Towards Understanding the Quran

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1. Al Fatihah
2. Al Baqarah
3. Al i Imran
4. An Nisa
5. Al Maidah
6. Al Anaam
7. Al Aaraf
8. Al Anfal
9. At Taubah
10. Yunus
11. Hud
12. Yusuf
13. Ar Ra'ad
14. Ibrahim
15. Al Hijr
16. An Nahl
17. Al Isra
18. Al Kahf
19. Maryam
20. Ta Ha
21. Al Anbiyaa
22. Al Hajj
23. Al Muminoon
24. An Noor
25. Al Furqan
26. Ash Shuaraa
27. An Naml
28. Al Qasas
29. Al Ankabut
30. Ar Rum
31. Luqman
32. As Sajdah
33. Al Ahzab
34. Saba
35. Fatir
36. Ya Sin
37. As Saaffat
38. Saad
39. Az Zumar
40. Ghafir
41. Fussilat
42. Ash Shura
43. Az Zukhruf
44. Ad Dukhan
45. At Jathiya
46. Al Ahqaf
47. Muhammad
48. Al Fath
49. Al Hujaraat
50. Qaf
51. Adh Dhariyat
52. At Tur
53. An Najm
54. Al Qamar
55. Ar Rahman
56. Al Waqia
57. Al Hadid
58. Al Mujadilah
59. Al Hashr
60. Al Mumtahina
61. As Saff
62. Al Jumuah
63. Al Munafiqoon
64. At Taghabun
65. At Talaq
66. At Tahrim
67. Al Mulk
68. Al Qalam
69. Al Haaqqa
70. Al Maarij
71. Nuh
72. AlJinn
73. AlMuzzammil
74. AlMuddaththir
75. AlQiyama
76. AlInsan
77. AlMursalat
78. AnNaba
79. Naziat
80. Abasa
81. AtTakwir
82. AlInfitar
83. AlMutaffifin
84. Inshiqaq
85. AlBurooj
86. AlTariq
87. AlAla
88. AlGhashiya
89. AlFajr
90. AlBalad
91. AsShams
92. AlLail
93. AdDhuha
94. AlInshirah
95. AtTin
96. AlAlaq
97. AlQadr
98. AlBayyina
99. AzZalzala
100. AlAdiyat
101. AlQaria
102. AtTakathur
103. AlAsr
104. AlHumaza
105. AlFil
106. Quraish
107. AlMa'un
108. AlKauthar
109. AlKafirun
110. AnNasr
111. AlMasad
112. AlIkhlas
113. AlFalaq
114. AnNas

1. Surah Al Fatihah (The Opening)

Name

This Surah is named Al-Fatihah because of its subject-matter. Fatihah is that which opens a subject or a book or any other thing. In other words, Al-Fatihah is a sort of preface.

Period of Revelation

It is one of the very earliest Revelations to the Holy Prophet. As a matter of fact, we learn from authentic Traditions that it was the first complete Surah which was revealed to Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him). Before this, only a few miscellaneous verses were revealed which form parts of `Alaq, Muzzammil, Muddaththir, etc.

Theme

This Surah is in fact a prayer which Allah has taught to all those who want to make a study of His book. It has been placed at the very beginning of the book to teach this lesson to the reader: if you sincerely want to benefit from the Quran, you should offer this prayer to the Lord of the Universe.

This preface is meant to create a strong desire in the heart of the reader to seek guidance from the Lord of the Universe, Who alone can grant it. Thus Al-Fatihah indirectly teaches that the best thing for a man is to pray for guidance to the straight path, to study the Quran with the mental attitude of a seeker- after-truth and to recognize the fact that the Lord of the Universe is the source of all knowledge. He should, therefore, begin the study of the Quran with a prayer to him for guidance.

From this theme, it becomes clear that the real relation between Al-Fatihah and the Quran is not that of an introduction to a book but that of a prayer and its answer. Al-Fatihah is the prayer from the servant and the Quran is the answer from the Master to his prayer. The servant prays to Allah to show him guidance and the Master places the whole of the Quran before him in answer to his prayer, as if to say, "This is the Guidance you begged from Me."

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ ١

(1:1) In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate[1]

1. One of the many practices taught by Islam is that its followers should begin their activities in the name of God. This principle, if consciously and earnestly followed, will necessarily yield three beneficial results. First, one will be able to restrain oneself from many misdeed, since the habit of pronouncing the name of God is bound to make one wonder when about to commit some offence how such an act can be reconciled with the saying of God's holy name. Second, if a man pronounces the name of God before starting good and legitimate tasks, this act will ensue that both his starting point and his mental orientation are sound. Third - and this is the most important benefit - when a man begins something by pronouncing God's name, he will enjoy God's support and succour; God will bless his

efforts and protect him from the machinations and temptation of Satan. For whenever man turns to God, God turns to him as well.

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۙ 2

(1:2) Praise[2] be to Allah, the Lord[3] of the entire universe.

2. As we have already explained, the character of this surah is that of a prayer. The prayer begins with praise of the One to whom our prayer is addressed. This indicates that whenever one prays one ought to pray in a dignified manner. It does not become a cultivated person to blurt out his petition. Refinement demands that our requests should be preceded by a wholehearted acknowledgement of the unique position, infinite benevolence and unmatched excellence of the One to Whom we pray. Whenever we praise someone, we do so for two reasons. First, because excellence calls for praise, irrespective of whether that excellence has any direct relevance to us or not. Second, we praise one who, we consider to be our benefactor; when this is the case our praise arises from a deep feeling of gratitude. God is worthy of praise on both counts. It is incumbent on us to praise Him not only in recognition of His infinite excellence but also because of our feeling of gratitude to Him, arising from our awareness of the blessings He has lavished upon us. It is important to note that what is said here is not merely that praise be to God, but that all praise be to God alone. Whenever there is any beauty, any excellence, any perfection-in whatever thing or in whatever shape it may manifest itself- its ultimate source is none other than God Himself. No human beings, angels, Demigods, heavenly bodies-in short, no created beings-are possessed of an innate excellence; where excellence exists, it is a gift from God. Thus, if there is anyone at all whom we ought to adore and worship, to whom we ought to feel indebted and grateful, towards whom we should remain humble and obedient, it is the creator of excellence, rather than its possessor.

3. In Arabic the word Rabb has three meanings: (i) Lord and Master; (ii) Sustainer, Provider, Supporter, Nourisher and Guardian, and (iii) Sovereign, Ruler, He Who controls and directs. God is the Rabb of the universe in all three meanings of the term.

الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ ۙ 3

(1:3) The Merciful, the Compassionate[4]

4. Whenever we are deeply impressed by the greatness of something we try to express our feelings by using superlatives. If the use of one superlative does not do full justice to our feelings, we tend to re-emphasize the extraordinary excellence of the object of our admiration by adding a second superlative of nearly equivalent meaning.* This would seem to explain the use of the word Rahim following Rahman. The form of the word Rahman connotes intensity. Yet God's mercy and beneficence towards His creatures is so great, so extensive and of such an infinite nature that no one word, however strong its connotation, can do it full justice. The epithet Rahim was therefore added to that of Rahman.

مٰلِكِ يَوۡمِ الدِّيۡنِ ؕ 4

(1:4) The Master of the Day of Recompense[5].

5. God will be the Lord of the Day when all generations of mankind gather together on order to render an account of their conduct, and when each person will be finally rewarded or punished for his deeds. The description of God as Lord of the Day of Judgement following the mention of his benevolence and compassion indicates that we ought to remember another aspect of God as well-namely, that He will judge us all, that He is so absolutely powerful, that on the Day of Judgement no one will have the power either to resist the enforcement of punishments that He decrees or to prevent anyone from receiving the rewards that He decides to confer. Hence, we ought not only to love Him for nourishing and sustaining us and for His compassion and mercy towards us, but should also hold Him in awe because of His justice, and should not forget that our ultimate happiness or misery rests completely with Him.

اِيَّاكَ نَعۡبُدُ وَاِيَّاكَ نَسۡتَعِيۡنُ ؕ 5

(1:5) You alone do we worship[6], and You alone do we turn for help[7]

6. The term ibadah is used in three sense: (i) worship and adoration; (ii) obedience and submission; and (iii) service and subjection. In this particular context the term carries all these meanings simultaneously. In other words, we say to God that we worship and adore Him, that we are obedient to Him and follow His will, and also that we are His servants. Moreover man is so bound to none save God, that none but He, may be the subject of man's worship and total devotion, of man's unreserved obedience, of man's absolute subjection and servitude.

7. Not only do we worship God, but our relationship with Him is such that we turn to Him alone for help and succour. We know that He is the Lord of the whole universe and that He alone is the Master of all blessings and benefactions. Hence, in seeking the fulfilment of our needs we turn to Him alone. It is towards Him alone that we stretch forth our hands when we pray and supplicate. It is in Him that we repose our trust. It is therefore to Him alone that we address our request for true guidance.

اِهۡدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الۡمُسۡتَقِيۡمَ ۙ 6

(1:6) Direct us on to the Straight Way[8],

8. We beseech God to guide us in all walks of life to a way which is absolutely true, which provides us with a properly-based outlook and sound principles of behaviour, a way which will prevent our succumbing to false doctrines and adopting unsound principles of conduct, a way that will lead us to our true salvation and happiness. This is man's prayer to God as he begins the study of the Qur'an. It is, in short, to illuminate the truth which he often tends to lose in a labyrinth of philosophical speculation; to enlighten him as to which of the

numerous ethical doctrines ensures a sound course of conduct; to show which of the myriad ways and by-ways is the clear, straight, open road of sound belief and right behaviour.

صِرَاطَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۙ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوْبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّآلِّيْنَ ع 7

(1:7) The way of those whom You have favoured[9], who did not incur Your wrath, who are not astray[10].

9. This defines the 'straight way' which we ask God to open to us. It is the way which has always been followed by those who have enjoyed God's favours and blessings. This is the way which has been trodden from the beginning of time by all those individuals and communities that have unfailingly enjoyed God's favours and blessings.

10. This makes it clear that the recipients of God's favour are not those who appear, briefly, to enjoy worldly prosperity and success; all too often, these people are among those whom God has condemned because they have lost sight of the true path of salvation and happiness. This negative explanation makes it quite clear that in'am (favour) denotes all those real and abiding favours and blessings which one receives in reward for righteous conduct through God's approval and pleasure, rather than those apparent and fleeting favours which the Pharaohs, Nimrods and Korahs (Qaruns) used to receive in the past, and which are enjoyed even today by people notorious for oppression, evil and corruption.

2. Surah Al Baqarah (The Cow)

Name

Why the name **Al-Baqarah**?

Al-Baqarah (the Cow) has been so named from the story of the Cow occurring in this Surah (vv. 67-73). It has not, however, been used as a title to indicate the subject of the Surah. It will, therefore, be as wrong to translate the name Al-Baqarah into "The Cow" or "The Heifer" as to translate any English name, say Mr. Baker, Mr. Rice, Mr. Wolf etc., into their equivalents in other languages or vice versa, because this would imply that the Surah dealt with the subject of "The Cow". Many more Surahs of the Quran have been named in the same way because no comprehensive words exist in Arabic (in spite of its richness) to denote the wide scope of the subject discussed in them. As a matter of fact all human languages suffer from the same limitation.

Sequence

Though it is a Madani Surah, it follows naturally a Makki Surah Al- Fatihah, which ended with the prayer: "Show us the straight way." It begins with the answer to that prayer, "This is the Book (that)...is guidance..."

The greater part of Al-Baqarah was revealed during the first two years of the Holy Prophet's life at Al-Madinah. The smaller part which was revealed at a later period has been included in this Surah because its contents are closely related to those dealt with in this Surah. For instance, the verses prohibiting interest were revealed during the last period of the Holy prophet's life but have been inserted in this Surah. For the same reason, the last verses (284-286) of this Surah which were revealed at Makkah before the migration of the Holy Prophet to AI-Madinah have also been included in it.

Historical Background

In order to understand the meaning of this Surah, we should know its historical background:

1. At Makkah the Quran generally addressed the mushrik Quraish who were ignorant of Islam, but at Al-Madinah it was also concerned with the Jews who were acquainted with the creed of the Unity of Allah, Prophethood, Revelation, the Hereafter and angels. They also professed to believe in the law which was revealed by Allah to their Prophet Moses (Allah's peace be upon him), and in principle, their way was the same (Islam) that was being taught by Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him). But they had strayed away from it during the centuries of degeneration and had adopted many un-Islamic creeds, rites and customs of which there was no mention and for which there was no sanction in the Torah. Not only this : they had tampered with the Torah by inserting their own explanations and interpretations into its text. They had distorted even that part of the Word of God which had remained intact in their Scriptures and taken out of it the real spirit of true religion and were now clinging to a lifeless frame of rituals. Consequently their beliefs, their morals and their conduct had gone to the lowest depths of degeneration. The pity is that they were not only satisfied with their condition but loved to cling to it. Besides this, they had no

intention or inclination to accept any kind of reform. So they became bitter enemies of those who came to teach them the Right Way and did their worst to defeat every such effort. Though they were originally Muslims, they had swerved from the real Islam and made innovations and alterations in it and had fallen victims to hair splitting and sectarianism. They had forgotten and forsaken Allah and begun to serve mammon. So much so that they had even given up their original name "Muslim" and adopted the name "Jew" instead, and made religion the sole monopoly of the children of Israel.

This was their religious condition when the Holy Prophet went to Al-Madinah and invited the Jews to the true religion. That is why more than one third of this Surah has been addressed to the children of Israel. A critical review of their history, their moral degeneration and their religious perversions has been made; side by side with this the high standard of morality and the fundamental principles of the pure religion have been put forward in order to bring out clearly the nature of the degeneration of the community of a prophet when it goes astray and to draw clear lines of demarcation between real piety and formalism, and the essentials and non-essentials of the true religion.

2. At Makkah Islam was mainly concerned with the propagation of its fundamental principles and the moral training of its followers. But after the migration of the Holy Prophet to Al-Madinah, where Muslims had come to settle from all over Arabia and where a tiny Islamic State had been set up with the help of the Ansar (local supporters), naturally the Quran had to turn its attention to the social, cultural, economic, political and legal problems as well. This accounts for the difference between the themes of the surahs revealed at Makkah and those at Al-Madinah. Accordingly about half of this Surah deals with those principles and regulations which are essential for the integration and solidarity of a community and for the solution of its problems.
3. After the migration to Al-Madinah, the struggle between Islam and un-Islam had also entered a new phase. Before this the Believers, who propagated Islam among their own clans and tribes, had to face its opponents at their own risk. But the conditions had changed at Al-Madinah, where Muslims from all parts of Arabia had come and settled as one community, and had established an independent city state. Here it became a struggle for the' survival of the Community itself, for the whole of non-Muslim Arabia was bent upon and united in crushing it totally. Hence the following instructions, upon which depended not only its success but its very survival, were revealed in this Surah :-
    1. The Community should work with the utmost zeal to propagate its ideology and win over to its side the greatest possible number of people.
4. It should so expose its opponents as to leave no room for doubt in the mind of any sensible person that they were adhering to an absolutely wrong position.
5. It should infuse in it's members (the majority of whom were homeless and indigent and surrounded on all sides by enemies) that courage and fortitude which is so indispensable to their very existence in the adverse circumstances in which they were struggling and to prepare them to face these boldly.
6. It should also keep them ready and prepared to meet any armed menace, which might come from any side to suppress and crush their ideology, and to oppose it tooth and

nail without minding the overwhelming numerical strength and the material resources of its enemies

7. It should also create in them that courage which is needed for the eradication of evil ways and for the establishment of the Islamic Way instead.

   That is why Allah has revealed in this Surah such instructions as may help achieve all the above mentioned objects.

8. During this period, a new type of "Muslims," munafiqin (hypocrites), had begun to appear. Though signs of duplicity had been noticed during the last days at Makkah, they took a different shape at Al-Madinah. At Makkah there were some people who professed Islam to be true but were not prepared to abide by the consequences of this profession and to sacrifice their worldly interests and relations and bear the afflictions which inevitably follow the acceptance of this creed. But at Al-Madinah different kinds of munafiqin (hypocrites) began to appear. There were some who had entered the Islamic fold merely to harm it from within. There were others who were surrounded by Muslims and, therefore, had become "Muslims" to safeguard their worldly interests. They, therefore, continued to have relations with the enemies so that if the latter became successful, their interests should remain secure. There were still others who had no strong conviction of the truth of Islam but had embraced it along with their clans. Lastly, there were those who were intellectually convinced of the truth of Islam but did not have enough moral courage to give up their former traditions, superstitions and personal ambitions and live up to the Islamic moral standards and make sacrifice in its way.

   At the time of the revelation of Al-Baqarah, all sorts of hypocrites had begun to appear. Allah has, therefore, briefly pointed out their characteristics here. Afterwards when their evil characteristics and mischievous deeds became manifest, Allah sent detailed instructions about them.

Theme: Guidance

This Surah is an invitation to the Divine Guidance and all the stories, incidents etc., revolve round this central theme. As this Surah has particularly been addressed to the Jews, many historical events have been cited from their own traditions to admonish and advise them that their own good lies in accepting the Guidance revealed to the Holy Prophet. They should, therefore, be the first to accept it because it was basically]y the same that was revealed to Prophet Moses (Allah's peace be upon him).

Topics and their Interconnection

These introductory verses declare the Quran to be the Book of Guidance : enunciate the articles of the Faith -- belief in Allah, Prophethood and Life-after-death; divide mankind into three main groups with regard to its acceptance or rejection -- Believers, disbelievers and hypocrites. **1 - 20**

Allah invites mankind to accept the Guidance voluntarily and to submit to Him, the Lord and the Creator of the Universe and to believe in the Quran, His Guidance, and in the Life-after-death. **21 - 29**

The story of the appointment of Adam as Allah's Vicegerent on Earth, of his life in the Garden, of his falling a prey to the temptations of Satan, of his repentance and its acceptance, has been related to show to mankind (Adam's offspring), that the only right thing for them is to accept and follow the Guidance. This story also shows that the Guidance of Islam is the same that was given to Adam and that it is the original religion of mankind. **30 - 39**

In this portion invitation to the Guidance has particularly been extended to the children of Israel and their past and present attitude has been criticized to show that the cause of their degradation was their deviation from the Guidance. **40 - 120**

The Jews have been exhorted to follow Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) who had come with the same Guidance and who was a descendant and follower of Prophet Abraham whom they highly honoured as their ancestor, and professed to follow as a prophet. The story of the building of the Ka`abah by him has been mentioned because it was going to be made the qiblah of the Muslim Community. **121 - 141**

In this portion, the declaration of the change of qiblah from the Temple (Jerusalem) to the Ka`abah (Makkah) has been made as a symbol of the change of leadership from the children of Israel to the Muslim Community, which has also been fore-warned to guard against those transgressions against the Guidance that had led to the deposition of the Jews. **142 - 152**

In this portion practical measures have been prescribed to enable the Muslims to discharge the heavy responsibilities of the leadership that had been entrusted to them for the promulgation of Guidance. Salat, Fast, Zakat, Haj and Jihad have been prescribed for the moral training of the Ummat. The Believers have been exhorted to obey authority, to be just, to fulfill pledges, to observe treaties, to spend wealth etc., in the way of Allah. Laws, rules and regulations have been laid down for their organization, cohesion and conduct of day-to-day life and for the solution of social, economic, political and international problems; on the other hand, drinking, gambling, lending money on interest etc., have been prohibited to keep the Ummat safe from disintegration. In between these, the basic articles of the Faith have been reiterated at suitable places, for these alone can enable and support one to stick to the Guidance. **153 - 251**

These verses serve as an introduction to the prohibition of lending money on interest. The true conception of Allah, Revelation and Life-after-death has been emphasized to keep alive the sense of accountability. The stories of Prophet Abraham (Allah's peace be upon him) and of the one who woke up after a sleep of hundred years have been related to show that Allah is All-Powerful and is able to raise the dead and call them to account. The Believers, therefore, should keep this fact in view and refrain from taking interest on money. **252 - 260**

The theme of **153 - 251** has been resumed and the Believers have been exhorted to spend in the way of Allah in order to please Him alone. In contrast to this, they have been warned against the evils of lending money on interest. Instructions have also been given for the honest conduct of day-to-day business transactions. **261 - 283**

The basic articles of the Faith have been recapitulated here at the end of the Surah, just as they were enunciated at its beginning. Then the Surah ends with a prayer which the Muslim

Community needed very much at that time when they were encountering untold hardships in the propagation of the Guidance. **284 - 286**

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

الٓمّٓ ۚ 1

(2:1) Alif, Lam, Mim.[1]

1. The names of letters of the Arabic alphabet, called huruf muqatta'at, occur at the beginning of several surahs of the Qur'an. At the time of the Qur'anic revelation the use of such letters was a well-known literary device, used by both poets and orators, and we find several instances in the pre-Islamic Arabic literature that has come down to us.

Since the muqatta'at were commonly used the Arabs of that period generally knew what they meant and so they did not present a puzzle. We do not notice, therefore, any contemporaries of the Prophet (peace be on him) raising objections against the Qur'an on the ground that the letters at the beginning of some of its surahs were absurd. For the same reason no Tradition has come down to us of any Companion asking the Prophet about the significance of the muqatta'at. Later on this literary device gradually fell into disuse and hence it became difficult for commentators to determine their precise meanings. It is obvious, however, that deriving right guidance from the Qur'an does not depend on grasping the meaning of these vocables, and that anyone who fails to understand them may still live a righteous life and attain salvation. The ordinary reader, therefore, need not delve too deeply into this matter.

ذٰلِكَ الۡكِتٰبُ لَا رَیۡبَ ۛۚ فِیۡهِ ۛۚ هُدًی لِّلۡمُتَّقِیۡنَ ۙ 2

(2:2) This is the Book of Allah, there is no doubt in it;[2] it is a guidance for the pious,[3]

2. One obvious meaning of this verse is that this Book, the Qur'an, is undoubtedly from God. Another possible meaning is that nothing contained in it can be subject to doubt. Books which deal with supernatural questions, with matters that lie beyond the range of sense perception, are invariably based on conjecture and their authors, despite their brave show of competence, are therefore not immune from a degree of scepticism regarding their statements. This Book, which is based wholly on Truth, a Book which is the work of none other than the All-Knowing God Himself is distinguishable from all other books. Hence, there is no room for doubt about its contents despite the hesitation some people might express either through ignorance or folly.

3. This means that while the Book is potentially for all, only those who possess certain qualities can benefit from it. The first such quality is piety: those who want to benefit should be disposed to distinguish between good and evil, and to shun evil and do good. Those who lead an animal existence, who never to consider whether their actions are either good or bad, whose cynically follow the prevailing winds, who are helplessly tossed about by the animal

desires that dominate their minds, such persons are all together incapable of deriving any benefit from the guidance embodied in the Qur'an.

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ۙ 3

(2:3) for those who believe in the existence of that which is beyond the reach of perception,[4] who establish Prayer[5] and spend out of what We have provided them,[6]

4. This is the second prerequisite for deriving benefit from the Qur'an. Ghayb signifies the verities which are hidden from man's senses and which are beyond the scope of man's ordinary observation and experience, for example the existence and attributes of God, the angels. the process of revelation, Paradise, Hell and so on. 'Belief in the ghaib' means having faith in such matters, based on an absolute confidence in the Messengers of God and despite the fact that it is impossible to experience them.

According to this verse, Qur'anic guidance can prove helpful only to those prepared to affirm the truths of the suprasensory realm. People who make their belief in these questions conditional upon sensory perception of the object of belief, and who are not prepared even to consider the possibility of the existence of things that cannot be weighed or measured, cannot profit from this Book.

5. This is the third requirement. It is pointed out that those to whom belief means merely the pronouncement of a formula, who think that a mere verbal confession of faith is enough and that it makes no practical demands on them, can derive no guidance from the Qur'an. To benefit from the Qur'an it is essential that a man's decision to believe should be followed immediately by practical obedience to God.

Prayer is the first and continuing sign of practical obedience. No more than a few hours can pass after a man has embraced Islam than the mu'adhin calls to Prayer and it becomes evident whether or not the profession of faith has been genuine. Moreover, the mu'adhin calls to Prayer five times every day and whenever a man fails to respond to his call it becomes clear that he has transgressed the bounds of practical obedience. An abandonment of Prayer amounts to an abandonment of obedience. Obviously, if a man is not prepared to follow the directives of his guide, it is immaterial whether or not true guidance is available to him.

It should also be noted that the expression 'establishment of Prayer' has a wider meaning than mere performance of Prayer. It means that the system of Prayer should be organized on a collective basis. If there is a person in a locality who prays individually but no arrangements are made for congregational Prayer, it cannot be claimed that Prayer is established in that locality.

6. This, the fourth prerequisite for a person to benefit from the Qur'an, demands that the person concerned should neither be niggardly nor a worshipper of money. On the contrary, he should be willing to pay the claims on his property of both God and man, and should not flinch from making financial sacrifices for the sake of his convictions.

وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ۚ وَبِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوْقِنُوْنَ ۝4

(2:4) who believe in what has been revealed to you and what was revealed before you,[7] and have firm faith in the Hereafter.[8]

7. The fifth requirement is that one should believe in the Books revealed by God to His Prophets in the various ages and regions of the world, in the Book revealed to Muhammad (peace be on him) as well as in those revealed to the other Prophets who preceded him. The door of the Qur'an is closed to all those who do not consider it necessary for man to receive guidance from God. It is also closed to those who, even if they believe in the need for such guidance, do not consider it necessary to seek it through the channel of revelation and prophethood, but would rather weave their own set of ideas and concepts and regard them as equivalent to Divine Guidance.

This door is also closed to those who believe in Divine books as such, but confine this belief to those books accepted by their forefathers, and spurn Divine Guidance revealed to anyone born beyond their own racial and national boundaries. The Qur'an excludes all such people and is prepared to open the source of its grace only to those who believe that mankind does require Divine Guidance, who acknowledge that this guidance does not come to people individually but reaches them through Prophets and Divine Books and who are not given to racial or national chauvinism but are devotees of Truth alone, and are therefore prepared to submit to Divine Guidance wherever it be found.

8. Belief in the After-life is the sixth and last requirement. The term al-Akhirah embraces a whole set of ideas: (i) that man is not an irresponsible being, but is answerable to God for all his conduct in this world; (ii) that the present order of the world is not timeless, but will come to an end at an appointed hour known only to God; (iii) that when this world comes to an end God will bring into being another world in which He will resurrect, at one and the same moment, all the human beings ever born on earth. He will gather them together, examine their conduct and grant each one just reward for his actions; (iv) that those who are accounted good in God's judgement will be sent to Heaven, and those judged by Him as evil-doers will be consigned to Hell; (v) that the real measure of success and failure is not one's prosperity in the present life, but one's success or failure according to God's judgement in the Next. Those who do not accept this set of beliefs can derive no benefit from the Qur'an. For if a man is merely in a state of doubt and hesitation with regard to these matters - let alone disbelieving them - he cannot advance even one step forward along the path charted out by the Qur'an.

اُولٰٓئِكَ عَلٰى هُدًى مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ۗ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ۝5

(2:5) Such are on true guidance from their Lord; such are the truly successful.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَاَنْذَرْتَهُمْ اَمْ لَمْ تُنْذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ۝6

(2:6) As for those who have rejected (these truths),[9] it is all the same whether or not you warn them, for they will not believe.

9. That is, those people who do not meet these six requirements, or reject all or any one of the fundamentals set out above.

خَتَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ وَعَلٰى سَمْعِهِمْ ؕ وَعَلٰٓى اَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ ۖ وَّلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ۧ 7

(2:7) Allah has sealed their hearts[10] and their hearing, and a covering has fallen over their eyes. They deserve severe chastisement.

10. This does not mean that their rejection of the Truth is a consequence of God sealing their hearts. What is meant is that God sealed their hearts and ears as a consequence of their decision to reject the fundamentals of faith, of their deliberate choice of a path divergent from that charted out by the Qur'an. Anyone who has worked for the dissemination of the Truth often finds that if, after full consideration, a person decides against a doctrine, his mind begins to move in a completely opposite direction so that he fails to appreciate anything that is explained to him. His ears become deaf, his eyes are blinded to the merits of that doctrine, and one gets the distinct impression that the person's heart has indeed been sealed.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّقُوْلُ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَبِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۘ 8

(2:8) There are some who say: “We believe in Allah and in the Last Day,” while in fact they do not believe.

يُخٰدِعُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ۚ وَمَا يَخْدَعُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ؕ 9

(2:9) They are trying to deceive Allah and those who believe, but they do not realize that in truth they are only deceiving themselves.[11]

11. These people delude themselves that their hypocritical behaviour will profit them when in fact it will prove harmful both in this world and the Next. A hypocrite may be able to fool people for a while, but it does not last long; his hypocrisy is ultimately seen through. As for the Next Life, it is obvious that his claim to be a true believer is contradicted by his own actions and is thus quite worthless.

فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ ۙ فَزَادَهُمُ اللّٰهُ مَرَضًا ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْذِبُوْنَ ۙ 10

(2:10) There is a disease in their hearts and Allah has intensified this disease.[12] A painful chastisement awaits them for their lying.

12. ' Disease' here refers to the disease of hypocrisy. The statement that 'Allah has intensified this disease' means that He does not punish the hypocrites immediately but allows them to indulge in their hypocrisy and exult in the success of their ruses. This feeling of success intensifies their hypocrisy.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۙ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ 11

(2:11) Whenever they are told: “Do not spread mischief on earth,” they say: “Why! We indeed are the ones who set things right.”

أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَٰكِن لَّا يَشْعُرُونَ 12

(2:12) They are the mischief makers, but they do not realize it.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا كَمَا آمَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا آمَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ ۗ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَٰكِن لَّا يَعْلَمُونَ 13

(2:13) Whenever they are told: “Believe as others believe,”[13] they answer: “Shall we believe as the fools have believed?”[14] Indeed it is they who are the fools, but they are not aware of it.

13. They are being asked to become Muslims in the same manner as others of their community became Muslims

14. They think that those people who sincerely embraced Islam and thereby exposed themselves to all kinds of trials and persecutions, and confronted risks and dangers, were merely fools. To them it seems sheer folly to invite the hostility of the entire land merely for the sake of Truth and righteousness. In their view, wisdom consists not in bothering oneself with the distinction between truth and falsehood, but in remaining concerned only with one's own interests.

وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَالُوا آمَنَّا ۖ وَإِذَا خَلَوْا إِلَىٰ شَيَاطِينِهِمْ ۙ قَالُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ ۙ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزِئُونَ 14

(2:14) When they meet the believers, they say: “We believe,” but when they meet their evil companions (in privacy),[15] they say: “Surely we are with you; we were merely jesting.”

15. 'Satan' in Arabic means refractory, rebellious and headstrong, and is used for both human beings and jinn. Although this word is generally used in the Qur'an for the satans

amongst the jinn, it is also used occasionally for human beings possessing satanic characteristics. The context generally explains whether the word 'satan' refers to jinn or to human beings. In this particular case the word 'satans' refers to those influential leaders of the time who were in the vanguard of opposition and hostility to Islam

اَللّٰهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِيْ طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُوْنَ 15

(2:15) Allah jests with them, leaving them to wander blindly on in their rebellion.

اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ اشْتَرَوُا الضَّلٰلَةَ بِالْهُدٰى ۠ فَمَا رَبِحَتْ تِّجَارَتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوْا مُهْتَدِيْنَ 16

(2:16) These are the ones who have purchased error in exchange for guidance. This bargain has brought them no profit and certainly they are not on the Right Way.[16]

16. This means that two opposite effects emerged when a true servant of God radiated the light which made it possible to distinguish true from false and right from wrong, and made the straight way distinct from the ways of error. To those endowed with true perception, all truths became evident. But those who were almost blinded by the worship of their animal desires perceived nothing.

The expression, 'Allah took away the light of their perception' should not create the impression that these people were not responsible for their stumbling into darkness. Only those who do not seek the Truth, who prefer error to guidance and who are adamantly disinclined to pursue the Truth despite its luminosity, are deprived, by God, of the light of their perception. God simply enables such people to do what they wish.

مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا ۚ فَلَمَّآ اَضَآءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهٗ ذَهَبَ اللّٰهُ بِنُوْرِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِيْ ظُلُمٰتٍ لَّا يُبْصِرُوْنَ 17

(2:17) They are like him who kindled a fire, and when it lit up all around him, Allah took away the light (of their perception) and left them in utter darkness where they can see nothing.

صُمٌّۢ بُكْمٌ عُمْيٌ فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُوْنَ ۙ 18

(2:18) They are deaf, they are dumb, they are blind;[17] they will never return (to the Right Way).

17. They have become deaf to hear, dumb to utter and blind to perceive the truth.

أَوْ كَصَيِّبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ فِيْهِ ظُلُمٰتٌ وَّرَعْدٌ وَّبَرْقٌ ۚ يَجْعَلُوْنَ اَصَابِعَهُمْ فِيْٓ اٰذَانِهِمْ مِّنَ
الصَّوَاعِقِ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ مُحِيْطٌۢ بِالْكٰفِرِيْنَ 19

(2:19) Or they are like those who encounter a violent rainstorm from the sky, accompanied by pitch-dark clouds, thunder-claps and flashes of lightning: on hearing thunder-claps they thrust their fingers into their ears in fear of death. Allah encompasses these deniers of the Truth.[18]

18. By thrusting their fingers into their ears they temporarily deceive themselves into believing that they can escape the catastrophic end that awaits them. However, they cannot escape that end since God with all His might, encompasses them.

يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ اَبْصَارَهُمْ ۭ كُلَّمَآ اَضَآءَ لَهُمْ مَّشَوْا فِيْهِ ۙ وَاِذَآ اَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوْا ۭ
وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَاَبْصَارِهِمْ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ۧ 20

(2:20) It is as if the lightning would snatch their sight; whenever it gleams a while for them they walk a little, and when darkness covers them they halt.[19] If Allah so willed, He could indeed take away their hearing and their sight.[20]Surely Allah is All-Powerful.

19. The first parable refers to those hypocrites who disbelieved completely but had become Muslims merely, to further their worldly interests. The second parable refers to those who were prone to doubt and hesitation or whose faith was weak; who believed in the Truth but not to the extent of exposing themselves to hardships for its sake. The 'violent rainstorm' here alludes to Islam, which came to the world as a blessing. 'Pitch-dark clouds, thunder and lightning' refer to trials, tribulations and difficulties which confronted the Islamic movement, owing to the violent opposition and resistance of those committed to Ignorance. The last part of the parable portrays the state of mind of the hypocrites. They move a little ahead when circumstances seem favourable, but when either difficulties cloud the horizon, or when they are given directives which run counter to their desires or inherited prejudices, they are seized with alarm and come to a halt.

20. Just as God has completely deprived the first category of hypocrites of their 'light of perception', He could have rendered these other hypocrites totally blind and deaf. But it is not God's way to deprive anyone of sight and hearing while he is willing to see and hear. Hence, God allowed them to retain their sight and hearing to the extent they were prepared to see and hear the Truth.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوْا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ ۙ 21

(2:21) O mankind,[21] serve your Lord Who has created you as well as those before you; do so that you are saved.[22]

21. Even though the message of the Qur'an is addressed to all, benefiting from it depends on ones willingness and on God's succour in relation to that willingness. This is why the Qur'an first explained which kind of people can and which kind of people cannot benefit from the Qur'an. As this has been explained in the foregoing verses, the quintessence of the message to which the Qur'an invites all mankind is now put forth.

22. So that you are saved from false beliefs and unrighteous conduct in this life, and from the punishment of God in the Next.

الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ فِرَاشًا وَّالسَّمَآءَ بِنَآءً ۖ وَّاَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَخْرَجَ بِهٖ
مِنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ رِزْقًا لَّكُمْ ۚ فَلَا تَجْعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ اَنْدَادًا وَّاَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ 22

(2:22) It is He Who has made the earth a resting-place for you, and the sky a canopy, and sent down water from above wherewith He brought forth fruits for your sustenance. Do not, then, set up rivals[23] to Allah when you know (the Truth).

23. That is, when man recognizes that all those things were done by none but God, then worship, devotion and service must be exclusively for Him. For who besides the Creator can legitimately claim these things from man?

Not to set up others as rivals to Allah means not to make anyone other than God the object of worship, service and obedience that one owes to God alone. Later on we shall see, in some detail, how the Qur'an itself specifies the forms of worship and service which we owe exclusively to God, and wherein associating anyone else amounts to shirk (associating others with God in His divinity). This, the Qur'an seeks to eradicate.

وَاِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِيْ رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلٰى عَبْدِنَا فَاْتُوْا بِسُوْرَةٍ مِّنْ مِّثْلِهٖ ۖ وَادْعُوْا شُهَدَآءَكُمْ
مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ 23

(2:23) If you are in any doubt whether it is We Who have revealed this Book to Our servant, then produce just a surah like it, and call all your supporters and seek in it the support of all others save Allah. Accomplish this if you are truthful.[24]

24. Before this, in Makka, opponents had often been challenged to produce anything of comparable merit if they believed the Qur'an to be the work of a human being. In Madina the same challenge was reiterated. (For similar challenges made elsewhere in the Qur'an, see (10: 38); (11: 13); (17: 88) and (52: 33)

فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوْا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوْا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِيْ وَقُوْدُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ ۖ أُعِدَّتْ

لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ 24

(2:24) But if you fail to do this – and you will most certainly fail – then have fear of the Fire whose fuel is men and stones[25] and which has been prepared for those who deny the Truth.

25. This suggests, in a subtle manner, that in the Next Life not only will the unbelievers become the fuel of hell-fire, but that the same fate will befall the idol-stones they worshipped and before which they had prostrated themselves. They will then know, for sure, how far their idols had any share in godhead.

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۭ كُلَّمَا

رُزِقُوْا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِّزْقًا ۙ قَالُوْا هٰذَا الَّذِيْ رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَاُتُوْا بِهٖ مُتَشَابِهًا ۭ وَلَهُمْ

فِيْهَآ اَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ ۙ وَّهُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ 25

(2:25) (O Prophet), announce glad tidings to those who believe in this Book and do righteous deeds (in accordance with its teachings), that for them are gardens beneath which rivers flow. Their fruits will have such resemblance to those of the earth that whenever they will be provided with those fruits they will say: "It was this which was granted to us on earth before."[26] For them there shall be pure spouses,[27] and there they shall abide forever.

26. The fruits of Paradise will not be so exotic in appearance as to be unfamiliar to people. They will resemble the fruits to which human beings are accustomed in this world, though infinitely excelling them in delicacy of taste. In appearance they may resemble, say mangoes, pomegranates and oranges, and the people of Paradise will be able to identify them as such. In taste, however, there will be no comparison between the terrestrial and heavenly fruits.

27. The Qur'anic text has the Arabic word azwaj which means 'spouses' or 'couples', and embraces both husband and wife. The husband is the zawj of his wife, and vice versa. In the Next World, however, this relationship of spouses will be qualified by purity. If a man has been virtuous in this world while his wife has not, their relationship in the Next World will be sundered and the man will receive another spouse who will be pure and virtuous. On the other hand, if a virtuous woman has had an evil husband she will be tied in companionship with a virtuous man. Where husband and wife have both been virtuous their relationship will become everlasting.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي أَن يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا ۚ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ ۖ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَيَقُولُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهَٰذَا
مَثَلًا ۘ يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَيَهْدِي بِهِ كَثِيرًا ۚ وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلَّا الْفَاسِقِينَ ۙ 26

(2:26) Behold! Allah is not ashamed to propound the parable of a gnat, or even of something more lowly.[28] On hearing these parables the believers know that it is the truth from their Lord, while those bent on denying the Truth say: "What does Allah mean by these parables?" Thus He causes many to go astray just as He directs many to the Right Way.[29] And He thereby causes to go astray only the transgressors,[30]

28. Here an objection is indirectly refuted. At several places in the Qur'an, spiders, flies, gnats and so on are mentioned in order to elucidate certain points. Opponents objected to this on the grounds that such objects were too lowly to find a place in the Book of God. They indicated that had the Qur'an indeed been a revelation from God it would not have mentioned such trivial objects.

29. Those who do not wish to understand things and are not motivated by the urge to seek the truth become enmeshed in superficial questions relating to the Book of God, draw altogether erroneous conclusions when they encounter references to apparently insignificant things such as gnats, and are thereby thrown further and further away from the Truth. Those who seek the Truth and possess true perception, on the other hand, penetrate through these superficialities and perceive the gems of wisdom that they embody. This appreciation makes their hearts attest that such wisdom could have no other source than God Himself.

30. Fasiq means transgressor, disobedient. See also (n 33 below)

الَّذِينَ يَنقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِن بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ ۠ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَن يُوصَلَ
وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ 27

(2:27) who break the covenant of Allah after its firm binding,[31] and cut asunder what Allah has commanded to be joined,[32] and spread mischief on earth.[33] They are the utter losers.

31. The injunctions or ordinances issued by a sovereign to his servants and subjects are termed 'ahd in Arabic since compliance with them becomes obligatory for the latter. 'Ahd has been used here in this sense. The 'ahd referred to signifies God's eternal command that all human beings are obliged to render their service, obedience and worship to Him alone. 'After its binding' refers to the promise made by mankind to remain faithful to the injunctions of God at the time of Adam's creation. (For details see(verse 7: 172)

32. That is, the transgressors strike their blows at those very relationships upon which the individual and collective well-being of mankind depends, and which God wants maintained on a sound basis. This small sentence is of great import as it embraces the whole of human morality and social life, and extends from relationships between individuals to those between nations. 'To cut asunder what Allah has commanded should he joined' does not merely signify the disruption of relationships between man and man; it forbids the establishment of all forms of human relationship except the right and permissible ones. For wrong and prohibited bonds between people have the same consequences as the disruption of the bonds of human relationship as such

33. In these three sentences the nature of transgression and the attitude of transgressors is fully defined. To debase the relationship between man and God, and between man and man necessarily leads to 'mischief'. Those who spread this 'mischief' on earth are transgressors.

كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَكُنْتُمْ اَمْوَاتًا فَاَحْيَاكُمْ ۚ ثُمَّ يُمِيْتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيْكُمْ ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ 28

(2:28) How can you be ungrateful to Allah Who bestowed life upon you when you were lifeless, then He will cause you to die and will again bring you back to life so that you will be returned to Him.

هُوَ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِى الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا ۚ ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰٓى اِلَى السَّمَآءِ فَسَوّٰىهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ ؕ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ع 29

(2:29) It is He Who created for you all that is on earth and then turned above and fashioned it into seven heavens.[34]He knows all things.[35]

34. It is difficult to explain precisely what is meant by the 'seven heavens'. In all ages man has tried, with the help of observation and speculation, to conceptualize the 'heavens', i.e. that which lies beyond and above the earth. As we well know, the concepts that have thus developed have constantly changed. Hence it would be improper to tie the meaning of these words of the Qur'an to any one of these numerous concepts. What might be broadly inferred from this statement is that either God has divided the universe beyond the earth into seven distinct spheres, or that this earth is located in that part of the universe which consists of seven different spheres.

35. In this sentence attention is drawn to two important facts. First, man is warned against disbelief and rebellion against God, for God knows all that man does and none of his actions are hidden from Him. Second, it is suggested to man that if he turns away from the All-Knowing God, from the One Who is the source of all knowledge, this can only leave him grouping in the darkness of ignorance and error. When there is no source of truth

knowledge except God, and when that very light which alone can illuminate man's life can be obtained from none else but Him, what good can come out of deviation from the Truth?

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً ۖ قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ
فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ ۖ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا
تَعْلَمُونَ 30

(2:30) Just think[36] when your Lord said to the angels:[37] "Lo! I am about to place a vicegerent[38] on earth," they said: "Will You place on it one who will spread mischief and shed blood[39] while we celebrate Your glory and extol Your holiness?"[40] He said: "Surely I know what you do not know."[41]

36. Thus far man has been summoned to serve and obey God on the grounds that God is his creator and sustainer, that in His grasp lies man's life and death, that He alone is the Lord Who rules over the entire universe in which he lives. In view of this, the only attitude which can be deemed appropriate for man is one of service and subjection to God.

The same idea is presented in the following section, but supported on slightly different grounds

In this connection the Qur'an defines precisely the true nature of man and his correct position in the universe. It also enlightens us to a period of man's past which is otherwise inaccessible. What the Qur'an tells us here, with its practical consequences, is of far greater value than knowledge derived by unearthing bones and pottery, and piecing together scattered fragments of information with the help of conjecture.

37. The word malak in Arabic means 'message'

38. 'Khalifah' or vicegerent is one who exercises the authority delegated to him by his principal, and does so in the capacity of his deputy and agent. Hence, whatever authority he possesses is not inherently his own, but is derived from, and circumscribed by, the limits set by his principal. A vicegerent is not entitled to do what he pleases, but is obliged to carry out the will of his master. If the vicegerent were either to begin thinking himself the real owner and to use the authority delegated to him in whatever manner he pleased, or if he were to acknowledge someone other than the real owner as his lord and master and to follow his directions, these would be deemed acts of infidelity and rebellion.

39. This was not said by way of objection or protest. It was said rather by way of inquiry and in order to satisfy their curiosity; it is inconceivable that the angels could object to any of God's decisions. The word 'vicegerent' suggested to them that the proposed species of creation would be placed on earth with some authority. It was incomprehensible to them how a species of being which had been invested with discretionary power and authority could conform with the overall order of the universe, which is based on absolute and

involuntary subservience to the Will of God. They thought that investing anyone with authority in any part of the universe would lead to mischief and disorder. It is this aspect which the angels were curious about.

40. This does not mean that the angels considered themselves suitable for 'vicegerency'. They merely wanted to point out that God's orders were already being carried out fully, that they - the angels - were engaged in doing His will and that according to His Divine will the entire universe was kept in a state of absolute purity; moreover, God's glory was constantly being extolled and His holiness celebrated. Since all these things were being done, they wanted to ask what gap was still considered to exist that called for the creation of a new species of being to fill it.

The word tasbih has two meanings: (i) to proclaim glory and (ii) to exert oneself earnestly and energetically. In the same way taqdis has two meanings: (i) to celebrate or proclaim holiness and (ii) to purify.

41. This was an answer to the latter doubt expressed by the angels. The angels were told that the reason for the appointment of a vicegerent was best known to God alone and could not be understood by them. Despite the services rendered by the angels, something over and above their work was still required. God decided, therefore, to create a new species of being in the world and to invest it with some authority.

وَعَلَّمَ اٰدَمَ الْاَسْمَآءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ فَقَالَ اَنْۢبِـُٔوْنِيْ بِاَسْمَآءِ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ 31

(2:31) Then Allah taught Adam the names of all things[42] and presented them to the angels and said: "If you are right (that the appointment of a vicegerent will cause mischief) then tell Me the names of these things."

42. The nature of man's knowledge is such that he acquires information of different things through their names. Hence it might be said that the sum total of man's knowledge consists of the names of things. To teach Adam the names of all things means, therefore, imparting the knowledge of those things. us.43 you, only You, are All-Knowing, All Wise.'

قَالُوْا سُبْحٰنَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَآ اِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا ؕ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَلِيْمُ الْحَكِيْمُ 32

(2:32) They said. "Glory to You! We have no knowledge except what You taught us.[43] You, only You, are All-Knowing, All-Wise."

43. It seems that the knowledge of each angel and each genre of angel is confined to its own sphere of competence. The angels appointed to administer, let us say, things relating to air have full knowledge about this subject but have no knowledge, say, about water, and so on and so forth. Man's range of knowledge, however, is comprehensive. Even if man's information in a particular area may be narrower than that of the angel directly concerned

with it, the total range of his knowledge has a comprehensiveness which has not been granted to the angels.

قَالَ يٰٓاٰدَمُ اَنۢبِئۡهُمۡ بِاَسۡمَآئِهِمۡ ۚ فَلَمَّاۤ اَنۡۢبَاَهُمۡ بِاَسۡمَآئِهِمۡ ۙ قَالَ اَلَمۡ اَقُلۡ لَّكُمۡ اِنِّىۡۤ اَعۡلَمُ غَيۡبَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ۙ وَاَعۡلَمُ مَا تُبۡدُوۡنَ وَمَا كُنۡتُمۡ تَكۡتُمُوۡنَ 33

(2:33) Then Allah said to Adam: "Tell them the names of these things."[44] And when he had told them the names of all things, Allah said: "Did I not say to you that I know everything about the heavens and the earth which are beyond your range of knowledge and I know all that you disclose and also all that you hide?"

44. This demonstration of Adam's capacity was an answer to the first of the doubts the angels had expressed. In this manner, they were made to realize that God had not only bestowed some authority upon man, but had also endowed him with knowledge. Fear of mischief and disorder through man's appointment as vicegerent is only one aspect of the matter. The other aspect is constructive and offsets man's potentiality for spreading mischief. For the wise will not sacrifice a major good for fear of a minor harm.

وَاِذۡ قُلۡنَا لِلۡمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسۡجُدُوۡا لِاٰدَمَ فَسَجَدُوۡۤا اِلَّاۤ اِبۡلِيۡسَ ؕ اَبٰى وَاسۡتَكۡبَرَ ۟ وَكَانَ مِنَ الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ 34

(2:34) And when We ordered the angels: "Prostrate yourselves before Adam," all of them fell prostrate,[45] except Iblis.[46] He refused, and gloried in his arrogance and became one of the defiers.[47]

45. This signifies that all the angels whose jurisdiction embraces the earth and that part of the universe in which the earth is situated were ordered to devote themselves to man's service. Since man had been invested with authority on earth the angels were told that whenever man wanted to make use of the powers with which he had been invested by God, and which God of His own will had allowed him to use, they should co-operate with him and enable him to do whatever to do, irrespective of right and wrong.

This can be understood with reference to the manner in which government employees are required to work. When a sovereign appoints a governor or a magistrate, all government employees under his jurisdiction are duty not. But as soon as the sovereign indicates to those employees that the governor or magistrate should be barred from doing something, the effective authority of the governor or the magistrate comes to an abrupt end. In fact, were the sovereign to issue the order that the governor be dismissed or imprisoned, the same employees who until then had been moving to and fro at his bidding would not feel hesitant in putting hand on him and taking him to prison.

God's order to the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam was of a similar nature. It is possible that prostration signifies the fact of their becoming yoked to man's service. At the same time it is also possible that they, were ordered to perform the act of prostration itself as a sign of the envisaged relationship between angels and man. In my view the latter seems more plausible.

46. Iblis literally means 'thoroughly disappointed; utterly in despair'. In Islamic terminology the word denotes the jinn who, in defiance of God's command, refused to obey and to yoke himself to the service of Adam and his progeny and asked God to allow him a term when he might mislead and tempt mankind to evil and error. He is also called al-Shaytan (Satan)

In fact Satan (or Iblis) is not an abstract, impersonal force. Like human beings he is possessed of a specific personality. Moreover, one should not make the mistake of considering Satan an angel. Elsewhere the Qur'an itself clearly states that he was a jinn and jinn, as we know, are an independent species, distinct from the angels. See(Qur'an 18: 50.)

47. These words seem to indicate that in committing disobedience Iblis was probably not alone. What seems to have been the case is that a section of the jinn was bent upon rebellion and the name of Iblis is mentioned only because he was their leader and the most noted among them for his rebellion. Another translation of this sentence could be: '? and he was of the defiers (kafirin)'. If this sense is correct, these words would signify that there was already a party of rebellious and recalcitrant jinn and that Iblis belonged to that party. In the Qur'an the word shayatin (satans) denotes these jinn and their offspring. Hence, whenever the context itself does not indicate that the term has been used for human beings who possess satanic attributes, the word ' Satans' should be understood to signify these satanic jinn.

وَقُلْنَا يَـٰٓـَٔادَمُ اسْكُنْ اَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا ۪ وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هٰذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُوْنَا مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ 35

(2:35) And We said: “O Adam, live in the Garden, you and your wife, and eat abundantly of whatever you wish but do not approach this tree[48] or else you will be counted among the wrong-doers.”[49]

48. This indicates that before man was sent to earth Moreover, for this kind of test Paradise was the best possible place. What God wanted to impress on man was that the only place that befits man's station is Paradise, and that if man turns from the course of obedience to God as a result of Satanic allurements, he will remain deprived of it in the Next Life even as he was deprived of it once before. The only way he can recover his true status and reclaim the lost Paradise is by resisting effectively the enemy who is always trying to drive him off the course of obedience to God.

49. The use of the word 'wrong-doer' is highly significant. 'Wrong-doing' consists in withholding someone's rights and the wrong-doer is one who withholds those rights from their legitimate claimants. Anyone who disobeys God withholds three major rights. The first

is what is due to God, for He has the right to be obeyed. Second, there are the rights of all those things which a man employs in disobeying God. The parts of his body, his mental energy, his fellow-beings, those angels who, under Divine dispensation, have been appointed to enable him to achieve his aims. both righteous and unrighteous, the material objects which he employs in his acts of disobedience - all these have a rightful claim upon him to be used in ways that please God. But when he uses them in ways which displease God he commits wrong against them all. Third, he wrongs his own self which has the right to be saved from perdition. By inviting punishment from God because of his disobedience he wrongs his own self as well. It is for these reasons that the word 'wrong' is often used in the Qur'an for sin, and the word 'wrong-doer' for sinner

فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطٰنُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيْهِ ۠ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوْا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ
عَدُوٌّ ۚ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَّمَتَاعٌ إِلٰى حِيْنٍ 36

(2:36) But Satan caused both of them to deflect from obeying Our command by tempting them to the tree and brought them out of the state they were in, and We said: "Get down all of you; henceforth, each of you is an enemy of the other,[50] and on earth you shall have your abode and your livelihood for an appointed time."

50. This means that Satan is the enemy of man, and vice versa. That Satan is the enemy, of man is obvious enough, for he tries to drive him off the course of obedience to God and leads him to perdition, but one might wonder how man could be referred to as the enemy of Satan. The fact is that man's essential humanity makes this enmity incumbent upon him. Man, however, is often deceived by Satan and befriends him owing to the temptations that he holds out to him. This kind of friendship does not mean that the basic, irreconcilable clash of interests between man and Satan has been resolved. It only means that one of the two (Satan) has defeated and successfully trapped the other (man).

فَتَلَقّٰى اٰدَمُ مِنْ رَّبِّهٖ كَلِمٰتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ ۭ إِنَّهٗ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيْمُ 37

(2:37) Thereupon Adam learned from his Lord some words and repented[51] and his Lord accepted his repentance for He is Much-Relenting, Most Compassionate.[52]

51. This means that when Adam became conscious of his act of sin and wanted to return from his state of disobedience to that of obedience, and when he tried to seek remission for his sin from God, he was unable to find the words to use in his prayer to God. In His Mercy God taught him the words with which he could pray.

The word tawbah basically denotes 'to come back, to turn towards someone'. Tawbah, on the part of man, signifies that he has given up his attitude of disobedience and has returned to submission and obedience to God. The same word used in respect of God means that He has mercifully turned towards His repentant servant so that the latter has once more become an object of His compassionate attention.

52. The Qur'an refutes the doctrine that certain consequences necessarily follow from sins and that man must in all cases bear them. In fact this is one of the most misleading doctrines to have been invented by human imagination. If it were true it would mean that a sinner would never have the opportunity to have his repentance accepted. It is a mechanistic view of reward and punishment and thus prevents and discourages the sinner from trying to improve.

The Qur'an, on the contrary, tells man that reward for good actions and punishment for bad ones rests entirely with God. The reward that one receives for good acts is not the natural consequence of those acts; it is rather due to the grace and benevolence of God and it is entirely up to Him to reward one or not. Likewise, punishment for evil deeds is not a natural and unalterable consequence of man's acts. God has full authority to punish man for his sin as well as to pardon him.

God's grace and mercy, however, are interrelated with His wisdom. Since He is wise, He does not use His power arbitrarily. Hence, whenever God rewards a man for his good acts, He does so because the good was done with purity of intention and for the sake of pleasing God. And if God refuses to accept an act of apparent goodness, He does so because that act had merely the form or appearance of goodness, and was not motivated by the desire to please God.

In the same way God punishes man for those sins which he commits with rebellious boldness, and which whet his appetite for more rather than lead him to repentance. Similarly, in His mercy God pardons those sins which are followed by genuine repentance and readiness on the part of the sinner to reform himself. There is no need for the criminal to despair of God's grace and mercy, no matter how great a criminal he is. Nor is there any reason for even the most rabid disbeliever to despair, provided he recognizes his error, repents of his disobedience and is ready to replace his former disobedience with obedience.

قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوْا مِنْهَا جَمِيْعًا ۚ فَاِمَّا يَاْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِّنِّيْ هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ 38

(2:38) We said: “Get you down from here,[53] all of you, and guidance shall come to you from Me: then, whoever will follow My guidance need have no fear, nor shall they grieve.

53. The reiteration of this statement is significant. We have been told above that Adam repented and that his repentance was accepted by God. This means that the stain of sin was washed away and therefore no stain remained

On the contrary, God not only accepted Adam's repentance but also honoured him by endowing him with prophethood so that he might he able to direct his children correctly. The repetition of the order to leave Paradise and go down to earth is aimed at driving home the point that earth was not created as a place of punishment for man. On the contrary, man

was put on earth to serve as God's vicegerent there. It was only to test man and thereafter to equip him for the performance of God's vicegerency that man was placed temporarily in Paradise. See also(n. 48 above.)

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ 39

(2:39) But those who refuse to accept this (guidance) and reject Our Signs as false[54] are destined for the Fire where they shall abide for ever."[55]

54. Ayat is the plural of ayah which means a 'sign' or 'token' which directs one to something important. In the Qur'an this word is used in four different senses. Sometimes it denotes a sign or indication. In certain other places the phenomena of the universe are called the ayat (signs) of God, for the reality to which the phenomena point is hidden behind the veil of appearances. At times the miracles performed by the Prophets are also termed ayat since they show that the Prophets were envoys of the Sovereign of the universe. Lastly, individual units of the Book of God are also called ayat because they point to the ultimate reality, and because the substantive contents of the Book of God, its phraseology, its style, its inimitable literary excellence are clear tokens of the attributes of the Author of the Book. The sense in which the word ayah has been used in a particular verse becomes evident from the context of its occurrence.

55. This is a permanent directive from God to mankind which is valid from the beginning of life until the Day of Judgement. It is this which has been mentioned earlier as God's covenant see (n. 31 above).

It is not for man to prescribe the way of life which his fellow human beings should follow. In his double capacity as the subject and vicegerent of God, man is required to follow the way of life prescribed by his Lord. There are only two means of access to this way: either by direct revelation from God or by following one to whom God has revealed guidance. Nothing else can direct man to the way that enjoys God's approval and good pleasure. Resorting to any other means in quest of salvation is not only fundamentally mistaken but tantamount to rebellion.

The story of the creation of Adam and the origin of the human species occurs seven times in the Qur'an, once in the verses just mentioned. For other references see (7: 11 ff), (15: 26 ff)., (17: 61 ff)., (18: 50), (20: 116 ff)., (38: 71 ff). The story also occurs in the Bible in Genesis 1, 2 and 3. A comparative reading of the Qur'anic and Biblical versions will enable the perceptive reader to detect the differences between the two.

The dialogue between God and the angels at the time of the creation of Adam is also mentioned in the Talmud. This account lacks the spiritual significance underlying the Qur'anic version. Indeed, the Talmudic version additionally contains the following oddity: when the angels ask why men are being created, God replies that they are being created so that good people may be born among them. God refrains from mentioning the bad people lest the angels disapprove the creation of man! (See Paul Isaac Hershon, Talmudic Miscellany, London, 1880, pp. 294

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يٰبَنِيٓ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ اذۡكُرُوۡا نِعۡمَتِىَ الَّتِىۡٓ اَنۡعَمۡتُ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَاَوۡفُوۡا بِعَهۡدِىۡٓ اُوۡفِ بِعَهۡدِكُمۡ

وَاِيَّاىَ فَارۡهَبُوۡنِ 40

(2:40) Children of Israel![56] Recall My favour which I had bestowed on you, and fulfil your covenant with Me and I shall fulfil My covenant with you, and fear Me alone.

56. 'Israel' means the slave of God. This was the title conferred on Jacob (Ya'qub) by God Himself. He was the son of Isaac and the grandson of Abraham. His progeny are styled the 'Children of Israel'.

Turning to the Qur'anic text itself, it is noteworthy that the foregoing verses have been in the nature of introductory remarks addressed to all mankind. From the present section up to and including the fourteenth (verses 40 discourse, the reader should be particularly aware of the following purposes:

The first purpose of this discourse is to invite those followers of the earlier Prophets who still had some element of righteousness and goodness to believe in the Truth preached by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) and to join hands in promoting the mission he championed. In these sections they are told that the Qur'an and the Prophet are bearers of the same message and mission preached by the earlier Prophets and Scriptures.

The earlier communities were entrusted with the Truth in order that, as well as following it themselves, they might call others towards it and try to persuade them to follow it. But instead of directing the world in the light of this truth, they themselves failed to follow the Divine Guidance and sank into degeneracy. Their history and their contemporary religious and moral condition bore out this degeneration.

They are also told that God has once again entrusted the same Truth to one of His servants and has appointed him to carry out the same mission as that of the earlier Prophets and their followers. What the Prophet has brought is, therefore, neither new nor foreign; it is their very own and they are asked to accept it as such. A fresh group of people has now arisen with the same mission they had, but which they failed to carry out. It is clearly their duty to support these people.

The second purpose of this discourse is to leave no reasonable justification for the negative Jewish attitude towards Islam, and to expose fully the true state of the religious and moral life of the Jews. This discourse makes it clear that the religion preached by the Prophet was the same as that preached by the Prophets of Israel. So far as the fundamentals are concerned, nothing in the Qur'an differs from the teachings of the Torah. It is also established that the Jews failed glaringly to follow the guidance entrusted to them, even as they had failed to live up to the position of leadership in which they had been placed. This point is established by reference to events of irrefutable authenticity.

Moreover, the way in which the Jews resorted to conspiracies and underhand machinations

designed to create doubts and misgivings, the mischievous manner in which they engaged in discussions, the acts of trickery in which they indulged in wilful opposition to the Truth, and the vile tactics which they employed in order to frustrate the mission of the Prophet, were all brought into sharp relief so as to establish that their formal, legalistic piety was a sham. What lay behind it was bigotry, chauvinism and self-aggrandizement rather than an honest search for and commitment to the Truth. The plain fact was that they did not want goodness to flourish.

This candid criticism of the Jews had several salutary effects. On the one hand, it made the situation clear to the good elements among the Jews. On the other, it destroyed the religious and moral standing of the Jews among the people of Madina, and among the pagans of Arabia as a whole. Moreover, it undermined the morale of the Jews to such an extent that from then on they could not oppose Islam with a firmness born of strong inner conviction.

Third, the message addressed in the earlier sections to mankind as a whole is here elucidated with reference to a particular people. The example of the Jews is cited to show the tragic end that overtakes a people when it spurns Divine Guidance. The reason for choosing the Children of Israel as an example is that they alone, out of all the nations, constituted for four thousand years the continual embodiment of a tragedy from which many lessons could be learnt. The vicissitudes of fortune which visit a people, depending on whether they follow or refrain from following Divine Guidance, were all conspicuous in the history of this nation.

Fourth, this discourse is designed to warn the followers of Muhammad (peace be on him) to avoid the same pitfalls as the followers of the earlier Prophets. While explaining the requirements of the true faith, it clearly specifies the moral weaknesses, the false concepts of religion, and the numerous errors in religious belief and practice which had made inroads among the Jews. The purpose is to enable Muslims to see their true path clearly and to avoid false ones. While studying the Qur'anic criticism of the Jews and Christians, Muslims should remember the Tradition from the Prophet in which he warned them that they would so closely follow the ways of the earlier religious communities that if the latter had entered a lizard's burrow, so would the Muslims. The Prophet was asked: 'Do you mean the Christians and Jews, O Messenger of God?' The Prophet replied: 'Who else?' (See Bukhari, 'Itisam', 14; Muslim, "Ilm', 6 - Ed.) This was not merely an expression of reproof. Thanks to the peculiar discernment and insight with which the Prophet was endowed, he knew the ways in which corruption encroaches upon the lives of the followers of the Prophets, and the different forms it assumes.

وَاٰمِنُوْا بِمَآ اَنْزَلْتُ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْٓا اَوَّلَ كَافِرٍۢ بِهٖ ۠ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِيْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا ۠ وَّاِيَّايَ فَاتَّقُوْنِ 41

(2:41) And believe in the Book which I have revealed and which confirms the Scripture you already have, and be not foremost among its deniers. Do not sell My signs for a trifling gain, [57] and beware of My wrath.

57. 'Trifling gain' refers to the worldly benefits for the sake of which they were rejecting God's directives. Whatever one may gain in exchange for the Truth, be it all the treasure in the world, is trifling; the Truth is of supreme value.

وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ 42

(2:42) Do not confound Truth by overlaying it with falsehood, nor knowingly conceal the Truth.[58]

58. For the proper understanding of this verse we need to recall that in the time of the Prophet the Jews of Arabia were more learned than the Arabs. In fact, there were some Jewish scholars of Arabia whose fame had spread even beyond the confines of that land. For this reason the Arabs tended to be intellectually overawed by them. In addition, the influence of the Jews had become pervasive and profound by virtue of the pomp and pageantry of their religious rites, and the magical crafts and feats of exorcism for which they were famous. The people of Madina, in particular, were greatly under the spell of the Jews. These Jews made on them the sort of impression generally created on ignorant neighbours by a better educated, more refined and more conspicuously religious group.

It was natural in such circumstances that, when the Prophet began to preach his message, the ignorant Arabs should approach the Jews and ask their opinion of the Prophet and his teachings, particularly as the Jews also believed in Prophets and Scriptures. We find that this inquiry was often made by the Makkans, and continued to he addressed to the Jews after the Prophet arrived in Madina.

In reply to this query, however, the Jewish religious scholars never told the candid truth. It was impossible for them to say that the doctrine of monotheism preached by Muhammad was incorrect, that there was any error in his teachings regarding the Prophets, the Divine Scriptures, the angels and the Next Life and that there was any error in the principles of moral conduct which the Prophet propounded. At the same time, however, they were not prepared to make a straightforward affirmation of the truth of his teachings. In short, they neither categorically denied the Truth nor were prepared to accept it with open hearts.

Instead, they tried to plant insidious doubts in the minds of everybody who enquired about the Prophet and his mission. They sought to create one misgiving after another, disseminated new slanders, and tried to engage people's minds in all kinds of hypothetical problems so as to keep them in a state of doubt and uncertainty. They also tried to raise controversial issues which might keep people, including the followers of the Prophet, entangled in sterile debate. It is this attitude of the Jews to which the Qur'an alludes when it asks them not to overlay the truth with falsehood, not to suppress and conceal it by resorting to false propaganda and mischievous campaigns of slander, and not to attempt to deceive the world by mixing truth with falsehood.

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ 43

(2:43) Establish Prayer and dispense Zakah (the Purifying Alms)[59] and bow in worship with those who bow.

59. Prayer and Purifying Alms (Zakah) have always been among the most important pillars of the Islamic faith. Like other Prophets, the Prophets of Israel laid great stress upon them. The Jews had, however, become very negligent about these duties. Congregational Prayer had all but ceased among them; in fact, a great majority of the Jews did not perform Prayers even individually. They had also not only ceased to pay Purifying Alms, but some had even gone so far as to make their living out of interest.

اَتَاْمُرُوْنَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَاَنْتُمْ تَتْلُوْنَ الْكِتٰبَ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ 44

(2:44) Do you enjoin righteousness on people and forget your own selves even though you recite the Scripture? Have you no sense?

وَاسْتَعِيْنُوْا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلٰوةِ ؕ وَاِنَّهَا لَكَبِيْرَةٌ اِلَّا عَلَى الْخٰشِعِيْنَ ۙ 45

(2:45) And resort to patience and Prayer for help.[60] Truly Prayer is burdensome for all except the devout,

60. That is, if they feel difficulty in keeping to righteousness, the remedy lies in resorting to Prayer and patience. From these two attributes they will derive the strength needed to follow their chosen course.

The literal meaning of 'sabr' is to exercise restraint, to keep oneself tied down. It denotes the will-power, the firm resolve and the control over animal desires which enables man to advance along the path of his choice - the path that satisfies his heart and conscience - in utter disregard of the temptations within, and of all obstacles and oposition without. The purpose of this directive is to urge man to develop this quality and to reinforce it from the outside by means of Prayer.

الَّذِيْنَ يَظُنُّوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ مُّلٰقُوْا رَبِّهِمْ وَاَنَّهُمْ اِلَيْهِ رٰجِعُوْنَ ۧ 46

(2:46) who realize that ultimately they will have to meet their Lord and that to Him they are destined to return.[61]

61. This means that Prayer is an insufferable encumbrance and affliction for the man who tends not to want to obey, God and to believe in the After-life. For the man who, of his own violation, has to stand before God after death, it is failure to perform the Prayer, rather than its performance, that becomes intolerable.

يٰبَنِيٓ إِسۡرَٰٓءِيلَ ٱذۡكُرُواْ نِعۡمَتِيَ ٱلَّتِيٓ أَنۡعَمۡتُ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلۡتُكُمۡ عَلَى
ٱلۡعَٰلَمِينَ 47

(2:47) Children of Israel! Recall My favour which I bestowed upon you, exalting you above all nations.[62]

62. This refers to that period of human history when, of all nations, only the Children of Israel possessed that knowledge of Truth which comes from God alone. At that time they were entrusted with the task of directing the nations of the world to righteousness; they were expected to serve God and to invite the rest of the world to do the same.

وَٱتَّقُواْ يَوۡمٗا لَّا تَجۡزِي نَفۡسٌ عَن نَّفۡسٖ شَيۡـٔٗا وَلَا يُقۡبَلُ مِنۡهَا شَفَٰعَةٞ وَلَا يُؤۡخَذُ مِنۡهَا
عَدۡلٞ وَلَا هُمۡ يُنصَرُونَ 48

(2:48) Fear the Day when no one shall avail another, when no intercession will be accepted, when no one will be ransomed, and no criminal will receive any help.[63]

63. A major reason for the degeneration of the Israelites was the corruption of their beliefs about the After that since they were related to those venerable saints and pious men who had dedicated themselves entirely to the service of God in the past, the, would be forgiven by the grace of those great men. They believed that once they had bound themselves firmly to those men of God, it would become impossible for God to punish them. Such false reliance made them negligent of true religious piety and enmeshed them in a life of sin and wickedness. Hence, as well as reminding the Children of Israel of God's favour upon them, it was necessary to refute all the false ideas which they cherished.

وَإِذۡ نَجَّيۡنَٰكُم مِّنۡ ءَالِ فِرۡعَوۡنَ يَسُومُونَكُمۡ سُوٓءَ ٱلۡعَذَابِ يُذَبِّحُونَ أَبۡنَآءَكُمۡ وَيَسۡتَحۡيُونَ
نِسَآءَكُمۡۚ وَفِي ذَٰلِكُم بَلَآءٞ مِّن رَّبِّكُمۡ عَظِيمٞ 49

(2:49) And recall[64] when We rescued you from the slavery of Pharaoh's people[65] who had afflicted you with dreadful suffering, slaying your males and sparing your females. That was a tremendous trial for you from your Lord.[66]

64. From here on, through the several sections that follow, reference is made to the best

65. We have rendered 'Al Fir'awn' as 'Pharaoh's people'. This includes the members of the Pharaonic family as well as the aristocracy of Egypt.

66. The test was whether they would emerge from the crucible of persecution as pure gold, or as mere dross. The test also lay, in whether or not, after their miraculous deliverance from so great a calamity, they would become grateful servants of God.

وَإِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمُ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنجَيْنَاكُمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَأَنتُمْ تَنظُرُونَ 50

(2:50) And recall when We split the sea, providing passage for you, and thus saved you and caused Pharaoh's people to drown before your very eyes.

وَإِذْ وَاعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِن بَعْدِهِ وَأَنتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ 51

(2:51) And recall when We summoned Moses for a term of forty nights,[67] and then you set up the calf as your god in his absence.[68] You indeed committed a grave wrong.

67. When the Israelites reached the Sinai peninsula after their exodus from Egypt, God summoned Moses to the mountain for forty days and nights so that the nation which had now achieved independence could be taught law and morality. (See Exodus 24-31.)

68. The cult of cow-worship was widespread among Israel's neighbours. It was particularly common in Egypt and Canaan. After the time of Joseph, when the Israelites fell prey to degeneracy and became the slaves of the Copts, they were contaminated by many of the corrupt practices prevalent among their rulers. Cow-worship was one of them. (There is a detailed account of the episode of calf-worship in Exodus 32.)

ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنكُم مِّن بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ 52

(2:52) Yet We pardoned you that you might be grateful.

وَإِذْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَالْفُرْقَانَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ 53

(2:53) And recall (that while you were committing this wrong) We gave Moses the Scripture[69] and the Criterion that you are guided to the Right Way.

69. 'Criterion' here means that understanding of religion which differentiates truth from falsehood, making each stand out distinctly.

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّكُمْ ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنفُسَكُم بِاتِّخَاذِكُمُ الْعِجْلَ فَتُوبُوا إِلَىٰ
بَارِئِكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ عِندَ بَارِئِكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنَّهُ هُوَ
التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ 54

(2:54) And recall when (on returning with this favour) Moses said to his people: "My people! You have wronged yourselves by taking the calf for an object of worship, so turn in repentance to your Creator and kill yourselves.[70] This will be best for you in your Creator's sight." Thereupon He accepted your repentance. Indeed He is Much-Relenting, Most Compassionate.

70. That is, they should put to death those of their own number who made the calf an object of worship and actually worshipped it.

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَىٰ لَن نُّؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّىٰ نَرَى اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً فَأَخَذَتْكُمُ الصَّاعِقَةُ وَأَنتُمْ
تَنظُرُونَ 55

(2:55) And recall when you said: "O Moses, we will not believe in you until we clearly see Allah (speaking to you)." Thereupon a tremendous thunderbolt struck you before your very eyes.

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاكُم مِّن بَعْدِ مَوْتِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ 56

(2:56) Then We revived you after your extinction, that you might be grateful.[71]

71. The incident referred to here is the following. When Moses went to the mountain he had been ordered to bring with him seventy elders of Israel. Later, when God bestowed upon Moses the Book and the Criterion, he presented them to the people. Some mischief-makers, according to the Qur'an, began to complain that they could not believe in something just because Moses claimed that God had spoken to him. This invited the wrath of God and they were punished. The Old Testament, however, has the following account:

'And they saw the God of Israel and there was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank' (Exodus 24: 10-11),

Interestingly, it is stated later in the same book that when Moses requested God to show him His glory, God rejected the request and said: 'You cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live'. (See Exodus 33: 18-23)

وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْغَمَامَ وَاَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوٰى ؕ كُلُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ ؕ
وَمَا ظَلَمُوْنَا وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ 57

(2:57) And We caused a cloud to comfort you with shade,[72] and We sent down upon you manna and the quails,[73](saying): "Eat of the good wherewithal that We have provided you as sustenance." And by their sinning (your forefathers) did not wrong Us: it is they themselves whom they wronged.

72. That is, God provided them with shade from clouds in the Sinai peninsula where there was no shelter from the heat of the sun.

It should be remembered that the Israelites had left Egypt in their hundreds of thousands. In Sinai, there were not even any tents in which they could shelter, never mind proper houses. But for the fact that God by His grace kept the sky, overcast for a considerable period, these people would have been scorched to death by the heat of the sun.

73. Manna and quails constituted the natural food that was continually made available to them throughout the forty years of their wandering in the Sinai desert. Manna was like coriander seed. When the dew fell in the night, manna fell with it from above. By God's grace the quails were made available so plentifully that the entire nation was able to live on them alone and so escaped starvation. (For details regarding manna and quails see Exodus 16; Numbers 11: 7-9 and 31-2; Joshua 5: 12)

وَاِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُوْا هٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوْا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا وَّادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا
وَّقُوْلُوْا حِطَّةٌ نَّغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطٰيٰكُمْ ؕ وَسَنَزِيْدُ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ 58

(2:58) And recall when We said: "Go into this town[74] and eat abundantly of its food; but enter the gate prostrate, saying, "Repentance".[75]We will forgive you your sins and shall bestow more favour on the doers of good."

74. It has not yet been possible to arrive at any conclusion about the identity of the locality mentioned here. The series of events in the context of which God's command to enter the city is mentioned belong to the period of the exodus of the Children of Israel in the Sinai peninsula. It is therefore probable that the place mentioned in this verse is some Sinaitic city. Another plausible suggestion is that it is Shattim, which was located opposite Jericho on the eastern bank of the river Jordan. According to the Bible the Israelites conquered this town during the last years of the life of Moses. After the conquest the Israelites became so decadent that God smote them with a plague from which twenty-four thousand died (Numbers 25: 1-9).

75. God's command was to enter the city not with the arrogance of tyrannical conquerors, but with the humility of men of God (in the manner in which the Prophet would later enter Makka at the time of its conquest).

As for 'hit ' tah', it could either mean that when they entered the town they should seek God's pardon for their sins or that instead of plundering and massacring people in the wake of their conquest, they should proclaim an amnesty.

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِيْ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ فَاَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَفْسُقُوْنَ ع 59

(2:59) Then the wrong-doers substituted another saying for that which had been given them; and so We sent down a scourge upon the wrong-doers from the heavens for their transgression.

وَاِذِ اسْتَسْقٰى مُوْسٰى لِقَوْمِهٖ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبْ بِّعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ ؕ فَانْفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا ؕ قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ اُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ ؕ كُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا مِنْ رِّزْقِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ مُفْسِدِيْنَ 60

(2:60) And recall when Moses prayed for water for his people and We replied: “Strike the rock with your staff.” And there gushed out from it twelve springs[76] and each tribe knew its drinking-place. (Then you were directed): “Eat and drink of the sustenance provided by Allah, and do not go about acting wickedly on earth, spreading mischief.”

76. That rock can still be seen in the Sinai Peninsula with the twelve holes of the springs. Twelve springs were caused to flow for the Israelites in order to avoid water disputes among their twelve clans.

وَاِذْ قُلْتُمْ يٰمُوْسٰى لَنْ نَّصْبِرَ عَلٰى طَعَامٍ وَّاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا تُنْۢبِتُ الْاَرْضُ مِنْۢ بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَّآئِهَا وَفُوْمِهَا وَعَدَسِهَا وَبَصَلِهَا ؕ قَالَ اَتَسْتَبْدِلُوْنَ الَّذِىْ هُوَ اَدْنٰى بِالَّذِىْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ ؕ اِهْبِطُوْا مِصْرًا فَاِنَّ لَكُمْ مَّا سَاَلْتُمْ ؕ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذِّلَّةُ وَالْمَسْكَنَةُ ۗ

وَبَآءُوْ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا يَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَيَقْتُلُوْنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ بِغَيْرِ
الْحَقِّ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَّكَانُوْا يَعْتَدُوْنَ ع 61

(2:61) And recall when you said: "O Moses, surely we cannot put up with one sort of food, so pray to your Lord to bring out for us what the earth produces – its herbs and its cucumbers and its corn and its lentils and its garlic and its onions." Then Moses said: "Will you take a meaner thing in exchange for what is better?[77] Go down to some city and there you shall get what you ask for." And ignominy and wretchedness were pitched upon them and they were laden with the burden of Allah's wrath. This was because they denied the Signs of Allah[78] and slew the Prophets unrightfully.[79] All this, because they disobeyed and persistently exceeded the limits (of the Law).

77. This does not mean that their real fault lay in asking for things which entailed cultivation instead of availing themselves of manna and quails which they received without any toil. What is emphasized here is that rather than being concerned with the great purpose for which they had been brought to the Sinai they relished the foods which gratified their palates to such a degree that they could not forgo them even temporarily (cf. Numbers 11: 4-9).

78. There are several ways in which one might deny the signs of God. First, one might refuse to accept those teachings of God which one found contrary to one's fancies and desires. Second, one might know that something is from God and yet wilfully flout it. Third, one might know well the import of God's directives and yet distort them.

79. The Israelites recorded their crimes in detail in their own history. Here are just a few examples from the Bible:

(1) After the death of Solomon the state of the Israelites was split into two: the State of Judah with its capital in Jerusalem, and the State of Israel with its capital in Samaria. This was followed by a series of wars between the two States so that the State of Judah sought the assistance of the Aramacan State of Damascus against its own kinsmen. At this, Hamani the seer went under God's direction to Asa the king and rebuked him. Instead of rectifying his behaviour, Asa was so angry that he put the seer in the stocks. (See 2 Chronicles 16: 7-10.)

(2) When Elijah denounced the Jews for their worship of Baal and invited them to return to monotheism, Ahab, the king of Israel pursued him for the sake of his pagan wife so that he had to take refuge in the mountains of the Sinai peninsula. On this occasion, according to the Bible, he said: '. . . the people of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword., and 1, even 1 only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away' (1 Kings 19: 14).

(3) The same king Ahab imprisoned another Prophet, Micah, for no other reason than that of speaking the truth. King Ahab ordered that he should be given only bread and water. (See 1 Kings 22: 26-7)

(4) When idol-worship and moral corruption became prevalent in Judah and the Prophet Zechariah raised his voice against them, he was stoned to death in the very court of the house of the Lord. (See 2 Chronicles 24: 21.)

(5) When the Israelite State of Samaria was wiped out by the State of Jerusalem, the Prophet Jeremiah deplored the condition of the Israelites. He warned them that it was time they set about mending their ways otherwise they would face an even more calamitous end than that of Samaria. The response to this sincere preaching was abuse and curses: he was beaten, imprisoned, put in the stocks and lowered by ropes into a cistern, where he was left to die of hunger and thirst. He was also accused of various crimes, including treason and conspiracy. (See Jeremiah 15: 10; 18: 20-3; 20: 1-18; 36-40)

(6) It is reported of another Prophet, Amos, that when he denounced the widespread errors and corruption in the State of Samaria and warned of the evil consequences that follow such misdeeds, he was condemned to exile and told to pursue his prophetic task somewhere beyond its frontiers. (See Amos 7: 10-13.)

(7) When John the Baptist protested against the acts of moral corruption that were brazenly practised in his court, Herod, the ruler of Judah, first put John into prison, then had him beheaded at the request of a dancing girl, and had his head set on a platter and presented to the girl. (See Mark 6: 17-29)

(8) The same hostility to Prophets is evident from the life of Jesus. The priests and political leaders of Israel ultimately became inflamed against Jesus, who criticized them for their impiety and hypocrisy and invited them to true faith and righteousness. It was this which prompted them to prepare a false case against him and persuade the Romans to sign a death sentence. Later, when the Roman governor, Pilate, asked them which of the two prisoners - Jesus or Barabbas, a notorious brigand - should be released on the occasion of the feast, they asked for the release of Barabbas and for the crucifixion of Jesus (Matthew 27: 20-6). This is a shameful chapter in the record of the Jewish nation, to which the Qur'an refers here in passing. It is evident that when a nation chooses its most notoriously criminal and wicked people for positions of leadership, and its righteous and holy men for gaol and the scaffold, God has no alternative but to lay His curse and damnation on that nation.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَىٰ وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ
وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۚ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ 62

(2:62) Whether they are the ones who believe (in the Arabian Prophet), or whether they are Jews, Christians or Sabians – all who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and do righteous deeds – their reward is surely secure with their Lord; they need have no fear, nor shall they grieve.[80]

80. The context of the verse makes it clear that it is not attempting to enumerate in detail all the articles of faith in which one should believe, or all the principles of conduct which one should follow in order to merit reward from God. These matters are mentioned elsewhere, in their appropriate places. The aim of the verse is merely to repudiate the illusion cherished by the Jews that, by virtue of their being Jews, they have a monopoly of salvation. They had long entertained the notion that a special and exclusive relationship existed between them and God. They thought, therefore, that all who belonged to their group were predestined to salvation regardless of their beliefs and actions,. whereas all non-Jews were predestined to serve as fodder for hell-fire.

To clarify this misgiving the Jews are told that what really matters in the sight of God is true faith and good deeds rather than formal affiliation with a certain religious community. Whoever has true faith and good deeds to his credit is bound to receive his reward, since God will judge people on the basis of merit rather than on the grounds that a man's name happens to be listed in the world as a member of one religious community or the other.

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ ۖ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ 63

(2:63) And recall when We made a covenant with you and caused the Mount Sinai to tower above you,[81] (saying): "Hold fast to the Book that We have given you, and remember the directives and commandments in it, that you be pious."

81. From the manner in which this incident is described at various places in the Qur'an it is obvious that, at that time, it was quite well known to the Israelites. It is difficult, however, after the Passage of many centuries to be able to speak with certainty about the precise nature of the incident. All we can say is that while the Children of Israel were making their covenant in the shadow of Mount Sinai, they witnessed an awesome phenomenon and felt as if the mountain was about to fall upon them. (Verse 171 of Surah al-A'raf) seems to portray this. See also (n. 132 in that surah.)

ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ ۖ فَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَكُنْتُمْ مِنَ
الْخَاسِرِينَ 64

(2:64) Then you turned away from your covenant, and had it not been for Allah's grace and mercy upon you, you would have long been utter losers.

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اعْتَدَوْا مِنْكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ ۖ 65

(2:65) And you know the case of those of you who broke the Sabbath,[82] how We said to them: "Become apes, despised and hated."[83]

82. Sabbath, i.e., Saturday . It was laid down that the Israelite should consecrate that day for rest and worship. They were required to from abstain from all worldly acts, including cooking (which they might neither do themselves, nor have their servants do for them). The injunctions, in this connection were so strict that violation of the Sabbath was to be punished with death. (See Exodus 31:12-17.) When religious and moral decadence, however, spread among the Israelites they indulged in open desecration of the Sabbath, so much so that in Jewish towns trade and commerce were carried out in broad daylight.

83. The details of this incident are mentioned later in (Surah 7, vv. 163) ff. The exact manner in which their transformation into apes took place is disputed. Some scholars are of the opinion that the transformation was a physical one, while others hold that they were invested with the attributes characteristic of apes. But both the words and the manner in which this incident is recounted in the Qur'an seem to suggest that what took place was a physical transformation of certain persons into apes rather than just a moral metamorphosis. What seems plausible to me is that while their minds were allowed to remain intact, their bodies were changed into those of apes.

فَجَعَلْنٰهَا نَكَالًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا وَمَا خَلْفَهَا وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ 66

(2:66) And thus We made their end a warning for the people of their own time and for the succeeding generations, and an admonition to the God-fearing.

وَاِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِقَوْمِهٖٓ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَاْمُرُكُمْ اَنْ تَذْبَحُوْا بَقَرَةً ؕ قَالُوْٓا اَتَتَّخِذُنَا هُزُوًا ؕ قَالَ

اَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ اَنْ اَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ 67

(2:67) And then recall when Moses said to his people: "Behold, Allah commands you to slaughter a cow." They said: "Are you jesting with us?" Moses answered: "I seek refuge in Allah that I should behave in the manner of the ignorant."

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَّنَا مَا هِيَ ؕ قَالَ اِنَّهٗ يَقُوْلُ اِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَّا فَارِضٌ وَّلَا بِكْرٌ ؕ عَوَانٌ

بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ ؕ فَافْعَلُوْا مَا تُؤْمَرُوْنَ 68

(2:68) They said: "Pray to your Lord that He make clear to us what she is like." Moses answered: "He says, she is a cow, neither old nor immature, but of an age in between the two. Do, then, what you have been commanded."

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَّنَا مَا لَوْنُهَا ۚ قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ صَفْرَاءُ فَاقِعٌ لَّوْنُهَا تَسُرُّ

النَّاظِرِينَ 69

(2:69) They said: "Pray to your Lord that He make clear to us of what colour she is." Moses answered: "He says, she is a yellow cow, with a bright colour which is pleasing to those who see!"

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَّنَا مَا هِيَ إِنَّ الْبَقَرَ تَشَابَهَ عَلَيْنَا ۚ وَإِنَّا إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

لَمُهْتَدُونَ 70

(2:70) They said: "Pray to your Lord that He make clear to us what cow she is. Cows seem much alike to us, and if Allah wills, we shall be guided."[84]

84. Through contact with neighbouring peoples, the Israelites had become infested with the attitude of sanctifying the cow, in fact they had even become accustomed to cow-worship. In order to disabuse the Jews of this, they were ordered to slaughter the cow. Their professed belief that God alone was worthy of worship could be tested only by making them slaughter with their own hands what they had formerly worshipped. This test was indeed a hard one since their hearts were not fully imbued with faith. Hence, they tried to shelve the issue by resorting to enquiries about the kind of animal they were required to slaughter. But the more they enquired, the narrower the strait became for them, until the indications were as obvious as if someone had put his finger precisely on the particular animal they were required to slaughter - the animal which had for so long been an object of their worship. The Old Testament also mentions the incident, but there is no reference to the manner in which the Jews tried to evade the matter. (See Numbers 19: 1-10.)

قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَّا ذَلُولٌ تُثِيرُ الْأَرْضَ وَلَا تَسْقِي الْحَرْثَ ۚ مُسَلَّمَةٌ لَّا شِيَةَ

فِيهَا ۚ قَالُوا الْآنَ جِئْتَ بِالْحَقِّ ۚ فَذَبَحُوهَا وَمَا كَادُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ۚ 71

(2:71) Moses answered: "Lo! He says, she is a cow unyoked to plough the earth or to water the tillage, one that has been kept secure, with no blemish on her!" Thereupon they cried out: "Now you have come forth with the information that will direct us aright." And they slaughtered her although they scarcely seemed to do so.

وَإِذْ قَتَلْتُمْ نَفْسًا فَادَّارَأْتُمْ فِيهَا ۚ وَاللَّهُ مُخْرِجٌ مَّا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ۚ 72

(2:72) And recall when you killed a man and then began to remonstrate and cast the blame (of killing) upon one another even though Allah was determined to bring to light what you were hiding.

فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبُوْهُ بِبَعْضِهَا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُحْيِ اللّٰهُ الْمَوْتٰى ۙ وَيُرِيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَعْقِلُوْنَ 73

(2:73) Then We ordered: "Smite the corpse with a part of it." Thus does Allah bring the dead to life and thus does He show His Signs that you might understand.[85]

85. At least one thing becomes clear from this statement: that the slain person was restored to life at least long enough to indicate his assassins. But the actual words in which the order 'smite the corpse with a part of it' is couched tend to create a measure of ambiguity. Nevertheless, the meaning inferred by the early Qur'anic commentators - that the order was to smite the slain man's body with some part of the slaughtered cow - seems to me plausible. Two birds were thus killed with one stone: first, they were made to behold a sign of God's power; and second, the notion that the cow possessed any holiness or sanctity was shattered. For if the of the object of their worship - the cow - had any supernatural power, some calamity should have visited them as a consequence of slaughtering it. But no calamity took place. On the contrary, killing the cow seemed to be beneficial insofar as striking a dead man with a part of it brought him back to life.

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوْبُكُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ اَوْ اَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً ؕ وَاِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا
يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْاَنْهٰرُ ؕ وَاِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَّقَّقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَآءُ ؕ وَاِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ
خَشْيَةِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَا اللّٰهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ 74

(2:74) Then (even after observing this) your hearts hardened and became like stones, or even harder. For surely there are some stones from which streams burst forth and some that split asunder and water issues out, and some that crash down for fear of Allah. Allah is not heedless of the things you do.

اَفَتَطْمَعُوْنَ اَنْ يُّؤْمِنُوْا لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُوْنَ كَلَامَ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ يُحَرِّفُوْنَهٗ
مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوْهُ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ 75

(2:75) Do you hope that these people will believe in the Message you are preaching,[86] even though a party of them has been wont to listen to the Word of Allah and after they had fully grasped it, knowingly distorted it?[87]

86. This is addressed to the converts of Madina, who had then lately embraced the faith of the Arabian Prophet. These people had some vague notions about Prophethood, Heavenly Scriptures, Angels, the After-life, Divine Law and so on, and for this they were indebted to their Jewish neighbours. It was from these same Jewish neighbours that they had heard that another Prophet was about to appear, and that his followers would prevail over the rest of the world.

It was partly because of this background that when the people of Madina heard about the Prophet, they readily turned towards him and embraced Islam in large numbers. They naturally expected that those who already followed Prophets and Divine Scriptures, and who, by introducing them to these ideas had contributed to their embracing the true faith, would not only join the ranks of the true believers, but would even be amongst their vanguard. As a result of these expectations the enthusiastic Muslim converts approached their Jewish friends and neighbours and invited them to embrace Islam. When the Jews flatly declined to do so, this negative reply was exploited by the hypocrites and other enemies of Islam as an argument for creating doubts about the truth of Islam.

If Muhammad was the true Prophet, they argued, how was it conceivable that the Jewish scholars and divines would deliberately turn away from him since, if he was a true Prophet, such a behaviour would be tantamount to ruining their After-life? Here the simple-hearted Muslims learn of the historical record of the Jews, a record which is replete with perversion and corruption. This was designed to make them realize that they ought not to expect too much of a people with so dark a past, for if they were not realistic in their expectations about them they would be utterly disappointed when their call failed to penetrate their hardened and stony hearts. Their chronic decadence had a history of several centuries. For a long time they had treated those verses of the Scriptures which made sincere believers tremble in awe as objects of jest and play. They had tailored religion to suit their base desires and it was around such a perverted view of religion that all their hopes of salvation were centred. It was futile to hope that such people would flock to the call of Truth the moment it was proclaimed.

87. 'A party of them' refers to the scholars and religious doctors of the Jewish community. The' Word of God' here signifies the Torah, the Psalms (Zabur) and other Scriptures which the Jews had received through the Prophets. 'Distortion' denotes the attempt to twist a text in such a manner as to make it signify something different from its real meaning, and may also denote tampering with the text of the Scriptures. The Israelite scholars had subjected the Scriptures to distortions of both kinds.

وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَالُوا آمَنَّا ۖ وَإِذَا خَلَا بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ قَالُوا أَتُحَدِّثُونَهُمْ بِمَا
فَتَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لِيُحَاجُّوكُمْ بِهِ عِندَ رَبِّكُمْ ۚ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ 76

(2:76) And when they meet those who believe (in Muhammad) they say: "We too believe in him." But in their intimate meetings they say to one another: "How foolish! Why should you intimate to them what Allah has revealed to you, for they will use it as argument against you before your Lord?"[88]

88. When the Jews talked among themselves they asked their co-religionists to disclose to the Muslims neither the prophesies about the Prophet, nor those verses of the Scriptures on the basis of which they could be reproached for their evil conduct; they thought that the Muslims would make use of scriptural arguments against them before God, and would thus have them pronounced guilty. These were the depths to which Jewish religious decadence had sunk. They were convinced that if they could succeed in concealing their guilt in this world, they would be saved from censure in the Next. For this reason they were asked if they considered God to be unaware of their deeds, either apparent or hidden.

أَوَلَا يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ 77

(2:77) Are they unaware that Allah knows all that they hide and all that they disclose?

وَمِنْهُمْ أُمِّيُّونَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا أَمَانِيَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ 78

(2:78) Among them are also the unlettered folk who do not know about the Scriptures but cherish baseless wishes and merely follow their conjectures.[89]

89. This was the state of the Jewish masses. They were ignorant of the Scriptures, unaware of the principles of faith as enunciated by God in His Book, unaware of the rules of conduct that He had laid down, and of the teachings which are of fundamental importance for man's salvation. Because they lacked this knowledge, they fabricated a whole religion out of their desires and fancies, living in a paradise built on false hopes and illusions.

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَٰذَا مِنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ
ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۖ فَوَيْلٌ لَّهُم مِّمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَّهُم مِّمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ 79

(2:79) Woe, then, to those who write out the Scriptures with their own hands and then, in order to make a trifling gain, claim: "This is from Allah."[90] Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they thus earn.

90. These observations relate to their rabbis. They were not content with misinterpreting the Word of God. They also interjected into it their readings of the Scriptures and their explanatory comments thereof, stories from their national history, superstitious ideas and fancies, philosophical doctrines and legal rules. The result was that the Divine and the human became inextricably mixed. They claimed, nevertheless, that the entire thing was divine! Every historical anecdote, the interpretation of every commentator, the doctrine of every theologian, and the legal deduction of every jurist that managed to find its way into

the Bible became the 'Word of God'. It was thus obligatory to believe in all that, and every deviation from it became tantamount to deviation from the true faith.

وَقَالُوْا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ اِلَّآ اَيَّامًا مَّعْدُوْدَةً ؕ قُلْ اَتَّخَذْتُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ عَهْدًا فَلَنْ يُّخْلِفَ اللّٰهُ
عَهْدَهٗٓ اَمْ تَقُوْلُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ 80

(2:80) They say: "The Fire will certainly not touch us except for a limited number of days."[91] Say (to them): "Have you received a promise from Allah – for Allah never breaks His promise – or do you attribute to Allah something about which you have no knowledge?"

91. This is a misconception entertained by all Jews, laymen as well as rabbis. They felt sure that no matter what they did, they would remain immune from hell-fire just by virtue of being Jews! The worst they could conceive of was the possibility of a transient punishment before they were transported to heaven.

بَلٰى مَنْ كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَّاَحَاطَتْ بِهٖ خَطِيْٓـَٔتُهٗ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا
خٰلِدُوْنَ 81

(2:81) Those who earn evil and are encompassed by their sinfulness are the people of the Fire, and there will they abide;

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ع 82

(2:82) those who believe and do righteous deeds are the people of the Garden, and there will they abide.

وَاِذْ اَخَذْنَا مِيْثَاقَ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ لَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ ۖ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ اِحْسَانًا وَّذِى الْقُرْبٰى
وَالْيَتٰمٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَقُوْلُوْا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا وَّاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ ؕ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ
اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا مِّنْكُمْ وَاَنْتُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ 83

(2:83) And recall when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel: "You shall serve none but Allah and do good to parents, kinsmen, orphans and the needy; you shall speak kindly to people, and establish Prayer and give Zakah (Purifying Alms).

And yet, except for a few of you, you turned back on this covenant, and you are still backsliders.

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ لَا تَسْفِكُونَ دِمَاءَكُمْ وَلَا تُخْرِجُونَ أَنفُسَكُم مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ ثُمَّ
أَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَنتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ 84

(2:84) And recall when We made a covenant with you, that you shall not shed one another's blood, and shall not turn out one another from your homelands; you confirmed it, and you yourselves are witnesses to it.

ثُمَّ أَنتُمْ هَٰؤُلَاءِ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَتُخْرِجُونَ فَرِيقًا مِّنكُم مِّن دِيَارِهِمْ تَظَاهَرُونَ
عَلَيْهِم بِالْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ ۖ وَإِن يَأْتُوكُمْ أُسَارَىٰ تُفَادُوهُمْ وَهُوَ مُحَرَّمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ
إِخْرَاجُهُمْ ۚ أَفَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ ۚ فَمَا جَزَاءُ مَن يَفْعَلُ ذَٰلِكَ
مِنكُمْ إِلَّا خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ أَشَدِّ الْعَذَابِ ۗ وَمَا اللَّهُ
بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ 85

(2:85) And here you are, killing one another, turning out a party of your own from their homelands, aiding one another against them in sin and enmity, and if they come to you as captives you ransom them although the very act of expelling them was unlawful to you. Do you believe in a part of the Scripture and reject the rest?[92] What else, then, could be the retribution of those among you who do this than that they should live in degradation in the present life, and that on the Day of Resurrection they should be sent to the severest chastisement? Allah is not heedless of what you do.

92. Before the advent of the Prophet (peace be on him) the Jewish tribes who lived on the outskirts of Madina had concluded an alliance with the Arab tribes of Aws and Khazraj. When the Arab tribes fought against one another each Jewish tribe fought on the side of its allies, which led to fratricide and so to a flagrant violation of the Book of God. Moreover, when the war ended the captives were ransomed. This ransom was justified on the basis of scriptural arguments; they extolled the Word of God when it permitted the ransom of prisoners of war, but attached no significance at all to the same Word of God when it prohibited mutual feuding.

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ ۖ فَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ
يُنْصَرُونَ ﴿86﴾

(2:86) These are the ones who have bought the present life in exchange for the World to Come. Their chastisement shall not be lightened, nor shall they be helped.

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَقَفَّيْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ بِالرُّسُلِ ۖ وَآتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ
وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ ۗ أَفَكُلَّمَا جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا تَهْوَىٰ أَنْفُسُكُمُ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ
فَفَرِيقًا كَذَّبْتُمْ وَفَرِيقًا تَقْتُلُونَ ﴿87﴾

(2:87) Surely We gave Moses the Scripture and caused a train of Messengers to follow him and then sent Jesus, the son of Mary, with Clear Proofs and supported him with the spirit of holiness.[93] But is it not true that every time a Messenger brought to you something that was not to your liking, you acted arrogantly: you called some Messengers liars and killed others?

93. The 'spirit of holiness' signifies the knowledge derived through revelation. It also signifies the angel Gabriel who brought this revelation. It also denotes the holy spirit of Jesus, the spirit which God had endowed with angelic character.

The expression 'clear proofs' refers to those signs which are likely to convince a truth-seeking and truth-loving person that Jesus is a Prophet of God.

وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ ۚ بَل لَّعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَقَلِيلًا مَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿88﴾

(2:88) They say: "Our hearts are well-protected."[94] No! The fact is that Allah has cursed them because of their denying the Truth. So, scarcely do they believe.

94. They said, in effect, that they were so staunch in their beliefs that their convictions would remain unaffected regardless of what was said. Such a claim is the hallmark of those bigots whose minds are seized by irrational prejudice. Nothing can be a matter of greater shame for human beings than the so-called firmness of conviction which they often boast of. What can be more foolish than adherence to inherited beliefs and convictions when their falseness is established by overwhelmingly strong arguments?

وَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمۡ كِتٰبٌ مِّنۡ عِنۡدِ اللّٰهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمۡ ۙ وَكَانُوۡا مِنۡ قَبۡلُ يَسۡتَفۡتِحُوۡنَ عَلَى
الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا ۚ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمۡ مَّا عَرَفُوۡا كَفَرُوۡا بِهٖ ۚ فَلَعۡنَةُ اللّٰهِ عَلَى الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ 89

(2:89) And now that there has come to them a Book from Allah, how are they treating it? Even though it confirms the Truth already in their possession, and even though they had prayed for victory against the unbelievers, and yet when that Book came to them – and they recognized it – they refused to acknowledge its Truth.[95] Allah's curse be upon the unbelievers.

95. Before the advent of the Prophet, the Jews were eagerly awaiting a Prophet whose coming had been prophesied by their own Prophets. In fact, the Jews used to pray for his advent so that the dominance of the unbelievers could come to an end and the age of their own dominance he ushered in. The people of Madina were witnesses to the fact that these same Jewish neighbours of theirs had yearned for the advent of such a Prophet. They often used to say: 'People may oppress us today as they wish, but when our awaited Prophet comes, we will settle our scores with our oppressors.'

Since the people of Madina had themselves heard such statements they were inclined to embrace the religion of the Prophet all the more readily lest their Jewish neighbours supersede them in acquiring this honour. It was therefore astonishing for them to find that when the promised Prophet did appear those same Jews who had so eagerly looked forward to welcoming him turned into his greatest enemies.

The statement 'and they recognized it' is confirmed by several contemporaneous events. The most authentic evidence in this connection is that of Safiyah, a wife of the Prophet, who was herself the daughter of one learned Jewish scholar (Huyayy b. Akhtab) and the niece of another (Abu Yasir). She says that when the Prophet migrated to Madina both her father and uncle went to meet him and conversed with him for quite a while. When they returned home, she heard the following conversation:

Uncle: Is he really the same Prophet whose advent has been prophesied in our Scriptures?

Father: By God, he is.

Uncle: Do you believe that?

Father: Yes..

Uncle. Then what do you intend to do?

Father: 1 will continue to oppose him and will not let his claim prevail as long as I live.

(Ibn Hishim, Sirah, eds., Mustafa al-Saqqa' et al., 2 vols., II edition, Cairo, 137511955, see vol.

1, pp. 518 f. See also Ibn IshAq, The Life of Muhammad, tr. and notes by A. Guillaume, London, Oxford University Press, 1955, pp. 241 f. - Ed.)

بِئۡسَمَا اشۡتَرَوۡا بِهٖۤ اَنۡفُسَهُمۡ اَنۡ يَّكۡفُرُوۡا بِمَاۤ اَنۡزَلَ اللّٰهُ بَغۡيًا اَنۡ يُّنَزِّلَ اللّٰهُ مِنۡ فَضۡلِهٖ
عَلٰى مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهٖ ۚ فَبَآءُوۡ بِغَضَبٍ عَلٰى غَضَبٍ ؕ وَلِلۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيۡنٌ 90

(2:90) Evil indeed is what they console themselves with.[96] They deny the guidance revealed by Allah, grudging that He chose to bestow His gracious bounty (of revelation and prophethood) on some of His servants whom He willed.[97]Thus they have brought on themselves wrath after wrath, and a humiliating chastisement is in store for such unbelievers.

96. Another possible rendering of the same verse is: 'And how evil is that for the sake of which they have sold themselves', i.e. for the sake of which they have sacrificed their ultimate happiness and salvation.

97. They had longed for the promised Prophet to arise from among their own people. But when he arose among a different people, a people they despised, they decided to reject him. It was as if they thought God was duty-bound to consult them in appointing Prophets, and since in this case He had failed to do so they felt they had a right to be offended by God's 'arbitrariness'.

وَاِذَا قِيۡلَ لَهُمۡ اٰمِنُوۡا بِمَاۤ اَنۡزَلَ اللّٰهُ قَالُوۡا نُؤۡمِنُ بِمَاۤ اُنۡزِلَ عَلَيۡنَا وَيَكۡفُرُوۡنَ بِمَا وَرَآءَهٗ ۃ
وَهُوَ الۡحَـقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَهُمۡ ؕ قُلۡ فَلِمَ تَقۡتُلُوۡنَ اَنۡۢبِيَآءَ اللّٰهِ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ
مُّؤۡمِنِيۡنَ 91

(2:91) When they are told: “Believe in what Allah has revealed,” they say: “We believe only in what was revealed to us (Israel).” They deny everything else even though it be the Truth which confirms what they possess. Say (to them): “If indeed you are believers, why is it that in the past you killed the Prophets of Allah (who were from Israel)?”

وَلَقَدۡ جَآءَكُمۡ مُّوۡسٰى بِالۡبَيِّنٰتِ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذۡتُمُ الۡعِجۡلَ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِهٖ وَاَنۡتُمۡ ظٰلِمُوۡنَ 92

(2:92) Moses came to you with clear proofs and yet you were so wont to wrong-doing that as soon as he was gone you took to worshipping the calf.

وَاِذۡ اَخَذۡنَا مِيۡثَاقَكُمۡ وَرَفَعۡنَا فَوۡقَكُمُ الطُّوۡرَ ؕ خُذُوۡا مَاۤ اٰتَيۡنٰكُمۡ بِقُوَّةٍ وَّاسۡمَعُوۡا ؕ قَالُوۡا
سَمِعۡنَا وَعَصَيۡنَا ۛ وَاُشۡرِبُوۡا فِىۡ قُلُوۡبِهِمُ الۡعِجۡلَ بِكُفۡرِهِمۡ ؕ قُلۡ بِئۡسَمَا يَاۡمُرُكُمۡ بِهٖۤ
اِيۡمَانُكُمۡ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ مُّؤۡمِنِيۡنَ 93

(2:93) Recall the covenant We made with you and caused the Mount to tower above you, stressing: "Hold to what We have given you with full strength and give heed to it." But their forefathers said: "We hear, but we disobey" – for their hearts were overflowing with love for the calf because of their unbelief. Say: "If you are people of faith, then evil are the things that your faith enjoins upon you."

قُلۡ اِنۡ كَانَتۡ لَـكُمُ الدَّارُ الۡاٰخِرَةُ عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ خَالِصَةً مِّنۡ دُوۡنِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوُا الۡمَوۡتَ اِنۡ
كُنۡتُمۡ صٰدِقِيۡنَ 94

(2:94) Say to them: "If indeed the Last Abode with Allah is yours, in exclusion of other people, then long for death[98] if you are truthful."

98. This is a subtle, satirical reference to their excessive worldliness. Those who really care for the Hereafter neither set their hearts on earthly life, nor are they unduly frightened of death. The condition of the Jews was the reverse of this.

وَلَنۡ يَّتَمَنَّوۡهُ اَبَدًا ۢ بِمَا قَدَّمَتۡ اَيۡدِيۡهِمۡ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيۡمٌۢ بِالظّٰلِمِيۡنَ 95

(2:95) But they shall never long for it because of the (evil) deeds they have committed; Allah is well aware of the wrong-doers.

وَلَتَجِدَنَّهُمۡ اَحۡرَصَ النَّاسِ عَلٰى حَيٰوةٍ ۛ۬ وَمِنَ الَّذِيۡنَ اَشۡرَكُوۡا ۛۚ يَوَدُّ اَحَدُهُمۡ لَوۡ يُعَمَّرُ
اَلۡفَ سَنَةٍ ۚ وَمَا هُوَ بِمُزَحۡزِحِهٖ مِنَ الۡعَذَابِ اَنۡ يُّعَمَّرَ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيۡرٌۢ بِمَا يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ع 96

(2:96) You will certainly find them most eager to cling on to life,[99] indeed even more eager than those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity. Each one of them wishes to live a thousand years although the bestowal of long life cannot remove him from chastisement. Allah sees whatever they do.

99. The Arabic text implies that the Jews were so frightened of death and so keen to remain alive that they did not mind whether they led an honourable and dignified existence, or whether their life was one of indignity and humiliation.

قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِّجِبْرِيْلَ فَاِنَّهٗ نَزَّلَهٗ عَلٰى قَلْبِكَ بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَّبُشْرٰى لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ 97

(2:97) Say: "Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel[100] (should know that) he revealed this (Qur'an) to your heart by Allah's[101] leave: it confirms the Scriptures revealed before it,[102] and is a guidance and good tiding to the people of faith.[103]

100. The Jews not only reviled the Prophet (peace be on him) and his followers but also God's chosen angel, Gabriel, denouncing him as their enemy, and branding him as the angel of curse rather than of blessing.

101. Since Gabriel communicated the revealed messages with God's approval the abuses of the Jews which were apparently aimed at Gabriel should be considered as directed at God.

102. They abused Gabriel because he had brought the Qur'an from God, and since the Qur'an on the whole confirms the Torah this too became a co-sharer in those abuses.

103. Here there is a subtle suggestion that the wrath of the Jews was, in fact, directed against true guidance and righteousness even though acceptance of these would have brought them good tidings as to their own success.

مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِّلّٰهِ وَمَلٰٓئِكَتِهٖ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَجِبْرِيْلَ وَمِيْكٰلَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَدُوٌّ لِّلْكٰفِرِيْنَ 98

(2:98) (And if this is the cause of their hostility to Gabriel, let them know) whoever is an enemy to Allah, His Angels and His Messengers and to Gabriel and Michael will surely find Allah an enemy to such unbelievers."

وَلَقَدْ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ اٰيٰتٍۢ بَيِّنٰتٍ ۚ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ بِهَآ اِلَّا الْفٰسِقُوْنَ 99

(2:99) We surely sent down to you clear verses that elucidate the Truth, (verses) which only the transgressors reject as false.

اَوَكُلَّمَا عٰهَدُوْا عَهْدًا نَّبَذَهٗ فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ ۭ بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ 100

(2:100) Is it not that every time they made a covenant with Allah a party of them set it aside? The truth is that most of them do not truly believe.

وَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمۡ رَسُوۡلٌ مِّنۡ عِنۡدِ اللّٰهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمۡ نَبَذَ فَرِيۡقٌ مِّنَ الَّذِيۡنَ اُوۡتُوا
الۡكِتٰبَ ۘ كِتٰبَ اللّٰهِ وَرَآءَ ظُهُوۡرِهِمۡ كَاَنَّهُمۡ لَا يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ۙ 101

(2:101) And whenever a Messenger from Allah came to them, confirming what they already possessed, a party of those who had been given the Scripture flung the Book of Allah behind their backs as if they knew nothing,

وَاتَّبَعُوۡا مَا تَتۡلُوا الشَّيٰطِيۡنُ عَلٰى مُلۡكِ سُلَيۡمٰنَ ۚ وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيۡمٰنُ وَلٰكِنَّ الشَّيٰطِيۡنَ
كَفَرُوۡا يُعَلِّمُوۡنَ النَّاسَ السِّحۡرَ ۗ وَمَاۤ اُنۡزِلَ عَلَى الۡمَلَكَيۡنِ بِبَابِلَ هَارُوۡتَ وَمَارُوۡتَ ؕ وَمَا
يُعَلِّمٰنِ مِنۡ اَحَدٍ حَتّٰى يَقُوۡلَاۤ اِنَّمَا نَحۡنُ فِتۡنَةٌ فَلَا تَكۡفُرۡ ؕ فَيَتَعَلَّمُوۡنَ مِنۡهُمَا مَا يُفَرِّقُوۡنَ
بِهٖ بَيۡنَ الۡمَرۡءِ وَزَوۡجِهٖ ؕ وَمَا هُمۡ بِضَآرِّيۡنَ بِهٖ مِنۡ اَحَدٍ اِلَّا بِاِذۡنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَيَتَعَلَّمُوۡنَ مَا
يَضُرُّهُمۡ وَلَا يَنۡفَعُهُمۡ ؕ وَلَقَدۡ عَلِمُوۡا لَمَنِ اشۡتَرٰٮهُ مَا لَهٗ فِى الۡاٰخِرَةِ مِنۡ خَلَاقٍ ؕ وَلَبِئۡسَ
مَا شَرَوۡا بِهٖۤ اَنۡفُسَهُمۡ ؕ لَوۡ كَانُوۡا يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ 102

(2:102) and then followed what the evil ones falsely attributed to the Kingdom of Solomon[104] even though Solomon had never disbelieved; it is the evil ones who disbelieved, teaching people magic. And they followed what had been revealed to the two angels in Babylon – Harut and Marut – although these two (angels) never taught it to anyone without first declaring: "We are merely a means of testing people; so, do not engage in unbelief."[105] And yet they learned from them what might cause division between a man and his wife[106]. They could not cause harm to anyone except by the leave of Allah, and still they learned what harmed rather than profited them, knowing well that he who bought it will have no share in the World to Come. Evil indeed is what they sold themselves for. Had they but known!

104. 'Evil ones' embraces all evil beings, whether they belong to the human species or to the jinn. Here the reference seems to be to both.

When moral and material decline set in among the Israelites, they were overwhelmed with slavery and ignorance, with misery and poverty, and with humiliation and decadence. They were thus drained of all high ambitions and increasingly turned to magic, sorcery, witchcraft, charms and amulets. They began to search for facile means such as spells that

would spare them hard work and yet ensure the achievement of their desired ends. At this stage they were misled by the evil ones, who made them believe that the mighty kingdom and astonishing power of Solomon were merely due to occult sciences and magical formulae, and that by revealing those they would pass on to them the keys to success. People were so engrossed in such practices that they ignored both the Book of God and anyone who summoned them to truth and righteousness.

105. There are various opinions on the interpretation of this verse. My own conclusion is that at the time when the whole Israelite nation was chained in slavery and captivity in Babylonia God sent two angels in human form in order to test the Jews. In the same way as angels were sent to the people of Lot in the form of handsome youths see (Quran 11: 69 ff. - Ed.), they were presumably sent to Israel in the form of divines who could work magic and sorcery. These angels at once began working their magical wonders but they warned the people that their presence among them was designed to test their faith, and that they ought not to jeopardize their After-life by the practice of magic. Despite the warning it seems that the Israelites had become so fond of their magical artifices that they continued to resort to talismans and sorcery.

It should not surprise anyone that angels came down to earth in human form; angels are dutiful servants of God's kingdom, and are capable of assuming the form appropriate to the specific task they are required to perform at any particular time. Who knows how many angels may be busy performing their duties in our midst even today!

One might also wonder why angels should teach people magic, which is after all intrinsically evil. In order to understand this we must remember that the nature of their task was no different from that of an undercover policeman who hands over marked currency notes to a corrupt official as a bribe with the aim of ensuring that he is caught red-handed.

106. This shows that the greatest demand was for magical arts and charms to sow discord between a man and his wife and to procure the eventual seduction of the latter. This was the depth of moral depravity to which these people had fallen. A people cannot sink to a lower level of moral degeneracy than when adulterous affairs become their favourite pastime, and when seducing a married woman is considered a boastful achievement. The matrimonial relationship is, in truth, the very foundation of man's collective life. The soundness of human civilization depends on the soundness of the relationship between the two sexes. Hence, nothing could be worse than the person who strikes at the very foundations of the structure which supports both him and society as a whole.

There is a Tradition from the Prophet to the effect that Satan sends his agents on their missions to all parts of the world. On their return these agents report their achievements with each mentioning his own special evil act. But Satan is not completely satisfied with any of them. It is only when an agent reports that he has succeeded in separating a wife from her husband that Satan is filled with joy and embraces him. (Bukhari, 'Talaq', 25 - Ed.) In the light of this Tradition it is understandable why the angels who were sent to the Israelites to test them were asked to disclose those magical arts which would lead to separation between a husband and his wife, for the inclination of a people to learn such arts is a sure index of its moral decadence.

وَلَوْ اَنَّهُمْ اٰمَنُوْا وَاتَّقَوْا لَمَثُوْبَةٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ ؕ لَوْ كَانُوْا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۚ 103

(2:103) Had they believed and been God-fearing Allah's reward would have been better! Had they but known!

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَقُوْلُوْا رَاعِنَا وَقُوْلُوا انْظُرْنَا وَاسْمَعُوْا ؕ وَلِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابٌ

اَلِيْمٌ 104

(2:104) O you who believe![107] Do not say (to the Prophet): Ra'ina (Lend ear to us), but say Unzurna (Favour us with your attention) and pay heed (to him).[108] A painful chastisement awaits the unbelievers.

107. This and the following verses inform the followers of the Prophet (peace be on him) of the machinations of the Jews against Islam and the Muslims, and dispel any doubts and misgivings they tried to create in their minds. Special attention is paid to the points raised during controversial discussions between Muslims and Jews. It is useful to note here that when the Prophet (peace be on him) arrived in Madina and the message of Islam began to spread the Jews tried to engage Muslims in controversial religious discussions. They raised all kinds of involved and suspicion-provoking problems so as to contaminate the simple and pure-hearted Muslims with the spiritual diseases from which they themselves suffered. Not only that, they resorted to sly and deceptive talk in the presence of the Prophet.

108. When the Jews visited the Prophet they tried to vent their spite by using ambiguous expressions in their greetings and conversation. They, used words which had double meanings, one innocent and the other offensive. After using quite proper expressions they would then whisper some malicious words. Ostensibly they maintained the decorum of respect and courtesy while sparing no underhand means to insult the Prophet. Later we shall encounter several examples of this kind of behaviour. The particular expression referred to here, and which the Muslims were asked to avoid using since it lent itself to abuse, was employed by the Jews when in conversation with the Prophet, whenever they wanted to request a short pause in which to finish whatever they wanted to say. They, used the expression ra'ina, which meant 'kindly indulge us' or ' kindly lend ear to us'.

It was possible, however, for the expression to be used with quite a different shade of meaning. In Hebrew, for instance, there is a word similar to it which means: 'Listen, may you become deaf.' In the same language it also means arrogant, ignorant and fool. In actual conversation it was also used on occasions when one wanted to say: 'If you listen to me, 1 will listen to you.' When it was pronounced with a slight twist of the tongue it turned into ra'ina, meaning 'our shepherd'.

It is because of the possibility of the word being used in these different senses that Muslims were asked to avoid it and to use instead the straightforward expression unzurna, meaning 'kindly favour us with your attention' or 'kindly grant us a while to follow (what you are

saying)'. This advice was followed by the admonition to listen attentively to what the Prophet said, for the Jews used to ask for the same thing to be repeated merely because they did not pay proper attention to what the Prophet said but instead were engrossed in their own thoughts. If the Muslims were to heed what the Prophet said, they would scarcely need to make such requests.

مَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ وَلَا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ اَنْ يُّنَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ خَيْرٍ مِّنْ
رَّبِّكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ 105

(2:105) The unbelievers, be they the People of the Book or those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity, do not wish that any good should be sent down upon you from your Lord. But Allah chooses for His mercy whomsoever He wills. Allah is Lord of Abounding Bounty.

مَا نَنْسَخْ مِنْ اٰيَةٍ اَوْ نُنْسِهَا نَاْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْهَآ اَوْ مِثْلِهَا ؕ اَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
قَدِيْرٌ 106

(2:106) For whatever verse We might abrogate or consign to oblivion, We bring a better one or the like of it.[109] Are you not aware that Allah is All-Powerful?

109. This is in response to a doubt which the Jews tried to implant in the minds of the Muslims. If both the earlier Scriptures and the Qur'an were revelations from God, why was it - they asked - that the injunctions found in the earlier Scriptures had been replaced by new ones in the Qur'an? How could the same God issue divergent injunctions? Furthermore, they expressed their amazement at the Qur'anic indictment of the Jews and Christians for having allowed part of the revelation to be forgotten and lost, pointing out that it was impossible that Divine revelation should be erased from human memory. In all this, their motive was not to know the truth but to cast doubt on the Divine origin of the Qur'an. In refutation God states that He being the Absolute Sovereign has unlimited authority both to abrogate previous injunctions and to cause people to forget the injunctions He wants them to forget. However, God ensures that whatever He abrogates or causes to be erased from people's memories is replaced by something equally or even more beneficial.

اَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا
نَصِيْرٍ 107

(2:107) Are you not aware that the dominion of the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah, and that none apart from Allah is your protector or helper?

أَمْ تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَسْئَلُوا رَسُولَكُمْ كَمَا سُئِلَ مُوسَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۗ وَمَنْ يَتَبَدَّلِ الْكُفْرَ

بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ 108

(2:108) Or would you ask your Messenger in the manner Moses[110] was asked before? And whoever exchanges faith for unbelief has surely strayed from the Right Way.

110. The Jews, who were addicted to hair-splitting arguments, instigated the Muslims to ask the Prophet a great many questions. God, therefore, cautioned the Muslims against following the example of the Jews in this matter, and admonished them against unnecessary inquisitiveness. The Prophet himself often warned the Muslims that excessive inquisitiveness (which was devoid of religious earnestness and the sincere desire to do God's will) had been the ruin of earlier religious communities. (Muslim, 'Fadail', 130; Bukhari, '1'tisim', 2 - Ed.) He stressed that people need not delve too deeply into questions left unelucidated by God or His Messenger. It was better to follow the injunctions which were clearly laid down, abstain from things prohibited, and avoid excessive inquiry about far-fetched, hypothetical issues, attending instead to questions of practical significance.

وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّونَكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كُفَّارًا ۖ حَسَدًا مِنْ عِنْدِ

أَنْفُسِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ ۚ فَاعْفُوا وَاصْفَحُوا حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ

عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ 109

(2:109) Out of sheer envy many People of the Book would be glad to turn you back into unbelievers after you have become believers even though the Truth has become clear to them. Nevertheless, forgive and be indulgent[111] towards them until Allah brings forth His decision. Surely Allah is All-Powerful.

111. This means that one should neither allow oneself to get angry at their spite and hostility, nor waste one's valuable time by engaging in useless debates and acrimonious polemics. It is better to wait patiently and observe how God deals with them. Instead of wasting energy in frivolous pursuits such as those mentioned above one should spend it in the remembrance of God and in acts of goodness, for it is these rather than barren controversies that will benefit man in the Life to Come.

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ۚ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۗ

إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ 110

(2:110) Establish Prayer and dispense Zakah. Whatever good deeds you send forth for your own good, you will find them with Allah. Surely Allah sees all that you do.

وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَّدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ اِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُوْدًا اَوْ نَصٰرٰى ؕ تِلْكَ اَمَانِيُّهُمْ ؕ قُلْ هَاتُوْا
بُرْهَانَكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ 111

(2:111) They say: "None shall enter the Garden unless he be a Jew or (according to the Christians), a Christian." These are their vain desires.[112] Say: "Bring your proof if you are speaking the truth."

112. That is, all this is merely wishful thinking, even though they express thoughts as if they were really going to happen.

بَلٰى ۚ مَنْ اَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهٗ لِلّٰهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهٗۤ اَجْرُهٗ عِنْدَ رَبِّهٖ ۪ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ
يَحْزَنُوْنَ ع 112

(2:112) (None has any special claim upon reward from Allah.) Whoever submits himself completely to the obedience of Allah and does good will find his reward with his Lord. No fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ لَيْسَتِ النَّصٰرٰى عَلٰى شَيْءٍ ۪ وَّقَالَتِ النَّصٰرٰى لَيْسَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ عَلٰى شَيْءٍ ۙ
وَّهُمْ يَتْلُوْنَ الْكِتٰبَ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ ۚ فَاللّٰهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ
يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فِيْمَا كَانُوْا فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ 113

(2:113) The Jews say: "The Christians have no basis for their beliefs," and the Christians say: "The Jews have no basis for their beliefs." They say so even though they read the Scripture. The claim of those who have no knowledge (of the Scripture) is similar.[113] Allah will judge between them concerning their differences on the Day of Resurrection.

113. The reference is to the polytheists of Arabia.

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ مَّنَعَ مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ أَنْ يُّذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهٗ وَسَعٰى فِي خَرَابِهَا ۭ أُولٰٓئِكَ مَا
كَانَ لَهُمْ أَنْ يَّدْخُلُوهَآ إِلَّا خَآئِفِينَ ۭ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَّلَهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ
عَظِيمٌ 114

(2:114) Who is more iniquitous than he who bars Allah's places of worship, that His name be mentioned there, and seeks their destruction? It does not behove such people to enter them, and should they enter, they should enter in fear.[114] There is degradation for them in this world and a mighty chastisement in the Next.

114. Places of worship should properly remain in the custody of devout and God-fearing people, so that even if bad people did go there they would be deterred from committing misdeeds through fear of punishment. This is a subtle reference to the wrong perpetrated by the unbelievers of Makka, who had barred their own compatriots - the Muslims - from worshipping in the House of God.

وَلِلّٰهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ ۚ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوْا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللّٰهِ ۭ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ 115

(2:115) The East and the West belong to Allah. To whichever direction you turn, you will be turning to Allah.[115] Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing.[116]

115. God is neither eastern nor western. East and west, north and south, and indeed all places and directions are His, though He is not confined to any particular place or direction. Hence, if any place or direction is fixed for worship this does not mean that God dwells there. Likewise, changes in the direction of Prayer is not a proper subject for controversy and dispute.

116. That is, God is neither limited, mean, narrow-minded, nor poor in resources. All such notions about God, which arise from considering Him as essentially similar to human beings, are erroneous. God's realm is boundless and so is His vision and the range of His benevolence and mercy. Moreover, God's knowledge is all-embracing. He knows who remembers Him, as well as where, when and why he does that.

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ وَلَدًا ۙ سُبْحٰنَهٗ ۭ بَل لَّهٗ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۭ كُلٌّ لَّهٗ
قَانِتُوْنَ 116

(2:116) They say: "Allah has taken to Himself a son." Glory to Him! Nay, whatever is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him; to Him are all in obeisance.

بَدِيْعُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَ اِذَا قَضٰٓى اَمْرًا فَاِنَّمَا يَقُوْلُ لَهٗ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ 117

(2:117) He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth; whenever He decrees a matter He (merely) says: "Be", and it is.

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ لَوْلَا يُكَلِّمُنَا اللّٰهُ اَوْ تَاْتِيْنَآ اٰيَةٌ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ
مِّثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ ؕ تَشَابَهَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ؕ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُّوْقِنُوْنَ 118

(2:118) The ignorant say: "Why does Allah not speak to us?[117] Why does no Sign come to us?" The same was said by people before them. Their hearts are all alike.[118] We have made the Signs clear for people of firm faith.[119]

117. What they meant was that God should either appear before them Himself, tell them plainly that the Qur'an was a revelation from Him, and proclaim His injunctions, or cause them to see some extraordinary sign that would convince them that whatever Muhammad (peace be on him) told them was from Him.

118. The fact is that the misguided people of the time of the revelation of the Qur'an did not raise any objection or make any demands essentially different from those of the misguided people of the past. From the remote past till today, error and misguidedness seem to have the same character, so the same doubts and objections are repeated over and over again.

119. The demand that God should speak to them directly was too absurd even to be answered. The question dealt with here concerns the demand for a sign that would convince them of the Truth. In response to this it is pointed out that many signs do exist, but all such signs are of profit only to those who are inclined to believe. As for those who are bent on disbelief, what sign can be shown to them, and to what avail?

اِنَّآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيْرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا ۙ وَّلَا تُسْـَٔلُ عَنْ اَصْحٰبِ الْجَحِيْمِ 119

(2:119) (What greater Sign can there be than that) We sent you with the Truth as a bearer of good tidings and a warner![120] And you will not be answerable about the people of the Blazing Flame!

120. Why speak of other signs when the most conspicuous sign of Truth is the very person of Muhammad? Let us recall his life before the commencement of his prophethood, the conditions existing in the area where, and the people among whom, he was born, the manner in which he was brought up and spent the first forty years of his life, and then his glorious achievements as a Prophet. What further signs could we want in support of his message?

وَلَنْ تَرْضٰى عَنْكَ الْيَهُوْدُ وَلَا النَّصٰرٰى حَتّٰى تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّ هُدَى اللّٰهِ هُوَ الْهُدٰى ؕ
وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ بَعْدَ الَّذِيْ جَآءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ۙ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا
نَصِيْرٍ 120

(2:120) Never will the Jews be pleased with you, (O Prophet), nor the Christians until you follow their way.[121] Say: "Surely Allah's guidance, is the true guidance." Should you follow their desires disregarding the knowledge which has come to you, you shall have no protector or helper against Allah.

121. The cause of their disconcertment with the Prophet (peace be on him) was not that they were earnest seekers after the Truth which the Prophet had failed to make clear to them. The real cause of their unhappiness was that he had not resorted to hypocrisy and trickery, in regard to religious matters, that unlike them he did not pursue self-interest and self-indulgence under the facade of godliness and piety, that he did not twist religious principles and injunctions without scruple, as the Jews were wont to do in order to make them suit their desires and fancies, that he did not resort to the chicanery and duplicity which characterized the religious life of the Jews. As a result, it was no use trying to appease them. For unless the Muslims were prepared to assume the attitude and orientation of the Jews and to follow all their errors in belief and practice, there was no question of their being able to bring about any reconciliation with them.

اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يَتْلُوْنَهٗ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهٖ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِهٖ
فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ع 121

(2:121) Those to whom We have given the Scripture, and who recite it as it ought to be recited, they truly believe in it;[122] and those who disbelieve in it, they are the real losers.

122. This refers to the pious element among the People of the Book. Since these people read the Book with sincerity and honesty of purpose, they are inclined to accept whatever they find to be true according to it.

يٰبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِيْٓ اَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاَنِّيْ فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى
الْعٰلَمِيْنَ 122

(2:122) Children of Israel![123] Recall My favour which I bestowed upon you and I exalted you above the nations of the world,

123. A fresh subject is now broached. In order to appreciate it fully, the following should be clearly borne in mind:

(1) After Noah, Abraham was the first Prophet appointed by God to spread the universal message of Islam. At the outset, he journeyed for many years from Iraq to Egypt, and from Syria and Palestine to various parts of Arabia inviting people to serve and obey God. Later he appointed deputies in various regions to carry on his mission. He sent his nephew Lot to Transjordan, his son Isaac to Syria and Palestine, and his eldest son Ishmael to Arabia. Then he built, in Makka, the shrine called the Ka'bah which subsequently, and under God's own command, was made the centre of the prophetic mission.

(2) Abraham's progeny descended in two main branches. One of these, the Children of Ishmael, lived in Arabia. The Quraysh and other Arabian tribes belonged to this branch of Abraham's line. Even those Arabian tribes which were not related to him by blood identified themselves with Abraham, since they had been influenced in varying degrees by his religious ideas. The other branch consisted of the Children of Isaac. In this branch there arose a great number of Prophets, for example Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, John, and Jesus. Since Jacob was called Israel, his offspring came to be known as the Children of Israel. Other peoples who accepted their faith as a result of preaching either lost their former identity and became assimilated with them, or remained separate from them ethnically but identified with them religiously. At the time when decadence flourished this branch of the Abrahamic family gave birth first to Judaism, and subsequently to Christianity.

(3) The true mission of Abraham was to invite people to obey God and to mould the entire system of individual and collective life according to Divine Guidance. He was himself obedient to God and followed the teaching received from Him, and constantly strove to spread it and make all human beings live in obedience to it. It was because of this that he was appointed the religious leader and guide of the whole world. After his death, the task of guiding the world was entrusted to the branch which had issued from Isaac and Jacob, and which came to be known as the Children of Israel. It is in this branch that many Prophets were born. It was also this branch which was given the knowledge of the Straight Way, and was designated to lead all the nations of the world along that Way. It is of this favour that God again and again reminds these people.

In the time of Solomon this branch took Jerusalem as the centre of its mission. Jerusalem maintained its central position for all devotees of God and remained the qiblah (direction) in which all worshippers of God were required to turn in their Prayer.

(4) While addressing the Children of Israel in the last ten sections, God set forth the criminal record of the Jews, exposed their decadent state at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an, and made it clear to them that they had totally lacked gratitude to God for His favours and bounties. Not only had they ceased to guide the world, but had turned away from Truth and righteousness to such an extent that nearly all of them had lost the capacity to do good and to respond to Truth.

(5) It is also intimated that the religious leadership of all mankind is not an exclusive privilege of Abrahamic blood, but rather the fruit of Abraham's sincere obedience and service to God, to which he had wholly consecrated himself. Only those who follow the way of Abraham, and guide the world along that way, are therefore entitled to the position of guidance and leadership. And since the Jews had abandoned it and become incapable of carrying out the mission of Abraham they were being removed from that position.

(6) At the same time it is hinted that the non-Israelite peoples who identified themselves with Abraham through Moses and Jesus had also veered from the way of Abraham. The same was true of the polytheists of Arabia, who felt proud of belonging to Abraham and Ishmael and based this pride on lineage alone. For, so far as their faith and conduct were concerned, they had not even the remotest tie with Abraham and Ishmael. They did not deserve, therefore, to be entrusted with the religious leadership of the world.

(7) It is also made clear that by God's will a Prophet, for whose advent Abraham and Ishmael had once prayed, was born in the other branch of the Abrahamic family, i.e. the Ishmaelites. The way propounded by this Prophet is exactly the same as that by Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob and in fact all the Messengers. His followers also confirm the truth of all those designated in the past to serve as God's Messengers, and call mankind to the same message those Messengers preached earlier. Thus, leadership now naturally devolves on those who follow this Prophet.

(8) This proclamation of a transfer of leadership naturally called for the proclamation of a change in the direction of Prayer. As long as the Israelites held the reins of the world's religious leadership, Jerusalem remained the centre of the mission of Islam and the qiblah of truth-loving people. The Arabian Prophet (peace be on him) as well as his followers had accepted Jerusalem as the qiblah until God duly proclaimed the removal of the Jews from their position of leadership. With this proclamation Jerusalem ceased to enjoy its central position. So it was proclaimed that from then on the centre of God's true religion would be the place from which the message of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) had radiated. Since in the past it had been the centre of the mission of Abraham (peace be on him), it was difficult even for the polytheists and for the People of the Book to deny that the Ka'bah had a greater right to be made the qiblah. There was thus every reasonable ground for the decision to change the qiblah and its opponents could only object out of irrational adamance.

(9) The proclamation that the followers of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) had been designated to the religious leadership of mankind, and that the Ka'bah would now be the focal point of man's religious life, was followed by directives (beginning with(verse 153)and continuing to the end of the surah) addressed to the Muslims. These directives were aimed at enabling the Muslims to acquit themselves creditably of the duties laid upon their shoulders as the bearers of this mission.

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَّا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَن نَّفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا تَنفَعُهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ 123

(2:123) and beware of the Day when no one shall avail another, when ransom shall be accepted from no one, when no one's intercession will profit anyone, when there shall be no help from any quarter.

وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ ۖ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا ۖ قَالَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِي ۖ قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ 124

(2:124) Recall when Abraham's Lord tested him in certain matters[124] and when he successfully stood the test, He said: "Indeed I am going to appoint you a leader of all people." When Abraham asked: "And is this covenant also for my descendants?" the Lord responded: "My covenant does not embrace the wrong-doers."[125]

124. At various places the Qur'an enumerates the severe tests through which Abraham passed. It was only after these had been completed successfully that he was able to establish his worthiness to serve as the religious guide and leader of all mankind. From the moment when the truth was revealed to him till the moment he died, his life was a continuous tale of sacrifice and suffering for his cause. There is no conceivable object of man's love and attachment in the world which Abraham did not sacrifice for the sake of the truth. Likewise, there is no conceivable danger which instinctively frightens man which Abraham did not encounter for the sake of the Truth.

125. This specifies that God's promise of the conferment of leadership applied only to those of Abraham's offspring who were righteous, and that the wrong-doers were naturally excluded. This also makes it clear that, just as the promise did not apply to the misguided Israelites, it did not apply to the polytheistic Ishmaelites.

وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمْنًا ۖ وَاتَّخِذُوا مِن مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى ۖ وَعَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَن طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْعَاكِفِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ 125

(2:125) And We made this House (Ka'bah) a resort for mankind and a place of security, commanding people: "Take the station of Abraham as a permanent place for Prayer," and enjoined Abraham and Ishmael: "Purify My House for those who walk around it, and those who abide in devotion, and those who bow, and who prostrate themselves (in Prayer)."[126]

126. 'Purify My House' does not merely mean keeping it clean of dirt and filth. The real purity and cleanliness of the House of God rests in the fact that in it the name of God alone should be glorified. If someone declares in its sacred precincts that anything other than God is his Lord, his object of worship and adoration, the dispenser of man's needs and requirements, the hearer of man's supplications, then such a person is guilty of desecrating the House of God.

This verse also contains a hint as to the evil-doing of the people of the Quraysh. They boasted that they were the inheritors of the legacy of Abraham and Ishmael, but instead of being faithful to that legacy, they actually trampled over it. So, just as the Children of Israel were excluded from the promise made to Abraham, so were the polytheistic children of Ishmael. (See also(n. 125 above - Ed.)

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرٰهِمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هٰذَا بَلَدًا اٰمِنًا وَّارْزُقْ اَهْلَهٗ مِنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ مَنْ اٰمَنَ مِنْهُمْ
بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ؕ قَالَ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَاُمَتِّعُهٗ قَلِيْلًا ثُمَّ اَضْطَرُّهٗۤ اِلٰى عَذَابِ النَّارِ ؕ وَبِئْسَ
الْمَصِيْرُ 126

(2:126) And when Abraham prayed: "O my Lord! Make this a place of security and provide those of its people that believe in Allah and the Last Day with fruits for sustenance," Allah answered, "And I shall still provide him who disbelieves with the wherewithal for this short life,[127] and then I shall drive him to the chastisement of the Fire; that is an evil end."

127. (Here a distinction is made between honouring a people by entrusting it with the religious leadership and guidance of the world, and bestowing on it an abundant means of livelihood - Ed.) When Abraham enquired who merited world leadership it was made clear to him that only his truly believing and righteous children, to the exclusion of the wrong-doing ones, were worthy of it. This occasioned God to clarify that the religious leadership of the world was quite distinct from its livelihood. Men of faith alone were entitled to the former, whereas both believers and unbelievers would be provided the latter. If someone enjoys abundant material wealth it should not be misconstrued to mean that God is necessarily pleased with him and that he has been designated by God to provide religious guidance to the world.

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرٰهِمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمٰعِيْلُ ؕ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا ؕ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ السَّمِيْعُ
الْعَلِيْمُ 127

(2:127) Recall when Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the House, praying: "Our Lord! Accept this from us; You are All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَآ أُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ ۠ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ
عَلَيْنَا ۚ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ 128

(2:128) Our Lord! Make us submissive to You and make out of our descendants a community that submits itself to You, and show us the ways of Your worship, and turn to us in mercy. You are Much-Relenting, Most Compassionate.

رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَ
يُزَكِّيهِمْ ۗ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ع 129

(2:129) Our Lord! Raise up in the midst of our offspring a Messenger from among them who shall recite to them Your verses, and instruct them in the Book and in Wisdom, and purify their lives.[128] Verily, You are the Most Mighty, the Most Wise."[129]

128. The term 'purification' used here embraces the purification of beliefs and outlook, morals, habits and customs, and social, cultural and political life; the purification of man's life in its totality.

129. This has been said in order to indicate that the advent of Muhammad (peace be on him) was in fact God's response to the prayer of Abraham (peace be on him).

وَمَنْ يَرْغَبُ عَنْ مِّلَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَفِهَ نَفْسَهُ ۗ وَلَقَدِ اصْطَفَيْنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَإِنَّهُ
فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ 130

(2:130) And who but a fool would be averse to the way of Abraham? For it is We Who chose Abraham for Our mission in this world, and surely in the World to Come he shall be reckoned among the righteous.

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ أَسْلِمْ ۙ قَالَ أَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ 131

(2:131) Such was Abraham that when his Lord said to him: "Submit,"[130] he said: "I have submitted to the Lord of the Universe."

130. 'Muslim' signifies he who bows in obedience to God, who acknowledges God alone as his Sovereign, Lord and Master, and the only object of worship, devotion and service, who unreservedly surrenders himself to God and undertakes to live his life in accordance with the guidance that has come down from Him. Islam is the appellation which characterizes the above -mentioned belief and outlook which constitutes the core and kernel of the

religion of all the Prophets who have appeared from time to time among different peoples and in different countries since the very beginning of human life.

وَوَصّٰى بِهَآ اِبْرٰهٖمُ بَنِيْهِ وَيَعْقُوْبُ ؕ يٰبَنِيَّ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰى لَكُمُ الدِّيْنَ فَلَا تَمُوْتُنَّ اِلَّا وَاَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ؕ 132

(2:132) And Abraham enjoined the same upon his children, and so did Jacob:[131] "My children! Behold, Allah has chosen this religion for you.[132] Remain till death in submission (to Allah)."[133]

131. Jacob is especially mentioned since the Children of Israel were his direct descendants.

132. Din is a Qur'anic technical term, signifying the way of life, the system of conduct, and the code on which man bases his entire mode of thought and action. (For the author's views on din see his Four Basic Qur'anic Terms, tr. Abu Asad, Lahore, 1979, pp. 93-103 - Ed.)

133. In the Bible the events connected with the death of Jacob (peace be on him) are narrated in detail. It is amazing that this narrative makes no reference to his testament. However, the contents of the detailed testament embodied in the Talmud greatly resemble the Qur'anic version. The Talmudic version reads as follows:

'Serve the Lord your God, and He will deliver ye from all trouble, even as He delivered your fathers.'

' . . . Teach your children to love God, and observe His commandments, in order that their days may be prolonged, for God will guard those who do justly and walk in righteousness through all His ways.'

And the sons of Jacob responded, 'All that you have commanded us, our father, we will do. May God be with us!'

And Jacob answered: 'The Lord will be with you if ye depart not from His ways to the right hand or to the left.'

(The Talmud Selections by H. Polano, London, Frederick Warne & Co., [1877], pp. 113-14.)

أَمْ كُنتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ الْمَوْتُ ۙ إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن بَعْدِي ۖ قَالُوا
نَعْبُدُ إِلَٰهَكَ وَإِلَٰهَ آبَائِكَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِلَٰهًا وَاحِدًا ۖ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ
مُسْلِمُونَ 133

(2:133) Why, were you witnesses when death came to Jacob? He asked his children: "Whom will you serve after me?" They said: "We shall serve your God, the God of your forefathers, Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, the One God, and unto Him do we submit."

تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ ۖ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُم مَّا كَسَبْتُمْ ۖ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا
يَعْمَلُونَ 134

(2:134) Now, they were a people who passed away. Theirs is what they have earned, and yours is what you have earned. You shall not be asked concerning what they did.[134]

134. What is being said here is that even though they might be their offspring in terms of blood - relationship they had, in fact, no true relationship with them. What right did they have to pretend to belong to them when they had departed far from their way? For God would not ask people what their forefathers did; it was rather about their own conduct and action that they would be questioned.

' Theirs is what they have earned ' is a characteristically Qur'anic expression. What we ordinarily characterize as either 'action' or 'doing' is termed by the Qur'an as 'earning'. The reason is that each and every human action has its ultimate effect, whether or not it is good, and will have its manifestation in God's approval or disapproval. It is this ultimate effect which is a man's earning. Since the Qur'an considers this to be of paramount importance, it characterizes man's actions as his 'earning'.

وَقَالُوا كُونُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَىٰ تَهْتَدُوا ۗ قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۖ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ
الْمُشْرِكِينَ 135

(2:135) They say: "Be Jews," or "Be Christians." "Then you will be rightly guided." Say to them: "No, follow exclusively the way of Abraham who was not one of those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity."[135]

135. In order to grasp the subtlety, of this remark two things should be borne in mind. First, that in comparison to Islam, the primordial religion, both Judaism and Christianity are later products. The name Judaism, as well as the characteristic features and elaborate body of laws and regulations associated with it. emerged during the third or fourth century, B.C. As for Christianity. in the sense of the body of dogmas and theological doctrines which characterize it, it came into existence long after Jesus (peace be on him). The question that naturally arises is that, if man's guidance depends on following Judaism or Christianity, how can Abraham and other Prophets and righteous people who are accepted as having been rightly-guided even by the Jews and Christians be considered so when they were born several centuries before the birth of Judaism and Christianity? If they were rightly-guided from whom did they receive their guidance? Obviously their source of guidance and inspiration was neither Judaism nor Christianity since, in their times, these did not exist. So man's rectitude does not depend on those characteristics which led to the rise of Jewish and Christian particularisms; it rather depends on adopting that universal way to Truth which has guided and inspired men throughout the ages.

Second. the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians attest that Abraham believed that worship, adoration, service and obedience were due to God alone, and that it was his mission to have none associated with God in His attributes and rights. Since polytheistic elements had made inroads into Judaism and Christianity it was obvious that both had strayed from the way of Abraham.

قُوْلُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْنَا وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلٰٓى اِبْرٰهٖمَ وَاِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَاِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ وَ
الْاَسْبَاطِ وَمَآ اُوْتِيَ مُوْسٰى وَعِيْسٰى وَمَآ اُوْتِيَ النَّبِيُّوْنَ مِنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ۚ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ اَحَدٍ
مِّنْهُمْ ۖ وَنَحْنُ لَهٗ مُسْلِمُوْنَ 136

(2:136) Say: "We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the descendants (of Jacob) and in what was given to Moses and Jesus and in what the other Prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them,[136] and we are those who submit to Allah."

136. To make no distinction between the Prophets means not to hold some of them to he right and the others to be wrong, not to recognize some to have been the recipients of Divine revelation and the others not. All the Prophets sent by God invited men to the same Truth and to the same way. Hence for anyone who is really a lover of Truth it is necessary that he should recognize all of them to be its bearers. Those who believe in one particular Prophet and disbelieve in others do not in fact believe even in that particular Prophet in whom they, claim to believe, for they have not grasped the nature of that universal 'Straight Way' (al-sirat al-mustaqim) which was enunciated by Moses, Jesus and the other Prophets. When such people claim to follow a Prophet they, really mean that they do so out of deference to their forefathers. Their religion in fact consists of bigoted ancestor-worship and blind

imitation of inherited customs rather than sincere adherence to the directives of any Prophet of God.

فَإِنْ آمَنُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا آمَنْتُمْ بِهِ فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا ۖ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا هُمْ فِي شِقَاقٍ ۖ فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ اللَّهُ ۚ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ۚ 137

(2:137) And then if they come to believe as you believe, they are on right guidance; and if they turn away, then quite obviously they have merely fallen into opposition to the Truth. Allah will suffice you for protection against them. He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ ۖ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً ۖ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عَابِدُونَ 138

(2:138) Say: "Take on Allah's colour."[137] And whose colour is better than Allah's? It is Him that we serve.

137. This verse can be translated in two ways. One of these is: 'We have taken on Allah's colour.' The other is: 'Take on Allah's colour.' On the eve of the advent of Christianity the Jews followed the practice of bathing everyone who embraced their religion. This ritual bath signified that all his previous sins had been washed away and that he had adopted a different colour for his life. This practice was subsequently taken over by the Christians and is termed 'baptism'. Not only converts but even new-born babies were baptized. The Qur'anic remarks here refer to this institution. The Qur'an says in effect: 'Of what use is this formal baptism? What really is worth doing is to adopt the colour of God, and it is not water that gives one this colour but actual service and devotion to God.'

قُلْ أَتُحَاجُّونَنَا فِي اللَّهِ وَهُوَ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ ۖ وَلَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ ۖ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُخْلِصُونَ ۝ 139

(2:139) Say (O Prophet): "Will you then dispute with us concerning Allah when He is our Lord and your Lord?[138] Our deeds are for us and your deeds are for you. And it is Him that we serve exclusively."[139]

138. The one principle that the Prophet and his followers unreservedly stood for was that God alone should be served. Does that call for dispute and quarrel? If anyone, it is the Muslims who are entitled to quarrel with the Jews and Christians, for it is they rather than the Muslims who insist that others beside God should also be made objects of service and adoration.

An alternative translation of this portion could be: 'Would you then dispute with us for the

sake of Allah?' In this case the meaning of the verse would be that if their dispute was sincere, it was easy to put an end to it by, agreeing to serve none but God.

139. They are told that everyone is responsible for his own conduct. If they have earmarked a part of their service and devotion to others than God, let them do so and see for themselves what it leads to. The Muslims did not want to keep them from error by force. As for themselves, they had consecrated their service, obedience and worship to God alone. If the Jews and Christians could bring themselves to recognize the right of the Muslims to do so, the dispute could automatically be brought to an end,

أَمْ تَقُولُونَ إِنَّ إِبْرٰهِمَ وَإِسْمٰعِيلَ وَإِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطَ كَانُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصٰرٰى ۗ
قُلْ ءَأَنتُمْ أَعْلَمُ أَمِ اللَّهُ ۗ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَتَمَ شَهَادَةً عِندَهُۥ مِنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ
عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ 140

(2:140) Or do you claim that Abraham and Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob and the descendants (of Jacob) were "Jews" or "Christians?" Say: "Who has greater knowledge, you or Allah?"[140] Who does greater wrong than he who conceals a testimony he has received from Allah? Allah is not heedless of the things you do.[141]

140. This remark is addressed to the ignorant mass of Jews and Christians who sincerely believed that all the Prophets belonged to their religious denomination.

141. This remark is addressed to the Jewish and Christian theologians who were not unaware that Judaism and Christianity, with their existing characteristics, had emerged at a relatively late period in history. They nevertheless considered Truth to he confined to their own religious sects. They also perpetuated the misunderstanding that man's ultimate happiness and success lay in following the beliefs, institutions and legal codes which had been developed by their jurists, theologians and mystics long after the Prophet of God had passed away. When these theologians were asked to which among their religious communities Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and other Prophets belonged, they evaded a reply. This was because they could not state categorically that they belonged to their own sect. On the other hand, they could not reply explicitly in the negative, for such an admission would have undermined the very basis of their claim that Truth was confined to their fold.

تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ ۖ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُمْ مَّا كَسَبْتُمْ ۖ وَلَا تُسْـَٔلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا
يَعْمَلُونَ ۝141

(2:141) Now, they were a people who passed away. Theirs is what they earned, and yours is what you earn; you shall not be questioned concerning what they did.

سَيَقُولُ السُّفَهَآءُ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَا وَلّٰىهُمْ عَنْ قِبْلَتِهِمُ الَّتِي كَانُوا عَلَيْهَا ۟ قُلْ لِّلّٰهِ
الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ ۟ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَّشَآءُ إِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ 142

(2:142) The block-headed will say: "What has turned them away from the direction they formerly observed in Prayer?"[142] Say: "To Allah belong the East and the West; He guides whomsoever He wills onto a Straight Way."[143]

142. After his migration to Madina the Prophet continued to pray in the direction of Jerusalem for between sixteen and seventeen months. Subsequently, he received the order to pray in the direction of the Ka'bah. See(verse 144 below)

143. This is the first answer to the objections of these ignorant people. Their narrow minds and limited vision led them to undue attachment to such formalities as the direction and locale of Prayer. They presumably conceived God to be confined to a particular direction. In reply to their absurd objection the first thing which was explained was that all directions belong to God. Fixing any particular direction for Prayer does not mean that God is confined to that direction. All those who have been favoured with God's true guidance rise above such limitations of outlook so that it is easy for them to grasp the universal verities of religion. (See also (nn. 115 and 116 above.)

وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنٰكُمْ أُمَّةً وَّسَطًا لِّتَكُوْنُوا شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلُ عَلَيْكُمْ
شَهِيْدًا ۟ وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَآ إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَّتَّبِعُ الرَّسُوْلَ مِمَّنْ يَّنْقَلِبُ
عَلٰى عَقِبَيْهِ ۟ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيْرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ هَدَى اللّٰهُ ۟ وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُضِيْعَ
إِيْمَانَكُمْ ۟ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ 143

(2:143) And it is thus that We appointed you to be the community of the middle way so that you might be witnesses to all mankind and the Messenger might be a witness to you.[144]

We appointed the direction which you formerly observed so that We might distinguish those who follow the Messenger from those who turn on their heels.[145] For it was indeed burdensome except for those whom Allah guided. And Allah will never leave your faith to waste. Allah is full of gentleness and mercy to mankind.

144. This constitutes the proclamation appointing the religious community (ummah) consisting of the followers of Muhammad to religious guidance and leadership of the world.

' And it is thus', which precedes this proclamation, contains two allusions. It alludes, in the first place, to that Divine Guidance which enabled the followers of Muhammad to know the Straight Way so that they could attain progress to the point of being proclaimed 'the community of the middle way' (or 'the mid-most community' or 'the community justly balanced' - Ed.) In the second place there is an allusion to the change in the direction of Prayer from Jerusalem to the Ka'bah. People of limited intelligence could see no significance in this change of direction although the substitution of Jerusalem by the Ka'bah amounted to the removal of the Children of Israel from their position of world leadership and their replacement by the ummah of Muhammad (peace be on him).

The Arabic expression which we have translated as 'the community of the middle way' is too rich in meaning to find an adequate equivalent in any other language. It signifies that distinguished group of people which follows the path of justice and equity, of balance and moderation, a group which occupies a central position among the nations of the world so that its friendship with all is based on righteousness and justice and none receives its support in wrong and injustice.

The purpose of creating 'the community of the middle way', according to this Qur'anic verse, is to make it stand as witness 'before all mankind and the Messenger might be a witness before you'. What this means is that when the whole of mankind is called to account, the Prophet, as God's representative, will stand witness to the fact that he had communicated to the Muslims and had put into practice the teachings postulating sound beliefs, righteous conduct and a balanced system of life which he had received from on high. The Muslims, acting on behalf of the Prophet after his return to the mercy of God, will he asked to bear the same witness before the rest of mankind and to say that they had spared no effort in either communicating to mankind what the Prophet had communicated to them, or in exemplifying in their own lives what the Prophet had, by his own conduct, translated into actual practice.

This position of standing witness before all mankind on behalf of God, which has been conferred on this community, amounts to its being invested with the leadership of all mankind. This is at once a great honour and a heavy responsibility. For what it actually means is that just as the Prophet served as a living example of godliness and moral rectitude, of equity and fair play before the Muslim community, so is the Muslim community required to stand vis-à-vis the whole world. What is expected of this community is that it should be able to make known, both by word and deed, the meaning of godliness and righteousness, of equity and fairplay.

Furthermore. just as the Prophet had been entrusted with the heavy responsibility of conveying to the Muslims the guidance which he had received. in a like manner a heavy responsibility has been laid on the Muslims to communicate this guidance to all mankind. If the Muslims fail to establish before God that they did their duty in conveying to mankind the guidance they had received through the Prophet they will be taken to task seriously and their honourable position as the leaders of the whole world, far from being of any help to them, will spell their disaster. They will be held responsible along with the protagonists of evil for all the errors of belief and conduct which have spread during their term of

leadership. They will have to face the grim question: What were they doing when the world was convulsed by storms of transgression, injustice and error?

145. One purpose of this change in the direction of Prayer was to find out who was blinkered by irrational prejudices and chained by chauvinistic attachment to land and blood, and who, having liberated himself from those bonds, was capable of rising to the heights and grasping the Truth.

On the one hand were the Arabs who were steeped in their national and racial arrogance. For them, taking Jerusalem as the direction of their Prayer (as originally practised by the Prophet) was too hard a blow to their national vanity to be accepted with equanimity. On the other hand, the Jews were essentially no different. They, too, were obsessed with racial pride so that it was difficult for them to accept any other than the direction of Prayer which they had inherited from the past. How could the people whose hearts were full of such idols respond to the call of the Messenger of God? Hence, God saw to it that the worshippers of such idols were distinguished from the genuine worshippers of God by first fixing Jerusalem as the direction of Prayer. This was bound to alienate all those who had worshipped the idol of Arabianism. Later, the fixing of the Ka'bah as the direction of Prayer led to the alienation of those who were engrossed in the worship of the idol of Israel. Thus there were left with the Prophet only, those who truly worshipped none but the One True God.

قَدْ نَرٰى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَآءِ ۚ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضٰىهَا ۪ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ
الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۭ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوْا وُجُوْهَكُمْ شَطْرَهٗ ۭ وَاِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ
لَيَعْلَمُوْنَ اَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ۭ وَمَا اللّٰهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُوْنَ 144

(2:144) We see you oft turning your face towards the sky; now We are turning you to the direction that will satisfy you. Turn your face towards the Holy Mosque, and wherever you are, turn your faces towards it in Prayer.[146]

Those who have been granted the Scripture certainly know that this (injunction to change the direction of Prayer) is right and is from their Lord. Allah is not heedless of what they do.

146. This is the injunction concerning the change in the direction of Prayer and was revealed in Rajab or Sha'ban. 2 A.H. According to a Tradition in the Tabaqat of Ibn Sa'd, the Prophet was at the house of Bishr b. Bara'b. Ma'rur where he had been invited to a meal. When the time of zuhr prayer came, the Prophet rose to lead it. He had completed two rak'ahs and was in the third when this verse was suddenly revealed. Soon after the revelation of this verse everybody, following the leadership of the Prophet, turned the direction of Prayer away from Jerusalem to the Ka'bah. A public proclamation of the new order was then made throughout Madina and in the suburbs. Bara' b. 'Azib says that at one place the

announcement was heard by people while they were in the state of ruku' (kneeling). On bearing this order they immediately turned their faces towards the Ka'bah. Anas b. Malik says that the news of the announcement reached Banu Salamah the next day while the morning Prayer was in progress. People had completed one rak'ah when they heard the announcement about the change of direction and the entire congregation immediately faced the new qiblah. (See Ibn Sa'd, Tabaqat, vol. 1, pp. 241 f. - Ed.)

It ought to be noted that Jerusalem is to the north of Madina while the Ka'bah is to the south. In order to change direction during congregational Prayer it would have been necessary for the leader of the Prayer to walk several steps beyond what was originally the last row of worshippers. The people in the congregation, too, would have been forced not only to make a right about-turn but also to walk a little to straighten their rows. We find specific mention of this in certain Traditions.

The words, 'We see you oft turning your face to the heaven', and 'Now We are turning your face to the direction that shall satisfy you', show clearly that even before the revelation of this injunction the Prophet was expecting something of this nature. He had begun to feel, with the termination of the era of Israelite leadership, that the time had come for the central position of Jerusalem to cease and a return to the original centre of the Abrahamic mission to commence.

The 'Holy Mosque' refers to the sanctuary invested with holiness and sanctity; the sanctuary in the centre of which the Ka'bah is located.

To turn one's face in the direction of the Ka'bah does not mean that wherever a man might be he should turn to the Ka'bah with absolute accuracy. It would obviously be extremely difficult for everyone to comply with such an order. Hence the order is to turn one's face in the direction of the Ka'bah rather than to the Ka'bah itself. According to the Qur'an, we are required to find out the direction of the Ka'bah as accurately as possible. We are not required, however, to locate it with absolute precision. We may pray in the direction which appears correct as a result of our enquiry. However, if a man is either at a place where it is difficult to determine the direction of the Ka'bah or if he is in a position where it is difficult to maintain the correct direction (e.g. when travelling on a train, a boat, or an aeroplane), he may pray in the direction which seems correct, or in whatever direction it is possible for him to face. If he then comes to know the correct direction while he is in the state of Prayer he should turn his face in that direction.

وَلَئِنْ أَتَيْتَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتٰبَ بِكُلِّ اٰيَةٍ مَّا تَبِعُوا قِبْلَتَكَ ۚ وَمَآ أَنْتَ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَتَهُمْ ۚ
وَمَا بَعْضُهُمْ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَةَ بَعْضٍ ۗ وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَآءَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ۙ
إِنَّكَ إِذًا لَّمِنَ الظّٰلِمِينَ 145

(2:145) And yet no matter what proofs you bring before the People of the Book they will not follow your direction of Prayer; nor will you follow their direction of Prayer. None is prepared to follow the other's direction of Prayer. Were you to follow their desires in disregard of the knowledge which has come to you, you will surely be reckoned among the wrong-doers.[147]

147. The purpose of this verse is to ask the Prophet not to be disturbed by the controversy and remonstrance to which some people had resorted as a result of this change in the direction of Prayer. It was difficult to convince those people by argument, since they suffered from prejudices and intransigence and were unwilling to abandon their traditional qiblah. It was also impossible for the matter to be resolved by adopting the qiblah of any of the contending groups; there were various groups and they were not agreed in respect of the qiblah. If the qiblah of one group had been adopted this would have satisfied only that group. As for the rest, their remonstrating would persist. Furthermore, and more basic in this connection, was the fact that as a Prophet Muhammad ought neither to be concerned to please people, nor haggle with them in order to arrive at compromised solutions. On the contrary, the mission of a Prophet is to adhere firmly, to the knowledge vouchsafed to him by God regardless of all opposition. To deviate from that knowledge to please others is tantamount to offending the prophetic mission and is inconsistent with the gratitude that the Prophet ought to feel for having been favoured with the position of world leadership.

اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يَعْرِفُوْنَهٗ كَمَا يَعْرِفُوْنَ اَبْنَآءَهُمْ ؕ وَاِنَّ فَرِيْقًا مِّنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُوْنَ
الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ 146

(2:146) Those to whom We have given the Scripture recognize the place (towards which one must turn in Prayer) as fully as they recognize their own sons,[148] this even though a group of them knowingly conceals the Truth.

148. 'To recognize something as well as one recognizes one's sons' is an Arabic idiom. It is used with regard to things which one knows without the least shadow of a doubt. The Jewish and Christian scholars were well aware that the Ka'bah had been constructed by Abraham and that Jerusalem had been built by Solomon some thirteen hundred years after that, and that in his time it was made the qiblah. This is an unquestionable historical fact and they knew it to be so.

اَلْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِيْنَ ۧ 147

(2:147) This is a definite Truth from your Lord; be not, then, among the doubters.

وَلِكُلٍّ وِّجْهَةٌ هُوَ مُوَلِّيْهَا ۚ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرٰتِ ۭ اَيْنَ مَا تَكُوْنُوْا يَاْتِ بِكُمُ اللّٰهُ جَمِيْعًا ۭ
اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ 148

(2:148) Everyone has a direction towards which he turns; so excel one another in good works.[149] Allah will bring you all together wherever you might be, for nothing is beyond His power.

149. There is a subtle gap between this sentence and the next, a gap which the reader can fill with just a little reflection. The idea conveyed here is that anyone who prays will, after all, have to turn his face in some direction. But what is of real significance is not the turning of one's face in some specific direction but one's orientation to righteousness for the sake of which one performs the ritual Prayer. A man's real concern should be moral excellence rather than controversies regarding such formal regulations as the direction of Prayer.

وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۭ وَاِنَّهٗ لَلْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ ۭ وَمَا
اللّٰهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ 149

(2:149) From wheresoever you might come forth turn your face towards the Holy Mosque; for that indeed is the Truth from your Lord, and Allah is not heedless of what you do.

وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۭ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوْا
وُجُوْهَكُمْ شَطْرَهٗ ۙ لِئَلَّا يَكُوْنَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَيْكُمْ حُجَّةٌ ڰ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مِنْهُمْ فَلَا
تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِيْ ۠ وَلِاُتِمَّ نِعْمَتِيْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ ۙ 150

(2:150) From wheresoever you come forth turn your faces towards the Holy Mosque, and wheresoever you may be, turn your faces towards it in Prayer so that none may have an argument against you,[150] unless they be those immersed in wrong-doing. Do not fear them, but fear only Me so that I may complete My favour upon you;[151] perhaps you will be guided to the Right Way.[152]

150. The followers of the Prophet (peace be upon him) were asked to follow the order to turn towards the Ka'bah, and to do so strictly, since any lapse in this matter on their part would give their opponents a weapon to use against them in their polemics. They would be able to hold Muslims up to ridicule on the grounds that they had violated what they themselves claimed to be from their Lord.

151. The 'favour' here refers to the position of world leadership and guidance from which God removed the children of israel and which was the conferred upon this ummah. The highest reward that can be granted to a people in recognition of its righteousness is its designation, by God's command, to the leadership of the world in order to guide the entire human race to godliness and righteousness.

What is said here, therefore, is that the command to change the qiblah was a sign of installation of the Muslims to leadership. Hence, the Muslims should follow the directives of God if for no other reason than that ingratitude and disobedience might deprive them of the honour that had been bestowed upon them.

152. '...Perhaps you will be guided to the right way' is indicative here of the regal appropriate for God's address to His creatures. The indication from a soverign, while addressing his slave, that the latter could expect some favour from him is quite enough to make that slave rejoice and celebrate.

كَمَآ اَرۡسَلۡنَا فِيۡكُمۡ رَسُوۡلًا مِّنۡكُمۡ يَتۡلُوۡا عَلَيۡكُمۡ اٰيٰتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيۡكُمۡ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الۡكِتٰبَ
وَالۡحِكۡمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمۡ مَّا لَمۡ تَكُوۡنُوۡا تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ۚ 151

(2:151) Just as when We sent among you a Messenger of yourselves, who recites to you Our Signs, purifies your lives, instructs you in the Book and in Wisdom, and instructs you what you did not know.

فَاذۡكُرُوۡنِىۡۤ اَذۡكُرۡكُمۡ وَاشۡكُرُوۡا لِىۡ وَلَا تَكۡفُرُوۡنِ ع 152

(2:152) So remember Me and I shall remember you; give thanks to Me and do not be ungrateful to Me for My favours.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوا اسۡتَعِيۡنُوۡا بِالصَّبۡرِ وَالصَّلٰوةِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيۡنَ 153

(2:153) Believers![153] Seek help in patience and in Prayer; Allah is with those that are patient.[154]

153. Since the ummah has been invested with world leadership, a set of necessary directives is now provided for its guidance. Before laying down these directives it seemed necessary to caution the Muslims that the office which had been conferred on them was indeed no bed of roses. On the contrary, it was a great and perilous responsibility. Once they undertook it, they would be subjected to all kinds of afflictions, put to all kinds of trials and tribulations and made to bear all kinds of deprivation. If, however, the Muslims persisted along the path of God despite the perils they would be rewarded with God's favour in full measure.

154. To acquire the strength that is needed to bear this heavy burden of responsibility the believers should do two things: they should develop patience and they should strengthen

themselves by devoting themselves to Prayer.

Later we shall encounter elaborations which will show that 'patience' is a word embracing a whole set of moral virtues of the utmost importance. 'Patience' is indeed an indispensable key to success. Likewise, we shall later have occasion to note in some detail how Prayer prepares the Muslims, both as individuals and as a collective body, to carry out their mission.

وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ يُقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتٌ ۚ بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ وَلَٰكِن لَّا تَشْعُرُونَ 154

(2:154) And do not say of those who are killed in the way of Allah that they are dead; they are alive even though you have no knowledge of their life.[155]

155. The word 'death' as well as its general concept has a depressing effect. People have therefore been instructed not to refer to martyrs who laid down their lives for God as 'dead', since this might lead to the dissipation of the spirit which enables people to struggle and make sacrifices in God's cause. Instead, people have been instructed to bear in mind that anyone who lays down his life for God has in fact attained immortality. As well as being a statement of fact this also helps to arouse and sustain courage.

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُم بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ 155

(2:155) We shall certainly test you by afflicting you with fear, hunger, loss of properties and lives and fruits. Give glad tidings, then, to those who remain patient;

الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُم مُّصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ 156

(2:156) those who when any affliction smites them, they say: “Verily, we belong to Allah, and it is to Him that we are destined to return.”[156]

156. 'Saying' does not signify the mere making of a statement. It means a statement which is accompanied by a deep conviction in one's heart: 'To Allah do we belong.' This being so, a man is bound to think that whatever has been sacrificed for God has in fact attained its legitimate end, for it has been spent in the way of the One to whom all things truly belong.

'And it is to Him that we are destined to return' refers to the fact that man will not stay forever in this world and will return, sooner or later, to God. And if man is indeed destined to return to God why should he not return to Him having spent his all, having staked his life for His sake? This alternative is preferable to the pursuit of self-aggrandizement and then meeting death either by sickness or accident.

أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ 157

(2:157) Upon them will be the blessings and mercy of their Lord, and it is they who are rightly guided.

إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِن شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ ۖ فَمَنْ حَجَّ الْبَيْتَ أَوِ اعْتَمَرَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَن
يَطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَا ۚ وَمَن تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَاكِرٌ عَلِيمٌ 158

(2:158) Surely, al-Safa and al-Marwah are the symbols of Allah. Hence, whoever performs Hajj (Full Pilgrimage)[157] to the House (of Allah) or makes 'Umrah (Minor Pilgrimage), will find that it is no sin for him to ambulate between the two.[158] And whoever does a good work voluntarily[159] should know that Allah is Appreciative, All-Knowing.

157. The pilgrimage to the Ka'bah along with a set of other rites on certain fixed dates of Dhu al-Hijjah is known as hajj. Pilgrimage at other times is known as 'Umrah.

158. Safa and Marwah are the names of two hillocks near the Holy Mosque in Makka. To run between these two hillocks was among the rites which God had taught Abraham in connection with hajj. Later, when Pagan Ignorance prevailed in Makka and the neighbouring regions, altars were built for Isaf at Safa and for Nai'lah at Marwah, and people began to circumambulate them. After the advent of the Prophet, when the light of Islam had spread to the people of Arabia, Muslims came to doubt whether running between Safa and Marwah was one of the original rites of Pilgrimage or was merely an invidious religious innovation of the Age of Ignorance. If it was in fact such, they feared they might be committing an act of polytheism.

Moreover, we learn from a Tradition transmitted from 'A'ishah that even in pre-Islamic times the people of Madina were not favourably disposed to this practice. Although they believed in al-Manat they did not believe in Isaf and Nai'lah. For these reasons, it was necessary, at the time of the change of the qiblah, to dispel popular misconceptions about this rite. It seemed necessary to tell people that running between these two hillocks was part of the original rites of Pilgrimage and that the sanctity, of Safa and Marwah, far from being an invidious innovation of the people of the Age of Ignorance, stemmed from the revealed Law of God.

159. It is best that one should perform this ritual obligation with wholehearted devotion. But if devotion is lacking one is not thereby exempt from fulfilling one's obligation. One must perform this ritual if only out of a sense of duty.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَآ أَنزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَٰتِ وَالْهُدَىٰ مِنۢ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِى الْكِتَٰبِ ۙ
أُولَٰٓئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّٰعِنُونَ ۙ 159

(2:159) Those who conceal anything of the clear teachings and true guidance which We have sent down even though We have made them clear in Our Book, Allah curses such people and so do all the cursers,[160]

160. The biggest failure of the Jews was that they kept the teachings contained in the Book of God confined to a limited class of people, the rabbis and professional theologians, instead of spreading them. They did not allow this knowledge to filter through even to the Jewish masses let alone the non-Jewish peoples of the world. Later, when errors and corruptions spread among them owing to widespread ignorance the Jewish theologians made no serious effort to root them out. Moreover, in order to maintain their hold on the Jewish masses they lent their tacit approval to every corrupting deviation from the true faith that gained currency.

The Muslims are being admonished to refrain from this kind of behaviour. The nation which has been charged with the guidance of the entire world is duty-bound to do its utmost to radiate true guidance, rather than keep it under lock and key as a miser hoards his money.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا۟ وَأَصْلَحُوا۟ وَبَيَّنُوا۟ فَأُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ أَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ
الرَّحِيمُ 160

(2:160) except those who repent and make amends and openly declare (what they had concealed). Such shall I pardon for I am Much- Relenting, Most Compassionate.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ وَمَاتُوا۟ وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ وَالْمَلَٰٓئِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ
أَجْمَعِينَ ۙ 161

(2:161) As for those who disbelieved[161] and died disbelieving, surely the curse of Allah and of the angels and of all men is on them.

161. The original meaning of kufr is to conceal. This lent the word a nuance of denial and it began to be used as an antonym of iman . Iman means to believe, to accept, and to recognize. Kufr, on the contrary, denotes refusal to believe, to deny, to reject. According to the Qur'an there are several possible forms of disbelief. One is to refuse either to believe in the existence of God, to acknowledge His sovereignty, to recognize Him as the only Lord of the Universe and of mankind or to recognize Him as the only Lord and the only object of worship and

adoration. The second form of disbelief is when a man recognizes the existence of God but still refuses to accept His ordinances and directives as the only source of true guidance, and as the true law for his life. The third form of disbelief is when even though a man recognizes in principle that he ought to follow the guidance of God he refuses to believe in the Prophets who were the means of communicating God's guidance to man. The fourth form of disbelief is to differentiate between one Prophet and another and, out of parochialism and bigotry, to accept some Prophets and reject others. The fifth form of disbelief is the refusal to recognize, either totally or partially, the teachings communicated by the Prophets, on God's behalf, concerning the beliefs, the principles of morality, and the laws for fashioning human life. The sixth form of disbelief is where a person theoretically accepts all that he should accept but wilfully disobeys God's ordinances and persists in this disobedience, and considers disobedience rather than obedience to God to be the true principle of life.

All these modes of thought and action are forms of rebellion towards God and the Qur'an characterizes each of them as kufr. In addition, the term kufr is used at several places in the Qur'an in the sense of ingratitude and in this usage it signifies the exact opposite of shukr (gratitude). Gratefulness consists in feeling thankful to one's benefactor, in duly recognizing the value of his benevolence, in making use of it in a manner pleasing to its bestower, and in being utterly loyal to him. Ingratitude denotes, on the contrary, that the man concerned has either failed to recognize the bounty of his benefactor, or considers it to be either the outcome of his own power and ability or else that of some other person's favour or intercession. Another form of ingratitude consists in failing to recognize fully the worth of the bounty received and in either allowing it to be wasted or to be used in contravention of the will of the benefactor; this ingratitude includes infidelity and treachery towards the benefactor in disregard of his benevolence and kindness. This kind of kufr is known in ordinary language as ungratefulness.

خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۚ لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُوْنَ 162

(2:162) Thus shall they abide and their chastisement shall not be lightened, nor shall they be given respite.

وَاِلٰهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ۚ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمٰنُ الرَّحِيْمُ ع 163

(2:163) Your God is One God, there is no god but He; the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate.

اِنَّ فِيْ خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِيْ تَجْرِيْ فِي الْبَحْرِ

بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مِنْ مَّآءٍ فَاَحْيَا بِهِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ

فِيۡهَا مِنۡ كُلِّ دَآبَّةٍ ۖ وَّتَصۡرِيۡفِ الرِّيٰحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الۡمُسَخَّرِ بَيۡنَ السَّمَآءِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ

لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوۡمٍ يَّعۡقِلُوۡنَ 164

(2:164) (To guide) those who use their reason (to this Truth) there are many Signs in the structure of the heavens and the earth, in the constant alternation of night and day, in the vessels which speed across the sea carrying goods that are of profit to people, in the water which Allah sends down from the sky and thereby quickens the earth after it was dead, and disperse over it all manner of animals, and in the changing courses of the winds and the clouds pressed into service between heaven and earth.[162]

162. If a man were to observe the constant operation of this universe, reflect on it in a manner befitting a rational being, and think about it without either stubbornness or bias, he would find sufficient signs to convince him that this gigantic system is absolutely subservient to the will of the Omnipotent and Wise Being, Who alone wields all power and authority. Moreover, this system seems to be such as to rule out all possibility of any interference from others whether independent of the Creator of the universe or in partnership with Him. Since this One True God is the Lord of all creation and none else is in possession of any power or authority, none is entitled to any share in His godhead or overlordship.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنۡ يَّتَّخِذُ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ اَنۡدَادًا يُّحِبُّوۡنَهُمۡ كَحُبِّ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَالَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اَشَدُّ حُبًّا

لِّلّٰهِ ؕ وَلَوۡ يَرَى الَّذِيۡنَ ظَلَمُوۡۤا اِذۡ يَرَوۡنَ الۡعَذَابَ ۙ اَنَّ الۡقُوَّةَ لِلّٰهِ جَمِيۡعًا ۙ وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيۡدُ

الۡعَذَابِ 165

(2:165) Yet there are some who take others as equals to Allah[163] and love them as Allah alone should be loved; but those who (truly) believe, they love Allah more than all else.[164]

If only the wrong-doers were to perceive now – as they will perceive when they will see the chastisement – that all power belongs to Allah alone, and that Allah is severe in chastisement!

163. There are certain attributes which belong exclusively to God. Moreover, there are certain duties that man owes to God by virtue of His being his Lord. The indictment of the Qur'an is that the people in question ascribe to others than God the attributes which are exclusively His and likewise consider others to be the rightful claimants of certain rights over man which belong only to God. To be Lord of the entire complex of causal relationships found in the universe, to dispense the needs and requirements of people, to deliver them from distress and affliction, to heed complaints and respond to lamentations

and prayers, and having full knowledge of all that is apparent as well as all that is hidden, are the exclusive attributes of God.

Furthermore, there are certain rights which God alone may claim: that His creatures should recognize Him alone as their Sovereign, prostrate themselves before Him alone in recognition of their bondage to Him, turn to Him alone for the fulfilment of their prayers, call Him alone for help and succour, place their trust is none save Him, centre their hopes and expectations only in His Munificence, and fear Him alone both in public and in private.

In the same way, being the only Absolute Sovereign of the universe, it befits none save God to lay down what is permitted and what is prohibited for His subjects, to prescribe their rights and duties, to command them what to do and what not to do, to direct them as to how the energy and resources bestowed on them, by God, should be expended.

Again, it is God alone Who can ask His subjects to acknowledge His sovereignty, to accept His commands as the source of law, to consider Him alone to be the Lord entitled to command men, to consider His commands supreme, and to turn to Him alone for correct guidance. Whoever either ascribes to any being other than God any of the aforementioned attributes or recognizes the claim of anyone save God to be entitled to any of the above-mentioned rights over His creatures is in fact setting up that being as a rival to God, and placing him on the same plane as God. By the same token, any individual or institution claiming to possess any of the exclusive attributes and rights of God (as mentioned above), is in fact claiming a position parallel and equal to that of God even though the claim to godhead may not have been categorically spelled out.

164. True faith requires that a man should give absolute priority to seeking God's good pleasure and should hold nothing too dear to sacrifice for the sake of God.

إِذْ تَبَرَّأَ الَّذِينَ اتُّبِعُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا وَرَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ وَتَقَطَّعَتْ بِهِمُ
الْأَسْبَابُ 166

(2:166) At that moment those who have been followed will disown their followers, and they will see the chastisement, and their resources will be cut asunder.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا لَوْ أَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً فَنَتَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُمْ كَمَا تَبَرَّءُوا مِنَّا ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ يُرِيهِمُ اللَّهُ
أَعْمَالَهُمْ حَسَرَاتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ وَمَا هُمْ بِخَارِجِينَ مِنَ النَّارِ ۝ 167

(2:167) And the followers will then say: "Oh if only we might return again, we would disown them as they have disowned us?" 165 Thus Allah will show them their works in a manner causing them bitter regrets. Never will they come out of the Fire.

165. Here particular reference is made to the dismal end of those so-called religious leaders who mislead people, and of their gullible followers who fall easy prey to their deception. This has been done in order to warn the Muslims to beware of the errors which misled former nations, and to impress upon them the need to develop the capacity to distinguish between true and spurious leaders so as to avoid being led by the latter.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ كُلُوا۟ مِمَّا فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ حَلَٰلًا طَيِّبًا ۖ صلے وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا۟ خُطُوَٰتِ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنِ ۚ إِنَّهُۥ لَكُمْ
عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ 168

(2:168) O people! Eat of the lawful and pure things in the earth and follow not in the footsteps of Satan.[166] For surely he is your open enemy;

166. The demand made here is that they should violate all those taboos in matters of food and drink which have their basis in superstitious beliefs or irrational usages.

إِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُم بِٱلسُّوٓءِ وَٱلْفَحْشَآءِ وَأَن تَقُولُوا۟ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ 169

(2:169) he only commands you to do evil and commit acts of indecency and to ascribe to Allah the things concerning which you have no knowledge (that He really is their source).[167]

167. The notion that all superstitious customs and taboos are God-given religious teachings is an example of satanic deception, pure and simple, since there is no evidence whatsoever to suggest that they are from God.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ ٱتَّبِعُوا۟ مَآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ قَالُوا۟ بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَآ أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ ءَابَآءَنَا ۚ أَوَلَوْ كَانَ
ءَابَآؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْـًٔا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ 170

(2:170) And when they are told: "Follow what Allah has revealed," they say: "No, we shall follow what we found our forefathers adhering to."[168] What! Even if their forefathers were devoid of understanding and right guidance?

168. The only possible argument and justification for these taboos was that they had been sanctified by the practice of their forefathers from whom they had allegedly come down generation after generation. Fickle-minded as they were, they deemed this argument to be sufficiently persuasive.

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا كَمَثَلِ الَّذِيْ يَنْعِقُ بِمَا لَا يَسْمَعُ اِلَّا دُعَآءً وَّنِدَآءً ؕ صُمٌّۢ بُكْمٌ

عُمْيٌ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ 171

(2:171) Those who have refused to follow the Way of Allah resemble cattle; when the shepherd calls them they hear nothing except shouting and crying;[169] they are deaf, dumb and blind, and so they understand nothing.

169. This parable has two aspects. On the one hand, it suggests that these people are like herds of irrational animals, dumb cattle, that always follow their herdsmen, moving on as they hear their calls without understanding what they mean. (Thus these people follow their leaders even though they do not grasp where it is they are being led to - Ed.) On the other hand, it also suggests that when the Truth is preached to them they show such insensitivity to it that one may as well be addressing animals who merely comprehend sounds but are incapable of understanding their meaning. The expression lends itself to both interpretations.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كُلُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوْا لِلّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اِيَّاهُ

تَعْبُدُوْنَ 172

(2:172) Believers! Eat of the pure things wherewith We have provided you for sustenance and give thanks to Allah[170] if it is Him that you serve.

170. The believers are told that if by having believed they have committed themselves to following the Law of God as they claim then they should abandon all taboos and prohibitions imposed by the pundits and priests, by the rabbis and church fathers, by the monks and recluses, and by their own forefathers. Although they were required to abstain from whatever had been prohibited by God, they ought to feel no compunction with regard to consuming all that He had permitted. This has also been alluded to in the saying of the Prophet reported in a Tradition in the following words: 'Whoever prays in our manner, turns towards our qiblah (in Prayer), and eats (the flesh) of our slaughtered (animals), that person is Muslim. (Bukhari, 'K. al-Salah', 28; 'K. al-Adahi', 12; Muslim, 'K. al-Adahi', 6; Nasai, 'K. al-lman', 9; 'K. al-Dahaya', 17 - Ed.) This means that in spite of praying and facing towards the qiblah, a person is not fully assimilated into Islam as long as he maintains the pre-Islamic taboos in matters of eating and drinking and holds on to the fetters of superstition forged by the victims of Ignorance. A person's adherence to these taboos is indicative of the fact that the poison of Ignorance continues to flow in his veins.

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِنزِيرِ وَمَا أُهِلَّ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ ۖ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ
بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ 173

(2:173) He has made unlawful to you only carrion and blood and the flesh of swine and that over which there has been pronounced the name of anyone other than Allah's.[171] But he who is constrained (to eat of them) – and he neither covets them nor exceeds the indispensable limit incurs no sin: Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.[172]

171. This applies to the flesh of an animal slaughtered in the name of anything and anyone other than God as well as to the food prepared as an offering to someone other than God. God alone is the master of everything - of the animal whose flesh we consume as well as of every other kind of food - and it is He Who has mercifully provided us with them. Hence, if it is appropriate to pronounce any name as an expression of gratitude, of consecration, it can only be the name of God. To use anyone else's name means that we believe that there is some other being either instead of or in addition to God which deserves to be acknowledged as our Lord and Benefactor.

172. This verse grants permission to use prohibited things with three stipulations. First, one must be in a state of extreme compulsion, for example, being gravely ill or being so hungry and thirsty that one's very life is in danger, and a prohibited thing is all that is available to save one's life. Second, the person concerned should have no inclination to violate the Law of God. Third, in consuming the prohibited thing one should not exceed the limits of bare necessity. If a few bites or a few drops are enough to save one's life, one ought not to go beyond the absolute minimum.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَشْتَرُونَ بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۙ أُولَٰئِكَ مَا
يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ إِلَّا النَّارَ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَ
لِيمٌ 174

(2:174) Those who conceal anything of the Book revealed by Allah and sell it away for a trifling gain are merely filling their bellies with Fire.[173] Allah will neither address them on the Day of Resurrection, nor shall He pronounce them "pure".[174] A painful chastisement lies in store for them.

173. This means that the blame for the growth of whole new codes consisting of superstitions, perverted customs, and unjustifiable taboos lay squarely on the shoulders of those religious scholars who had knowledge of the Scriptures but failed to transmit their knowledge to the common people. Moreover, later, when erroneous practices began to

spread among them they remained mute spectators of this drama. Indeed, some of them kept wilfully silent about these matters thinking that their interests would be better served if the Scripture remained a sealed book and its injunctions were kept beyond the access of the common people.

174. This is a refutation of the false claims made by their religious leaders and a clarification of the misconceptions regarding their positions and privileges which these leaders had been spreading among the common people. They spared no efforts to give the impression that they were sacred beings and that anyone who attached himself to them would necessarily earn God's forgiveness through their intercession. Here God is telling them that He takes no notice of people who are unworthy to intercede for themselves, let alone able to intercede for others.

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الضَّلَالَةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَالْعَذَابَ بِالْمَغْفِرَةِ ۚ فَمَا أَصْبَرَهُمْ عَلَى
النَّارِ 175

(2:175) They are the ones who bought error in exchange for true guidance, and chastisement in exchange for forgiveness. How patient they are in enduring the Fire!

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ نَزَّلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ ۗ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِي الْكِتَابِ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ
بَعِيدٍ ۚ 176

(2:176) This is so because Allah revealed the Book with the Truth, but those who disagreed concerning the Book veered far away from the Truth.

لَّيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَن تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَٰكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ
وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ ۚ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ
وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ ۙ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ ۚ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ ۚ
وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا ۚ وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ
الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ 177

(2:177) Righteousness does not consist in turning your faces towards the east or towards the west;[175] true righteousness consists in believing in Allah and the Last Day, the angels, the Book and the Prophets, and in giving away one's property in love of Him to one's kinsmen, the orphans, the poor and the wayfarer, and to those who ask for help, and in freeing the necks of slaves, and in establishing Prayer and dispensing the Zakah. True righteousness is attained by those who are faithful to their promise once they have made it and by those who remain steadfast in adversity and affliction and at the time of battle (between Truth and falsehood). Such are the truthful ones; such are the God-fearing.

175. Turning one's face towards the east or the west is mentioned here only by way of illustration. The actual purpose of the verse is to emphasize that the observance of certain outward religious rites, the performance of certain formal religious acts out of conformism, and the manifestation of certain familiar forms of piety do not constitute that essential righteousness which alone carries weight with God and earns His recognition and approval.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ كُتِبَ عَلَيۡكُمُ ٱلۡقِصَاصُ فِي ٱلۡقَتۡلَىۖ ٱلۡحُرُّ بِٱلۡحُرِّ وَٱلۡعَبۡدُ بِٱلۡعَبۡدِ
وَٱلۡأُنثَىٰ بِٱلۡأُنثَىٰۚ فَمَنۡ عُفِيَ لَهُۥ مِنۡ أَخِيهِ شَيۡءٞ فَٱتِّبَاعُۢ بِٱلۡمَعۡرُوفِ وَأَدَآءٌ إِلَيۡهِ بِإِحۡسَٰنٖۗ
ذَٰلِكَ تَخۡفِيفٞ مِّن رَّبِّكُمۡ وَرَحۡمَةٞۗ فَمَنِ ٱعۡتَدَىٰ بَعۡدَ ذَٰلِكَ فَلَهُۥ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٞ ١٧٨

(2:178) Believers! Retribution is prescribed for you in cases of killing:[176] if a freeman is guilty then the freeman; if a slave is guilty then the slave; if a female is guilty, then the female.[177]

But if something of a murderer's guilt is remitted by his brother[178] this should be adhered to in fairness,[179] and payment be made in a goodly manner. This is an alleviation and a mercy from your Lord; and for him who commits excess after that[180] there is a painful chastisement.

176. Retribution, that is, blood revenge, is based on the principle that what a person has done to others ought to be done to him. This does not mean that the murderer should be put to death in exactly the same manner as he killed but that the murderer should be subjected to the same act, i.e. killing, as that to which he subjected his victim.

177. In pre-Islamic Arabia people tried to take blood revenge upon the murderer's family and tribe, and the retaliation corresponded to the value placed on the blood of the victim. Their desire for revenge was not quenched merely by putting the murderer to death. They preferred to put to death tens and even hundreds of people to avenge the one life they had lost. If a respected member of their tribe was killed by an ordinary member of another, it was not deemed enough to put to death the actual murderer. They preferred to kill a man of the murderer's tribe equal in standing to the victim, and even several members of the murderer's tribe. However, if the victim was a man of humble standing from another tribe,

and the murderer from their tribe happened to be a man of high standing, they were unwilling to permit the execution of the murderer.

This attitude is not confined to the Ignorance of that bygone age. Even today those nations that are supposedly the most civilized will often proclaim, officially and quite brazenly, that if one of their citizens is killed they will execute scores of the killer's compatriots. In addition we often hear that to avenge the murder of one person a large number of hostages belonging to a subject nation have been shot dead. One of the 'civilized' nations of the present century subjected the whole Egyptian nation to blood revenge because one of their officials, Sir Lee Stack, was killed by an Egyptian. The courts of justice of these so-called civilized nations have been known to refrain from passing the death sentence on convicted homicides when they happened to be members of the ruling nation while their victims belonged to the subject nation. It is iniquities such as these that God seeks to end by means of the directive contained in this verse. What God says here is that the killer ought to be put to death irrespective of his status and that of the victim.

178. The very use of the word 'brother' in this context suggests that as a general rule one ought to incline towards leniency. Despite the bitterness felt towards someone who has shed the blood of, say, one's father, the murderer is still one's brother by virtue of being a member of the human family. Hence if one who has been wronged can overcome the vengeful spirit aroused by his erring brother's deed, this attitude of forgiveness will be worthy of his humanity.

This verse also makes it clear that according to the Islamic penal law the question of homicide can be settled by the mutual consent of the two parties. It is the prerogative of the heirs of the victim to forgive the murderer, and if it is exercised not even a judge has the power to insist on carrying out the death sentence. In such a case, however, as the following verse mentions, the murderer will be made to pay blood money.

179. The term ma'ruf occurs quite frequently in the Qur'an. It refers to conduct which is reckoned fair and equitable by the generality of disinterested people. The generally accepted usages and customs of life are called 'urf and ma'ruf in Islamic terminology, and they are considered valid in all those matters not specifically regulated by the Shar'iah.

180. Excess might consist of trying to avenge the blood of the murdered man even after his heirs have settled the matter and received blood money or of efforts on the part of the murderer to delay the payment of blood money thus repaying the heirs of the victim with ingratitude for their kindness and goodwill.

وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيٰوةٌ يّٰٓأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ 179

(2:179) People of understanding, there is life for you in retribution[181] that you may guard yourselves against violating the Law.

181. This refutes another notion of Ignorance, a notion ingrained in the minds of many people, both past and present. On the one hand there are some people who, entrenched in Ignorance, tend to exceed the limits of moderation in revenge. At the other end of the

spectrum stand those who are opposed in principle to the concept of executing a murderer. They have conducted such intense, world-wide propaganda against the death penalty that it has become abhorrent to many people. In fact the impact of this propaganda has been so great that in many countries the death penalty has been abolished altogether.

The Qur'an, however, addresses itself on this question to wise and intelligent people and cautions them against such immoderate leniency by proclaiming that the survival of human society rests on the application of the death penalty for homicide. A society which holds inviolable the lives of those who disregard the sanctity of human life is in fact rearing snakes and serpents. To save the life of one murderer is to risk the lives of many innocent human beings.

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ إِنْ تَرَكَ خَيْرًا ۖ الْوَصِيَّةُ لِلْوَالِدَيْنِ
وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۖ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ ۖ 180

(2:180) It is decreed that when death approaches, those of you who leave behind property shall bequeath equitably to parents and kinsmen. This is an obligation on the God-fearing.[182]

182. This injunction relates to a period of time when no rules had been laid down for the distribution of inheritance. Thus everyone was required to make testamentary disposal of their property so as to ensure that no disputes arose in the family and no legitimate claimant to inheritance was deprived of his due share. Later when God revealed a set of laws regarding the distribution of inheritance see (Qur'an 4: 11 ff.), the Prophet elucidated further the laws relating to testamentary disposition and inheritance by expounding two rules.

First, that no person can make any will regarding his estate in favour of any of his legal heirs. Their portions were laid down in the Qur'an and neither increase nor decrease in this was permissible, nor could any heir be disinherited, nor anything willed in favour of any heir over and above his legal portion. (See the Tradition: 'There may be no will in favour of the heir.' See Abu Da'ud, 'Al-Wasaya', 6; Tirmidhi, 'Al-Wasaya', 5; Nasa'i, 'Al-Wasaya', 5; Ibn Majah, 'Al-Wasaya', 5 - Ed.)

Second, that testamentary disposition might be made to the extent of one third of the estate, but no more. (See Bukhari, 'Al-Wasaya', 2 and 3; Muslim, 'Al-Wasiyah', 5-10; Abu Da'ud, 'Al-Wasaya', 2 - Ed.)

The purpose underlying these explanatory directives of the Prophet seems to be that at least two-thirds of the estate should be left aside to be distributed among the legal heirs according to the Qur'anic rules, and that a will could be made in respect of the whole or part of the remaining one-third. This could be made in favour of either relatives, whether close or distant, who are not legal heirs, or others not related by the blood-tie but who are deserving of assistance. Likewise, a will could be made in favour of charitable causes which are found worthy of support.

In later times people began to regard this directive regarding testamentary disposal as a recommendation only. The result was that this rule fell largely into disuse. It is significant, however, that the Qur'an mentions it as 'an obligation on the God-fearing'. Were Muslims to make this injunction an operative institution no trace would remain of the problems which agitate their minds respecting the Islamic law of inheritance , for example grandchildren whose parents had predeceased their paternal or maternal grandparents and who, under Islamic law, were not entitled to inherit from their grandparents. (The author suggests that re-activating the Qur'anic directive on testamentary disposal is the answer to this and similar problems - Ed.)

فَمَنۢ بَدَّلَهٗ بَعۡدَمَا سَمِعَهٗ فَاِنَّمَاۤ اِثۡمُهٗ عَلَى الَّذِيۡنَ يُبَدِّلُوۡنَهٗ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيۡعٌ عَلِيۡمٌ ؕ 181

(2:181) Then if anyone alters the will after hearing it, this sin shall be upon them who alter. Surely Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

فَمَنۡ خَافَ مِنۡ مُّوۡصٍ جَنَفًا اَوۡ اِثۡمًا فَاَصۡلَحَ بَيۡنَهُمۡ فَلَاۤ اِثۡمَ عَلَيۡهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوۡرٌ

رَّحِيۡمٌ ع 182

(2:182) He who suspects that the testator has committed an error or injustice and then brings about a settlement among the parties concerned incurs no sin. Surely Allah is Much-Forgiving, Most Compassionate.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا كُتِبَ عَلَيۡكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِيۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِكُمۡ لَعَلَّكُمۡ

تَتَّقُوۡنَ ۙ 183

(2:183) Believers! Fasting is enjoined upon you, as it was enjoined upon those before you, that you become God-fearing.[183]

183. Like most other injunctions of Islam those relating to fasting were revealed gradually. In the beginning the Prophet (peace be on him) had instructed the Muslims to fast three days in every month, though this was not obligatory. When the injunction in the present verse was later revealed in 2 A.H., a degree of relaxation was introduced: it was stipulated that those who did not fast despite their capacity to endure it were obliged to feed one poor person as an expiation for each day of obligatory fasting missed see (verse 184). Another injunction was revealed later see (verse 185) and here the relaxation in respect of able-bodied persons was revoked. However, for the sick, the traveller, the pregnant, the breast-feeding women and the aged who could not endure fasting, the relaxation was retained. (See Bukhari, 'Tafsir al-Qur'an', 25; Tirmidhi, 'Sawm', 21; Nasai, 'Siyam', 51, 62, 64; Ibn Majah,

'Siyam', 12; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 3, p. 104; vol. 4, pp. 347 and 418; vol. 5, p. 29 - Ed.)

اَيَّامًا مَّعْدُوْدٰتٍ ؕ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيْضًا اَوْ عَلٰى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ اَيَّامٍ اُخَرَ ؕ وَعَلَى الَّذِيْنَ
يُطِيْقُوْنَهٗ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِيْنٍ ؕ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّهٗ ؕ وَاَنْ تَصُوْمُوْا خَيْرٌ
لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ 184

(2:184) Fasting is for a fixed number of days, and if one of you be sick, or if one of you be on a journey, you will fast the same number of other days later on. For those who are capable of fasting (but still do not fast) there is a redemption: feeding a needy man for each day missed. Whoever voluntarily does more good than is required, will find it better for him;[184] and that you should fast is better for you, if you only know.[185]

184. This act of extra merit could either be feeding more than the one person required or both fasting and feeding the poor.

185. Here ends the early injunction with regard to fasting which was revealed in 2 A.H. prior to the Battle of Badr. The verses that follow were revealed about one year later and are linked with the preceding verses since they deal with the same subject.

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِيْٓ اُنْزِلَ فِيْهِ الْقُرْاٰنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنٰتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدٰى وَالْفُرْقَانِ ۚ
فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ؕ وَمَنْ كَانَ مَرِيْضًا اَوْ عَلٰى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ اَيَّامٍ اُخَرَ ؕ
يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيْدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ ۫ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللّٰهَ عَلٰى مَا
هَدٰىكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ 185

(2:185) During the month of Ramadan the Qur'an was sent down as a guidance to the people with Clear Signs of the true guidance and as the Criterion (between right and wrong). So those of you who live to see that month should fast it, and whoever is sick or on a journey should fast the same number of other days instead. Allah wants ease and not hardship for you so that you may complete the number of days required,[186] magnify Allah for what He has guided you to, and give thanks to Him.[187]

186. Whether a person should or should not fast while on a journey is left to individual discretion. We find that among the Companions who accompanied the Prophet on journeys some fasted whereas others did not; none objected to the conduct of another. The Prophet

himself did not always fast when travelling. On one journey a person was so overwhelmed by hunger that he collapsed; the Prophet disapproved when he learned that the man had been fasting. During wars the Prophet used to prevent people from fasting so that they would not lack energy for the fight. It has been reported by 'Umar that two military expeditions took place in the month of Ramadan. The first was the Battle of Badr and the second the conquest of Makka. On both occasions the Companions abstained from fasting, and, according to Ibn 'Umar, on the occasion of the conquest of Makka the Prophet proclaimed that people should not fast since it was a day of fighting. In other Traditions the Prophet is reported to have said that people should not fast when they had drawn close to the enemy, since abstention from fasting would lead to greater strength. (See Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 3, p. 329, and vol. 5, pp. 205 and 209: Darimi, ' Sawm', 41; Muslim, 'Siyarn', 92; Nasai, 'Siyam', 47; Bukhari, 'Maghazi', 71; Muslim, 'Siyam', 102; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 3, pp. 21, 35, 46; Tirmidhi, 'Sawm', 18, Nasa'i. 'Siyam', 52; Bukhari , 'Jihad', 29; Muslim, 'Siyam', 98; Abu Da'ud, 'Sawm' 42; Muslim, 'Siyam', 102, 103, 105; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad vol. 2, 99; Tirmidhi, : 'Sawm', 19 - Ed.)

The duration of a journey for which it becomes permissible for a person to abstain from fasting is not absolutely clear from any statement of the Prophet, (cf. relevant Traditions Abu Da'ud, 'Sawm', 46, 47; Nasai , 'Siyam', 54, 55; Malik, Muaatta', 'Siyam', 21, 27 - Ed.) In addition the practice of the Companions was not uniform. It would seem that any journey which is commonly regarded as such, and which is attended by the circumstances generally associated with travelling, should be deemed sufficient justification for not fasting.

Jurists agree that one does not have to fast on the day of commencing a journey; one may eat either at the point of departure or after the actual journey has commenced. Either course is sanctioned by the practice of the Companions. Jurists, however, are not agreed as to whether or not the residents of a city under attack may abstain from fasting even though they are not actually travelling. Ibn taymiyah favours the permissibility of abstention from fasting and supports his view with vcry forceful arguments.

187. This indicates that fasting need not be confined, exclusively, to Ramadan. For those who fail to fast during that month owing to some legitimate reason God has kept the door of compensation open during other months of the year so that they need not be deprived of the opportunity to express their gratitude to Him for His great bounty, in revealing the Qur'an.

It should he noted here that fasting in Ramadan has not only been declared an act of worship and devotion and a means to nourish piety but has also been characterized as an act of gratefulness to God for His great bounty of true guidance in the form of the Qur'an. In fact, the best way of expressing gratitude for someone's bounty or benevolence is to prepare oneself, to the best of one's ability, to achieve the purpose for which that bounty has been bestowed. The Qur'an has been revealed so that we may know the way that leads to God's good pleasure, follow that way ourselves and direct the world along it. Fasting is an excellent means by which to prepare ourselves for shouldering this task. Hence fasting during the month of the revelation of the Qur'an is more than an act of worship and more than an excellent course of moral training; it is also an appropriate form for the expression of our thankfulness to God for the bounty of the Qur'an.

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ ۖ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي
وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ 186

(2:186) (O Muhammad), when My servants ask you about Me, tell them I am quite near; I hear and answer the call of the caller whenever he calls Me. Let them listen to My call and believe in Me;[188] perhaps they will be guided aright.[189]

188. Even though people can neither see God nor subject Him to any other form of sense perception this should not make them feel that God is remote from them. On the contrary, He is so close to each and every person that whenever any person so wishes he can communicate with his Lord. So much so that God hears and responds even to the prayers which remain within the innermost recesses of the heart.

People exhaust themselves by approaching false and powerless beings whom they foolishly fancy to be their deities but who have neither the power to hear nor to grant their prayers. But God, the omnipotent Lord and the absolute Master of this vast universe, Who wields all power and authority, is so close to human beings that they can always approach Him without the intercession of any intermediaries, and can put to Him their prayers and requests.

189. This announcement of God's closeness to man may open his eyes to the Truth, may turn him to the right way wherein lies his success and well-being.

أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَىٰ نِسَائِكُمْ ۚ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ ۗ
عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنكُمْ ۖ فَالْآنَ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ
وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۚ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ
الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ۖ ثُمَّ أَتِمُّوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ ۚ وَلَا تُبَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَأَنتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ
فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ ۗ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرَبُوهَا ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَتَّقُونَ 187

(2:187) It has been made lawful for you to go in to your wives during the night of the fast. They are your garment, and you are theirs.[190] Allah knows that you used to

betray yourselves and He mercifully relented and pardoned you. So you may now associate intimately with your wives and benefit from the enjoyment Allah has made lawful for you,[191] and eat and drink[192] at night until you can discern the white streak of dawn against the blackness of the night;[193] then (give up all that and) complete your fasting until night sets in.[194]

But do not associate intimately with your wives during the period when you are on retreat in the mosques.[195] These are the bounds set by Allah; do not, then, even draw near them.[196] Thus does Allah make His Signs clear to mankind that they may stay away from evil.

190. Just as nothing intervenes between a person's body and his clothes, so nothing can intervene between a man and his wife; it is a relationship of inalienable intimacy.

191. Although there was no categorical ordinance in the early days prohibiting sexual intercourse between husband and wife during the nights of Ramadan, people generally assumed that this was not permissible. Despite the feeling that their action was either not permitted or was at least disapproved of, they did at times approach their wives. Such a betrayal of conscience can encourage a sinful disposition. God, therefore, first reproaches them with their lack of integrity, for this is what was objectionable. As for the act itself, God makes it clear that it is quite permissible. Henceforth they might engage in sexual intercourse as a perfectly lawful act unencumbered by feelings of guilt.

192. In this connection, too, there was a misapprehension at first. Some thought that eating and drinking were absolutely prohibited after the performance of the 'Isha' (Night) Prayer. Others thought that one could eat and drink so long as one had not fallen asleep, but that if one had it was not permissible to eat on reawakening. These were people's own fancies and often caused great inconvenience. This verse seeks to remove all such misconceptions. It clearly lays down the duration of the fast: from dawn until sunset. Between sunset and dawn it is permissible to eat, to drink, and to indulge in the legitimate gratification of sexual desires.

At the same time the Prophet introduced the pre-fasting repast, recommending a good meal just before dawn.

193. In fixing the time of obligatory rites, Islam has been mindful that these timings should be so clear and simple that people, at all stages of development, should be able to follow them. This is why Islam bases its timing on conspicuous natural phenomena and not on the clock.

Some people object that this principle of timing is untenable in areas close to the poles, where night and day each last for about six months. This objection is based on a very superficial knowledge of geography. In point of fact neither day nor night lasts for six months in those areas - not in the sense in which people living near the Equator conceive of night and day. The signs of morning and evening appear at the poles with unfailing regularity and it is on this basis that people time their sleeping and waking, their professional work, their play and recreation. Even in the days before watches were common, the people of countries like Finland, Norway and Greenland used to fix the hours of the day

and night by means of various signs that appeared on the horizon. Just as those signs helped them to determine their schedules in other matters, so they should enable them to time their various Prayers, the pre-fast meal and the breaking of the fast.

194. 'Complete your fasting until night sets in' means that the time of fasting ends with nightfall, i.e. sunset marks the breaking of the fast. The precise time of the end of the pre-dawn repast is when a lean strip of aurora appears at the eastern end of the horizon and begins to grow. The time to break one's fast starts when the darkness of night seems to have begun to appear over the eastern horizon.

In our own time, some people have adopted an attitude of extreme caution with regard to the time of both the end and start of fasting. The Law has not fixed these schedules with rigid precision. If a person wakes up just at the crack of dawn it is proper for him to eat and drink hastily. According to a Tradition the Prophet said: 'If anyone of you hears the call for [the morning] Prayer while he is eating he should not stop immediately, but should finish eating to the extent of his bare need.' (Abu Da'ud. Siyam', 14 - Ed.) Similarly, one need not wait for the light of day to disappear fully before breaking the fast. The Prophet, for instance, used to ask Bilil to bring him something to drink as soon as the sun had set. Bilal expressed his astonishment, pointing out that the light of day could still be observed. To this the Prophet replied that the time of fasting came to an end when the darkness of night began to rise from the east. (Muslim, 'Siyam', 10; Abu Da'ud, 'Siyam', 15; etc. - Ed.)

195. 'On retreat in the mosque' refers to the religious practice of spending the last ten days of Ramadan in the mosque, consecrating this time to the remembrance of God. In this state, known as i'tikaf, one may go out of the mosque only for the absolutely necessary requirements of life, but one must stay away from gratifying one's sexual desire.

196. The directive here is neither to exceed nor draw near the limits set by God. This means that it is dangerous for a man to skirt the boundaries of disobedience; prudence demands that one should keep some distance from these lest one's steps inadvertent lead one to cross them. The same principle has been enunciated in a Tradition in which the Prophet said: 'Even sovereign has an enclosed pasture and the enclosed pasture of God consists of His prohibitions. So, whosoever keeps grazing around that pasture is likely to fall into it.' (Bukhari, 'lman', 36; 'Buyu'', 3; Muslim, 'Musaqah', 107; Abu Da'd, 'Buyu", 3; Tirmidhi, 'Buyu", 1; Nasa'i, 'Buyu?, 3; 'Ashribah', 50; Ibn Majah, 'Fitan', 14 - Ed.)

It is a pity that many people. who are not conversant with the spirit of the Shari'ah (Islamic law), insist on using these boundaries to the limits. Many religious scholars exert themselves in finding out arguments to justify this attitude, and a point is thus reached where only a hair's breadth separates obedience from disobedience. Consequently many people fall prey to disobedience, even to downright error and wrong-doing. For once a man arrives at this point he is seldom capable of discerning between right and wrong, and maintaining the absolute self-control needed to keep within the lawful limits.

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوٓا اَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتُدْلُوْا بِهَآ اِلَى الْحُكَّامِ لِتَاْكُلُوْا فَرِيْقًا مِّنْ اَمْوَالِ
النَّاسِ بِالْاِثْمِ وَاَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ع 188

(2:188) Do not usurp one another's possessions by false means, nor proffer your possessions to the authorities so that you may sinfully and knowingly usurp a portion of another's possessions.[197]

197. One meaning of this verse is that people should not try to seek illegitimate benefits by bribing magistrates. Another meaning is that when a person is aware that the property, he claims rightfully belongs to someone else, he should not file a judicial petition either because the other party lacks the evidence to support their case or because by trickery and cunning the petitioner can usurp that property. It is possible that the judicial authority would decide the case in favour of the false claimant on the basis of the formal strength of the claim, but as this judicial verdict would merely be the result of the chicanery to which the claimant had resorted he would not become its rightful owner. In spite of the judgement of the court the property would remain unlawful for him in the sight of God. It has been reported in a Tradition that the Prophet said: 'I am merely a human being and you bring to me your disputes. It is possible that some of you will be more impressive in argument than others, so that 1 may give judgement in favour of one on the basis of what 1 hear. Beware that if 1 award to someone what belongs to his brother, I will have assigned to him a lump of Fire.' (Bukhari, 'Shahadat', 27; Muslim, 'Aqdiayah', 4; Abu Da'ud , 'Aqdiayah', 7; Tirmidhi, 'Ahkam', 11, 18; Nasai 'Qudat', 12, 33; 1bn Majah, 'AhkAm', 5, etc. - Ed.)

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الْاَهِلَّةِ ط قُلْ هِيَ مَوَاقِيْتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ ط وَلَيْسَ الْبِرُّ بِاَنْ تَاْتُوا
الْبُيُوْتَ مِنْ ظُهُوْرِهَا وَلٰكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنِ اتَّقٰى ج وَاْتُوا الْبُيُوْتَ مِنْ اَبْوَابِهَا ص وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ 189

(2:189) People question you concerning the phases of the moon. Say: "They are signs to determine time for the sake of people and for the Pilgrimage."[198] Also tell them: "True righteousness is not that you enter your houses from the back; righteousness lies in fearing Allah. So, enter your houses by their doors, and fear Allah that you might attain true success."[199]

198. The waxing and waning of the moon has attracted men's attentions throughout the ages and all kinds of fanciful ideas, superstitions and rituals have been, and are still today, associated with it. The moon was considered the basis of good and bad omens. Certain dates were considered auspicious and others inauspicious for starting journeys, for beginning new tasks, for weddings and so on on the ground that the rising and setting of the moon, its waxing and waning and its eclipse affect human destiny. The Arabs too had their share of

such superstitions. It was therefore natural that enquiries regarding such matters should be addressed to the Prophet.

In response, God says that the waxing and waning of the moon is nothing more than a physical phenomenon. By its appearance in the firmament the moon enables man to divide his year and it can thus be considered nature's own calendar. Particular reference is made to Hajj because it occupied the position of highest importance in the religious, cultural and economic life of the Arabs. Four months of the year were specified since they were the months of major and minor Pilgrimage (Hajj and 'Umrah). During these months there was to be no warfare and the routes were completely safe for travelling. Thanks to the peace and tranquillity thus established, trade and commerce prospered.

199. One superstitious custom of the Arabs was that once they entered the state of consecration for Pilgrimage they did not enter their houses by the door. Instead, they either leapt over the walls from the rear or climbed through windows which they had specially erected for that purpose. On returning from journeys, too, they entered their houses from the rear. In this verse this superstitious custom is denounced, as are all superstitious customs; it is pointed out that the essence of moral excellence consists of fearing God and abstaining from disobeying His commands. Those meaningless customs by which people felt bound, out of blind adherence to the traditions of their forefathers, and which had no effect at all on man's ultimate destiny, had nothing to do with moral excellence.

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ
الْمُعْتَدِينَ 190

(2:190) Fight in the way of Allah[200] against those who fight against you but do not transgress,[201] for Allah does not love transgressors.

200. The believers are asked to fight those who hindered their efforts in the cause of God, and acted with hostility towards them merely because they sought to fashion human life according to the revealed guidance of God. Earlier, when they were weak and scattered, the Muslims were asked merely to preach and be patient with the wrongful repression meted out to them by their opponents. However, now that a small city state had been established in Madina they were commanded for the first time to unsheathe their swords against those who had resorted to armed hostility against their movement of reform. It was some time after this injunction that the Battle of Badr took place, to be followed by several other battles.

201. The believers are told that material interests should not be the motivation for their fighting, that they should not take up arms against those who were not in opposition to the true faith, that they should not resort to unscrupulous methods or to the indiscriminate killing and pillage which characterized the wars of the pre-Islamic era, the Age of Ignorance. The excesses alluded to in this verse are acts such as taking up arms against women and children, the old and the injured, mutilation of the dead bodies of the enemy, uncalled-for devastation through the destruction of fields and livestock, and other similar acts of injustice and brutality. In the Hadith all these acts have been prohibited. The real intent of the verse is

to stress that force should be used only when its use is unavoidable, and only to the extent that is absolutely necessary.

وَاقْتُلُوْهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوْهُمْ وَاَخْرِجُوْهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ اَخْرَجُوْكُمْ وَالْفِتْنَةُ اَشَدُّ مِنَ
الْقَتْلِ ۚ وَلَا تُقٰتِلُوْهُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ حَتّٰى يُقٰتِلُوْكُمْ فِيْهِ ۚ فَاِنْ قٰتَلُوْكُمْ
فَاقْتُلُوْهُمْ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ جَزَاۗءُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ 191

(2:191) Kill them whenever you confront them and drive them out from where they drove you out. (For though killing is sinful) wrongful persecution is even worse than killing.[202] Do not fight against them near the Holy Mosque unless they fight against you; but if they fight against you kill them, for that is the reward of such unbelievers.

202. Here the word fitnah is used in the sense of 'persecution'. It refers to a situation whereby either a person or a group is subjected to harassment and intimidation for having accepted, as true, a set of ideas contrary to those currently held, and for striving to effect reforms in the existing order of society by preaching what is good and condemning what is wrong. Such a situation must be changed, if need be, by the force of arms.

Bloodshed is bad, but when one group of people imposes its ideology and forcibly prevents others from accepting the truth, then it becomes guilty of an even more serious crime. In such circumstances, it is perfectly legitimate to remove that oppressive group by the force of arms.

فَاِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ 192

(2:192) Then if they desist, know well that Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Compassionate.[203]

203. God, in whom the believers have faith, is forgiving and ready to pardon even the worst criminals and sinners after they have renounced their arrogant defiance towards Him. It is suggested that this attribute of God should be reflected in the behaviour of the believers as well. As the saying goes: 'Mould your morals according to the attributes of God.' Hence, Whenever the believers have to resort to armed conflict, they should do so not for the sake of quenching their thirst for vengeance but in the cause of God's religion. Their conflict with any group should last only as long as that group resists the cause of God. As soon as it gives up this resistance hostility should cease.

وَقٰتِلُوْهُمْ حَتّٰى لَا تَكُوْنَ فِتْنَةٌ وَّيَكُوْنَ الدِّيْنُ لِلّٰهِ ؕ فَاِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَلَا عُدْوَانَ اِلَّا عَلَى

الظّٰلِمِيْنَ 193

(2:193) Keep on fighting against them until mischief ends and the way prescribed by Allah prevails.[204] But if they desist, then know that hostility is directed only against the wrong-doers.[205]

204. Here the term fitnah is used in a different sense from the one in which it was used above see(verse 191). It is evident from the context that fitnah refers here to the state of affairs wherein the object of obedience is someone other than God. Hence the purpose of a believer's fighting is that this fitnah should cease and obedience should be consecrated to God alone.

An investigation of the usages of the word din (which occurs in this verse) reveals that the core of its meaning is obedience. In its technical usage, the word refers to that system of life which arises as a result of a person recognizing someone as his Lord and Sovereign and committing himself to following his commands and ordinances. This explanation of the word din makes it quite clear that when some human beings establish their godhead and absolute dominance over others, this state of affairs is one of fitnah. Islam seeks to put an end to this and replace it by a state of affairs in which people live in obedience to the laws of God alone.

205. What is meant here by 'desisting' is not the abandonment of unbelief and polytheism on the part of the unbelievers but rather their desistance from active hostility to the religion enjoined by God. The unbeliever, the polytheist, the atheist, has each been, empowered to hold on to his beliefs and to worship who and whatever he wishes. In order to deliver these people from their error, Muslims are required to counsel them and tell them where their good lies. But Muslims ought not to try to achieve this purpose by resorting to force. At the same time, these misguided people have no right to either enforce the false laws of their own contriving instead of the laws of God or to drive the people of God to bondage of others than God. In order to put an end to this fitnah, both persuasion and force be used, whenever and to the extent to which each of the two is needed, and a true believer will not rest until the unbelievers give up this fitnah.

The statement that hostility is meant only against wrong-doers seems to imply that when the true system of life replaces the false one, ordinary people should be granted a general amnesty. At the same time, however, it would be justifiable to punish those who exceeded all limits in their hostility to the Truth, at the time when they held the reins of power. Yet in dealing with such people, it becomes the true believers, after they have one final victory, to adopt a general attitude of forgiveness and tolerance towards the vanquished rather than subject them to revenge for the wrongs they committed in the past. Those criminals whose records were exceptionally bad could, however, be punished. The Prophet (peace be on him), availed himself of this permission in respect of some notorious enemies whose hostility had exceeded all limits, even though pardon and forgiveness behoved none more than him.

Thus 'Uqbah ibn Abi Mu'avt and Nadr b. Harith from among the captives of the Battle of Badr were put to death and when a general amnesty, was proclaimed after the conquest of Makka four out of seventeen persons were executed. (See Ibn Hisham, vol. 1, p. 644 and vol. 2, pp. 409 ff. - Ed.) These acts were based on the permission to put to the sword those who have been conspicuously ruthless in their hostility to Islam and the Muslims.

اَلشَّهۡرُ الۡحَرَامُ بِالشَّهۡرِ الۡحَرَامِ وَالۡحُرُمٰتُ قِصَاصٌ ؕ فَمَنِ اعۡتَدٰى عَلَيۡكُمۡ فَاعۡتَدُوۡا
عَلَيۡهِ بِمِثۡلِ مَا اعۡتَدٰى عَلَيۡكُمۡ ۪ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعۡلَمُوۡۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الۡمُتَّقِيۡنَ 194

(2:194) The sacred month for the sacred month; sanctities should be respected alike (by all concerned). Thus, if someone has attacked you, attack him just as he attacked you, and fear Allah and remain conscious that Allah is with those who guard against violating the bounds set by Him.[206]

206. From the time of Abraham three months - Dhu al-Qa'dah, Dhu al-Hijjah and Muharram - were consecrated for Hajj, and the month of Rajab was consecrated for 'Umrah. For the duration of these four months warfare, killing and pillage were prohibited so that people could perform Pilgrimage and return home safely. For this reason these months were called the 'sacred months'.

The purpose of the verse is to stress that if the unbelievers respect the sanctity of the sacred months, the Muslims should do the same. If, however, they violate this sanctity and subject the Muslims to aggression, then the Muslims are also entitled to retribution even during the 'sacred months'.

The permission mentioned here was called forth by the introduction of nasi', a practice which had been introduced by the Arabs in order to have an advantage over others in their battles and raids. The manner in which the Arabs used nasi' was such that whenever they wished either to start a conflict in order to satisfy their vendetta or to loot and plunder they carried out their raid in one of the sacred months and then later on tried to compensate for this violation by treating one of the non-sacred months as a sacred month. The Muslims were, therefore, concerned as to what they should do in case the unbelievers resorted to this artifice and surprised them by an attack in one of the recognized sacred months. The verse refers to this problem.

وَاَنۡفِقُوۡا فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا تُلۡقُوۡا بِاَيۡدِيۡكُمۡ اِلَى التَّهۡلُكَةِ ۛۖ صلے وَاَحۡسِنُوۡا ۛۚ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ
الۡمُحۡسِنِيۡنَ 195

(2:195) Spend in the Way of Allah and do not cast yourselves into destruction with your own hands;[207] do good, for Allah loves those who do good.[208]

207. 'To spend in the way of Allah' signifies financial sacrifice in order to establish God's religion. Not to make any financial sacrifice but to be inclined, instead, to hold personal interests dear to one's heart will lead to one's ruin both in this world and in the Next. Allah will set the unbelievers to dominate over you in this world and condemn you in the Next world.

208. The root of the word ihsan is HSN, which means doing something in a goodly manner.

One standard of conduct is merely to perform the task entrusted to one. The other and higher standard is to perform that task in a wholesome manner, to devote all one's capacities and resources to its fulfilment, to do one's duty with all one's heart. The first standard is that of ordinary obedience for which it is enough that a man should fear God. The other and higher standard is that of ihsan (moral and spiritual excellence) for which it is necessary that one should have a strong love for God and a profound attachment to Him.

وَأَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ ۚ فَإِنْ أُحْصِرْتُمْ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ ۚ وَلَا تَحْلِقُوا
رُءُوسَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ الْهَدْيُ مَحِلَّهُ ۚ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَرِيضًا أَوْ بِهِ أَذًى مِنْ رَأْسِهِ
فَفِدْيَةٌ مِنْ صِيَامٍ أَوْ صَدَقَةٍ أَوْ نُسُكٍ ۚ فَإِذَا أَمِنْتُمْ ۖ فَمَنْ تَمَتَّعَ بِالْعُمْرَةِ إِلَى الْحَجِّ فَمَا
اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ ۚ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ فِي الْحَجِّ وَسَبْعَةٍ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ ۗ تِلْكَ
عَشَرَةٌ كَامِلَةٌ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ أَهْلُهُ حَاضِرِي الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ
وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿196﴾

(2:196) Complete Hajj and 'Umrah for Allah. And if you are prevented from doing so, then make the offering which is available to you,209 and do not shave your heads until the offering reaches its appointed place.210

If any of you should have to shave your head before that because of illness, or injury to the head, then you should make redemption by fasting, or almsgiving, or ritual sacrifice.211 And when you are secure,212 then he who avails of 'Umrah before the time of Hajj shall give the offering he can afford; and if he cannot afford the offering, he shall fast for three days during Hajj and for seven days after he returns home; that is, ten days in all. This privilege is for those whose families do not live near the Holy Mosque.213 Guard against violating these ordinances of Allah and be mindful that Allah is severe in chastisement.

209. If any obstruction prevents a person from proceeding with the Pilgrimage and he is forced to stay behind, he should make a sacrificial offering to God of whatever is available - for example, either a camel, a cow, a goat or a sheep

210. The statement: 'until the offering reaches its appointed place' has been variously interpreted by the jurists. The Hanafi jurists consider this to signify the area which lies within the boundaries of the Haram. In their view this injunction means that if a man has been prevented from Pilgrimage he ought to send to the Haram either the animal itself or the money to purchase it, and have a sacrificial offering made on his behalf. According to Malik and al-Shafi'i this verse enjoins one to perform a sacrifice at the very spot where one is prevented from going any further. (See also Qurtubi's commentary on the verse - Ed.) The injunction regarding 'shaving the head' means that one may not have one's hair cut until a sacrificial offering has been made.

211. According to the Hadith, in such a situation the Prophet (peace be on him) ordered three days of fasting, or the feeding of six poor people, or the slaughter of one sheep or goat. (See Bukhari, 'Maghazi', 35; Muslim, 'Hajj', 83 - Ed.)

212. This refers to the change in the situation when the obstacle to proceeding with the Pilgrimage has been removed. Since, in those days, the circumstances which most commonly prevented people from proceeding with their Pilgrimage was the danger of armed attack from tribes hostile to Islam, the removal of that circumstance is described by the words: 'when you are secure'. 'To become secure' refers not only to the removal of the danger of armed attack but to the removal of all such dangers.

213. In pre-Islamic Arabia it was considered a serious sin to perform Hajj and 'Umrah in one and the same journey. According to the self-made law of the pre-Islamic Arabs, each of these Pilgrimages required a separate journey. God declared this law void for those coming from abroad and who were granted the privilege of performing both types of pilgrimage in the same journey. This privilege, however, was not extended to those living in the environs of Makka, within the miqat, since it is not difficult for them to proceed separately for the major and minor Pilgrimages.

'Then you who take advantage of 'Umrah before the time of Hajj' means that a person may perform 'Umrah (minor Pilgrimage) and then may interrupt the state of consecration (ihram) and free himself of the prohibitions and limitations incumbent upon him in that state. Later, when the time for the Hajj (major Pilgrimage) arrives, he should once again assume the state of consecration (ihram).

اَلْحَجُّ اَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُوْمٰتٌ ۚ فَمَنْ فَرَضَ فِيْهِنَّ الْحَجَّ فَلَا رَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوْقَ ۙ وَلَا جِدَالَ فِي
الْحَجِّ ۭ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَّعْلَمْهُ اللّٰهُ ۭ وَتَزَوَّدُوْا فَاِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوٰى ۡ وَاتَّقُوْنِ
يٰٓاُولِي الْاَلْبَابِ 197

(2:197) The months of Hajj are well known. Whoever intends to perform Pilgrimage in these months shall abstain from sensual indulgence,[214] wicked conduct[215] and quarrelling;[216] and whatever good you do, Allah knows it. Take your provisions for the Pilgrimage; but, in truth, the best provision is piety. Men of understanding, beware of disobeying Me.[217]

214. In the state of consecration (ihram) the husband and wife are required to refrain not only from sexual intercourse but also from lascivious conversation (and, for that matter, from any act which either stems from or is likely to stimulate sexual desire - Ed).

215. Even though all sinful acts are evil, the sinfulness of such acts is aggravated when they are committed in the state of consecration (ihram).

216. In this state it is not even permitted to rebuke one's servant.

217. In the pre-Islamic Age of Ignorance it was considered an act of gross worldliness for anyone to carry provisions while on the Pilgrimage. A pious man was expected to go to the House of God without any worldly goods. This misconception is removed here and it is pointed out that abstention from carrying provisions is not necessarily an act of righteousness. True righteousness lies in the fear of God, in abstaining from violating His commands, and in leading a pure and decent life. If a pilgrim's conduct is not good and he resorts to wickedness the mere fact of not carrying provisions, thus parading his detachment from worldly goods, will do him no good. For his wickedness he will suffer humiliation both in the sight of God and man, and his action will be a desecration of the religious duty for which he undertook the journey. On the other hand, if a person's heart is full of the fear of God, and his moral conduct is good, he will be exalted by God and will be held in high esteem by human beings on his return from the Pilgrimage, regardless of the amount of provisions he carried.

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ۚ فَإِذَا أَفَضْتُم مِّنْ عَرَفَاتٍ فَاذْكُرُوا
اللَّهَ عِندَ الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ ۖ وَاذْكُرُوهُ كَمَا هَدَاكُمْ ۚ وَإِن كُنتُم مِّن قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الضَّالِّينَ 198

(2:198) It is no offence for you to seek the bounty of your Lord during Pilgrimage.[218] When you hasten back from [Arafat then remember Allah at al-Mash[ar al-Haram (i.e. al-Muzdalifah), and remember Him in the manner He has directed you, for before this you were surely in error.[219]

218. This was another misconception entertained by the pre-Islamic Arabs. They considered it objectionable to do anything relating to one's livelihood during the Pilgrimage. In their view earning one's living was an act of pure worldliness and hence it was bad to indulge in it while engaged in the performance of a religious duty. The Qur'an refutes this and expounds the view that if a person strives to earn his living while observing fully the laws of

God his action is tantamount to seeking God's grace and bounty. See(62: 10 - Ed.)It is no sin if a man sets out to seek God's good pleasure and during the same journey tries to combine that purpose with the quest for permissible worldly benefits.

219. The Muslims were asked to give up all those polytheistic and pagan practices that had arisen among the Arabs during the Age of Ignorance and which ran alongside the worship of God thereby adulterating the latter. They were required to consecrate their worship and adoration to God alone according to the guidance He had now revealed through the Prophet.

ثُمَّ اَفِيْضُوْا مِنْ حَيْثُ اَفَاضَ النَّاسُ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ 199

(2:199) Then press on even as others press on and implore Allah's forgiveness;220 Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.

220. Since the time of Abraham and Ishmael the recognized practice of the Arabs with regard to Hajj was that on the 9th, Dhu al-Hijjah, they went from Mina to 'Arafat, returning on the morning of the 10th to stay at Muzdalifah. Later, as the priestly monopoly of the Quraysh became well established, they claimed that it was below their dignity to go to 'Arafat with the ordinary people of Arabia. As a mark of what they called their distinction, they went to Muzdalifah only (without going to 'Arafat) and returned from there, leaving it to the commoners to go to 'Arafat. Subsequently Banu Khuza'ah, Banu Kananah and those tribes which were linked by marriage with the Quraysh acquired the same privilege. Eventually, the status of the tribes allied to the Quraysh came to be considered higher than that of the ordinary Arabs, and these tribes too abandoned the practice of going to 'Arafat.

It is this pride and vainglory which the present verse seeks to undermine. It is addressed to the Quraysh and the tribes associated with them either through marriage or alliance, and to all those who might be inclined to claim for themselves special privileges and distinctions in the future. Such people are asked to go to the place to which all others go, to stay with them, to return with them and to seek pardon from God for the fact that they violated the way of Abraham.

فَاِذَا قَضَيْتُمْ مَّنَاسِكَكُمْ فَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ كَذِكْرِكُمْ اٰبَآءَكُمْ اَوْ اَشَدَّ ذِكْرًا ؕ فَمِنَ

النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّقُوْلُ رَبَّنَآ اٰتِنَا فِى الدُّنْيَا وَمَا لَهٗ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَاقٍ 200

(2:200) And when you have performed your rites remember Allah as you remember your fathers; or remember Him even more.221 There are some (among those that remember Allah) who say: "Our Lord, grant us what is good in this world;" such shall have no share in the Hereafter.

221. After the Hajj the Arabs used to hold rallies at Mind. At these rallies people from different tribes proudly narrated the achievements of their forefathers and indulged in much extravagant self-praise. Here they are asked to renounce all such things and devote

the time which they formerly spent on trivialities to remembering and celebrating God.

Dhikr refers to the remembrance of God at Mina.

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّقُوْلُ رَبَّنَآ اٰتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَّفِي الْاٰخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَّقِنَا عَذَابَ

النَّارِ 201

(2:201) There are others who say: "Our Lord, grant us what is good in this world and what is good in the World to Come, and protect us from the chastisement of the Fire."

اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ نَصِيْبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوْا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ 202

(2:202) They shall have a portion from what they earned; Allah is quick in reckoning.

وَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ فِيْٓ اَيَّامٍ مَّعْدُوْدٰتٍ ؕ فَمَنْ تَعَجَّلَ فِيْ يَوْمَيْنِ فَلَآ اِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ۚ وَمَنْ تَاَخَّرَ فَلَآ

اِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ۙ لِمَنِ اتَّقٰى ؕ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّكُمْ اِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ 203

(2:203) And remember Allah through the appointed days. It is no sin for him who hastens off and returns in two days, and it is no sin for him who delays the return[222] provided he has spent the days in piety. Beware of disobeying Allah and know well that to Him you all shall be mustered.

222. Whether a person returned on the 12th or on the 13th of Dhu al-Hijjah from Mina to Makka during the day of tashriq (i.e. from the 10th to 13th of Dhu al-Hijjah) was immaterial. What was of real importance was not the number of days spent at Mina but the intensity of one's devotion to God during the period of one's stay.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهٗ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيُشْهِدُ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى مَا فِيْ قَلْبِهٖ ۙ وَهُوَ اَلَدُّ

الْخِصَامِ 204

(2:204) Among people there is a kind whose sayings on the affairs of the world fascinate you: he calls Allah again and again to bear testimony to his sincerity;[223] yet he is most fierce in enmity.[224]

223. Such a person tends to claim again and again that he was merely a well-wisher and was simply striving to uphold what is true and right, and to promote the welfare of the people rather than doing things for the sake of personal aggrandizement.

224. The words aladd al-khisam mean 'the most fierce in enmity'. This would apply to someone who concentrates all his energies on opposing truth, and who resorts to whatever falsehood, dishonesty, treachery and breach of faith he thinks necessary to achieve his ends.

وَإِذَا تَوَلّٰى سَعٰى فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ

الْفَسَادَ 205

(2:205) Whenever he attains authority,[225] he goes about the earth spreading mischief and laying to waste crops and human life, even though Allah (whose testimony he invokes) does not love mischief.

225. The expression idha tawalla can be translated in two ways. First, in the manner of our translation of the text. It can also be translated to make the verse mean that when such people return from sweet and apparently genuine talk, they engage in arrogant and destructive action.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُ اتَّقِ اللّٰهَ أَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ بِالْإِثْمِ ۚ فَحَسْبُهُ جَهَنَّمُ ۚ وَلَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ 206

(2:206) Whenever he is told: “Fear Allah,” his vainglory seizes him in his sin. So Hell shall suffice for him; what a wretched resting place!

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللّٰهِ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ 207

(2:207) On the other hand, among men there is a kind who dedicates his life seeking to please Allah; Allah is Immensely Kind to such devoted servants.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَافَّةً ۖ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ ۚ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ

عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ 208

(2:208) Believers! Enter wholly into Islam[226] and do not follow in the footsteps of Satan for he is your open enemy.

226. God demands that man should submit, without reservation, the whole of his being to His will. Man's outlook, intellectual pursuits, behaviour, interaction with other people and modes of endeavour should all be completely subordinate to Islam. God does not accept the splitting up of human life into separate compartments, some governed by the teachings of Islam and others exempt.

فَاِنۡ زَلَلۡتُمۡ مِّنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَا جَآءَتۡكُمُ الۡبَيِّنٰتُ فَاعۡلَمُوۡۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيۡزٌ حَكِيۡمٌ 209

(2:209) And if you stumble in spite of the clear instructions which have come to you, then know well that Allah is Most Mighty, Most Wise.[227]

227. The point is that God has enormous power and knows well how to punish criminals.

هَلۡ يَنۡظُرُوۡنَ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ يَّاۡتِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ فِىۡ ظُلَلٍ مِّنَ الۡغَمَامِ وَالۡمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَقُضِىَ الۡاَمۡرُ ؕ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ تُرۡجَعُ الۡاُمُوۡرُ ۧ 210

(2:210) Are those people (who are not following the Right Path in spite of admonition and instruction) waiting for Allah to come to them in canopies of clouds with a retinue of angels and settle the matter finally?[228] To Allah shall all matters ultimately be referred.

228. These words are indicative of an important fact. Man's test lies in showing whether he accepts reality even though he cannot perceive it directly through his senses; and whether, after having accepted it, he has the required moral stamina to obey God even though he is endowed with the capacity to disobey Him. In sending the Prophets, in revealing the Scriptures, indeed, even in performing miracles, God has always taken care to leave scope for testing man's power of judgement and his moral stamina. He has never disclosed reality to such a degree that man would be inevitably compelled to accept it. For if that were done, nothing would remain to be tested and the very idea of man's success or failure would be meaningless.

It is pointed out, therefore, that people should not keep waiting for God and the angels - the devoted servants of His realm - to appear before them. If that were to happen, it would mark the end of everything and there would be no occasion left for man to decide anything. To believe and to bow in submission and obedience to God are of value only so long as the reality is presented in such a way as to make its rejection possible.

For, if the Truth were to be fully disclosed and if men were to see with their own eyes God on His Throne of Majesty with the entire universe acting according to His command, what would be the worth of their faith and obedience? If all these things were physically observable not even the most stubborn unbelievers and the worst sinners would dare either to disbelieve or disobey. Acceptance of faith and obedience has value only as long as there remains a veil over reality. The moment when reality is totally unveiled would mark the end of the period granted to man to decide, and of the testing period for him. It would, in fact, be the Day of Judgement.

سَلۡ بَنِیۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِیۡلَ کَمۡ اٰتَیۡنٰہُمۡ مِّنۡ اٰیَۃٍۭ بَیِّنَۃٍ ؕ وَ مَنۡ یُّبَدِّلۡ نِعۡمَۃَ اللّٰہِ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَا
جَآءَتۡہُ فَاِنَّ اللّٰہَ شَدِیۡدُ الۡعِقَابِ 211

(2:211) Ask the Children of Israel how many Clear Signs We gave them! And when a people tamper with Allah's bounty after it has been bestowed on them – then indeed Allah is severe in punishment.[229]

229. There are two reasons why this query is addressed to the Children of Israel. In the first place, a group of living human beings provide a better source of instruction and admonition than mute archaeological findings. In the second place, the Israelites were a people who, having been endowed with Scripture and prophethood, were entrusted with the leadership of the world. By falling prey to worldliness, hypocrisy and other errors of belief and conduct they subsequently lost God's favour. A people entrusted with the task of universal leadership could derive no better lesson from another people than this one.

زُیِّنَ لِلَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوا الۡحَیٰوۃُ الدُّنۡیَا وَ یَسۡخَرُوۡنَ مِنَ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا ۘ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ اتَّقَوۡا
فَوۡقَہُمۡ یَوۡمَ الۡقِیٰمَۃِ ؕ وَ اللّٰہُ یَرۡزُقُ مَنۡ یَّشَآءُ بِغَیۡرِ حِسَابٍ 212

(2:212) Worldly life has been made attractive to those who have denied the Truth. Such men deride the men of faith, but the pious shall rank higher than them on the Day of Resurrection. As for worldly livelihood, Allah grants it to whomsoever He wills without measure.

کَانَ النَّاسُ اُمَّۃً وَّاحِدَۃً ۟ فَبَعَثَ اللّٰہُ النَّبِیّٖنَ مُبَشِّرِیۡنَ وَ مُنۡذِرِیۡنَ ۪ وَ اَنۡزَلَ مَعَہُمُ
الۡکِتٰبَ بِالۡحَقِّ لِیَحۡکُمَ بَیۡنَ النَّاسِ فِیۡمَا اخۡتَلَفُوۡا فِیۡہِ ؕ وَ مَا اخۡتَلَفَ فِیۡہِ اِلَّا الَّذِیۡنَ
اُوۡتُوۡہُ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَا جَآءَتۡہُمُ الۡبَیِّنٰتُ بَغۡیًۢا بَیۡنَہُمۡ ۚ فَہَدَی اللّٰہُ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا لِمَا اخۡتَلَفُوۡا فِیۡہِ
مِنَ الۡحَقِّ بِاِذۡنِہٖ ؕ وَ اللّٰہُ یَہۡدِیۡ مَنۡ یَّشَآءُ اِلٰی صِرَاطٍ مُّسۡتَقِیۡمٍ 213

(2:213) In the beginning mankind followed one single way. (Later on this state ended and differences arose.) Then Allah sent forth Prophets as heralds of good tidings for the righteous and as warners against the consequences of evil-doing. He sent down with them the Book embodying the Truth so that it might judge among people in their disputes. And those who innovated divergent ways rather than follow the Truth were

none other than those who had received the knowledge of the Truth and clear guidance; and they did so to commit excesses against each other.[230] So by His leave Allah directed the believers to the Right Way in matters on which they disagreed. Allah guides whomsoever He wills onto a Straight Way.

230. When ignorant people attempt to trace the history of 'religion' they tend to the view that man began his life in the darkness of polytheisrn and that in the course of time, corresponding to man's progress, this darkness gradually receded and light increased till man arrived at monotheism.

The Qur'anic version, however, proclaims that man began his life in full light of the Truth. God revealed this Truth to the very first man He created, one to whom He intimated the right way of life for man. Thereafter the human race remained on the Right Way for some time and lived as one community. Later, however, people invented deviating ways. This did not happen because Truth had not been communicated to them. The cause was rather that some people wilfully sought to acquire privileges, benefits and advantages beyond their legitimate limits, and thus subjected others to injustices. It was in order to enable people to overcome this corruption that God sent His Prophets. These Prophets were not sent to found separate religions in their own names and bring new religious communities into existence. Rather the purpose of the Prophets was to illuminate before people the Truth which they had allowed to be lost, and once again make them into one community.

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ ۖ مَسَّتْهُمُ
الْبَأْسَاءُ وَالضَّرَّاءُ وَزُلْزِلُوا حَتَّىٰ يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ مَتَىٰ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ ۗ أَلَا إِنَّ
نَصْرَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ 214

(2:214) Do you suppose[231] that you will enter Paradise untouched by the suffering endured by the people of faith who passed away before you? They were afflicted by misery and hardship and were so convulsed that the Messenger and the believers with him cried out: “When will Allah’s help arrive?” They were assured: “Behold, Allah’s help is close by.”

231. In between this verse and the one above comes a whole story which has been left untold, a story which is alluded to in the present verse and which is mentioned in some detail in the Makkan surahs of the Qur'an (these were revealed earlier than the present surah). The point emphasized here is that whenever the Prophets came into the world they, and their followers, were confronted with severe resistance from those in rebellion against God. At grave risk to themselves they strove to establish the hegemony of the true religion over the false ways of life. To follow this religion has, therefore, never been easy; it is not merely a matter of declaring one's faith and then sitting back in ease and comfort. On the contrary, the profession of faith has always demanded that one should strive to establish the religion,

which one has adopted as one's faith, as a living reality and that one should spare no effort in undermining the power of the Devil who seeks to resist it.

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ ۗ قُلْ مَآ اَنْفَقْتُمْ مِّنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْاَقْرَبِيْنَ وَالْيَتٰمٰى
وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ ۗ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِهٖ عَلِيْمٌ 215

(2:215) People ask you what they should spend. Say: "Whatever wealth you spend let it be for your parents and kinsmen, the orphans, the needy and the wayfarer; Allah is aware of whatever good you do."

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ وَعَسٰٓى اَنْ تَكْرَهُوْا شَيْـًٔا وَّهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ
وَعَسٰٓى اَنْ تُحِبُّوْا شَيْـًٔا وَّهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ وَاَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۧ 216

(2:216) Fighting is ordained upon you and it is disliked by you; it may well be that you dislike a thing even though it is good for you, and it may well be that you like a thing even though it is bad for you. Allah knows and you do not know.

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ قِتَالٍ فِيْهِ ۗ قُلْ قِتَالٌ فِيْهِ كَبِيْرٌ ۗ وَصَدٌّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ
وَكُفْرٌ ۢ بِهٖ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۙ وَاِخْرَاجُ اَهْلِهٖ مِنْهُ اَكْبَرُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَالْفِتْنَةُ اَكْبَرُ مِنَ
الْقَتْلِ ۗ وَلَا يَزَالُوْنَ يُقَاتِلُوْنَكُمْ حَتّٰى يَرُدُّوْكُمْ عَنْ دِيْنِكُمْ اِنِ اسْتَطَاعُوْا ۗ وَمَنْ
يَّرْتَدِدْ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِيْنِهٖ فَيَمُتْ وَهُوَ كَافِرٌ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ حَبِطَتْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ فِى الدُّنْيَا
وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ 217

(2:217) People ask you about fighting in the holy month. Say: "Fighting in it is an awesome sin, but barring people from the Way of Allah, disbelieving in Him, and denying entry into the Holy Mosque and expelling its inmates from it[232] are more awesome acts in the sight of Allah; and persecution is even more heinous than killing." They will not cease fighting against you till they turn you from your religion if they can.[233] (So remember well) that whoever from amongst you turns away from his religion and dies in the state of unbelief their work will go to waste in this world and in the Next. They are destined for the Fire and it is there that they will abide.

232. This relates to a certain incident. In Rajab 2 A. H. the Prophet sent an expedition of eight persons to Nakhlah (which lies between Makka and Ta'if). He directed them to follow the movements of the Quraysh and gather information about their plans, but not to engage in fighting. On their way they came across a trade caravan belonging to the Quraysh and ambushed it. They killed one person and captured the rest along with their belongings and took them to Madina. They did this at a time when the month of Rajah was approaching its end and Sha'ban was about to begin. It was, therefore, doubtful whether the attack was actually carried out in one of the sacred months, that is, Rajab, or not. But the Quraysh, and the Jews who were secretly in league with them, as well as the hypocrites made great play of this and used it as a weapon in their propaganda campaign against the Muslims. (For this expedition see Ibn Hisham, Sirah. vol. 1, pp. 601 ff; Ibn Ishaq, Life of Muhammad, tr. A. Guillaume. pp. 286 ff.) They pointed out the contradiction between the claims of the Muslims to true religion on the one hand, and their not hesitating to shed blood in a sacred month on the other.

This verse aims to answer these objections. The essence of what is said here is that fighting during the sacred months is without doubt an evil act. It points out that those people who had continually subjected their kith and kin to untold wrong for thirteen years merely because they believed in the One God were not competent to make such an objection. Not only had the Muslims been driven from their homes, they had had the way to the Holy Mosque closed to them, a bar which had not been imposed by anyone during the course of some two thousand years. With this record of mischief and misconduct it was not for them to raise such an outcry at a minor ambush, and especially so when the incident had taken place without the approval of the Prophet. The whole incident was in fact no more than an irresponsible act on the part of some members of the Islamic community.

It should be remembered that when on their return those people went, with captives and booty, to visit the Prophet, he expressly pointed out to them that he had not permitted them to fight. Not only that, he declined to receive the public exchequer's share of their booty, which indicated that their booty was considered unlawful. The Muslims, in general, also severely reproached the people responsible for the incident, and in fact nobody in Madina applauded what they had done.

233. A few simple-hearted Muslims, whose minds were seized by a mistaken concept of righteousness and pacifism, were influenced by the above objections which had been raised by the polytheists of Makka and the Jews. In this verse the believers are being asked not to entertain the hope that they might clear the air and promote understanding and goodwill by adopting an over-lenient stance towards their opponents. The objections of the latter were not motivated by the desire to find out the Truth; their true purpose was nothing but vilification. What particularly irked the adversaries of the Muslims was that they believed in a religion of their own and were inviting the whole world to accept it. Hence, as long as the Muslims continued to believe in Islam and as long as their opponents remained stubborn in their disbelief, the existing chasm between the two groups was bound to remain.

Moreover, the enemies whom they confronted were not to be considered ordinary enemies. Those who wanted to deprive a person of his belongings or land were in fact enemies of a relatively much less dangerous kind than those who sought to turn him away from his faith;

while the former sought to harm his worldly interests, the latter were bent upon hurling him into the eternal torment in the Hereafter.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۙ أُولَٰئِكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ 218

(2:218) (On the contrary) those who believed, and forsook their hearth and home and strove[234] in the Way of Allah, such may rightly hope for the mercy of Allah: for Allah is All-Forgiving, All- Merciful.

234. Jihad denotes doing one's utmost to achieve something. It is not the equivalent of war, for which the Arabic word is qital. Jihad has a wider connotation and embraces every kind of striving in God's cause. A mujahid is a person who is single-mindedly devoted to his cause, who uses his mental capacity to reflect how best he can achieve it, propagates it by word of mouth and by the pen, uses his physical energy in striving to serve it, spends all the resources at his disposal to promote it, employs all the force he commands in confronting any power which might stand in its way, and, whenever necessary, does not shirk risking his very life for it. All this is Jihad. ' Jihad in the way of God' is that strife in which man engages exclusively to win God's good pleasure, to establish the supremacy of His religion and to make His word prevail.

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ ۖ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِن نَّفْعِهِمَا ۗ وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنفِقُونَ ۖ قُلِ الْعَفْوَ ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ 219

(2:219) They ask you about wine and games of chance. Say: “In both these there is great evil, even though there is some benefit for people, but their evil is greater than their benefit.”[235]

They ask: “What should we spend in the Way of Allah?” Say: “Whatever you can spare.” In this way Allah clearly expounds His injunctions to you that you may reflect upon them,

235. This is the first injunction concerning intoxicating drinks and gambling, and here the matter has been left merely as an expression of disapproval. This was a preliminary step designed to prepare the minds of people for the acceptance of their prohibition. The injunction prohibiting the performance of Prayer when in a state of intoxication came later, and ultimately alcohol, gambling and the like were categorically prohibited see(4: 43)and (5: 90).

فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ؕ وَيَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الْيَتٰمٰى ؕ قُلْ اِصْلَاحٌ لَّهُمْ خَيْرٌ ؕ وَاِنْ تُخَالِطُوْهُمْ
فَاِخْوَانُكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ الْمُفْسِدَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِ ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَاَعْنَتَكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ
حَكِيْمٌ 220

(2:220) both in regard to this world and the Next. They question you concerning orphans. Say: "To deal with them in the way which is to their good, that is best.[236] And if you intermix (your expenses and living) with them, (there is no harm for) they are your brothers." Allah knows the mischievous from the righteous, and had Allah willed, He would indeed have imposed on you exacting conditions; but He is All-Powerful, Most Wise.

236. Before this verse was revealed many severe injunctions had already been revealed regarding the protection of orphans' property. It had been ordained that ' people should not even draw near to the property of the orphan' (6: 152)v; (17: 34) and that 'those who wrongfully eat the properties of orphans only, fill their bellies with fire' (4: 10). Because of these severe injunctions the orphans' guardians were so over awed that they even separated the food and drink of the orphans from their own; they felt anxious lest anything belonging to the orphans became mixed with their own. It is for this reason that they enquired of the Prophet (peace he on him) what the proper form of their dealings with orphans should be.

وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكٰتِ حَتّٰى يُؤْمِنَّ ؕ وَلَاَمَةٌ مُّؤْمِنَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكَةٍ وَّلَوْ اَعْجَبَتْكُمْ ۚ
وَلَا تُنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ حَتّٰى يُؤْمِنُوْا ؕ وَلَعَبْدٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكٍ وَّلَوْ اَعْجَبَكُمْ ؕ
اُولٰٓئِكَ يَدْعُوْنَ اِلَى النَّارِ ۖۚ وَاللّٰهُ يَدْعُوْٓا اِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ بِاِذْنِهٖ ۚ وَيُبَيِّنُ اٰيٰتِهٖ لِلنَّاسِ
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ع 221

(2:221) Marry not the women who associate others with Allah in His Divinity until they believe; for a believing slave-girl is better than a (free, respectable) woman who associates others with Allah in His Divinity, even though she might please you. Likewise, do not give your women in marriage to men who associate others with Allah in His Divinity until they believe; for a believing slave is better than a (free, respectable) man who associates others with Allah in His Divinity, even though he might please you. Such people call you towards the Fire,[237] and Allah calls you, by His leave, towards Paradise and forgiveness; and He makes His injunctions clear to people so that they may take heed.

237. This is the reason for, and the wisdom underlying the injunction mentioned above prohibiting marriage links with polytheists. Marriage does not consist merely of sexual relations between a man and a woman. It is a relationship which has deep social, moral and emotional implications. If established between a believer and a polytheist, this kind of relationship has many possible outcomes. On the one hand, it is possible that because of the influence of the believing spouse, the other partner, the family and the future generations may become receptive to Islamic beliefs and to the Islamic wav of life. On the other hand, it is also possible that the spouse who is a polytheist may influence the thinking and mode of living of the believing spouse, the family and the future generations. Moreover this relationship may promote in that family a hotchpotch of Islam, downright atheism, and polytheism which, however welcome to non-Muslims, is in no way acceptable to Islam. No true believer can run the risk that either the ideas and life-styles which are organically related to atheism and polytheism may flourish among the members of his family, or that some aspect of his own life may bear the impress of atheism or polytheism.

وَيَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيْضِ ۭ قُلْ هُوَ اَذًى ۙ فَاعْتَزِلُوا النِّسَاۗءَ فِي الْمَحِيْضِ ۙ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوْهُنَّ
حَتّٰى يَطْهُرْنَ ۚ فَاِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ فَاْتُوْهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ اَمَرَكُمُ اللّٰهُ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِيْنَ
وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِيْنَ 222

(2:222) They ask you about menstruation. Say: "It is a state of impurity; so keep away from women in the state of menstruation,[238] and do not approach them until they are cleansed. And when they are cleansed,[239] then come to them as Allah has commanded you."[240] Truly, Allah loves those who abstain from evil and keep themselves pure.

238. The Arabic word adha denotes both a state of ritual impurity and sickness. Menstruation is not merely an impurity, but also a state in which the woman is closer to sickness than to health.

239. With regard to matters such as these the Qur'an resorts to metaphors and figurative language. Hence it instructs men not to approach women. This does not mean that people should either abstain from sitting together on the same floor or eating together when a woman has her monthly period making her virtually an untouchable, as has been the custom among the Jews, Hindus and certain other nations. The explanation of this injunction by the Prophet makes it clear that during this period men are only required to abstain from sexual intercourse; no change is postulated in other relationships, and the woman is to be treated in the normal way. (See, for instance, Bukhari, 'Hayd', 10, 'Itikaf', 2-4, 10, 19; Muslim, 'Hayd', 6-13; Abu Da'ud, 'Taharah', 102, 106 - Ed.)

240. The 'command' of God mentioned here is not a formal legal injunction from God, but that inherent urge with which the nature of both men and animals has been imbued and which is apprehended instinctively.

(The verse means, therefore, that after the end of the menstrual course people may again engage in sexual intercourse - Ed.)

نِسَآؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَّكُمْ ۖ فَأْتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّىٰ شِئْتُمْ ۖ وَقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ
وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُم مُّلَاقُوهُ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ 223

(2:223) Your wives are your tilth; go, then, into your tilth as you wish[241] but take heed of your ultimate future[242] and avoid incurring the wrath of Allah. Know well that one Day you shall face Him. Announce good tidings to the believers.

241. That is, God's purpose in the creation of women is not merely to provide men with recreation. Their mutual relationship is like that between a farmer and his tilth. A farmer approaches his field not just for the sake of pleasure, but to acquire produce. Similarly, man ought to approach the tilth of the human race with the purpose of acquiring produce, that is, offspring. What is of concern to the Law of God is not the particular mode of cultivating one's tilth, but rather that one should go only to one's tilth and not elsewhere, and that one should go there for the purpose of cultivation.

242. These words are susceptible to two meanings. First, that a person should try to maintain the continuity of the human race so that when he departs from this world there should be others to replace him in his tasks. Second, that one should be concerned with the quality of the coming generation, i.e., how far it is endowed with religious devotion, moral excellence and humanity, and that one should do all that is possible to promote these qualities. The latter part ot the verse contains the warning that those who deliberately neglect these two duties will he severely taken to task by God.

وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا اللَّهَ عُرْضَةً لِّأَيْمَانِكُمْ أَن تَبَرُّوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَتُصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ
عَلِيمٌ 224

(2:224) Do not swear by Allah in your oaths if they are intended to hinder you from virtue, piety and promoting the good of mankind.[243] Surely Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

243. Authentic Traditions indicate that if a person takes a vow and discovers later that righteousness and common good are best served by breaking that vow then he should do so. Expiation consists in either feeding or providing clothes for ten poor people, or setting free a slave, or fasting for three days (see 5: 89).

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِاللَّغۡوِ فِيۡۤ اَيۡمَانِكُمۡ وَلٰـكِنۡ يُّؤَاخِذُكُمۡ بِمَا كَسَبَتۡ قُلُوۡبُكُمۡ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ

غَفُوۡرٌ حَلِيۡمٌ 225

(2:225) Allah will not take you to task for the oaths you utter in vain,[244] but will certainly take you to task for the oaths you utter in earnest. Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Forbearing.

244. This refers to oaths which one utters either through habit or without any intent and purpose. The breach of such vows neither entails expiation nor makes man liable to God's reproach.

لِّلَّذِيۡنَ يُؤۡلُوۡنَ مِنۡ نِّسَآئِهِمۡ تَرَبُّصُ اَرۡبَعَةِ اَشۡهُرٍ ۚ فَاِنۡ فَآءُوۡ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوۡرٌ

رَّحِيۡمٌ 226

(2:226) For those who vow abstinence from their wives there is a respite of four months.[245] Then, if they go back on their vow they will find that Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.[246]

245. In the legal terminology of Islam this is known as ila'. It is obvious that harmony and cordiality do not always prevail in matrimonial life. There are occasions when strains and tensions develop, leading to discord and estrangement. But the Law of God does not approve of that discord which causes a husband and wife, who are legally tied to one another in matrimony, to remain for all practical purposes alienated from one another as if they had ceased to be spouses. For this kind of abnormal discord and estrangement God has fixed a limit of four months during which the spouses are required either to settle their difference, or to break the tie of wedlock so that each becomes free to contract marriage with someone with whom a harmonious matrimonial relationship appears more likely.

Since the verse mentions 'taking a vow', the Hanafi and Shafi'i jurists consider the injunction to be applicable only when a husband has taken a vow not to have sexual relations with his wife. According to them, the injunction does not apply if the husband merely forsakes sexual relations with his wife without taking any vow to that effect. The Maliki jurists are, however, of the opinion that irrespective of whether a person has taken a vow, the maximum permissible limit for abstaining from sexual relations in wedlock is four months. A statement to that effect is also attributed to Ahmad b. Hanbal. (See Ibn Rushd, Bidayat al-Mujtahid, vol. 2, pp. 98 ff. - Ed.)

According to 'Ali, Ibn Abbas and Hasan al-Basri, this injunction is related to the cessation of sexual relations as a result of unpleasantness in the relationship of the spouses. It would not apply, however, if a husband were to decide to abandon sexual relations with his wife out of some beneficial consideration - say because the wife is breastfeeding - at a time when their

relationship was pleasant. According to other jurists, however, any vow which prevents sexual intercourse between a husband and wife is ila', and ought not to last longer than four months irrespective of the state of the matrimonial relationship when it was taken. (See Jassas, Ahkam al-Qur'an, vol. 1, pp. 355 ff - Ed.)

246. Some jurists have interpreted this verse to signify that if the spouses break their vow and re-establish sexual relations they will not be liable to any expiation and will be pardoned by God gratuitously. However, the majority of jurists are of the opinion that they, are required to expiate. The statement that God is Oft-Forgiving and Merciful does not mean that God has forgiven them. It means rather that God will accept their expiation and will forgive them for whatever excesses they may have committed against each other.

وَإِنْ عَزَمُوا الطَّلَاقَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ 227

(2:227) And if they resolve on divorce,[247] surely Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.[248]

247. According to 'Uthman, Ibn Mas'ud, Zayd ibn Thabit and others the limit for the restoration of matrimonial relations is four months. The mere termination of that period proves that the husband has decided to repudiate the marriage and so divorce automatically ensues. It will be reckoned as an irrevocable (ba'in) repudiation. This means that separation between the spouses will come into force and the husband will not have the right to revoke it during the period of waiting ('iddah). The two parties will, however, have the right to recontract marriage by mutual consent. Statements from 'Umar, 'Ali, Ibn 'Abbas, and also a statement from Ibn 'Umar, have been reported in support of this doctrine and have been accepted by the Hanafi jurists as the basis of their doctrine.

Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib, Makhul, Zuhri,. and some other early jurists agree with this doctrine to the extent that divorce comes into force after four months. But they consider that the husband may revoke it during the period of waiting; and even after the lapse of that period the spouses may recontract marriage by mutual consent.

However, 'A'ishah, Abu al-Darda' and the majority of the jurists of Madina are opposed to this opinion and hold that after four months the matter should be placed before the court when the judge will order the husband either to resume matrimonial relations with his wife or divorce her. Statements from 'Umar and 'Ali as well as a statement from Ibn 'Umar have come down in support of this doctrine. This opinion has been accepted by Malik and Shafi'i. (See Jassas, vol. 1, pp. 359 f. - Ed.)

248. That is, if a man has abandoned his wife on unreasonable grounds, he should not feel secure from the wrath of God for He is not unaware of the excesses that he may have committed.

وَالْمُطَلَّقٰتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِاَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلٰثَةَ قُرُوْٓءٍ ؕ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ اَنْ يَّكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ
فِيْٓ اَرْحَامِهِنَّ اِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنَّ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ؕ وَبُعُوْلَتُهُنَّ اَحَقُّ بِرَدِّهِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ اِنْ
اَرَادُوْٓا اِصْلَاحًا ؕ وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِيْ عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۠ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ ؕ
وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ۧ 228

(2:228) Divorced women shall keep themselves in waiting for three menstrual courses and it is unlawful for them, if they believe in Allah and the Last Day, to hide whatever Allah might have created in their wombs. Should their husbands desire reconciliation during this time they are entitled to take them back into wedlock.[249]

Women have the same rights against their men as men have against them; but men have a degree above them. Allah is All- Powerful, All-Wise.

249. Jurists disagree about the legal import of this verse. According to some, as long as a woman has not completed her third menstrual period repudiation will not have the effect of irrevocable divorce. This is the view of Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Ali, Ibn 'Abbas, Abu Musa al-Ash'arl, Ibn Mas'ud and several distinguished Companions of the Prophet. This is also the accepted doctrine of the Hanafi jurists. On the other hand, another group of jurists is of the view that, as soon as the third monthly period of a woman begins, the husband ceases to have the right to revoke the divorce. This is the view of , 'A'ishah, Ibn 'Umar and Zayd ibn Thabit, and has been accepted by, the Shafi'i and Maliki jurists. It should be clear, however, that this injunction is applicable only when the husband has pronounced single or double divorce. In case of triple divorce, the husband ceases to have the right of revocation. (See Jassas, vol. 1. pp. 364 ff. - Ed.)

اَلطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتٰنِ ۠ فَاِمْسَاكٌۢ بِمَعْرُوْفٍ اَوْ تَسْرِيْحٌۢ بِاِحْسَانٍ ؕ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ اَنْ تَاْخُذُوْا
مِمَّآ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ شَيْـًٔا اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّخَافَآ اَلَّا يُقِيْمَا حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ فَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَلَّا يُقِيْمَا حُدُوْدَ
اللّٰهِ ۙ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا فِيْمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهٖ ؕ تِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ فَلَا تَعْتَدُوْهَا ۚ وَمَنْ يَّتَعَدَّ
حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ 229

(2:229) Divorce can be pronounced twice: then, either honourable retention or kindly release should follow.[250]

(While dissolving the marriage tie) it is unlawful for you to take back anything of what you have given to your wives[251] unless both fear that they may not be able to keep within the bounds set by Allah. Then, if they fear that they might not be able to keep within the bounds set by Allah, there is no blame upon them for what the wife might give away of her property to become released from the marriage tie.[252] These are the bounds set by Allah; do not transgress them. Those of you who transgress the bounds set by Allah are indeed the wrong-doers.

250. This little verse aims at the reform of a serious evil that was rampant in the social life in pre-Islamic Arabia. According to the customary law of Arabia, a person was entitled to pronounce any number of divorces upon his wife. As a result divorce was resorted to at the least provocation and annoyance. In addition, the husband often exercised his right to revoke the divorce he had pronounced with the result that the poor wife could neither live with him in happiness nor free herself to contract a fresh marriage with someone else. Here the Qur'an seeks to shut the door on this injustice. According to this verse, a man may pronounce revocable divorce upon his wife not more than twice. Should he pronounce divorce for the third time after revoking it twice, the wife will be permanently alienated from him.

The appropriate procedure for divorce, according to the Qur'an and Hadith, is that a person should pronounce one divorce outside the time of the wife's menstrual period. After the first divorce he may pronounce a second in the next clear period if he wants to, though it is preferable that he should confine himself to pronouncing the first. In this case the husband retains the right to revoke the divorce at any time before the lapse of the period of waiting ('iddah) even if the period of waiting has lapsed, the couple have the right to recontract the marriage by mutual consent. If the husband, however, pronounces divorce in his wife's third clear period he has no right to revoke the divorce, and the spouses are not entitled to recontract the marriage. The pronouncing of triple divorce in one session is a highly sinful act according to the Law, and the Prophet has strongly denounced it. (See Nasii, 'Talaq', 6 - Ed.) It has even been established that 'Umar used to flog those who pronounced triple divorce in one session. Although this procedure of divorce is considered sinful, the founders of the four legal schools consider it to have legal effect, with the result that such divorce, in their view, becomes absolutely irrevocable.

251. This refers to the mahr (bridal gift) and the jewellery, clothes and so on which the husband offers as a gift to his wife, and to which he has no right of reclaim. It is, indeed, normally inconsistent with Islamic ethics that a person should reclaim anything he has made over to another by way of donation or gift. In the Hadith this disgraceful act is likened to a dog licking its own vomit. (See Bukhari, 'Hibah', 30; Nasiii, 'Hibah', 3, etc. - Ed.)

In the case of a husband, in particular, it is a matter of the utmost disgrace that, at the time of saying farewell to his divorced wife he should try to dispossess her of what he had once given her out of his own goodwill. On the contrary, the morals that Islam seeks to cultivate require that at the time of parting the husband ought to present her with a farewell gift. See (verse 241 below.)

252. In the terminology of Islamic Law this is known as khul', i.e. a woman's securing the annulment of her marriage through the payment of some compensation to her husband. Whatever settlement is made between a husband and wife should come into effect. If the matter is referred to the court, however, it will investigate only whether the wife has really become too disgusted with the husband to put up with him. (For the Traditions on the basis of which the author concludes this see the commentaries on this verse in Ibn Kathir and Qurtubi, see especially the latter, vol. 2, pp. 946-8 - Ed.) Once this is determined the court is entitled to fix the amount of payment incumbent on the wife as compensation for the repudiation of her marriage, and the husband will be bound to accept that amount and divorce his wife. In general, the jurists believe that the payment, thus fixed, should not be higher than the original mahr paid by the husband.

The divorce that comes into effect is irrevocable and brings separation into effect immediately. Since the woman has paid compensation, she has in effect purchased the right of repudiation and the husband, therefore, has ceased to have the right to revoke the divorce. If, however, the spouses agree to recontract marriage, they may do so.

According to the majority of jurists the period of waiting under khul' is the same as under divorce. However, there are several Traditions in Abu Da'ud, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, etc., which show that the Prophet fixed the period of waiting at one menstrual period, and that 'Uthman applied this in a case which he decided. (See Ibn Kathir's commentary on the verse.)

فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا تَحِلُّ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدُ حَتَّىٰ تَنْكِحَ زَوْجًا غَيْرَهُ ۗ فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا جُنَاحَ
عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يَتَرَاجَعَا إِنْ ظَنَّا أَنْ يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ يُبَيِّنُهَا لِقَوْمٍ
يَعْلَمُونَ 230

(2:230) Then, if he divorces her (for the third time, after having pronounced the divorce twice), she shall not be lawful to him unless she first takes another man for a husband, and he divorces her.[253] There is no blame upon them if both of them return to one another thereafter, provided they think that they will be able to keep within the bounds set by Allah. These are the bounds of Allah which He makes clear to a people who have knowledge (of the consequences of violating those bounds).

253. It is known from authentic Traditions that it is totally illegitimate for a person to arrange the marriage of his divorced wife with someone else on the understanding that the latter will divorce her to make it possible for the former husband to recontract marriage with that woman. Such trickery would in fact be an act of sheer sexual corruption and would not render the woman liable to remarriage with her former husband. According to a Tradition transmitted from 'Ali, Ibn Mas'ud, Abu Hurayrah and 'Uqbah ibn 'Amir, the Prophet pronounced his curse on those who arrange, as well as on those who agree to contract, such fictitious marriages. (See Muslim. 'Talaq', l5, 71; Nasa'i, 'Talaq', 8; Ahmad b.

Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 1, P. 314 and vol. 5, p. 334; Al-Muwatta', 'Talaq', 27; Abu Da'ud. 'Talaq'. 10 - Ed.)

وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ سَرِّحُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ ۖ
وَلَا تُمْسِكُوهُنَّ ضِرَارًا لِّتَعْتَدُوا ۚ وَمَن يَفْعَلْ ذَٰلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ ۚ وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوٓا
آيَاتِ اللَّهِ هُزُوًا ۚ وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أَنزَلَ عَلَيْكُم مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ
يَعِظُكُم بِهِ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوٓا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٣١﴾

(2:231) And so, when you divorce women and they reach the end of their waiting term, then either retain them in a fair manner or let them go in a fair manner. And do not retain them to their hurt or by way of transgression; whosoever will do that will indeed wrong himself.[254]

Do not take the Signs of Allah in jest and remember Allah's favour upon you. He exhorts you to revere the Book and the Wisdom that He has sent down upon you.[255] Fear Allah, and know well that Allah has full knowledge of everything.

254. It is absolutely improper that a person should revoke the divorce he pronounced on his wife before the lapse of the period of waiting merely in order to use this revocation as a pretext to harass and torment her . God commands that if a person revokes the divorce this decision should be prompted by a sincere desire to live together amicably. Should that intention be lacking, it is better to part company in a graceful manner see further(n. 250 above).

255. Muslims should not forget that by teaching them the Book and Wisdom, God entrusted them with the glorious task of guiding the world. They should also not forget that they were appointed the 'community, of the middle way' and appointed as witnesses to good and righteousness see (verse 143 above). It does not become them, therefore, to indulge in sophistry and to play with the verses of the Book of God, to exploit the words of the Law to their advantage in achieving ends counter to its spirit, and to slump into injustice and other evil behaviour instead of directing the world to the Right Way.

وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ أَن يَنكِحْنَ أَزْوَاجَهُنَّ إِذَا تَرَاضَوْا
بَيْنَهُم بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ يُوعَظُ بِهِ مَن كَانَ مِنكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۗ ذَٰلِكُمْ
أَزْكَىٰ لَكُمْ وَأَطْهَرُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ 232

(2:232) When you divorce women and they have completed their waiting term do not hinder them from marrying other men if they have agreed to this in a fair manner.[256]

That is an admonition to everyone of you who believes in Allah and the Last Day; that is a cleaner and purer way for you. For Allah knows whereas you do not know.

256. This is a directive to the relatives of the divorced woman. When a woman is divorced by her husband and he fails to revoke the divorce before the expiry of the waiting period, the relatives of the woman should not try to prevent the couple from re-marrying if they agree to do so. This verse may also be interpreted to mean that if a divorced woman wants to contract marriage with someone other than her former husband after the expiry of the waiting period, the former husband should not obstruct this marriage by making malicious propaganda against the woman he has forsaken.

That is an admonition to every one of you who believes in Allah and the Last Day; that is a cleaner and purer way for you. For Allah knows whereas you do not know.

وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ ۖ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَن يُتِمَّ الرَّضَاعَةَ ۚ وَعَلَى
الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۚ لَا تُضَارَّ وَالِدَةٌ
بِوَلَدِهَا وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ لَّهُ بِوَلَدِهِ ۚ وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَٰلِكَ ۗ فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَن تَرَاضٍ
مِّنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا ۗ وَإِنْ أَرَدتُّمْ أَن تَسْتَرْضِعُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ
عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُم مَّا آتَيْتُم بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ
بَصِيرٌ 233

(2:233) If they (i.e. the fathers) wish that the period of suckling for their children be completed, mothers may suckle their children for two whole years.[257] (In such a case)

it is incumbent upon him who has begotten the child to provide them (i.e. divorced women) their sustenance and clothing in a fair manner. But none shall be burdened with more than he is able to bear; neither shall a mother suffer because of her child nor shall the father be made to suffer because he has begotten him. The same duty towards the suckling mother rests upon the heir[258] as upon him (i.e. the father). And if both (the parents) decide, by mutual consent and consultation, to wean the child, there is no blame on them; if you decide to have other women suckle your children there is no blame upon you, provided you hand over its compensation in a fair manner. Fear Allah and know well that Allah sees all that you do.

257. This injunction applies to the condition where the couple have separated either because of divorce, or klul' see (n. 252 above) or ' faskh (annulment) or tafriq (repudiation as a result of judicial decision) and the woman is nursing a child.

258. That is, if the father dies, whoever replaces him as the guardian of the child will be responsible for fulfilling this claim.

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وَالَّذِيْنَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُوْنَ اَزْوَاجًا يَّتَرَبَّصْنَ بِاَنْفُسِهِنَّ اَرْبَعَةَ اَشْهُرٍ وَّعَشْرًا ۚ فَاِذَا بَلَغْنَ اَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيْمَا فَعَلْنَ فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ 234

(2:234) The wives of men who have died must observe a waiting period of four months and ten days;[259] when they have reached the end of the waiting term, there is no blame upon you regarding what they may do with themselves in a fair manner. Allah is well aware of what you do.

259. The waiting period owing to the death of the husband is obligatory even for a woman with whom consummation of marriage has not taken place. A pregnant woman, however, is exempted from this. Her waiting period expires the husband's death and the childbirth is less than the waiting period prescribed by Law.

'To observe a waiting period' does not mean merely that they should refrain from marrying, but also from self-adornment.

Hence we find categorical directives in the Hadith that a widow should neither wear colourful and showy dresses and jewellery, make use of henna, kohl, and perfumes, nor set her hair in an attractive style. There is disagreement, however, as to whether the widow may go out of her house during the waiting period. 'Umar, 'UthmaAn, Ibn 'Umar, Zayd ibn Thabit, Ibn Mas'uid, Ummn Salamah, Said ibn al-Musayyib, Ibrahim al-Nakha'i, Muhammad ibn Sirin and the founders of the four legal schools are of the opinion that during the waiting period a woman should stay in the house in which her husband died. During the daytime she may go out to do necessary errands, but her residence should be her

own home. On contrary, 'A'ishah, Ibn 'Abbas, 'Ali, Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah. 'Ata'. Ta'us, Hasan al-Basri. 'Umar ibn'Abd al'Aziz and the Zahiris are of the opinion that a widow may spend her waiting period wherever she likes, and may even go on journeys. (See the commentary on the verse in JassAs. vol. 1, pp. 418 f. - Ed.)

وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا عَرَّضْتُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ خِطْبَةِ النِّسَآءِ اَوْ اَكْنَنْتُمْ فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِكُمْ ؕ عَلِمَ
اللّٰهُ اَنَّكُمْ سَتَذْكُرُوْنَهُنَّ وَلٰكِنْ لَّا تُوَاعِدُوْهُنَّ سِرًّا اِلَّآ اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا ۬ؕ وَلَا
تَعْزِمُوْا عُقْدَةَ النِّكَاحِ حَتّٰى يَبْلُغَ الْكِتٰبُ اَجَلَهٗ ؕ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِكُمْ
فَاحْذَرُوْهُ ۚ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ حَلِيْمٌ ع 235

(2:235) There is no blame upon you whether you hint at a marriage proposal to such women or keep the proposal hidden in your hearts. Allah knows that you will think of them in that connection. But do not make any secret engagement with them and speak openly in an honourable manner. Do not resolve on the marriage tie until the ordained term has come to its end. Know well that Allah knows even what is in your hearts. So, have fear of Him and know well that Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Forbearing.

لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ اِنْ طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ مَا لَمْ تَمَسُّوْهُنَّ اَوْ تَفْرِضُوْا لَهُنَّ فَرِيْضَةً ۖ صلے ج
وَّمَتِّعُوْهُنَّ ۚ عَلَى الْمُوْسِعِ قَدَرُهٗ وَعَلَى الْمُقْتِرِ قَدَرُهٗ ۚ مَتَاعًا ۢ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۚ ج حَقًّا عَلَى
الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ 236

(2:236) There is no blame upon you if you divorce your wives before you have touched them or settled a bridal gift upon them. But even in this case you should make some provision for them:[260] the affluent, according to his means; the straitened, according to his means – a provision in fair manner. That is a duty upon the good-doers.

260. This sundering of the matrimonial contract after it has been concluded does cause some harm to the woman; God has ordered, therefore, that the person concerned should compensate for the loss according to his capacity.

وَاِنۡ طَلَّقۡتُمُوۡهُنَّ مِنۡ قَبۡلِ اَنۡ تَمَسُّوۡهُنَّ وَقَدۡ فَرَضۡتُمۡ لَهُنَّ فَرِيۡضَةً فَنِصۡفُ مَا فَرَضۡتُمۡ
اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ يَّعۡفُوۡنَ اَوۡ يَعۡفُوَا الَّذِىۡ بِيَدِهٖ عُقۡدَةُ النِّكَاحِ ؕ وَاَنۡ تَعۡفُوۡۤا اَقۡرَبُ لِلتَّقۡوٰى ؕ وَلَا
تَنۡسَوُا الۡفَضۡلَ بَيۡنَكُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ بَصِيۡرٌ 237

(2:237) And if you divorce them before you touch them or settle a bridal gift upon them, then (give them) half of what you have settled unless either the women act leniently and forgo their claim, or he in whose hand is the marriage tie acts leniently (and pays the full amount). If you act leniently, it is closer to God-fearing. And forget not to act gracefully with one another,[261] for indeed Allah sees all that you do.

261. Magnanimity in dealings is essential if human relationships are to remain sound and pleasant. If everyone were to stick strictly to his legal rights and claims, a pleasant social life would he rendered impossible.

حَافِظُوۡا عَلَى الصَّلَوٰتِ وَالصَّلٰوةِ الۡوُسۡطٰى ۗ وَقُوۡمُوۡا لِلّٰهِ قٰنِتِيۡنَ 238

(2:238) Be watchful over the Prayers,[262] and over praying with the utmost excellence,[263] and stand before Allah as would utterly obedient servants.

262. Having mentioned the laws for the guidance of human society, God rounds off this address by emphasizing Prayer, for it is Prayers which instil in man the fear of God. They inculcate the feelings of goodness and purity and the disposition to obey the ordinances of God, and foster adherence to righteousness. Without Prayer it would be impossible for men to persist in observing the laws of God, and they would likely be swept away by a current of defiance and disobedience, as happened in the case of the Jews.

263. 'Re expression al-salat al-wusta has been variously interpreted to mean the Morning, Mid-Day, Sunset or Night Prayers. But no direct statement explaining this expression has come down from the Prophet himself. All the divergent opinions are deductions made by scholars. The opinion of the majority, seems to he inclined in favour of the Afternoon ('Asr) Prayer. since it is claimed that on one occasion the Prophet alluded to this as al-salat al-wusta. The event cited in support of this inference is that during the Battle of the Ditch the Prophet once so preoccupied with the problems posed by the siege of Madina, by the polytheists, that he could not perform his 'Asr Prayer within the scheduled time. and the time of sunset drew close. On that occasion the Prophet said: 'God fill the graves and houses of these people with fire. They have caused us to our wusta (mid-most) Prayer.' This statement led people to believe that the expression 'mid-most Prayer' referred to the

'Asr Prayer. It seems more likely, however, that the Prophet meant that the cares of the battle had prevented him and his followers from performing the Prayer in an excellent way; the delay in the Prayer meant that instead of praying with equanimity, concentration and

total devotion, they were forced by circumstances to pray hurriedly.

The adjective wusta in addition to signifying the middle position of the subject that it qualifies, also signifies its excellence. Hence the expression could legitimately be interpreted both in the sense of the middle Prayer as well as in the sense of the Prayer which is performed at the right time and with full devotion and attention to God, a Prayer which contains all the attributes of excellence. The admonition which follows, 'stand before Allah as utterly, obedient servants', seems to indicate what was meant by the 'mid-most Prayer'.

فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ فَرِجَالًا أَوْ رُكْبَانًا ۚ فَإِذَا أَمِنْتُمْ فَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَمَا عَلَّمَكُمْ مَا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ 239

(2:239) And even if you face the state of fear, still perform the Prayer whether on foot or riding; and when you are secure, remember Allah in the manner that He taught you, the manner that you did not know earlier.

وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا ۖ وَصِيَّةً لِأَزْوَاجِهِمْ مَتَاعًا إِلَى الْحَوْلِ غَيْرَ إِخْرَاجٍ ۚ فَإِنْ خَرَجْنَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي مَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِنَّ مِنْ مَعْرُوفٍ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ 240

(2:240) Those of you who die leaving behind your wives[264] should make testament of one year's provision without expulsion in favour of your wives; and if they themselves depart, there shall be no blame upon you for what they may do with themselves in an honourable manner. Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.

264. The main discourse has already come to an end see (verse 238 an n. 262) above. These concluding remarks are supplementary,.

وَلِلْمُطَلَّقَاتِ مَتَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۖ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ 241

(2:241) Likewise, let there be a fair provision for the divorced women; this is an obligation on the God-fearing.

كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ۝ 242

(2:242) Thus Allah makes His injunctions clear to you that you may understand.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيۡنَ خَرَجُوۡا مِنۡ دِيَارِهِمۡ وَهُمۡ اُلُوۡفٌ حَذَرَ الۡمَوۡتِ ۖ فَقَالَ لَهُمُ اللّٰهُ
مُوۡتُوۡا ۟ ثُمَّ اَحۡيَاهُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَذُوۡ فَضۡلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلٰـكِنَّ اَكۡثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا
يَشۡكُرُوۡنَ 243

(2:243) (O Messenger), have you thought of those who went forth from their homes for fear of death even though they were in their thousands?[265] Allah said to them: "Die!" Then He restored them to life.[266] Indeed Allah is Bounteous to mankind; but most people do not give thanks in return.

265. Here begins a fresh discourse, in which Muslims are urged to struggle and make financial sacrifices for God's cause. Moreover, they have been warned to avoid those forms of corruption which eventually led the Children of Israel into decline and degeneration. In order to appreciate this discourse it should be borne in mind that it was revealed when the Muslims had been driven out of Makka and had lived in Madina for year and a half. Exasperated by the wrongs to which the unbelievers subjected them, the Muslims had again and again asked the Prophet to permit them to fight. But when they were at long last asked to fight, some of them showed a degree of reluctance and disinclination see (verse 216)above. Their attention is now drawn, therefore, to two incidents in the history of the Israelites from which the may learn their lesson.

266. This refers to the exodus of the Israelites. Surah 5 see(verse 20 ff)) gives some details of this incident. The Israelites had left Egypt in large numbers and were wandering in the desert, eager to find a home. But when at God's command Moses ordered them to drive the Canaanites out of Palestine and conquer that land, they showed cowardice and refused to proceed. Eventually God let them wander about for forty years till one full generation of Israelites had died and been replaced by a new one reared in the tough conditions of desert life. It was only, then that God enabled the Israelites to overcome the Canaanites. Their former condition is described as death, whereas the later development is seen as their restoration to life.

وَقَاتِلُوۡا فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ وَاعۡلَمُوۡۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيۡعٌ عَلِيۡمٌ 244

(2:244) So fight in the Way of Allah and know well that Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

مَنۡ ذَا الَّذِىۡ يُقۡرِضُ اللّٰهَ قَرۡضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضٰعِفَهٗ لَهٗۤ اَضۡعَافًا كَثِيۡرَةً ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَقۡبِضُ
وَيَبۡصُۜطُ ۪ وَاِلَيۡهِ تُرۡجَعُوۡنَ 245

(2:245) Who of you will lend Allah a goodly loan[267] which He will return after multiplying it for him manifold? For Allah has the power both to decrease and increase, and to Him will you be returned.

267. 'Goodly loan' signifies whatever one gives to another person selflessly, and from absolutely pure motives. God describes whatever man spends in this manner as a loan made to none other than Him, and He undertakes to repay that loan and to repay it several-fold. The stipulation, however. is that the loan should be a 'goodly' one; that is, it should not he tainted with selfish designs and should be given for the sake of God, to be spent for purposes pleasing to Him

They said: 'And why would we not fight in the way of Allah when we have been torn from our homes and our children?' But when fighting was ordained for them they turned back, except a few of them. Allah is well aware of the wrong-doers.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الْمَلَإِ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَىٰ إِذْ قَالُوا لِنَبِيٍّ لَهُمُ ابْعَثْ لَنَا مَلِكًا
نُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۖ قَالَ هَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ أَلَّا تُقَاتِلُوا ۖ قَالُوا
وَمَا لَنَا أَلَّا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَدْ أُخْرِجْنَا مِنْ دِيَارِنَا وَأَبْنَائِنَا ۖ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ
الْقِتَالُ تَوَلَّوْا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ 246

(2:246) (O Messenger), have you thought of what happened with the elders of the Children of Israel after Moses? They asked one of their Prophets: “Set up for us a king so that we may fight in the way of Allah.”[268] He said: “Would you possibly refrain from fighting if fighting is ordained for you?” They said: “And why would we not fight in the way of Allah when we have been torn from our homes and our children?” But when fighting was ordained for them they turned back, except a few of them. Allah is well aware of the wrong-doers.

268. This took place about a thousand years before Christ. At that time the Israelites were persecuted by the Amalekites who had deprived them of the greater part of Palestine. The Prophet Samuel, who was then ruling over the Israelites, was old. The elders of Israel, therefore, felt the need to appoint as their head someone else under whose leadership they could wage wars. By that time, however, the Israelites had become so deeply infected with Ignorance, and the customs and practices of non-Muslim nations had made such inroads into their lives that the distinction between a religious state committed to serving God and secular monarchy was lost on them. They consequently asked God to appoint a king rather than a religious ruler (khalifah) over them. The information contained in the Bible is as follows:

Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. . . . Then all the elders of Israel gathered

together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, 'Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint for us a king to govern us like all the nations.' But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, 'Give us a king to govern us'. And Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, 'Hearken to the voice of the people in what they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. According to all the deeds which they have done to me, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you . . . ' So Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking a king for him. He said, 'These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you; he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots. And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plough his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make the implements of war and the equipments of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. He will take the tenth of your grain and your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. He will take you men-servants and maid-servants, and the best of your cattle and asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And on that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the Lord will not answer you in that day.' But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said. 'No! But we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles.' And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, 'Hearken to their voice, and make them a king.' Samuel then said to the men of Israel, 'Go every man to his city.' (1 Samuel 7: 15; 8: 4-22.)

And Samuel said to the people ? 'And when you saw that Nahash the king of Ammonites came against you, You said to me, No, but a king shall reign over us, when the Lord your God was your king. And now behold the king whom you have chosen, for whom you have asked; behold, the Lord has set a king over you. If you will fear the Lord and serve him and hearken to his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God, it will be well; but if you will not hearken to the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you and your king. Now therefore stand still and see this great thing, which the Lord will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call upon the Lord, that he may send thunder and rain; and you shall know and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking for yourselves a king.' So Samuel called upon the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. And all the people said to Samuel, 'Pray for your servants to the Lord your God, that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins this evil, to ask for a king.' And Samuel said to the people, 'Fear not; you have done all this evil, yet do not turn aside front following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart, and do not turn aside after vain things which cannot profit or save, for they are vain. For the Lord will not cast away his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself. Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you; and I will instruct you in the good and right way?' (1 Samuel 12: 6-23).

These statements from Samuel make it clear that the demand to appoint a king was disagreeable to God and to His Prophet. It might be asked, however, why the Qur'an does not contain any denunciation of this demand of the elders of Israel. The reason is that to the purpose for which this incident has been cited the appropriateness and otherwise of the demand is irrelevant. The purpose here is to show the extent to which cowardice and self-indulgence had become part of Israelite life, and to show how the lack of moral restraint had come to characterize their conduct. It is these which ultimately led to their decline. The aim of the Qur'anic narrative is to enable Muslims to derive a lesson from this and to ensure that these weaknesses do not creep into their own lives.

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوْتَ مَلِكًا ؕ قَالُوْۤا اَنّٰى يَكُوْنُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ
عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ اَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِّنَ الْمَالِ ؕ قَالَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰىهُ عَلَيْكُمْ
وَزَادَهٗ بَسْطَةً فِى الْعِلْمِ وَ الْجِسْمِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يُؤْتِىْ مُلْكَهٗ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ وَاسِعٌ
عَلِيْمٌ 247

(2:247) And their Prophet said to them: “Indeed Allah has sent forth Saul (Talut) as your king.”[269] They said: “By what right shall he rule over us when we are more worthy than he to dominion, for he is not very wealthy?” He said: “Allah has chosen him over you and has endowed him abundantly with both intellectual and physical capacities. Allah indeed has the power to bestow dominion upon whomsoever He wills. Allah is All-Resourceful, All- Knowing.”

269. In the Bible he is called Saul. He was a thirty-year-old Benjaminite youth. 'There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he; from his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people' (1 Samuel 9: 2). He went out in search of the lost asses of his father. During this search, he passed through the house of Samuel and God informed Samuel that this was the person who had been chosen to govern the people of Israel. Samuel brought Saul to his house, took a vial of oil, poured it on his head,. kissed him and said: 'Has not the Lord anointed you to be the prince over His people of Israel? ' (1 Samuel 10: 1). Samuel later called the people of Israel together and proclaimed Saul to be their king (1 Samuel 10: 17).

This was the second Israelite to be anointed by God's command to a position of leadership. Earlier, Aaron had been anointed as the chief priest. The third case of anointment was that of David, and the fourth that of Jesus. There is no clear statement in the Qur'an regarding the designation of Talut (the Saul of the Bible) to prophethood. The mere fact of his being appointed a ruler does not necessarily warrant considering him a Prophet as well.

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ اِنَّ اٰيَةَ مُلْكِهٖٓ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَكُمُ التَّابُوْتُ فِيْهِ سَكِيْنَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَبَقِيَّةٌ مِّمَّا
تَرَكَ اٰلُ مُوْسٰى وَاٰلُ هٰرُوْنَ تَحْمِلُهُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ
مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ع 248

(2:248) And their Prophet said to them: "The Sign of his dominion is that in his reign the Ark, wherein is inner peace for you, will be brought back to you, and the sacred relics left behind by the house of Moses and the house of Aaron borne by angels.[270] Truly in that is a Sign for you, if indeed you are people of faith."

270. The Biblical version of this incident is different from the Qur'anic one. The former sheds light, however, on certain details of the incident. It shows that during a military engagement the pagan Philistines had captured the 'Ark of the covenant'. Terrified of the scourge and pestilence which spread wherever they carried the Ark, these pagans placed it on a cart driven by milk cows, and sent it off. (1 Samuel 5-6 - Ed.) Perhaps the Qur'an alludes to this when it mentions angels, since the cart was driverless and it was the angels who kept it in their custody and brought it to the Israelites. The Qur'anic statement, that in the Ark 'lies inward peace for you', can be understood in the light of the Biblical statements that the Israelites regarded the Ark as highly auspicious, and as an emblem of their triumph and victory. When they were deprived of it, they began to feel that they had been deprived of the mercy of God. The return of the Ark, therefore, had a highly salutary effect on them as it strengthened their sagging morale and raised their spirits.

The Qur'anic mention of 'the sacred relics left behind by the house of Aaron' seems to allude to the Tablets of Law bequeathed to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Ark is also said to have contained the original copy of the Torah, which Moses himself had had transcribed and which he had himself handed over to the Levites. The Ark is also supposed to have contained a golden urn holding the manna (Hebrews 9: 2 ff - Ed.), in order that the coming generations might recall God's benevolence to their forefathers during their wandering in the desert. The Ark also probably contained the rod of Moses which was one of the great miracles of God. (Hebrews 9: 5 mentions the rod of Aaron - Ed.)

فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوْتُ بِالْجُنُوْدِ ۙ قَالَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مُبْتَلِيْكُمْ بِنَهَرٍ ۚ فَمَنْ شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّيْ ۚ
وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَاِنَّهٗ مِنِّيْٓ اِلَّا مَنِ اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً ۢ بِيَدِهٖ ۚ فَشَرِبُوْا مِنْهُ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا مِّنْهُمْ ؕ
فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهٗ هُوَ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ ۙ قَالُوْا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ بِجَالُوْتَ وَجُنُوْدِهٖ ؕ قَالَ

الَّذِيْنَ يَظُنُّوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ مُّلٰقُوا اللّٰهِ ۙ كَمْ مِّنْ فِئَةٍ قَلِيْلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيْرَةًۢ بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ

مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ 249

(2:249) When Saul (Talut) set out with his forces he said: "Allah will try you with a river, and whoever drinks of it does not belong to me; he who refrains from tasting it – unless it be just a palmful – he indeed belongs to me." Then all, except a few of them, drank their fill at the river.[271]

But as soon as Saul (Talut) and the believers with him went forth across the river, they said: "Today we have no strength to face Goliath (Jalut) and his forces."[272] But those who believed that they were bound to meet their Lord said: "How often has a small party prevailed against a large party by the leave of Allah." Allah is with those who remain steadfast.

271. This may refer either to the river Jordan or to some other river or stream in that region. Saul wanted to take the Israelite army across the river. He was aware, however, that there was little moral discipline and restraint left in them. Hence he hit upon this device to distinguish the worthy from the worthyless. Those who could not endure thirst even for a short while, would not be expected to remain steadfast in their confrontation with an enemy at whose hands they had already taken a beating.

272. These were presumable the people who had shown their impatience on the bank of the river. (See the preceding note - Ed.)

وَلَمَّا بَرَزُوْا لِجَالُوْتَ وَجُنُوْدِهٖ قَالُوْا رَبَّنَآ اَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَّثَبِّتْ اَقْدَامَنَا وَانْصُرْنَا عَلَى

الْقَوْمِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ۗ 250

(2:250) And when they went forth against Goliath (Jalut) and his forces, they prayed: "Our Lord! Shower us with patience, and set our feet firm, and grant us victory over this unbelieving people."

فَهَزَمُوْهُمْ بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ۙ قف وَقَتَلَ دَاوٗدُ جَالُوْتَ وَاٰتٰىهُ اللّٰهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَهٗ مِمَّا

يَشَآءُ ۗ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللّٰهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَّفَسَدَتِ الْاَرْضُ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ ذُوْ فَضْلٍ

عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ 251

(2:251) Thereupon by Allah's leave they put the unbelievers to flight, and David killed Goliath,[273] and Allah granted him dominion and wisdom, and imparted to him the knowledge of whatever He willed. And were it not that Allah repelled some people with another, the earth would surely be overlaid with mischief.[274] But Allah is Bounteous to the people of the world (and thus extirpates mischief).

273. David was then in the early years of his youth. By chance he joined the army of Saul just when the mighty champion of the Philistine army had challenged the Israelite army to combat. None of the Israelites had the courage to take up the challenge. On seeing this, David took on Goliath in a duel and slew him. From then on, David could do no wrong in the eyes of the Israelites. Saul gave him the hand of his daughter in marriage and ultimately he became the ruler of the Israelites. (For details see 1 Samuel, chapters 17 and I8.)

274. This enunciates the principle according to which God treats the nations as a part of the Divine system governing the world. He allows various nations to attain power and strength within certain limits. But when any nation begins to commit wrongs and exceed reasonable limits. God brings forth another nation as a counterweight, Were the dominion of one nation or party to endure for ever, and were its capacity to perpetrate wrongs granted in perpetuity, God's earth would become full of corruption and wickedness.

تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ اللّٰهِ نَتْلُوْهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ وَاِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ 252

(2:252) These are the Signs of Allah which We recite to you in Truth, for indeed you are one of those entrusted with the Message.

تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ ۘ مِنْهُمْ مَّنْ كَلَّمَ اللّٰهُ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَهُمْ دَرَجٰتٍ ؕ
وَاٰتَيْنَا عِيْسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنٰتِ وَاَيَّدْنٰهُ بِرُوْحِ الْقُدُسِ ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَا اقْتَتَلَ
الَّذِيْنَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ وَلٰكِنِ اخْتَلَفُوْا فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ اٰمَنَ
وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ كَفَرَ ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَا اقْتَتَلُوْا ۟ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيْدُ ع 253

(2:253) And these Messengers (who have been designated to guide people), We have exalted some of them above the others. Among them are such as were spoken to by Allah Himself, and some He exalted in other respects. And We granted Jesus, son of Mary, Clear Signs and supported him with the spirit of holiness. Had He willed, those who had seen these Clear Signs would not have fought one another thereafter. But (it was not the will of Allah to prevent people from disagreement by compulsion, hence) they differed among themselves whereby some attained faith and others denied the Truth. Yet had Allah so willed they would not have fought one another. Allah does whatever He wills.[275]

275. The main cause of the differences which arose after people had received true knowledge through the Prophets, and which were even aggravated into feuds and wars, is not that God was helpless, and lacked the power to put an end to the fighting. Had He willed so, no one would have had the power to defy the teachings of the Prophets, to take the course of disbelief and rebellion against Him, and to spread mischief and corruption in His world. But it was not His will to deprive human beings of their free-will and choice, and to compel them to follow a particular course. He has created human beings on earth in order to test them and hence endowed them with the freedom to choose from the various alternative courses of belief and action.

God did not appoint the Prophets as policemen to force people to faith and obedience. He sent them, instead, with reasonable arguments and clear signs in order to invite people to righteousness. Hence the cause of all the differences and wranglings and fighting which took place was that people, in exercising the free-will granted to them by God, followed divergent courses. In short, people follow divergent ways precisely because of God's omnipotent will that men should have a choice. It would be a grave misunderstanding to hold that people follow different paths because God failed to persuade people to follow the path which He wanted them to choose.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ أَنفِقُوا۟ مِمَّا رَزَقْنَٰكُم مِّن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِىَ يَوْمٌ لَّا بَيْعٌ فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةٌ وَلَا شَفَٰعَةٌ ۗ وَٱلْكَٰفِرُونَ هُمُ ٱلظَّٰلِمُونَ 254

(2:254) O you who believe! Spend out of what We have provided you[276] before there comes a Day when there will be no buying and selling, nor will friendship and intercession be of any avail. Indeed those who disbelieve are the wrong-doers.[277]

276. This means spending in the way of God. The instruction given here is that those who have adopted the cause of the true faith should undertake financial sacrifices for its sake.

277. Here the expression 'they who disbelieve' signifies either those who refused to obey God and held their property to be clearer than God's good pleasure, or those who did not believe in the Day of which they had been warned, or those who cherished the false i11usion that in the Hereafter they would somehow be able to secure their salvation and that their association with men devoted to God would stand them in good stead for they would intercede with God on their behalf.

ٱللَّهُ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ٱلْحَىُّ ٱلْقَيُّومُ ۚ لَا تَأْخُذُهُۥ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ ۚ لَّهُۥ مَا فِى ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَمَا فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ ۗ مَن ذَا ٱلَّذِى يَشْفَعُ عِندَهُۥٓ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِۦ ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ۖ وَلَا

يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِۦٓ إِلَّا بِمَا شَآءَ ۚ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضَ ۖ وَلَا يَـُٔودُهُۥ
حِفْظُهُمَا ۚ وَهُوَ ٱلْعَلِىُّ ٱلْعَظِيمُ 255

(2:255) Allah, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsisting by Whom all subsist, there is no god but He.[278] Neither slumber seizes Him, nor sleep;[279] to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth.[280] Who is there who might intercede with Him save with His leave?[281]

He knows what lies before them and what is hidden from them, whereas they cannot attain to anything of His knowledge save what He wills them to attain.[282] His Dominion[283] overspreads the heavens and the earth, and their upholding wearies Him not. He is All-High, All-Glorious.[284]

278. Irrespective of the number of gods or objects of worship set up by ignorant people, the fact remains that godhead in its entirety, belongs exclusively to the Eternal Being, Who is indebted to no one for His existence. In fact, He is not only self-existent, but upon Him rests the entire order of the universe. He alone wields all sovereign authority over His dominion. None shares either His attributes or His power and might, and no one has the same claims against the creatures as He. Hence, if anywhere in the heavens or the earth someone sets up anything or anybody as an object of worship and service (ilah) either instead of or in addition to the One True God this amounts to declaring war on reality.

279. This is a refutation of the ideas of those who, in formulating their concepts of God, are inclined to consider God analogous to their own imperfect selves and hence ascribe to God the weaknesses characteristic of human beings. An instance at hand is the famous Biblical statement that God created the heavens and the earth in six days and on the seventh day He rested (see Genesis, chapters 1 and 2).

280. To God belongs the heavens and the earth and everything therein. There is no one who shares anything with God in governance either of the heavens or of the earth. Any conceivable being other than God would necessarily be a part of the universe and thus belong to, and be a subject of, God rather than His partner and equal.

281.This is a refutation of the ideas of those polytheists who consider either saints, angels or other beings to be so influential with God that if they were adamant in demanding something of Him, their demand would prevail. They are being told that, far from anyone having the power to impose his will on God, none - not even the greatest Prophets and the most highly esteemed angels - will dare utter one word in the majestic court of the Lord unless they are expressly permitted to do so.

282. Here another blow is struck against polytheism. On the basis of the concept of God's unlimited sovereignty and omnipotence it was stressed, in the foregoing verses, that no one shares independently in God's governance of the universe, and no one is so powerful with God that his intercession would decisively influence His judgement. The same point is

stressed here but in a different manner. It is pointed out that no one possesses the knowledge that would enable him to comprehend the order of the universe and the considerations underlying it, so no one can legitimately interfere in its governance. The knowledge of human beings, of jinn, of angels and of all other creatures is limited and imperfect. No one's knowledge embraces all the facts of the universe. If someone did have the right to interfere even in only a part of the universe, and if his suggestions were of necessity to be put into effect, the entire order of the universe would be disrupted. Creatures are incapable of understanding what is best for them, and do not have the capacity to know how best the universe should be governed. It is God alone Who knows everything.

283. The Arabic term kursi signifies sovereignty, dominion and authority.

(The word Kursi has been variously interpreted by Muslim scholars. The literal meaning is obvious; it signifies that which one sits on. Scholars have differed, however, as to whether the word has been used in the Qur'an literally or figuratively. They have also disagreed whether the Kursi and 'Arsh Which occur in the Qur'an have one and the same meaning or are different. The main opinions expressed by the scholars are the following: (i) that Kursi signifies God's knowledge, a view attributed to Ibn 'Abbas; (ii) that it is identical with 'Arsh (Throne), a view attributed to Hasan al-Basri; (iii) that it signifies God's power (iv) in opposition to such views a large number of scholars insist that Kursi should be considered a reality rather than be understood figuratively. In addition to many earlier scholars, this was vigorously championed by Ibn Taymiyah. It should be remembered, however, that Ibn Taymiyah and others who hold this opinion, side by side with affirming that Kursi is a reality, also emphasize that man has no knowledge about the nature and modality of Kursi and that it ought to be treated as something unique, being related to God Who is unique both in His essence and attributes. (See the commentaries of Alusi. Tabari, Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir and Shawkani on this verse. See also Ibn Taymiyah, Majmu al-Fatawa 1bn Taymiyah, vol. 5, pp. 55-8 and vol. 6, pp. 584-5. It is interesting to note that Sayyid Qutb, (martyred 1386 A.H/966 C.E.), a contemporary of Mawdudi and one of the most influential Islamic thinkers of our time, has interpreted the verse exactly, as Mawdudi did - Ed.)

284. This verse is generally known as the 'Verse of the Throne' and it provides in one piece a knowledge of God without parallel.

The question that arises here is: What is the occasion for describing the Lord of the Universe and His attributes? In order to appreciate this one should rehearse the discourse beginning with(verse 243) and continuing up to this point. In this discourse the believers were urged to strive with their lives and belongings to establish the true faith and were warned to get rid of the weaknesses which had characterized the conduct of the Israelites. A fundamental fact about war - that victory and success do not depend upon superiority in either numbers or weapons - was then indicated. They depend rather on faith, fortitude, discipline and firm resolution. Thereafter the Divine wisdom underlying fighting was disclosed, namely that God removes one set of people by means of another in order to maintain the good administration of the world. For were one group's dominance to be assured in perpetuity, the lives of all other human beings mould become miserable.

This was followed by the clarification of a misunderstanding which often arises in the minds

of ignorant people. This misunderstanding arose from the false assumption that God had sent His Prophets so that all diversity and disagreement might come to an end. The people who accepted this premise, however, saw considerable diversity and disagreement, and were aware that falsehood existed side by side with Truth. They were agitated by the thought that this state of affairs might suggest helplessness on God's part, that He had failed to stamp out the evils He wanted to. In reply to this it was pointed out that it was not God's will to compel all human beings to follow one and the same way. Had it been so, man could not have deviated from the course set for him by God. This observation was followed by a passing reference to the subject with which the discourse opened. Finally, the point is made that no matter how many divergent beliefs, viewpoints, ways of life and conduct exist in actual life, the reality underlying the order of the universe is the one stated in this verse, and it remains unaffected by the misconceptions of people. On the other hand, however, it is not God's purpose to compel people to accept it. Whoever accepts it will find it to his own benefit; whoever rejects it, will find the result harmful.

لَآ اِكۡرَاهَ فِى الدِّيۡنِ ۙ قَد تَّبَيَّنَ الرُّشۡدُ مِنَ الۡغَىِّ ۚ فَمَنۡ يَّكۡفُرۡ بِالطَّاغُوۡتِ وَيُؤۡمِنۡۢ بِاللّٰهِ
فَقَدِ اسۡتَمۡسَكَ بِالۡعُرۡوَةِ الۡوُثۡقٰى ۗ لَا انۡفِصَامَ لَهَا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيۡعٌ عَلِيۡمٌ 256

(2:256) There is no compulsion in religion.[285] The Right Way stands clearly distinguished from the wrong. Hence he who rejects the evil ones[286] and believes in Allah has indeed taken hold of the firm, unbreakable handle. And Allah (Whom he has held for support) is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

285. Din here signifies the belief about God embodied in the above 'Verse of the Throne' and the entire system of life which rests upon it. The verse means that the system of Islam, embracing belief, morals and practical conduct cannot be imposed by compulsion. These are not things to which people can be yoked forcibly.

286. Literally taghut means anvone who exceeds his legitimate limits. In the Qur'anic terminology, however, it refers to the creature who exceeds the limits of his creatureliness and arrogates to himself godhead and lordship. There are three stages of man's transgression and rebellion against God. The first stage is that one acknowledges in principle that obedience to God is right, but disregards it in practice. This is fisq (transgression). The second stage is that one not only disobeys but also rejects obedience in principle, and thus either refuses to become the subject of anyone at all or adopts someone other than God as the object of service and devotion. This is kufr (infidelity). The third stage is that one not only rebels against one's Lord but also imposes one's own will (in disregard of the Will of God - Ed.) on God's world and God's creatures. Anyone who reaches such a point is termed taghut and no one can be a true believer in God unless the authority of such a taghut (evil one) is rejected.

اَللّٰهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا يُخْرِجُهُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اَوْلِيٰٓـُٔهُمُ
الطَّاغُوْتُ ۙ يُخْرِجُوْنَهُمْ مِّنَ النُّوْرِ اِلَى الظُّلُمٰتِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا
خٰلِدُوْنَ ع 257

(2:257) Allah is the Guardian of those who believe, He brings them out of every darkness into light.[287]

And those who disbelieve, their guardians are the evil ones;[288] they bring them out of light into all kinds of darkness. These are destined for the Fire, and there shall they abide.

287. The 'darkness' mentioned here means the darkness of Ignorance, which throws man off the path of salvation and well-being and directs his energies and efforts to wrong directions in defiance of reality. 'Light' here means the knowledge of Truth with the help of which man comes to know his own reality and that of the universe; this knowledge also shows him the purpose of his life, and thus leads him consciously, to adopt the Right Way.

288. Here taghut see(n. 286) above has a plural connotation. It implies that by turning away from God a man is subjected not to the tyranny of one, but to the tyranny of many tawaghit (evil one). One of these is Satan, who throws up new temptations and allurements. Another potential taghut (transgressor) is man's own animal self, which seeks to subjugate him to his appetites and desires. There are many more taghut in the world outside oneself ; one's wife and children, one's relatives, one's family and one's community, one's friends and acquaintances, one's social environment and one's people, one's leaders and guides, one's government and rulers are all potential taghut, each one of whom seeks to have his purposes served. Man remains subjected to these innumerable masters throughout his life, not knowing precisely whom he should please and whose displeasure he should avoid.

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِىْ حَآجَّ اِبْرٰهٖمَ فِىْ رَبِّهٖٓ اَنْ اٰتٰىهُ اللّٰهُ الْمُلْكَ ۘ اِذْ قَالَ اِبْرٰهٖمُ رَبِّىَ الَّذِىْ
يُحْىٖ وَيُمِيْتُ ۙ قَالَ اَنَا اُحْىٖ وَاُمِيْتُ ؕ قَالَ اِبْرٰهٖمُ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَاْتِىْ بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ
فَاْتِ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ فَبُهِتَ الَّذِىْ كَفَرَ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۙ 258

(2:258) Did you not consider the case of the person[289] who remonstrated with Abraham[290] about who was Abraham's Lord just because Allah had granted him dominion?[291]

When Abraham said: “My Lord is He Who grants life and causes death,” he replied: “I grant life and I cause death.” Abraham said: “But surely Allah causes the sun to rise from the east; now you cause it to rise from the west.” Thereupon the denier of the Truth was confounded.[292] Allah does not direct the wrong-doers to the Right Way.

289. It was stated earlier that God is the protector and supporter of the man of faith and brings him out of darkness into light whereas the protectors and supporters of the unbelievers are taghut who lead him out of light into darkness. It is to illustrate this that three examples are cited here. The first is that of a person before whom truth was put with such clear and impressive arguments that he could not refute it, but since he had placed his reins in the hands of taghut, he still could not believe in it. The two subsequent examples are those of two people who clung to God as their support, and God drew them out of darkness so that they were enabled to perceive directly those realities which are beyond the reach of man's perception.

290. Here the reference is to Nimrod the ruler of the land of Abrahams birth, Iraq. The event which is referred to here is not mentioned at all in the Bible. However, the whole story occurs in the Talmud and is largely in harmony with the Qur'anic version. In the Talmudic version it is said that the father of Abraham occupied the highest office in Nimrod's government. When Abraham denounced polytheism, preached the doctrine of the unity of God and smashed the idols of the temple, his own father lodged a complaint against him before the king. This was followed by a conversation which is mentioned here.

291. The dispute was over the question: Whom did he acknowledge as his Lord? The reason why this dispute arose was that God had granted kingship to the remonstrator, namely Nimrod. In order to comprehend fully the nature of the dispute hinted at in these statements, it is necessary to bear in mind the following:

(1) All polytheistic societies from the earliest times till today share one characteristic: they acknowledge God to be the Lord of lords, the greatest of all deities. They are unwilling to acknowledge Him, however, as the only God, the only object of man's worship and service.

(2) Polytheists tend to divide godhead into two categories. One of these belongs to the supernatural stratum. The being invested with godhead at this stratum rules over the entire system of causation and is the one to whom man turns for the fulfilment of his needs and for solutions to his problems. With this godhead the polytheists associate spirits, angels, jinn, heavenly bodies and several other beings. To them they address their prayers. They regard them as the objects of their worship. It is at their altars that offerings and sacrifices are placed. The second category of godhead belongs to the social and political stratum, and refers to the being who has the privilege of absolute sovereignty: the one who is entitled to make the rules of conduct for human life, the one who is entitled to unreserved obedience, the one who has unlimited authority to command in worldy matters. Polytheists of all ages have either wrested this godhead from God altogether, or they have had this godhead distributed, in addition to God, among many others such as royal dynastics, religious divines and the venerated personalities of society, whether they belonged to the past or to their own times. Many royal families have laid claim to godhead of the second category and, in order to consolidate their claim, they have pretended to be the offspring of gods in the former sense. In general there has been collusion between the religious and the ruling

classes on this question.

(3) Nimrod's claim to godhead belong to this second category. He did not deny the existence of God, and he did not deny that He was the creator of the heavens and the earth, and that He alone governed the entire universe. Nimrod did not claim for himself that he held the reins of the entire realm of causation in his hands; he claimed rather that he was the absolute sovereign of Chaldaea and its inhabitants, that in his realm his word was law, that there was no authority superior to his own to which he was answerable. Any Chaldaean who did not either acknowledge him to be his lord or took anyone other than him to be so, was a rebel and a traitor.

(4) Abraham asserted that he acknowledged none else but the creator of the universe as his God, the only object worthy of his worship. He also denied categorically the godhead and overlordship of anyone else. This raised the question of how far the new creed could be tolerated, in so far as it was opposed to the tenets of the national religion and rejected the current ideas regarding the deities it worshipped. It also alerted the establishment in so far as Abraham's ideas might constitute a serious threat to the national state and to the position and privilege of its ruling coterie.

292. Even though it was clear from Abraham's very first sentence that none other than God could legitimately be regarded as the Lord, Nimrod resorted to an unreasonable reply. But Abraham's second statement left no room even for Nimrod's brazenness. He knew well enough that the sun and the moon were subjected to the overlordship of the same God as Abraham had acknowledged as his Lord. What, then, could he say in reply? To accept the Truth which Abraham had made crystal clear by his argument meant that Nimrod ought to part with his absolutist despotism. The devil within him was not prepared for that. Hence he was left wonderstruck, unable to get out of the darkness of self-adoration to the light of Truth. If he had taken God rather than the Evil One as his patron and supporter, the true path would have been opened to him after Abraham's preaching.

According to the Talmud, Abraham was interned in prison on the orders of this king. He remained in prison for ten days, after which the king decided to have him burnt alive. It was then that the famous incident of Abraham being thrown into the fire took place see Qur'an (21:51 f f).; (29:16); (37:83).

أَوْ كَالَّذِي مَرَّ عَلَىٰ قَرْيَةٍ وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَىٰ عُرُوشِهَا ۖ قَالَ أَنَّىٰ يُحْيِي هَٰذِهِ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ۖ فَأَمَاتَهُ اللَّهُ مِائَةَ عَامٍ ثُمَّ بَعَثَهُ ۖ قَالَ كَمْ لَبِثْتَ ۖ قَالَ لَبِثْتُ يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ ۖ قَالَ بَل لَّبِثْتَ مِائَةَ عَامٍ فَانظُرْ إِلَىٰ طَعَامِكَ وَشَرَابِكَ لَمْ يَتَسَنَّهْ ۖ وَانظُرْ إِلَىٰ حِمَارِكَ ۖ

وَلِنَجْعَلَكَ اٰيَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَانْظُرْ اِلَى الْعِظَامِ كَيْفَ نُنْشِزُهَا ثُمَّ نَكْسُوْهَا لَحْمًا ؕ فَلَمَّا
تَبَيَّنَ لَهٗ ۙ قَالَ اَعْلَمُ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ 259

(2:259) Or consider him by way of example who passed by a town that was fallen down upon its turrets.[293] He exclaimed: "How will Allah restore life to this town that is now dead?"[294]

Allah then caused him to remain dead for a hundred years and then raised him to life, and asked him: "How long did you remain in this state?" He replied: "I remained so for a day or a part of a day." Allah rejoined: "No, you have rather stayed thus for a hundred years. But look at your food and your drink, there is no deterioration in them. And look at your ass (how its entire skeleton has rotted)! And We did all this so that We might make you a token of instruction for people.[295] And see how We will put the bones (of the ass) together and will clothe them with flesh." Thus when the reality became clear to him, he said: "I know that Allah has power over everything."

293. It is irrelevant to ask who the person was and the place where this incident occurred. The real purpose in mentioning this event is to show how God showed light to the one who had chosen God as his protector and supporter. As for determining the name of the person and the locality, we neither possess the means to do so, nor is such an endeavour in any way beneficial. What seems to be evident from the statement that follows is that the person concerned must necessarily have been a Prophet.

294. This question does not signify that the person concerned denied or entertained any doubts regarding life after death. His enquiry merely indicates his wish to have direct knowledge of reality, like the Prophets of the past.

295. The restoration of life to a man considered to have died a hundred years ago was in itself sufficient to make him, for his contemporaries, a living testimony.

وَاِذْ قَالَ اِبْرٰهٖمُ رَبِّ اَرِنِىْ كَيْفَ تُحْىِ الْمَوْتٰى ؕ قَالَ اَوَلَمْ تُؤْمِنْ ؕ قَالَ بَلٰى وَلٰكِنْ لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ
قَلْبِىْ ؕ قَالَ فَخُذْ اَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ اِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَلٰى كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ
جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَاْتِيْنَكَ سَعْيًا ؕ وَاعْلَمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ع 260

(2:260) And recall when Abraham said: "My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead," Allah said: "Why! Do you have no faith?" Abraham replied: "Yes, but in order that my heart be at rest."[296] He said: "Then take four birds, and tame them to yourself,

then put a part of them on every hill, and summon them; they will come to you flying. Know well that Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise."[297]

296. That is, the rest and inner peace that one attains as a result of direct personal observation.

297. People have subjected this incident and the one above to very strange interpretations. If one bears in mind, however, God's dealings with the Prophets, one will not feel any need to strain one's energies in hammering out such artificially-contrived interpretations. The truth of the matter is that the kind of function that ordinary believers are required to perform requires of them no more than believing in certain truths without perceiving them through their senses. The function entrusted by God to the Prophets is such that they ought to have direct knowledge of the truths, the acceptance of which they are required to invite others to.

Thanks to the nature of their mission, the Prophets had to tell the world that while others resorted to conjecture and fancy, they spoke from personal direct observation and experience; that while others could claim to possess only imagination, they possessed reliable knowledge; that while others were blind, they alone had the God-given capacity to perceive the Truth. It is for this reason that the angels come to the Prophets and they see them with their own eyes. It is for the same reason that the Prophets were allowed a glimpse of the system of governance of the heavens and the earth. It is for the same reason, again, that they were enabled to observe Heaven and Hell and witness scenes of resurrection.

The Prophets are in possession of faith in the Unseen at the time they are invested with prophethood. After being designated to prophethood, they are further honoured by special favours and privileges, and initiated into what may be termed as 'faith in the seen' (for the 'Unseen' is changed for them to the 'seen'). This favour is a special prerogative of the Prophets. (For a further explanation see (Surah 9, nn. 17, 18, 19 and 34.)

مَثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ اَمْوَالَهُمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ اَنْۢبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِيْ كُلِّ
سُنْۢبُلَةٍ مِّائَةُ حَبَّةٍ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يُضٰعِفُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيْمٌ 261

(2:261) The example of those[298] who spend their wealth in the Way of Allah[299] is like that of a grain of corn that sprouts seven ears, and in every ear there are a hundred grains. Thus Allah multiplies the action of whomsoever He wills. Allah is Munificent, All-Knowing.[300]

298. Here the discourse turns to the subject touched upon in verses 244 ff. above. Believers were urged to sacrifice life and property for the sake of the great cause in which they believed. It is difficult, however, to persuade those whose standard of judgement in respect of economic matters has not completely changed, to rise above either personal or narrow group interests and dispense their wealth wholeheartedly for the sake of a righteous cause. People who have a materialistic outlook and whose life constitutes an uninterrupted pursuit of money, who adore every single penny they have, and who can never stop thinking about their balance sheets can never have the capacity to do anything really effective for the sake

of higher ideals. When such people apparently do spend money for the sake of higher moral ideals, it is merely an outward act which is performed after carefully calculating the material benefits which are likely to accrue either to them, to their group or to their nation. With this outlook a person cannot go one step forward along the path of that religion which requires man to become indifferent to considerations of worldly profit and loss, and constantly to spend time, energy and money to make the Word of God reign supreme.

To follow such a course requires a moral outlook of an altogether different kind; it requires breadth of vision and magnanimity and, above all, an exclusive devotion to God. At the same time it requires that man's collective life should be so re-moulded as to become conducive to the growth of the moral qualities mentioned above rather than to the growth of a materialistic outlook and behaviour. Hence the three succeeding sections i.e. (verses 261-81 - Ed.)are devoted to enunciating instructions designed to foster such an outlook.

299. A great many expenditures fall under the category of spending 'in the way of Allah', as long as this is done according to the laws of God and with the intention of seeking His good pleasure. This includes spending one's wealth to fulfil one's legitimate needs, to provide for one's family, to look after the needs of relatives, to help the needy and to contribute to the general welfare and to spread the true religion and so on.

300. The greater the sincerity and the more intense the feeling with which one spends for the sake of God, the greater will be God's reward. It is not difficult at all for God, Who blesses a grain so that out of it seven hundred grains grow, to allow one's charity to grow in like manner so that the unit of money one spends will return seven hundred fold. This statement is followed by a mention of two of God's attributes. First is His munificence. His Hand is not clenched so as to restrain Him from recompensing man for his deeds to the fullest extent that he deserves. Second, God is All-Knowing. He is not unaware of what one spends and the spirit in which one spends. So there is no reason to fear that one will not receive one's due reward.

اَلَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ اَمْوَالَهُمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ لَا يُتْبِعُوْنَ مَآ اَنْفَقُوْا مَنًّا وَّلَآ اَذًى ۙ لَّهُمْ
اَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۚ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ 262

(2:262) Those who spend their wealth in the Way of Allah and do not follow up their spending by stressing their benevolence and causing hurt, will find their reward secure with their Lord. They have no cause for fear and grief.[301]

301. They need not fear that they will not be amply rewarded or that they will have any reason to feel remorse for spending in the way of God.

قَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوْفٌ وَّمَغْفِرَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ صَدَقَةٍ يَّتْبَعُهَآ اَذًى ۗ وَاللّٰهُ غَنِيٌّ حَلِيْمٌ 263

(2:263) To speak a kind word and to forgive people's faults is better than charity followed by hurt. Allah is All-Sufficient, All-Forbearing.[302]

302. This implies two things. First, Allah does not stand in need of anybody's charity, for He is Self-Sufficient. Secondly, He likes those people who are generous and large-hearted, but does not like frivolous and narrow-minded people, for He Himself is Generous, Clement and Forbearing. How, then Allah, Who bestows on the people the necessities of life without stint, and forgives and pardons them over and over again in spite of their errors, would like those who mar the self-respect of a person by sending repeated reminders of their charity and making pointed references to it even though they might have given only a farthing. A Tradition of the Holy Prophet says that on the Day of Resurrection, Allah will neither speak a word nor even so much as look at a person who makes pointed references to the gift he gave to some one.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ لَا تُبْطِلُوا۟ صَدَقَٰتِكُم بِٱلْمَنِّ وَٱلْأَذَىٰ ۙ كَٱلَّذِى يُنفِقُ مَالَهُۥ رِئَآءَ ٱلنَّاسِ
وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِٱللَّهِ وَٱلْيَوْمِ ٱلْءَاخِرِ ۖ فَمَثَلُهُۥ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُۥ وَابِلٌ
فَتَرَكَهُۥ صَلْدًا ۖ لَّا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَىٰ شَىْءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا۟ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِى ٱلْقَوْمَ
ٱلْكَٰفِرِينَ 264

(2:264) Believers! Do not nullify your acts of charity by stressing your benevolence and causing hurt as does he who spends his wealth only to be seen by people and does not believe in Allah and the Last Day.[303] The example of his spending is that of a rock with a thin coating of earth upon it: when a heavy rain smites it, the earth is washed away, leaving the rock bare;[304] such people derive no gain from their acts of charity. Allah does not set the deniers of the Truth on the Right Way.[305]

303. The desire to display one's good deeds itself proves that the person concerned does not truly believe in God and the Hereafter. One who does good merely in order to impress people with his righteousness clearly regards those persons as his god. Such a person neither expects reward from God nor is he concerned that his good deeds will some day be reckoned to his credit.

304. In this parable, 'heavy rain' signifies charity, and 'rock' the wicked intent and motive which lie behind external acts of charity. The expression, 'with a thin coating of earth upon it' signifies the external aspect of charity which conceals the wicked intent and motive of a man. These explanations make the significance and purport of the parable clear. The natural effect of rainfall should be the growth of plants and harvest. But if the earth, which is the repository of fertility, is insignificant in quantity, for example only a coating of it on some rock, the result will be that instead of yielding any beneficial result the rainfall may even prove harmful. Similarly, charity has the capacity to generate goodness and benevolence in

human beings. Man's potential for goodness, however, is conditional on sincerity. Devoid of that charity leads to sheer loss and waste.

305. Here the term kafir is used in the sense of the ungrateful person who refuses to acknowledge benevolence. People who either make use of the bounties of God in order to seek the gratitude of God's creatures rather than God's good pleasure, or who spend on others and then hurt them by stressing their acts of benevolence and kindness, are ungrateful to God for His bounties and favours. Since such people do not seek to please God, God does not care to direct them to the way that leads to His good pleasure.

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ اَمْوَالَهُمُ ابْتِغَآءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللّٰهِ وَتَثْبِيْتًا مِّنْ اَنْفُسِهِمْ كَمَثَلِ جَنَّةٍۢ
بِرَبْوَةٍ اَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ فَاٰتَتْ اُكُلَهَا ضِعْفَيْنِ ۚ فَاِنْ لَّمْ يُصِبْهَا وَابِلٌ فَطَلٌّ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا
تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ 265

(2:265) The example of those who spend their wealth single-mindedly to please Allah is that of a garden on a high ground. If a heavy rain smites it, it brings forth its fruits twofold, and if there is no heavy rain, even a light shower suffices it.[306] Allah sees all that you do.

306. 'Heavy rain' signifies here charity motivated by a high degree of benevolence and sincerity. 'Light shower' refers to charity deficient in sincerity and goodness, though not altogether devoid of them.

اَيَوَدُّ اَحَدُكُمْ اَنْ تَكُوْنَ لَهٗ جَنَّةٌ مِّنْ نَّخِيْلٍ وَّاَعْنَابٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۙ لَهٗ فِيْهَا مِنْ
كُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ ۙ وَاَصَابَهُ الْكِبَرُ وَلَهٗ ذُرِّيَّةٌ ضُعَفَآءُ ۖۚ فَاَصَابَهَآ اِعْصَارٌ فِيْهِ نَارٌ فَاحْتَرَقَتْ ؕ
كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ۧ 266

(2:266) Would any of you desire that he should have a garden of palms and vines with rivers flowing beneath it – a garden in which he has every manner of fruit – and that it should then be struck by a fiery whirlwind and be utterly burnt down at a time when old age has overtaken him, and his offspring are still too small to look after their affairs?[307] Thus does Allah make His teachings clear to you that you may reflect.

307. It is obvious that a man does not like to see the earnings of his lifetime destroyed in his old age, when he needs them badly and when he can no longer earn. How is it, then, that he can contemplate stepping into the realm of the Hereafter and finding suddenly that he is empty-handed; that he has sown nothing from which he can reap the fruit? In the Next

World there will he no opportunity to begin earning anew. Whatever one can do towards ensuring one's well-being in the Hereafter must he done in this world. If one devotes oneself totally to the pursuit of the riches of this world rather than to the Hereafter, one's situation will be as pitiable as that of the age-stricken man whose orchard (his source of income in his old age) is reduced to ashes too late for him to produce a new one.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ أَنفِقُوا۟ مِن طَيِّبَٰتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّآ أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُم مِّنَ ٱلْأَرْضِ ۖ وَلَا تَيَمَّمُوا۟ ٱلْخَبِيثَ مِنْهُ تُنفِقُونَ وَلَسْتُم بِـَٔاخِذِيهِ إِلَّآ أَن تُغْمِضُوا۟ فِيهِ ۚ وَٱعْلَمُوٓا۟ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ غَنِىٌّ حَمِيدٌ 267

(2:267) Believers! Spend (in the Way of Allah) out of the good things you have earned and out of what We have produced for you from the earth, and choose not for your spending the bad things such as you yourselves would not accept or accept only by overlooking its defects. Know well that Allah is All-Munificent, Most Praiseworthy.[308]

308. It is obvious that He Who is invested with the best attributes cannot be appreciative of those possessed of low and evil qualities. God is, for instance, Generous and Beneficent, and constantly showers His favours and bounties on His creatures. How is it possible for Him, then, to love those who are mean, niggardly and vicious?

ٱلشَّيْطَٰنُ يَعِدُكُمُ ٱلْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُم بِٱلْفَحْشَآءِ ۖ وَٱللَّهُ يَعِدُكُم مَّغْفِرَةً مِّنْهُ وَفَضْلًا ۗ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ۗ 268

(2:268) Satan frightens you with poverty and bids you to commit indecency whereas Allah promises you His forgiveness and bounty. Allah is Munificent, All-Knowing.

يُؤْتِى ٱلْحِكْمَةَ مَن يَشَآءُ ۚ وَمَن يُؤْتَ ٱلْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِىَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا ۗ وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّآ أُو۟لُوا۟ ٱلْأَلْبَٰبِ 269

(2:269) He grants wisdom to those whom He wills; and whoever is granted wisdom has indeed been granted much good.[309] Yet none except people of understanding take heed.

309. 'Wisdom' signifies sound perception and sound judgement. The purpose of this statement is to point out that one who is possessed of wisdom will follow God's path rather than that of Satan. The followers of Satan believe that it is the height of wisdom and

shrewdness to be constantly concerned with saving out of one's earnings, and to be perpetually on the look-out for higher income. But for those endowed with Divine perception such an attitude is sheer folly. True wisdom consists in using one's resource moderately to meet one's needs and in spending whatever is left for charitable purposes. It may be possible for a person who does not spend for charitable purposes to attain a much greater degree of worldy prosperity than others. The life of this world, however, is only a fraction of man's total life which is not limited to the confines of this world. One who risks the well-being of his eternal existence for the sake of highly transient well-being in this world is indeed a fool. The truly wise person is he who makes full use of the tenure of this life and invests his resources in prosperity in this life that will never cease.

وَمَآ اَنۡفَقۡتُمۡ مِّنۡ نَّفَقَةٍ اَوۡ نَذَرۡتُمۡ مِّنۡ نَّذۡرٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعۡلَمُهٗ ؕ وَمَا لِلظّٰلِمِيۡنَ مِنۡ اَنۡصَارٍ 270

(2:270) Allah knows whatever you spend or whatever you vow (to spend). The wrong-doers have none to succour them.[310]

310. Whether or not a man spends in the way of God, and whether or not he vows to spend in the way of God, God is fully aware both of his intentions and deeds. All those who either spend for the sake of God or vow to spend for the sake of God will be adequately rewarded. As for those who have either spent or have vowed to spend for others than God, no one will save them from God's chastisement.

'Vow' means either a man's pledge to spend something or to perform some act of goodness which is not obligatory on him providing a particular wish of his is fulfilled. Provided that this vow is related to some wish which is in itself permissible and good and that the person concerned makes it to none but God and for the sake of God, then such a vow will be reckoned as an act of obedience to God and its fulfilment will be worthy of reward. Otherwise such a vow will be seen as an act of disobedience and sin and its fulfilment will invite punishment from God.

اِنۡ تُبۡدُوا الصَّدَقٰتِ فَنِعِمَّا هِىَ ۚ وَاِنۡ تُخۡفُوۡهَا وَتُؤۡتُوۡهَا الۡفُقَرَآءَ فَهُوَ خَيۡرٌ لَّكُمۡ ؕ وَيُكَفِّرُ عَنۡكُمۡ مِّنۡ سَيِّاٰتِكُمۡ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ خَبِيۡرٌ 271

(2:271) If you dispense your charity publicly, it is well; but if you conceal it and pay it to the needy in secret, it will be even better for you.[311] This will atone for several of your misdeeds.[312] Allah is well aware of all that you do.

311. If charity is of an obligatory nature it is preferable to dispense it openly. Non-obligatory charity should preferably be dispensed secretly. This principle applies to all acts. As a rule,

it is more meritorious to perform obligatory acts openly and non-obligatory acts of goodness, secretly .

312. The performance of good deeds in secret leads to the continual improvement of one's life and character. One's good qualities develop fully and one's bad qualities gradually wither away. This makes a man so acceptable to God that He pardons the sins that he might have committed.

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدٰىهُمْ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَهْدِيْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِاَنْفُسِكُمْ ؕ
وَمَا تُنْفِقُوْنَ اِلَّا ابْتِغَآءَ وَجْهِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يُّوَفَّ اِلَيْكُمْ وَاَنْتُمْ لَا
تُظْلَمُوْنَ 272

(2:272) You are not responsible for setting these people on the Right Way; Allah sets on the Right Way whomsoever He wills. Whatever wealth you spend in charity is to your own benefit for you spend merely to please Allah. So, whatever you spend in charity will be repaid to you in full and you shall not be wronged.[313]

313. In the beginning Muslims tended to hesitate in helping either their non-Muslim relatives or other non-Muslims who were in need. They thought that helping Muslims only constituted 'spending in the way of Allah'. This verse rejects this attitude. The purpose of this verse is to point out that Muslims are not responsible for forcing true guidance down the throats of people; conveying the message of Truth to people absolves them of the obligation incumbent upon them. It is, then, for God either to favour the recipients of the message with true perception or not. In addition Muslims should not shrink from helping their relatives in the affairs of the world on the ground that they are not following the true guidance; they will he rewarded by God for whatever help they render to needy persons for the sake of God.

لِلْفُقَرَآءِ الَّذِيْنَ اُحْصِرُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ ضَرْبًا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۫ يَحْسَبُهُمُ
الْجَاهِلُ اَغْنِيَآءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ ۚ تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيْمٰهُمْ ۚ لَا يَسْئَلُوْنَ النَّاسَ اِلْحَافًا ؕ وَمَا
تُنْفِقُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِهٖ عَلِيْمٌ ع 273

(2:273) Those needy ones who are wholly wrapped up in the cause of Allah, and who are hindered from moving about the earth in search of their livelihood, especially deserve help. He who is unaware of their circumstances supposes them to be wealthy because of their dignified bearing, but you will know them by their countenance,

although they do not go about begging of people with importunity. Whatever wealth you spend on helping them, Allah will know of it.[314]

314. The people referred to here are those who, because they had dedicated themselves wholly to serving the religion of God, were unable to earn their livelihood. In the time of the Prophet there was a group of such volunteer workers, known as Ashab al-Suffah, consisting of about three or four hundred people who had forsaken their homes and gone to Madina. They remained at all times in the company, of the Prophet, always at his beck and call to perform whatever service he required of them. They were dispatched by the Prophet on whatever expeditions he wished. Whenever there was nothing to do elsewhere, they stayed in Madina and devoted themseleves to acquiring religious knowledge and imparting it to others. Since they were full-time workers and had no private resources to meet their needs, God pointed out to the Muslims that helping such people was the best way of 'spending in the way of Allah'.

اَلَّذِيۡنَ يُنۡفِقُوۡنَ اَمۡوَالَهُمۡ بِالَّيۡلِ وَالنَّهَارِ سِرًّا وَّعَلَانِيَةً فَلَهُمۡ اَجۡرُهُمۡ عِنۡدَ رَبِّهِمۡ ۚ وَلَا
خَوۡفٌ عَلَيۡهِمۡ وَلَا هُمۡ يَحۡزَنُوۡنَ 274

(2:274) Those who spend their wealth by night and by day, secretly and publicly, will find that their reward is secure with their Lord and that there is no reason for them to entertain any fear or grief.

اَلَّذِيۡنَ يَاۡكُلُوۡنَ الرِّبٰوا لَا يَقُوۡمُوۡنَ اِلَّا كَمَا يَقُوۡمُ الَّذِىۡ يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيۡطٰنُ مِنَ الۡمَسِّ ؕ
ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمۡ قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّمَا الۡبَيۡعُ مِثۡلُ الرِّبٰوا ۘ وَاَحَلَّ اللّٰهُ الۡبَيۡعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبٰوا ؕ فَمَنۡ جَآءَهٗ
مَوۡعِظَةٌ مِّنۡ رَّبِّهٖ فَانۡتَهٰى فَلَهٗ مَا سَلَفَ ؕ وَاَمۡرُهٗۤ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَنۡ عَادَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ اَصۡحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ
هُمۡ فِيۡهَا خٰلِدُوۡنَ 275

(2:275) As for those who devour interest,[315] they behave as the one whom Satan has confounded with his touch.[316]Seized in this state they say: “Buying and selling is but a kind of interest,”[317] even though Allah has made buying and selling lawful, and interest unlawful.[318] Hence, he who receives this admonition from his Lord, and then gives up (dealing in interest), may keep his previous gains, and it will be for Allah to judge him.[319] As for those who revert to it, they are the people of the Fire, and in it shall they abide.

315. The term riba in Arabic means 'to grow, to exceed, to increase'. Technically, it denotes the amount that a lender receives from a borrower at a fixed rate of interest. At the time of

the revelation of the Qur'an several forms of interest transactions were in vogue and were designated as riba by the Arabs. Of these one was that the vendor sold an article and fixed a time limit for the payment of the price, stipulating that if the buyer failed to pay within the specified period of time, he would extend the time limit but increase the price of the article. Another was that a man loaned a sum of money to another person and stipulated that the borrower should return a specified amount in excess of the amount loaned within a given time limit. A third form of interest transaction was that the borrower and vendor agreed that the former would repay the loan within a certain limit at a fixed rate of interest, and that if he failed to do so within the limit, the lender would extend the time limit, but at the same time would increase the rate of interest. It is to transactions such as these that the injunctions mentioned here apply.

316. The Arabs used the word majnun (possessed by the jinn) to characterize the insane. The Qur'an uses the same expression about those who take interest. Just as an insane person, unconstrained by ordinary reason, resorts to all kinds of immoderate acts, so does one who takes interest. He pursues his craze for money as if he were insane. He is heedless of the fact that interest cuts the very roots of human love, brotherhood and fellow-feeling, and undermines the welfare and happiness of human society, and that his enrichment is at the expense of the well-being of many other human beings. This is the state of his 'insanity' in this world: since a man will rise in the Hereafter in the same state in which he dies in the present world, he will be resurrected as a lunatic.

317. The unsoundness of this view lies in not differentiating between the profit one gains on investment in commercial enterprises on the one hand, and interest on the other. As a result of this confusion, the proponents of this view argue that if profit on money invested in a business enterprise is permissible, why should the profit accruing on loaned money be deemed unlawful? Similar arguments are advanced by those who thrive on interest in our own times. Their argument runs as follows: A person who could have profitably invested his money in a commercial enterprise loans it out to somebody who, in turn, makes a profit out of it. In such circumstances why should the borrower not pay the lender a part of the profit? Such people, however, disregard the fact that no enterprise in which a man participates, whether it is commercial, industrial or agricultural, and whether one participates in it with one's organizing skill or capital, or by both, is immune from risk. No enterprise carries absolutely guaranteed profit at a fixed rate. What is the justification, then, for the fact that out of all the people in the business world, the financier alone should be considered entitled to a profit at a fixed rate in all circumstances, and should be protected against all possibility of loss?

Let us set aside for a moment the questions of non-profitable loans and vacillations in the rate of profit. Let us consider only the question of loans for profitable enterprises, and confine our consideration to loans made at non-exorbitant rates of interest. The question, however, remains: Which rational principle, which logic, which canon of justice and which sound economic principle can justify that those who spend their time, energy, capacity and resources, and whose effort and skill make a business thrive, are not guaranteed profit at any fixed rate, whereas those who merely lend out their funds are fully secured against all risks of loss and are guaranteed profit at a fixed rate? And which principle can justify the fact that a man lends out his funds to an industrial concern and fixes, say for the next twenty

years, that he will be entitled to receive each year a given per cent interest on his capital, while the proprietors of the industrial concern have no means of foretelling the price changes affecting their commodity, and hence their profit? Let us consider another case, namely that of war loans. How can it be appropriate that all classes of people endure all kinds of losses and are exposed to all kinds of risks and dangers connected with war, whereas the financiers, simply by having made loans, continue to receive Interest on them for long periods of time, sometimes even for a whole century?

318. The essential difference between non-interest business transactions and interest-bearing transactions rests on the following grounds:

(1) In ordinary business transactions there occurs a mutually equitable exchange of benefits between the buyer and the seller. The buyer derives benefit from the article which he purchases from the seller; the seller receives compensation for the effort, ingenuity and time spent on making the article available to the buyer. In interest-bearing transactions, on the other hand, the exchange of benefits does not take place equitably. The interest receiving party, receives a fixed amount as a payment for using the loan he advances and thus his gain is secured. The other party to the transaction has only one thing at his disposal - a period of time during which he can make use of the funds loaned, and which may not always yield a profit. If such a person spends the borrowed funds on consumption, there is obviously no question of profit. Even if the funds are invested in trade, agriculture or industry, one stands the chance both of making a profit and of incurring a loss during the period of time in question. Hence an interest-bearing transaction entails either a loss on one side and a profit on the other, or an assured and fixed profit on one side and an uncertain and unspecified profit on the other.

(2) In business enterprises the profit that a person makes, however large it may be, is made only once. The person who lends out money on interest receives, on the contrary, an on-going profit which multiplies with the passage of time. Moreover, however large the extent of the profit made by the borrower from the loaned money it will still be within certain limits, while the claims of the lender in return for this profit are unlimited. It is even possible that the lender may seize the entire turnover of the borrower if he defaults on payment, thus depriving him of all the resources from which he makes his living. It is also possible that even after the lender has seized all the property of the borrower, his claims will still remain unsatisfied.

(3) In a business deal, the transaction ends with the exchange between a commodity and its price. After this exchange has taken place, no obligation remains on either party towards the other. If the transaction is that of rent, the thing rented (e.g. land or building) is not consumed but is rather used and remains intact, and is returned to the owner after a stipulated period of time. In a transaction involving interest, however, what actually happens is that the borrower first spends the loaned funds, then reclaims them with his efforts, returning them to the lender together with a surplus.

(4) In agriculture and industry, and in trade and commerce, one makes a profit after having expended one's effort, intelligence and time. In an interest-bearing transaction, on the contrary, one becomes entitled to a sizeable share in the earnings of others without any toil

and effort, by merely allowing someone to make use of one's surplus money. The lender is neither a 'partner' in the technical sense of the term, for he does not share both the profit and the loss, nor is his share in proportion to the actual profit.

There is thus a tremendous difference from an economic point of view between business transactions as such and interest- bearing transactions. Whereas the former plays a highly constructive role in human society, the latter leads to its corrosion. This is in addition to its moral implications. By its very nature interest breeds meanness, selfishness, apathy and cruelty towards others. It leads to the worship of money and destroys fellow-feeling and a spirit of altruistic co-operation between man and man. Thus it is ruinous for mankind from both an economic and a moral viewpoint.

319. What is said here is not that man will be pardoned by God for the interest taken in the past, but that it is for God to judge him. The expression: 'may keep his previous gains' does not signify absolute pardon from God for the interest one has taken, rather it points to the legal concession that has been made. It only means that no legal claim will be made for the interest taken in the past. For were such claims to be entertained, an endless succession of litigation would ensue. From a moral point of view, however, the earnings made by way of interest would continue to be impure. If a person is really God-fearing and if his economic and moral viewpoint has really undergone a change under the influence of Islam, he will try to abstain from spending on himself the income which he has obtained by illegitimate means. He will also try to seek out those from whom he has derived illegitimate earnings and will try to return those earnings to such people; if he is unable to locate them, he will try to spend them on collective welfare rather than on himself. It is this conduct alone which can save him from the punishment of God. As for one who continues to enjoy his illegitimate earnings, it is not unlikely that he will be subjected to God's punishment.

يَمْحَقُ اللّٰهُ الرِّبٰوا وَيُرْبِي الصَّدَقٰتِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ اَثِيْمٍ 276

(2:276) Allah deprives interest of all blessing, whereas He blesses charity with growth.[320] Allah loves none who is ungrateful and persists in sin.[321]

320. The fact stated in this verse is a truism from a moral and spiritual as well as from an economic and social viewpoint. For, although wealth apparently multiplies through interest and shrinks as a result of charity, in actual fact the opposite is the case. By God's decree, the law of nature is such that interest not only serves as a strain on moral and spiritual well-being, and social and economic growth, it also causes actual regression and decline. Charity, however, (including such acts as lending money to people with the stipulation that they should return it if they can. and at their convenience) leads to the growth and expansion of man's moral and spiritual qualities and to the growth of human society and economy.

Looked at from moral and spiritual standpoints, it is evident that interest is not only the outcome of selfishness, miserliness and callousness but also encourages their growth. Charity, on the other hand, is the outcome of generosity, compassion, large -heartedness and magnanimity, with the result that the more one practises charity the more these qualities develop. It is obvious that if there is a society whose individuals are selfish in their dealings with one another, in which none is prepared to assist the other without self-interest, in

which every person considers the other's need an opportunity to capitalize and exploit, in which the interests of the rich are directly opposed to the interests of the common people, that society does not rest on stable foundations. In such a society, instead of love and compassion there is bound to grow mutual spite and bitterness, apathy, indifference and callousness. The elements which compose such a society are bound to remain inclined towards disintegration and chaos; acute internal conflict and strife are sure to occur.

Contrast this with the society which is based on mutual sympathy and co-operation, whose individuals deal with one another magnanimously, in which, when a person is in need, people willingly come forward to accord generous help, in which the 'haves' assist the 'have-nots' with compassion and at least engage in just and equitable co-operation. In such a society mutual cordiality. goodwill and fellow-feeling are bound to flourish. The various components of such a society will be closely knit together and prove a source of mutual support. In such a society internal conflict and strife will make few inroads. Also, owing to mutual co-operation and goodwill the pace of development should be faster than in the other kind of society.

Let us now look at the matter from an economic viewpoint, from which interest- bearing loans are seen to be of two kinds. The first category, consists of loans incurred by people in genuine need, who are compelled to borrow for their personal consumption requirements. The second consists of the loans incurred by businessmen for investment in trade and industry or agriculture.

The first category is generally acknowledged to lead to ruin. Nevertheless, there is not one country in the world where financiers and financial institutions are not sucking the blood of poor labourers, peasants and ordinary low-income people through interest on consumption loans. The burden of interest makes it extremely difficult, often impossible, for borrowers to pay off the original loan. They may even have to resort to fresh borrowing from elsewhere to pay if off. Because of the way interest works, the sum outstanding against them often remains even after they, have paid twice or three times its amount in interest. The bulk of the income of labourers is snatched away from them by lenders, leaving them without enough for the bare necessities of life for themselves and their families. This situation steadily erodes their interest in their jobs. For if someone else is to reap the benefit of a man's hard work, why should he work hard at all? Moreover, oppressed by the worries of debt, the health and strength of labourers is gradually destroyed by undernourishment and lack of medical treatment.

In short, a minority of people continually fatten themselves by sucking the blood of millions of ordinary people, but the total production level of the people remains much lower than its optimum potential. Ultimately, of course, these exploiters are seldom spared the evil consequences of their actions. Their callous selfishness causes such widespread misery among the masses that anger and resentment against the rich smoulder in their hearts ready to erupt in times of revolutionary unrest. The exploiters then have to pay very dearly: their ill-earned riches are not only wrested from them, they are either killed mercilessly or subjected to ignominy and humiliation.

The second category of loans, those invested in productive enterprises, also cause harm

because of the infliction of a predetermined rate of interest on such borrowings. The most significant are the following:

(1) Projects which do not promise a higher rate of profit than the current rate of interest fail to attract sufficient funds, no matter how useful and necessary they may, be from the viewpoint of larger national interests. Loanable funds flow towards those business enterprises which are likely to yield at least the same, if not a higher rate of profit on investments than the current rate of interest, even though they may be of very little or no benefit to the nation at large.

(2) There can be no guarantee that a business investment, whether it is in trade, industry or agriculture, will always yield a rate of profit which is higher than the rate of interest. Not only can there be no such assurance, there can never be an assurance about any business that it will always remain profitable. What really happens, therefore, is that the financier is assured interest at a predetermined rate whereas the business in which the loan is invested is exposed to risk and possible losses.

(3) Since the lender does not share the profit and loss of the business but lends out funds on the assurance of a fixed rate of interest, he is in no way concerned with the fortunes of the business itself. He is solely concerned, and in a totally selfish spirit, with his own pecuniary benefit. Hence, whenever the lender senses the faintest sign of depression, he begins to withdraw money from the market. The result is that sometimes imaginary fears and anxieties spark off an actual depression in the economy. And if the economy is depressed owing to other factors, the excessive selfishness of the financiers tends to escalate the situation into a full-scale economic crisis. These three evils of interest are obvious to every student of economics. Can anyone then deny the truth of the Natural law, enunciated by Allah that interest decreases the national economic wealth?

Let us now look at the economic effects of charity. Suppose the general attitude of the prosperous members of a society, is that within the limits of their means they spend generously on the fulfilment of their own requirements and on the requirements of their family, and then devote the surplus to helping the poor. After that they, either use their funds to provide interest-free loans to businessmen, invest them in business with the stipulation that they shall be co-sharers in both the profit and loss of the business, or deposit them with the government so that it may use them on projects of public welfare. A little reflection will make it obvious that trade, industry, and agriculture in such a society, will attain maximum prosperity; the standard of living of its people will continually rise and production in it will be much higher than in societies where economic activity is fettered by interest.

321. It is clear that only those who have a surplus of earnings over their basic requirements can lend out money at interest. This surplus, according to the Qur'an, constitutes God's bounty. And true thankfulness for this bounty requires that a person should be bountiful towards other creatures of God even as the Creator has been to him. If, instead of doing this, the person tries to become richer at the expense of those whose present earnings are insufficient to meet their needs, he is at once guilty of ungratefulness to God, and blatantly unjust, cruel and wicked.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِندَ
ج
رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ 277

(2:277) Truly the reward of those who believe and do righteous deeds and establish Prayer and pay Zakah is with their Lord; they have no reason to entertain any fear or grief.[322]

322. In this section God brings into sharp relief two contrasting characters. One is selfish, Mammon-worshipping, a kind of Shylock. He is totally preoccupied with making and accumulating money in total disregard of his obligations to God and his fellow-beings. He counts the money he has saved and is so consumed by the desire to see it multiply that he spends much time estimating how much it will grow in the weeks, months and years to come. The other character is a God-worshipping, generous and compassionate person, ever conscious of the claims of both God and man, ready to spend whatever he earns by the sweat of his brow on himself as well as on other human beings, and devotes a good part of it to philanthropic purposes.

The first character is strongly denounced by God. No healthy society can exist on the basis of such men, and in the Hereafter, too, they are destined to meet grief and affliction, torment and misery. The latter, by contrast, is a character highly extolled by God, a character which will serve as the basis of a sound and healthy society in this world and will lead man to salvation in the Next.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَذَرُوا مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ الرِّبَا إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ 278

(2:278) Believers! Have fear of Allah and give up all outstanding interest if you do truly believe.

فَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْذَنُوا بِحَرْبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ۖ وَإِن تُبْتُمْ فَلَكُمْ رُءُوسُ أَمْوَالِكُمْ لَا
ج ج
تَظْلِمُونَ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ 279

(2:279) But if you fail to do so, then be warned of war from Allah and His Messenger.[323] If you repent even now, you have the right of the return of your capital; neither will you do wrong nor will you be wronged.

323. This verse was revealed after the conquest of Makka and has been placed here because of its contextual relevance. Although interest was considered objectionable earlier, it had not been legally prohibited. After the revelation of this verse interest-bearing transactions became a punishable offence within the realm of Islam. The Prophet (peace he on him) warned the Arab tribes through his officials that war would be declared against them if they

did not give up interest-bearing transactions. It was specified, for instance, in the agreement under which the Christians of Najran were granted internal autonomy under the suzerainty of the Islamic state, that if they continued to use interest, the agreement with them would be considered void and their action an act of belligerency. On the basis of the last words of the verse, Ibn 'Abbas, Hasan al-Baari, Ibn Sirin and Rabi' ibn Anas are of the view that anyone who takes interest within the boundaries of the Islamic State (Dar al-Islam) should be pressed to repudiate the transaction and recant and, if he persists, should be put to death. Others consider it sufficient to imprison such people and keep them in prison until they pledge to give up taking interest. (See Jassas's commentary, on verse 2: 278; see especially vol. 1, pp. 471 f. - Ed.)

وَاِنۡ كَانَ ذُوۡ عُسۡرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ اِلٰى مَيۡسَرَةٍ ؕ وَاَنۡ تَصَدَّقُوۡا خَيۡرٌ لَّـكُمۡ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ 280

(2:280) But if the debtor is in straitened circumstance, let him have respite until the time of ease; and whatever you remit by way of charity is better for you, if only you know.[324]

324. This verse is the basis of the Islamic regulation that if a person has become incapable of paying off his debt, the court will force the creditors to grant him respite for payment. In fact, under certain circumstances, the court is entitled to remit a part of his debt and, at times, the whole of it. It is mentioned in the Hadith that once a person suffered loss in his trade and became greatly burdened with debt and the case was brought to the notice of the Prophet. The Prophet urged the people to help their brother in his distress. They came to his assistance but the amount of help was not enough to wipe out his debts. Then the Prophet approached the lenders and asked them to accept whatever amount was available and to grant remission to the borrower because of his inability to make further payments. Muslim jurists have made it clear that a debtor's residential house, eating utensils, clothes and the tools which he uses for earning his livelihood may not be confiscated in any, circumstances whatsoever for non-payrment of loans. (For relevant discussion and textual evidence see the commentaries on this verse in Ibn Kathir, Jassas, and Qurtubi - Ed.)

وَاتَّقُوۡا يَوۡمًا تُرۡجَعُوۡنَ فِيۡهِ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ۟ ثُمَّ تُوَفّٰى كُلُّ نَفۡسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتۡ وَهُمۡ لَا يُظۡلَمُوۡنَ ع 281

(2:281) And have fear of the Day when you shall return to Allah, and every human being shall be fully repaid for whatever (good or evil) he has done, and none shall be wronged.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا تَدَايَنْتُمْ بِدَيْنٍ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَاكْتُبُوْهُ ؕ وَلْيَكْتُبْ بَّيْنَكُمْ
كَاتِبٌۢ بِالْعَدْلِ ۠ وَلَا يَاْبَ كَاتِبٌ اَنْ يَّكْتُبَ كَمَا عَلَّمَهُ اللّٰهُ فَلْيَكْتُبْ ۚ وَلْيُمْلِلِ الَّذِيْ
عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللّٰهَ رَبَّهٗ وَلَا يَبْخَسْ مِنْهُ شَيْـًٔا ؕ فَاِنْ كَانَ الَّذِيْ عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ سَفِيْهًا
اَوْ ضَعِيْفًا اَوْ لَا يَسْتَطِيْعُ اَنْ يُّمِلَّ هُوَ فَلْيُمْلِلْ وَلِيُّهٗ بِالْعَدْلِ ؕ وَاسْتَشْهِدُوْا شَهِيْدَيْنِ مِنْ
رِّجَالِكُمْ ۚ فَاِنْ لَّمْ يَكُوْنَا رَجُلَيْنِ فَرَجُلٌ وَّامْرَاَتٰنِ مِمَّنْ تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ الشُّهَدَآءِ اَنْ
تَضِلَّ اِحْدٰىهُمَا فَتُذَكِّرَ اِحْدٰىهُمَا الْاُخْرٰى ؕ وَلَا يَاْبَ الشُّهَدَآءُ اِذَا مَا دُعُوْا ؕ وَلَا
تَسْـَٔمُوْٓا اَنْ تَكْتُبُوْهُ صَغِيْرًا اَوْ كَبِيْرًا اِلٰٓى اَجَلِهٖ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ اَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَاَقْوَمُ
لِلشَّهَادَةِ وَاَدْنٰٓى اَلَّا تَرْتَابُوْٓا اِلَّآ اَنْ تَكُوْنَ تِجَارَةً حَاضِرَةً تُدِيْرُوْنَهَا بَيْنَكُمْ فَلَيْسَ
عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ اَلَّا تَكْتُبُوْهَا ؕ وَاَشْهِدُوْٓا اِذَا تَبَايَعْتُمْ ۠ وَلَا يُضَآرَّ كَاتِبٌ وَّلَا شَهِيْدٌ ؕ
وَاِنْ تَفْعَلُوْا فَاِنَّهٗ فُسُوْقٌۢ بِكُمْ ؕ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ
عَلِيْمٌ 282

(2:282) Believers! Whenever you contract a debt from one another[325] for a known term, commit it to writing.[326] Let a scribe write it down between you justly, and the scribe may not refuse to write it down according to what Allah has taught him; so let him write, and let the debtor dictate; and let him fear Allah, his Lord, and curtail no part of it. If the debtor be feebleminded, weak, or incapable of dictating, let his guardian dictate equitably, and call upon two of your men as witnesses;[327] but if two men are not there, then let there be one man and two women as witnesses from among those acceptable to you[328] so that if one of the two women should fail to remember, the other might remind her. Let not the witnesses refuse when they are summoned (to give evidence). Do not show slackness in writing down the transaction, whether small or large, along with the term of its payment. That is fairest in the sight of Allah; it is best for testimony and is more likely to exclude all doubts. If it be a matter of buying and

selling on the spot, it is not blameworthy if you do not write it down;[329] but do take witnesses when you settle commercial transactions with one another. And the scribe or the witness may be done no harm.[330] It will be sinful if you do so. Beware of the wrath of Allah. He teaches you the Right Way and has full knowledge of everything.

325. This is the basis of the rule that the time for the repayment of a loan should be fixed at the time when the loan is transacted.

326. When friends and relatives borrow from one another it is generally considered unseemly either to commit these loans to writing, or to have them attested by witnesses. Such an act is considered a sign of distrust. But God enjoins that whenever loans or business transactions take place, their conditions should be recorded in black and white and should be attested by witnesses so that there remains no ground for misunderstanding or dispute. It is mentioned in the Hadith that three kinds of people who air their grievances to God go unheeded. The first is the man who does not divorce his wife despite her being of bad character. The second is the guardian of the orphan who hands over the latter's property to him before his having attained the age of majority. The third is he who loans out his money to a person without making anyone a witness to that transaction. (Cited by Jassas. Ahkam al-Qur'an, vol. 1, p. 481; also Ibn Kathir, in commentary on 4: 5, citing this as a Tradition from Abu Musa al-Ash'ari mentioned bv Ibn Jarir al-Tabari - Ed.)

327. That is, from among Muslim males. This shows that wherever one has a choice, one should appoint only Muslims as one's witnesses. In the case of non-Muslim subjects of the Islamic State (ahl al-Dhimmah), however, they may appoint witnesses from among themselves.

328. What is implied is that every Tom, Dick or Harry is not worthy of acting as a witness. Rather, persons of high integrity enjoying public credibility should be appointed as witnesses.

329. The purpose of this directive is to stress that it is better for even day-to-day sales to be written down, as has become customary nowadays (viz. the issuance of invoices). Such a procedure, however, has not been made obligatory. Likewise, it is not objectionable if neighbouring shopkeepers do not record the frequent transactions that take place between them.

330. This means that no person should be compelled to write the document or be its witness. It also means that no party of a dispute should persecute either a scribe or witness for witnessing against the interests of that party.

وَاِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ عَلٰى سَفَرٍ وَّلَمۡ تَجِدُوۡا كَاتِبًا فَرِهٰنٌ مَّقۡبُوۡضَةٌ ؕ فَاِنۡ اَمِنَ بَعۡضُكُمۡ بَعۡضًا
فَلۡيُؤَدِّ الَّذِى اؤۡتُمِنَ اَمَانَتَهٗ وَلۡيَتَّقِ اللّٰهَ رَبَّهٗ ؕ وَلَا تَكۡتُمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ ؕ وَمَنۡ يَّكۡتُمۡهَا فَاِنَّهٗۤ
اٰثِمٌ قَلۡبُهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ عَلِيۡمٌ ۧ 283

(2:283) And if you are on a journey and do not find a scribe to write the document then resort to taking pledges in hand.[331]

But if any of you trusts another, let him who is trusted, fulfil the trust and fear Allah, his Lord.

And do not conceal what you have witnessed,[332] for whoever conceals it, his heart is sinful. Allah has full knowledge of all that you do.

331. This does not mean that pledge transactions are confined to journeys alone. These transactions have been specially mentioned in the context of journeys because during journeys people often have to resort to pledge transactions. Moreover, it has not been laid down that pledge transactions may be entered into only when a scribe is not available to write down the transaction. It is also permissible, if the lender is not satisfied merely with the written promise of the repayment of the loan, for the borrower to seek a loan by pledging some property to the lender. But since the Qur'an urges its followers to be generous in their dealings, and since it is inconsistent with high standards of moral excellence not to make loans to needy persons without keeping some property in custody, the Qur'an has abstained from mentioning this form of dealing even though it is permissible.

It should also be noted that the purpose of taking a pledge is merely to assure the lender the return of his loan. He has no right at all to benefit from the pledged property. If a person lives, say, either in the building which has been pledged, or pockets its rent, he is guilty of taking interest. There is no essential difference between charging interest directly and using the pledged property. If, however, either cattle or beasts of burden have been pledged, they can be milked and used for transport in lieu of the fodder that one provides them during the period of custody.

332. Concealing true evidence applies both to a person not appearing to give evidence and to his avoidance of stating facts.

لِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ وَاِنۡ تُبۡدُوۡا مَا فِىۡۤ اَنۡفُسِكُمۡ اَوۡ تُخۡفُوۡهُ يُحَاسِبۡكُمۡ بِهِ
اللّٰهُ ؕ فَيَغۡفِرُ لِمَنۡ يَّشَآءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرٌ 284

(2:284) All that is in the heavens[333] and the earth belongs to Allah.[334] Whether you disclose whatever is in your hearts or conceal it,[335] Allah will call you to account for it, and will then forgive whomsoever He wills, and will chastise whomsoever He wills. Allah has power over everything.[336]

333. These are the concluding observations on the subject. Just as this surah opened with an enunciation of the basic teachings of religion, so the fundamentals upon which Islam rests are reiterated in the concluding section of the surah, It is useful to go through the first section of this surah see (verses 1-5) while reading these concluding verses.

334. This is the first fundamental principle of Islam. That God is the Sovereign of the heavens and the earth and all they contain, and that it is improper for man not to bend himself in obedience and service to God.

335. This sentence mentions two other matters. First, that man is individually responsible to, and answerable before, God. Second, that the Lord of the heavens and the earth, before Whom man is answerable, is All-Knowing. Thus, nothing is concealed from Him, not even intentions and thoughts which lie hidden deep in the hearts and minds of people.

336. This refers to God's absolute authority. He is not bound by laws framed by others which might limit Him to operating in a certain manner. He is an absolute sovereign and has the full power either to punish or pardon people.

اٰمَنَ الرَّسُوْلُ بِمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَّبِّهٖ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ؕ كُلٌّ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَمَلٰٓئِكَتِهٖ وَكُتُبِهٖ
وَرُسُلِهٖ ۫ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ اَحَدٍ مِّنْ رُّسُلِهٖ ۫ وَقَالُوْا سَمِعْنَا وَاَطَعْنَا ۫ غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَاِلَيْكَ
الْمَصِيْرُ 285

(2:285) The Messenger believes, and so do the believers, in the guidance sent down upon him from his Lord: each of them believes in Allah, and in His angels, and in His Books, and in His Messengers. They say: "We make no distinction between any of His Messengers. We hear and obey. Our Lord! Grant us Your forgiveness; to You we are destined to return."[337]

337. This verse outlines what one is required to believe in and what should be the distinguishing characteristics of one's conduct. They consist of the following: belief in God, in His angels, in His Books, in all His Messengers (instead of some rather than others), and in the fact that ultimately one will have to stand before God's judgement. These are the five fundamental articles of faith in Islam. Having accepted them, the only proper attitude for a Muslim is to cheerfully accept and follow whatever directives he receives from God. Instead of exulting in his moral excellence he should be humble and should constantly seek God's forgiveness and mercy.

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ؕ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ ؕ رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَآ
اِنْ نَّسِيْنَآ اَوْ اَخْطَاْنَا ۚ رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَآ اِصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهٗ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا ۚ
رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهٖ ۚ وَاعْفُ عَنَّا ۟ وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ۟ وَارْحَمْنَا ۟ اَنْتَ مَوْلٰنَا
فَانْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ع 286

(2:286) Allah does not lay a responsibility on anyone beyond his capacity.[338] In his favour shall be whatever good each one does, and against him whatever evil he does.[339] (Believers! Pray thus to your Lord): "Our Lord! Take us not to task if we forget or commit mistakes.

Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden such as You laid on those gone before us.[340] Our Lord! Lay not on us burdens which we do not have the power to bear.[341] And overlook our faults, and forgive us, and have mercy upon us. You are our Guardian; so grant us victory against the unbelieving folk."[342]

338. Man's answerability to God is limited by the extent of his ability. If a man does not have the ability to do a certain thing, God will not take him to task for not having performed it. In the same way, if it is really beyond a man's ability to abstain from something, God will not blame him for having failed to abstain from it. It should be noted here that man will not be the final judge as to whether he had the ability to do something or not. Such judgement will be made by God alone.

339. This is the second fundamental principle of God's law of retribution. Every man will be rewarded for the services he has rendered, none will be rewarded for services rendered by others. The same applies to punishment. It is the one who is guilty who will be punished. It is possible, however, that if a man has initiated either good or bad practices, they will continue to affect people's lives. The resulting good and bad deeds of people will be reckoned either to their credit or against them, since they are clearly related to their efforts and actions. It is impossible, however, that a map should be either rewarded for an act of goodness or punished for an act of evil in which he has had no share - neither by intent nor practical action. The requital of acts is not transferable.

340. The prayer made here is that God should not subject them to the severe tests and the terrible persecutions and hardships undergone by their predecessors. It is God's law that those who commit themselves to follow Truth and righteousness are subjected to severe tests and tribulations, and it is a believer's duty to meet them with patience and fortitude. At the same time, the believer should always pray that God may make it easy for him to follow the path of Truth and righteousness.

341. Believers pray to God not to place upon them a burden beyond their capacity of endurance, and to subject them only to those tests from which they may emerge triumphant. May it not happen that the hardships are too much for them to bear, and that their feet falter and are turned away from the path of righteousness,

342. In order to appreciate fully the spirit of this prayer, one should remember that these verses were revealed on the occasion of the ascension of the Prophet, a year before his migration to Madina. At that time the struggle between Islam and unbelief had reached its climax. Not only in Makka, but throughout the Arabian peninsula, there was no place where the lives of those who wished to follow the religion of God had not been made extremely difficult. In these circumstances the Muslims were told in what manner they ought to pray to their Lord. It is obvious that if the bestower himself tells one how to present one's request, the granting of the request becomes virtually assured. Hence, this prayer greatly strengthened the hearts of the Muslims. Moreover, this prayer implicitly taught the Muslims not to allow their feelings to flow along undesirable channels. They should instead mould them into a prayer to their Lord.

Think of the heart-rending cruelties to which the Muslims were subjected merely because of their devotion to Truth, and then turn to the contents of this prayer, where there is no trace of bitterness against the enemies. Consider the physical afflictions and material losses which the Muslims suffered, then note how this prayer does not contain the slightest hint of worldly ambition. Compare the wretchedness and misery of these devotees of Truth with the pure, exalted feelings with which this prayer is overflowing. This comparison will enable us to appreciate the nature of the spiritual and moral training provided to men of faith.

3. Surah Al i Imran (The Family of Imran)

Name

This Surah takes its name from v. 33. Al-i-Imran, like the names of many other surahs, is merely a name to distinguish it from other surahs and does not imply that the family of Imran has been discussed in it.

The Period of Revelation

This Surah consists of four discourses The first discourses :-

The first discourse (vv. 1-32) was probably revealed soon after the Battle of Badr.

The second discourse (vv. 33-63) was revealed in 9 A. H. on the occasion of the visit of the deputation from the Christians of Najran.

The third discourse (vv. 64-120) appears to have been revealed immediately after the first one.

The fourth discourse (vv. 121-200) was revealed after the Battle of Uhd.

Subject

Though these discourses were revealed at different periods and on different occasions, they are so inter-linked and so inter-connected iii regard to their aim, object and central theme that they make together one continuous whole. This Surah has been especially addressed to two groups-the people of the Book (the Jews and the Christians) and the followers of Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him).

The message has been extended to the Jews and the Christians in continuation of the invitation in Al-Baqarah, in which they have been admonished for their erroneous beliefs and evil morals and advised to accept, as a remedy, the Truth of the Quran. They have been told here that Muhammad (Allah's peace be, upon him) taught the same right way of life that had been preached by their own Prophets; that it alone was the Right Way, the way of Allah; hence any deviation from it will be wrong even according to their own Scriptures.

The second group, the Muslims, who had been declared to be the best Community in Al-Baqarah and appointed torch-bearers of the Truth and entrusted with the responsibility of reforming the world, have been given additional instructions in continuation of those given in the preceding Surah. The Muslims have been warned to learn a lesson from the religious and moral degeneration of the former communities and to refrain from treading in their footsteps. Instructions have also been given about the reformative work they had to perform. Besides this, they have been taught how to deal with the people of the Book and the hypocrites who were putting different kinds of hindrances in the way of Allah. Above all, they have been warned to guard against those weaknesses which had come to the surface in the Battle Uhd.

Background

The following is the background of the Surah:

1. The Believers had met with all sorts of trials and hardships about which they had been forewarned in Al-Baqarah. Though they had come out victorious in the Battle of Badr, they were not out of danger yet. Their victory had aroused the enmity of all those powers in Arabia which were opposed to the Islamic Movement. Signs of threatening storms had begun to appear on all sides and the Muslims were in a perpetual state of fear and anxiety. It looked as if the whole Arabian world around the tiny state of Al-Madinah - which was no more than a village state at that time -- was bent upon blotting out its very existence. This state of war was also adversely affecting its economy, which had already been badly disturbed by the influx of the Muslim refugees from Makkah.
2. Then there was the disturbing problem of the Jewish clans who lived in the suburbs of Al-Madinah. They were discarding the treaties of alliance they had made with the Holy Prophet after his migration from Makkah. So much so that on the occasion of the Battle of Badr, these people of the Book sympathized with the evil aims of the idolaters, in spite of the fact that their fundamental articles of the Faith - Oneness of Allah, Prophethood, Life-after- death -- were the same as those of the Muslims. After the Battle of Badr, they openly began to incite the Quraish and other Arab clans to wreak their vengeance on the Muslims. Thus those Jewish clans set aside their centuries-old friendly and neighborly relations with the people of Al-Madinah. At last when their mischievous actions and breaches of treaties became unbearable, the Holy Prophet attacked the Bani- Qainu-qa'a, the most mischievous of all the other Jewish clans who had conspired with the hypocrites of Al-Madinah and the idolatrous Arab clans to encircle the Believers on all sides. The magnitude of the peril might be judged from the fact that even the life of the Holy Prophet himself was always in danger. Therefore his Companions slept in their armors during that period and kept watch at night to guard against any sudden attack, and whenever the Holy Prophet happened to be out of sight even for a short while, they would at once set out in search of him.
3. This incitement by the Jews added fuel to the fire which was burning in the hearts of the Quraish and they began to make preparations to avenge the defeat they had suffered at Bad. A year after this an army of 3,000 strong marched out of Makkah to invade Al-Madinah and a battle took place at the foot of Mount Uhd. The Holy Prophet came out of Al-Madinah with one thousand men to meet the enemy. While they were marching to the battle-field, three hundred hypocrites deserted the army and returned to Al- Madinah, but there still remained a small band of hypocrites among the seven hundred who accompanied the Holy Prophet. They played their part and did their worst to create mischief and chaos in the ranks of the Believers during the Battle. This was the first clear indication of the fact that within the fold of the Muslim Community there was quite a large number of saboteurs who were always ready to conspire with the external enemies to harm their own brethren.
4. Though the devices of the hypocrites had played a great part in the set-back at Uhd, the weaknesses of the Muslims themselves contributed no less to it. And it was but natural that the Muslims should show signs of moral weakness for they were a new community which had only recently been formed on a new ideology and had not as yet got a thorough moral training. Naturally in this second hard test of their physical

and moral strength, some weaknesses came to the surface. That is why a detailed review of the Battle of Uhd was needed to warn the Muslims of their shortcomings and to issue instructions for their reform. It should also be noted that this review of the Battle is quite different from the reviews that are usually made by generals on similar occasions.

Subject: Guidance

This Surah is the sequel to, Al-Baqarah and the invitation therein is continued to the people of the Book. In Al-Baqarah the Jews were pointedly invited to accept the Guidance and in this Surah the Christians have particularly been admonished to give up their erroneous beliefs and accept the Guidance of the Quran. At the same time, the Muslims have been instructed to nourish the virtues that may enable them to carry out their obligations and spread the Divine Guidance.

Topics and their Interconnection

In these introductory verses, the fundamental truths about Allah, Revelation and Life-after-death have been reiterated to serve as fitting preliminaries, leading to the main topics discussed in the Surah. **1 - 32**

This discourse is particularly addressed to the Christians and invites them to accept Islam. It clears Jesus and his mother not only from the stigma maliciously set upon them by the Jews, but also refutes the erroneous Christian creed of the Divinity of Jesus which had been formulated because of his miraculous birth. For this purpose the instances of John the Baptist to a barren woman and an extremely aged man and that of Adam without father and mother have been cited to show that there is nothing in the birth of Jesus without a father to entitle him to Divinity. **33 - 65**

In these verses the people of the Book, the Jews, have been invited to give up their sinister ways and accept the divine Guidance. At the same time the Muslims have been warned to be on their guard against their malicious intentions, erroneous ways and absurd objections. **66 - 101**

The Muslims have been instructed to learn lessons from the history of the people of the Book and also to guard themselves against their machinations, and to prepare and train themselves to establish virtue and eradicate evil. **102 - 120**

In this portion, a review of the Battle of Uhd has been mad to teach and reassure the Muslims that the machinations of their enemies could do them no harm, if they would practice restraint and fortitude and have fear of Allah. It has been pointed out that the set-back they had suffered was due to the lack of some moral qualities and the existence of some evils. Since the main cause of the defeat was the greed of the archers, guarding the pass, the taking of interest has been prohibited to eradicate this evil. **121 - 175**

The main theme of the verses **109 - 120** has been resumed to reassure and encourage the Muslims against the dangerous plots of their enemies. **175 - 189**

This is the conclusion of the Surah and is not directly connected with the verses immediately preceding it but with the theme of the Surah as a whole. **190 - 200**

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

الٓمّٓ ۙ 1

(3:1) Alif, Lam, Mim.

اللّٰہُ لَاۤ اِلٰہَ اِلَّا ہُوَ ۙ الۡحَیُّ الۡقَیُّوۡمُ ؕ 2

(3:2) Allah, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsisting, Who sustains the entire order of the universe - there is no God but He.[1]

1. For explanation see (Surah 2, n. 278) above.

نَزَّلَ عَلَیۡکَ الۡکِتٰبَ بِالۡحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَیۡنَ یَدَیۡہِ وَ اَنۡزَلَ التَّوۡرٰىۃَ وَ الۡاِنۡجِیۡلَ ۙ 3

(3:3) He has revealed this Book to you, setting forth the truth and confirming the earlier Books, and earlier He revealed the Torah and Gospel

مِنۡ قَبۡلُ ہُدًی لِّلنَّاسِ وَ اَنۡزَلَ الۡفُرۡقَانَ ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا بِاٰیٰتِ اللّٰہِ لَہُمۡ عَذَابٌ شَدِیۡدٌ ؕ وَ اللّٰہُ عَزِیۡزٌ ذُو انۡتِقَامٍ ؕ 4

(3:4) for the guidance of mankind;[2] and He has also revealed the Criterion (to distinguish truth from falsehood). A severe chastisement lies in store for those who deny the signs of Allah. Allah is All-Mighty; He is the Lord of Retribution.

2. The Torah is generally taken to signify the first five books of the Old Testament, and the Injil (Gospel), to mean the four Gospels of the New Testament, even though those books form a part of it. This has sometimes caused people to wonder if these books were indeed revealed by God. If they are accepted as revealed, one may wonder if the Qur'an really verifies their contents as this verse says. The fact is, however, that the Torah is not identical with the first five books of the Old Testament even though those books form a part of the Torah. Likewise, the Injil is not identical with the four Gospels of the New Testament.

The fact is that the Torah, in the Qur'anic usage, signifies the revelations made to Moses (peace be on him), in about forty years, from the time he was appointed a Prophet until his death. These include the Ten Commandments', which were handed over to him inscribed on stone tablets. Moses took down the rest of the revealed injunctions and handed over one copy to each of the twelve tribes of Israel, and one copy to the Levites for safe keeping. It is

this book which was known as the Torah and it existed until the first destruction of Jerusalem. The copy entrusted to the Levites was put beside the Ark of the Covenant along with the Commandment tablets, and the Israelites knew it as the Torah. The Jews, however, neglected the Book: during the reign of Josiah the King of Judah the Temple of Solomon was under repair and the high priest, Hilkiah, chanced to find the Book lying in the construction area. He gave it to the King's secretary, Shaphan, who in turn took it to the King as if it were a strange find (see 2 Kings 22: 8-13).

Hence, when the Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar, conquered Jerusalem and razed it and the Temple of Solomon to the ground, the Israelites lost for ever the few original copies of the Torah which they possessed, and which they had consigned to obscurity. At the time of Ezra the priest, some Israelites returned from captivity in Babylon, and when Jerusalem was rebuilt the entire history of Israel, which now comprises the first seventeen books of the Old Testament, was recorded by Ezra with the assistance of some other elders of the community. Four of these books, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, consist of a biographical narrative of Moses. In this biography those verses of the Torah available to Ezra and the other elders are also recorded and in the contexts in which they were revealed. The present Torah, therefore, comprises those fragments of the original book which are interspersed throughout the biography of Moses (composed in the manner described above).

In locating these fragments of the original Torah there are certain expressions which help us. These are interspersed between the different pieces of biographical narration and usually open with words such as: 'Then the Lord said to Moses', and 'Moses said, the Lord your God commands you.' These expressions, then, are fragments of the original Torah. When the biographical narration re-commences, however, we can be sure that the fragment of the true Torah has concluded. Wherever authors and editors of the Bible have added anything of their own accord, by way of either elaboration or elucidation, it has become very difficult for an ordinary reader to distinguish the original from the explanatory additions. Those with insight into Divine Scripture, however, do have the capacity to distinguish between the original revealed fragments and the later, human interpolations.

It is these scattered fragments of the original revealed Book which the Qur'an terms as the Torah, and it is these which it confirms. When these fragments are compared with the Qur'an, there is no difference between the two as regards the fundamental teachings. Whatever differences exist relate to legal matters and are of secondary importance. Even today a careful reader can appreciate that the Torah and the Qur'an have sprung from one and the same Divine source.

Likewise, Injil signifies the inspired orations and utterances of Jesus (peace be on him), which he delivered during the last two or three years of his life in his capacity as a Prophet. There are no certain means by which we can definitively establish whether or not his statements were recorded during his lifetime. It is possible that some people took notes of them and that some followers committed them to memory. After a period of time, however, several treatises on the life of Jesus were written. The authors of these treatises recorded, in connection with the biographical account, those sayings of his which they had received from the previous generation of co-religionists, in the form of either oral traditions or written notes about events in his life. As a result the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are

not identical with the Injil. Rather, the Injil consists of those statements by Jesus which form part of these Gospels. Unfortunately we have no means of distinguishing the fragments of the original Injil from the pieces written by the authors themselves. All we can say is that only those sections explicitly attributed to Jesus, for example in statements such as: 'And Jesus said' and 'And Jesus taught', constitute the true Injil. It is the totality of such fragments which is designated as the Injil by the Qur'an, and it is the teachings contained in these fragments that the Qur'an confirms. If these fragments are put together and compared with the teachings of the Qur'an one notices very few discrepancies between the two, and any discrepancies that are found can be resolved easily by unbiased reflection.

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَخْفٰى عَلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَآءِ ۟ 5

(3:5) Nothing in the earth and in the heavens is hidden from Allah.[3]

3. That is, God knows all the facts of the universe. Hence the Book which He has revealed is, of necessity, true. It may be more appropriate to say that the unadulterated Truth can be made available to man only through this Book, which has been revealed by the All-Knowing, All-Wise God.

هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُصَوِّرُكُمْ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ كَيْفَ يَشَآءُ ۟ لَآ إِلٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ 6

(3:6) It is He Who fashions you in the wombs as He wills.[4] There is no God but He; the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.

4. This refers to two important facts. The first is that no being knows human nature as well as God does; it is thus imperative that man should depend on the guidance revealed by God, something man needs the most. The second is that the Being Who takes care of all of man's requirements, major and minor, from the time of conception onwards, will not fail to provide guidance for man's conduct in this life.

هُوَ الَّذِيْٓ أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ مِنْهُ اٰيٰتٌ مُّحْكَمٰتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتٰبِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشٰبِهٰتٌ ۟
فَأَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُوْنَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَآءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَآءَ تَأْوِيْلِهٖ ۚ وَمَا
يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيْلَهٗٓ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ ۘ وَالرّٰسِخُوْنَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُوْلُوْنَ اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ ۙ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا ۚ وَمَا
يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّآ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ 7

(3:7) It is He Who has revealed the Book to you. Some of its verses are absolutely clear and lucid, and these are the core of the Book.[5] Others are ambiguous.[6] Those in whose hearts there is perversity, always go about the part which is ambiguous, seeking

mischief and seeking to arrive at its meaning arbitrarily, although none knows their true meaning except Allah. On the contrary, those firmly rooted in knowledge say: 'We believe in it; it is all from our Lord alone.'[7] No one derives true admonition from anything except the men of understanding.

5. Muhkam means that which has been made firmly and perfectly. The muhkam verses mentioned here are those Qur'anic verses which are embodied in clear and lucid language and whose meaning is not liable to any ambiguity and equivocation. The words of these verses are clear pointers to their true meaning and, therefore, it is difficult to subject them to arbitrary interpretation. Such verses form the core of the Holy Book; they are the verses which fulfil the true purpose for which the Qur'an was revealed, and they invite the whole world to Islam. They embody admonition and instruction as well as the refutation of erroneous doctrines and the elucidation of the Right Way. They also contain the fundamentals of the true faith; teachings relating to belief, worship and morality, and mandatory duties and prohibitions. These are the verses which will guide the genuine seeker after Truth who turns to the Qur'an in order to find out what he ought and ought not to do.

6. 'Ambiguous' verses are those whose meaning may have some degree of equivocation. It is obvious that no way of life can be prescribed for man unless a certain amount of knowledge explaining the truth about the universe, about its origin and end, about man's position in it and other matters of similar importance, is intimated to him. It is also evident that the truths which lie beyond the range of human perception have always eluded and will continue to elude man; no words exist in the human vocabulary which either express or portray them. In speaking about such things, we necessarily resort to words and expressions generally employed in connection with tangible objects. In the Qur'an, too, this kind of language is employed in relation to supernatural matters; the verses which have been characterized as 'ambiguous' refer to such matters.

At best, such expressions may serve to either bring man close to or enable him to formulate some view of reality, even if it is a faint one. The more one tries to determine the precise meaning of such verses, the more their ambiguities proliferate, and the more one is confronted with choosing between several plausible interpretations. All this is likely to alienate one progressively further away' from the Truth instead of bringing one closer to it. Those who seek the Truth and do not hanker after the satisfaction of their egocentric quest for exotic superfluities, will be satisfied with the dim vision of reality derived from these verses. They will concentrate their attention instead on the clear and lucid 'core' verses of the Qur'an. It will be left to those who are either out to make mischief and mislead people or who have an abnormal passion for superfluities to devote their attention to hair-splitting discussions about the contents of the 'ambiguous" verses.

7. This might give rise to an unnecessary problem: How can people believe in 'ambiguous' verses when the contents of these cannot be grasped?

The fact is that a reasonable person will believe that the Qur'an is the Book of God through his reading of its clear and lucid verses, rather than by learning fanciful interpretations of the ambiguous verses. Once so convinced, he is not likely to be worried by doubts and anxieties caused by the ambiguities of the verses concerned. One who seeks the Truth is

satisfied with the obvious meaning of these verses, and wherever he encounters complications and ambiguities he abstains from pursuing their solution too far. Instead of wasting his time splitting hairs, he is content to believe in the things laid down in the Book of God, without seeking to know them precisely and in detail. He turns his attention, in the main, to questions of a practical nature.

رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ رَحْمَةً ۚ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْوَهَّابُ 8

(3:8) They pray to Allah: 'Our Lord! Do not let our hearts swerve towards crookedness after You have guided us to the right way, and. bestow upon us Your mercy. Surely You, only You, are the Munificent Giver!

رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ جَامِعُ النَّاسِ لِيَوْمٍ لَّا رَيْبَ فِيهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ ۝ 9

(3:9) Our Lord! You surely will gather mankind together one Day, a Day about (the coming of which) there is no doubt. Surely Allah never goes against His promise.'

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَن تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ وَقُودُ النَّارِ 10

(3:10) Those who disbelieve, neither their wealth nor their offspring will avail them at all against Allah, and it is they who will be the fuel of the Fire

كَدَأْبِ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ وَالَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا ۖ فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ 11

(3:11) (To them shall happen) the like of what happened to the people of Pharaoh, and those before them. They rejected Our signs, so Allah seized them for their sins. Allah indeed is severe in punishment.

قُل لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَتُغْلَبُونَ وَتُحْشَرُونَ إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ ۚ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ 12

(3:12) Tell those who disbelieved:[8] 'You shall soon be overpowered and mustered to Hell - and that is an evil resting place!'

8. For explanation see (Surah 2, n. 161)above.

قَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ اٰيَةٌ فِيْ فِئَتَيْنِ الْتَقَتَا ؕ فِئَةٌ تُقَاتِلُ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَاُخْرٰى كَافِرَةٌ يَّرَوْنَهُمْ
مِّثْلَيْهِمْ رَاْىَ الْعَيْنِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يُؤَيِّدُ بِنَصْرِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّاُولِي
الْاَبْصَارِ 13

(3:13) You have already come across an instructive sign in the two hosts that encountered each other in battle (at Badr): one host fighting in the way of Allah, and the other that of unbelievers. They saw with their own eyes that one host was twice the number of the other.[9] But (the result of the battle has proved that) Allah succours with His victory whomsoever He wills. In this there is surely a lesson for all who have eyes to see.[10]

9. The actual disparity between the two armies was roughly three to one, but even a cursory glance was enough to tell the casual observer that the army of unbelievers was about twice as large as that of the believers.

10. The events and results of the Battle of Badr are briefly reviewed so as to bring home certain lessons to the Muslims. There are three important lessons to be learnt. First, the manner in which the believers and the unbelievers advanced to the battlefield clearly demonstrated the difference in the moral fibre of the two armies. In the army of the unbelievers, the soldiers held drinking parties and were entertained by the songs and dances of slave girls. The prevalent mood of that army was one of self-indulgence. On the other hand, piety, fear of God and moral restraint of the highest order characterized the Muslim army. The soldiers were busy in devotion and remembrance of God, to Whom they addressed all their prayers and supplication. It was obvious to anyone which army was fighting in God's cause. Second, the believers won a resounding victory against an army of unbelievers superior to them in numbers, and in the quality and the quantity of arms. So the victory clearly indicated which of the two armies enjoyed the support of God. Third, the outcome of the battle came as a shocking humiliation for those who, heedless of God's might, had been exulting in the strength of their arms and the number of their supporters. It came as a shock to such people when God subjected a tribe like the Quraysh, foremost in influence and power throughout Arabia, to an ignominious defeat at the hands of a few ill-equipped Makkan fugitives and peasants from Madina.

زُيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوٰتِ مِنَ النِّسَآءِ وَالْبَنِيْنَ وَالْقَنَاطِيْرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ
وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْاَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَاللّٰهُ عِنْدَهٗ
حُسْنُ الْمَاٰبِ 14

(3:14) Men are naturally tempted by the lure of women, children, treasures of gold and silver, horses of mark, cattle and plantations. These are the enjoyments in the life of this world; but with Allah lies a goodly abode to return to.

قُلْ أَؤُنَبِّئُكُم بِخَيْرٍ مِّن ذَٰلِكُمْ ۖ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَأَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ ۚ 15

(3:15) Say: 'Shall I tell you of things better than these? For the God-fearing there are, with their Lord, gardens beneath which rivers flow; there they will abide for ever, will have spouses of stainless purity[11] as companions, and will enjoy the good pleasure of Allah.' Allah thoroughly observes His servants.[12]

11. For explanation see (Surah 2, n. 27) above.

12. This shows that God neither showers His favours on people arbitrarily nor makes casual and superficial judgements. He knows full well the deeds and intentions of people. He also knows who merits His rewards and who does not.

الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ۚ 16

(3:16) These are the ones who pray: 'Our Lord! We do indeed believe, so forgive us our sins and keep us safe from the chastisement of the Fire';

الصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْمُنفِقِينَ وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ بِالْأَسْحَارِ 17

(3:17) men who are steadfast,[13] truthful, obedient, spend (in the way of Allah) and implore the forgiveness of Allah before daybreak.

13. That is, they are those who remain steadfast in the cause of Truth; who do not lose heart when they either suffer losses or are subjected to afflictions; who do not despair when they encounter reverses; who are not seduced by temptations. They are the ones who remain faithful to the Truth, even when it apparently stands no chance of prevailing see also (Surah 2, n. 60 above.)

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ
الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ۚ 18

(3:18) Allah Himself bears witness that there is no God but He;[14] and likewise do the angels and the men possessed of knowledge[15] bear witness in truth and justice that there is no God but He, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.

14. The testimony in question is from God Himself, Who knows directly all the realities of the universe, Who observes every existing thing without obstruction. It is the testimony of the One from Whose sight nothing is hidden, and who can be a better first-hand witness than He? His testimony is that no one but He is possessed of the attributes of godhead; no one has the power to govern the universe, and no one has the right to claim the rights which belong exclusively to God.

15. After God, the most trustworthy testimony is that of the angels, for they carry out the administration of the universe. The testimony of the angels, based on their own observations, is that the Will of God alone reigns supreme in the universe, and they turn to Him alone in the governance of the heavens and the earth. Moreover, all creatures possessing knowledge of reality have testified, unanimously, that no one except the One True God reigns and rules over the universe.

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِندَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ ۗ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ
الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ ۗ وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ 19

(3:19) The true religion with Allah is Islam.[16] The People of the Book adopted many different ways rather than follow the true way of Islam even after the knowledge of truth had reached them, and this merely to commit excesses against one another.[17] Let him who refuses to follow the ordinances and directives of Allah know that Allah is swift in His reckoning.

16. In the sight of God there is only one system of life and way of conduct which is both in accord with reality and morally right. This consists of man's acknowledging God as his Lord and the sole object of his worship and devotion; of surrendering himself unreservedly to God in obedience and service. In doing so he should follow in toto the guidance communicated by God through His Messengers rather than try to devise ways of serving God according to his own lights. This mode of thought and action is known as Islam, and it is only reasonable that the Lord and Creator of the universe should accept nothing less from His creatures and servants. In his folly man thinks that he has the right to believe in and follow every doctrine that comes his way whether it be atheism or idolatry. In the sight of the Sovereign of the universe, however, all such attitudes amount to nothing short of rebellion against God.

17. This shows that the religion of every Messenger of God, in every age and clime, was none other than Islam (submission to God). Likewise, every Divine book, in whichever language it was revealed, and to whichever people it was addressed, contained the teachings of Islam. The various religions which have spread among mankind are distortions of this true, original religion, and are the result of tampering. Coveting privileges over and above those to which they were entitled, people altered the beliefs, principles and injunctions of the true religion in a manner conducive to their own interests.

فَإِنْ حَآجُّوكَ فَقُلْ أَسْلَمْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّهِ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِ ۗ وَقُل لِّلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَٰبَ
وَالْأُمِّيِّـۧنَ ءَأَسْلَمْتُمْ ۚ فَإِنْ أَسْلَمُوا۟ فَقَدِ ٱهْتَدَوا۟ ۖ وَإِن تَوَلَّوْا۟ فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ ٱلْبَلَٰغُ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ
بَصِيرٌۢ بِٱلْعِبَادِ ﴿20﴾

(3:20) And if they remonstrate with you, tell them: 'I have submitted my whole being to Allah, and so have those who follow me.' And ask the People of the Book as well as those who follow no heavenly Scripture: 'Have you also submitted (to Allah)?'[18] If they have submitted to Him, they are indeed on the right way but if they deviate from submitting to Allah, then your duty is merely to deliver the message. Allah observes the affairs of His servants.

18. The Prophet (peace be on him) is asked to tell them in effect: I and my followers have embraced the original, unadulterated Islam which is the true religion enjoined by God. Tell us, now, if you are prepared to give up the accretions introduced by your forefathers, and embrace this original, true religion?'

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِـَٔايَٰتِ ٱللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ ٱلنَّبِيِّـۧنَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ۙ وَيَقْتُلُونَ ٱلَّذِينَ يَأْمُرُونَ
بِٱلْقِسْطِ مِنَ ٱلنَّاسِ ۙ فَبَشِّرْهُم بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿21﴾

(3:21) Give those who refuse to follow the directives of Allah, who slay the Prophets unjustly, and who slay those who enjoin justice, give them glad tidings of a grievous chastisement.[19]

19. This is a sarcastic remark. Its purpose is to bring home to them that the misdeeds about which they are so jubilant, and which they regard as their proud achievements, will ultimately lead them to a painful end.

أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ ٱلَّذِينَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَٰلُهُمْ فِى ٱلدُّنْيَا وَٱلْـَٔاخِرَةِ ۖ وَمَا لَهُم مِّن نَّٰصِرِينَ ﴿22﴾

(3:22) These are the people whose works have gone to waste in this world and in the World to Come.[20] They have none to help them.[21]

20. They have spent their efforts and energies in a manner leading to catastrophic results in this world and the Next.

21. No power can make these misdeeds either bear good fruit or prevent them bearing evil fruit. The powers upon which the wrong-doers rely for support in this world and in the World to Come will not be of any help to them.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيۡنَ اُوۡتُوۡا نَصِيۡبًا مِّنَ الۡكِتٰبِ يُدۡعَوۡنَ اِلٰى كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ لِيَحۡكُمَ بَيۡنَهُمۡ ثُمَّ يَتَوَلّٰى فَرِيۡقٌ مِّنۡهُمۡ وَهُمۡ مُّعۡرِضُوۡنَ 23

(3:23) Have you not noticed those who have been given a portion of the Book? Whenever their learned men are summoned to the Book of Allah to judge the differences between them,[22] a party of them turns away in aversion.

22. They are asked to acknowledge the Book of God as the final arbiter in all matters, and to submit to its judgement, accepting as right whatever this Book holds to be right, and as wrong whatever it holds to be wrong. The Book of God referred to here is the Torah and the Injil, while the expression 'those who have been given a portion of the Book' refers to the Jewish and Christian religious scholars. (For the Quranic view of the Torah and the Injil see n. 2 above - Ed.)

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمۡ قَالُوۡا لَنۡ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ اِلَّاۤ اَيَّامًا مَّعۡدُوۡدٰتٍ ۖ وَغَرَّهُمۡ فِىۡ دِيۡنِهِمۡ مَّا كَانُوۡا يَفۡتَرُوۡنَ 24

(3:24) This is because they say: 'The fire of Hell shall not touch us except for a limited number of days.'[23] The false beliefs which they have forged have deluded them in their faith.

23. These people considered themselves to be God's favourites and cherished the illusion that, regardless of what they did, they were bound to enter Paradise. They took the view that since they were believers, were descended from pious people, followed noble Prophets, and were disciples and admirers of holy men, Hell would not dare touch them. They also thought that even if they were thrown into Hell they would remain there for a few days only, to be purged of the impurity of the sins which had afflicted them, and would then be sent straight to Paradise. Such notions had made them so bold that even when they committed the most atrocious crimes and the most mortal of sins, and brazenly deviated from Truth and rectitude, their hearts remained utterly unmoved by the fear of God.

فَكَيۡفَ اِذَا جَمَعۡنٰهُمۡ لِيَوۡمٍ لَّا رَيۡبَ فِيۡهِ ۖ وَوُفِّيَتۡ كُلُّ نَفۡسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتۡ وَهُمۡ لَا يُظۡلَمُوۡنَ 25

(3:25) How, then, will they fare when We shall gather them all together to witness the Day about (the coming of) which there is no doubt, and when every human being shall be repaid in full for what he has done, and none shall be wronged?

قُلِ اللّٰهُمَّ مٰلِكَ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَآءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَآءُ ۚ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ
تَشَآءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَآءُ ؕ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ ؕ اِنَّكَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ 26

(3:26) Say: 'O Allah, Lord of all dominion! You give dominion to whom You will, and take away dominion from whom You will, and You exalt whom You will, and abase whom You will. In Your Hand is all good. Surely You are All-Power-ful.

تُوْلِجُ الَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُوْلِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي الَّيْلِ ۚ وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ
الْحَيِّ ۚ وَتَرْزُقُ مَنْ تَشَآءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ 27

(3:27) You cause the night to pass into the day and the day to pass into the night. You bring forth the living out of the dead, and You bring the dead out of the living, and You give sustenance to whom You will beyond all reckoning.'[24]

24. Those who disbelieved and disobeyed were seen to be prosperous, whereas the believers, with their devotion and loyalty to God, suffered all the deprivation, persecution and torment to which the Prophet and his followers were subjected around the year 3 A.H. The contrasting states of the two groups of men were the reverse of what would naturally be expected. This raised disturbing questions in people's minds about the underlying wisdom of this phenomenon. The verse conveys God's answer.

لَا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ
اللّٰهِ فِيْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَتَّقُوْا مِنْهُمْ تُقٰىةً ؕ وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسَهٗ ؕ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ الْمَصِيْرُ 28

(3:28) The believers may not take the unbelievers for their allies in preference to those who believe. Whoever does this has nothing to do with Allah unless he does so in order to protect himself from their wrong-doing.[25] Allah warns you to beware of Him for it is to Allah that you will return.[26]

25. This means that it is lawful for a believer, helpless in the grip of the enemies of Islam and in imminent danger of severe wrong and persecution, to keep his faith concealed and to behave in such a manner as to create the impression that he is on the same side as his enemies. A person whose Muslim identity is discovered is permitted to adopt a friendly attitude owards the unbelievers in order to save his life. If he considers himself incapable of enduring the excesses to which he may be subjected, he may even state that he is not a believer.

26. One should not be overwhelmed by the fear of other human beings to the extent of losing the fear of God. Human beings can harm a man but the most they can do is to ruin his transient, earthly life. God, on the other hand, can subject him to everlasting torment. If one is constrained in extraordinary circumstances to resort to a prudent concealment of faith (taqiyah) in order to save one's life, this concealment should remain within reasonable limits. The most one is permitted to do is to protect one's life and property without jeopardizing either the interests of Islam or of the Muslim community as a whole, and without causing loss of life and property to other Muslims. One must never allow saving one's own life to lead to the propagation of unbelief at the expense of Islam and to the dominance of unbelievers over Muslims. Here the believers are warned that, no matter how dangerous the circumstances surrounding them, they cannot escape God's reproach if they give substantial aid to those rebelling against Him, and cause any harm to God's chosen religion, to the community of believers or to any individual believer. For, it is to God that one will ultimately return for reckoning.

قُلْ اِنْ تُخْفُوْا مَا فِيْ صُدُوْرِكُمْ اَوْ تُبْدُوْهُ يَعْلَمْهُ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي
الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ 29

(3:29) Say: 'Whether you conceal what is in your hearts or disclose it, Allah knows it. Allah knows what is in the heavens and in the earth and He has power over everything.'

يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُّحْضَرًا ۚ وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوْٓءٍ ۚ تَوَدُّ لَوْ اَنَّ
بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهٗٓ اَمَدًا بَعِيْدًا ؕ وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسَهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ رَءُوْفٌۢ بِالْعِبَادِ ع 30

(3:30) The Day is approaching when every soul shall find itself confronted with whatever good it has done and whatever evil it has wrought. It will then wish there is a wide space between it and the Day! Allah warns you to beware of Him; He is most tender towards His servants.[27]

27. It is out of sheer goodwill that God warns people against deeds likelyto have devastating consequences for them.

قُلْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّوْنَ اللّٰهَ فَاتَّبِعُوْنِيْ يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوْبَكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ
رَّحِيْمٌ 31

(3:31) (O Messenger!) Tell people: 'If you indeed love Allah, follow me, and Allah will love you and will forgive you your sins. Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.'

قُلْ اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَالرَّسُوْلَ ۚ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ 32

(3:32) Say: 'Obey Allah and obey the Messenger.' If they turn away from this then know that Allah does not love those who refuse to obey Him and His Messenger.[28]

28. This marks the conclusion of the first discourse. Reflection upon its contents, particularly the reference to the Battle of Badr, leads one to the conclusion that this section was probably revealed between the battles of Badr and Uhud, i.e. sometime in 3.A.H. The tradition mentioned by Muhammad b. Ishaq has led to the common misunderstanding that the first eighty verses of this surah were revealed on the occasion of the arrival of the deputation from Najran in 9 A.H. (See Ibn Hisham. Sirah, vol. 1, pp. 573 ff., especially p. 576; Ibn Ishaq, Life of Muhammad, tr. A. Guillaume, second impression, London, Oxford, 1968. pp. 270 ff.. especially p. 272 - Ed.) This is not true. In the first place, the introductory section indicates that the surah was revealed much earlier. Second, the Tradition narrated by Muqatil b. Sulayman states explicitly that on the occasion of the arrival of the deputation from Najran only those verses which concern the Prophets John (Yahya) and Jesus ('Isa) (peace be on them) were revealed, and the number of those verses is about thirty.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰٓى اٰدَمَ وَنُوْحًا وَّاٰلَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاٰلَ عِمْرٰنَ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۙ 33

(3:33) Truly Allah[29] chose Adam and Noah and the descendants of Abraham and of 'Imran[30] above all mankind.

29. This marks the beginning of the second discourse. The period of its revelation is about 9 A.H., when a delegation from the Christian republic of Najran visited the Prophet. Najran lies between the Hijaz and Yaman, and comprised, at that time, seventy-three towns and villages. Its population can be gauged from the fact that an estimated one hundred and twenty thousand men could bear arms. The entire population was Christian and was under the hegemony of three Christian chiefs. The first of these, 'aqib, was the head of the community. The second, sayyid, looked after the collective and political affairs of the people. The third, usquf (bishop), was their religious leader. (See Ibn Hisham, vol. 1, p. 573; Ibn Ishaq, Life of Muhammad, tr. A. Guillaume, pp. 270 f. - Ed.)

When the Prophet annexed Makka, the whole of Arabia became convinced that the future of the area was bound up with him, and deputations from all parts of the peninsula began to visit him. In this connection the three chiefs of Najran came to Madina accompanied by sixty people. As they were not prepared to go to war, the alternatives before them were either to embrace Islam or to live as dhimmis (protected non-Muslim subjects of the Islamic state). It was on this occasion that God revealed this discourse; it served as an invitation to the people of Najran to accept Islam.

30. 'Imran was the father of Moses and Aaron, and has been mentioned in the Bible as Amram.

ذُرِّيَّةًۢ بَعْضُهَا مِنْۢ بَعْضٍ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ۚ 34

(3:34) (for His messengership) - a people alike and the seed of one another.[31] Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

31. The real error of the Christians lies in considering Jesus to be the son of God and a partner in His godhead, rather than His servant and Messenger. If this misunderstanding was removed it would become quite easy for them to advance towards Islam. Hence at the very outset of the discourse it is mentioned that Adam, Noah and the Prophets in the house of Abraham and 'Imran were all human beings. Even though many Prophets were born in the same family, one from the other, none of them was God. Their merit lay in the fact that God had chosen them to preach His religion and reform the world.

اِذْ قَالَتِ امْرَاَتُ عِمْرٰنَ رَبِّ اِنِّيْ نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِيْ بَطْنِيْ مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّيْ ۚ اِنَّكَ

اَنْتَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ 35

(3:35). (He also heard) when the woman of 'Imran[32] said: 'O Lord! Behold, unto You do I vow that the child in my womb is to be devoted to Your exclusive service. Accept it, then, from me. Surely You alone are All-Hearing, All-Knowing.'[33]

32. If the 'woman of 'Imran' is interpreted as the wife of 'Imran, this 'Imran must be different from the 'Imran just mentioned (see the preceding verse). In the Christian tradition the name of the father of Mary is mentioned as Joachim. If this expression, however, is interpreted to mean 'a woman of the house of 'Imran', it would mean that the mother of Mary belonged to that tribe. There is, unfortunately, no definite source of information that would lead us to prefer one interpretation to the other, as there is no historical record either about who the parents of Mary were, or to which tribes they belonged. Were we to accept the tradition that the mother of John (Yahya) and the mother of Jesus were cousins, then it would be valid to interpret the expression as meaning 'a woman of the tribe of 'Imran' for, according to the Gospel of Luke, the mother of John was one of the daughters of Aaron (Luke 1:5).

33. That is, God heeds the prayers of His creatures and is well aware of their intentions.

فَلَمَّا وَضَعَتْهَا قَالَتْ رَبِّ اِنِّيْ وَضَعْتُهَآ اُنْثٰى ۗ وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا وَضَعَتْ ۗ وَلَيْسَ الذَّكَرُ

كَالْاُنْثٰى ۚ وَاِنِّيْ سَمَّيْتُهَا مَرْيَمَ وَاِنِّيْٓ اُعِيْذُهَا بِكَ وَذُرِّيَّتَهَا مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيْمِ 36

(3:36) But when she gave birth to a female child, she said: 'O Lord! I have given birth to a female' - and Allah knew full well what she had given birth to - 'and a female is not the same as a male.[34] I have named her Mary and commit her and her offspring to You for protection from Satan, the accursed.'

34. Since a boy is free from some of the physical shortcomings and social disabilities associated with a girl, the mother of Mary thought that had the child been a boy he would have been more able to achieve the purpose for which she had consecrated the child.

فَتَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُوْلٍ حَسَنٍ وَّاَنْۢبَتَهَا نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا ۙ وَّكَفَّلَهَا زَكَرِيَّا ؕ كُلَّمَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا
زَكَرِيَّا الْمِحْرَابَ ۙ وَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا رِزْقًا ۚ قَالَ يٰمَرْيَمُ اَنّٰى لَكِ هٰذَا ؕ قَالَتْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ
اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ 37

(3:37) Thereupon her Lord graciously accepted Mary and vouchsafed to her a goodly growth and placed her in the care of Zechariah. Whenever Zechariah[35] visited her in the sanctuary,[36] he found her provided with food. He asked her: 'O Mary, how did this come to you?' She said: 'It is from Allah. Allah provides sustenance to whom He wills beyond all reckoning.'

35. This section refers to that period of Mary's life when she attained her majority and was admitted to the Temple of Jerusalem, and devoted all her time to remembering God. Zechariah, into whose care she was given, was perhaps the husband of her maternal aunt, and was one of the guardians of the Temple. This Zechariah is not to be confused with the Prophet Zechariah whose assassination is mentioned in the Old Testament.

36. The word mihrab usually refers to that niche in mosques where the leader of the prayer stands. In this instance, however, the term signifies the apartments usually built in synagogues and sanctuaries on a raised platform adjacent to the place of congregational worship, which served as the residence of caretakers, servants and beggars. Mary lived in an apartment of this kind and devoted all her time to worship and prayer.

هُنَالِكَ دَعَا زَكَرِيَّا رَبَّهٗ ۚ قَالَ رَبِّ هَبْ لِيْ مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً ۚ اِنَّكَ سَمِيْعُ
الدُّعَآءِ 38

(3:38) Then Zechariah prayed to his Lord: 'O Lord! Grant me from Yourself out of Your grace the gift of a goodly offspring, for indeed You alone heed all Prayers.'[37]

37. Until then Zechariah had no issue. The sight of this pious young girl made him yearn for a child just as virtuous and devout. When he saw that God sent food to her, by dint of His limitless power, he felt hopeful that God might also bless him with issue, despite his old age.

فَنَادَتْهُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَهُوَ قَآئِمٌ يُّصَلِّيْ فِي الْمِحْرَابِ ۙ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُبَشِّرُكَ بِيَحْيٰى مُصَدِّقًۢا بِكَلِمَةٍ
مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَسَيِّدًا وَّحَصُوْرًا وَّنَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ 39

(3:39) As he stood praying in the sanctuary, the angels called out to him: 'Allah gives you good tidings of John (Yahya),[38] who shall confirm a command of Allah ,[39] shall be outstanding among men, utterly chaste, and a Prophet from among the righteous.'

38. In the Bible his name is mentioned as John the Baptist. For information about him see Matthew 3, 9 and 14: Mark 1 and 6; Luke 1 and 3.

39. The 'command from Allah' signifies Jesus (peace be on him). His birth took place as the result of an extraordinary command from God and in an unusual manner, hence he is designated as 'the command' or 'word' from Allah.

قَالَ رَبِّ اَنّٰى يَكُوْنُ لِيْ غُلٰمٌ وَّقَدْ بَلَغَنِيَ الْكِبَرُ وَامْرَاَتِيْ عَاقِرٌ ۭ قَالَ كَذٰلِكَ اللّٰهُ يَفْعَلُ مَا
يَشَآءُ 40

(3:40) Zechariah exclaimed: 'My Lord! How shall I have a son when old age has overtaken me and my wife is barren?' He said: Thus shall it be;[40] Allah does what He wills.'

40. God granted Zechariah a son despite his old age and despite the barrenness of his wife.

قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِّيْٓ اٰيَةً ۭ قَالَ اٰيَتُكَ اَلَّا تُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ ثَلٰثَةَ اَيَّامٍ اِلَّا رَمْزًا ۭ وَاذْكُرْ
رَّبَّكَ كَثِيْرًا وَّسَبِّحْ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْاِبْكَارِ ع 41

(3:41) Zechariah said: 'O my Lord! Appoint a sign for me.'[41] The angel said: 'The sign for you shall be that you shall not speak to men for three days except by gesture. Remember your Lord and extol His glory by night and by day.'[42]

41. Here the request is made for some specific sign to be given by means of which Zechariah would come to know in advance when the unusual incident of the birth of a child to a couple, where the male was old and the female both old and barren, would take place.

42. The real purpose of this discourse is to disclose to the Christians the error of their belief in Jesus as God and as the son of God. The subject is introduced by mentioning the birth of John (peace be on him), anothermiraculous birth which had taken place only six months before the birth of the Messiah (peace be on him) and among his own relatives. God wants

to make the Christians ask themselves why the miraculous birth of Jesus should make him God when the similarly miraculous birth of John did not make him so.

وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يٰمَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰىكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفٰىكِ عَلٰى نِسَآءِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ 42

(3:42) Then came the time when the angels said: 'O Mary! Behold, Allah has chosen you, and made you pure, and exalted you above all the women in the world.

يٰمَرْيَمُ اقْنُتِيْ لِرَبِّكِ وَاسْجُدِيْ وَارْكَعِيْ مَعَ الرّٰكِعِيْنَ 43

(3:43) O Mary! Remain devout to your Lord, and prostrate yourself in worship, and bow with those who bow (before Him).'

ذٰلِكَ مِنْ أَنْۢبَآءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهِ إِلَيْكَ ۭ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يُلْقُوْنَ أَقْلَامَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ يَكْفُلُ مَرْيَمَ ۠ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُوْنَ 44

(3:44) (O Muhammad!) We reveal to you this account from a realm which lies beyond the reach of your perception for you were not with them when they drew lots with their pens about who should be Mary's guardian,[43] and you were not with them when they disputed about it.

43. They drew lots to decide who should be the guardian of Mary, whose mother had consecrated her to the service of God in the Temple. Since she was a girl, it was a delicate matter as to who from among the priests of the Temple would be the appropriate person to take care of her.

إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يٰمَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنْهُ ۖ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيْحُ عِيْسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيْهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِيْنَ ۙ 45

(3:45) And when the angels said: 'O Mary! Allah gives you the glad tidings of a command from Him: his name shall be Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary. He shall be highly honoured in this world and in the Next, and shall be one of those near stationed to Allah.

وَيُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَّمِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ 46

(3:46) And he shall speak to men in the cradle and also later when he grows to maturity and shall indeed be among the righteous.'

قَالَتْ رَبِّ اَنّٰى يَكُوْنُ لِيْ وَلَدٌ وَّلَمْ يَمْسَسْنِيْ بَشَرٌ ؕ قَالَ كَذٰلِكِ اللّٰهُ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ ؕ

اِذَا قَضٰٓى اَمْرًا فَاِنَّمَا يَقُوْلُ لَهٗ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ 47

(3:47) She said: 'O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no man has ever touched me?' The angel answered: Thus shall it be.[44] Allah creates whatever He wills. When He decides something, He merely says: "Be" and it is.

44. Thus it was affirmed that a child would be born to Mary despite the fact that no man had touched her. The angel's answer mentioned here, 'Thus shall it be', was exactly the same as the response given to Zechariah. Both the following sentences and the preceding section support the view that the angel had conveyed to Mary the glad tidings that a son would be born to her without normal sexual contact, and it was thus that Jesus was born. For, if Mary's child was to be born to her in the usual manner in which children are born to women, and if the birth of Jesus did take place in the normal way, the entire narrative from (verse 35)of this surah to (verse 63) would have to be declared absurd.

Indeed, one would be forced to treat as meaningless all those statements about the birth of Jesus which are found scattered elsewhere in the Qur'an. The Christians had begun to regard Jesus as God and the son of God because of this fatherless birth. The Jews, in turn, cast aspersions on Mary's chastity on the grounds that she had given birth to a child despite being unmarried. If the fatherless birth of Jesus was itself false, it would have been sufficient to tell the Christians that they were indulging in sheer mis-statement, that Mary had indeed been married, that she had a legitimate husband, and that it was as a result of that wedlock that Jesus was born. If this fact could have been stated plainly, there would have been no need for long preparatory statements and complicated propositions, and no need to call Jesus the son of Mary instead of naming his father. For far from resolving the issue such statements add to the confusion. Those who believe the Qur'an to be the word or command from God and yet try to prove that the birth of Jesus took place in the normal manner, as a result of union between his father and mother, end up by proving only that God is less capable of clear expression than they are!

وَيُعَلِّمُهُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرٰىةَ وَالْاِنْجِيْلَ ۚ 48

(3:48) And He will teach him the Book, the Wisdom, the Torah, the Gospel,

وَرَسُوْلًا اِلٰى بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ۙ اَنِّيْ قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِاٰيَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ۙ اَنِّيْٓ اَخْلُقُ لَكُمْ مِّنَ
الطِّيْنِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ فَاَنْفُخُ فِيْهِ فَيَكُوْنُ طَيْرًا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَاُبْرِئُ الْاَكْمَهَ وَالْاَبْرَصَ
وَاُحْيِ الْمَوْتٰى بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَاُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ وَمَا تَدَّخِرُوْنَ ۙ فِيْ بُيُوْتِكُمْ ۭ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ
لَاٰيَةً لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ۚ 49

(3:49) and he will be a Messenger to the Children of Israel.' (And when he came to them he said): 'I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. I will make for you from clay the likeness of a bird and then I will breathe into it and by the leave of Allah it will become a bird. I will also heal the blind and the leper, and by the leave of Allah bring the dead to life. I will also inform you of what things you eat and what you treasure up in your houses. Surely this is a sign for you if you are true believ-ers.[45]

45. It is hinted here that these signs are sufficient proof that Jesus was designated by God, the Creator and Sovereign of the universe, provided people are prepared to accept the truth instead of obstinately clinging to their prejudiced views. This is further proof that Jesus had been entrusted with a mission by God. Had he not been designated by God but by an imposter he would surely have attempted to found an independent religion, exploiting his miracles to lead people away from their original faith. However, Jesus believed in, and confirmed, the validity of the teachings of the original religion which had been preached at God's behest by the earlier Prophets.

وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرٰىةِ وَلِاُحِلَّ لَكُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِيْ حُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَجِئْتُكُمْ
بِاٰيَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ۣ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ ۚ 50

(3:50) And I have come to confirm the truth of whatever there still remains of the Torah,[46] and to make lawful to you some of the things which had been forbidden to you.[47] have come to you with a sign from your Lord; so have fear of Allah and obey me.

46. The fact that Jesus preached the same religion as that expounded earlier by Moses and the other Prophets is also borne out by the statements of the existing Gospels: According to Matthew, in his Sermon on the Mount the Messiah categorically declared: 'Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them' (Matthew 5: 17). And when a Jewish lawyer enquired: 'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?', Jesus replied: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these

two commandments depends the law and the prophets' (ibid., 22: 37-40). He also instructed his disciples: The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so practise and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practise' (ibid., 23: 2-3).

47. What Jesus wanted to impress upon them was that he would abolish the prohibitive innovations which had infiltrated the original Divine Law (Shari'ah}. These were the results of the superstitions of their ignorant commoners, the legal hair-splitting of their lawyers, the extremism of their world-renouncing pietists, and the ascendancy and predominance of non-Muslim peoples over them. In determining what is lawful and unlawful, Jesus would be guided by the injunctions of God and not by the inventions of human beings.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ ۗ هَٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيمٌ 51

(3:51) Surely, Allah is my Lord and your Lord; so serve Him alone. This is the straight way.'[48]

48. This shows that as with the other Prophets, the fundamental points of Jesus' mission were the following:

(1) Man should acknowledge- the exclusive sovereignty of God which demands absolute service and obedience to Him, and Him alone. This principle serves as the basis for the entire structure of human morality and social behaviour.

(2) Man should obey the Prophets since they are the representatives of the true Sovereign.

(3) The Law which should regulate man's conduct by elaborating what is right and what is wrong should be none other than the Law of God. The laws devised by others should be abrogated. There is, thus, no difference between the missions of Jesus, Moses and Muhammad (peace be on them all). Those who think that the missions of the Prophets differ from one another and who believe that their objectives vary have fallen into serious error. Whoever is sent by the Lord of the Universe to His creatures can have no other purpose than to dissuade God's subjects from disobeying Him and assuming an attitude of vanity and disregard towards Him, and to admonish them against associating anyone with God in His divinity (that is, either holding anyone to be a partner with the Lord of the Universe in His Sovereignty or recognizing others beside God as having a rightful claim on part of man's loyalty, devotion and worship), and to invite them all to be loyal to, and to serve, obey and worship God alone.

It is unfortunate that the Gospels in their present form do not offer as clear a picture of the mission of Jesus as that presented by the Qur'an. Nevertheless, we find scattered throughout the Gospels all the three fundamentals mentioned above. The notion that man ought to submit himself totally to God is embodied in the following statement:

'You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve' (Matthew 4: 10).

In addition, Jesus believed that the object of his efforts was that God's commands relating to

the moral realm should be obeyed in this world in the sphere of human conduct just as His commands about the operation of the physical universe are obeyed in the heavens: 'Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven' (ibid., 6: 10).

The fact that Jesus presented himself as a Prophet and a representative of the Kingdom of Heaven, and that in this capacity he asked people to follow him is borne out by several statements. When, for instance, he began his mission in Nazareth and when his own kith, kin and compatriots turned against him, he remarked: 'A prophet is not without honour except in his own country . . .' (Matthew 13: 57; see also Luke 4: 24 and Mark 6: 4). And when conspiracies were hatched in Jerusalem to put an end to his life, and people counselled him to go away, he replied: 'Nevertheless I must go on my way . . . for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem' (Luke 13: 33). When Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time the disciples cried with a loud voice: 'Blessed be the King who comes in the name of the Lord' (Luke 19: 38). This angered the Pharisees, who asked Jesus to rebuke his disciples. But he replied: 'I tell you, if these were silent the very stones would cry out' (ibid., 19: 40). On another occasion he said: 'Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light' (Matthew 11: 28-30).

The fact that he invited people to obey the Laws of God rather than the laws made by man is evident from his response (found in both Matthew and Mark) to the objection raised by the Pharisees to the conduct of their disciples who ate with defiled hands, that is, without washing.

'Well did Isiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:

This people honours me with their lips,

but their heart is far from me;

in vain do they worship me,

teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'

And he said to them: 'You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. For Moses said, "Honour your father and your mother", and "He who speaks evil of his father or mother, let him surely die", but you say, "If a man tells his father or mother what you would have gained from me is Corban (that is, given to God), and then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, thus making void the word of God through your tradition which you hand on"' (Mark 7: 6-13; see also Matthew 15: 2-9).

فَلَمَّآ اَحَسَّ عِيۡسٰى مِنۡهُمُ الۡكُفۡرَ قَالَ مَنۡ اَنۡصَارِىۡۤ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ قَالَ الۡحَوَارِيُّوۡنَ نَحۡنُ
اَنۡصَارُ اللّٰهِ ۚ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ ۚ وَاشۡهَدۡ بِاَنَّا مُسۡلِمُوۡنَ 52

(3:52) And when Jesus perceived their leaning towards unbelief, he asked: 'Who will be my helpers in the way of Allah?' The disciples[49] said: 'We are the helpers of Allah. We believe in Allah,[50] and be our witness that we have submitted ourselves exclusively to Allah.

49. The word hawari means approximately the same as the word ansar in the Islamic tradition. In the Bible the usual terms are 'apostles' and 'disciples'. Jesus' chosen disciples were called apostles in the sense that they had been entrusted with a mission by him rather than in the sense of having been entrusted with a mission by God.

50. At various places the Qur'an characterizes man's participation in the effort to establish the supremacy of Islam as 'helping God'. This needs a little explanation. God has endowed man with the freedom of will and choice, with the result that He does not resort to His omnipotent will to compel man either to do certain things or to refrain from others. He rather leaves man free to adopt the course that pleases him - be it that of either belief or unbelief, of either obedience or disobedience. God prefers to instruct man by means of persuasive argument and admonition, so as to bring home to him that even though he is free to disbelieve, disobey and defy the Will of God, his own interest and well-being lie in serving and obeying his Creator.

Hence, directing people to the right path by persuasion and admonition is of concern to God, He regards those who contribute to this cause as His allies and helpers. This is, in fact, the most exalted position attainable by man. When a man performs Prayers, keeps his fast and worships God in other ways, he is merely on the level of service and subjection to God. But when a man strives to spread God's true religion and to enthrone it in actual life, he is honoured with the status of God's ally and helper, which is the zenith of man's spiritual growth. 'Literally, 'and be our witness that we are Muslims' - Ed.

رَبَّنَآ اٰمَنَّا بِمَآ اَنۡزَلۡتَ وَاتَّبَعۡنَا الرَّسُوۡلَ فَاكۡتُبۡنَا مَعَ الشّٰهِدِيۡنَ 53

(3:53) Our Lord! We believe in the com-mandment You have revealed and we obey the Messenger; make us, then, one of those who bear witness (to the Truth).'

وَمَكَرُوۡا وَمَكَرَ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ خَيۡرُ الۡمٰكِرِيۡنَ ۚ 54

(3:54) Then they schemed (against the Messiah), and Allah countered their schemes by schemes of His own. Allah is the best of schemers.

إِذْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ يٰعِيْسٰٓى اِنِّيْ مُتَوَفِّيْكَ وَرَافِعُكَ اِلَيَّ وَمُطَهِّرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَجَاعِلُ
الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْكَ فَوْقَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۚ ثُمَّ اِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَاَحْكُمُ
بَيْنَكُمْ فِيْمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيْهِ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ 55

(3:55) (And it was part of His scheme) when Allah said: 'O Jesus! I will recall you[51] and raise you up to Me and will purify you (of the company) of those who disbelieve,[52] and will set your followers above the unbelievers till the Day of Resurrection. Then to Me you shall return, and I will judge between you regarding what you differed.

51. The expression used is mutawaffika. The original meaning of tawaffa is to take and receive. To 'seize a person's sou!' constitutes the figurative rather than the literal meaning of the word. Here the word is used in the sense of 'recall', for example, the recall of an official from his work. The Israelites had persisted in their disobedience, and despite repeated warnings and admonitions their collective behaviour had become increasingly corrupt. They had killed a succession of Prophets and were out to shed the blood of all those who invited them to righteousness and moral rectitude. In order to complete His argument against them, and to give them a last chance to reform themselves, God sent to them two great Prophets, Jesus and John the Baptist. These Prophets carried with them such overwhelming proof of their designation by God that no ground was left for anyone to disbelieve in them, except those who were obstinately hostile to the Truth and who had become exceedingly bold in their opposition to it.

Yet the Israelites let this last opportunity slip away. They not only spurned the message of the Prophets but also brazenly indulged in many other atrocious crimes. One of their chiefs had John beheaded at the behest of a dancing girl, and their priests and scribes conspired to have Jesus put to death by the Roman authorities. Further admonition would have been a sheer waste of time. God, therefore, decided to recall His Prophet and condemned the Israelites to perpetual disgrace.

It should be noted that this whole discourse (verses 3: 33 ff.) is devoted to repudiating the Christian belief in the godhead of Jesus, and to reforming their beliefs. The main reasons for the spread of these false beliefs were: (i) the miraculous birth of Jesus; (ii) the miracles which he performed; and (iii) his ascension into heaven (which is mentioned categorically in the Christian scriptures). The Qur'an confirms the miraculous birth of Jesus and asserts that this fatherless birth is a manifestation of God's omnipotence. God creates whomsoever He wills and in the manner He chooses. This extraordinary birth neither proves that Jesus was God nor that he had any share in God's godhead. The miracles of Jesus are also verified by the Qur'an; in fact it enumerates them one by one. The Qur'an, however, makes it clear that Jesus performed these miracles in accordance with God's will, and not of his own innate power.

Had the traditions cherished by the Christians regarding Jesus' ascension into heaven been without foundation, they would have been told that he whom they regarded as either God or the son of God had died long ago and become part of the earth, and that if they wanted to satisfy themselves on that score they could go and witness for themselves his grave at a certain place. But not only does the Qur'an not make any categorical statement that Jesus died, it employs an expression which, to say the least, contains the possibility of being interpreted as meaning that he had been raised into heaven alive. Further, the Qur'an tells the Christians that Jesus, contrary to their belief, was not crucified. This means that the man who cried out at the end of his life: 'Eli, Eli, lama sabach-thani?', that is, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (Matthew 27: 46), and the one whose image was seen on the cross was not Christ; God had already raised Christ into heaven.

As for those who try to interpret these Qur'anic verses as indicating the death of Jesus, they actually prove only that God is incapable of expressing His ideas in clear, lucid terms.

52. The words 'those who disbelieve' here refer to the Jews whom Jesus had invited to believe, and who had refused that invitation. The expression: 'your followers', if it denotes the true followers of Jesus, can only mean Muslims. Should 'followers' signify all those who profess allegiance to Jesus, it would include both Christians and Muslims.

فَاَمَّا الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا فَاُعَذِّبُهُمۡ عَذَابًا شَدِيۡدًا فِى الدُّنۡيَا وَالۡاٰخِرَةِ ۫ وَمَا لَهُمۡ مِّنۡ نّٰصِرِيۡنَ 56

(3:56) As for those who disbelieved, I shall punish them with a terrible chastisement in this world and in the Next; and they shall find none to help them.

وَاَمَّا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَيُوَفِّيۡهِمۡ اُجُوۡرَهُمۡ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ 57

(3:57) But those who believe and do righteous deeds, He will reward them in full. Allah does not love the unjust.'

ذٰلِكَ نَتۡلُوۡهُ عَلَيۡكَ مِنَ الۡاٰيٰتِ وَالذِّكۡرِ الۡحَكِيۡمِ 58

(3:58) What We recite to you consists of signs and wise admonition.

اِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيۡسٰى عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ كَمَثَلِ اٰدَمَ ؕ خَلَقَهٗ مِنۡ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهٗ كُنۡ فَيَكُوۡنُ 59

(3:59) Surely, in the sight of Allah, the similitude of the creation of Jesus is as the creation of Adam whom He created out of dust, and then said: 'Be', and he was.[53]

53. This means that if Jesus' miraculous birth is sufficient proof that he should be regarded either as God or as the son of God then there are even stronger grounds to apply this to Adam. For, while Jesus was born without a father, Adam was born with neither father nor mother.

اَلۡحَقُّ مِنۡ رَّبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُنۡ مِّنَ الۡمُمۡتَرِيۡنَ 60

(3:60) This is the truth from your Lord; be not, then, among those who doubt.[54]

54. The main points set before the Christians so far are the following: First, it was impressed upon them that none of the various arguments which gave rise to the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus provided valid grounds to support that doctrine. Jesus was merely a human being whom God had created in an extraordinary manner for reasons best known to Him. God had also invested Jesus with the power to perform certain miracles by means of which he could categorically establish his claim to prophethood. It seems perfectly reasonable that God should not have allowed such an extraordinary person to be crucified by unbelievers and should have raised him up to Himself. As the Sovereign, God has the power to treat any of His subjects as He wishes. How can this extraordinary treatment of Jesus justify the conclusion that the subject was himself either the Sovereign, the son of the Sovereign or an associate with Him in His Sovereignty?

Second, the message of Muhammad (peace be on him) is the same as that of Jesus. The missions of the two are identical.

Third, even after [the ascension of] Jesus the religion of his disciples remained the same, namely, Islam, which is now expounded by the Qur'an. What has happened is that, in the course of time, the Christians have abandoned the teachings of Christ, and have deviated from the religion followed by the early disciples of Jesus.

فَمَنۡ حَآجَّكَ فِيۡهِ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَا جَآءَكَ مِنَ الۡعِلۡمِ فَقُلۡ تَعَالَوۡا نَدۡعُ اَبۡنَآءَنَا وَاَبۡنَآءَكُمۡ وَنِسَآءَنَا وَنِسَآءَكُمۡ وَاَنۡفُسَنَا وَاَنۡفُسَكُمۡ ۟ ثُمَّ نَبۡتَهِلۡ فَنَجۡعَلۡ لَّعۡنَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَى الۡكٰذِبِيۡنَ 61

(3:61) Tell whoever disputes with you on this matter after true knowledge has come to you: 'Come! Let us summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves, and then let us pray together and invoke the curse of Allah on those who lie.'[55]

55. The real aim in suggesting this procedure for deciding the dispute was to prove that the attitude of those amongst the delegation of Najran was one of deliberate stubbornness and intransigence. They had no sound arguments to contradict any of the points mentioned above, and they could not find any shred of evidence in their own scriptures upon which they could claim, with firm conviction, that their beliefs were true. Moreover, all that the members of the deputation had come to know of the character, teachings and achievements of the Prophet had made them more or less convinced of his prophethood, and at least caused their disbelief to waver. When they were told that if they had full confidence in the truth of their beliefs they should come forward and pray to God that His curse should fall on the deniers of the truth, none of them came forward. It thus became clear all over Arabia that the priests and leaders of Christianity in Najran, whose holiness was celebrated far and wide, followed beliefs, the truth of which, they themselves were not fully confident in.

إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَهُوَ الْقَصَصُ الْحَقُّ ۚ وَمَا مِنْ إِلَٰهٍ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ۚ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ 62

(3:62) This is the true story. There is no God but Allah, and assuredly Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِالْمُفْسِدِينَ ۝ 63

(3:63) And if they turn their backs, truly Allah knows those who cause mischief.

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ۚ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ 64

(3:64) Say:[56] 'People of the Book! Come to a word common between us and you:[57] that we shall serve none but Allah and shall associate none with Him in His divinity and that some of us will not take others as lords beside Allah.' And if they turn their backs (from accepting this call), tell them: 'Bear witness that we are the ones who have submitted ourselves exclusively to Allah.'

56. This marks the beginning of the third discourse of this surah. Its contents invite the conclusion that the surah was revealed sometime between the battles of Badr and Uhud. The subjects of these three discourses are so closely interrelated that some commentators have wrongly understood the verses which follow to be part of the foregoing discourse. From the whole tenor of the discourse which now begins, however, it is evident that it is addressed to the Jews.

57. The invitation here is for the two parties to agree on something believed in by one of them, the Muslims, and the soundness of which could hardly be denied by the other party,

the Christians. For this was the belief of their own Prophets and had been taught in their own scriptures.

يَاأَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تُحَآجُّوْنَ فِيْٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَتِ التَّوْرٰىةُ وَالْاِنْجِيْلُ اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ 65

(3:65) People of the Book! Why do you dispute with us about Abraham even though the Torah and the Gospel were not revealed until after the time of Abraham? Do you not understand?[58]

58. That is, both Judaism and Christianity came into existence after the Torah and the Injil had been revealed; Abraham had lived much earlier than that. Thus it can easily be grasped that the religion of Abraham could not have been that of either Judaism or Christianity. If Abraham was on the right path and had attained salvation it is obvious that one need not follow either, Judaism or Christianity in order to be on the right path and to attain salvation. (See also (Surah 2, nn. 135 and 141 above.)

هٰٓاَنْتُمْ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ حٰجَجْتُمْ فِيْمَا لَكُمْ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ فَلِمَ تُحَآجُّوْنَ فِيْمَا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ وَاَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ 66

(3:66) Behold, you are those who have disputed greatly concerning matters which you knew; why are you now disputing about matters that you know nothing about? Allah knows it whereas you do not know.

مَا كَانَ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ يَهُوْدِيًّا وَّلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَّلٰكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيْفًا مُّسْلِمًا ؕ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ 67

(3:67) Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian; he was a Muslim, wholly devoted to God.[59] And he certainly was not amongst those who associate others with Allah in His divinity.

59. The word hanif denotes someone who turns his face away from all other directions in order to follow one particular course. We have tried to convey this sense through the expression: 'a Muslim, wholly devoted to God'.

إِنَّ أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِإِبْرٰهِيمَ لَلَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ وَهٰذَا النَّبِيُّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ

الْمُؤْمِنِينَ 68

(3:68) Surely the people who have the best claim to a relationship with Abraham are those who followed him in the past, and presently this Prophet and those who believe in him; Allah is the guardian of the men of faith.

وَدَّت طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ لَوْ يُضِلُّونَكُمْ ۖ وَمَا يُضِلُّونَ إِلَّآ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا

يَشْعُرُونَ 69

(3:69) A party of the People of the Book would fain lead you astray, whereas in truth they lead none astray except themselves, but they do not realize it.

يٰٓأَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِـَٔايٰتِ اللَّهِ وَأَنتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ 70

(3:70) O People of the Book! Why do you reject the signs of Allah even though you yourselves witness them?[60]

60. Another rendering of this could be, 'and you yourselves bear witness' to Muhammad's prophethood. However it is translated the sense remains the same. In fact, the impeccable purity of the life of the Prophet, the astounding impact of his teachings and training on the lives of his Companions, and the loftiness of the teachings of the Qur'an all constituted such illustrious signs of God that it was very difficult for anyone conversant with the lives of the Prophets and the tenor of Divine Scriptures to doubt the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be on him).

It is a fact that many Jews and Christians (especially their scholars) came, to recognize in their hearts that Muhammad was the very Prophet whose coming had been announced by the preceding Prophets. This fact was so overwhelming that, despite their intransigence, they could not help but give verbal expression, at times, to the truth of the Prophet's teachings. This is why the Qur'an repeatedly blames them for maliciously misrepresenting the signs of God which they saw with their own eyes and to which they themselves attested.

يٰٓأَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تَلْبِسُونَ الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ۝ 71

(3:71) People of the Book! Why do you confound Truth with falsehood, and why do you conceal the Truth knowingly?

وَقَالَتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ اٰمِنُوْا بِالَّذِيْٓ اُنْزِلَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَجْهَ النَّهَارِ
وَاكْفُرُوْٓا اٰخِرَهٗ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ۚ صلے 72

(3:72) A party of the People of the Book said: 'Believe in the morning what has been revealed to those who believe, and then deny it in the evening that they may thus retract (from their faith).'[61]

61. This was one of the devices adopted by the leaders and rabbis of the Jews who lived on the outskirts of Madina in order to damage the mission of Islam. To demoralize the Muslims and create misgivings about the Prophet (peace be on him), they sent their agents to embrace Islam publicly, then to renounce it, and subsequently to go about telling people they had done so because of the faults they had found in Islam, the Muslims and their Prophet.

وَلَا تُؤْمِنُوْٓا اِلَّا لِمَنْ تَبِعَ دِيْنَكُمْ ۭ قُلْ اِنَّ الْهُدٰى هُدَى اللّٰهِ ۙ اَنْ يُّؤْتٰٓى اَحَدٌ مِّثْلَ مَآ اُوْتِيْتُمْ اَوْ
يُحَاۗجُّوْكُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ ۭ قُلْ اِنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللّٰهِ ۚ يُؤْتِيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ وَاسِعٌ
عَلِيْمٌ ۙ ج 73

(3:73) They also say among themselves: 'Do not follow anyone except him who follows your faith.' Say: 'Surely true guidance is Allah's. It is His favour that anyone should be given the like of what you have been given in the past, and that others should have been given firm evidence to proffer against you before your Lord.' Say: 'Surely bounty is in the Hand of Allah; He gives it to whom He wills.[61a] Allah is All-Embracing,[62] All-Knowing.[63]

61a. They were stirred to play this wicked game by their envy of Islam and bias in favour of the religion of their fore-fathers. They have been rebuked, as if to say, "God is not bound by your prejudices, but He bestows His Guidance on anyone He wills, and He has by His grace blessed the Muslims with the same Guidance that was once bestowed upon you. You must understand it well that your wily tricks will not succeed in snatching away that Guidance from them nor in changing it into misguidance but only in providing a strong argument against you before your Lord." By this, Allah willed to see whether they would give up their prejudice and accept the Guidance which had been given to another (Muhammad) or whether they would persist in their envy and reject it and provide the Muslims with a strong argument against themselves before their Lord that they rejected the Truth merely because of their prejudice and obduracy.

62. The word wasi' which is used here occurs in the Qur'an in three contexts. The first context is the narrow-mindedness and mean outlook of certain people, in contrast to which

God is not 'narrow'. The second context is the denunciation of miserliness, meanness and niggardliness, in contrast to which God is Generous and Munificent. The third context is the ascription of finite, limited concepts to God as a result of their limitedimagination, whereas the truth is that God is infinite see (Surah 2, n. 116 above)

63. That is, God knows who deserves to be honoured and exalted.

يَّخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ 74

(3:74) He singles out for His mercy whomever He wills, Allah is possessed of abounding bounty.'

وَمِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ مَنْ اِنْ تَاْمَنْهُ بِقِنْطَارٍ يُّؤَدِّهٖۤ اِلَيْكَ ۚ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ اِنْ تَاْمَنْهُ بِدِيْنَارٍ لَّا
يُؤَدِّهٖۤ اِلَيْكَ اِلَّا مَا دُمْتَ عَلَيْهِ قَآئِمًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَالُوْا لَيْسَ عَلَيْنَا فِى الْاُمِّيّٖنَ سَبِيْلٌ ۚ
وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ 75

(3:75) And among the People of the Book there are some who would restore you even if you were to entrust a treasure of gold, and of them there are some whom were you to entrust with one gold piece, will not restore it unless you stand over them. That is because they say: 'We will not be taken to task for whatever we may do to non-Jews (ummls).[64] Thus they falsely fix a lie upon Allah, and do so wittingly.

64. This was not merely the misconception of the ignorant mass of Jews. Their religious teaching was the same and the legal doctrines of their accepted religious authorities and jurists reflected this idea. With regard to injunctions on loans and interest the Bible makes a clear distinction between an Israelite and a non-Israelite (Deuteronomy 15: 1-3; 23: 20).

It is stated in the Talmud that if the bullock of an Israelite injures the bullock of a non-Israelite the former is not liable to any penalty, but not vice versa. Similarly, it is laid down that if anyone finds an unclaimed article he should enquire amongst the people who live nearby. If they are Israelites he should announce his find; if not he may keep it without saying anything further.

Rabbi Samuel Ishmael says that if a dispute between a Jew and a Gentile is brought before a judge, he should base his verdict on Jewish law if it is favourable; if the law of the Gentiles goes in favour of the Jew he should justify his judgement by saying that the Gentile has no valid ground for complaint since judgement was given according to his own law. Even if both laws are unfavourable towards the Jew the judge should still find some pretext for deciding in his favour. Rabbi Samuel says that benefit should be derived from every mistake the non-Israelite may make. (See Paul Isaac Hershon, Talmudic Miscellany, London, 1880, pp. 37 and 210-21.)

بَلٰى مَنْ اَوْفٰى بِعَهْدِهٖ وَاتَّقٰى فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ 76

(3:76) But Allah loves only those who fulfil their covenant and fear Allah. Truly Allah loves the God-fearing.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَشْتَرُوْنَ بِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ وَاَيْمَانِهِمْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا اُولٰٓئِكَ لَا خَلَاقَ لَهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ وَلَا

يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَلَا يَنْظُرُ اِلَيْهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيْهِمْ ۠ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ 77

(3:77) There shall be no share in the Life to Come for those who sell away the covenant of Allah and their oaths for a trivial gain. On the Day of Resurrection Allah will neither address them, look at them, nor will He purify them.[65] A painful chastisement lies ahead of them.

65. The reason is that, despite their worst crimes, they still thought that on the Day of Judgement they alone would be honoured with God's favour, and that towards them alone He would turn His gracious attention. They also entertained the belief that if they had been stained by any trace of sin, it would be washed away by the grace of their pious elders. Such people are warned here that the treatment meted out to them in the Next Life will be altogether contrary to their expectations.

وَاِنَّ مِنْهُمْ لَفَرِيْقًا يَّلْوٗنَ اَلْسِنَتَهُمْ بِالْكِتٰبِ لِتَحْسَبُوْهُ مِنَ الْكِتٰبِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنَ

الْكِتٰبِ ۚ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ وَ

هُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ 78

(3:78) And there is a party among them who twist their tongues while reciting the Book to make you think that it is part of the Book when in fact it is not.[66] They say: 'It is from Allah', when in fact it is not from Allah. They falsely fix a lie upon Allah, and do so wittingly.

66. This could mean that they either distort the meaning of the Scriptures or twist the words of the text in order to misinterpret it. Its real meaning, however, seems to be that when, during their reading of the Scriptures, they encounter any word or sentence which goes against their interests, and the beliefs and notions which they cherish, they distort the meaning of it by deliberately twisting their tongues. Instances of such tongue-twisting are not altogether wanting among those who, despite their belief in the Qur'an, share some of these people's characteristics. For instance, some people who stress the superhuman character of the Prophet (peace be on him) misread the following verse: innama ana basharun mithlukum (Qur'an 18: 110) (I am nothing but a human being like you), replacing

innama by inna ma ana and translate it: '(O Prophet), say to them: "I am not a human being like you."

مَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ اَنْ يُّؤْتِيَهُ اللّٰهُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ ثُمَّ يَقُوْلَ لِلنَّاسِ كُوْنُوْا عِبَادًا لِّيْ
مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلٰكِنْ كُوْنُوْا رَبّٰنِيّٖنَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تُعَلِّمُوْنَ الْكِتٰبَ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ
تَدْرُسُوْنَ ۙ 79

(3:79) It does not befit a man that Allah should grant him His Book and sound judgement and prophet-hood, and thereafter he should say to men: 'Become servants to me apart from Allah.' He would rather say: 'Become dedicated men of Allah,[67] in accord with the dictates of the Book you have been teaching and studying.'

67. The term rabbani is used here to denote Jewish religious scholars and functionaries who were supposed to provide true religious guidance to establish their rites of worship, implement religious laws, and so on. The same word occurs in(Surah 5: 44 and 63). In the Christian tradition the word 'divine' is used as an equivalent to the word rabbani.

وَلَا يَاْمُرَكُمْ اَنْ تَتَّخِذُوا الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ وَالنَّبِيّٖنَ اَرْبَابًا ۭ اَيَاْمُرُكُمْ بِالْكُفْرِ بَعْدَ اِذْ اَنْتُمْ
مُّسْلِمُوْنَ ع 80

(3:80) He will never enjoin you to take the angels or Prophets for your lords. Will he enjoin upon you unbelief when you have submitted yourselves to Allah?[68]

68. This refutation is directed at all the false concepts which were attributed to the Messengers of God by various nations, and then made an integral part of the religious scriptures. These concepts were false in that they elevated either the Prophets or the angels to the level of deities

وَاِذْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيْثَاقَ النَّبِيّٖنَ لَمَآ اٰتَيْتُكُمْ مِّنْ كِتٰبٍ وَّحِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ جَاۗءَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ
لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهٖ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهٗ ۭ قَالَ ءَاَقْرَرْتُمْ وَاَخَذْتُمْ عَلٰي ذٰلِكُمْ اِصْرِيْ ۭ قَالُوْٓا
اَقْرَرْنَا ۭ قَالَ فَاشْهَدُوْا وَاَنَا مَعَكُمْ مِّنَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ 81

(3:81) And recall when Allah took a covenant from the Prophets: 'This is the Book and the Wisdom which I have given you. But should a Prophet come to you confirming

that which is already with you, you shall believe in him and shall help him.[69] So saying, Allah asked: 'Do you agree and accept to take up the burden of the covenant?' They answered: 'We agree,' He said: 'Then bear wirness; and I will be with you among the witness.

69. A party of the People of the Book would fain lead you astray, whereas in truth they lead none astray except themselves, but they do not realize it.

فَمَنْ تَوَلّٰى بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ 82

(3:82) Then whosoever shall turn away from this covenant they are the transgressors.[70]

70. People of the Book! Why do you reject the signs of Allah even though you yourselves witness them?60

اَفَغَيْرَ دِيْنِ اللّٰهِ يَبْغُوْنَ وَلَهٗٓ اَسْلَمَ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَّكَرْهًا وَّاِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُوْنَ 83

(3:83) Do they now seek a religion other than prescribed by Allah even though all that is in the heavens and the earth is in submission to Him[71] - willing or unwillingly - and to Him all shall return?

71. The basic principle characterizing the universe, in other words the religion of the universe and of every part of it, is Islam; insofar as the universe is in a state of total obedience and service to the Will of God. Here people are asked if they would follow a way of life different from Islam though they are part of the universe which is characterized by submission to God (islam).

قُلْ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ عَلٰٓى اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَاِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ وَالْاَسْبَاطِ وَمَآ اُوْتِيَ مُوْسٰى وَعِيْسٰى وَالنَّبِيُّوْنَ مِنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ۚ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ ۠ وَنَحْنُ لَهٗ مُسْلِمُوْنَ 84

(3:84) Say: 'We believe in Allah and what was revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and to Issac and Jacob and his descendents, and the teachings which Allah gave to Moses and Jesus and to other Prophets. We make no distinction between any of them[72] and to Him do we submit.

72. They are told that it is not the habit of Muslims either to believe in Prophets and disbelieve in others or to affirm to the truth of some call others false. Muslims are free from

narrow prejudices and chauvinistic loyalties. The true attitude of Muslims is to bear witness to truth of every Messenger of God, irrespective of where and when he appears.

وَمَنْ يَّبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْاِسْلَامِ دِيْنًا فَلَنْ يُّقْبَلَ مِنْهُ ۚ وَهُوَ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ 85

(3:85) And whoever seeks a way other than this way a submission (Islam), will find that it will not be accepted from him and in the Life to come he will be among the losers.

كَيْفَ يَهْدِي اللّٰهُ قَوْمًا كَفَرُوْا بَعْدَ اِيْمَانِهِمْ وَشَهِدُوْٓا اَنَّ الرَّسُوْلَ حَقٌّ وَّجَآءَهُمُ
الْبَيِّنٰتُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ 86

(3:86) How can Allah guide people who once believed, after they received clear signs and affirmed that the Messenger was a true one, lapsed into disbelief.[73] Allah does not guide the wrong-doers.

73. This is a repetition of the statement made earlier, namely that the Jewish rabbis of Arabia in the time of the Prophet (peace be on him) knew, and sometimes even testified to verbally, that Muhammad was a true Prophet and that his teachings were the same as those of the earlier Prophets. (See for instance Qur'an 2: 89 - Ed.) Their subsequent attitude - namely that of rejection and opposition - was the outcome of prejudice and intransigence, born out of their centuries-old hostility to the Truth.

اُولٰۗىِٕكَ جَزَاۗؤُهُمْ اَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةَ اللّٰهِ وَالْمَلٰۗىِٕكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ۙ 87

(3:87) The recom- pense for their wrong-doing is that the curse of Allah and of the angels and of all men shall upon them.

خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۚ لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُوْنَ ۙ 88

(3:88) Thus shall they abide. Neither shall their chastisement be granted nor shall they be granted any respite.

اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ وَاَصْلَحُوْا ۣ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ 89

(3:89) But those who repent and mend their ways shall be excepted for indeed Allah is Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ثُمَّ ازْدَادُوا كُفْرًا لَّن تُقْبَلَ تَوْبَتُهُمْ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ
الضَّالُّونَ 90

(3:90) Those who relieved and have har-dened in their disbelief after once believing,[74] their (pretence to) repentance shall not be accepted. Indeed such men have altogether strayed.

74. They were not content with just rejecting the call to the Truth but stood in vehement opposition and hostility to it and spared no efforts in obstructing people from following the way of God. They created doubts, spread misgivings, sowed the seeds of distrust and engaged in the worst conspiracies and machinations in order to frustrate the mission of the Prophet (peace be on him).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَن يُقْبَلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِم مِّلْءُ الْأَرْضِ ذَهَبًا وَلَوِ
افْتَدَىٰ بِهِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ وَمَا لَهُم مِّن نَّاصِرِينَ 91

(3:91) Truly those who disbelieved and died as unbelievers, not even an earth full of gold will be accepted from them as ransom. For such people there is painful chastisement; and none shall come to their help.

لَن تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّىٰ تُنفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ ۚ وَمَا تُنفِقُوا مِن شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ 92

(3:92) You shall not attain righteousness until you spend out of what you love (in the way of Allah).[75] Allah knows whatever you spend.

75. The purpose of this verse is to remove the misconception of the Jews concerning 'righteousness'. The Jews had inherited an elaborate legal code which had accumulated as a result of the casuistry and hair-splitting legalism of their jurists. Their notion of 'righteousness' consisted of outward, formal conformity to that code and they evaluated all day-to-day actions, especially the trivial ones, in terms of conformity to that code. Narrow-mindedness, greed, covetousness, meanness, concealment of the Truth and readiness to barter with it lay beneath this veneer of formal piety. They were, nevertheless, considered pious in the minds of the people; Jewish public opinion condoned their conduct because it conformed to its concept of 'righteousness'.

In order to remove this misconception they are told that the things they considered fundamental to righteous conduct are of little consequence. The real spirit of righteousness consists in the love of God - a love which makes man value the good pleasure of God above all worldly acquisitions. If the love of anything seizes a man's mind to such an extent that he is unable to sacrifice it for the sake of the love of God, then that thing has virtually become

an idol, and until he smashes it the door to righteousness will remain closed to him. If a man lacks this spirit, then his excessively formal and legalistic approach in religious matters can be considered no more than glossy paint over a piece of hollow, worm-eaten wood. It may be possible to deceive human beings by the sheer lustre of the outer paint, but not God.

كُلُّ الطَّعَامِ كَانَ حِلًّا لِّبَنِيٓ إِسۡرَٰٓءِيلَ إِلَّا مَا حَرَّمَ إِسۡرَٰٓءِيلُ عَلَىٰ نَفۡسِهِۦ مِن قَبۡلِ أَن
تُنَزَّلَ ٱلتَّوۡرَىٰةُۗ قُلۡ فَأۡتُواْ بِٱلتَّوۡرَىٰةِ فَٱتۡلُوهَآ إِن كُنتُمۡ صَٰدِقِينَ 93

(3:93) All food (that is lawful in the Law revealed to Muhammad) was lawful to the Children of Israel,[76] except what Israel[77] made unlawful to themselves before the revelation of the Torah. Tell them: 'Bring the Torah and recite any passage of it if you are truthful.'

76. When the Jewish rabbis found no grounds for criticizing the fundamental teachings of the Prophet (there was no difference between the teachings of the previous Prophets and that of the Arabian Prophet on matters which constitute the core of religion), they raised objections about the details of religious law. The first objection was that the Prophet (peace be on him) had declared lawful a number of things which had been reckoned as unlawful since the time of the ancient Prophets. What is said here is a refutation of that objection.

77. If 'Israel' is taken to mean the 'Children of Israel' then the interpretation of this verse must be that before the revelation of the Torah they treated a number of things as prohibited on the grounds of custom and usage alone. If, however, 'Israel' signifies Jacob (Ya'qub) then, the meaning is that he avoided the use of certain foods, which his descendants wrongly understood to be religiously prohibited, as a result of either a temperamental dislike or an ailment. This latter version is more commonly accepted. It becomes clear from the next verse that the Biblical injunction regarding the prohibition of the flesh of camels and rabbits was not part of the original Torah but an interpolation by Jewish doctors. (For a detailed discussion see (Surah 6, n. 122 below.)

فَمَنِ ٱفۡتَرَىٰ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ ٱلۡكَذِبَ مِنۢ بَعۡدِ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلظَّٰلِمُونَ 94

(3:94) Those who falsely fix lies upon Allah despite this are the wrong-doers.

قُلۡ صَدَقَ ٱللَّهُۗ فَٱتَّبِعُواْ مِلَّةَ إِبۡرَٰهِيمَ حَنِيفٗاۖ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ ٱلۡمُشۡرِكِينَ 95

(3:95) Say: 'Whatever Allah has said is true. Follow, then, the way of Abraham in total devotion to Allah. He was not one of those who associate others with Allah in His divinity.[78]

78. The Jews had enmeshed themselves in legalistic minutiae and these had become their major concern. They had abandoned service to the One True God and had allowed their religious life to become corrupted by polytheism. Instead of attending to the fundamentals

of religion they indulged in discussions about questions that had only arisen because of the hair-splitting legalism of their scholars during their centuries of decadence.

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُّضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبٰرَكًا وَّهُدًى لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۚ 96

(3:96) Behold, the first House (of Prayer) established for mankind is the one at Bakkah: it is full of blessing and a centre of guidance for the whole world.[79]

79. The second objection raised by the Jews was that the direction for Prayer had been changed from Jerusalem to the Ka'bah. This objection is answered in (Surah 2 (see verses 142 ff. and nn. 142 and 147 above) The Bible, itself, testifies that Jerusalem was built by Solomon more than four and a half centuries after Moses (see 1 Kings 6: 1), and that it was during his time that the worshippers of the One God began to pray towards it (1 Kings 8: 29-30). It is established by traditions from numerous sources which are undisputed throughout Arabia, however, that the Ka'bah was constructed by Abraham who lived some eight or nine centuries before Moses. That the Ka'bah was older than the Temple of Jerusalem was beyond dispute.

فِيْهِ اٰيٰتٌۢ بَيِّنٰتٌ مَّقَامُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ ۚ وَمَنْ دَخَلَهٗ كَانَ اٰمِنًا ۗ وَلِلّٰهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ
مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ اِلَيْهِ سَبِيْلًا ۗ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ 97

(3:97) In it there are clear signs and the station of Abraham;[80] whoever enters it becomes secure.[81] Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to Allah by all who can make their way to it. As for those who refuse to follow His command, surely Allah does not stand in need of anything.

80. Here it is stressed that there are several clear signs which prove that the Makkan sanctuary enjoys God's blessing and has been chosen by Him as His sanctuary. Even though it is located in the middle of wide expanses of desert God has seen to it that its inhabitants enjoy a satisfactory living. Although the rest of Arabia was plunged into chaos and disorder for about two and a half thousand years, peace and tranquillity reigned in both the precincts and the environs of the Ka'bah. Thanks to the Ka'bah the entire Arabian peninsula enjoyed four months of peace and order every year. These were the sacred months when people went on Pilgrimage. Moreover, barely a half century before the revelation of these verses, people had seen how Abrahah, the Abyssinian invader, fell prey to God's scourge when he attacked Makka with the intention of destroying the Ka'bah. At that time, this incident was known to everybody in Arabia. Its memory was fresh and many eye-witnesses were still alive at the time of the Prophet (peace be on him).

81. Even during the pre-Islamic era - the Age of Ignorance in Arabia - this sanctuary enjoyed such veneration that even those who thirsted for each other's blood saw their enemies in the sacred territory but dare not attack them.

قُلْ يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ۖ وَاللّٰهُ شَهِيْدٌ عَلٰى مَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ 98

(3:98) Say: 'People of the Book! Why do you reject the signs of Allah when Allah is witness to all that you do?'

قُلْ يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ مَنْ اٰمَنَ تَبْغُوْنَهَا عِوَجًا وَّاَنْتُمْ شُهَدَآءُ ؕ وَمَا اللّٰهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ 99

(3:99) Say: 'People of the Book! Why do you hinder one who believes from the way of Allah, seeking that he follow a crooked way, even though you yourselves are witness to its being the right way?' Allah is not heedless of what you do.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنْ تُطِيْعُوْا فَرِيْقًا مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ يَرُدُّوْكُمْ بَعْدَ اِيْمَانِكُمْ كٰفِرِيْنَ 100

(3:100) Believers! Were you to obey a party of those who were given the Book, they might cause you to renounce the Truth after you have attained to faith.

وَكَيْفَ تَكْفُرُوْنَ وَاَنْتُمْ تُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتُ اللّٰهِ وَفِيْكُمْ رَسُوْلُهٗ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّعْتَصِمْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدْ هُدِيَ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ع 101

(3:101) How can you disbelieve when you are the ones to whom the signs of Allah are recited and amidst you is His Messenger? Whoever holds fast to Allah will certainly be guided to the straight way.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ تُقٰتِهٖ وَلَا تَمُوْتُنَّ اِلَّا وَاَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ 102

(3:102) Believers! Fear Allah as He should be feared, and see that you do not die save in the state of submission to Allah.[82]

82. They should remain steadfast in their obedience and loyalty to God.

وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِحَبْلِ اللّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا وَّلَا تَفَرَّقُوْا ۠ وَاذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ كُنْتُمْ
اَعْدَآءً فَاَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوْبِكُمْ فَاَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهٖٓ اِخْوَانًا ۚ وَكُنْتُمْ عَلٰى شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ
النَّارِ فَاَنْقَذَكُمْ مِّنْهَا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ 103

(3:103) Hold fast together to the cable of Allah[83] and be not divided. Remember the blessing that Allah bestowed upon you: you were once enemies then He brought your hearts together, so that through His blessing you became brothers. You stood on the brink of a pit of fire and He delivered you from it.[84] Thus Allah makes His signs clear to you that you may be guided to the right way.[85]

83. The expression 'cable of Allah', in this verse, refers to the 'religion of God'. The reason for use of the word 'cable' (habl) is that it both establishes a bond between man and God and joins all believers together. To take a firm hold on this cable means that the believers should attach profound importance to their religion: this should always be the centre of their concerns; they should continually strive to establish it; and the common desire to serve it should make them co-operate with each other.

As soon as Muslims turn their attentions away from the fundamental teachings of their religion and lose sight of establishing its hegemony in life they begin to concern themselves with matters of secondary importance. And, just as they rent the communities of the former Prophets, enticing people away from their true objective in life, so schisms and dissensions are bound to plague their lives. If Muslims do this they are bound to suffer indignity and disgrace both in this world and the Next as happened with the followers of the previous Prophets.

84. This refers to the state of the Arabs on the eve of the advent of Islam. There were animosities among the tribes which regularly broke out into fighting; every now and then there was much bloodshed. Things had reached a point that the entire Arabian nation seemed to be on the verge of destroying itself. It was due to the blessings of Islam alone that it was saved from being consumed by the fire to which this verse alludes. The people of Madina had embraced Islam some three or four years before these verses were revealed. They had witnessed the blessing of Islam as it unified into one brotherhood the Aws and Khazraj, two tribes which had long been sworn enemies. Moreover, both tribes treated the migrants from Makka in a spirit of sacrifice and love seldom seen even among members of the same family.

85. If they had eyes to see they could conclude for themselves whether their salvation lay in adhering firmly to this religion or in abandoning it and reverting to their former state; i.e. decide whether their true well-wishers were God and His Messenger or those Jews, polytheists and hypocrites who strove to plunge them back into their former state.

وَلْتَكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ اُمَّةٌ يَّدْعُوْنَ اِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ؕ
وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ 104

(3:104) And from among you there must be a party who invite people to all that is good and enjoin the doing of all that is right and forbid the doing of all that is wrong. It is they who will attain true success.

وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ تَفَرَّقُوْا وَاخْتَلَفُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ
عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ۙ 105

(3:105) Do not be like those who fell into factions and differed among themselves[86] after clear signs had come to them. A mighty chastisement awaits them.

86. The reference is to those communities which received clear and straightforward teachings of the true religion but who had abandoned the fundamentals, forming separate sects around trivial and subsidiary questions; they became so engrossed in quarrelling over superfluous and insignificant questions that they lost sight of the mission God had entrusted to them, and even lost interest in those fundamentals of belief and righteous conduct which are essential for man's salvation and felicity.

يَّوْمَ تَبْيَضُّ وُجُوْهٌ وَّتَسْوَدُّ وُجُوْهٌ ۚ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اسْوَدَّتْ وُجُوْهُهُمْ ۫ اَكَفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ
اِيْمَانِكُمْ فَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ 106

(3:106) On the Day when some faces will turn bright and ther faces will turn dark. Those whose faces have turned dark will be told: 'Did you fall into unbelief after you had been blessed with belief? Taste, then, chastisement for your unbelief.

وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ ابْيَضَّتْ وُجُوْهُهُمْ فَفِيْ رَحْمَةِ اللّٰهِ ؕ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ 107

(3:107) And those whose faces have turned bright, they will be in the mercy of Allah, and therein they shall abide.

تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ اللّٰهِ نَتْلُوْهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ وَمَا اللّٰهُ يُرِيْدُ ظُلْمًا لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ 108

(3:108) These are the mes sages of Allah which We recite to you in truth, and Allah desires no wrong[87] to the people of the world.

87. Since God does not want to subject people to any wrong He illuminates the straight path of their salvation, and forewarns them of the matters for which they will be asked to render an account in the Hereafter. It is clear that if people abandon the path of rectitude they wrong no one but themselves.

وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ تُرْجَعُ الْاُمُوْرُ ع 109

(3:109)To Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth, and to Allah are all matters referred for decision.

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ اُمَّةٍ اُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ ؕ وَلَوْ اٰمَنَ اَهْلُ الْكِتٰبِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ ؕ مِنْهُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَاَكْثَرُهُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ 110

(3:110) You are now the best people brought forth for (the guidance and reform of) mankind.[88] You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah. Had the People of the Book[89] believed it were better for them. Some of them are believers but most of them are transgressors.

88. This is the same declaration that was made earlier (see verse 2: 143 above). The Arabian Prophet (peace be on him) and his followers are informed that they are being assigned the guidance and leadership of the world, a position the Israelites had been relieved of because they had shown themselves unsuitable. The Muslims were charged with this responsibility because of their competence. They were the best people in terms of character and morals and had developed in theory and in practice the qualities essential for truly righteous leadership, namely the spirit and practical commitment to promoting good and suppressing evil and the acknowledgement of the One True God as their Lord and Master. In view of the task entrusted to them, they had to become conscious of their responsibilities and avoid the mistakes committed by their predecessors see (((Surah 1, nn. 123 and 144 above))).

89. 'People of the Book' refers here to the Children of Israel.

لَنْ يَّضُرُّوْكُمْ اِلَّاۤ اَذًى ؕ وَاِنْ يُّقَاتِلُوْكُمْ يُوَلُّوْكُمُ الْاَدْبَارَ ۫ ثُمَّ لَا يُنْصَرُوْنَ 111

(3:111) They will not be able to harm you except for a little hurt, and if they fight against you they will turn their backs (in flight), and then they will not be succoured.

ضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذِّلَّةُ اَيْنَ مَا ثُقِفُوْٓا اِلَّا بِحَبْلٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَحَبْلٍ مِّنَ النَّاسِ وَبَآءُوْ بِغَضَبٍ
مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَسْكَنَةُ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا يَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَيَقْتُلُوْنَ
الْاَنْۢبِيَآءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَّكَانُوْا يَعْتَدُوْنَ ۝112

(3:112) Wherever they were, they were covered with ignominy, except when they were protected by either a covenant with Allah or a covenant with men.[90] They are laden with the burden of Allah's wrath, and humiliation is stuck upon them - and all this because they rejected the signs of Allah and slayed the Prophets without right, and because they disobeyed and transgressed.

90. If the Jews have ever enjoyed any measure of peace and security anywhere in the world they owe it to the goodwill and benevolence of others rather than to their own power and strength. At times Muslim governments granted them refuge while at others non-Muslim powers extended protection. Similarly, if the Jews ever emerged as a power it was due not to their intrinsic strength but to the strength of others.

لَيْسُوْا سَوَآءً ؕ مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ اُمَّةٌ قَآئِمَةٌ يَّتْلُوْنَ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ اٰنَآءَ الَّيْلِ وَهُمْ
يَسْجُدُوْنَ ۝113

(3:113) Yet all are not alike: among the People of the Book there are upright people who recite the messages of Allah in the watches of the night and prostrate themselves in worship.

يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَيَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُسَارِعُوْنَ فِى
الْخَيْرٰتِ ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ۝114

(3:114) They believe in Allah and in the Last Day and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, and hasten to excel each other in doing good. These are among the righteous.

وَمَا يَفْعَلُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَنْ يُّكْفَرُوْهُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِالْمُتَّقِيْنَ ۝115

(3:115) Whatever good they do shall not go unappreciated, and Allah fully knows those who are pious.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَن تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ
أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ 116

(3:116) As for those who denied the Truth, neither their possessions nor their children will avail them against Allah. They are the people of the Fire, and therein they shall abide.

مَثَلُ مَا يُنفِقُونَ فِي هَٰذِهِ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَثَلِ رِيحٍ فِيهَا صِرٌّ أَصَابَتْ حَرْثَ قَوْمٍ
ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ فَأَهْلَكَتْهُ ۚ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَٰكِنْ أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ 117

(3:117) The example of what they spend in the life of this world is like that of a wind accompanied with frost which smites the harvest of a people who wronged themselves, and lays it to waste.[91] It is not Allah who wronged them; rather it is they who wrong themselves.

91. The term 'harvest' in this parable refers to this life which resembles a field of cultivation the harvest of which one will reap in the World to Come. The 'wind' refers to the superficial appearance of righteousness, for the sake of which unbelievers spend their wealth on philanthropic and charitable causes. The expression 'frost' indicates their lack of true faith and their failure to follow the Divine Laws, as a result of which their entire life has gone astray.

By means of this parable God seeks to bring home to them that while wind is useful for the growth of cultivation if that wind turns into frost it destroys it. So it is with man's acts of charity: they can prove helpful to the growth of the harvest one will reap in the Hereafter but are liable to be destructive if mixed with unbelief. God is the Lord and Master of man as well as of all that man owns, and the world in which he lives. If a man either does not recognize the sovereignty of his Lord and unlawfully serves others or disobeys God's Laws then his actions become crimes for which he deserves to be tried; his acts of 'charity' are but the acts of a servant who unlawfully helps himself to his master's treasure and then spends it as he likes.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا بِطَانَةً مِّن دُونِكُمْ لَا يَأْلُونَكُمْ خَبَالًا ۖ وَدُّوا مَا عَنِتُّمْ ۖ قَدْ
بَدَتِ الْبَغْضَاءُ مِنْ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ ۖ وَمَا تُخْفِي صُدُورُهُمْ أَكْبَرُ ۚ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ إِن
كُنتُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ 118

(3:118) Believers! Do not take for intimate friends those who are not of your kind. They spare no effort to injure you.[92]Indeed they love all that distresses you. Their hatred is clearly manifest in what they say, and what their breasts conceal is even greater. Now We have made Our messages clear to you, if only you can understand (the danger of their intimacy).

92. The Jews living on the outskirts of Madina had long enjoyed friendly relations with the two tribes of Aws and Khazraj. In the first place this was the result of relations between individuals. Later, they were bound by ties of neighbourliness and allegiance as a result of tribal inter-relationship. Even after the people of Aws and Khazraj embraced Islam, they maintained their old ties with the Jews and continued to treat them with the same warmth and cordiality. However, the hostility of the Jews towards the Arabian Prophet (peace be on him) and towards his mission was far too intense to allow them to maintain a cordial relationship with anyone who had joined the new movement. Outwardly, the Jews maintained the same terms of friendship with the Ansar (Helpers) as before but at heart they had become their sworn enemies. They made the best use of this pretended friendship, and remained constantly on the look-out for opportunities to create schisms and dissensions in the Muslim body-politic, and to draw out the secrets of the Muslims and pass them on to their enemies. Here God warns the Muslims to note this hypocrisy and take the necessary precaution.

هَآ أَنتُمْ أُولَآءِ تُحِبُّونَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِبُّونَكُمْ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْكِتَٰبِ كُلِّهِۦ ۖ وَإِذَا لَقُوكُمْ قَالُوٓا۟
ءَامَنَّا ۖ وَإِذَا خَلَوْا۟ عَضُّوا۟ عَلَيْكُمُ ٱلْأَنَامِلَ مِنَ ٱلْغَيْظِ ۚ قُلْ مُوتُوا۟ بِغَيْظِكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ
عَلِيمٌۢ بِذَاتِ ٱلصُّدُورِ 119

(3:119) Lo! It is you who love them but they do not love you even though you believe in the whole of the (heavenly) Book.[93] When they meet you they say: 'We believe', but when they are by themselves they bite their fingers in rage at you. Say: 'Perish in your rage.' Allah knows even what lies hidden in their breasts.

93. It is strange that although the Muslims had reason to feel aggrieved by the Jews it was the latter who felt aggrieved by the Muslims. Since the Muslims believed in the Torah along with the Qur'an the Jews had no justifiable ground for complaint. If anyone had cause to complain it was the Muslims for the Jews did not believe in the Qur'an.

إِن تَمْسَسْكُمْ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ ۖ وَإِن تُصِبْكُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَفْرَحُوا۟ بِهَا ۖ وَإِن تَصْبِرُوا۟
وَتَتَّقُوا۟ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْـًٔا ۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ ۠ 120

(3:120) If anything good happens to you they are grieved; if any misfortune befalls you they rejoice at it. But if you remain steadfast and mindful of Allah their designs will not cause you harm. Allah surely encompasses all that they do.

وَإِذْ غَدَوْتَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ تُبَوِّئُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَقَاعِدَ لِلْقِتَالِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ۙ 121

(3:121) (O Messenger![94] Remind the Muslims of the occasion) when you went forth from your home at early dawn (to the battlefield of Uhud) and placed the believers in battle arrays. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

94. This marks the beginning of the fourth discourse of this surah. It was revealed after the Battle of Uhud and contains comments on it. The previous section ended with the assurance: 'But if you remain steadfast and mindful of Allah their designs will not cause you harm.' (See verse 120 above.) The Muslims did suffer a setback in the Battle of Uhud precisely because of this lack of patience, and because of a few mistakes committed by some of them which were indicative of insufficient piety. This discourse, therefore, is quite appropriate and warns the Muslims against such weaknesses.

The discourse contains a precise and instructive commentary on all the main events connected with the Battle of Uhud. In order to appreciate this it is appropriate to refresh our minds as to the situational context of its revelations. In the beginning of Shawwal 3 A.H., the Quraysh attacked Madina with an army of three thousand men. In addition to their numerical superiority they were also much better equipped. Moreover, they sought to avenge their losses in the Battle of Badr. The Prophet (peace be on him) and his closest Companions were of the opinion that they should defend themselves from within the boundaries of Madina, There were, however, several young people who longed for martyrdom and felt aggrieved at, not having had the opportunity to fight in the Battle of Badr. They insisted that the enemy should be resisted outside the confines of Madina. The Prophet gave in to their demands and decided to march out of the city to meet their enemies. A thousand people accompanied him. Of these, 'Abd Allah b. Ubayy broke away along with his three hundred followers after reaching the place called Shawt. This, happening as it did just before the commencement of the battle, created such perplexity and confusion that the people of Banu Salamah and Banu Harithah wanted to turn back, and it took some effort on the part of the Companions to persuade them not to.

The Prophet advanced with the remaining seven hundred Muslims and lined up his troops at the foot of Mount Uhud (a distance of approximately four miles from Madina) in such a manner that the mountain was behind and the Quraysh army in front of them. There was only one mountain pass from where the Muslims could be subjected to a surprise attack. The Prophet posted fifty archers there as guards under the- command of 'Abd Allah b. Jubayr, instructing him neither to let anyone approach nor to move away from that spot. 'Even if you see birds fly off with our flesh', the Prophet said, 'still you must not move away from this place'. (For such instructions from the Prophet see Ibn Sa'd, Tabaqat, vol. 2, pp. 39-40 and 47, and Waqidi, Maghazi, vol. 1, pp. 224 and 229 - Ed.) Then the battle commenced. In the beginning the Muslims proved the better side but instead of maintaining their onslaught until they had assured complete victory, they were overcome by the temptation of booty and turned to collecting the spoils. When the archers whom the Prophet had posted

to repel the attack of the enemy from the rear saw that the enemy had taken to its heels and that people were collecting booty, they too joined the melee and began to do the same.

'Abd Allah b. Jubayr tried to persuade them not to leave their posts by reminding them of the Prophet's directive. Hardly anyone heeded him. Khalid b. Walld, who was at that time an unbeliever and who commanded the Quraysh cavalry, seized his opportunity. He rode with his men around Mount Uhud and attacked the flank of the Muslim army through the pass. 'Abd Allah b. Jubayr's depleted forces tried unsuccessfully to resist the attack.

The fleeing soldiers of the enemy also returned and joined the attack from the front and the scales of the battle turned against the Muslims. The suddenness of these attacks, from both the rear and the front, caused such confusion that many fled. Then the rumour spread that the- Prophet, himself, had been martyred. This news shattered whatever presence of mind the Companions had left, and led many who had stood firm to lose courage altogether. At this moment there remained around the injured and bleeding Prophet (peace be on him) no more than ten or twelve loyal persons who had staked their lives for his sake. Defeat seemed inevitable. Fortunately, however, the Companions realized that the Prophet was still alive. They therefore advanced towards him from all sides, rallied around him, and led him to the safety of the mountain. (For an account of the Battle of Uhud in early Islamic sources, see Ibn Hisham, Slrah, yol, 1, pp. 61 ff., Waqidi, Maghazi, vol. 1, pp. 199 ff., especially pp. 224, 229 f. and 237 ff., and Ibn Sa'd, Tabaqat, vol. 2, pp. 36-48, etc. - Ed.)

It remains a mystery why the unbelievers of Makka held back when victory was within their grasp. The Muslim ranks were in such disarray that they would have been hard pushed to resist further. (Cf. the account and conclusion of W. M. Watt regarding the Battle of Uhud in Muhammad at Medina, Oxford University Press, 1956, pp. 21 ff., especially pp. 26-9 -Ed.)

إِذْ هَمَّتْ طَّآئِفَتَانِ مِنكُمْ أَن تَفْشَلَا ۙ وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّهُمَا ۗ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ
الْمُؤْمِنُونَ 122

(3:122) And recall when two groups from among you were inclined to flag[95] although Allah was their protector; it is in Allah that the believers should put their trust.

95. This refers to Banu Salamah and Banu Harithah, whose morale had been undermined as a result of the withdrawal of 'Abd Allah b. Ubayy and his followers.

وَلَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ بِبَدْرٍ وَأَنتُمْ أَذِلَّةٌ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ 123

(3:123) For sure Allah helped you at Badr when you were utterly weak. Beware, then, of Allah; perhaps you will be thankful.

إِذْ تَقُولُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَلَن يَكْفِيَكُمْ أَن يُمِدَّكُمْ رَبُّكُم بِثَلَاثَةِ آلَافٍ مِّنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ
مُنزَلِينَ ۝124

(3:124) And recall when you said to the believers: 'Will it not suffice you that your Lord will aid you by sending down three thousand angels?[96]

96. When the Muslims saw that their enemies numbered three thousand while three hundred out of their army of one thousand had departed they began to lose heart. It was on this occasion that the Prophet spoke these words to them.

بَلَىٰ إِن تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَيَأْتُوكُم مِّن فَوْرِهِمْ هَٰذَا يُمْدِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُم بِخَمْسَةِ آلَافٍ مِّنَ
الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُسَوِّمِينَ ۝125

(3:125) If you are steadfast and mindful of God, even though the enemy should suddenly fall upon you, your Lord will help you even with five thousand marked angels.

وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بُشْرَىٰ لَكُمْ وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ قُلُوبُكُم بِهِ ۚ وَمَا النَّصْرُ إِلَّا مِنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ
الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ ۝126

(3:126) Allah has reminded you of this only as a glad tiding to you and so as to let your hearts be at rest. Help can only come from Allah, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.

لِيَقْطَعَ طَرَفًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْ يَكْبِتَهُمْ فَيَنقَلِبُوا خَائِبِينَ ۝127

(3:127) And Allah provided this aid to you in order to cut off a part of those who disbelieved and frustrate them so that they retreat in utter disappointment.

لَيْسَ لَكَ مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ أَوْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ أَوْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ۝128

(3:128) (O Messenger!) It is not for you to decide whether He will accept their repentance or chastise them, for they surely are wrongdoers.

وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ يَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَ يُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ

رَّحِيْمٌ ع 129

(3:129) Whatever is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah. He forgives whom He wills, and chastises whom He wills: Allah is indeed All-Forgiving, Most-Compassionate.[97]

97. When the Prophet was injured he uttered words of imprecation against the unbelievers: 'How can a people that injures its own Prophet attain salvation?' These verses are in response to that utterance.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَاْكُلُوا الرِّبٰۤوا اَضْعَافًا مُّضٰعَفَةً ۪ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ

ج 130

(3:130) Believers! Do not swallow interest, doubled and redoubled, and be mindful of Allah so that you may attain true success.[98]

98. The major cause of the setback suffered at Uhud was that precisely at the moment of their victory the Muslims succumbed to the desire for worldly possessions, and turned to collecting booty rather than completing their task of crushing the enemy. Hence God thought fit to raise a barrier against this excessive adoration of money, and to urge them to give up usury which keeps man constantly absorbed in considering ways and means of amassing wealth and generally whets his appetite for money.

وَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِيْۤ اُعِدَّتْ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ ۚ 131

(3:131) And have fear of the Fire which awaits those who deny the Truth.

وَاَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَالرَّسُوْلَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ۚ 132

(3:132) And obey Allah and the Messenger, that you may be shown mercy.

وَسَارِعُوْۤا اِلٰى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمٰوٰتُ وَالْاَرْضُ ۙ اُعِدَّتْ

لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ۙ 133

(3:133) And hasten to the for-giveness of your Lord and to a Paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth, prepared for the God-fearing.

الَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ فِي السَّرَّآءِ وَالضَّرَّآءِ وَالْكٰظِمِيْنَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِيْنَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ
يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ۚ 134

(3:134) who spend in the way of Allah both in plenty and hardship, who restrain their anger, and forgive others. Allah loves such good-doers." [99]

99. The existence of interest in a society generates two kinds of moral disease. It breeds greed and avarice, meanness and selfishness among those who receive interest. At the same time, those who have to pay interest develop strong feelings of hatred, resentment, spite and jealousy. God intimates to the believers that the attributes bred by the spread of interest are the exact opposite of those which develop as a result of spending in the way of God, and that it is through the latter rather than the former that man can achieve God's forgiveness and Paradise. (For further explanation see (Surah 2, n. 320 above.)

وَالَّذِيْنَ اِذَا فَعَلُوْا فَاحِشَةً اَوْ ظَلَمُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللّٰهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوْا لِذُنُوْبِهِمْ ۫ وَمَنْ
يَّغْفِرُ الذُّنُوْبَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ ۫ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوْا عَلٰى مَا فَعَلُوْا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ 135

(3:135) These are the ones who, when they commit any indecency and wrong against themselves, instantly remember Allah and implore forgiveness for their sins - for who will forgive sins save Allah? - and who do not wilfully persist in the wrong they did.

اُولٰٓئِكَ جَزَآؤُهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَجَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا
وَنِعْمَ اَجْرُ الْعٰمِلِيْنَ ۚ 136

(3:136) They shall be recompensed by forgiveness from their Lord and by gardens beneath which rivers flow; there they shall abide. How good is the reward of those who labour!

قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ سُنَنٌ ۙ فَسِيْرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَانْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ
الْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ 137

(3:137) Many eras have passed before you. Go about, then, in the land and behold the end of those who gave the lie to (the directives and ordinances of Allah).

هٰذَا بَيَانٌ لِّلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَّمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ 138

(3:138) This is a plain exposition for men, and a guidance and admonition for the Godfearing.

وَلَا تَهِنُوْا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوْا وَاَنْتُمُ الْاَعْلَوْنَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ 139

(3:139) Do not, then, either lose heart or grieve: for you shall surely gain the upper hand if you are true men of faith.

اِنْ يَّمْسَسْكُمْ قَرْحٌ فَقَدْ مَسَّ الْقَوْمَ قَرْحٌ مِّثْلُهٗ ؕ وَتِلْكَ الْاَيَّامُ نُدَاوِلُهَا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ۚ
وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَيَتَّخِذَ مِنْكُمْ شُهَدَآءَ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۙ 140

(3:140) If a wound has befallen you a similar wound has already befallen the people who are opposed to you.[100] We make such movements to men in turn so that Allah might mark out those who are the true men of faith and select from among you those who do really bear witness (to the Truth):[101] for Allah does not love the wrong-doers,

100. This alludes to the Battle of Badr. The intention is to point out to the Muslims that if the unbelievers were not demoralized by the setback they suffered at Badr then the Muslims should not be disheartened by the setback thev suffered in the Battle of Uhud.

101. The actual words of this verse, can be interpreted in two ways. One meaning could be that God wanted to select some of them so that He could bestow upon them the honour of martyrdom. The second meaning could be that out of the hotch-potch of true believers and hypocrites which their community consisted of at that moment, God wanted to sift those who were truly His witnesses over all mankind. See(Qur'an 2: 143 - Ed.)

وَلِيُمَحِّصَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَيَمْحَقَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ 141

(3:141) and makes men go through trials in order that He might purge the believers and blot out those who deny the Truth.

اَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ اَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ جٰهَدُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَيَعْلَمَ
الصّٰبِرِيْنَ 142

(3:142) Did you think that you would enter Paradise even though Allah has not yet seen who among you strove hard in His way and remained steadfast?

وَلَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ تَمَنَّوْنَ الْمَوْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ تَلْقَوْهُ ۖ فَقَدْ رَاَيْتُمُوْهُ وَاَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُوْنَ ۚ 143

(3:143) You previously longed for death (in the way of Allah): now you have faced it, observing it with your own eyes.[102]

102. This is with reference to those Companions who had urged the Prophet to go out of Madina and take on the enemy there because of their ardent desire for martyrdom. (See Ibn Sa'd, Tabaqat, vol. 2, p. 38 - Ed.)

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ اِلَّا رَسُوْلٌ ۚ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ؕ اَفَاْئِنْ مَّاتَ اَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلٰٓى اَعْقَابِكُمْ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّنْقَلِبْ عَلٰى عَقِبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَّضُرَّ اللّٰهَ شَيْـًٔا ؕ وَسَيَجْزِى اللّٰهُ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ 144

(3:144) Muhammad is no more than a Messenger, and Messengers have passed away before him. If, then, he were to die or be slain will you turn about on your heels?[103] Whoever turns about on his heels can in no way harm Allah. As for the grateful ones, Allah will soon reward them.

103. When the rumour of the Prophet's martyrdom spread during the battle, it disheartened most of the Companions. The hypocrites who were in the Muslim camp began to advise the believers to approach 'Abd Allah b. Ubayy so that he might secure protection for them from Abu Sufyan. Some went so far as to say that had Muhammad really been the Messenger of God he would not have been put to death, and for that reason they counselled people to revert to their ancestral faith. It is in this context that the Muslims are now told that if their devotion to the truth is wholly bound up with the person of Muhammad (peace be on him), and if their submission to God is so lukewarm that his demise would cause them to plunge back into the disbelief they had cast off, then they should bear in mind the fact that Islam does not need them.

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ اَنْ تَمُوْتَ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ كِتٰبًا مُّؤَجَّلًا ؕ وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهٖ مِنْهَا وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ ثَوَابَ الْاٰخِرَةِ نُؤْتِهٖ مِنْهَا ؕ وَسَنَجْزِى الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ۚ 145

(3:145) It is not given to any soul to die except with the leave of Allah, and at an appointed time.[104] And he who desires his reward in this world, We shall grant him the reward of this world; and he who desires the reward of the Other World,[105] We

shall grant him the reward of the Other World. And soon shall We reward the ones who are grateful.[106]

104. The purpose of this directive is to bring home to the Muslims that it would be futile for them to try to flee from death. No one can either die before or survive the moment determined for death by God. Hence one should not waste one's time thinking how to escape death. Instead, one should take stock of one's activities and see whether one's efforts have either been directed merely to one's well-being in this world or to well-being in the Hereafter.

105. The word thawab denotes recompense and reward. The 'reward of this world' signifies the totality of benefits and advantages which a man receives as a consequence of his actions and efforts within the confines of this world. The 'reward of the Other World' denotes the benefits that a man will receive in the lasting World to Come as the fruits of his actions and efforts. From the Islamic point of view, the crucial question bearing upon human morals is whether a man keeps his attention focused on the worldly results of his endeavours or on the results which will acrue to him in the Next World.

106. The 'ones who are grateful' are those who fully appreciate God's favour in making the true religion available to them, and thereby intimating to them knowledge of a realm that is infinitely vaster than this world. Such people appreciate that God has graciously informed them of the truth so that the consequences of human endeavour are not confined to the brief span of earthly life but cover a vast expanse, embracing both the present life and the much more important life of the Hereafter.

A grateful man is he who, having gained this breadth of outlook and having developed this long-range perception of the ultimate consequences of things, persists in acts of righteousness out of his faith in God and his confidence in God's assurance that they will bear fruit in the Hereafter. He does so even though he may sometimes find that, far from bearing fruit, righteousness leads to privation and suffering in this world. The ungrateful ones are those who persist in a narrow preoccupation with earthly matters. They are those who disregard the evil consequences of unrighteousness in the Hereafter, seizing everything which appears to yield benefits and advantages in this world, and who are not prepared to devote their time and energy to those acts of goodness which promise to bear fruit in the Hereafter and which are either unlikely to yield earthly advantages or are fraught with risks. Such people are ungrateful and lack appreciation of the valuable knowledge vouchsafed to them by God.

وَكَاَيِّنۡ مِّنۡ نَّبِىٍّ قٰتَلَ مَعَهٗ رِبِّيُّوۡنَ كَثِيۡرٌ ۚ فَمَا وَهَنُوۡا لِمَاۤ اَصَابَهُمۡ فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ وَمَا
ضَعُفُوۡا وَمَا اسۡتَكَانُوۡا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الصّٰبِرِيۡنَ 146

(3:146) Many were the Prophets on whose side a large number of God-devoted men fought: they neither lost heart for all they had to suffer in the way of Allah nor did they weaken nor did they abase themselves.[107] Allah loves such steadfast ones.

107. They did not surrender to the followers of falsehood merely because of their numerical inferiority and lack of resources.

وَمَا كَانَ قَوْلَهُمْ إِلَّآ أَن قَالُوا۟ رَبَّنَا ٱغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَإِسْرَافَنَا فِىٓ أَمْرِنَا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا
وَٱنصُرْنَا عَلَى ٱلْقَوْمِ ٱلْكَٰفِرِينَ 147

(3:147) And all they said was this: 'Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, and our excesses, and set our feet firm, and succour us against those who deny the Truth.'

فَـَٔاتَىٰهُمُ ٱللَّهُ ثَوَابَ ٱلدُّنْيَا وَحُسْنَ ثَوَابِ ٱلْـَٔاخِرَةِ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ ۝ 148

(3:148) Thereupon Allah granted them the reward of this world as well as a better reward of the World to Come. Allah loves those who do good.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ إِن تُطِيعُوا۟ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ يَرُدُّوكُمْ عَلَىٰٓ أَعْقَٰبِكُمْ فَتَنقَلِبُوا۟
خَٰسِرِينَ 149

(3:149) Believers! If you follow those who deny the Truth, they will drive you back on your heels,[108] and you will turn about, losers.

108. That is, they would push them back into the same state of unbelief from which they had extricated themselves. Since the Battle of Uhud the hypocrites and the Jews had constantly propagated the idea that, had Muhammad been a true Prophet, he would not have suffered the reverse that he encountered in that battle. This reverse was offered as proof that Muhammad (peace be on him) was an ordinary person whose fortunes varied, like those of other men, between victory and defeat. They further contended that the support and patronage of God which Muhammad claimed to enjoy was a sham.

بَلِ ٱللَّهُ مَوْلَىٰكُمْ ۖ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ ٱلنَّٰصِرِينَ 150

(3:150) But Allah is your Protector, and He is the best of helpers.

سَنُلْقِى فِى قُلُوبِ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ ٱلرُّعْبَ بِمَآ أَشْرَكُوا۟ بِٱللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِۦ سُلْطَٰنًا ۖ
وَمَأْوَىٰهُمُ ٱلنَّارُ ۖ وَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ 151

(3:151) We will cast terror into the hearts of those who have denied the Truth since they have associated others with Allah in His divinity - something for which He has sent down no sanction. The Fire is their abode; how bad the resting place of the wrong-doers will be!

وَلَقَدْ صَدَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَعْدَهٗٓ اِذْ تَحُسُّوْنَهُمْ بِاِذْنِهٖ ۚ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا فَشِلْتُمْ وَتَنَازَعْتُمْ فِى الْاَمْرِ
وَعَصَيْتُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ مَآ اَرٰىكُمْ مَّا تُحِبُّوْنَ ۭ مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُّرِيْدُ الدُّنْيَا وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُّرِيْدُ
الْاٰخِرَةَ ۚ ثُمَّ صَرَفَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ ۚ وَلَقَدْ عَفَا عَنْكُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ ذُوْ فَضْلٍ عَلَى
الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ 152

(3:152) Allah surely fulfilled His promise (of succour) when you were slaying them by His leave until the moment when you flagged and quarrelled among yourselves about the matter, and acted against the order of (the Prophet). Soon He showed you what you had intensely desired[108a] - for some among you sought this world and some of you sought the Next. Thereupon, in order to put you to a test He turned you away from your foes. Still He pardoned you after that[109] for Allah is Bounteous to those who believe.

108a. This refers to the conduct of the archers. When they were commanded to abstain from taking spoils, they argued with and disobeyed their leader and deserted their positions with the result that the scales of victory were turned against the Muslims.

109. The failure of the Muslims was of such a serious nature that had God not pardoned them they might have been obliterated there and then. It was out of God's grace, support and patronage that after the Muslims had been overpowered by the enemy the latter were seized with perplexity and confusion, and withdrew.

اِذْ تُصْعِدُوْنَ وَلَا تَلْوٗنَ عَلٰٓى اَحَدٍ وَّالرَّسُوْلُ يَدْعُوْكُمْ فِيْٓ اُخْرٰىكُمْ فَاَثَابَكُمْ غَمًّۢا بِغَمٍّ
لِّكَيْلَا تَحْزَنُوْا عَلٰي مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا مَآ اَصَابَكُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ 153

(3:153) Recall when you were fleeing without casting even a side glance at anyone, and the Messenger was calling out to you from the rear.[110] Then Allah requited you by inflicting grief after grief upon you[111] so as to instruct you neither to grieve for the losses you might suffer nor for the afflictions that might befall you. Allah knows all that you do.

110. When subjected to a sudden two-pronged attack the Muslims scattered; some fled to Madina while others climbed Mount Uhud. Despite this, the Prophet (peace be on him) did not move from his position. The enemy surrounded him on all sides and only a small party of ten to twelve followers was left with him. Even at that critical moment his feet remained firm and he continued to summon his fleeing followers towards himself. (See Waqidi, Maghazi, vol. 1, pp. 237, 240 and 241 - Ed.)

111. The 'grief referred to in this verse had many causes: (i) by the setback the Muslims suffered on the battlefield and by the rumour that the Prophet (peace be on him) had been martyred; (ii) by the fact that a large number of believers had been killed and wounded; and (iii) by the fact that nothing was known about what was happening to the Muslim families left behind in Madina. For it was possible that the enemy was greater in numbers than the total population of Madina, and that it might break through the defences of the battered

ثُمَّ أَنزَلَ عَلَيْكُم مِّن بَعْدِ الْغَمِّ أَمَنَةً نُّعَاسًا يَغْشَىٰ طَائِفَةً مِّنكُمْ ۖ وَطَائِفَةٌ قَدْ أَهَمَّتْهُمْ
أَنفُسُهُمْ يَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ ظَنَّ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ ۖ يَقُولُونَ هَل لَّنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ مِن شَيْءٍ ۗ
قُلْ إِنَّ الْأَمْرَ كُلَّهُ لِلَّهِ ۗ يُخْفُونَ فِي أَنفُسِهِم مَّا لَا يُبْدُونَ لَكَ ۖ يَقُولُونَ لَوْ كَانَ لَنَا مِنَ
الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ مَّا قُتِلْنَا هَٰهُنَا ۗ قُل لَّوْ كُنتُمْ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ لَبَرَزَ الَّذِينَ كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَتْلُ
إِلَىٰ مَضَاجِعِهِمْ ۖ وَلِيَبْتَلِيَ اللَّهُ مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ وَلِيُمَحِّصَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ
بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ 154

(3:154) Then, after inflict-ing this grief, He sent down an inner peace upon you - a sleep which overtook some of you.[112] Those who were concerned merely about themselves, entertaining false notions about Allah - the notions of the Age of Ignorance - asked: 'Have we any say in the matter?' Tell them: 'Truly, all power of decision rests solely with Allah.' Indeed, they conceal in their hearts what they would not reveal to you, saying: 'If we had any power of decision, we would not have been slain here.' Say: 'Even if you had been in your houses, those for whom slaying had been appointed would have gone forth to the places where they were to be slain.' And all this happened so that Allah might test your secret thoughts and purge your hearts of all impurities. Allah knows well what is in the breasts of men.

112. A strange phenomenon was then experienced by certain Muslim soldiers. Abu Talhah, who took part in the battle, states that the Muslims were seized by such drowsiness that

their swords were slipping from their hands. (For several Traditions stating this incident, including one related by Abu Talhah, see Waqidi, Maghazi, vol. 1, pp. 295-6 - Ed.)

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَلَّوْا مِنكُمْ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعَانِ ۙ إِنَّمَا اسْتَزَلَّهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ بِبَعْضِ مَا كَسَبُوا ۖ وَلَقَدْ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿155﴾

(3:155) Surely those of them who turned their backs on the day when the two armies met (at Uhud) did so because Satan made them slip because of some of their lapses. But Allah has pardoned them; He is All-Forgiving, All-Forbearing.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَقَالُوا لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ إِذَا ضَرَبُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَوْ كَانُوا غُزًّى لَّوْ كَانُوا عِندَنَا مَا مَاتُوا وَمَا قُتِلُوا ۖ لِيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ ذَٰلِكَ حَسْرَةً فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿156﴾

(3:156) Believers, do not behave like those who disbelieved and say to their brothers (who meet some mishap) in the course of their journey for fighting: 'Had they remained with us, they would not have died nor been slain.' Allah makes such thoughts the cause of deep regrets in their hearts.[113] For in truth it is Allah alone who grants life and deals death. Allah sees all that you do.

113. Such ideas had no solid ground. God's decree regarding the time of one's death cannot be deferred. Those who lack faith in God and think that everything is dependent on their own scheming and effort rather than on the overpowering Will of God become victims of perpetual remorse, since they never cease to reflect how a slightly different circumstance or slightly altered strategy could have led to an altogether different and wholesome result.

وَلَئِن قُتِلْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَوْ مُتُّمْ لَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَحْمَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ ﴿157﴾

(3:157) And were you to be slain or to die in the way of Allah, then surely Allah's forgiveness and mercy are better than all the goods they amass.

وَلَئِن مُّتُّمْ أَوْ قُتِلْتُمْ لَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿158﴾

(3:158) And were you to die or be slain, it is to Allah that you will all be mustered.

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ ۚ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيْظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوْا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ ۖ
فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْاَمْرِ ۚ فَاِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِيْنَ 159

(3:159) It was thanks to Allah's mercy that you were gentle to them. Had you been rough, hard-hearted, they would surely have scattered away from you. So pardon them, and pray for their forgiveness, and take counsel from them in matters of importance. And when you are resolved on a course of action place your trust in Allah; surely Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him).

اِنْ يَّنْصُرْكُمُ اللّٰهُ فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّخْذُلْكُمْ فَمَنْ ذَا الَّذِيْ يَنْصُرُكُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ ۗ
وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ 160

(3:160) If Allah helps you none shall prevail over you; if He forsakes you then who can help you? It is in Allah that the believers should put their trust.

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ اَنْ يَّغُلَّ ۗ وَمَنْ يَّغْلُلْ يَاْتِ بِمَا غَلَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۚ ثُمَّ تُوَفّٰى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا
كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ 161

(3:161) It is not for a Prophet to defraud;[114] and whoever defrauds shall bring with him the fruits of his fraud on the Day of Resurrection, when every human being shall be paid in full what he has earned, and shall not be wronged.

114. When the archers, whom the Prophet had posted to defend the army against any attack from the rear, saw that the spoils of the enemy were being collected, they feared that the spoils might fall in their entirety to the lot of the soldiers who were then collecting them, and that they might, therefore, be deprived of their share. It was this idea which had impelled them to leave their posts. When the Prophet returned to Madina after the battle he asked them to explain the cause of their disobedience. When he had heard their unconvincing stories he told them: 'You thought that we would act dishonestly and would not deliver you your share.' (See Alusi. Ruh al-Ma'ani, commentary on this verse - Ed.) The verse alludes to this here. The purpose is to impress upon them that the Messenger of God himself was the commander of their army and that all their affairs were in his hands alone. What made them feel that their interests were not secure even in the hands of God's Messenger? Did they think that a division of spoils under the direct supervision of the

Prophet Would be made in any manner other than that dictated by absolute honesty, trustworthiness and justice?

اَفَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَ اللّٰهِ كَمَنْۢ بَآءَ بِسَخَطٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَمَاْوٰىهُ جَهَنَّمُ ؕ وَبِئْسَ
الْمَصِيْرُ 162

(3:162) Is he who follows the good pleasure of Allah like him who is laden with Allah's wrath and whose abode is Hell? How evil that is for a resting-place!

هُمْ دَرَجٰتٌ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌۢ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ 163

(3:163) They vary greatly in rank in the sight of Allah, and Allah sees what they do.

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اِذْ بَعَثَ فِيْهِمْ رَسُوْلًا مِّنْ اَنْفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ
وَيُزَكِّيْهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ ۚ وَاِنْ كَانُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ 164

(3:164) Surely Allah conferred a great favour on the believers when He raised from among them a Messenger to recite to them His signs, and to purify them, and to teach them the Book and Wisdom. For before that they were in manifest error.

اَوَلَمَّآ اَصَابَتْكُمْ مُّصِيْبَةٌ قَدْ اَصَبْتُمْ مِّثْلَيْهَا ۙ قُلْتُمْ اَنّٰى هٰذَا ؕ قُلْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اَنْفُسِكُمْ ؕ
اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ 165

(3:165) And how come when a calamity befell you, you began to ask: 'How has this come about?'[115] even though the enemy has suffered at your hands (in the Battle of Badr) double what you have suffered![116] Say: This calamity has been brought about by yourselves.[117] Surely Allah is All-Powerful.[118]

115. The more high ranking Companions were too well aware of reality to fall prey to any misunderstandings. The ordinary believers, however, had thought that as long as God's Messenger was in their midst and as long as they enjoyed God's support and help the unbeliever, could never triumph over them. Hence, when they suffered defeat at the Battle of Uhud, their expectations were shaken and they began to wonder why things had taken the course they had. They wondered why they had been defeated even though they had fought for the sake of God's true religion with God's support, and the Messenger of God was with them on the battlefield. Furthermore, they were worried that the defeat had been

at the hands of those who were out to destroy God's true religion. These verses seek to allay this sense of anxiety and rid their minds of doubt and suspicion.

116. In the Battle of Uhud seventy Muslims were martyred. In the Battle of Badr. seventy unbelievers were killed and seventy taken as captives.

117. The calamity that had befallen them was the outcome of their own weaknesses and mistakes. They had not remained sufficiently patient, they had acted, in certain respects, in a manner inconsistent with the dictates of piety, they had disobeyed the command that had been given them, they were lured by material wealth and they disputed and quarrelled among them-selves. After all this, was it still necessary to ask what caused the debacle?

118. If God has the power to make them victorious He also has the power to bring about their defeat.

وَمَآ اَصَابَكُمۡ يَوۡمَ الۡتَقَى الۡجَمۡعٰنِ فَبِاِذۡنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيَعۡلَمَ الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ۙ 166

(3:166) What befell you on the day when the two hosts met was by the leave of Allah, and in order that He might mark out those who believe

وَلِيَعۡلَمَ الَّذِيۡنَ نَافَقُوۡا ۚۖ وَقِيۡلَ لَهُمۡ تَعَالَوۡا قَاتِلُوۡا فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ اَوِ ادۡفَعُوۡا ؕ قَالُوۡا لَوۡ
نَعۡلَمُ قِتَالًا لَّا تَّبَعۡنٰكُمۡ ؕ هُمۡ لِلۡكُفۡرِ يَوۡمَئِذٍ اَقۡرَبُ مِنۡهُمۡ لِلۡاِيۡمَانِ ۚ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ بِاَفۡوَاهِهِمۡ
مَّا لَيۡسَ فِىۡ قُلُوۡبِهِمۡ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَا يَكۡتُمُوۡنَ ۚ 167

(3:167) and those who are hypocrites. And when these hypocrites were asked: 'Come and fight in the wayof Allah', or (at least) 'defend yourselves', they answered: 'If we but knew that there would be fighting, we would certainly have followed.[119] They were nearer then to infidelity than to faith. They utter from their mouths what is not in their hearts. Allah knows well what they conceal.

119. When 'Abd Allah b. Ubayy decided to withdraw from the battlefield with his men several Muslims attempted to persuade him not to do so. Ibn Ubayy replied that he was sure that there would be no fighting that day, and he assured them that had he expected fighting to take place, he would have gone along with them.

اَلَّذِيۡنَ قَالُوۡا لِاِخۡوَانِهِمۡ وَقَعَدُوۡا لَوۡ اَطَاعُوۡنَا مَا قُتِلُوۡا ؕ قُلۡ فَادۡرَءُوۡا عَنۡ اَنۡفُسِكُمُ
الۡمَوۡتَ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ صٰدِقِيۡنَ 168

(3:168) These are the ones who stayed away, saying about their brothers: 'Had they followed us, they would not have been slain.' Say: 'If you speak the truth then avert death when it comes to you.'

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ قُتِلُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اَمْوَاتًا ؕ بَلْ اَحْيَآءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ
يُرْزَقُوْنَ ۙ 169

(3:169) Think not of those slain in the way of Allah as dead.[120] Indeed they are living, and with their Lord they have their sustenance,

120. For an explanation see (Surah 2. n. 155) above.

فَرِحِيْنَ بِمَآ اٰتٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۙ وَيَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ بِالَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوْا بِهِمْ مِّنْ
خَلْفِهِمْ ۙ اَلَّا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ۘ 170

(3:170) rejoicing in what Allah has bestowed upon them out of His bounty,[121] jubilant that neither fear nor grief shall come upon the believers left behind in the world who have not yet joined them.

121. There is a Tradition from the Prophet that he who leaves the world after having lived righteously is greeted with a life so felicitous that he never wishes to return to the world. The only exception to this are martyrs who wish to be sent back to the world so that they may once again attain martyrdom and thereby enjoy that unique joy, bliss and ecstasy which one experiences at the time of laying down one's life for God. (Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. Ill, 103, 126, 153, 173, 251, 276, 278, 284, 289; Bukhari, 'Tafsir al-Qur'an', 6 and 21: Muslim, 'Al-Imarah', 108, 109. 121 - Ed.)

يَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَفَضْلٍ ۙ وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُضِيْعُ اَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۚ ۛ 171

(3:171) They rejoice at the favours and bounties of Allah, and at the awareness that Allah will not cause the reward of the believers to be lost.

اَلَّذِيْنَ اسْتَجَابُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَالرَّسُوْلِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَآ اَصَابَهُمُ الْقَرْحُ ۛ ؕ لِلَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوْا مِنْهُمْ
وَاتَّقَوْا اَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ ۚ 172

(3:172) There were those who responded to the call of Allah and the Messenger[122] after injury had smitten them[123] - for all those who do good and fear Allah there is a mighty reward.

122. When, after the Battle of Uhud, the Makkan polytheists had travelled several stages of their journey, they began to tell themselves what a mistake they had made in allowing the opportunity to crush the power of Muhammad to slip out of their hands. At one place they halted and deliberated among themselves about launching a second attack on Madina. They failed, however, to muster sufficient courage and carried on to Makka. The Prophet, for his part, also realized that they might attack once again. On the second day of Uhud, therefore, he gathered the Muslims and urged them to pursue the unbelievers. Even though this was a highly critical moment, the true men of faith girded their loins and were prepared to lay down their lives at the behest of the Prophet. They accompanied him to Hamra' al-Asad, eight miles from Madina. The present verse refers to these dedicated men.

123. These few verses were revealed almost one year after the Battle of Uhud. As they are connected with the events of the battle they were included in the present discourse.

اَلَّذِيْنَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ اِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوْا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ اِيْمَانًا صلے ق

وَّقَالُوْا حَسْبُنَا اللّٰهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيْلُ 173

(3:173) When people said to them: 'Behold, a host has gathered around you and you should fear them', it only increased their faith and they answered: 'Allah is Sufficient for us; and what an excellent Guardian He is!'

فَانْقَلَبُوْا بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَفَضْلٍ لَّمْ يَمْسَسْهُمْ سُوْٓءٌ ۙ وَّاتَّبَعُوْا رِضْوَانَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ ذُوْ

فَضْلٍ عَظِيْمٍ 174

(3:174) So they returned with a mighty favour and a great bounty from Allah having suffered no harm. They followed the good pleasure of Allah, and Allah is the Lord of great bounty.

اِنَّمَا ذٰلِكُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ يُخَوِّفُ اَوْلِيَآءَهٗ ۪ فَلَا تَخَافُوْهُمْ وَخَافُوْنِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ 175

(3:175) It was Satan who suggested to you the fear of his allies. Do not fear them; fear Me, if you truly believe.[124]

124. While returning from the Battle of Uhud, Abu Sufyan challenged the Muslims to another encounter at Badr the following year. But when the appointed time arrived, Abu Sufyan's courage failed him on account of the famine prevailing in Makka that year. As a face-saving device he arranged to send an agent to Madina who spread the rumour that

tremendous war preparations were afoot among the Quraysh, and that they were trying to muster a huge army which would be so powerful that no other power in the whole of Arabia would resist it. The purpose of this rumour was to overawe the Muslims and discourage them from advancing towards Makka, so that when the confrontation did not take place it would be blamed on the timidity of the Muslims. The effect of this measure was such that when the Prophet (peace be on him) urged the Muslims to accompany him to Badr the initial response was not encouraging. Finally, the Prophet publicly announced that if no one would accompany him, he would go alone. In response, fifteen hundred devotees expressed their willingness and accompanied him to Badr. Abu Sufyan set out with two thousand men but after travelling for two days he told his men that it seemed unwise to fight and that they would return the following year for the proposed encounter. Thus he and his men retreated. The Prophet and his Companions stayed at Badr for eight days awaiting the threatened encounter. Meanwhile, they conducted business with a trade caravan which yielded them considerable profit. Later, when it became known that the unbelievers had gone back to Makka, the Prophet returned to Madina. (See Ibn Hisham, vol. 2, pp. 209 f.; Ibn Ishaq, Life of Muhammad, pp. 447 f. - Ed.)

وَلَا يَحْزُنْكَ الَّذِيْنَ يُسَارِعُوْنَ فِي الْكُفْرِ ۚ اِنَّهُمْ لَنْ يَّضُرُّوا اللّٰهَ شَيْـًٔا ۗ يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ اَلَّا
يَجْعَلَ لَهُمْ حَظًّا فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ 176

(3:176) Let not those who run towards disbelief grieve you; they shall not hurt Allah in the least. Allah will not provide for them any share in the Next Life. A mighty punishment awaits them.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اشْتَرَوُا الْكُفْرَ بِالْاِيْمَانِ لَنْ يَّضُرُّوا اللّٰهَ شَيْـًٔا ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ 177

(3:177) Indeed those who have purchased unbelief in exchange for faith shall not hurt Allah in the least. Theirs shall be a painful chastisement.

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اَنَّمَا نُمْلِيْ لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِّاَنْفُسِهِمْ ۗ اِنَّمَا نُمْلِيْ لَهُمْ لِيَزْدَادُوْٓا اِثْمًا ۚ
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ 178

(3:178) Do not let the, unbelievers imagine that the respite We give them is good for them. We give them respite so that they may grow in wickedness. A humiliating chastisement lies in store for them.

مَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيَذَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ عَلٰى مَآ اَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ حَتّٰى يَمِيْزَ الْخَبِيْثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ ؕ وَمَا كَانَ
اللّٰهُ لِيُطْلِعَكُمْ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَجْتَبِيْ مِنْ رُّسُلِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۪ فَاٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ
وَرُسُلِهٖ ۚ وَاِنْ تُؤْمِنُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا فَلَكُمْ اَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ 179

(3:179) Allah will not let the believers stay in the state they are:[125] He will set the wicked apart from the good. Allah is not going to disclose to you what is hidden in the realm beyond the reach of perception,[126] but He chooses from among His Messengers whom He wills (to intimate such knowledge). Believe, then, in Allah and in His Messengers; and if you believe and become God-fearing, yours will be a great reward.

125. That is, God does not want to see the Muslim community in a hotch-potch condition with the true men of faith indistinguishable from the hypocrites.

126. This means that God does not resort to revelation to provide information as to whether specific individuals are true men of faith or hypocrites. God creates, instead, certain situations in which the faith of those who profess to believe is severely tested. The result is that the man of faith stands out clearly from the hypocrite.

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَبْخَلُوْنَ بِمَآ اٰتٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ هُوَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ ؕ بَلْ هُوَ شَرٌّ لَّهُمْ ؕ
سَيُطَوَّقُوْنَ مَا بَخِلُوْا بِهٖ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ مِيْرَاثُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا
تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ع 180

(3:180) Those who are niggardly about what Allah has granted them out of His bounty think that niggardli ness is good for them; it is bad for them. What they were niggardly about will turn into a halter round their necks on the Day of Resur-rection. To Allah belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth;[127] and Allah is well aware of what you do.

127. Everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to God alone. Hence the possession and use of anything by man is purely transient. For everyone will be dispossessed of his temporary belongings, and everything will ultimately return to and abide with God. If anyone therefore spends openheartedly in the way of God out of his temporary possessions he does so from property which, ultimately, belongs to God alone. Anyone who hoards his possessions and fails to spend them in the way of God is indeed stupid.

لَقَدْ سَمِعَ اللّٰهُ قَوْلَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ فَقِيْرٌ وَّنَحْنُ اَغْنِيَآءُ ۘ سَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَالُوْا وَقَتْلَهُمُ
الْاَنْۢبِيَآءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ۙ وَّنَقُوْلُ ذُوْقُوْا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيْقِ 181

(3:181) Allah has heard the saying of those who said: 'Allah is poor, and we are rich.[128] We shall record what they have said, and the fact of their slaying the Prophets unjustly, and we shall say to them: Taste now the torment of the Fire.

128. This statement was made by the Jews. On the revelation of the Qur'anic verse (2: 245): 'Who of you will lend Allah a goodly loan?', the Jews began to ridicule it and said: 'Look, God has now gone bankrupt and has begun to beg of His creatures for loans.' (For this statement made by the Jews see the Tradition mentioned by Ibn Kathir in his comments on this verse - Ed.)

ذٰلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْكُمْ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيْدِ ۚ 182

(3:182) That is in recompense for what you have done.' Allah does no wrong to His servants.

اَلَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَهِدَ اِلَيْنَآ اَلَّا نُؤْمِنَ لِرَسُوْلٍ حَتّٰى يَاْتِيَنَا بِقُرْبَانٍ تَاْكُلُهُ النَّارُ ۭ قُلْ
قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْ قَبْلِيْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَبِالَّذِيْ قُلْتُمْ فَلِمَ قَتَلْتُمُوْهُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ
صٰدِقِيْنَ 183

(3:183) To those who say: 'Allah has directed us that we accept none as Messenger until he makes an offering that the fire will consume', say: 'Other Messengers came to you before me with clear signs, and with the sign you have mentioned. So why did you slay them, if what you say is true?[129]

129. The Bible mentions at several places that the token of Divine acceptance of a person's sacrificial offering was the appearance of a mysterious fire which consumed the offering. (See Judges 6: 20-1 and 13: 19-20; 2 Chronicles 7: 1-2.) The Bible does not state, however, that the consuming fire was an indispensable token of prophethood and that anyone not endowed with that miracle could not be a Prophet. The Jews in discussing the claim of Muhammad (peace be on him) to be a Messenger of God brought up the question of this miraculous sign, and used it as a pretext for denying that claim. There was even clearer evidence of the Jews' hostility to Truth: they had not hesitated to murder a number of Prophets who had been endowed with the miracle of consuming fire. The Bible mentions, for example, the Prophet Elijah who had challenged the worshippers of Ba'l to sacrifice a bull, promising that he too would sacrifice a bull. He stated that the offering of the one who

was truthful would be consumed by the miraculous fire. The confrontation took place before a large crowd and it was Elijah's sacrifice which was consumed by the fire. This so antagonized the Ba'l-worshipping Queen that the henpecked King decided to put the Prophet Elijah to death. Elijah was forced to leave his homeland and take refuge in the mountains of Sinai. (See 1 Kings 18 and 19.) The Jews are told in effect: 'How dare you ask for the miracle of the consuming fire when in the past you have not even refrained from murdering Prophets who performed that miracle?'

فَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كُذِّبَ رُسُلٌ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ جَآءُو بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَالْكِتٰبِ
الْمُنِيرِ 184

(3:184) Now, if they give the lie to you, then other Messengers who came bearing clear signs and scriptures and the illuminating Book were also given the lie before you.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَآئِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ۗ وَإِنَّمَا تُوَفَّوْنَ أُجُورَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۖ فَمَنْ زُحْزِحَ عَنِ النَّارِ
وَأُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ ۗ وَمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَآ إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ 185

(3:185) Everyone is bound to taste death and you shall receive your full reward on the Day of Resurrection. Then, whoever is spared the Fire and is admitted to Paradise has indeed been successful. The life of this world is merely an illusory enjoyment.[130]

130. Whoever considers the effects of his actions in this earthly life to be of crucial significance, and sees in them the criteria of right and wrong, the criteria of that which leads either to one's ultimate salvation or to one's doom, falls prey to a serious misconception. The fact that a person is outstandingly successful in life does not necessarily prove that he is either not prove that he has either strayed from the right way or is out of favour with God. The earthly results of a man's actions are often quite different from the ones he will see in the Next Life. What is of true importance is what will happen in that eternal life rather than in this transient one.

لَتُبْلَوُنَّ فِيٓ أَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنفُسِكُمْ ۖ وَلَتَسْمَعُنَّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ
وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوٓا أَذًى كَثِيرًا ۚ وَإِن تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ
الْأُمُورِ 186

(3:186) (Believers!) You will certainly be put to test in respect of your properties and lives, and you will certainly hear many hurtful things from those who were granted

the Book before you and those who have associated others with Allah in His divinity. If you remain patient and God-fearing[131] this indeed is a matter of great resolution.

131. Muslims should not lose their self-control in the face of the Jews' invidious taunts and slander. The Jews' accusations, debased talk and false propaganda should not provoke the Muslims into adopting a posture either inconsistent with truth and justice or with the dignity, decorum and high standards of moral conduct that become men of faith.

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُونَهُ فَنَبَذُوهُ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ وَاشْتَرَوْا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۖ فَبِئْسَ مَا يَشْتَرُونَ 187

(3:187) And recall when Allah took a covenant from those who were given the Book: 'You shall explain it to men and not hide it.[132] Then they cast the Book behind their backs, and sold it away for a trivial gain. Evil indeed is their bargain.

132. Although the Jews remembered that some Prophets had been endowed with the miracle of consuming fire, they conveniently forgot their covenant with God at the time they were entrusted with the Scripture, and their mission as the bearers of the Scripture. The 'covenant' to which this verse alludes is mentioned at several places in the Bible. In the last sermon of Moses, cited in Deuteronomy, he again and again calls the attention of Israel to the covenant in the following words: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might. And these words which I command shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.' (Deuteronomy 6: 4-9.)

Then, in his last testament Moses said: 'And on the day you pass over the Jordan to the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall set up large stones, and plaster them with plaster and you shall write upon them all the words of this law, when you pass over to enter the land which the Lord your God gives you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you. And when you have passed over the Jordan, you shall set up these stones, concerning which I command you this day, on Mount Ebal, and you shall plaster them with plaster.' (Deuteronomy 27: 2-4.) When the Levites were handed a copy of the Torah, they were instructed to gather men, women and children every seventh year on the occasion of the Feast of Tabernacles and to recite the entire text to them. But their indifference to the Book of God grew to such a point that seven hundred years later even the priests of the Temple of Solomon and the Jewish ruler of Jerusalem did not know that they had the Book of God with them. (See 2 Kings 22: 8-13.)

لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَفْرَحُوْنَ بِمَآ اَتَوْا وَّيُحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ يُّحْمَدُوْا بِمَا لَمْ يَفْعَلُوْا فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّهُمْ
بِمَفَازَةٍ مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ 188

(3:188) Do not think that those who exult in their misdeeds and love to be praised for what indeed they have not done,[133] do not think that they are secure from chastisement. A painful chastisement awaits them.

133. Such people expected praises to be lavished upon them for being God-fearing, devout and pious, for being sincere servants of the true faith, for being defenders of God's Law and for having reformed and purified the lives of people, even though none of this might be true. They wanted people to go about trumpeting that such and such a person had made great sacrifices in the cause of God and had sincerely guided people to the right way even though the facts might be the reverse of what they claimed.

وَلِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ع 189

(3:189) To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth; and Allah is All-Powerful. indeed been successful.

اِنَّ فِيْ خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّاُولِي
الْاَلْبَابِ ۙ صلے 190

(3:190) Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth,[134] and in the alternation of night and day, there are signs for men of understanding.

134. This section constitutes the conclusion of the present surah. It is related not so much to the verses which immediately precede it as to the entire surah. In order to grasp its significance one should particularly bear in mind our introductory remarks to this surah. (See pp. 229 ff. above.)

الَّذِيْنَ يَذْكُرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ قِيَامًا وَّقُعُوْدًا وَّعَلٰي جُنُوْبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ فِيْ خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هٰذَا بَاطِلًا ۚ سُبْحٰنَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ 191

(3:191) those who remember Allah while standing, sitting or (reclining) on their backs, and reflect in the creation of the heavens and the earth,[135] (saying): 'Our Lord! You have not created this in vain. Glory to You! Save us, then, from the chastisement of the Fire.[136]

135. This means that with the help of those signs one can easily arrive at the Truth, provided one is not indifferent to God and looks at the phenomenon of the universe thoughtfully.

136. When people look carefully at the order of the universe, it becomes clear to them that it is an order permeated by wisdom and intelligent purpose. It is altogether inconsistent with wisdom that the man endowed with moral consciousness and freedom of choice, the man gifted with reason and discretion, should not be held answerable for his deeds. This kind of reflection leads people to develop a strong conviction that the After-life is a reality. Thanks to this conviction, they begin to seek God's refuge from His punishment.

رَبَّنَآ اِنَّكَ مَنۡ تُدۡخِلِ النَّارَ فَقَدۡ اَخۡزَيۡتَهٗ ؕ وَمَا لِلظّٰلِمِيۡنَ مِنۡ اَنۡصَارٍ 192

(3:192) Our Lord! Whomever You cause to enter the Fire, him You indeed bring to disgrace, and there will be none to succour the wrong-doers.

رَبَّنَآ اِنَّنَا سَمِعۡنَا مُنَادِيًا يُّنَادِىۡ لِلۡاِيۡمَانِ اَنۡ اٰمِنُوۡا بِرَبِّكُمۡ فَاٰمَنَّا ۖ صلے رَبَّنَا فَاغۡفِرۡ لَنَا ذُنُوۡبَنَا وَكَفِّرۡ عَنَّا سَيِّاٰتِنَا وَتَوَفَّنَا مَعَ الۡاَبۡرَارِ ۚ ج 193

(3:193) Our Lord! Indeed we heard a crier calling to the faith saying: "Believe in your Lord"; so we did believe.[137] Our Lord, forgive us our sins, and wipe out our evil deeds and make us die with the truly pious.'

137. Many eras have passed before you. Go about, then, in the land and behold the end of those who gave the lie to (the directives and ordinances of Allah).

رَبَّنَا وَاٰتِنَا مَا وَعَدۡتَّنَا عَلٰى رُسُلِكَ وَلَا تُخۡزِنَا يَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ ؕ اِنَّكَ لَا تُخۡلِفُ الۡمِيۡعَادَ 194

(3:194) 'Our Lord, fulfil what You promised to us through Your Messengers, and disgrace us not on the Day of Resurrection; indeed You never go back on Your promise.[138]

138. Such people do not doubt the fact that God will fulfil His promises. What they do doubt is whether they will be reckoned among those for whom those promises were made. Hence they pray to God to make them worthy of His promised rewards. They are afraid lest they remain targets of slander and ridicule by the unbelievers in this world, and then be disgraced in the Hereafter before the same unbelievers who may mock them once again saying that their faith has been of no avail to them.

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ اَنِّيْ لَآ اُضِيْعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنْكُمْ مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ اَوْ اُنْثٰى ۚ بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْۢ
بَعْضٍ ۚ فَالَّذِيْنَ هَاجَرُوْا وَاُخْرِجُوْا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَاُوْذُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِيْ وَقٰتَلُوْا وَقُتِلُوْا
لَاُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّاٰتِهِمْ وَلَاُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ثَوَابًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ
وَاللّٰهُ عِنْدَهٗ حُسْنُ الثَّوَابِ ۝195

(3:195) Their Lord answered the Prayer thus: "I will not suffer the work of any of you, whether male or female, to go to waste; each of you is from the other.[139] Those who emigrated and were driven out from their homesteads and were persecuted in My cause, and who fought and were slain, indeed I shall wipe out their evil deeds from them and shall certainly admit them to the gardens beneath which rivers flow." This is their reward with their Lord; and with Allah lies the best reward.[140]

139. All humans are equal in the sight of God. God does not have separate criteria for judging the male and the female, the master and the slave, the high and the low.

140. It is reported that some non-Muslims came to the Prophet and said that Moses had produced his staff and had been endowed with the miracle of the shining hand see(Qur'an 7: 108; 20: 22), and that Jesus restored sight to the blind and cured the lepers see (Qur'an 31 49). Other Prophets had also been granted miracles. What miracles, they enquired, could the Prophet perform? In response the Prophet recited all the verses from (verse 190)to the end of this surah, adding that that was what he had brought.

لَا يَغُرَّنَّكَ تَقَلُّبُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فِي الْبِلَادِ ۝196

(3:196) (O Messenger!) Do not let the strutting about of the unbelievers in the land deceive you.

مَتَاعٌ قَلِيْلٌ ۚ ثُمَّ مَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۭ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ۝197

(3:197) This is but a little enjoyment, then their destination is Hell -what an evil resting place!

لٰكِنِ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا نُزُلًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ
اللّٰهِ ۭ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ لِّلْاَبْرَارِ ۝198

(3:198) But those who fear their Lord: theirs shall be the gardens beneath which rivers flow and in which they will live forever: a hospitality from Allah Himself, And Allah's reward is best for the truly pious.

وَإِنَّ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ لَمَنْ يُّؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَمَآ أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَمَآ أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ خٰشِعِيْنَ
لِلّٰهِ ۙ لَا يَشْتَرُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا ۭ أُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۭ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ
سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ 199

(3:199) And among the People of the Book some believe in Allah and what has been revealed to you, and what has been revealed to them. They humble themselves before Allah, and do not sell Allah's revelations for a small price. For these men their reward is with their Lord. Allah is swift in His reckoning.

يٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اصْبِرُوْا وَصَابِرُوْا وَرَابِطُوْا ۣ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ۝200

(3:200) Believers, be steadfast, and vie in steadfastness,[141] stand firm in your faith, and hold Allah in fear that you may attain true success.

141. The original Arabic word is " sabiru". This has two possible meanings. One is that whenever they are in confrontation with unbelievers, the believers should endure even greater hardships for their cause, and display a higher degree of fortitude than the unbelievers. The other is that the believers should try to excel one another in facing the opposition and hostility of unbelievers with courage and fortitude.

4. Surah An Nisa (The Women)

Period of Revelation

This Surah comprises several discourses which were revealed on different occasions during the period ranging probably between the end of A.H. 3 and the end of A.H. 4 or the beginning of A.H. 5. Although it is difficult to determine the exact dates of their revelations, yet it is possible to assign to them a fairly correct period with the help of the Commandments and the events mentioned therein and the Traditions concerning them. A few instances are given below by way of illustration:

1. We know that the instructions about the division of inheritance of the martyrs and for the safeguard of the rights of the orphans were sent down after the Battle of Uhd in which 70 Muslims were killed. Then naturally the question of the division of the inheritance of the martyrs and the safeguard of the rights of their orphans arose in many families at Al-Madinah. From this we conclude that vv. 1 -28 were revealed on that occasion.
2. We learn from the Traditions that the Commandment about salat during war time was given on the occasion of Zat-ur-Riqa'a, an expedition which took place in A. H. 4. From this we conclude that the discourse containing v. 102 was revealed on that occasion.
3. The last warning (v. 47) to the Jews was given before the Banu Nadir were exiled from Al-Madinah in Rabi'-ulAwwal, A. H. 4. From this it may safely be concluded that the discourse containing v. 47 must have been revealed some time before that date.
4. The permission about tayammum (the performance of ablutions with pure dust, in case no water be available) was given during the Bani-al-Mustaliq expedition, which took place in A. H. 5.. Therefore the probable period of the revelation of the discourse containing v. 43 was A. H. 5.

Topics and Their Background

Let us now consider the social and historical considerations of the period in order to understand the Surah. All the discourses in this Surah deal with three main problems which confronted the Holy Prophet at the time. First of all, he was engaged in bringing about an all round development of the Islamic Community that had been formed at the time of his migration to Al-Madinah. For this purpose he was introducing new moral, cultural, social, economic and political ways in place of the old ones of the pre-Islamic period. The second thing that occupied his attention and efforts was the bitter struggle that was going on with the mushrik Arabs, the Jewish clans and the hypocrites who were opposing tooth and nail his mission of reform. Above all he had to propagate Islam in the face of the bitter opposition of these powers of evil with a view to capturing more and more minds and hearts.

Accordingly, detailed instructions have been given for the consolidation and strengthening of the Islamic Community in continuation of those given in Al-Baqarah. Principles for the smooth running of family life have been laid down and ways of settling family disputes have been taught. Rules have been prescribed for marriage and rights of wife and husband have been apportioned fairly and equitably. The status of women in the society has been

determined and the declaration of the rights of orphans has been made laws and regulations have been laid down for the division of inheritance, and instructions have been given to reform economic affairs. The foundation of the penal code has been laid down drinking has been prohibited, and instructions have been given for cleanliness and purity. The Muslims have been taught the kind of relations good men should have with their Allah and fellow men. Instructions have been given for the maintenance of discipline in the Muslim Community.

The moral and religious condition of the people of the Book has been reviewed to teach lessons to the Muslims and to forewarn them to refrain from following in their footsteps. The conduct of the hypocrites has been criticized and the distinctive features of hypocrisy and true faith have been clearly marked off to enable the Muslims to distinguish between the two.

In order to cope with the aftermath of the Battle of Uhd, Inspiring discourses were sent down to urge the Muslims to face the enemy bravely, for the defeat in the Battle had so emboldened the mushrik Arab clans and the neighboring Jews and the hypocrites at home that they were threatening the Muslims on all sides. At this critical juncture, Allah filled the Muslims with courage and gave them such instructions as were needed during that period of war clouds. In order to counteract the fearful rumors that were being spread by the hypocrites and the Muslims of weak faith, they were asked to make a thorough inquiry into them and to inform the responsible people about them. Then they were experiencing some difficulties in offering their salat during the expeditions to some places where no water was available for performing their ablutions, etc. In such cases they were allowed to cleanse themselves with pure earth and to shorten the salat or to offer the "Salat of Fear", when they were faced with danger. Instructions were also given for the solution of the puzzling problem of those Muslims who were scattered among the unbelieving Arab clans and were often involved in war. They were asked to migrate to Al-Madinah, the abode of Islam.

This Surah also deals with the case of Bani Nadir who were showing a hostile and menacing attitude, in spite of the peace treaties they had made with the Muslims. They were openly siding with the enemies of Islam and hatching plots against the Holy Prophet and the Muslim Community even at Al-Madinah itself. They were taken to task for their inimical behavior and given a final warning to change their attitude, and were at last exiled from Al-Madinah on account of their misconduct.

The problem of the hypocrites, who had become very troublesome at that time, was involving the Believers in difficulties-- Therefore they were divided into different categories to enable the Muslims to deal with them appropriately.

Clear instructions were also given regarding the attitude they should adopt towards the non-belligerent clans. The most important thing needed at that time was to prepare the Muslims for the bitter struggle with the opponents of Islam. For this purpose greatest importance was attached to their character building, for it was obvious that the small Muslim Community could only come out successful, nay, survive, if the Muslims possessed high moral character. They were, therefore, enjoined to adopt the highest moral qualities and were severely criticized whenever any moral weakness was detected in them.

Though this Surah mainly deals with the moral and social reforms, yet due attention has been paid to propagation of Islam. On the one hand, the superiority of the Islamic morality and culture has been established over that of the Jews, Christians and mushriks; on the other hand, their wrong religious conceptions, their wrong morality and their evil acts have been criticized to prepare the ground for inviting them to the way of the Truth.

Subject: Consolidation of the Islamic Community

The main object of this Surah is to teach the Muslims the ways that unite a people and make them firm and strong. Introductions for the stability of family, which is the nucleus of community have been given. Then they have been urged to prepare themselves for defense. Side by side with these, they have been taught the importance of the propagation of Islam. Above all, the importance of the highest moral character in the scheme of consolidation of the Community has been impressed.

Topics and their Interconnection

Just, fair and equitable laws and regulations for the smooth running of family life have been laid down for the husband and wife. Detailed instructions have been given for the division of inheritance and due regard has been paid to the rights of orphans. **1 - 35**

In order to inculcate the right spirit for the observance of rules and regulations, the Muslims have been enjoined to show generosity to all around them and to be free from meanness, selfishness, stinginess of mind, because this is essential for the consolidation of the Communities and helpful for the propagation of Islam. **36 - 42**

The ways of the purification of mind and body for the offering of Salat have been taught because it plays the most important part in every scheme of moral and social reform. **43**

After moral preparation, instructions for defense have been given. First of all, the Muslims have been warned to be on their guard against the cunning machinations and vile practices of the local Jews who were hostile to the New Movement. This caution was necessary for removing some possible misunderstanding that might have arisen on account of the pre-Islamic alliance between the people of Al-Madinah and the Jews. **44 - 57**

Then they have been enjoined to place their trusts and offices of trust in the custody of honest and qualified persons, and to do what is just and right, and to obey Allah and His Messenger and those among themselves entrusted with the conduct of their affairs and to turn to Allah and His Messenger for the settlement of their disputes. As such an attitude and behavior alone can ensure consolidation, they have been strongly warned that any deviation from this path will lead to their disintegration. **58 - 72**

After this pre-requisite, they have been exhorted to make preparation for defense and to fight bravely for the cause of Islam, without showing any kind of cowardice or weakness. They have also been warned to be on their guard against hypocrites. A line of demarcation has been drawn to distinguish the intentional shirkers from the helpless devotees. **73 - 100**

Here again instructions have been given for the offering of Salat during military campaigns and actual fighting. This is to impress the importance of Salat even at the time of fear and danger. **101 - 103**

Before proceeding on to the next topic, the Muslims have been exhorted to persevere in their fight without showing any kind of weakness. **104**

In order to make the Islamic Community firm and strong for defense, the Muslims have been enjoined to observe the highest standard of justice. The Muslims are required to deal out strict justice even in case of the enemy, with whom they might be involved in war. They should also settle disputes between husband and wife with justice. In order to ensure this, they should keep their beliefs and deeds absolutely free from every kind of impurity and should become the standard bearers of justice. **105 - 135**

Resuming the theme of defense, the Muslims have been warned to be on their guard against their enemies. They have been admonished to take necessary precautions against the machinations of the hypocrites and the unbelievers and the people of the Book. As belief in Allah, and Revelation and Life-after-death is the only safeguard against every kind of enemy, they should sincerely believe in and follow His Messenger, Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him). **136 - 175**

Though this verse also deals with the family laws contained in verses **1 - 35**, it has been added as a supplement at the end of this Surah because it was revealed long after An-Nisa was being recited as a complete Surah. **176**

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

یٰۤاَیُّہَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوۡا رَبَّکُمُ الَّذِیۡ خَلَقَکُمۡ مِّنۡ نَّفۡسٍ وَّاحِدَۃٍ وَّخَلَقَ مِنۡہَا زَوۡجَہَا وَبَثَّ
مِنۡہُمَا رِجَالًا کَثِیۡرًا وَّنِسَآءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰہَ الَّذِیۡ تَسَآءَلُوۡنَ بِہٖ وَالۡاَرۡحَامَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ کَانَ
عَلَیۡکُمۡ رَقِیۡبًا ۱

(4:1) O men! Fear your Lord Who created you from a single being and out of it created its mate; and out of the two spread many men and women.[1] Fear Allah in Whose name you plead for rights, and heed the ties of kinship. Surely, Allah is ever watchful over you.

1. What are the mutual rights of human beings, what are the principles on which a sound and stable family life can be established, are questions that are discussed a little further on in this surah. As an appropriate introduction to the subject, the surah opens by exhorting the believers to fear God and to avoid courting His displeasure, and by urging them to recognize that all human beings have sprung from the same root and that all of them are, therefore, of one another's flesh and blood. The expression 'Who created you from a single

being (nafs)' indicates that the creation of the human species began with the creation of one individual. At another place, the Qur'an specifies that the one person from whom the human race spread in the world was Adam. (For Adam being the progenitor of mankind see Towards Understanding the Qur'an, (Surah 2, verses 31 f.) and (Surah al-A'raf: 11), etc. - Ed.)

The details how out of that 'being' its mate was created are not known to us. The explanation which is generally given by the commentators of the Qur'an and which is also found in the Bible is that Eve was, created out of a rib of Adam. (The Talmud is even more detailed in that it states that Eve was created out of Adam's thirteenth rib on the left side.) The Qur'an, however, is silent on the matter and the tradition which is adduced in support of this statement does not mean what it is often thought to be. It is thus better that we leave the matter in the same state of ambiguity in which it was left by God, rather than waste our time trying to determine, in detail, the actual process of the creation of man's mate.

'The author alludes to, but does not quote, the text of the following tradition:

Muslim, 'Rida'ah', 61 and 62; Tirmidhi, 'Talaq'' 12; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 2, pp. 428, 449, 497, 530 and vol. 6, p. 279 - Ed.

وَاٰتُوا الْيَتٰمٰٓى اَمْوَالَهُمْ وَلَا تَتَبَدَّلُوا الْخَبِيْثَ بِالطَّيِّبِ ۖ وَلَا تَاْكُلُوْٓا اَمْوَالَهُمْ اِلٰٓى
اَمْوَالِكُمْ ۭ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ حُوْبًا كَبِيْرًا 2

(4:2) Give orphans their property,[2] and do not exchange the bad for the good,[3] and do not eat up their property by mixing it with your own. This surely is a mighty sin.

2. God directs the guardians of the orphans to spend out of the latter's property while they are still minors, and to restore it to them when they attain majority.

3. The order not to exchange the bad for the good has several meanings. On the one hand, it means that one should not replace honest by dishonest living. At the same time, it also means that one should not exchange one's own property which is of little value for the more valuable property of the orphans.

وَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَلَّا تُقْسِطُوْا فِي الْيَتٰمٰى فَانْكِحُوْا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ النِّسَاۗءِ مَثْنٰى وَثُلٰثَ
وَرُبٰعَ ۚ فَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا فَوَاحِدَةً اَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ ۭ ذٰلِكَ اَدْنٰٓى اَلَّا
تَعُوْلُوْا ۭ 3

(4:3) If you fear that you might not treat the orphans justly, then marry the women that seem good to you: two, or three, or four.[4] If you fear that you will not be able to

treat them justly, then marry (only) one,[5] or marry from among those whom your right hands possess.[6] This will make it more likely that you will avoid injustice.

4. Commentators have explained this in the following ways:

(i) There is the view of 'A'ishah who says that men tended to marry orphan girls who were under their guardianship out of consideration for either their property, beauty or because they thought they would be able to treat them according to their whims, as they had no one to protect them. After marriage such men sometimes committed excesses against these girls. It is in this context that the Muslims are told that if they fear they will not be able to do justice to the orphan girls, then they should marry other girls whom they like. (This interpretation seems to be supported by (verse 127)of this surah.)

(ii) The second view is that of Ibn 'Abbas and his disciple 'Ikrimah who expressed the opinion that in the Jahiliyah period there was no limit on the number of wives a man could take. The result was that a man sometimes married as many as ten women and, when expenses increased because of a large family, he encroached on the rights either of his orphan nephews or other relatives. It was in this context that God fixed the limit of four wives and instructed the Muslims that they may marry up to four wives providing they possessed the capacity to treat them equitably.

(iii) Sa'id b. Jubayr, Qatadah and some other commentators say that while the Arabs of the Jahiliyah period did not approve of subjecting orphans to wrong, they had no concept of justice and equity with regard to women. They married as many women as they wanted and then subjected them to injustice and oppression. It is in this context that people are told that if they fear perpetrating wrongs on orphans they ought to be equally worried about perpetrating them on women. In the first place they should never marry more than four, and of those four, they should marry only as many as they can treat fairly.

Each of the three interpretations is plausible and all three may possibly be correct. Moreover, the verse could also mean that if a person does not find himself able to treat orphans in a fair manner, then he might as well marry the women who are looking after those orphans.

5. Muslim jurists are agreed that according to this verse the maximum number Of wives has been fixed at four. This conclusion is also supported by traditions. It is reported that when Ghaylan, the chief of Ta'if, embraced Islam he had nine wives. The Prophet (peace be on him) ordered him to keep only four wives and divorce the rest. Another person, Nawfal b. Mu'awiyah, had five wives. The Prophet (peace be on him) ordered him to divorce one of them. (For the relevant traditions see the comments of Ibn Kathir and Qurtubi on this verse - Ed.)

This verse stipulates that marrying more wives than one is permissible on the condition that one treats his wives equitably. A person who avails himself of this permission granted by God to have a plurality of wives, and disregards the condition laid down by God to treat them equitably has not acted in good faith with God. In case there are complaints from wives that they are not being treated equitably, the Islamic state has the right to intervene and redress such grievances.

Some people who have been overwhelmed and overawed by the Christianized outlook of Westerners have tried to prove that the real aim of the Qur'an was to put an end to polygamy (which, in their opinion, is intrinsically evil). Since it was widely practised at that time, however, Islam confined itself to placing restrictions on it. Such arguments only show the mental slavery to which these people have succumbed. That polygamy is an evil per se is an unacceptable proposition, for under certain conditions it becomes a moral and social necessity. If polygamy is totally prohibited men who cannot remain satisfied with only one wife will look outside the bounds of matrimonial life and create sexual anarchy and corruption. This is likely to cause much greater harm than polygamy to the moral and social order. For this reason the Qur'an has allowed those who feel the need for it to resort to polygamy. Those who consider it an evil in itself may certainly denounce it in disregard of the Qur'an and may even argue for its abolition. But they have no right to attribute such a view to the Qur'an, for it has expressed its permission of polygamy in quite categorical terms. Indeed, there is not the slightest hint in the Qur'an that could justify the conclusion that it advocates abolition of polygamy. (For further elaboration see my book, Sunnat k A'iniHaythiyat, Lahore, 3rd edition, 1975, pp. 307-16.)

6. This expression denotes 'slave-girls', i.e. female captives of war who are distributed by the state among individuals. The purpose of this verse is to tell men that if their financial circumstances do not permit them to support a free woman as their wife then they may marry a slave-girl (see verse 25 below); if they consider it necessary to have more than one wife and it would be difficult for them to treat their free wives equitably they may resort to slave-girls, for here the burden of obligations is lighter by comparison. (For further injunctions regarding slave-girls seen. 44 below.)

وَاٰتُوا النِّسَآءَ صَدُقٰتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً ؕ فَاِنْ طِبْنَ لَكُمْ عَنْ شَیْءٍ مِّنْهُ نَفْسًا فَكُلُوْهُ هَنِیْٓـًٔا

مَّرِیْٓـًٔا 4

(4:4) Give women their bridal-due in good cheer (considering it a duty); but if they willingly remit any part of it, consume it with good pleasure.7

7. In the opinion of 'Umar and Shurayh, if a woman gives up either the whole or a part of the bridal-due (mahr) in favour of her husband and later reclaims it from him then he is bound to pay it. The claim on the woman's part would be tantamount to her unwillingness to remit either the whole or a part of the bridal-due. For further details see the section entitled 'Mahr' in my book Huquq al-Zawjayn, 16th edition, Lahore, 1976, pp. 31-3 and 119-23.

وَلَا تُؤْتُوا السُّفَهَآءَ اَمْوَالَكُمُ الَّتِیْ جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ قِیٰمًا وَّارْزُقُوْهُمْ فِیْهَا وَاكْسُوْهُمْ

وَقُوْلُوْا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا 5

(4:5) Do not entrust your properties - which Allah hasmade a means of support for you - to the weak of understanding, but maintain and clothe them out of it, and say to them a kind word of admonition.[8]

8. This verse covers a very wide spectrum of meaning. It emphasizes to the community of believers that wealth is one of the main supports of human life. It should not be left, therefore, at the mercy of those who are incompetent to handle it properly. By misusing wealth such people might destroy the bases of social and economic life and wreck the moral foundations of human society. The right to private property is not so absolute; if a person is incapable of exercising this right properly and if he might cause grave social harm by wanton expenditure then his right may be forfeited. The necessities of such a person's life should always be provided for. But so far as the exercise of his proprietary rights is concerned, due restrictions should be placed on it in order that the owner is restrained from spending his resources in brazen disregard of the dictates of morality, collective welfare and economic interests of the community. According to the directive embodied in the verse, anyone who entrusts his property to someone else's care should satisfy himself that the latter is capable of making good use of it. At a higher level, it is incumbent upon an Islamic state to take over the management of the properties of those who either lack totally the capacity for good management or cause social damage by misuse. In such cases the state is responsible for providing these people with their livelihood.

وَابْتَلُوا الْيَتٰمٰى حَتّٰٓى اِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ ۚ فَاِنْ اٰنَسْتُمْ مِّنْهُمْ رُشْدًا فَادْفَعُوْٓا اِلَيْهِمْ اَمْوَالَهُمْ ۚ
وَلَا تَاْكُلُوْهَآ اِسْرَافًا وَّبِدَارًا اَنْ يَّكْبَرُوْا ۭ وَمَنْ كَانَ غَنِيًّا فَلْيَسْتَعْفِفْ ۚ وَمَنْ كَانَ فَقِيْرًا
فَلْيَاْكُلْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۭ فَاِذَا دَفَعْتُمْ اِلَيْهِمْ اَمْوَالَهُمْ فَاَشْهِدُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ ۭ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ
حَسِيْبًا 6

(4:6) Test the orphans until they reach the age of marriage,[9] and then if you find them mature of mind hand over to them their property,[10] and do not eat it up by either spending extravagantly or in haste, fearing that they would grow up (and claim it). If the guardian of the orphan is rich let him abstain entirely (from his ward's property); and if he is poor, let him partake of it in a fair measure.[11] When you hand over their property to them let there be witnesses on their behalf. Allah is sufficient to take account (of your deeds).

9. When such people approach their majority their mental development should be watched so as to determine to what extent they have become capable of managing their own affairs.

10. Two conditions have been laid down for handing over the charge of their properties to such people. The first of these is the attainment of puberty, and the second is that of mental maturity - i.e. the capacity to manage their affairs in a sound and appropriate manner. There

is full agreement among Muslim jurists with regard to the first condition. As for the second condition, Abu Hanifah is of the opinion that if an orphan does not attain mental maturity after he has attained puberty, the guardian of the orphan should wait for a maximum of seven years after which he should hand over the property to its owner regardless of whether he has attained maturity or not. According to Abu Yusuf, Muhammad b. al-Hasan and Shafi'i, maturity is an indispensable pre-condition for the handing over of property. If one were to apply the doctrine of the latter jurists it would probably be more appropriate to refer particular cases to a judge under Islamic law. If the judge is convinced that the person concerned lacks maturity he should make adequate arrangements for the supervision of that person's financial affairs. (For a more complete study of the subject see Jassas, vol. 2, pp. 59 ff.; Ibn Rushd, Biddyat al-Mujtahid, 2 vols., Cairo, Al-Maktabahal-Tijariyahal-Kubra, n.d., vol. 2, pp. 275ff.-Ed.)

11. The guardian is entitled to remuneration for his service. The amount of this remuneration should be such as is deemed to be fair by neutral and reasonable people. Moreover, the guardian is instructed that he should take a fixed and known amount by way of remuneration, that he should take it openly rather than secretly, and that he should keep an account of it.

لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ ۖ وَلِلنِّسَآءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ
وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ أَوْ كَثُرَ ۚ نَصِيبًا مَّفْرُوضًا 7

(4:7) Just as there is a share for men in what their parents and kinsfolk leave behind, so there is a share for women in what their parents and kinsfolk leave behind - be it little or much[12] - a share ordained (by Allah).

12. This verse embodies five legal injunctions. First, that women as well as men are entitled to inheritance. Second, that inheritance, however meagre it might be, should be distributed; even if the deceased has left a small piece of cloth and he has ten heirs, that piece of cloth should be distributed among them all. This does not exclude, however, the permissibility of one heir purchasing the shares of other heirs with their consent. Third, this verse indicates that the law of inheritance is applicable to all kinds of property - movable and immovable, agricultural, industrial and so on. Fourth, it shows that the right of inheritance comes into force as soon as a person dies leaving property. Fifth, it implies the rule that immediate blood-relatives exclude those that are further removed.

وَإِذَا حَضَرَ الْقِسْمَةَ أُولُوا الْقُرْبٰى وَالْيَتٰمٰى وَالْمَسٰكِينُ فَارْزُقُوهُم مِّنْهُ وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ
قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا 8

(4:8) If other near of kin orphans and needy are pre sent at the time of division of inheritance give them some thing of it and speak to them kindly.[13]

13. This directive is addressed to the heirs of the deceased. They are told not to be niggardly towards their relatives whether they be close or distant. Nor should they be niggardly towards either poor and needy members of the family or towards orphans who are present when the inheritance is distributed. Although they are not legally entitled to any share it is seemly for people to act magnanimously and give them something out of their inheritance, and especially to desist from making hurtful remarks.

وَلْيَخْشَ الَّذِيْنَ لَوْ تَرَكُوْا مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّةً ضِعٰفًا خَافُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ ۠ فَلْيَتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَلْيَقُوْلُوْا قَوْلًا سَدِيْدًا 9

(4:9) And let them fear, those who, if they would themselves leave behind helpless offspring, they would surely have been fearful on their account. Let them, then, fear Allah and make the right statement.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَاْكُلُوْنَ اَمْوَالَ الْيَتٰمٰى ظُلْمًا اِنَّمَا يَاْكُلُوْنَ فِيْ بُطُوْنِهِمْ نَارًا ؕ وَسَيَصْلَوْنَ سَعِيْرًا ع 10

(4:10) Behold, those who wrongfully devour the properties of orphans only fill their bellies with fire. Soon they will burn in the Blazing Flame.[14]

14. It is reported in a tradition that after the Battle of Uhud the wife of Sa'd b. Rabi' brought her two daughters to the Prophet (peace be on him) and said: 'O Messenger of God! These are daughters of Sa'd who was with you in the Battle of Uhud, where he was martyred. The girls' uncles have seized the whole property and left nothing for them. Who will now marry these girls?' It was after this incident that these verses were revealed. (See Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni's comments on this verse in his Safwat al-Tafasir and the sources quoted therein - Ed.)

يُوْصِيْكُمُ اللّٰهُ فِيْۤ اَوْلَادِكُمْ ۗ لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ ۚ فَاِنْ كُنَّ نِسَآءً فَوْقَ اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُنَّ ثُلُثَا مَا تَرَكَ ۚ وَاِنْ كَانَتْ وَاحِدَةً فَلَهَا النِّصْفُ ؕ وَلِاَبَوَيْهِ لِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ مِمَّا تَرَكَ اِنْ كَانَ لَهٗ وَلَدٌ ۚ فَاِنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ وَلَدٌ وَّوَرِثَهٗۤ اَبَوٰهُ فَلِاُمِّهِ الثُّلُثُ ؕ فَاِنْ كَانَ لَهٗۤ اِخْوَةٌ فَلِاُمِّهِ السُّدُسُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُّوْصِيْ بِهَاۤ اَوْ دَيْنٍ ؕ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ

وَاَبۡنَآؤُكُمۡ ۚ لَا تَدۡرُوۡنَ اَيُّهُمۡ اَقۡرَبُ لَكُمۡ نَفۡعًا ؕ فَرِيۡضَةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيۡمًا حَكِيۡمًا 11

(4:11) Allah thus commands you concerning your children: the share of the male is like that of two females.[15] If (the heirs of the deceased are) more than two daughters, they shall have two-thirds of the inheritance;[16] and if there is only one daughter, then she shall have half the inheritance. If the deceased has any offspring, each of his parents shall have a sixth of the inheritance;[17] and if the deceased has no child and his parents alone inherit him, then one-third shall go to his mother;[18] and if the deceased has brothers and sisters, then one-sixth shall go to his mother.[19] All these shares are to be given after payment of the bequest he might have made or any debts outstanding against him.[20]

You do not know which of them, your parents or your children, are more beneficial to you. But these portions have been determined by Allah, for He indeed knows all, is cognizant of all beneficent considerations.[21]

15. This is the first general rule in connection with inheritance, viz., that the share of the male should be double that of the female. Since Islamic law imposes greater financial obligations on men in respect of family life and relieves women of a number of such obligations, justice demands that a woman's share in inheritance should be less than that of a man.

16. The same applies in the case where there are two daughters. If the deceased leaves only daughters, and if there are two or more daughters then they will receive two-thirds of the inheritance and the remaining one-third will go to the other heirs. But if the deceased has only one son there is a consensus among jurists that in the absence of other heirs he is entitled to all the property and if the deceased has other heirs, he is entitled to the property left after their shares have been distributed.

17. If the deceased leaves issue each of his parents will receive one-sixth of the inheritance irrespective of whether the issue consists either only of daughters, only of sons, of both sons and daughters, of just one son or just one daughter. The remaining two-thirds will be distributed among the rest of the heirs.

18. If there are no other heirs than the parents, the remaining two-thirds will go to the share of the father; otherwise the two-thirds will be distributed between the father and other heirs.

19. In the case where the deceased also has brothers and sisters the share of the mother will be one-sixth rather than one-third. In this case the sixth that was deducted from the share of the mother will be added to that of the father, for in this circumstance the father's obligations are heavier. It should be noted that if the parents of the deceased are alive, the brothers and sisters will not be entitled to any share in the inheritance.

20. The mention of bequest precedes the mention of debt, for although not everyone need be encumbered with debt it is necessary that everyone should make a bequest. (However, other Mufassirun (exegetes) regard making a bequest as a discretionary act - Ed.) As for legalities, there is consensus among Muslims that the payment of debts takes precedence over the payment of bequests, i.e. if the deceased owes a debt and also leaves a bequest, the debt will first be paid out of the inheritance, and only then will his bequest be fulfilled.

We have already stated in connection with bequest (see Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 2, n. 182) that a man has the right to bequeath up to a maximum of one-third of his inheritance. The principle laid down in regard to bequest is that a man can -^\ot a portion of his inheritance either to a relative who is not legally entitled to any prescribed share in the inheritance or to others whom he considers deserving of help, e.g. either an orphaned grandson or grand-daughter, the widow of a son in financial distress, any brother, sister, brother's wife, nephew, and other relatives who seem to be in need of support. If there are no such relatives bequests can be made either to other needy people or for charitable purposes. In short, the Law has fixed regulations for the distribution of two-thirds or more of one's inheritance, out of which the legal heirs are to receive their shares according to the regulations laid down by the Law. A maximum of one-third of the inheritance has been left to the discretion of the person concerned, who can dispose of it by means of bequest in light of his particular family circumstances. If anyone makes either an inequitable bequest or misuses his discretion so as to hurt the legitimate rights of others, it is permissible for the members of the family to rectify the situation either by mutual agreement or by requesting a judge to intervene. For further details see my booklet Yatim Pot6 ki Wirathat ka Mas'alah, Lahore, 1954.

21. This is in response to those feeble-minded people who do not fully appreciate God's law of inheritance and try to fill, with the help of their limited intellect, what they see as gaps in God's Laws.

وَلَكُمْ نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ أَزْوَاجُكُمْ إِن لَّمْ يَكُن لَّهُنَّ وَلَدٌ ۚ فَإِن كَانَ لَهُنَّ وَلَدٌ فَلَكُمُ
الرُّبُعُ مِمَّا تَرَكْنَ مِن بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوصِينَ بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ ۚ وَلَهُنَّ الرُّبُعُ مِمَّا تَرَكْتُمْ إِن لَّمْ
يَكُن لَّكُمْ وَلَدٌ ۚ فَإِن كَانَ لَكُمْ وَلَدٌ فَلَهُنَّ الثُّمُنُ مِمَّا تَرَكْتُم مِّن بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ تُوصُونَ
بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ ۗ وَإِن كَانَ رَجُلٌ يُورَثُ كَلَالَةً أَوِ امْرَأَةٌ وَلَهُ أَخٌ أَوْ أُخْتٌ فَلِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ
مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ ۚ فَإِن كَانُوا أَكْثَرَ مِن ذَٰلِكَ فَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ فِي الثُّلُثِ مِن بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ
يُوصَىٰ بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ ۙ غَيْرَ مُضَارٍّ ۚ وَصِيَّةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَلِيمٌ ۗ 12

(4:12) And to you belongs half of whatever has been left behind by your wives if they die childless; but if they have any children then to you belongs a fourth of what they have left behind, after payment of the bequest they might have made or any debts outstanding against them. And to them belongs a fourth of what you leave behind, if you die childless; and if you have any child then to them belongs one-eighth of what you have left behind,[22] after the payment of the bequest you might have made or any debts outstanding against you. And if the man or woman has no heir in the direct line, but has a brother or sister, then each of these shall inherit one-sixth; but if they are more than two, then they shall inherit one-third of the inheritance,[23] after the payment of the bequest that might have been made or any debts outstanding against the deceased, providing that the bequest causes no injury.[24] This is a commandment from Allah; Allah is All-Knowing, All-Forbearing.[25]

22. Whether a man has one wife or several wives the share of the wife/wives is one-eighth of the inheritance when the deceased has issue, and one-fourth when he has no issue. The share of the wives, whether one-fourth or one-eighth, will be distributed equally among them.

23. The remaining five-sixths or two-thirds of the inheritance goes to the legal heirs, if any. Where there are no legal heirs, the person concerned is entitled to make a bequest with regard to the remaining part of the inheritance. Commentators are agreed that the sisters and brothers mentioned here mean half-brothers and half-sisters, i.e. those who have kinship with the deceased on the mother's side. Injunctions affecting full brothers and sisters, and half-brothers and half-sisters on the father's side are mentioned towards the end of the present surah. See (verse 176 below, and nn. 219 ff. - Ed.)

24.'Bequests which cause injury' are those that entail depriving deserving kin of their legitimate rights. Similarly, the debt which causes injury is the fake debt which one falsely admits to owing, and any other device to which one resorts merely in order to deprive the rightful heirs of their shares in inheritance. This kind of injury has been declared to be a major sin in a tradition from the Prophet (peace be on him). According to another tradition the Prophet (peace be on him) said that even if a man worked all his life, like the men of Paradise, yet ended his life's record by making a wrongful bequest, he would be consigned to Hell. (Ibn Kathir, vol. 2, p. 218.) Such an act of deliberate injury and calculated effort designed to deprive people of their due rights is always a sin, but it is mentioned by God particularly in the case of kalalah (the person who leaves behind neither parents nor descendants). (For kalalah see nn. 219 ff. below - Ed.) The reason for this seems to be that a man who has neither issue nor parents is often prone to squander his property and somehow prevent his distant relatives from receiving any share in the inheritance.

25. God's knowledge is referred to here for two reasons. First, to stress that if a man violates God's Law he will not be able to escape from the grip of God, for He is Omniscient. Second, to emphasize that the shares in inheritance fixed by God are absolutely sound, for God knows better than His creatures where their true interests lie. Reference is also made to God's forbearance. This is in order to point out that harshness could not characterize the laws laid down by God in respect of inheritance since He Himself is not harsh. On the contrary, the aim of God's laws is to prevent people suffering inconvenience and hardship.

تِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ
خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ وَذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ 13

(4:13) These are the bounds set by Allah. Allah will make the man who obeys Allah and His Messenger enter the Gardens beneath which rivers flow. He will abide there for ever. That is the mighty triumph.

وَمَنْ يَّعْصِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَيَتَعَدَّ حُدُوْدَهٗ يُدْخِلْهُ نَارًا خَالِدًا فِيْهَا ۪ وَلَهٗ عَذَابٌ
مُّهِيْنٌ ع 14

(4:14) And he who disobeys Allah and His Messenger and transgresses the bounds set by Him - him shall Allah cause to enter the Fire. There he will abide. A humiliating chastisement awaits him. [25a]

25a. This is a terrifying verse in which those who either tamper with God's laws of inheritance or violate the legal bounds categorically laid down by God in His Book are warned of unending punishment. It is lamentable that, in spite of these very stern warnings, Muslims have occasionally been guilty of breaching God's laws with the same boldness and insolence as that of the Jews. Disobedience to God's law of inheritance has occasionally assumed the proportion of open rebellion against Him. In some instances, women have been disinherited altogether. In others, the eldest son has been declared the only legal heir. There are also instances where the entire system of inheritance distribution has been replaced by the system of joint family property. In still other instances, the shares of women have been made equal to those of men. In our time a few Muslim states, in imitation of the West, even contrived a new form of disobedience. This consists of imposing death duties so that governments, too, become one of the heirs of the deceased, an heir whose share God had altogether failed to mention! This is despite the fact that under Islamic dispensation governments may assume control of a dead man's inheritance only if it is either unclaimed or if the person concerned has specifically so bequeathed part of his inheritance.

وَالّٰتِىْ يَاْتِيْنَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مِنْ نِّسَآئِكُمْ فَاسْتَشْهِدُوْا عَلَيْهِنَّ اَرْبَعَةً مِّنْكُمْ ۚ فَاِنْ شَهِدُوْا
فَاَمْسِكُوْهُنَّ فِى الْبُيُوْتِ حَتّٰى يَتَوَفّٰىهُنَّ الْمَوْتُ اَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيْلًا 15

(4:15) As for those of your women who are guilty of immoral conduct, call upon four from amongst you to bear witness against them. And if four men do bear witness, confine those women to their houses until either death takes them away or Allah opens some way for them.

وَالَّذٰنِ يَاْتِيٰنِهَا مِنْكُمْ فَاٰذُوْهُمَا ۚ فَاِنْ تَابَا وَاَصْلَحَا فَاَعْرِضُوْا عَنْهُمَا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ

تَوَّابًا رَّحِيْمًا 16

(4:16) Punish both of those among you who are guilty of this sin, then if they repent and mend their ways, leave them alone. For Allah is always ready to accept repentance. He is All-Compassionate.[26]

26. In these two (verses 15-16)the first, preliminary directives for the punishment for unlawful sexual intercourse are stated. The first verse deals with women. The punishment laid down was to confine them until further directives were revealed. The second verse (i.e. 16) relates to both sexes. The injunction lays down that they should be punished - that is, they should be beaten and publicly reproached. Later, another injunction was revealed see (Surah al-Nur 24: 2) which laid down that both the male and female should be given a hundred lashes. These injunctions are necessarily of a preliminary nature since the people of Arabia were neither used to obeying the orders of any established government, the verdicts of any courts of law nor to following any legal code; it would therefore have been unwise to try to force acceptance of a penal code upon them so soon after the establishment of the Islamic state. In due course, the punishments for unlawful sexual intercourse, for slanderous accusations of unchastity against women, and for theft were laid down in their definitive form and served as the basis of that detailed penal code which was enforced by the Prophet (peace be on him) and the Rightly-Guided Caliphs.

The apparent difference between the contents of the two verses led al-Suddi to the misconceived belief that the first verse lays down the punishment for married women, and the second that for unmarried men and women. This is a tenuous explanation unsupported by any serious evidence and argument. Even less convincing is the opinion expressed by Abu Muslim al-Isfahani that the first verse relates to lesbian relations between females, and the second to homosexual relations between males. It is strange that al-Isfahani ignored the basic fact that the Qur'an seeks merely to chart a broad code of law and morality and hence deals only with fundamental questions. It is inconsistent with the majestic style of the Qur'an to discuss secondary details which have been left to people to decide through the exercise of their legal judgement. It is for this reason that when the problem of fixing a punishment for sodomy came up for consideration after the time of the Prophet (peace be on him), none of the Companions thought that the above-mentioned verse contained any relevant injunction.

اِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللّٰهِ لِلَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ السُّوْۗءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ يَتُوْبُوْنَ مِنْ قَرِيْبٍ فَاُولٰۗىِٕكَ

يَتُوْبُ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا 17

(4:17) (And remember that) Allah's acceptance of repentance is only for those who commit evil out of ignorance and then soon repent. It is towards such persons that Allah turns graciously. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

وَلَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ السَّيِّاٰتِ ۚ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا حَضَرَ اَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ اِنِّيْ
تُبْتُ الْـٰٔنَ وَلَا الَّذِيْنَ يَمُوْتُوْنَ وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ اَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا 18

(4:18) But of no avail is repentance of those who do evil until death approaches any one of them and then he says: 'Now I repent.' Nor is the repentance of those who die in the state of unbelief of any avail to them. For them We have kept in readiness a painful chastisement.[27]

27. The Arabic word tawbah means 'to return, to come back'. A man's tawbah after he has sinned means that God's servant, who had turned away from his Master in disobedience, has repented, and has returned to obedience and service. On the other hand, tawbah on the part of God means that the attention of the Master, which had turned away from His erring servant, has once again turned towards him. In this verse, however, God makes it clear to His servants that tawbah is acceptable only from those who commit errors inadvertently and out of ignorance. Such persons will always find the door of God open for them whenever they turn to Him in repentance.

But this tawbah is not for those who pile sin upon sin throughout their lives in sheer indifference to God and who cry for pardon as soon as they see the angel of death approaching. The Prophet (peace be on him) has warned against this attitude in the following words: 'God accepts the repentance of a slave until the gurgling (of death) begins.' (Tirmidhi, 'Da'wat', 98; Ibn Majah, 'Zuhd', 30; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 2, pp. 132 and 153, and vol. 3, pp. 425 - Ed.) For when the last leaf of a man's book of life has been turned, what opportunity remains for a man to return to righteous conduct? Likewise, if a person spends even the very last moment of his life in a state of disbelief and then on the threshold of the Next Life he comes to discover that the facts are quite contrary to what he had imagined, what sense is there for him to seek forgiveness?

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ اَنْ تَرِثُوا النِّسَاۗءَ كَرْهًا ۭ وَلَا تَعْضُلُوْهُنَّ لِتَذْهَبُوْا
بِبَعْضِ مَآ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّاْتِيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ ۚ وَعَاشِرُوْهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۚ فَاِنْ
كَرِهْتُمُوْهُنَّ فَعَسٰٓى اَنْ تَكْرَهُوْا شَيْـــًٔا وَّيَجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ فِيْهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيْرًا 19

(4:19) Believers! It is not lawful for you to become heirs to women against their will.[28] It is not lawful that you should put constraint upon them that you may take away anything of what you have given them; (you may not put constraint upon them)

unless they are guilty of brazenly immoral conduct.[29] Live with your wives in a good manner. If you dislike them in any manner, it may be that you dislike something in which Allah has placed much good for you.[30]

28. This means that the relatives of the husband should not treat the widow of the deceased as if she were a part of the inheritance and begin imposing their will on her. Upon the death of her husband a woman becomes independent. As soon as her legally-prescribed period of waiting ends, she is free to go to wherever she likes and to marry anyone she wishes.

29. This permission is intended not in order to provide them with an excuse to misappropriate her property but to exercise a restraint on her conduct and prevent her from lewdness.

30. This means that if the wife is either not beautiful or has some shortcoming because of which she does not seem attractive enough to her husband, the latter should not suddenly decide, in a fit of rage and disgust, to part with her. Rather he should act with patience and forbearance. It often happens that a woman lacks physical attraction but has other qualities which are of much greater value for the success of married life. Hence if such a woman finds the opportunity to express her qualities, the same husband who initially felt revulsion towards her becomes captivated by her attractive conduct and character. Sometimes in the early stages of married life a husband dislikes certain things in his wife, and this initial dislike may even grow to revulsion. Were a man to be patient and allow all the potentialities of the woman to be realized, it would become evident to him that her merits outweighed her weaknesses. Hence a man's haste in taking the decision to rupture the matrimonial bond is not praiseworthy. Repudiation of marriage should be a man's last resort, a resort towards which he should turn only in unavoidable circumstances. The Prophet (peace be on him) has said: For God, divorce is the most reprehensible of all lawful things.' (Abu Da'ud, Talaq', 3; Ibn Majah, 'Talaq', 1 - Ed.) In another tradition the Prophet (peace be on him) said: 'Marry and do not go about divorcing. For God does not like men and women who keep on changing partners merely for a change of taste.' (al-Tabrani, cited by 'Ajluni in Kashf al-Khifa. vol. 1, p. 304 - Ed.)

وَاِنۡ اَرَدۡتُّمُ اسۡتِبۡدَالَ زَوۡجٍ مَّكَانَ زَوۡجٍ ۙ وَّاٰتَيۡتُمۡ اِحۡدٰىهُنَّ قِنۡطَارًا فَلَا تَاۡخُذُوۡا مِنۡهُ
شَيۡـًٔا ؕ اَتَاۡخُذُوۡنَهٗ بُهۡتَانًا وَّاِثۡمًا مُّبِيۡنًا 20

(4:20) And if you decide to dispense with a wife in order to take another, do not take away anything of what you might have given the first one, even if you had given her a heap of gold. Would you take it back by slandering her and committing a manifest wrong?

وَكَيۡفَ تَاۡخُذُوۡنَهٗ وَقَدۡ اَفۡضٰى بَعۡضُكُمۡ اِلٰى بَعۡضٍ وَّاَخَذۡنَ مِنۡكُمۡ مِّيۡثَاقًا غَلِيۡظًا 21

(4:21) How can you take it away after each one has enjoyed the other, and they have taken a firm covenant from you?[31]

31. The 'firm covenant' in this verse refers to marriage. For marriage is a firm covenant of fidelity. It is only because a woman has faith in the firmness of this covenant that she entrusts herself to a man. If a man decides of his own will to break it, he has no right to withdraw the amount he offered his wife by way of bridal-due at the time of entering into that covenant. (See Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I,(Surah 2, n. 251)

وَلَا تَنكِحُوا مَا نَكَحَ آبَاؤُكُم مِّنَ النِّسَاءِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَمَقْتًا ۖ وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا ﴿22﴾

(4:22) Do not marry the women whom your fathers married, although what is past is past.[32] This indeed was a shameful deed, a hateful thing, and an evil way.[33]

32. The Qur'an rounds off all statements prohibiting the objectionable features of the social life of the Jahiliyah period by condoning violations of those prohibitions prior to their revelation: 'What is past is past.' This has two meanings. First, that those concerned would not be punished for mistakes committed in their state of Ignorance, providing they rectified their conduct after the prohibitory injunction had been revealed. Second, that the prohibition of any ancient custom, usage and law did not mean that all acts which took place in the past would be nullified, and that all the consequences of those acts would be deemed void, and people absolved of all the obligations which ensued from them. If marriage with the step-mother, for instance, was prohibited it did not necessarily follow that the children of all such marriages which had been contracted in the past were to be reckoned illegitimate, and that the offspring from such marriages would be disinherited. Similarly, if a certain transaction was declared unlawful it did not mean that all such transactions which had taken place prior to the prohibition should be deemed void and that all the earnings of people accumulated through those transactions would be either seized or declared illegitimate property.

33. In Islamic law marrying women who fall in the prohibited degrees of marriage is a recognized criminal offence. According to traditions in the Hadith collections of Abu Da'ud, Nasa'i and Ahmad b. Hanbal, people guilty of this offence were punished by the Prophet (peace be on him) with death and confiscation of property. It appears from the tradition related by Ibn 'Abbas (found in the collection of Ibn Majah), that the Prophet (peace be on him) had devised the following general rule: 'Kill whosoever commits sexual intercourse with a woman forbidden to him' (Ibn Majah; 'Hudud', 13, 35; also Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 1, p. 300 - Ed.) There is some disagreement, however, among jurists on this question. Ahmad b. Hanbal is of the opinion that the convicted person should be put to death and his property confiscated. Abu Hanifah, Malik and Shafi'i are of the opinion that if a person commits sexual intercourse with a woman within the prohibited degrees he should be punished for adultery; and if he merely marries (but has not actually had sexual intercourse - Ed.) he should be subjected to severe punishment.

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أُمَّهٰتُكُمْ وَبَنٰتُكُمْ وَأَخَوٰتُكُمْ وَعَمّٰتُكُمْ وَخٰلٰتُكُمْ وَبَنٰتُ الْأَخِ
وَبَنٰتُ الْأُخْتِ وَأُمَّهٰتُكُمُ الّٰتِيٓ أَرْضَعْنَكُمْ وَأَخَوٰتُكُمْ مِّنَ الرَّضَاعَةِ وَأُمَّهٰتُ
نِسَآئِكُمْ وَرَبَآئِبُكُمُ الّٰتِي فِي حُجُوْرِكُمْ مِّنْ نِّسَآئِكُمُ الّٰتِي دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ ۫ فَإِنْ لَّمْ
تَكُوْنُوْا دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۫ وَحَلَآئِلُ أَبْنَآئِكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ أَصْلَابِكُمْ ۙ وَأَنْ
تَجْمَعُوْا بَيْنَ الْأُخْتَيْنِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ ۗ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ۙ 23

(4:23) Forbidden to you are your mothers,[34] your daughters,[35] your sisters,[36] your father's sisters and your mother's sisters, your brother's daughters and your sister's daughters,[37] your milk-mothers, your milk-sisters,[38] the mothers of your wives,[39] and the stepdaughters - who are your foster-children,[40] born of your wives with whom you have consummated the marriage; but if you have not consummated the marriage with them, there will be no blame upon you (if you marry their daughters).

It is also forbidden for you to take the wives of the sons who have sprung from your loins[41] and to take two sisters together in marriage,[42] although what is past is past. Surely Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.[43]

34. The word 'mother' applies to one's step-mother as well as to one's real mother. Hence the prohibition extends to both. This injunction also includes prohibition of the grandmother, both paternal and maternal. There is disagreement on whether a woman with whom a father has had an unlawful sexual relationship is prohibited to his son or not. There are some among the early authorities who do not believe in such prohibition. But there are others who go so far as to say that a woman whom a father has touched with sexual desire becomes prohibited to the son. Likewise, there is disagreement among the scholars of the early period of Islam in regard to a woman with whom a person has had an illegitimate sexual relationship whether she is prohibited to his father or not. In the same way there has been disagreement in regard to a man with whom a mother or daughter has had an illegitimate sexual relationship, whether or not marriage with him is prohibited for both the mother and daughter. (See Jassas, vol. 2, pp. 113 ff., and Bidayat al-Mujtahid, vol. 2, pp. 33 f. - Ed.) There is a great deal of formal, legal discussion on this point. But even a little reflection makes it evident that if a man marries a woman who is at once the object of the desire of either his father or his son, and if a man marries a woman and is attracted to either her mother or daughter, this militates against the requirements of a righteous society. The spirit of the Law is opposed to the legal hair-splitting which makes a distinction between sexual relations that take place either within the marital framework or outside it, and between either touching or looking with desire and so on. The plain fact is that if the sexual passions of both the father and the son are focused on the same woman, or conversely, if the

sexual passions of both the mother and daughter are focused on the same man, this situation is full of evil and mischief for family life and the Law can never tolerate it. The Prophet (peace be on him) has said: 'Whoever looks at the genitals of a woman, both the mother and daughter of that woman become prohibited for him.' In another tradition, the Prophet (peace-be on him) said: 'God will not even care to look at the person who casts his look at the genitals of a woman as well as those of her daughter.' (Jassas, Ahkam al-Qur'an, vol. IV, p. 141.) These traditions bring out the intent of the Law very clearly.

35. The injunction with regard to daughters applies to grand-daughters on both the paternal and maternal sides as well. There is disagreement, however, whether a daughter born of an illegitimate relationship becomes prohibited or not. According to Abu Hanifah, Malik and Ahmad b. Hanbal such a daughter is prohibited in the same way as a daughter born in wedlock; Shafi'i, however, is of the opinion that such daughters are not prohibited. The very idea, however, of marrying a girl who was born of one's own semen would be repulsive to any decent person.

36. This applies to full sisters as well as to half-sisters.

37. In all these relationships, no distinction is made between the full and step-relationships. The sister of a man's father or mother, whether full sister or step-sister, is prohibited to him. Likewise, the daughters of a man's brothers and sisters are prohibited just as if they were one's own daughters. (See Bidayat al-Mujtahid, vol. 2, pp. 31 ff. - Ed.)

38. There is consensus among Muslims that if a boy or girl is breast-fed by a woman, that woman attains the status of mother, and her husband the status of father. It is forbidden to marry relatives through milk where the degree of relationship is such as /to constitute a bar to marriage in the case of blood-relations. The basis of this rule is the saying of the Prophet (peace be on him): 'Whatever is rendered prohibited by descent (nasab) is likewise rendered prohibited by breast-feeding.' (Bukhari, 'Shahadat', 4, 7,13,14; Muslim, 'Rida'ah', 1-14,26-30; etc. - Ed.) According to Abu Hanifah and Malik prohibition is established if a child suckles milk from a woman's breast equal to that minimum quantity which nullifies fasting. But according to Ahmad b. Hanbal, it is established by three sucklings; and according to Shafi'i by five. There is also disagreement about the maximum age up to which breast-feeding leads to prohibition of marriage with the woman concerned. In this connection, jurists have expressed the following opinions:

(1) Suckling is of legal significance only when it occurs before a child has been weaned, and when milk is its main source of nourishment. If a child suckles from a woman's breast after having been weaned, this is legally no different from drinking anything else. This is the opinion of Umm Salamah and Ibn 'Abbas, and a tradition to this effect has also been reported from 'Ali. This is also the view of al-Zuhri, Hasan al-Basri, Qatadah, 'Ikrimah and Awza'i.

(2) Prohibition is established by breast-feeding during the first two years of a child's life. This is the view of 'Umar, Ibn Mas'ud, Abu Hurayrah and 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar. Among jurists, Shafi'i, Ahmad b. Hanbal, Abu Yusuf, Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Shaybani and Sufyan al-Thawri followed this view; and according to a report, so did Abu Hanifah. Malik largely followed this view, but he was of the opinion that if breast-feeding took place a

month or two after the age of two, the prohibition would still remain in effect.

(3) The generally-reported opinion of Abu Hanifah and Zufar is that a bar to marriage is created by breast-feeding up to an age limit of two and a half years.

(4) Some other jurists are of the opinion that the prohibition comes into effect irrespective of the age when breast-feeding takes place. This opinion is based on the view that the effective cause of the prohibition is a woman's milk, rather than the age of the person fed. Hence, even in the case of an older person, the same prohibition would apply as in the case of an infant. This is the view of 'A'ishah and this has been supported on the basis of a tradition from 'Ali, which is presumably .authentic. Among the jurists this opinion has been followed by 'Urwah b. al-Zubayr, 'Ata', Layth b. Sa'd and Ibn Hazm. (On this subject see Jassas, vol. 2, pp. 124 ff.; and Ibn Rushd, Biddyat al-Mujtahid, vol. 2,'pp'. 35 ff. -Ed.)

39. There is disagreement about prohibition in respect of the mother of the woman with whom one has merely contracted marriage (without having consummated it). Abu Hanifah, Malik, Ahmad b. Hanbal and Shafi'i believe that such a relationship is prohibited. 'Ali, however, holds the opinion that unless the marriage has been consummated the mother of one's wife does not become prohibited.

40. The prohibitive restriction in regard to such girls is not based on the consideration of their having been brought up in the house of a step-father. The reference to the child's upbringing in his house points to the delicacy of this relationship. The jurists are almost unanimous that it is prohibited to marry one's step-daughter irrespective of whether or not she has been raised in the step-father's house.

41. This restriction has been added because the widow of one's adopted son is, according to Islam, not prohibited. It is only the wife of one's own son who is prohibited. Likewise, the wives of grandsons (paternal and maternal) are prohibited to grandfathers (on both the mother's and father's side).

42. The Prophet (peace be on him) has taught that it is prohibited for a man to combine in marriage an aunt - whether maternal or paternal - with her niece. The guiding principle is that it is prohibited to have as wives two women who, if one were male, would be prohibited to each other. (See Bidayat al-Mujtahid, vol. 2, p. 41 - Ed.)

43. This is an assurance that God would not call them to task for such misdeeds of the Jahiliyah period as combining two sisters in matrimony, provided they abstained from doing so in the future. See also(n. 32 above.) For this reason a man with two sisters as his wives is required to divorce one of them when he embraces Islam.

وَّالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ النِّسَآءِ اِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ ۚ كِتٰبَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ ۚ وَاُحِلَّ لَكُمْ مَّا
وَرَآءَ ذٰلِكُمْ اَنْ تَبْتَغُوْا بِاَمْوَالِكُمْ مُّحْصِنِيْنَ غَيْرَ مُسَافِحِيْنَ ۭ فَمَا اسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهٖ مِنْهُنَّ

فَاٰتُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ فَرِيْضَةً ؕ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيْمَا تَرٰضَيْتُمْ بِهٖ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ الْفَرِيْضَةِ ؕ

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا 24

(4:24) And also forbidden to you are all married women (muhsanat) except those women whom your right hands have come to possess (as a result of war).[44] This is Allah's decree and it is binding upon you. But it is lawful for you to seek out all women except these, offering them your wealth and the protection of wedlock rather than using them for the unfettered satisfaction of lust. And in exchange of what you enjoy by marrying them pay their bridal-due as an obligation. But there is no blame on you if you mutually agree to alter the settlement after it has been made. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

44. Women who come as captives of war, leaving their husbands behind in Dar al-Harb (Domain of War), are not prohibited, for their marriage is nullified by virtue of their entry into Dar al-Islam (Domain of Islam). A man may marry such women and, if they happen to be his slave-girls, he may have sexual relations with them. There is disagreement, however, among jurists as to what should be done if both husband and wife have been taken captive together. Abu Hanifah and the jurists of his school are of the opinion that their marriage should remain intact. Malik and Shafi'i, on the other hand, argue that their matrimonial contract should be rendered void.

Many misunderstandings seem to persist about the right to have sexual relations with one's slave-girls. It is pertinent to call attention to the following regulations of Islam:

(1) Islam does not permit soldiers of the Islamic army to have sexual relations with women they capture in war. Islamic Law requires that such women should first be handed over to the government, which then has the right to decide what should be done with them. It may either set them free unconditionally, release them on payment of ransom, exchange them for Muslim prisoners of war held by the enemy or distribute them among the soldiers. A soldier may have sexual relations only with that woman who has been entrusted to him by the government.

(2) Even then, he may not have sexual relations with her until at least one menstrual period has expired; this is in order to establish that she is not already pregnant. If the woman concerned is pregnant one may not have sexual relations with her until after the birth of her child.

(3) It is not necessary for female captives of war to be People of the Book in order that sexual relations with them be permitted. The man to whom such a woman is entrusted has the right to have sexual relations with her regardless of her religious affiliations.

(4) Only that person to whom a female captive has been entrusted has the right to have sexual relations with her. Any child born to her will be regarded as the legitimate child of her master, and will be entitled to all the rights laid down by the Law for one's issue.

Moreover, once such a woman has given birth to a child she may not be sold to anyone, and on the death of her master she automatically becomes a free person.

(5) If the master allows the woman to marry someone else he ceases to have the right to sexual relations with her but retains the right to have her serve him in other ways.

(6) Although the Law has fixed the maximum number of wives at four, it has set no limit with regard to slave-girls. The Law does not lay down a limit in order to encourage people to accumulate huge armies of slave-girls, and thereby turn their homes into dens of sexual enjoyment. Rather the Law does not define the limit because the effects of war and the total number of female captives that would have to be disposed of after a certain war are unpredictable.

(7) In the same way as other rights of property are transferable, so are the proprietary rights regarding the captives of war that have been legally entrusted to a man by the state.

(8) Since the regular conferment of property rights is as legal an act as that of marriage, there is no basis for a person who feels no revulsion towards the idea of marriage to feel revulsion towards the idea of having sexual relations with a slave-girl duly entrusted to him.

(9) If a government confers proprietary rights to a man over a female captive of war it forfeits the right to withdraw those rights in the same way as the guardian (wali) of a woman ceases to have the right to withdraw his agreement to the marriage proposal after the marriage has been contracted.

(10) If a military commander permitted his soldiers to temporarily use the female captives as objects of sexual desire and distributed them among the soldiers for that purpose, such an act would be considered unlawful by Islamic Law. Such an act is not essentially different from fornication or adultery. For details see my book Tafhimat, vol. 2, pp. 366-84, and Rasai'il wa Masa'il, 6th edition, Lahore, 1976, vol. 3, pp. 102-4.

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنْكُمْ طَوْلًا اَنْ يَّنْكِحَ الْمُحْصَنٰتِ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ فَمِنْ مَّا مَلَكَتْ
اَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ فَتَيٰتِكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِاِيْمَانِكُمْ ؕ بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْضٍ ۚ
فَانْكِحُوْهُنَّ بِاِذْنِ اَهْلِهِنَّ وَاٰتُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ مُحْصَنٰتٍ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحٰتٍ وَّلَا
مُتَّخِذٰتِ اَخْدَانٍ ۚ فَاِذَآ اُحْصِنَّ فَاِنْ اَتَيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ فَعَلَيْهِنَّ نِصْفُ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْصَنٰتِ

مِنَ الْعَذَابِ ۚ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ الْعَنَتَ مِنْكُمْ ۚ وَاَنْ تَصْبِرُوْا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ

رَّحِيْمٌ ع 25

(4:25) And those of you who cannot afford to marry free, believing women (muhsanat), then marry such believing women whom your right hands possess. Allah knows all about your faith. All of you belong to one another.[45] Marry them, then, with the leave of their guardians, and give them their bridal-due in a fair manner that they may live in the protection of wedlock rather than be either mere objects of unfettered lust or given to secret love affairs. Then if they become guilty of immoral conduct after they have entered into wedlock, they shall be liable to half the penalty to which free women (muhsanat) are liable.[46] This relaxation is for those of you who fear to fall into sin by remaining unmarried.[47] But if you persevere, it is better for you. Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

45. The difference between the status of people is relative. All Muslims are alike. If there is any true distinction its basis is a person's faith and faith is not an exclusive privilege of the rich or so-called upper classes of the society. So it is possible for a slave-girl to be superior, in respect of her faith and morals, to a woman belonging to the elite of a society.

46.A superficial reading of this verse can lead to the mistaken conclusion, as Khawarij and others have done, that stoning is not the prescribed punishment for adultery. Such people ask: If stoning is the prescribed punishment for extra-marital sexual intercourse, then how is it possible to halve that punishment with regard to slave-girls? Such people have not noted carefully the wording of this verse. In this section see (verses 24-5) the term muhsanat (protected women) is used in two different meanings. First, it is used in the sense of 'married women', that is, those who enjoy the protection of their husbands. Second, it is used in the sense of 'women belonging to families', i.e. those who enjoy the protection of families even though they may not be married. In the verse under discussion, the word muhsanat is used in the latter sense, i.e. in the sense of women who enjoy the protection of families as opposed to slave-girls. At the same time, the word is also used in the first meaning, when slave-girls have acquired the protection accorded by the contract of marriage (fa idha uhsinna), they will be liable to the punishment laid down in this verse if they have unlawful Sexual intercourse.

It is therefore apparent that a free woman enjoys two kinds of protection. One is the protection of her family through which she remains protected even when she is not married. The second is the protection of her husband, which reinforces the protection of the family that she already enjoys. As long as the slave-girl remains a slave, she does not enjoy the protection of the family. However, when she is married she has the protection of her husband - and of her husband alone. This protection is partial. Even after marriage she is neither liberated from the bond of her master nor does she attain the status enjoyed by free women. The punishment prescribed for a married slave-girl is accordingly half the punishment of an unmarried free woman rather than half that of a married free woman.

This also explains that the punishment for unlawful sexual intercourse (zina) laid down in (Surah al-Nur 24: 2)refers to the offence committed by unmarried free women alone, and it is in comparison with their punishment that the punishment of married slave women has been laid down as half. As for free married women, they deserve more severe punishment than the unmarried free women (muhsanat) for they violate the double protection. Even though the Qur'an does not specifically mention punishment by stoning it does allude to it in a subtle manner.

47. That is, if a man cannot afford to marry a free woman then he should marry a slave-girl with the permission of her master.

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ سُنَنَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ وَيَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ
عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ 26

(4:26) Allah wants to make all this clear to you, and to guide you to the ways which the righteous have followed in the past. He will turn graciously towards you. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.[48]

48. Here a general reference is made to the directives embodied in this surah, as well as those revealed earlier in Surah al-Baqarah and which deal with social and collective matters. It is stressed that these directives reveal those lasting principles observed by the Prophets and their followers from the earliest times. It is merely out of His grace and benevolence that God liberated them from their state of Ignorance (Jahiliyah) and opened to them the way of life of the righteous.

وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَن يَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۖ وَيُرِيدُ الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الشَّهَوَاتِ أَن تَمِيلُوا مَيْلًا
عَظِيمًا 27

(4:27) And Allah indeed wants to turn graciously towards you; but those who follow their lusts would want you to drift far away from the right way.[49]

49. This refers to the hypocrites, the ultra-conservatives and the Jews who lived on the outskirts of Madina. Both the hypocrites and the conservatives were incensed at the reforms introduced by Islam, as these were diametrically opposed to the age-old customs and traditions of their society and culture. The reforms were numerous: a share of the inheritance was assigned to daughters; widows were liberated from bondage to the will of their husbands' families and were granted the freedom to marry whomever they wished after the expiry of the waiting-period ('iddah); marriage with one's step-mother and with two sisters together was prohibited; adopted sons were disinherited; and a foster-father's marriage with either the divorced or widowed wife of his adopted son was declared lawful. These and other such reforms were so totally opposed to the customary laws of the Arabs that it was impossible for the elders and the blind devotees of the ways of their forefathers

not to protest against them vehemently. They long continued to grumble against these injunctions. Mischievous people pointed to these innovations and exploited them by provoking people against the Prophet's movement of reform. For instance, they would meet those born as a result of the marriage which had been prohibited by Islam and try to infuriate them by saying that according to the new-fangled teachings of Muhammad (peace be on him) the relationship between their parents was unlawful.

The Jews, on the other hand, had woven a complex network of laws and regulations for themselves. The result was that they had forbidden a great number of things which were, in fact, lawful. Additionally, they had introduced a number of superstitions into God's Law. It was argued that the simple and straightforward law of the Qur'an was out of tune with the tastes and temperaments of both the religious leaders and the ordinary people. The Qur'anic injunctions simply infuriated them and as soon as they came to know of any Qur'anic law, they vehemently denounced it. They expected the Qur'an to endorse and validate all the legal deductions and all the superstitions and myths of their forefathers, and to treat them as an integral part of the law of God. If the Qur'an would not do so then they would refrain from recognizing it as the Book of God.

Let us take the following as an example. According to Jewish usage, a woman was considered completely unclean during her menstrual period. Hence, they neither ate the food she cooked, drank from the cup of water she offered nor even sat with her. It was even considered unwholesome to be touched by her. Thus for a few days every month a woman virtually became an untouchable in her own house. Owing to the influence of the Jews the same custom had found its way into the Arab families of Madina. When the Prophet (peace be on him) arrived in Madina, he was asked about this matter. In response to this query (verse 222 of Surah al-Baqarah) was revealed. In the light of the principle embodied in the verse the Prophet (peace be on him) made it clear that it was unlawful to have sexual intercourse with a woman during her menstrual period; but it was only that relationship, and no other, that was unlawful. (See Bukhari, 'Hayd', 2, 3; Nasa'i, 'Hayd', 9, 13, 16, 19, and 'Ahkam', 13 - Ed.) This caused uproar among the Jews. They claimed that Muhammad (peace be on him) was bent upon reversing all their legal injunctions to the extent that he wanted to legalize whatever they held as prohibited and prohibit whatever they held as lawful.

يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يُّخَفِّفَ عَنْكُمْ ۚ وَخُلِقَ الْاِنْسَانُ ضَعِيْفًا 28

(4:28) Allah wants to lighten your burdens, for man was created weak.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَاْكُلُوْٓا اَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَكُوْنَ تِجَارَةً عَنْ
تَرَاضٍ مِّنْكُمْ ۣ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيْمًا 29

(4:29) Believers! Do not devour one another's possessions wrongfully; rather than that, let there be trading by mutual consent.[50] You shall not kill yourselves.[51] Surely Allah is ever Compassionate to you.[52]

50. The expression 'wrongfully' embraces all transactions which are opposed to righteousness and which are either legally or morally reprehensible. By contrast, 'trade' signifies the mutual transfer of benefits between the parties concerned, such as that underlying those transactions in which one person provides whatever satisfies the needs of another person and is paid in return. 'Mutual consent' means that the exchange should be free of undue pressure, fraud and deception. Although bribery and interest apparently represent transactions based on mutual consent, closer examination reveals that such consent takes place by constraint and under pressure. In games of chance, too, the participants seem to consent freely to the outcome. This kind of consent, however, is due to the expectation entertained by the participants that they will win. No one takes part anticipating loss. Fraudulent transactions also seem to be based on the mutual consent of the parties concerned. That kind of consent, however, is based on the false assumption that no fraud is involved in the transaction. Nobody who knew that he would be subjected to fraud would consent to be a party to that transaction.

51. This can be considered either as complementary to the preceding sentence or as an independent statement. If it is complementary, it means that to consume the property of others by wrongful means is tantamount to courting one's own destruction; for such practices corrupt society on such a scale that even the most cunning are not spared their destructive consequences. This is in addition to the severe punishment that is bound to be meted out to such people in the Next Life. Taken as an independent statement, it can mean either that one should not kill others or that one should not kill oneself. Both the words used and the sequence in which they have been placed by God in this verse make each of these three meanings feasible.

52. God wishes His creatures well; their well-being and salvation please Him, and it is out of benevolence that He has forbidden things harmful to human beings.

وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ عُدْوَانًا وَّظُلْمًا فَسَوْفَ نُصْلِيْهِ نَارًا ؕ وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ

يَسِيْرًا 30

(4:30) And whoever does this by way of transgression and injustice him shall We surely cast into the Fire; that indeed is quite easy for Allah.

اِنْ تَجْتَنِبُوْا كَبَآئِرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ وَنُدْخِلْكُمْ مُّدْخَلًا

كَرِيْمًا 31

(4:31) But if you avoid the major sins which you have been forbidden, We shall remit your (trivial) offences,[53] and cause you to enter an honourable abode.

53. God is not overly exacting and severe in His judgements. He is not on the look out for trivial omissions and lapses on the part of His creatures in order to punish them. God is prepared to condone minor omissions, and may even spare a man from being presented with a charge-sheet provided his record is free of major sins. But if a man's record is full of major transgressions, he will be required to explain all the sins he has committed - both major and minor.

We need at this stage to grasp the essential differences between major and minor sins. After reflecting on this question, in the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah, it seems to me - and God alone knows what is absolutely correct - that three elements turn an act into a major sin:

(1) Violation of rights - be it either the rights of God, of parents, of other human beings or even of one's own self. The greater a person's rights, the greater is the sin in violating them. Hence sin is characterized in the Qur'an as wrong-doing (zulm). It is for the same reason that associating others with God in His divinity is called the 'great wrong' in the Qur'an. See, for example, (Surah Luqman 31: 13 - Ed.)

(2) Insufficient fear of God, and arrogance and indifference towards Him, as a result of which man does not heed God's commandments, even wilfully violates them, and deliberately desists from carrying them out. The greater the brazenness, temerity and fearlessness with which one disobeys God, the more heinous is the sin in His eyes. It is for this reason that sin is also termed ma'siyah (disobedience) and fisq. See, for instance, (Surah al-Baqarah 2: 26, 61); (Surah al-Hujurat 49: 11); (Surah al-Munafiqun 63: 6); (Surah Hud 11: 59); (Surah AI 'Imran 3: 112); (Surah al-Nisa' 4: 42); (Surah al-Ma'idah 5: 78); and passim for verbal forms derived from the word ma'siyah and fisq - Ed.)

(3) Sin is aggravated by breaking those bonds and relationships on which the peace and tranquillity of social order rest. These bonds include the relationship between a man and his Lord, as well as that between a man and his fellow-beings. The more important a bond is, the greater is the harm done to the peace of human society when that bond is broken. Likewise, the stronger the expectation that the sanctity of a certain bond will be honoured, the greater is the sin incurred through its desecration. Let us take the case of unlawful sexual intercourse in its various degrees. This act is inimical to the existence of a sound social order and is therefore a major sin. But in certain cases the sin becomes even graver. For instance, it is more serious if committed by a married person than by one who is unmarried. Similarly, unlawful sexual intercourse with a married woman is graver than with an unmarried woman. Again, to commit this act with one's neighbours is more heinous than with others, and to commit this act with women within the prohibited degrees, such as one's sister, daughter or mother, is far more abominable than with others. Further still, it is a much graver sin to commit such an act in places of worship than elsewhere. The difference in the degree of such sinfulness is based on the considerations we have mentioned above. Wherever the sanctity "of a relationship is normally respected, wherever there is a bond which deserves to be held sacred, and wherever the disruption of a particular relationship is likely to result in greater harm and corruption, the gravity of the sin increases. This is why

in certain places the Qur'an uses the term fujur to denote sin. See, for instance, (Surah al-Qiyamah 75: 5); (Surah al-Infitar 82: 14); (Surah al-Shams 9l: 8 - Ed.)

وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ ؕ لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيْبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبُوْا ؕ
وَلِلنِّسَآءِ نَصِيْبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبْنَ ؕ وَسْـَٔلُوا اللّٰهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ
عَلِيْمًا 32

(4:32) Do not covet what Allah has conferred more abundantly on some of you than others. Men shall have a share according to what they have earned, and women shall have a share according to what they have earned. Do ask of Allah His bounty. Allah has full knowledge of everything.[54]

54. This verse embodies a very important directive. By heeding it, man would be able to achieve a great measure of peace and tranquillity. God has not created all men alike. Some are handsome while others are ugly. The voices of some are sweet and those of others repulsive. Some are physically strong others are weak. Some have sound limbs others have inherent deformities. Some possess outstanding physical and mental abilities while others lack them. Some are born in favourable circumstances and others not. Some have been endowed with more resources than others. It is this diversity which gives variety to human civilization, and hence serves a useful purpose. Whenever man superimposes distinctions of his own over and above this natural inequality he disrupts the natural order of things, and paves the way for corruption. Likewise, when anyone attempts to obliterate all differences between human beings he in fact engages in a war against nature and inflicts wrongs of another kind. Man is naturally inclined to feel uneasy whenever he sees someone else ahead of him. This is the root of jealousy and envy, of cut-throat competition and animosity, of mutual strife and conflict. These feelings often obsess a person to such a degree that whenever fair means do not prove effective, he resorts to unfair means to achieve his ambitions. In the present verse, God directs us not to allow this kind of mentality to take hold of us. The import of the directive is that one should not yearn for the good that God has bestowed on others. One should rather pray to God to bestow upon one the good which is in one's best interests according to God's wisdom and knowledge.

The statement that 'men shall have a share according to what they have earned and women shall have a share according to what they have earned' seems to mean, to the best of my understanding, that men and women shall have their shares of good and evil, depending on the good and evil they have earned in using the resources bestowed upon them by God.

وَلِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مَوَالِيَ مِمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدٰنِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ ۟ وَالَّذِينَ عَقَدَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ فَـَٔاتُوهُمْ
نَصِيبَهُمْ ۟ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدًا ۝33

(4:33) And to everyone We have appointed rightful heirs to what the parents and near of kin might leave behind. As to those with whom you have made a solemn covenant, give them their share. Allah watches over all things.[55]

55. According to Arab customary law, those who concluded compacts of alliance and friendship also became mutual heirs. Likewise, an adopted son inherited from his foster-father. While abrogating this customary law, this verse reveals that inheritance goes to one's kin according to the rules for the distribution of inheritance laid down by God Himself. However, if a man has made commitments to people, he has the right to give away to them whatever he wishes during his lifetime.

ٱلرِّجَالُ قَوَّٰمُونَ عَلَى النِّسَآءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنفَقُوا مِنْ
أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۟ فَالصَّٰلِحَٰتُ قَٰنِتَٰتٌ حَٰفِظَٰتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ۟ وَاللَّٰتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ
فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ ۚ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ
سَبِيلًا ۟ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيًّا كَبِيرًا ۝34

(4:34) Men are the protec-tors and maintainers of women[56] because Allah has made one of them excel over the other,[57] and because they spend out of their possessions (to support them). Thus righteous women are obedient and guard the rights of men in their absence under Allah's protection.[58] As for women of whom you fear rebellion, admonish them, and remain apart from them in beds, and beat them.[59] Then if they obey you, do not seek ways to harm them. Allah is Exalted, Great.

56. A qawwam or qayyim is a person responsible for administering and supervising the affairs of either an individual or an organization, for protecting and safeguarding them and taking care of their needs.

57. The verb used here - a derivative of the root fdl - is not used to mean that some people have been invested with superior honour and dignity. Rather it means that God has endowed one of the sexes (i.e. the male sex) with certain qualities which He has not endowed the other sex with, at least not to an equal extent. Thus it is the male who is qualified to function as head of the family. The female has been so constituted that she should live under his care and protection.

58. It is reported in a tradition from the Prophet (peace be on him) that he said: 'The best wife is she who, if you look at her, will please you; who, if you bid her to do something, will obey; and who will safeguard herself and your property in your absence.' (Cited by Ibn Kathir, and reported by Tabari and Ibn Abi Hatim. See Mukhtasar Tafsir Ibn Kathir, 3 vols., ed. Muhammad 'All al-Sabuni, 7th edition, Beirut, 1402 A.H./1981 C.E.; vol. 1, p. 385 and n. 1 - Ed.) This tradition contains the best explanation of the above verse. It should be borne in mind, however, that obedience to God has priority over a woman's duty to obey her husband. If a woman's husband either asks her to disobey God or prevents her from performing a duty imposed upon her by God, she should refuse to carry out his command. Obedience to her husband in this case would be a sin. However, were the husband to prevent is wife from performing either supererogatory Prayer or Fasting - as distinct from the obligatory ones - she should obey him, for such acts would not be accepted by God if performed by a woman in defiance of her husband's wish. (See Abu Da'ud, 'Sawm', 73; Ibn Majah, 'Siyam', 53 - Ed.)

59. This does not mean that a man should resort to these three measures all at once, but that they may be employed if a wife adopts an attitude of obstinate defiance. So far as the actual application of these measures is concerned, there should, naturally, be some correspondence between the fault and the punishment that is administered. Moreover, it is obvious that wherever a light touch can prove effective.one should not resort to sterner measures. Whenever the Prophet (peace be on him) permitted a man to administer corporal punishment to his wife, he did so with reluctance, and continued to express his distaste for it. And even in cases where it is necessary, the Prophet (peace be on him) directed men not to hit across the face, nor to beat severely nor to use anything that might leave marks on the body. (See Ibn Majah, 'Nikah', 3 - Ed.)

وَاِنۡ خِفۡتُمۡ شِقَاقَ بَيۡنِهِمَا فَابۡعَثُوۡا حَكَمًا مِّنۡ اَهۡلِهٖ وَحَكَمًا مِّنۡ اَهۡلِهَا ۚ اِنۡ يُّرِيۡدَاۤ
اِصۡلَاحًا يُّوَفِّقِ اللّٰهُ بَيۡنَهُمَا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيۡمًا خَبِيۡرًا 35

(4:35) If you fear a breach between the two, appoint an arbitrator from his people and an arbitrator from her people. If they both want to set things right,[60] Allah will bring about reconciliation between them. Allah knows all, is well aware of everything.[61]

60. The statement: 'if they both want to set things right', may be interpreted as referring either to the mediators or to the spouses concerned. Every dispute can be resolved providing the parties concerned desire reconciliation, and the mediators too are keen to remove the misunderstandings between them and to bring them together.

61. Whenever the relationship between a husband and a wife starts to break down, an attempt should first be made to resolve the dispute at the family level, before it is aggravated and leads to the disruption of the matrimonial tie. The procedure to be followed is that two persons, one on behalf of each family, should be nominated to look into the matter together and devise means whereby the misunderstanding between the spouses may be brought to an end. Who should nominate these mediators? God has not specified this so as to allow people full freedom to choose the most convenient arrangement. The parties

would be free, for instance, to decide that the mediators be nominated either by the spouses themselves or by the elders of their respective families. If the dispute is brought before the court, the latter also has the right to nominate mediators, representing the families of both parties, before referring the matter for judicial verdict.

There is disagreement among Muslim jurists about the extent of the mediators' authority. The Hanafi and Shafi'i schools are of the opinion that they normally have no authority to issue a binding verdict. All they may do is to recommend the solution they advocate, whereafter the spouses have the right either to accept or to reject it. The exception is if the spouses have nominated the mediators to act on their behalf in regard to either talaq or khul': they will then be bound by their verdict. This is the opinion of the Hanafi and Shafi'i schools. Another group of jurists argues that the authority of the mediators is confined to deciding how the spouses should reconcile their differences, and does not extend to the annulment of marriage. This is the opinion of Hasan al-Basri and Qatadah, among others. Yet another group holds the opinion that the mediators have full authority both in respect of reconciliation and annulment of marriage. This is the opinion of Ibn 'Abbas, Sa'id b. Jubayr, Ibrahim al-Nakha'i, al-Sha'bi, Muhammad b. Sinn and several other authorities. The precedents which have come down from early Islam, however, are the judgements of 'Uthman and 'Ali. These indicate that they conferred upon the mediators the authority to issue judgements binding on both parties. When the dispute between 'Aqil b. Abi Talib and his wife Fatimah b. 'Utbah b. Rabi'ah came up for the judgement of 'Uthman, he nominated Ibn 'Abbas and Mu'awiyah b. Abi Sufyan from the families of the husband and the wife respectively. He also told them that if they thought that separation was preferable, they should declare the marriage annulled. In a similar dispute 'Ali nominated mediators and authorized them either to bring about reconciliation or annul the marriage, whichever they considered appropriate. This shows that the mediators do not have judicial authority as such. (See the commentaries of Ibn Kathir and Jassas on this verse -Ed.) Such authority, however, may be conferred upon them by the courts, in which case their decision will have the force of a judicial verdict.

وَاعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوْا بِهٖ شَيْـًٔا ۗ وَّبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ اِحْسَانًا وَّبِذِى الْقُرْبٰى وَالْيَتٰمٰى وَ
الْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَالْجَارِ ذِى الْقُرْبٰى وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنْۢبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ ۙ وَمَا
مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُوْرَا ۙ 36

(4:36) Serve Allah and ascribe no partner to Him. Do good to your parents, to near of kin, to orphans, and to the needy, and to the neighbour who is of kin and to the neighbour who is a stranger, and to the companion by your side,[62] and to the wayfarer, and to those whom your right hands possess. Allah does not love the arrogant and the boastful,

62. The expression al-sahib bi al-janb (the companion by your side) embraces those with whom one has friendly relations of an abiding nature as well as those with whom one's

relationship is transient: for instance, either the person who walks beside one on the way to the market or who sits beside one while buying things from the same shop or one's fellow traveller. Even this temporary relationship imposes certain claims on every refined and decent person - that he should treat him, as far as possible, in a kind and gracious manner and avoid causing him any inconvenience.

ٱلَّذِينَ يَبۡخَلُونَ وَيَأۡمُرُونَ ٱلنَّاسَ بِٱلۡبُخۡلِ وَيَكۡتُمُونَ مَآ ءَاتَىٰهُمُ ٱللَّهُ مِن فَضۡلِهِۦۗ وَ
ج
أَعۡتَدۡنَا لِلۡكَٰفِرِينَ عَذَابٗا مُّهِينٗا 37

(4:37) who are niggardly and bid others to be niggardly and conceal the bounty which Allah has bestowed upon them.[63] We have kept in readiness a humiliating chastisement for such deniers (of Allah's bounty).

63. Concealing God's bounty is to live, as if God had not bestowed that bounty. If anyone has considerable wealth and yet lives at a standard strikingly lower than that warranted by his income, if he shuns spending on himself and his family, and also on helping other creatures of God, and avoids providing financial support to any philanthropic cause, then he creates the false impression of being in a state of financial stringency. This is sheer ingratitude to God. The Prophet (peace be on him) is reported, according to a tradition, as saying: 'If God confers a bounty on somebody, He would like to see that benefaction displayed.' (Ibn Kathir, vol. 4, p. 486 - Ed.) This means that a person's day-to-day life, his eating and drinking, his dress and his abode and his spending on others, all these should reflect God's bounty.

وَٱلَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمۡوَٰلَهُمۡ رِئَآءَ ٱلنَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤۡمِنُونَ بِٱللَّهِ وَلَا بِٱلۡيَوۡمِ ٱلۡأٓخِرِۗ وَمَن يَكُنِ
ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنُ لَهُۥ قَرِينٗا فَسَآءَ قَرِينٗا 38

(4:38) Allah does not love those who spend out of their wealth to make a show of it to people when they believe neither in Allah nor in the Last Day. And he who has taken Satan for a companion has indeed taken for himself a very bad companion.

وَمَاذَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ لَوۡ ءَامَنُواْ بِٱللَّهِ وَٱلۡيَوۡمِ ٱلۡأٓخِرِ وَأَنفَقُواْ مِمَّا رَزَقَهُمُ ٱللَّهُۚ وَكَانَ ٱللَّهُ بِهِمۡ
عَلِيمًا 39

(4:39) What harm would have befallen them if they had believed in Allah and the Last Day, and spent on charity what Allah had bestowed upon them as sustenance? For Allah indeed has full knowledge of them.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ ۖ وَإِن تَكُ حَسَنَةً يُضَاعِفْهَا وَيُؤْتِ مِن لَّدُنْهُ أَجْرًا

عَظِيمًا 40

(4:40) Indeed Allah wrongs none, not even as much as an atom's weight. Whenever a man does good, He multiplies it two-fold, and bestows out of His grace a mighty reward.

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِن كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيدٍ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ عَلَىٰ هَٰؤُلَاءِ شَهِيدًا ۜ 41

(4:41) Consider, then, when We shall bring forward witnesses from every community, and will bring you (O Muhammad!) as a witness against them all.[64]

64. The Prophet of each age will stand as a witness before God against his people; he will testify that he conveyed to them the true way of life, and showed them the right outlook and the fundamentals of moral conduct revealed to him by God. The testimony of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) will be to the same effect, and the Qur'an indicates that he will stand as a witness to the period beginning with his advent as a Prophet right through to the Day of Judgement. (See Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 3, n. 69.)

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَعَصَوُا الرَّسُولَ لَوْ تُسَوَّىٰ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضُ ۚ وَلَا يَكْتُمُونَ اللَّهَ

حَدِيثًا ۗ 42

(4:42) Those who disbelieved and disobeyed the Messenger will wish on that Day that the earth were levelled with them. They will not be able to conceal anything from Allah.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنتُمْ سُكَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ وَلَا جُنُبًا

إِلَّا عَابِرِي سَبِيلٍ حَتَّىٰ تَغْتَسِلُوا ۚ وَإِن كُنتُم مَّرْضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنكُم مِّنَ

الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَامَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ

وَأَيْدِيكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا غَفُورًا 43

(4:43) Believers! Do not draw near to the Prayer while you are intoxicated[65] until you know what you are saying[66] nor while you are defiled[67] - save when you are travelling - until you have washed yourselves.[68] If you are either ill or travelling or have satisfied a want of nature or have had contact with women[69] and can find no water, then betake yourselves to pure earth, passing with it lightly over your face and your hands.[70] Surely Allah is All-Relenting, All-Forgiving.

65. This is the second in the chronological sequence of injunctions concerning intoxicants. We came across the first injunction in (Surah al-Baqarah 2: 219). In that verse God merely indicated that drinking wine was a great sin, making it clear that it was reprehensible in His sight. This was quite enough to make some Muslims give up liquor altogether, though many others still took intoxicating drinks: they sometimes stood up to pray while still under the influence of alcohol, so that they even made mistakes in their recitations. This second injunction was probably revealed at the beginning of 4 A.H., making it forbidden, thenceforth, to pray in a state of intoxication. This led people to alter their drinking times. They drank only at those hours when there was no fear of their remaining under the influence of intoxicants when the time for Prayer came. The injunction embodying unconditional prohibition of intoxicants was revealed not long afterwards. See (Surah al-Ma'idah 5: 90-1.)

It should also be borne in mind that the word used in the verse is derived from sukr, which embraces not merely intoxicating liquors but everything which causes intoxication. The injunction contained in the verse is valid even now, for though the use of intoxicants as such has been completely prohibited, praying in a state of intoxication is a graver sin.

66. It is on this basis that the Prophet (peace be on him) directed anyone who is under the influence of sleep, and dozes off again and again during the Prayer, to stop praying and go to bed. (Ibn Kathir, vol. 4, p. 494-Ed.) Some people argue, on the basis of this verse, that the Prayer of one who does not understand the Arabic text of the Qur'an will not be accepted. Apart from taking things too far such a conclusion is not supported by the words in the text. The expression used by the Qur'an is neither ( ) nor even ( ). On the contrary, the expression is ( ) (i.e. until you know what you are saying, rather than 'until you understand' what you are saying). What is required is that while praying one should at least be conscious enough to know what one is uttering in the Prayer.

67. The term janabah denotes the state of major ritual impurity, and is derived from the root meaning: 'to ward off'. The word ajnabi, meaning foreigner or stranger, is also derived from the same root. In Islamic terminology, janabah denotes the state of ritual impurity (in both male and female) which results from the act of intercourse or from seminal emission (either from sexual stimulation or from a wet dream).

68. One group of jurists and Qur'anic commentators interpret this verse to mean that one should not enter a mosque in the state of major ritual impurity (janabah), unless out of necessity. This is the opinion of 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud, Anas b. Malik, Hasan al-Basri, Ibrahim al-Nakha'i and others. Another group thinks that the reference here is to travel. In the opinion of this group, if a traveller is in the state of major ritual impurity he may resort to tayammum (i.e. symbolic ablution attained through wiping the hands and face with clean earth). See (Surah al-Ma'idah 5: 6 and also n. 70) below - Ed.) This group considers it

permissible to stay in the mosque in this state provided one has performed ablution. This is the view of 'Ali, Ibn 'Abbas, Sa'id b. Jubayr and some other authorities. The opinion that a traveller in the state of major impurity may perform ablution if he is unable to take a bath is supported by consensus, but while some authorities infer it from traditions others base it on the Qur'anic verse mentioned above. (See Jassas, vol. 2, pp. 201-6; and Ibn Kathir's commentary on this verse - Ed.)

69. There is disagreement as to what is meant here by the verb lamastum, which literally means 'you touched'. 'Ali, Ibn 'Abbas, Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, Ubayy b. Ka'b, Sa'id b. Jubayr, Hasan al-Basri and several other leading jurists are of the opinion that it signifies sexual intercourse. Abu Hanifah and his school, and Sufyan al-Thawri follow this view. But 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud and 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar hold that it signifies the act of touching, the mere placing of one's hand on a woman's body. This is the opinion adopted by Shafi'i. Other jurists take an intermediate position. Malik, for instance, is of the opinion that if a man and a woman touch each other with sexual desire, their ablution is nullified, and if they want to perform the Prayer they are obliged to renew their ablution. He sees nothing objectionable, however, in the mere fact of a man touching a woman's body, or vice versa, provided the act is not motivated by sexual desire. (See Ibn Kathir's commentary on this verse - Ed.-)

70. The detailed rules of tayammum are as follows: A man who either needs to perform ablution or take a bath to attain the state of purity for ritual Prayer may resort to tayammum provided water is not available to him. Only then may he perform the Prayer. Permission to resort to tayammum, rather than make ablution with water or take a bath, is also extended to invalids whose health is likely to be harmed by the use of water. We have tried to convey both shades of meaning in the translation of the verse by using the expression 'have had contact with' instead of 'touched' - Ed.

Tayammum literally means 'to turn to, to aim at, to head for, to intend'. The relevance of the term in the Islamic religious context is that when water is either not available or when its use is likely to cause harm one should 'turn to' clean earth.

There is some disagreement among jurists about the manner of performing tayammum. According to some, one should strike one's palms on the clean earth, then gently wipe one's face, then strike one's hands again and gently wipe one's hands and arms up to the elbows. This is the view of Abu Hanifah, Shafi'i, Malik and the majority of jurists. Among the Companions and Successors, 'Ali, 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar, Hasan al-Basri, Sha'bi, Salim b. 'Abd Allah and many others are of the same opinion. Other jurists are of the view that it is sufficient to strike one's palms once on the clean earth, then wipe one's face and one's hands up to the wrist; it is not necessary to wipe the arms between the wrist and the elbow. This is the opinion of 'Ata', Makhul, Awza'i, and Ahmad b. Hanbal, and is generally followed by the Ahl al-Hadith. (Cf. Qurtubi, Ahkam al-Qur'an, vol. 5, pp. 239-41.)

Tayammum is not necessarily performed by striking one's palms on earth proper. It is sufficient to strike the palms on anything which either has dust over it or anything consisting of the dry elements of the earth. It may be asked how one attains purity by striking one's palms on the earth and then wiping one's hands and face with them. In fact tayammum is a useful psychological device to keep the sense of ritual purity and the

sanctity of Prayer alive in man's mind even when water - the principal agent of purification - is not available. The value of tayammum is that even if a man is unable to use water - and no one knows how long this situation may persist - his sensitivity to cleanliness and purity will endure. He will continue to observe the regulation laid down by the Law in respect of cleanliness and purity, and the distinction between the states in which one may and may not perform the Prayer will not be erased.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيۡنَ اُوۡتُوۡا نَصِيۡبًا مِّنَ الۡكِتٰبِ يَشۡتَرُوۡنَ الضَّلٰلَةَ وَيُرِيۡدُوۡنَ اَنۡ تَضِلُّوا
السَّبِيۡلَ ؕ 44

(4:44) Have you not seen those to whom a portion of the Book was given?[71] They purchased error for themselves, and wish that you too lose the right way?

71. The Qur'an often characterizes the scholars of the People of the Book as those who 'were given a portion of the Book'. The reason for the use of this expression, in the first place, is that they caused a part of the divine revelation to be lost. Moreover, they had detached themselves from the spirit and purpose of the divine revelation which was available to them. Their concern with the Scripture was confined to verbal discussions, arguments about legal minutiae, and speculation about subtle and involved philosophical and theological questions. This had so alienated even their religious leaders and scholars from the true concept of religion that they lost true religious devotion and piety.

وَاللّٰهُ اَعۡلَمُ بِاَعۡدَآئِكُمۡ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَلِيًّا ۙ وَّكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ نَصِيۡرًا 45

(4:45) Allah knows your enemies better and Allah suffices as a protector and Allah suffices as a helper.

مِنَ الَّذِيۡنَ هَادُوۡا يُحَرِّفُوۡنَ الۡكَلِمَ عَنۡ مَّوَاضِعِهٖ وَيَقُوۡلُوۡنَ سَمِعۡنَا وَعَصَيۡنَا وَاسۡمَعۡ غَيۡرَ
مُسۡمَعٍ وَّرَاعِنَا لَيًّا ۢ بِاَلۡسِنَتِهِمۡ وَطَعۡنًا فِى الدِّيۡنِ ؕ وَلَوۡ اَنَّهُمۡ قَالُوۡا سَمِعۡنَا وَاَطَعۡنَا وَاسۡمَعۡ
وَانۡظُرۡنَا لَكَانَ خَيۡرًا لَّهُمۡ وَاَقۡوَمَ ۙ وَلٰكِنۡ لَّعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِكُفۡرِهِمۡ فَلَا يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ اِلَّا
قَلِيۡلًا 46

(4:46) Among those who have become Jews[72] there are some who alter the words from their context,[73] and make a malicious play with their tongues and seek to revile the true faith. They say: 'We have heard and we disobey' (sami'na wa 'asayna),[74] 'Do hear us, may you turn dumb' (isma' ghayr musma')[75] and 'Hearken to us' (ra'ina). It would

indeed have been better for them and more upright if they had said: 'We have heard and we obey' (sami'na wa ata'na)[76] and: 'Do listen to us, and look at us (with kindness)' (wa isma' wa unzurna). But Allah has cursed them because of their disbelief. Scarcely do they believe.

72. It is to be noted that this expression means 'they became Jews', rather than 'they were Jews'. For, originally, they were nothing but Muslims, just as the followers of every Prophet are Muslims. Only later on did they become merely 'Jews'.

73. This signifies three things. First, that they tampered with the text of the Scripture. Second, that they misinterpreted the Scripture and thereby distorted the meanings of the verses of the Book. Third, that they came and stayed in the company of the Prophet (peace be on him) and his Companions and listened to the conversations which took place there, then went among other people and misreported what they had heard. They did this with the malicious intent of bringing the Muslims into disrepute and thereby preventing people from embracing Islam.

74. When the ordinances of God are announced to them, they loudly proclaim: 'Yes, we have heard', (sami'na), but then they whisper: 'And we disobeyed' ('asayna). Or else they pronounce ata'na ('we obey') with such a twist of the tongue that it becomes indistinguishable from 'asayna.

75. Whenever they wanted to say something to the Prophet (peace be on him) they would say, 'isma" (listen), but added to this the expression, 'ghayr musma" which had several meanings. It could either be a polite expression, meaning that he was worthy of such deep respect that one should say nothing to his dislike or it could have a malicious implication, meaning that he did not deserve to be addressed by anybody. It also meant the imprecation: 'May God turn you deaf.'

76. For an explanation of this see Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 2, n. 108).

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا۟ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ ءَامِنُوا۟ بِمَا نَزَّلْنَا مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُم مِّن قَبْلِ أَن نَّطْمِسَ
وُجُوهًا فَنَرُدَّهَا عَلَىٰٓ أَدْبَارِهَآ أَوْ نَلْعَنَهُمْ كَمَا لَعَنَّآ أَصْحَٰبَ ٱلسَّبْتِ ۚ وَكَانَ أَمْرُ ٱللَّهِ
مَفْعُولًا 47

(4:47) O you who have been granted the Book! Do believe in what We have (now) revealed, which confirms the revelation which you already possess.[77] Do this before We alter countenances, turning them backwards, or lay a curse upon them as We cursed the Sabbath-men.[78] Bear in mind that Allah's command is done.

77. See ibid., (Surah 3, n. 2).

78. See ibid., (Surah 2, nn. 82 and 83).

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُّشْرَكَ بِهٖ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدِ

افْتَرٰٓى إِثْمًا عَظِيْمًا 48

(4:48) Surely Allah does not forgive that a partner be ascribed to Him,[79] although He forgives any other sins for whomever He wills.[80] He who associates anyone with Allah in His divinity has indeed forged a mighty lie and committed an awesome sin.

79. Although the People of the Book claimed to follow the Prophets and the Divine Books they had, in fact, fallen a prey to polytheism.

80. The purpose of this verse is not to tell man that he may commit any sin as long as he does not associate others with God in His divinity. The object is rather to impress upon those who had begun to regard polytheism as a trivial matter that it constitutes the most serious offence in God's sight, an offence so serious that while other sins may be pardoned this will not. Jewish religious scholars were meticulous about questions of subsidiary importance, and devoted all their time to pondering over legal subtleties which their jurists had painstakingly elaborated by far-fetched deductions. Yet they treated polytheism so lightly that they neither abstained from it themselves nor tried to prevent their people from falling a prey to polytheistic ideas and practices nor found anything objectionable in establishing cordial relations with the polytheists nor in supporting them.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِيْنَ يُزَكُّوْنَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ ۭ بَلِ اللّٰهُ يُزَكِّيْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَلَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ

فَتِيْلًا 49

(4:49) Have you not seen those who boast of their righteousness, even though it is Allah Who grants righteousness to whomsoever He wills? They are not wronged even as much as the husk of a date-stone (if they do not receive righteousness).

اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ يَفْتَرُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ ۭ وَكَفٰى بِهٖٓ إِثْمًا مُّبِيْنًا ع 50

(4:50) See how they forge lies about Allah! This in itself is a manifest sin.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِيْنَ أُوْتُوْا نَصِيْبًا مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْجِبْتِ وَالطَّاغُوْتِ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ

لِلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ أَهْدٰى مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا سَبِيْلًا 51

(4:51) Have you not seen those to whom a portion of the Book was given? They believe in baseless superstitions[81] and taghut (false deities),[82] and say about the unbelievers that they are better guided than those who believe.[83]

81. Jibt signifies 'a thing devoid of any true basis and bereft of all usefulness'. In Islamic terminology the various forms of sorcery, divination and soothsaying, in short all superstitions, are termed jibt. It is reported in a tradition that, 'to divine things from the cries of animals, or the traces of animals' paws, or the flight of birds, constitutes jibt. Thus, jibt may be roughly translated as 'superstition'. (See Abu Da'ud, Tibb', 23; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 3, p. 477 and vol. 5, p. 60 - Ed.)

82. For explanation see Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 2, nn. 286 and 288).

83. The obstinacy of the Jewish religious scholars had, reached such a point that they brazenly declared the followers of Muhammad (peace be on him) to be in greater error than even the polytheists of Arabia. This was despite the fact that they knew that the Muslims stood for absolute monotheism while their opponents believed in that undisguised polytheism which has been so vehemently denounced throughout the Bible.

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ ۖ وَمَن يَلْعَنِ اللَّهُ فَلَن تَجِدَ لَهُ نَصِيرًا ۖ 52

(4:52) Such are the ones whom Allah has cursed; and he whom Allah curses has none to come to his help.

أَمْ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُلْكِ فَإِذًا لَّا يُؤْتُونَ النَّاسَ نَقِيرًا ۙ 53

(4:53) Have they any share in the dominion (of Allah)? Had that been so, they would never have granted people even as much as the speck on a date-stone.[84]

84. The Jews, who had judged the Muslims to be in error, are asked if they have some share in God's authority which entitles them to judge who is rightly guided and who is not. If the Jews really had any share in that authority, no one would receive so much as a penny from them, for their hearts are too small to even acknowledge the truth, let alone credit others with righteousness and goodness. This verse can also be understood somewhat differently so as to pose the following question to the Jews: 'Is it a matter of your possessing some dominion which you are reluctant to share with others?' Obviously, the question was merely one of acknowledging the Truth, and they were too grudging to credit others with it.

أَمْ يَحْسُدُونَ النَّاسَ عَلَىٰ مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ ۚ فَقَدْ آتَيْنَا آلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْكِتَابَ

وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَآتَيْنَاهُم مُّلْكًا عَظِيمًا 54

(4:54) Do they envy others for the bounty that Allah has bestowed upon them?[85] (Let them bear in mind that) We bestowed upon the house of Abraham the Book and Wisdom, and We bestowed upon them a mighty dominion,[86]

85. By implication, this query accurately portrays the state of mind of the Jews. They saw the Muslims being endowed with the grace and reward of God which they, notwithstanding their own unworthiness had expected to fall to their share. By virtue of the advent of a great Prophet among the ummis of Arabia, a spiritual, moral and intellectual revolution had taken place which totally changed their practical life and ultimately led them to greatness and glory. It is this which aroused their spite and envy, and which was reflected in their unjustifiable remarks about the Muslims.

86. This 'mighty dominion' refers to the position of world leadership and authority which a people attain by virtue of receiving the knowledge in the Book of God and acting according to its dictates.

فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ اٰمَنَ بِهٖ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ صَدَّ عَنْهُ ؕ وَ كَفٰى بِجَهَنَّمَ سَعِيْرًا 55

(4:55) whereupon some of them believed, and others turned away.[87] (Those who turn away), Hell suffices for a blaze.

87. This is in response to the malicious remarks of the Israelites. What is being said is that they had no reason to feel jealous since both the Israelites and Ishmaelites were offspring of the same Abraham. Now, the leadership of the world had been promised only to those children of Abraham who followed the Book and Wisdom revealed by God. The Book and Wisdom had been sent down earlier to the Israelites, and to their discredit they had turned away from them. The same Book and Wisdom had now been made available to the Ishmaelites and they had decided to greet it with faith and gratitude.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا سَوْفَ نُصْلِيْهِمْ نَارًا ؕ كُلَّمَا نَضِجَتْ جُلُوْدُهُمْ بَدَّلْنٰهُمْ جُلُوْدًا غَيْرَهَا لِيَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَزِيْزًا حَكِيْمًا 56

(4:56) Surely We shall cast those who reject Our signs into the Fire; and as often as their skins are burnt out, We shall give them other skins in exchange that they may fully taste the chastisement. Surely Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ؕ لَهُمْ فِيْهَآ اَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ ۫ وَّنُدْخِلُهُمْ ظِلًّا ظَلِيْلًا 57

(4:57) And those who believe and do good deeds, We shall cause them to enter the Gardens beneath which rivers flow. There they shall abide for ever. There they shall

have spouses purified and there We shall cause them to enter a shelter with plenteous shade.

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمٰنٰتِ إِلٰى أَهْلِهَا ۙ وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا
بِالْعَدْلِ ۚ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهٖ ۗ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ سَمِيْعًا بَصِيْرًا 58

(4:58) Allah commands you to deliver trusts to those worthy of them; and when you judge between people, to judge with justice.[88] Excellent is the admonition Allah gives you. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.

88. Here the Muslims are forewarned against the evils which had afflicted the Israelites. One of the fundamental mistakes committed by the Israelites was that in the time of their degeneration they had handed over positions of trust (i.e. religious and political leadership) to incompetent, mean, immoral, dishonest and corrupt people. The result was that corruption spread throughout the nation. The Muslims are directed to take heed of this, and to entrust positions of responsibility only to those who are capable of shouldering the burdens of such positions. The other major weakness of the Israelites was that they completely lost their sense of justice. In their pursuit of either personal or national interests, honesty and good faith were often sacrificed. The Muslims, in the time of the Prophet (peace be on him), were themselves subjected to gross injustice at their hands. On the one side were the Prophet (peace be on him) and his followers, to whose purity of life and conduct the Jews were themselves witnesses. On the other side were those who worshipped idols, buried their daughters alive, married their step-mothers and circumambulated the Ka'bah naked. Despite this, these so-called People of the Book felt no shame in declaring that the latter were closer to righteousness than the Muslims. After informing the Muslims of the iniquity of the Jews, God now warns them against committing similar injustices. They should rather declare what is right in the face of friend and foe alike, and judge between people with equity and justice.

يٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا أَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَأَطِيْعُوا الرَّسُوْلَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ ۚ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ
فِيْ شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوْهُ إِلَى اللّٰهِ وَالرَّسُوْلِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ۗ ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ
وَّأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيْلًا ۚ 59

(4:59) Believers! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and those from among you who are invested with authority; and then if you were to dispute among yourselves about anything refer it to Allah and the Messenger[89] if you indeed believe in Allah and the Last Day; that is better and more commendable in the end.[90]

89. This verse is the cornerstone of the entire religious, social and political structure of Islam, and the very first clause of the constitution of an Islamic state. It lays down the following

principles as permanent guidelines:

(1) In the Islamic order of life, God alone is the focus of loyalty and obedience. A Muslim is the servant of God before anything else, and obedience and loyalty to God constitute the centre and axis of both the individual and collective life of a Muslim. Other claims to loyalty and obedience are acceptable only insofar as they remain secondary and subservient, and do not compete with those owed to God. All loyalties which may tend to challenge the primacy of man's loyalty to God must be rejected. This has been expressed by the Prophet (peace be on him) in the following words: 'There may be no obedience to any creature in disobedience to the Creator.' (Muslim, 'Iman', 37; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 3, p. 472 - Ed.)

(2) Another basic principle of the Islamic order of life is obedience to the Prophet (peace be on him). No Prophet, of course, is entitled to obedience in his own right. Obedience to Prophets, however, is the only practical way of obeying God, since they are the only authentic means by which He communicates His injunctions and ordinances to men. Hence, we can obey God only if we obey a Prophet. Independent obedience to God is not acceptable, and to turn one's back on the Prophets amounts to rebellion against God. The following tradition from the Prophet (peace be on him) explains this: 'Whoever obeyed me, indeed obeyed God; and whoever disobeyed me, indeed disobeyed God.' (Bukhari, 'Jihad', 109; 'I'tisam', 2; Muslim, 'Amarah', 32, 33; Nasa'i, 'Bay'ah', 27; etc. - Ed.) We shall see this explained in more detail a little further on in the Qur'an.

(3) In the Islamic order of life Muslims are further required to obey fellow Muslims in authority. This obedience follows, and is subordinate to, obedience to God and the Prophet (peace be on him). Those invested with authority (ulu al-amr) include all those entrusted with directing Muslims in matters of common concern. Hence, persons 'invested with authority' include the intellectual and political leaders of the community, as well as administrative officials, judges of the courts, tribal chiefs and regional representatives. In all these capacities, those 'invested with authority' are entitled to obedience, and it is improper for Muslims to cause dislocation in their collective life by engaging in strife and conflict with them. This obedience is contingent, however, on two conditions: first, that these men should be believers; and second, that they should themselves be obedient to God and the Prophet (peace be on him). These two conditions are not only clearly mentioned in this verse they have also been elucidated at length by the Prophet (peace be on him) and can be found in the Hadith. Let us consider, for example, the following traditions: A Muslim is obliged to heed and to obey an order whether he likes it or not, as long as he is not ordered to carry out an act of disobedience to God (ma'siyah). When ordered to carry out an act of disobedience-to God he need neither heed nor obey.

There is no obedience in sin; obedience is only in what is good (ma'ruf). (For these traditions see Bukhari, 'Ahkam', 4; 'Jihad', 108; Muslim, 'Amarah', 39; Tirmidhi, 'Jihad', 29; Ibn Majah, 'Jihad', 40; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 2, pp. 17 and 142 - Ed.)

There will be rulers over you, some of whose actions you will consider good and others abominable. Who even disapproves of their abominable acts will be acquitted of all blame, and whoever resents them he too will remain secure (from all blame); not so one who approves and follows them in their abominable acts. They (i.e. the Companions) asked:

'Should we not fight against them?' The Prophet (peace be on him) said: 'No, not as long as they continue to pray.' (See Bukhari, 'Jihad', 108 - Ed.)

This means that their abandonment of Prayer will be a clear sign of their having forsaken obedience to God and the Prophet (peace be on him). Thereafter it becomes proper to fight against them. In another tradition the Prophet (peace be on him) says:

Your worst leaders are those whom you hate and who hate you; whom you curse and who curse you. We asked: 'O Messenger of God! Should we not rise against them?' The Prophet (peace be on him) said: 'No, not as long as they establish Prayer among you: not as long as they establish Prayer among you.' (See Muslim, 'Amarah', 65, 66; Tirmidhi, 'Fitan', 77; Darimi, 'Riqaq, 78; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 6, pp. 24, 28 - Ed.)

In this tradition the position is further clarified. The earlier tradition could have created the impression that it was not permissible to revolt against rulers as long as they observed their Prayers privately. But the latter tradition makes it clear that what is really meant by 'praying' is the establishment of the system of congregational Prayers in the collective life of Muslims. This means that it is by no means sufficient that the rulers merely continue observing their Prayers: it is also necessary that the system run by them should at least be concerned with the establishment of Prayer. This concern with Prayer is a definite indication that a government is essentially an Islamic one. But if no concern for establishing Prayer is noticed, it shows that the government has drifted far away from Islam making it permissible to overthrow it. The same principle is also enunciated by the Prophet (peace be on him) in another tradition, in which the narrator says: 'The Prophet (peace be on him) also made us pledge not to rise against our rulers unless we see them involved in open disbelief, so that we have definite evidence against them to lay before God' (Bukhari and Muslim).

(4) In an Islamic order the injunctions of God and the way of the Prophet (peace be on him) constitute the basic law and paramount authority in all matters. Whenever there is any dispute among Muslims or between the rulers and the ruled the matter should be referred to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and all concerned should accept with sincerity whatever judgement results. In fact, willingness to take the Book of God and the Sunnah of His Messenger as the common point of reference, and to treat the judgement of the Qur'an and the Sunnah as the last word on all matters, is a central characteristic which distinguishes an Islamic system from un-Islamic ones. Some people question the principle that we should refer everything to the Book of God and the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be on him). They wonder how we can possibly do so when there are numerous practical questions involved, for example, rules and regulations relating to municipal administration, the management of railways and postal services and so on which are not treated at all in these sources. This doubt arises, however, from a misapprehension about Islam. The basic difference between a Muslim and a non-Muslim is that whereas the latter feels free to do as he wishes, the basic characteristic of a Muslim is that he always looks to God and to His Prophet for guidance, and where such guidance is available, a Muslim is bound by it. On the other hand, it is also quite important to remember that when no specific guidance is available, a Muslim feels free to exercise his discretion because the silence of the Law indicates that God Himself has deliberately granted man the freedom to make his decision.

90. Since the Qur'an is not merely a legal code, but also seeks to instruct, educate, admonish and exhort, the earlier sentence which enunciates a legal principle is followed by another which explains its underlying purpose and wisdom. Two things are laid down. First, that faithful adherence to the above four principles is a necessary requirement of faith. Anyone who claims to be a Muslim and yet disregards the principles of Islam involves himself in gross self-contradiction. Second, the well-being of Muslims lies in basing their lives on those principles. This alone can keep them on the straight path in this life, and will lead to their salvation in the Next. It is significant that this admonition follows immediately after the section which embodies comments about the moral and religious condition of the Jews. Thus the Muslims were subtly directed to draw a lesson from the depths to which the Jews had sunk, as a result of their deviation from the fundamental principles of true faith just mentioned. Any community that turns its back upon the Book of God and the guidance of His Prophets, that willingly follows rulers and leaders who are heedless of God and His Prophets, and that obeys its religious and political authorities blindly without seeking authority for their actions either in the Book of God or in the practice of the Prophets, will inevitably fall into the same evil and corruption as the Israelites.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيۡنَ يَزۡعُمُوۡنَ اَنَّهُمۡ اٰمَنُوۡا بِمَاۤ اُنۡزِلَ اِلَيۡكَ وَمَاۤ اُنۡزِلَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِكَ يُرِيۡدُوۡنَ
اَنۡ يَّتَحَاكَمُوۡۤا اِلَى الطَّاغُوۡتِ وَقَدۡ اُمِرُوۡۤا اَنۡ يَّكۡفُرُوۡا بِهٖ ؕ وَيُرِيۡدُ الشَّيۡطٰنُ اَنۡ يُّضِلَّهُمۡ
ضَلٰلًا ۢ بَعِيۡدًا 60

(4:60) (O Messenger!) Have you not seen those who claim to believe in the Book which has been revealed to you and in the Books revealed before you, and yet desire to submit their disputes to the judgement of taghut (the Satanic authorities who decide independently of the Law of Allah), whereas they had been asked to reject it.[91] And Satan seeks to make them drift far away from the right way.

91. Taghut clearly signifies here a sovereign who judges things according to criteria other than the law of God. It also stands for a legal and judicial system which acknowledges neither the sovereignty of God nor the paramount authority of the Book of God. This verse categorically proclaims that to refer disputes to the judgement of a court of law which is essentially taghut contravenes the dictates of a believer's faith. In fact, true faith in God and His Book necessarily requires that a man should refuse to recognize the legitimacy of such courts. According to the Qur'an, belief in God necessitates repudiation of the authority of taghut. To try to submit both to God and to taghut at the same time is hypocrisy.

وَاِذَا قِيۡلَ لَهُمۡ تَعَالَوۡا اِلٰى مَاۤ اَنۡزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَاِلَى الرَّسُوۡلِ رَاَيۡتَ الۡمُنٰفِقِيۡنَ يَصُدُّوۡنَ عَنۡكَ
صُدُوۡدًا ۚ 61

(4:61) When they are told: 'Come to that which Allah has revealed, and come to the Messenger', you will notice the hypocrites turning away from you in aversion.[92]

92. This shows that the hypocrites were inclined to refer to the Prophet (peace be on him) those cases in which they expected a favourable decision. When they feared an adverse judgement they refused to refer to the Prophet (peace be on him). This continues to be the practice of many hypocrites even now. Whenever they feel that Islamic Law would further their interests they turn to it but when they feel it would militate against them they refer their disputes to whichever legal systems and courts of law, customs and usages they anticipate most likely to give them a favourable decision.

فَكَيْفَ إِذَآ أَصَابَتْهُم مُّصِيبَةٌۢ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ جَآءُوكَ يَحْلِفُونَ ۖ صلے ق بِاللَّهِ إِنْ أَرَدْنَآ

إِلَّآ إِحْسَانًا وَتَوْفِيقًا 62

(4:62) But what happens when some misfortune visits them because of their own misdeeds? Then, they come to you swearing by Allah,[93] saying: 'We wanted nothing but to do good and to bring about conciliation (between the two parties)'.

93. This may mean that when Muslims become aware of their hypocritical activities and they feel afraid of being caught, censured, and eventually punished, the hypocrites resort to every stratagem, including oaths, in order to assure people that they are true believers.

أُولَٰٓئِكَ ٱلَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُ ٱللَّهُ مَا فِى قُلُوبِهِمْ ۖ ق فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَعِظْهُمْ وَقُل لَّهُمْ فِىٓ

أَنفُسِهِمْ قَوْلًۢا بَلِيغًا 63

(4:63) As for them, Allah knows what is in their hearts. Leave them alone, admonish them, and say to them penetrating words about themselves.

وَمَآ أَرْسَلْنَا مِن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ ٱللَّهِ ۚ ط وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذ ظَّلَمُوٓا۟ أَنفُسَهُمْ جَآءُوكَ

فَٱسْتَغْفَرُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ وَٱسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ ٱلرَّسُولُ لَوَجَدُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِيمًا 64

(4:64) (And tell them that) We never sent a Messenger but that he should be obeyed by the leave of Allah.[94] If whenever they wronged themselves they had come to you praying to Allah for forgiveness, and had the Messenger prayed for their forgiveness, they would indeed have found Allah All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

94.This is to impress upon us that Prophets are not sent so that people may pay lip-service to their Prophethood, and then obey whoever they wish. The purpose of sending Prophets is that people should follow the laws of God as brought and expounded by them rather than

laws devised by man, and that they should obey the commands of God as revealed to the Prophets to the exclusion of the commands of others.

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا 65

(4:65) But no, by your Lord, they cannot become true be-lievers until they seek your arbitration in all matters on which they disagree among themselves, and then find not the least vexation in their hearts over what you have decided, and accept it in willing submission.[95]

95.The application of the injunction embodied in this verse is not confined to the life-time of the Prophet (peace be on him). It will remain in force until the Day of Judgement. The guidance the Prophet (peace be on him) proclaimed on God's behalf, and the manner in which he followed God's direction and inspiration, will for ever remain the universal touchstone for Muslims. In fact, recognition of that guidance as the final authority is the criterion of true belief. This principle was pronounced by the Prophet (peace be on him) in the following words: 'None of you can become a believer until his desires become subservient to what I have brought (i.e. my teachings).' (Cited by al-Nawawi in al-Arba'in, see the tradition no. 41, transmitted on their authority of Abu al-Qasim Isma'il b. Muhammad al-Isfahani, Kitab al-Hujjah with the opinion that it is a 'good' and 'sound' tradition, with a sound chain of transmission - Ed.)

وَلَوْ أَنَّا كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَنِ اقْتُلُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ أَوِ اخْرُجُوا مِن دِيَارِكُم مَّا فَعَلُوهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ مِّنْهُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ فَعَلُوا مَا يُوعَظُونَ بِهِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ وَأَشَدَّ تَثْبِيتًا ۙ 66

(4:66) Had We enjoined upon them: 'Slay yourselves', or 'Leave your habitations', very few of them would have done it;[96] yet if they had done as they were admonished, it would have been better for them and would have strengthened them;[97]

96. As these people are not prepared to endure even minor losses and inconveniences in order to follow the law of God, they can never be expected to make big sacrifices. If asked either to lay down their lives or to give up their homes and families for the sake of the Truth they would fly straight back to unbelief and disobedience.

97. Had these people been able to free themselves of uncertainty, hesitation and ambivalence, and to resolve firmly to follow and obey the Prophet (peace be on him), their lives would have been spared the instability from which they suffer. Their way of thinking, their morals and their practical dealings would all have found permanent and stable foundations, and they would have enjoyed the blessings granted only to those who follow the one straight path with firmness and resolution. For one who is subject to indecision and

hesitation, who keeps changing from one direction to another in a state of uncertainty, life is a continuous exercise in futility.

وَّاِذًا لَّاٰتَيْنٰهُمْ مِّنْ لَّدُنَّآ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ۙ 67

(4:67) whereupon We would indeed grant them from Us a mighty reward,

وَّلَهَدَيْنٰهُمْ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيْمًا 68

(4:68) and guide them to a straight way.[98]

98. By giving up uncertainty, and deciding with complete faith and conviction to follow the Prophet (peace be on him), the straight path of their endeavours would have opened up before them. They would have been able to perceive clearly the channels into which their energies should be directed, so that each step they took would be a step towards the true goal.

وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَالرَّسُوْلَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ وَالصِّدِّيْقِيْنَ
وَالشُّهَدَآءِ وَالصّٰلِحِيْنَ ۚ وَحَسُنَ اُولٰٓئِكَ رَفِيْقًا ؕ 69

(4:69) And he who obeys Allah and the Messenger -they shall be with those whom Allah has favoured -the Prophets, those steadfast in truthfulness[99], the martyrs, and the righteous." How excellent will they be for companions![100]

99. Siddiq denotes someone who is utterly honest, someone whose devotion to truth has reached a very high point. Such a person is always upright and straightforward in his dealings. He supports nothing but right and justice and does so with sincerity. He opposes whatever is contrary to truth, and does not waver in his opposition to falsehood. His life is so unblemished and selfless that even enemies, let alone friends, expect of him unadulterated probity and justice.

The term shahid (pi. shuhada') means 'witness'. It signifies one who attests to the truth of his faith with his whole life. He who lays down his life fighting for God is called a shahid because by this sacrifice he confirms that his confession of faith was backed by a deep, genuine conviction of its truth, and that he valued it above his own life. The term shahid is also applied to those outstandingly honest people who are so trustworthy that their testimony, on any matter, is accepted without hesitation. Salih denotes one whose belief and thinking, motives and intentions, words and deeds, are based on righteousness. In short, he is a person whose life as a whole is oriented to righteousness.

100.He who enjoys, in this world, the company of the kind of people mentioned in this verse, and whom God judges worthy of the same company in the Hereafter is fortunate. The fact is that unless a man's natural sensitivity has atrophied, the companionship of corrupt and

wicked people is a painful punishment even in this transient world, let alone that one should be subjected to the perpetual companionship of such people in the abiding life of the Hereafter. Good people have always longed for the company of like people, both in this world and the Next.

ذٰلِكَ الْفَضْلُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ عَلِيْمًا ۚ 70

(4:70) That is a bounty from Allah, and Allah suffices to know the truth.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا خُذُوْا حِذْرَكُمْ فَانْفِرُوْا ثُبَاتٍ اَوِ انْفِرُوْا جَمِيْعًا 71

(4:71) Believers! Always be on your guard against encounters.[101] Then (as circumstance demands) either advance in detachments or advance in a body.

101. This discourse was revealed after the Battle of Uhud, when the tribes living around Madina had been greatly encouraged by the defeat of the Muslims. Thus dangers seemed to surround the Muslims on all sides. Day in and day out news poured in about the hostile intentions of one tribe after another. Reports came in of attacks mounted now in one area, and then in another. The Muslims were again and again the victims of treachery. Their preachers were invited to preach and then put to the sword. Beyond Madina, neither their lives nor their property was secure. Consequently the Muslims had to prepare themselves for a fierce struggle, for a tremendous, all-out effort to ensure that the Islamic movement would not be crushed.

وَاِنَّ مِنْكُمْ لَمَنْ لَّيُبَطِّئَنَّ ۚ فَاِنْ اَصَابَتْكُمْ مُّصِيْبَةٌ قَالَ قَدْ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيَّ اِذْ لَمْ اَكُنْ مَّعَهُمْ شَهِيْدًا 72

(4:72) Among you there is such who lags behind,[102] then if some affliction strikes you, he says: 'Indeed Allah bestowed His favour upon me that I was not present with them.'

102. Another meaning could be that such persons not only shirk the risks of fighting themselves but also go about spreading demoralization to discourage others from fighting in the name of God.

وَلَئِنْ اَصَابَكُمْ فَضْلٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ لَيَقُوْلَنَّ كَاَنْ لَّمْ تَكُنْۢ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهٗ مَوَدَّةٌ يّٰلَيْتَنِيْ كُنْتُ مَعَهُمْ فَاَفُوْزَ فَوْزًا عَظِيْمًا 73

(4:73) And if a bounty from Allah is given you, he says - and says as if there never was any affection between you and him - 'Oh, would that I had been with them, I would have come by a great gain.

فَلْيُقَاتِلْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْنَ يَشْرُوْنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْاٰخِرَةِ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّقَاتِلْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ
اللّٰهِ فَيُقْتَلْ اَوْ يَغْلِبْ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيْهِ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا 74

(4:74) Let those who seek the life of the Next World in exchange for the life of this world fight in the way of Allah.[103] We shall grant a mighty reward to whoever fights in the way of Allah, whether he is slain or comes out victorious.

103. The point stressed here is that fighting in the cause of God cannot be conducted by people engrossed in the pursuit of worldly benefits. This is the task of those who seek to please God, who have complete faith in Him and in the Hereafter, who are prepared to sacrifice all opportunities of worldly success and prosperity, and of all worldly interests, hoping thereby to win God's good pleasure. Irrespective of what happens in the present world such sacrifices will not be wasted in the Hereafter. Jihad (struggle in the cause of God) is not for those who mainly care for worldly benefits.

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَاتِلُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِيْنَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَآءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ
الَّذِيْنَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَآ اَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ الظَّالِمِ اَهْلُهَا ۚ وَاجْعَلْ لَّنَا مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ
وَلِيًّا ۙ وَّاجْعَلْ لَّنَا مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ نَصِيْرًا ؕ 75

(4:75) How is it that you do not fight in the way of Allah and in support of the helpless - men, women and children -who pray: 'Our Lord, bring us out of this land whose people are oppressors and appoint for us from Yourself, a protector, and appoint for us from Yourself a helper'?[104] .

104. This refers to those wronged, persecuted men, women and children of Makka and of the other tribes in Arabia who had embraced Islam, but were able neither to emigrate nor to protect themselves from the wrongs to which they were subjected. These helpless people suffered many forms of persecution, and prayed for deliverance from oppression.

اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا يُقَاتِلُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا يُقَاتِلُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ الطَّاغُوْتِ
فَقَاتِلُوْٓا اَوْلِيَآءَ الشَّيْطٰنِ ۚ اِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطٰنِ كَانَ ضَعِيْفًا ۧ 76

(4:76) Those who have faith fight in the way of Allah, while those who disbelieve fight in the way of taghut (Satan).[105]Fight, then, against the fellows of Satan. Surely Satan's strategy is weak.[106]

105. This lays down a clear verdict of God. To fight in the cause of God in order that His religion be established on earth is the task of men of faith, and whoever truly believes can never shirk this duty. To fight in the cause of taghut (authority in defiance of God) in order that the world may be governed by rebels against God is the task of unbelievers in which no believer can engage himself.

106. Satan and his comrades-in-arms ostensibly undertake tremendous preparations and contrive all kinds of ingenious machinations. True men of faith, however, should not be intimidated either by such preparations or by machinations. For, no matter what they do, they are doomed to fail.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيۡنَ قِيۡلَ لَهُمۡ كُفُّوۡۤا اَيۡدِيَكُمۡ وَاَقِيۡمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ ۚ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ
عَلَيۡهِمُ الۡقِتَالُ اِذَا فَرِيۡقٌ مِّنۡهُمۡ يَخۡشَوۡنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشۡيَةِ اللّٰهِ اَوۡ اَشَدَّ خَشۡيَةً ۚ وَقَالُوۡا رَبَّنَا
لِمَ كَتَبۡتَ عَلَيۡنَا الۡقِتَالَ ۚ لَوۡلَاۤ اَخَّرۡتَنَاۤ اِلٰۤى اَجَلٍ قَرِيۡبٍ ؕ قُلۡ مَتَاعُ الدُّنۡيَا قَلِيۡلٌ ۚ
وَالۡاٰخِرَةُ خَيۡرٌ لِّمَنِ اتَّقٰى ۟ وَلَا تُظۡلَمُوۡنَ فَتِيۡلًا 77

(4:77) Have you not seen those who were told: 'Restrain you hands, and establish the Prayer, and pay the Zakah'? But when fighting was enjoined upon them some of them feared men as one should fear Allah, or even more,[107] and said: 'Our Lord, why have You ordained fighting for us? Why did You not grant us a little more respite?' Say to them: 'There is little enjoyment in this world. The World to Come is much better for the God-fearing. And you shall not be wronged even to the extent of the husk of a date-stone.[108]

107. This verse .can be interpreted in three ways, and each meaning is equally valid: First, that those who now shirked to fight in the cause of God were themselves initially eager to fight. They often approached the Prophet (peace be on him), saying that they were being wronged, beaten, persecuted and abused, that' their patience was exhausted, and that they wanted permission to fight. They had then been told to be patient and continue to purify their souls by observing Prayers and dispensing Zakah. At that time they had felt disconcerted by this counsel of patience. Later on, some of those very same people were to tremble at the first sight of the enemy and the dangers of warfare.

Second, that they remained highly 'religious' as long as they were asked merely to pray and pay Zakah, which entailed no risk to their lives. But as soon as that phase was over and they were asked to expose themselves to danger, they began to shiver with fear.

Third, that in the former times the same people had unsheathed their swords for trivial causes. They had fought for loot and plunder, and engaged in feuds motivated by animal impulses, so much so that feuding had almost become their national pastime. At that time they had been told to abstain from bloodshed and to reform themselves by observing Prayers and dispensing Zakah. When, later on, the same people were told that the time had come for them to fight in the cause of God, those who had shown themselves to be lions while fighting for their own selfish causes turned out to be as meek as lambs. The strong hands which had wielded the sword so firmly, and had used it so fiercely for the sake of either personal or tribal honour, or for Satan's sake, became almost paralysed.

Each of these three meanings applies to a different kind of person, but the actual words of the verse seem to apply equally to all who shirked fighting in the cause of God.

108. Were they to serve the religion of God and spend their energy in that cause, they would surely be rewarded by Him.

أَيْنَ مَا تَكُونُوا يُدْرِكْكُّمُ الْمَوْتُ وَلَوْ كُنتُمْ فِي بُرُوجٍ مُّشَيَّدَةٍ ۗ وَإِن تُصِبْهُمْ حَسَنَةٌ
يَقُولُوا هَٰذِهِ مِنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ ۖ وَإِن تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَقُولُوا هَٰذِهِ مِنْ عِندِكَ ۗ قُلْ كُلٌّ مِّنْ
عِندِ اللَّهِ ۗ فَمَالِ هَٰؤُلَاءِ الْقَوْمِ لَا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ حَدِيثًا 78

(4:78) Wherever you might be, death will overtake you even though you be in massive towers. And when some good happens to them, they say: 'This is from Allah'; whereas when some misfortune befalls them, they say: 'This is because of you'.[109] Say: 'All is from Allah.' What has happened to this people that they seem to understand nothing?

109. When such people encounter success and victory, they attribute it to the grace of God. They allow themselves to forget that this grace came to them through no one but the Prophet (peace be on him). When they are either beaten or face setbacks because of their own faults and weaknesses they gratuitously exonerate themselves and place the blame squarely on the Prophet (peace be on him).

مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ ۖ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِن سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِن نَّفْسِكَ ۚ وَأَرْسَلْنَاكَ
لِلنَّاسِ رَسُولًا ۚ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا 79

(4:79) Whatever good happens to you is from Allah; and whatever misfortune smites you is because of your own action. We have sent you to mankind (O Muhammad!) as a Messenger, and Allah is sufficient as a witness.

مَنْ يُّطِعِ الرَّسُوْلَ فَقَدْ اَطَاعَ اللّٰهَ ۚ وَمَنْ تَوَلّٰى فَمَآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيْظًا ؕ 80

(4:80) He who obeys the Messenger thereby obeys Allah; as for he who turns away, We have not sent you as a keeper over them![110]

110. Such people are responsible for their own conduct. It is they rather than the Prophet (peace be on him) who will be censured. The task entrusted to the Prophet (peace be on him) was merely to communicate to them the ordinances and directives of God and he acquitted himself of it very well. It was not his duty to compel them to follow the right way, so that if they failed to follow the teachings communicated to them by the Prophet (peace be on him) the responsibility was entirely theirs. The Prophet (peace be on him) would not be questioned as to why they disobeyed.

وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ طَاعَةٌ ۫ فَاِذَا بَرَزُوْا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ بَيَّتَ طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ غَيْرَ الَّذِىْ تَقُوْلُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ
يَكْتُبُ مَا يُبَيِّتُوْنَ ۚ فَاَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا 81

(4:81) They say (in your presence): 'We obey', but when they leave your presence a party of them meets by night to plan against what you have said. Allah takes note of all their plots. So, let them alone, and put your trust in Allah. Allah is sufficient as a guardian.

اَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُوْنَ الْقُرْاٰنَ ؕ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللّٰهِ لَوَجَدُوْا فِيْهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيْرًا 82

(4:82) Do they not ponder about the Qur'an? Had it been from any other than Allah, they would surely have found in it much inconsistency.[111]

111. The main reason for the attitude of the hypocrites and lukewarm believers was their lack of conviction that the Qur'an came from God. They did not believe that the Prophet (peace be on him) had received the messages and directives that he preached from God Himself. Hence, when they are censured for their hypocritical conduct, they are told that they do not reflect upon the Qur'an. For the Qur'an itself is a strong, persuasive testimony to its divine origin. It is inconceivable that any human being should compose discourses on different subjects under different circumstances and on different occasions, and that the collection of those discourses should then grow into a coherent, homogeneous and integrated work, no component of which is discordant with the others. It is also inconceivable that such a work would be permeated through and through with a uniform outlook and attitude, a work reflecting a remarkable consistency in the mood and spirit of its Author, and a work too mature ever to need revision.

وَاِذَا جَآءَهُمۡ اَمۡرٌ مِّنَ الۡاَمۡنِ اَوِ الۡخَوۡفِ اَذَاعُوۡا بِهٖ ؕ وَلَوۡ رَدُّوۡهُ اِلَى الرَّسُوۡلِ وَاِلٰٓى اُولِى
الۡاَمۡرِ مِنۡهُمۡ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِيۡنَ يَسۡتَنۡۢبِطُوۡنَهٗ مِنۡهُمۡ ؕ وَلَوۡلَا فَضۡلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَرَحۡمَتُهٗ
لَاتَّبَعۡتُمُ الشَّيۡطٰنَ اِلَّا قَلِيۡلًا 83

(4:83) Whenever they come upon any news bearing upon either security or causing consternation they go about spreading it, whereas if they were to convey it to either the Messenger or to those from among them who are entrusted with authority, it would come to the knowledge of those who are competent to investigate it.[112] But for Allah's bounty and mercy upon you, (weak as you were) all but a few of you would surely have followed Satan.

112. This was a period of turbulence and upheaval and rumour was rife. Occasionally, baseless and exaggerated reports circulated and seized the whole of Madina and its outlying areas with alarm and consternation. At other times some cunning enemy tried to conceal the dangers threatening the Muslims by spreading soothing reports. A specially keen interest in rumours was taken by those who simply relished anything out of the ordinary, and who did not consider this life-and-death struggle between Islam and Ignorance to be a matter of crucial importance, and who were not aware of the far-reaching consequences of rumour-mongering. As soon as they heard something, they ran about spreading it everywhere. This rebuke is addressed to such people. They are warned against spreading rumours and are directed to convey every report they receive to responsible quarters.

فَقَاتِلۡ فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ ۚ لَا تُكَلَّفُ اِلَّا نَفۡسَكَ وَحَرِّضِ الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ۚ عَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنۡ يَّكُفَّ
بَاۡسَ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ اَشَدُّ بَاۡسًا وَّاَشَدُّ تَنۡكِيۡلًا 84

(4:84) (So, O Messenger!) Fight in the way of Allah -since you are responsible for none except yourself - and rouse the believers to fight, for Allah may well curb the might of the unbelievers. Indeed Allah is strongest in power and most terrible in chastisement.

مَنۡ يَّشۡفَعۡ شَفَاعَةً حَسَنَةً يَّكُنۡ لَّهٗ نَصِيۡبٌ مِّنۡهَا ۚ وَمَنۡ يَّشۡفَعۡ شَفَاعَةً سَيِّئَةً يَّكُنۡ لَّهٗ
كِفۡلٌ مِّنۡهَا ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ مُّقِيۡتًا 85

(4:85) He who intercedes in a good cause shall share in its good result, and he who intercedes in an evil cause shall share in its burden.[113] Allah watches over everything.

113. It is all a matter of choice and luck. One has the opportunity to struggle for the cause of God, and to urge others to strive for it in order to raise the banner of the Truth and be rewarded by God for so doing. Likewise, one also has the opportunity to expend one's energy trying to create misunderstanding among God's creatures and to demoralize people in their struggle for His cause thus incurring His chastisement.

وَإِذَا حُيِّيتُم بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَا أَوْ رُدُّوهَا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَسِيبًا 86

(4:86) When you are greeted with a salutation then return it with a better one, or at least the same.[114] Surely Allah takes good count of everything.

114. At that time the relations between the Muslims and non-Muslims were strained to the limit. It was feared, therefore, that the Muslims might feel inclined to treat the latter discourteously. They are accordingly asked to pay at least as much respect and consideration to others as is paid to them - and preferably more. Good manners and courtesy are to be matched by the Muslims. In fact, the mission entrusted to the Muslims requires them to excel others in this respect. Harshness, irritability and bitterness are not becoming in a people whose main function is to preach a message and invite people to it; a people committed to guiding mankind towards righteousness. While harshness and bitterness may at best satisfy one's injured vanity, they are positively harmful to the cause that one seeks to promote.'

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ ۗ وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حَدِيثًا 87

(4:87) There is no god but Allah. He will certainly gather you all together on the Day of Resurrection - the Day regarding which there can be no doubt. Whose word can be truer than Allah's?[115]

115.Whatever the unbelievers, polytheists and atheists may do does not impair God's godhead. That God is the One and Absolute Lord of all is a fact which none can alter. And a Day will come when He will gather together all human beings and will make them see the consequences of their deeds, and no one will be in a position to escape His retribution. God therefore does not require His good creatures to maltreat, on His behalf, those who are lost in error. This is the link between the present verse and the one preceding it. The same verse also concludes the theme running through the last twenty verses or so (see verses 71 ff). The present verse outlines that a man can follow whichever course he deems fit, and expend his energy in any direction he likes, but ultimately all men will have to stand before the One True God for His judgement and will see the consequences of their deeds.

فَمَا لَكُمْ فِي الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ فِئَتَيْنِ وَاللّٰهُ اَرْكَسَهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوْا ؕ اَتُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ تَهْدُوْا مَنْ
اَضَلَّ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهٗ سَبِيْلًا 88

(4:88) What has happened to you that you have two minds about the hypocrites[116] even though Allah has reverted them, owing to the sins that they earned?[117] Do you want to lead those to the right way whom Allah let go astray? And he whom Allah lets go astray, for him you can never find a way.

116.The problem of the hypocrites is discussed here. They had outwardly embraced Islam in Makka and in other parts of Arabia, but instead of migrating to the Domain of Islam they continued co live among their own people who were unbelievers, taking part in all their hostile machinations against Islam and the Muslims. It was not easy for the Muslims to decide how to deal with such people. Some were of the opinion that since they professed Islam, performed Prayers, fasted and recited the Qur'an they could not be treated as unbelievers. Here God pronounces His judgement on this issue.

Unless the following is made clear at this point, the reader is likely to miss the real object of not only this verse but of all those verses in which believers who have failed to migrate are characterized as hypocrites. The fact is that after the Prophet (peace be on him) migrated to Madina the Muslims came to possess a piece of territory where they could fulfil the dictates of their faith. At that time all Muslims who suffered from the pressures and constraints imposed on them by the unbelievers, and who did not enjoy the freedom to practise their religion, were directed to migrate to Madina, the Domain of Islam. It was in these circumstances that all those believers who were in a position to migrate to Madina, but who failed to do so because their hearth and home, kith and kin, and their material interests were dearer to them than Islam, were declared hypocrites. Those who were not really in a position to migrate were reckoned as 'feeble' see(verse 98 below).

It is obvious that Muslims living in non-Islamic territories can be called hypocrites only when the Domain of Islam either extends a general invitation to all of them or at least leaves its doors open to them. In such circumstances, all Muslims who are neither engaged in trying to transform the non-Islamic territory into a Domain of Islam nor inclined to migrate to the latter despite their ability to do so, will be deemed hypocrites. But if the Domain of Islam neither invites them nor even keeps its doors open for them, then they obviously cannot be declared hypocrites merely because of their failure to migrate. Such persons would be considered hypocrites only if they did something too outrageous to be consistent with true faith.

117. God has returned them whence they came because of their duplicity, their excessive hankering after their material interests, and their preference for the good of this world over that of the Next. Those people had indeed tried to extricate themselves from the grip of unbelief and to advance towards Islam. To be a true Muslim calls for single-mindedness. It requires a willingness to sacrifice all interests and advantages that are in conflict with the interests of Islam. It requires a faith in the Hereafter strong enough to enable a man to

cheerfully sacrifice all worldly advantages for the sake of his eternal happiness. Since those people lacked these qualities they retraced their steps. Could there be any doubt about the stuff they were made of?

وَدُّوْا لَوْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ كَمَا كَفَرُوْا فَتَكُوْنُوْنَ سَوَآءً فَلَا تَتَّخِذُوْا مِنْهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءَ حَتّٰى
يُهَاجِرُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَخُذُوْهُمْ وَاقْتُلُوْهُمْ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُّمُوْهُمْ ۪ وَلَا
تَتَّخِذُوْا مِنْهُمْ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا ۙ 89

(4:89) They wish that you should disbelieve just as they disbelieved so that you may all be alike. Do not, therefore, take from them allies until they emigrate in the way of Allah, but if they turn their backs (on emigration), seize them and slay them[118] wherever you come upon them. Take none of them for your ally or helper,

118. This is the verdict on those hypocritical confessors of faith who belong to a belligerent, non-Muslim nation and actually participate in acts of hostility against the Islamic state.

اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ يَصِلُوْنَ اِلٰى قَوْمٍ ۢ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِّيْثَاقٌ اَوْ جَآءُوْكُمْ حَصِرَتْ صُدُوْرُهُمْ
اَنْ يُّقَاتِلُوْكُمْ اَوْ يُقَاتِلُوْا قَوْمَهُمْ ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَسَلَّطَهُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ فَلَقٰتَلُوْكُمْ ۚ فَاِنِ
اعْتَزَلُوْكُمْ فَلَمْ يُقَاتِلُوْكُمْ وَاَلْقَوْا اِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَمَ ۙ فَمَا جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ
سَبِيْلًا 90

(4:90) unless it be such of them who seek refuge with a people who are joined with you by a covenant,[119] or those who come to you because their hearts shrink from fighting either against you or against their own people. Had Allah so willed, He would certainly have given them power over you and they would have fought against you. If they leave you alone and do not fight against you and offer you peace,, then Allah does not permit you to harm them.

119. The exception here does not relate to the injunction that they should not be taken as friends and supporters, but to the injunction that the believers should seize and slay them. What is meant is that if a hypocrite takes shelter among an unbelieving people with whom the Muslims have an agreement he should not be pursued into that territory. It is not permissible for Muslims of the Islamic state to kill a hypocrite in some neutral territory even if he merits execution. This is because of the sanctity of the agreement concluded by the Muslims rather than the sanctity of the hypocrite's blood.

سَتَجِدُوْنَ اٰخَرِيْنَ يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يَّاْمَنُوْكُمْ وَيَاْمَنُوْا قَوْمَهُمْ ؕ كُلَّمَا رُدُّوْٓا اِلَى الْفِتْنَةِ
اُرْكِسُوْا فِيْهَا ۚ فَاِنْ لَّمْ يَعْتَزِلُوْكُمْ وَيُلْقُوْٓا اِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَمَ وَيَكُفُّوْٓا اَيْدِيَهُمْ فَخُذُوْهُمْ
وَاقْتُلُوْهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوْهُمْ ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكُمْ جَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطٰنًا مُّبِيْنًا ع 91

(4:91) You will also find others who wish to be secure from you, and secure from their people, but who, whenever they have any opportunity to cause mischief, plunge into it headlong. If such people neither leave you alone nor offer you peace nor restrain their hands from hurting you, then seize them and slay them wherever you come upon them. It is against these that We have granted you a clear sanction.

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ اَنْ يَّقْتُلَ مُؤْمِنًا اِلَّا خَطَـًٔا ۚ وَمَنْ قَتَلَ مُؤْمِنًا خَطَـًٔا فَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ
مُّؤْمِنَةٍ وَّدِيَةٌ مُّسَلَّمَةٌ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهٖٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّصَّدَّقُوْا ؕ فَاِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَدُوٍّ لَّكُمْ وَهُوَ
مُؤْمِنٌ فَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ ؕ وَاِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍۢ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِّيْثَاقٌ فَدِيَةٌ مُّسَلَّمَةٌ
اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهٖ وَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ ۚ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ ۙ تَوْبَةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ
وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا 92

(4:92) It is not for a believer to slay another believer unless by mistake.[120] And he who has slain a believer by mistake, his atonement is to set free from bondage a believing person[121] and to pay blood-money to his heirs,[122] unless they forgo it by way of charity. And if the slain belonged to a hostile people, but was a believer, then the atonement is to set free from bondage a believing person.

And if the slain belonged to a (non-Muslim) people with whom you have a covenant, then the atonement is to pay the blood-money to his heirs, and to set free from bondage a believing person.[123] But he who cannot (free a slave) should fast for two consecutive months.[124] This is the penance ordained by Allah.[125] Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

120. The hypocritical confessors of Islam mentioned here are distinct from those whom the Muslims may kill. The reference here is to Muslims who are either residents of the Domain

of Islam (Dar al-Islam) or to those who live in the Domain of War or of Unbelief (Dar al-Harb or Dar al-Kufr) but against whom there is no proof of actual participation in the hostile activities with the enemies of Islam. In the time of the Prophet (peace be on him) there were many people who had embraced Islam and yet, because of genuine difficulties, were living among tribes hostile to Islam. It occasionally happened that, in attacking a hostile tribe, the Muslims inadvertently killed fellow Muslims living in its midst.

121. Since the person killed was a believer, expiation of the sin required the emancipation of a Muslim slave.

122. The Prophet (peace be on him) had fixed the blood-money at either 100 camels, 200 oxen or 2,000 head of cattle. If someone wished to pay this in another form the amount would be determined with reference to the market value of the articles mentioned above. For instance, for those who wished to pay blood-money in cash, the fixed amount in the time of the Prophet (peace be on him) was 800 dinars (8000 dirhams). In the time of Caliph 'Umar the amount of blood-money was fixed at 1000 golden dinars (12000 silver dirhams). It should be noted, however, that this amount relates to an unintentional rather than a deliberate homicide. (Regarding blood-money for unintentional homicide and injury see Abu Da'ud, 'Diyat', 14-17; Tirmidhi, 'Diyat', 1; Nasa'i, 'Qasamah', 34; Ibn Majah, 'Diyat', 6; Malik b. Anas, Muwatta', "Uqul', 4; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 1, pp. 384 and 450; vol. 2, pp. 178, 183, 186, 217, 224; vol. 4, p. 275. See also Ibn Rushd, Bidayat al-Mujtahid, vol. 2, pp. 401 ff. - Ed.)

123. The legal injunctions embodied in this verse are as follows:

(1) If the victim was a resident of the Domain of Islam (Dar al-Islam) the killer is not only required to pay blood-money but also to emancipate a slave by way of expiation.

(2) If the victim was a resident of the Domain of War (Dar al-Harb) the killer is only required to emancipate a slave.

(3) If the victim was a resident of a non-Muslim country which had treaty relations with an Islamic state the killer is required to emancipate a slave and also to pay blood-money. The amount of the blood-money, however, depends on the terms stipulated in the treaty between the Muslims and the territory of the victim. (See Jassas, vol. 2, pp. 238 f f. and 240 ff. - Ed.)

124. This means that he should observe fasting uninterrupted for the entire period. If a man breaks his fast for just one day without a legally valid reason he will be required to resume fasting anew.

125. This shows that what has been prescribed is an act of repentance and expiation rather than a penalty inflicted on a criminal. Penalization is essentially devoid of the spirit of repentance and of the urge to self-reform. A penalty is suffered under duress, usually with resentment, and leaves behind repugnance and bitterness. On the contrary, what God wants is that the believer who has committed a sin should wash the stain of it from his soul by supererogatory worship, by acts of charity, and by a meticulous fulfilment of all the duties incumbent upon him. Such a person is required to turn to God in remorse and repentance so

that his sin may be pardoned and his soul secured against the recurrence of similar errors.

The word kaffarah signifies that which either covers or hides something. To declare that certain acts of charity constitute kaffarah means that those acts overlay the sin and cover it up, just as stains on a wall are covered up when it is painted.

وَمَنْ يَّقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُّتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَآؤُهٗ جَهَنَّمُ خَالِدًا فِيْهَا وَغَضِبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَعَنَهٗ وَاَعَدَّ لَهٗ عَذَابًا عَظِيْمًا 93

(4:93) And he who slays a believer wilfully his reward is Hell, where he will abide. Allah's wrath is against him and He has cast His curse upon him, and has prepared for him a great chastisement.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَتَبَيَّنُوْا وَلَا تَقُوْلُوْا لِمَنْ اَلْقٰٓى اِلَيْكُمُ السَّلٰمَ لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا ۚ تَبْتَغُوْنَ عَرَضَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۡ فَعِنْدَ اللّٰهِ مَغَانِمُ كَثِيْرَةٌ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ كُنْتُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ فَمَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَتَبَيَّنُوْا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا 94

(4:94) Believers! When you go forth in the way of Allah, discern (between friend and foe), and do not say to him who offers you the greeting of peace: 'You are not a believer.'[126] If you seek the good of this worldly life, there lies with Allah abundant gain. After all, you too were such before, and then Allah was gracious to you.[127] Discern, then, for Allah is well aware of what you do.

126.In the early days of Islam the greeting as-salam 'alaykum ('peace be on you') was a distinguishing symbol of the Muslims. When a Muslim greeted another Muslim with this expression it signified that he was a member of the same community, that he was a friend and well-wisher, one who wished peace and security, from whom he need entertain no fear of hostility and towards whom, in return, he should not behave with hostility. The Islamic greeting occupied virtually the same position among Muslims as the passwords used by sentries to distinguish friend from foe. This was particularly important in those days because there were no distinctions in dress, language and so on by which Muslims could be conclusively marked off from their non-Muslim Arab compatriots.

The Muslims also encountered a strange problem on the battlefield. Whenever a Muslim was in danger of being harmed inadvertently by other Muslims during the fighting, he resorted to either the Islamic greeting (as-salam 'alaykum) or the Islamic creed There is no god save Allah' (ili-Jl^y) in order to indicate that he was their brother-in-faith. The Muslims, however, often suspected this to be merely a ruse of the enemy and therefore sometimes disregarded the utterance of the Islamic greeting or of the Islamic creed, and killed such

people and seized their belongings as booty. Although whenever the Prophet (peace be on him) came to know of such incidents, he severely reproached the people concerned, it, nevertheless, continued to take place. In the end God solved the problem by revelation. The purport of the verse is that no one has the right summarily to judge those who profess to be Muslims, and assume them to be lying for fear of their lives. At least two possibilities exist: the claim may either be true or it may be false. The truth can only be ascertained by proper investigation. While it is impossible to investigate a person's case properly during fighting and this may enable him to save his life by lying, it is equally possible that an innocent, true believer might be put to death by mistake. The error of letting an unbeliever go unpunished is preferable to that of killing a true believer.

127.The Muslims are now told that there was a time when they were scattered among different tribes of unbelievers. They were, therefore, forced to conceal the fact of being Muslims since they feared that they would be subjected to persecution and hardship. In those days they had nothing else besides their verbal profession to testify to their faith. Later on, some time before these verses were revealed, God benevolently enabled the Muslims to develop a collective entity of their own and thus to raise the banner of Islam in the face of strong opposition from the unbelievers. That the Muslims should fail to appreciate the hardships which other Muslims were enduring, and which they themselves had endured until not long before, and not to treat them with consideration and forbearance, did not seem an adequate way of thanking God for His benevolence.

لَا يَسْتَوِي الْقَاعِدُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ غَيْرُ أُولِي الضَّرَرِ وَالْمُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ ۚ فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ
دَرَجَةً ۚ وَكُلًّا وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْحُسْنَىٰ ۚ وَفَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ أَجْرًا
عَظِيمًا ۙ 95

(4:95) Those believers who sit at home, unless they do so out of a disabling injury, are not the equals of those who strive in the way of Allah with their possessions and their lives. Allah has exalted in rank those who strive with their possessions and their lives over those who sit at home; and though to each Allah has promised some good reward, He has preferred those who strive (in the way of Allah) over those who sit at home for a mighty reward.[128]

128. "Those who sit at home' (i.e. remain passive) does not refer either to those who had been ordered to fight but tried to look for excuses not to fight or to those who were individually obliged to take part in fighting because of the general summons of Jihad (fight in the cause of God) and yet shirked this duty. The reference here is to those who remained engrossed in personal concerns at a time when Jihad had become a collective obligation (fard bi al-kifayah). In the first case the person who fails to fight can only be a hypocrite, and

God holds out no good promise for such a person unless there is good reason, for example, genuine disability. In the second case, however, what is required is the mobilization of a part rather than the entire military strength of the Islamic community. In such cases, if the recognized head (imam) of the Islamic community summons the people to come forward and undertake the expedition concerned, those who respond to that call are reckoned to be of superior merit to those who remain occupied with other pursuits however meritorious.

Fard bi al-kifayah signifies a collective duty of the Muslim community so that if some people carry it out no Muslim is considered blameworthy; but if no one carries it out all incur a collective guilt - Ed.

دَرَجٰتٍ مِّنْهُ وَمَغْفِرَةً وَّرَحْمَةً ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ۧ 96

(4:96) For them are ranks, forgiveness, and favours from Him. Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ تَوَفّٰىهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ ظَالِمِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ قَالُوْا فِيْمَ كُنْتُمْ ؕ قَالُوْا كُنَّا مُسْتَضْعَفِيْنَ
فِى الْاَرْضِ ؕ قَالُوْٓا اَلَمْ تَكُنْ اَرْضُ اللّٰهِ وَاسِعَةً فَتُهَاجِرُوْا فِيْهَا ؕ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَاْوٰىهُمْ
جَهَنَّمُ ؕ وَسَآءَتْ مَصِيْرًا ۙ 97

(4:97) While taking the souls of those who were engaged in wronging themselves,[129] the angels asked: 'In what circumstances were you?' They replied: 'We were too weak and helpless in the land.' The angels said: 'Was not the earth of Allah wide enough for you to emigrate in it?'[130] For such men their refuge is Hell - an evil destination indeed;

129. The reference here is to those who stay behind along with the unbelievers, despite no genuine disability. They are satisfied with a life made up of a blend of Islamic and un-Islamic elements, even though they have had the chance to migrate to the Dar al-Islam and thus enjoy a full Islamic life. This is the wrong that they committed against themselves. What kept them satisfied with the mixture of Islamic and un-Islamic elements in their life was not any genuine disability but their love of ease and comfort, their excessive attachment to their kith and kin and to their properties and worldly interests. These concerns had exceeded reasonable limits and had even taken precedence over their concern for their religion see also(n. 116)above).

130. Those people who had willingly acquiesced to living under an un-Islamic order would be called to account by God and would be asked: If a certain territory was under the dominance of rebels against God, so that it had become impossible to follow His Law, why did you continue to live there? Why did you not migrate to a land where it was possible to follow the law of God?

إِلَّا الْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ حِيلَةً وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ
سَبِيلًا ۙ 98

(4:98) except the men, women, and children who were indeed too feeble to be able to seek the means of escape and did not know where to go .-

فَأُولَٰئِكَ عَسَى اللَّهُ أَن يَعْفُوَ عَنْهُمْ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَفُوًّا غَفُورًا 99

(4:99) maybe Allah shall pardon these, for Allah is All-Pardoning, All-Forgiving.

وَمَن يُهَاجِرْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يَجِدْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُرَاغَمًا كَثِيرًا وَسَعَةً ۚ وَمَن يَخْرُجْ مِن بَيْتِهِ
مُهَاجِرًا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ يُدْرِكْهُ الْمَوْتُ فَقَدْ وَقَعَ أَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا
رَّحِيمًا ۝ 100

(4:100) He who emigrates in the way of Allah will find in the earth enough room for refuge and plentiful resources. And he who goes forth from his house as a migrant in the way of Allah and His Messenger, and whom death overtakes, his reward becomes incumbent on Allah. Surely Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.[131]

131. It should be understood clearly that it is only permissible for a person who believes in the true religion enjoined by God to live under the dominance of an un-Islamic system on one of the following conditions. First, that the believer struggles to put an end to the hegemony of the un-Islamic system and to have it replaced by the Islamic system of life, as the Prophets and their early followers had done. Second, that he lacks the means to get out of his homeland and thus stays there, but does so with utmost disinclination and unhappiness.

If neither of these conditions exist, a believer who continues to live in a land where an un-Islamic order prevails, commits an act of continuous sin. To say that one has no Islamic state to go to does not hold water. For if no Islamic state exists, are there no mountains or forests from where one could eke out a living by eating leaves and drinking the milk of goats and sheep, and thus avoid living in a state of submission to unbelief.

Some people have misunderstood the tradition which says: 'There is no hijrah after the conquest of Makka' (Bukhari, 'Sayd', 10; 'Jihad', 1, 27, 194; Tirmidhi, 'Siyar', 33; Nasa'i, 'Bay'ah', 15, etc. - Ed.) This tradition is specifically related to the people of Arabia of that time and does not embody a permanent injunction. At the time when the greater part of Arabia constituted the Domain of Unbelief (Dar al-Kufr) or the Domain of War (Dar al-

Harb), and Islamic laws were being enforced only in Madina and its outskirts, the Muslims were emphatically directed to join and keep together. But when unbelief lost its strength and elan after the conquest of Makka, and almost the entire peninsula came under the dominance of Islam, the Prophet (peace be on him) declared that migration was no longer needed. This does not mean, however, that the duty to migrate was abolished for Muslims all over the world for all time to come regardless of the circumstances in which they lived.

وَإِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَقْصُرُوا مِنَ الصَّلٰوةِ ۖ إِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَنْ
يَفْتِنَكُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۚ إِنَّ الْكٰفِرِينَ كَانُوا لَكُمْ عَدُوًّا مُبِينًا 101

(4:101)When you go forth journeying in the land, there is no blame on you if you shorten the Prayer,[132] (especially) if you fear that the unbelievers might cause you harm.[133] Surely the unbelievers are your open enemies.

132. Shortening Prayers (qasr) while travelling in peace-time consists of praying two rak'ahs at those appointed times when one is normally required to pray four rak'ahs. The form of qasr during a state of war has not been specified. Prayers should, therefore, be performed as circumstances permit. People should pray in congregation if possible, otherwise individually. If it is not possible to turn towards the qiblah, one may keep the direction in which one happens to be facing. One may even pray while seated either on the back of an animal or on a vehicle. If actual bowing and prostrating are not possible, they may be performed with hand signals. If absolutely necessary, one may even pray while walking. One may also pray even though one's clothes are soiled with blood. If, in spite of these relaxations, a man still fails to manage to perform a Prayer within the prescribed time, he may defer it, following the precedent set by the Prophet (peace be on him) during the Battle of the Ditch.

There is disagreement as to whether one should also perform the sunnah (recommended) Prayers, or confine oneself to the obligatory ones. It is established that the practice of the Prophet (peace be on him) was to keep up the sunnah connected with the fajr (morning) Prayers, and with the witr in the 'isha' (evening) Prayers. At the other prescribed times, he performed only the obligatory Prayers. He did, however, perform the nafl (supererogatory) Prayers whenever he had the chance to do so, sometimes even while he was mounted. For this reason 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar expressed the opinion that one ought not to perform the sunnah Prayers while travelling, except for the sunnah in the fajr Prayers. But a majority of scholars consider both the performance and the omission of these Prayers as equally permissible, leaving the matter entirely to the discretion of the individual. The opinion held by the Hanafi school, however, is that it is preferable for a traveller actually on the move to omit the sunnah Prayers, but when he makes an overnight stop and is at his ease (even though in the legal sense he may still be a traveller), their performance is preferable.

According to some eminent jurists, journeys on which one may resort to qasr are those characterized as being fi sabil Allah (in the cause of God), such as military expeditions, Pilgrimage, the quest for knowledge, and so on. This is the judgement of 'Abd Allah b.

'Umar, 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud and 'Ata'. On the other hand, Shafi'i and Ahmad b. Hanbal are of the view that such permission extends to all journeys undertaken for lawful purposes, though not to those undertaken for unlawful purposes: indeed, if one travels for illegitimate purposes, one has no right whatever to benefit from the relaxation of qasr. Hanafi jurists, however, do not connect qasr with the purpose of the journey; they consider it lawful on all journeys, regardless of the purposes for which they are undertaken. They hold that a traveller may be either rewarded or punished by God, depending on his purpose in travelling. That, however, has nothing to do with the permissibility of qasr. (See the commentaries on the verse by Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir and Jassas. See also Ibn Rushd, Biddy at al-Mujtahid, vol. 1, p. 163 - Ed.)

Other eminent jurists have inferred from the words: 'And there is no blame on you . . . ' that qasr is not obligatory for a traveller: it is merely permitted. A person may avail himself of it if he chooses, and he may also perform his Prayers normally if he so wishes. This is the view of Shafi'i, even though he considers qasr recommended and holds its omission to be tantamount to failure to adopt the preferable alternative. According to Ahmad b. Hanbal, however, while qasr is not obligatory, its omission falls under the category of disapproved acts. In Abu Hanifah's opinion, qasr is obligatory, and according to one report, Malik is of the same opinion. (See the commentaries on the verse by Qurtubi, Jassas and Ibn al-'Arabi. See also al-Fiqh 'aid al-Madhdhib al-Arba'ah, vol. 1, p. 471, and n. 1, pp. 471-3 and Ibn Rushd, vol. 1, p. 161 - Ed.) It is established by the Hadith that the Prophet (peace be on him) always shortened his Prayers during his journeys. There is no reliable tradition to the effect that the Prophet (peace be on him) ever prayed four full rak'ahs in these circumstances. Ibn 'Umar states that he accompanied the Prophet (peace be on him) as well as Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman on their journeys, and never saw any of them fail to shorten their Prayers. A number of authentic traditions which have come down from Ibn 'Abbas and several other Companions corroborate this. When 'Uthman prayed four rak'ahs in Mina on the occasion of Hajj, some Companions objected to his not shortening the Prayer. 'Uthman convinced them that he had not made any mistake in so doing by arguing that he had got married in Makka and he had heard from the Prophet (peace be on him) that the place a person married in was in a sense his home. In that respect he was, therefore, not a traveller. (See the commentaries on the verse by Qurtubi, Jassas and Ibn Kathir, and the chapters on 'Salat al-Qasr' in the major collections of Hadith - Ed.)

In opposition to these numerous traditions are two from 'A'ishah which indicate that it is equally valid both to shorten the Prayers and to do them in full. These traditions, however, have weak links in their transmission and are also opposed to the authenticated practice of 'A'ishah herself. It is also true that there are intermediary states between travel and non-travel. During a temporary stop, it is quite proper for a man to shorten his Prayers on some occasions and on others to complete them. It depends upon the circumstances. It is probably in this context that 'A'ishah states that the Prophet (peace be on him) sometimes shortened his Prayers and sometimes performed them in full.

The Qur'anic expression in the verse 'there shall be no blame' also occurs in the Qur'anic verse on the ritual of running between Safa and Marwah see (Surah al-Baqarah 2: 158). The actual words used in both verses apparently mean that these acts were not blameworthy even though the running, as we know, is part of the prescribed rites of Pilgrimage and is

obligatory: We can appreciate the significance of both these Qur'anic verses if we remember that the purpose in each case is to dispel the misunderstanding that the acts concerned might either entail some sin or jeopardize a man's reward.

Another question in. regard to qasr is: What is the minimum travelling distance in which Prayers may be shortened? The Zahiri school recognizes no limit at all: any travelling validates the shortening of Prayers. According to Malik, however, one may not shorten Prayers if the distance involved is either less than forty-eight miles (seventy-seven kilometers) or involves travelling for less than a day and a night. This is also the opinion of Ahmad b. Hanbal and Ibn 'Abbas and a statement in support of it has also come down from Shafi'i. The Companion Anas considers it permissible to shorten Prayers if the travelling distance is fifteen miles. Awza'i, Zuhri and 'Umar consider one day's travelling to be sufficient; Hasan al-Basri says that the journey should be two days long, and Abu Yusuf says that it should be more than two days. According to Abu Hanifah, one may shorten the Prayers on any journey in which one has to travel for three days either on foot or by camel, i.e. a distance of eighteen farsakh. Ibn 'Umar, Ibn Mas'ud and 'Uthman agree with this view. (See the commentary on the verse by Qurtubi and Jassas. See also al-Fiqh 'aid al-Madhahib al-Arba'ah, vol. 1, pp. 472 ff. and Ibn Rushd, vol. 1, pp. 163 ff. - Ed.)

If one stops over en route to one's destination, how long may one stay in one place and still be allowed to shorten one's Prayers? On this question, too, a variety of opinions have been expressed. Ahmad b. Hanbal is of the opinion that if a man decides to stay for four days, he should perform his Prayers in full. Malik and Shafi'i are of the opinion that a man may not shorten his Prayers if he decides to stay at a place for more than four days. Awza'i and Abu Hanifah are respectively of the opinion that if a person intends to stay at a place for more than thirteen or fifteen days, he should pray in full. No categorical injunction has come down from the Prophet (peace be on him) on this matter. All jurists agree, however, that if a man has been held up somewhere and cannot proceed because of some constraint, he may shorten his Prayers indefinitely provided he is in a constant state of readiness to undertake the journey back to his home as soon as the constraint is removed. Instances are reported of Companions who continued to shorten their Prayers for two years in this kind of circumstance. Treating the situation of a prisoner as analogous to this, Ahmad b. Hanbal holds that he may shorten his Prayers throughout the period of his imprisonment. (For legal discussions on the questions discussed here see the commentaries on the verse by Ibn Kathir, Jassas, Qurtubi and Ibn al-'Arabi. See also Ibn Rushd, vol. 1, pp. 160-5 - Ed.)

133. The Zahiris and Khawarij have interpreted this to signify that the injunction of shortening Prayers is confined to war-time alone and that it is against the Qur'an to shorten Prayers while travelling in peace-time. But it is established by an authentic tradition that when 'Umar mentioned this misgiving to the Prophet (peace be on him), he said: "This is a charitable gift to you from God, so accept His charitable gift.' (Muslim, 'Salat al-Musafirin', 12; Abu Da'ud, 'Salat al-Safar', 1; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 3, pp. 129 and 190 - Ed.) It is more or less established by an overwhelmingly large number of traditions that the Prophet (peace be on him) shortened his Prayers in times of both war and peace. Ibn 'Abbas states categorically that the Prophet (peace be on him) left Madina with the intention of performing Pilgrimage to the Ka'bah, and during this journey he prayed two rak'ahs (instead of four) even though he could have nothing to fear except God. (See Nasa'i, 'Taqsir

al-Salah', 1 - Ed.) It is for this reason that I have added the word 'especially' in brackets to the text of the translation:

وَإِذَا كُنتَ فِيهِمْ فَأَقَمْتَ لَهُمُ الصَّلٰوةَ فَلْتَقُمْ طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُم مَّعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوٓا
أَسْلِحَتَهُمْ ۖ فَإِذَا سَجَدُوا فَلْيَكُونُوا مِن وَرَآئِكُمْ ۖ وَلْتَأْتِ طَآئِفَةٌ أُخْرٰى لَمْ يُصَلُّوا
فَلْيُصَلُّوا مَعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا حِذْرَهُمْ وَأَسْلِحَتَهُمْ ۗ وَدَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْ تَغْفُلُونَ عَنْ
أَسْلِحَتِكُمْ وَأَمْتِعَتِكُمْ فَيَمِيلُونَ عَلَيْكُم مَّيْلَةً وَٰحِدَةً ۚ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِن كَانَ
بِكُمْ أَذًى مِّن مَّطَرٍ أَوْ كُنتُم مَّرْضٰٓى أَن تَضَعُوٓا أَسْلِحَتَكُمْ ۖ وَخُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ أَعَدَّ لِلْكٰفِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُّهِينًا 102

(4:102) (O Messenger!) If you are among the believers and rise (in the state of war) to lead the Prayer for them,[134] let a party of them stand with you to worship, keeping their arms.[135] When they have performed their prostration, let them go behind you, and let another party who have not prayed, pray with you, remaining on guard and keeping their arms,[136] for the unbelievers love to see you heedless of your arms and your baggage so that they might swoop upon you in a surprise attack. But there shall be no blame upon you if you were to lay aside your arms if you are either troubled by rain or are sick; but remain on guard. Surely Allah has prepared a humiliating chastisement for the unbelievers.[137]

134. These words have led Abu Yusuf and Hasan b. Ziyad to the view that Prayer in a state of insecurity was confined to the time of the Prophet (peace be on him) alone. There are numerous examples, however, where a Qur'anic injunction was addressed specifically to the Prophet (peace be on him), yet holds good for the succeeding periods. Moreover, it is established that many outstanding Companions also resorted to this form of Prayer, even after the death of the Prophet (peace be on him), and there are no reports of disagreement on this question among the Companions. (For discussion see Jassas, vol. 2, pp. 261-3 and Ibn Rushd, vol. 1, p. 169-Ed.)

135. This injunction regarding Prayer in a state of either fear or insecurity (salat al-khawf) refers to the time when an enemy attack is anticipated, but the fighting has not yet begun. When fighting is taking place the ruling of the Hanafi school is that Prayer may be deferred. Malik and Thawri are of the opinion that if it is not possible to bow and prostrate in Prayer, it is enough to perform these actions by means of signs. Shafi'i argues that should the need arise, one might even fight while still in the state of Prayer. It is an established fact that on four occasions during the Battle of the Ditch the Prophet (peace be on him) missed Prayers

during the appointed times, but performed them subsequently in their correct sequence, even though the above-mentioned injunction regarding Prayer in the state of insecurity had already been revealed. (See Jassas, vol. 2, pp. 263 ff. - Ed.)

136. The actual form of congregational Prayer in the state of insecurity depends, to a large extent, on the actual state of the hostilities. The Prophet (peace be on him) prayed variously under different conditions. A Muslim commander may use his discretion and adopt whichever of the following forms of Prayer seems to him most in keeping with the actual circumstances of the conflict:

(1) That a group of soldiers may pray behind the Prayer-leader, while the rest take their positions against the enemy. When one rak'ah is completed, the first group may disperse to be replaced in the Prayer by those who were at battle-stations, and who now complete the second rak'ah behind the leader. In this way the soldiers will have prayed one rak'ah each, and the leader two rak'ahs.

(2) That a group of soldiers may pray first and then another group may pray one rak'ah each behind the leader. Subsequently, each of the two groups comes, in turn, to complete the Prayer by performing one rak'ah individually. In this way, each of the two groups will have prayed one rak'ah congregationally and one rak'ah individually.

(3) That a group may pray two rak'ahs behind the leader, recite tashahhud and finish the Prayer by reciting the salutation. Then the second group may join the Prayer behind the leader and complete it with him. Thus the Prayer-leader will have prayed four rak'ahs and each of the two groups will have prayed two.

(4) That a group may pray one rak'ah behind the leader. When the leader rises to pray the second rak'ah, those who have been following him may complete the second rak'ah by themselves, including the recitation of the tashahhud and salutation. Then the second group joins the Prayer while the leader is in the second rak'ah. After the leader has finished his second rak'ah and his followers have prayed their first, the latter may rise and complete their Prayer by performing the second rak'ah by themselves. In this case, the leader should prolong his standing in the second rak'ah of the Prayer. The first form has been reported by Ibn 'Abbas, Jabir b. 'Abd Allah and Mujahid. The second form has been reported by 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud and is the basis of the Hanafi ruling on this matter. The third form of the Prayer has been adopted by Shafi'i and Malik with slight modification. The basis of this ruling is a tradition from Sahl b. Abi Hathmah. There are certain other forms of Prayer in the state of insecurity, details of which can be found in larger works of Islamic Law.

137. This is to emphasize that the precautions recommended here are among the measures which ought to be adopted with a view to minimizing This tradition reports that the Prophet (peace be on him) led the Prayer of his Companions as prescribed for the state of insecurity. The Companions stood in two rows behind the Prophet (peace be on him). The Companions in the first row completed the first rak'ah with the Prophet (peace be on him), then rose and remained standing until those in the second row had prayed one rak'ah. The latter then rose and stepped forward and the ones standing ahead of them retreated behind them. Then the Prophet (peace be on him) prayed with this group one rak'ah, then sat down

until the back raw had prayed one rak'ah. Then the Prophet (peace be on him) recited the salutation (marking the end of the Prayer). See Muslim. 'Salat al-Musafirin' - Ed. losses and ensuring good results. Victory and defeat ultimately depend, however, on the will of God; so even while taking these precautionary measures one should feel sure that God will humiliate those who are trying to extinguish His light.

فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُمُ الصَّلٰوةَ فَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ قِيَامًا وَّقُعُوْدًا وَّعَلٰى جُنُوْبِكُمْ ۚ فَإِذَا اطْمَأْنَنْتُمْ
فَأَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ ۚ إِنَّ الصَّلٰوةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ كِتٰبًا مَّوْقُوْتًا 103

(4:103) When you have finished the Prayer, remember Allah -standing, and sitting, and reclining. And when you become secure, perform the regular Prayer. The Prayer is enjoined upon the believers at stated times.

وَلَا تَهِنُوْا فِي ابْتِغَآءِ الْقَوْمِ ۖ إِنْ تَكُوْنُوْا تَأْلَمُوْنَ فَإِنَّهُمْ يَأْلَمُوْنَ كَمَا تَأْلَمُوْنَ ۚ وَتَرْجُوْنَ
مِنَ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَرْجُوْنَ ۗ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ۚ 104

(4:104) Do not be faint of heart in pursuing these people:[138] if you happen to suffer harm they too are suffering just as you are, while you may hope from Allah what they cannot hope for.[139] Allah is All-Knowing, All- Wise.

138. This refers to those unbelievers who adamantly opposed the cause of Islam and the establishment of the Islamic order.

139. It is astonishing that men of faith should not be prepared to endure the same degree of hardship for the sake of the Truth as unbelievers do for the sake of falsehood. This is strange insofar as the latter merely seek the transient benefits of worldly life whereas the faithful seek to please, and secure the proximity of the Lord of the Universe and look forward to everlasting rewards.

إِنَّآ أَنْزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَآ أَرٰىكَ اللّٰهُ ۚ وَلَا تَكُنْ
لِّلْخَآئِنِيْنَ خَصِيْمًا ۙ 105

(4:105) (O Messenger!) We have revealed to you this Book with the Truth so that you may judge between people in accordance with what Allah has shown you. So do not dispute on behalf of the dishonest,[140]

140. These and certain other verses which occur a little later on (see verses 113 ff.) deal with an important matter, related to an incident that took place around the time they were revealed. The incident involved a person called Tu'mah or Bashir ibn Ubayriq of the Banu

Zafar tribe of the Ansar. This man stole an Ansari's coat of mail. While the investigation was in progress, he put the coat of mail in the house of a Jew. Its owner approached the Prophet (peace be on him) and expressed his suspicion about Tu'mah. But Tu'mah, his kinsmen and many of the Banu Zafar colluded to ascribe the guilt to the Jew. When the Jew concerned was asked about the matter he pleaded that he was not guilty. Tu'mah's supporters, on the other hand, waged a vigorous propaganda campaign to save Tu'mah's skin. They argued that the wicked Jew, who had denied the Truth and disbelieved in God and the Prophet (peace be on him), was absolutely untrustworthy, and his statement ought to be rejected outright. The Prophet (peace be on him) was about to decide the case against the Jew on formal grounds and to censure the plaintiff for slandering Banu Ubayriq, but before he could do so, the whole matter was laid bare by a revelation from God. (For the traditions cited here, see the commentary of Ibn Kathir on this verse - Ed.)

It is obvious that the Prophet (peace be on him) would have committed no sin if he had given judgement on the evidence before him. Judges are quite often faced with such situations. False evidence is given in order to obtain wrong verdicts. The time when this case came up for decision was a time of severe conflict between Islam and unbelief. Had the Prophet (peace be on him) issued a wrong judgement on the basis of the evidence before him, it would have provided the opponents of Islam with an effective weapon against the Prophet (peace be on him) as well as against the entire Islamic community, and even Islam itself. They could have spread the word that the Prophet (peace be on him) and his followers were not concerned about right and justice: it would have been claimed that they were guilty of the same prejudice and chauvinism against which they had themselves been preaching. It was specifically to prevent this situation that God intervened in this particular case.

In this and the following (verses 105 ff.) the Muslims were strongly censured for supporting criminals for no other reason than either family or tribal solidarity and were told that they should not allow prejudice to interfere with the principle of equal justice for all. Man's instinctive honesty revolts against the idea of supporting one's own kin even when they are wrong, and denying others their legitimate rights.

وَّاسْتَغْفِرِ اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ۙ 106

(4:106) and seek forgiveness from Allah. Surely Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

وَلَا تُجَادِلْ عَنِ الَّذِيْنَ يَخْتَانُوْنَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ خَوَّانًا اَثِيْمًا ۙ

107

(4:107) Do not plead for those who are dishonest to themselves;[141] Allah does not love him who betrays trust and persists in sin.

141. Whoever commits a breach of trust with others in fact commits a breach of trust with his own self first. For the powers of his head and heart have been placed at his disposal as a trust, and by misusing them he is forcing those powers to support him in acts which involve a breach of trust. In doing so the person concerned suppresses his conscience, which God has placed as a sentinel over his moral conduct, with the result that it is rendered incapable of preventing him from acts of wrong and iniquity. It is only after a man has already carried out this cruel suppression of conscience within himself that he is able to commit acts of sin and iniquity outwardly.

يَّسْتَخْفُوْنَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يَسْتَخْفُوْنَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ وَهُوَ مَعَهُمْ اِذْ يُبَيِّتُوْنَ مَا لَا يَرْضٰى مِنَ
الْقَوْلِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ مُحِيْطًا 108

(4:108) They can hide (their deeds) from men but they cannot hide (them) from Allah for He is with them even when they hold nightly counsels that are unpleasing to Allah. Allah encompasses all their doings.

هٰٓاَنْتُمْ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ جٰدَلْتُمْ عَنْهُمْ فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۣ فَمَنْ يُّجَادِلُ اللّٰهَ عَنْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ اَمْ
مَّنْ يَّكُوْنُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكِيْلًا 109

(4:109) You pleaded on their behalf in this worldly life but who will plead with Allah on their behalf on the Day of Resurrection, or who will be their defender there?

وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ سُوْٓءًا اَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهٗ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللّٰهَ يَجِدِ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا 110

(4:110) He who does either evil or wrongs himself, and then asks for the forgiveness of Allah, will find Allah All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

وَمَنْ يَّكْسِبْ اِثْمًا فَاِنَّمَا يَكْسِبُهٗ عَلٰى نَفْسِهٖ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا 111

(4:111) He who commits a sin, commits it only to his detriment. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

وَمَنْ يَّكْسِبْ خَطِيْٓئَةً اَوْ اِثْمًا ثُمَّ يَرْمِ بِهٖ بَرِيْٓـًٔا فَقَدِ احْتَمَلَ بُهْتَانًا وَّاِثْمًا
مُّبِيْنًا ع 112

(4:112) But he who commits either a fault or a sin, and then casts it upon an innocent person, lays upon himself the burden of a false charge and a flagrant sin.

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكَ وَرَحْمَتُهٗ لَهَمَّتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ اَنْ يُّضِلُّوْكَ ؕ وَمَا يُضِلُّوْنَ اِلَّآ
اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَضُرُّوْنَكَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ؕ وَاَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا
لَمْ تَكُنْ تَعْلَمُ ؕ وَكَانَ فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكَ عَظِيْمًا 113

(4:113) (O Messenger!) But for Allah's favour and mercy upon you, a party of them had resolved to mislead you,yet they only misled them selves, and could not have harmed you in any way.[142] Allah revealed to you the Book and Wisdom, and He taught you what you knew not. Great indeed has been Allah's favour upon you.

142. Even if some people succeeded in their design to obtain from the Prophet (peace be on him) a wrong judgement in their favour by presenting a false account of events, the real loss would have been theirs rather than the Prophet's (peace be on him). For the real criminals in the sight of God are the perpetrators of that fraud and not the Prophet (peace be on him) who might in good faith have delivered a verdict that actually did not conform to the facts. Whoever obtains a judgement in his favour by tricking the courts deludes himself into believing that by such tricks he can bring right to his side; right remains with its true claimant regardless of judgements obtained by fraud and deception. (See also Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 2, n. 197.)

لَا خَيْرَ فِيْ كَثِيْرٍ مِّنْ نَّجْوٰىهُمْ اِلَّا مَنْ اَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ اَوْ مَعْرُوْفٍ اَوْ اِصْلَاحٍۢ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ؕ
وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ ابْتِغَآءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللّٰهِ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيْهِ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا 114

(4:114) Most of their secret conferrings are devoid of good, unless one secretly enjoins in charity, good deeds, and setting the affairs of men right. We shall grant who ever does that seeking to please Allah a great reward.

وَمَنْ يُّشَاقِقِ الرَّسُوْلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدٰى وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيْلِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ نُوَلِّهٖ مَا
تَوَلّٰى وَنُصْلِهٖ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ وَسَآءَتْ مَصِيْرًا ۧ 115

(4:115) As for him who sets himself against the Messenger and follows a path other than that of the believers even after true guidance had become clear to him, We will let him go to the way he has turned to,[143] and We will cast him into Hell - an evil destination.

143. When, after revelation from God, the Prophet (peace be on him) delivered his verdict in favour of the innocent Jew rather than the dishonest Muslim, the latter was so seized by un-Islamic, egotistic and chauvinistic considerations that he left Madina, went straight to Makka to join the ranks of the enemies of Islam and of the Prophet (peace be on him), and undertook open opposition. The verse alludes to that incident.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَن يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ ۚ وَمَن يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ
ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا 116

(4:116) Truly it is only associating others with Allah in His divinity that Allah does not forgive,144 and forgives anything besides that to whomsoever He wills. Whoever associates others with Allah in His divinity has indeed strayed far away.

144. In this and the following verses we are asked to consider coolly, the end result of obsession with rage and anger, and what kind of people one chooses to identify with in place of the righteous people from whom one foolishly dissociates oneself.

إِن يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِهِ إِلَّا إِنَاثًا ۚ وَإِن يَدْعُونَ إِلَّا شَيْطَانًا مَّرِيدًا ۙ 117

(4:117) Rather than call upon Him, they call upon goddesses, and call upon a rebellious Satan145

145. No one sets up Satan as his 'god' in the sense that he makes him the object of his ritual worship and declares him to be God in so many words. The way to make Satan one's god is to entrust one's reins to him and let oneself be drawn helplessly in whichever direction he wants; the relationship between the two is, then, that of worshipper and worshipped. This shows that either absolute, unreserved obedience to or blind following of anybody is tantamount to 'worshipping' him, so that whoever indulges in this kind of absolute obedience is guilty of worshipping a 'god' other than the One True God.

لَّعَنَهُ اللَّهُ ۘ وَقَالَ لَأَتَّخِذَنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِكَ نَصِيبًا مَّفْرُوضًا ۙ 118

(4:118) upon whom Allah has laid His curse. He said (to Allah): 'I will take to myself an appointed portion of Your servants146

146. This shows that Satan is determined to lay his claim to a portion of men's time, to their effort and labour, to their energies and capacities, to their material belongings, and to their offspring, and would somehow trick them into devoting a sizeable portion of all these in his cause.

وَّلَاُضِلَّنَّهُمْ وَلَاُمَنِّيَنَّهُمْ وَلَاٰمُرَنَّهُمْ فَلَيُبَتِّكُنَّ اٰذَانَ الْاَنْعَامِ وَلَاٰمُرَنَّهُمْ فَلَيُغَيِّرُنَّ خَلْقَ
اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَّخِذِ الشَّيْطٰنَ وَلِيًّا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ فَقَدْ خَسِرَ خُسْرَانًا مُّبِيْنًا ؕ 119

(4:119) and shall lead them astray, and shall engross them in vain desires, and I shall command them and they will cut off the ears of the cattle,[147] and I shall command them and they will disfigure Allah's creation.'[148] He who took Satan rather than Allah for his guardian has indeed suffered a man-ifest loss.

147. The reference here is to a superstitious Arabian custom. It was customary among the Arabs that after a camel had given birth to five or ten young to slit her ears and let her go in the name of their deity; they considered it forbidden to put her to any work. Likewise, the male camel that had caused the birth of ten camels was consecrated to some deity. The slitting of ears symbolized this consecration.

148. To alter God's creation in some respect does not mean changing its original form. If that was meant, human civilization would have to be considered Satanic in its entirety. For civilization consists essentially of man's putting to use the resources endowed by God. Hence the alteration of God's creation, which is characterized as Satanic, consists in using a thing not for the purpose for which it was created by God. In other words, all acts performed in violation either of one's true nature or of the intrinsic nature of other things are the result of the misleading promptings of Satan. These include, for instance, sodomy, birth control, monasticism, celibacy, sterilization of either men or women, turning males into eunuchs, diverting females from the functions entrusted to them by nature and driving them to perform the functions for which men were created. These and numerous similar measures are enacted by Satan's disciples in this world, which amounts on their part, to saying that the laws of the Creator were faulty and that they would like to 'reform' them.

يَعِدُهُمْ وَيُمَنِّيْهِمْ ؕ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اِلَّا غُرُوْرًا 120

(4:120) Satan makes promises to them and fills them with vain hopes,[149] but whatever he promises them is merely delusion.

149. Satanic operations are based on making attractive promises and raising high hopes. Whenever Satan wants to mislead men, whether individually or collectively, he tries to inspire them with Utopian expectations. In some he inspires expectations of ecstatic pleasure and outstanding success in their individual lives. He inspires others with prospects for achieving national glory. To still others he promises the well-being of mankind. He makes people feel confident that they can arrive at the ultimate truth without the aid of revealed knowledge. He deludes others into believing that God neither exists nor that there is any Life-after-Death. He comforts others with the belief that even if there is an After-life, they will be able to escape punishment through the intercession of certain persons. In short, Satan extends to different groups of people different promises and expectations with a view to seducing them.

أُولَٰئِكَ مَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۖ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ عَنْهَا مَحِيصًا 121

(4:121) For these people, their abode shall be Hell and from there they shall find no way of escape.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۖ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقًّا ۚ وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ قِيلًا 122

(4:122) But those who believe and do good, We shall cause them to enter the Gardens beneath which rivers flow. Here they will abide for ever. This is Allah's promise in truth and whose word is truer than Allah's?

لَيْسَ بِأَمَانِيِّكُمْ وَلَا أَمَانِيِّ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ ۗ مَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا يُجْزَ بِهِ ۙ وَلَا يَجِدْ لَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا 123

(4:123) It is neither your fancies nor the fancies of the People of the Book which matter. Whoever does evil shall reap its consequence and will find none to be his protector and helper against Allah.

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ نَقِيرًا 124

(4:124) Whoever does good and believes -whether he is male or female - such shall enter the Garden, and they shall not be wronged in the slightest.

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۗ وَاتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلًا 125

(4:125) And whose way of life could be better than that of he who submits his whole being to Allah, does good, and follows exclusively the way of Abraham whom Allah took for a friend?

وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّحِيْطًا ع 126

(4:126) Whatever is in the heavens and in the earth belongs to Allah;[150] Allah encompasses everything.[151]

150. To submit to God is the best course for man, for it conforms fully to ultimate reality. Since God is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that lies therein, the only right attitude for man is to give up his unlimited freedom and willingly commit himself to serve and obey God.

151. If man will neither submit to God nor stop acting in defiance of Him, he should bear in mind that he can never escape from God's grip,for His power encompasses him completely.

وَيَسْتَفْتُوْنَكَ فِي النِّسَاۗءِ ۭ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُفْتِيْكُمْ فِيْهِنَّ ۙ وَمَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتٰبِ فِيْ يَتٰمَى النِّسَاۗءِ الّٰتِيْ لَا تُؤْتُوْنَهُنَّ مَا كُتِبَ لَهُنَّ وَتَرْغَبُوْنَ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْهُنَّ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِيْنَ مِنَ الْوِلْدَانِ ۙ وَاَنْ تَقُوْمُوْا لِلْيَتٰمٰى بِالْقِسْطِ ۭ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوْا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِهٖ عَلِيْمًا 127

(4:127) They ask you to pronounce laws concerning women,[152] say: 'Allah pronounces to you concerning them,[153] and reminds you of the injunctions which were recited to you in the Book about female orphans whom you do not give what has been ordained for them[154] and whom you wish to marry (out of greed)',[155] and the commandments relating to the children who are weak and helpless.[156] Allah directs you to treat the orphans with justice. Allah is well aware of whatever good you do.

152. The actual query about women is not spelled out directly. The judgement pronounced a little later on in response to that query, however, makes it abundantly clear what the query was.

153. This is not a response to the query itself. Before attending to this, God once again emphasizes that people should implement His directives regarding orphans in general, and orphan girls in particular, as mentioned at the beginning of this surah see (verses 2 ff). above). This shows the importance of the rights of orphans in the sight of God. The protection of their rights, as we have pointed out, had already been stressed forcefully (see beginning of the surah, (verses 1-14). But that was not deemed sufficient. Hence, when problems of family life came up for discussion, the question of the well-being of orphans automatically arose even before answering the questions people raised.

154. This alludes to (verse 3 of this surah): 'And if you fear that you might not treat the orphans justly, then marry the women that seem good to you. '

155. The words of the text ( ) may be interpreted as: 'Whom you wish to marry (out of greed)' and also as 'Whom you do not wish to marry.' In explanation of this verse 'A'ishah states that, in those days, guardians of orphan girls who had any significant inheritance from their parents used to perpetrate many wrongs on their wards. If the girl was both rich and good looking, the guardian desired to marry her and exploit both her attractiveness and wealth without either having to make the bridal-due (mahr) or even having to undertake her maintenance. If the girl was ugly, the guardian would neither marry her nor allow her to get married, for she might thus get a husband who would support her claim to her legitimate rights. (See the commentary of Ibn Kathir on this verse. The tradition is quoted by Ibn Kathir from Bukhari. See also(n. 4)above -Ed.)

156. The reference here is to the injunctions regarding the protection of the rights of orphans at the beginning of the surah see (verses 1 ff . and 11) ff. above).

وَإِنِ امْرَأَةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا نُشُوزًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يُصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا
صُلْحًا ۚ وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ ۗ وَأُحْضِرَتِ الْأَنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ ۚ وَإِنْ تُحْسِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ
بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا 128

(4:128) If[157] a woman fears either ill-treatment or aversion from her husband it is not wrong for the husband and wife to bring about reconciliation among themselves (by compromising on their rights), for settlement is better.[158] Man's soul is always prone to selfishness,[159] but if you do good and are God-fearing, then surely Allah is aware of the things you do.[160]

157.The actual response to the query begins here. In order to appreciate the response fully one would do well to consider the query itself. In the days of Ignorance a man was free to marry an unlimited number of women, who had virtually no rights. When the preliminary verses of the present surah were revealed (see especially(verse 3) this freedom was circumscribed

in two ways. First, the maximum number of wives was fixed at four. Second, justice (that is, equal treatment of wives) was laid down as a necessary condition for marrying more than one. This gives rise to the question whether a person is obligated by Islam to feel equally towards each of his wives, to love each to an equal degree, and treat them equally even in respect of sexual relationship. Such questions are especially relevant with regard to a husband one of whose wives might be, say, afflicted with either sterility, permanent sickness or who is incapable of sexual intercourse. Does justice demand that if he fails to live up to the standards of equality mentioned above that he should renounce his first wife in order to marry the second? Moreover, where the first wife is disinclined to agree to

annulment of the marriage, is it appropriate for the spouses to make a voluntary accord between themselves, according to which the wife, towards whom the husband feels relatively less attracted, voluntarily surrenders some of her rights, prevailing upon her husband not to repudiate the marriage? Would such an act be against the dictates of justice? It is to questions such as these that these verses are addressed.

158. It is better for the spouses to come to a mutual understanding so that the wife may remain with the same man with whom she has already spent part of her life.

159. The 'selfishness' on the part of the wife is that even though she is conscious of the causes which have contributed to her husband's aversion towards her, she nevertheless expects from him the treatment that a husband accords to the wife that he loves. The 'selfishness' of the husband, on the other hand, lies in suppressing her unduly and curtailing her rights to an intolerable extent, merely because she is keen to continue to live with him even though she has lost her attraction for him.

160. Here, too, God urges the male, as He usually does in such matters, to be magnanimous. God urges a man to treat his wife, who has probably spent a considerable number of years with him as his companion, with kindliness and grace in spite of the aversion that he has come to feel for her. He also urges man to love God, for if He were to deprive him of His loving care and blessing in order to punish him for his shortcomings, what place would he have under the sun?

وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعُوٓا اَنْ تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَآءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ فَلَا تَمِيلُوا كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ فَتَذَرُوهَا
كَالْمُعَلَّقَةِ ؕ وَاِنْ تُصْلِحُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا 129

(4:129) You will not be able to treat your wives with absolute justice not even when you keenly desire to do so. (It suffices in order to follow the Law of Allah that) you incline not wholly to one, leaving the other in suspense.[161] If you act rightly and remain God-fearing, surely Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.[162]

161. This means that it is not possible for a man to accord complete equality of treatment to two or more wives under all circumstances and in all respects. It is possible that one is ugly, the other beautiful; one is old, the other young; one is permanently sick, the other healthy; one is irritable, the other good-tempered. These and other differences are likely to make a person less attracted to one and more to the other. In such circumstances, the Law does not demand that one should necessarily maintain absolute equality between the wives in respect of love, emotional attachment and sexual relationship. What it does demand is that if a husband does not repudiate the marriage despite aversion for his wife, either because of his own desire or out of consideration for the desire of his wife, he should at least maintain a good relationship short of which his wife begins to feel as if she is without a husband. In such circumstances, while it is natural that a person should prefer one wife to the other, this should not go to the extent that the woman remains, as it were, in a state of suspension, as if she were without a husband at all.

Some people point out that in this verse the Qur'an in one breath stipulates justice as the necessary condition for plurality of wives and in the other breath declares it to be impossible. On this ground they conclude that the Qur'an has itself revoked the permission to marry more than one wife. There is, however, absolutely no justification for such an inference. Such an inference would have been justified had the Qur'an merely said that 'You will not be able to treat your wives with (absolute) justice.' But this statement has been followed by the directive: ' ... do not allow yourselves to incline wholly to one, leaving the other in suspense.' This leaves no grounds at all for the blind followers of Christian Europe to force an interpretation of their liking on the verse.

162. If a man does not deliberately inflict any wrong and tries earnestly to be just in his dealings God will pardon whatever minor shortcomings take place.

وَإِنْ يَّتَفَرَّقَا يُغْنِ اللّٰهُ كُلًّا مِّنْ سَعَتِهٖ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ وَاسِعًا حَكِيْمًا 130

(4:130) But if the two separate, out of His plenty Allah will make each dispense with the other. Indeed Allah is All-Bounteous, All-Wise.

وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۭ وَلَقَدْ وَصَّيْنَا الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَاِيَّاكُمْ اَنِ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ۭ وَاِنْ تَكْفُرُوْا فَاِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَنِيًّا حَمِيْدًا 131

(4:131) All that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth belongs to Allah. We enjoined upon those who were given the Book before you, and also yourselves, to have fear of Allah. But if you disbelieve, then bear in mind that all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth belongs to Allah. Allah is Self-Sufficient, Most Praiseworthy.

وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۭ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا 132

(4:132) And to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth; and Allah suffices for help and protection.

اِنْ يَّشَاْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ اَيُّهَا النَّاسُ وَيَاْتِ بِاٰخَرِيْنَ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰي ذٰلِكَ قَدِيْرًا 133

(4:133) If He wills, He has the full power to remove you, O mankind, and bring in others in your place.

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ثَوَابُ الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ سَمِيْعًا
بَصِيْرًا ع 134

(4:134) He who desires the reward of this world, let him know that with Allah is the reward of this world and also of the World to Come. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.[163]

163. In the Qur'an God often rounds off His enunciation of laws by urging people to reform those aspects of family life and social order in which they are generally liable to commit injustice with admonitions designed to create in people the urge to follow those legal injunctions. Since in the preceding verse the believers were asked to treat women and orphans with justice and kindness it was deemed necessary to bring home to them the following points:

First, that people should not entertain the illusion that they have the power to make or mar the destinies of others, that if they were to withdraw their support, people would be left helpless. The fact is that the destinies of all lie in the Hand of God alone and He need not remain dependent upon any single person as the sole instrument for helping any particular creature. The resources of the Lord of the heavens and the earth are limitless and He also knows how to use those resources.

Second, that the followers of the Prophet (peace be on him) ought to heed the admonition that was made to them, just as it was made to the followers of the former Prophets: to fear God in all their actions. They are being told in effect that by following God's guidance they will secure their own well-being rather than be the source of any benefit to God, that they can do God no harm by disobeying Him, just as it did not lie in the power of the followers of the former Prophets to cause God any harm. The Lord of the Universe does not need people's obedience. If they disobey He may simply replace them with some other nation, and their dismissal will not diminish the majesty and splendour of His realm in the least.

Third, that God alone has the power to dispense the good of this world as well as that of the Hereafter, to lavish transient benefits as well as abiding felicity. It all depends on a man's nature and the extent of his ambition what kind of benefit he seeks from God. If a man is infatuated with the fleeting benefits of this world, and is prepared to sacrifice the benefits of the everlasting life, then God will grant him only the good of this world and he will have no share in the good of the Hereafter. God's benevolence is like a river which never dries up, a river which is both capable of, and geared to, providing abundant water to all who need their tillage watered. It is short-sighted and unambitious to want one's fields to be irrigated only once, and to be prepared thereafter to face the prospect of eternal drought. Anyone with breadth of vision would commit himself to submit to God and obey Him, thereby earning the well-being of both worlds.

The section ends with the assertion that God is All-Seeing and All-Hearing. This means that God is fully aware of the actions of His creatures, and is unlike those negligent sovereigns

who are blind in lavishing their favours. God governs the universe with full knowledge and awareness. He has an eye on the capacities and ambitions of all human beings and knows their qualities exactly. He is fully aware of the purposes to which people devote their efforts and energies. Anyone who 'wilfully decides to be disobedient to God should therefore not cherish hopes of receiving the favours reserved for those who obey Him.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كُوْنُوْا قَوّٰمِيْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَآءَ لِلّٰهِ وَلَوْ عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَوِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ
وَالْاَقْرَبِيْنَ ۚ اِنْ يَّكُنْ غَنِيًّا اَوْ فَقِيْرًا فَاللّٰهُ اَوْلٰى بِهِمَا ۣ فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوٰٓى اَنْ تَعْدِلُوْا ۚ
وَاِنْ تَلْوٗٓا اَوْ تُعْرِضُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا 135

(4:135) Believers! Be upholders of justice,[164] and bearers of witness to truth for the sake of Allah,[165] even though it may either be against yourselves or against your parents and kinsmen, or the rich or the poor: for Allah is more concerned with their well-being than you are. Do not, then, follow your own desires lest you keep away from justice. If you twist or turn away from (the truth), know that Allah is well aware of all that you do.

164. It is not enough for believers to uphold justice themselves: they are expected to be its standard-bearers. They are supposed not merely to practise justice in their own dealings but to strive for its triumph. They have to do all within their power to ensure that injustice is eradicated and replaced by equity and justice. A true believer is required to be the pillar supporting the establishment of right and justice.

165. The testimony of the believers should be solely for the sake of God. Their testimony should not be biased in favour of any of the parties concerned, they should not use any opportunity for personal aggrandizement, and they should not seek to please anyone but God.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَالْكِتٰبِ الَّذِيْ نَزَّلَ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ وَالْكِتٰبِ
الَّذِيْٓ اَنْزَلَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۭ وَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِاللّٰهِ وَمَلٰۗىِٕكَتِهٖ وَكُتُبِهٖ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ فَقَدْ
ضَلَّ ضَلٰلًۢا بَعِيْدًا 136

(4:136) Believers! Believe[166] in Allah and His Messenger and in the Book He has revealed to His Messenger, and in the Book He revealed before. And whoever disbelieves[167] in Allah, in His angels, in His Books, in His Messengers and in the Last Day, has indeed strayed far away.

166. To ask believers to believe might at first seem strange. The fact is, however, that belief as used here has two meanings. First, belief denotes that a man has preferred to acknowledge the soundness of true guidance, to distance himself from the fold of those who disbelieve, and to join the camp of the believers. Second, belief denotes faith, a man's believing in the truth with all his heart, with full earnestness and sincerity. It denotes man's sincere determination to mould his way of thinking, his taste and temperament, his likes and dislikes, his conduct and character, his friendship and enmity, and the direction of his efforts and striving, in conformity with the creed which he has resolved to embrace. This verse is addressed to all those who are 'believers' in the first sense of the term, and they are asked to change themselves into true believers, i.e. believers in the second sense.

167. Kufr has two meanings. One signifies categorical rejection. The other signifies that pretence of belief even when either one's heart is not convinced or one's conduct is flagrantly opposed to the demands of one's belief. Here the term Kufr conveys both meanings, and the verse aims at impressing upon people that whichever kind of Kufr they adopt in respect of the fundamental beliefs of Islam, it will only alienate them from the Truth, and lead them instead to falsehood, and ultimately to their tragic failure and destruction.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ ازْدَادُوا كُفْرًا لَّمْ يَكُنِ اللَّهُ لِيَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ سَبِيلًا ۝137

(4:137) Allah will neither forgive nor show the right way to those who believed, and then disbelieved, then believed, and again disbelieved, and thenceforth became ever more intense in their disbelief.[168]

168. This refers to those for whom religion is no more than an object of casual entertainment, a toy with which they like to play as long as it suits their desires and fancies. One wave carries them to the fold of Islam and the next away to that of disbelief. Whenever Islam appears to suit their interests they become Muslims; and when the glamorous visage of the god of utility leaps up before their eyes they rush off to worship it. To such people God holds out neither the assurance of forgiveness nor of direction to true guidance. The statement that such people 'became even more intense in their disbelief refers to those who are not content with not believing themselves, but also try to undermine the faith of others and to persuade them to disbelief, who engage in secret conspiracies as well as overt activities against Islam, and who devote their energies to the struggle aimed at exalting disbelief and degrading the true religion of God. This is a higher degree of disbelief, involving the progressive heaping of crime upon crime. It is obvious that the punishment for this must be greater than for simple disbelief.

بَشِّرِ الْمُنَافِقِينَ بِأَنَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ۝138

(4:138) Give tidings of painful chastisement to the hypocrites.

الَّذِيْنَ يَتَّخِذُوْنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ؕ اَيَبْتَغُوْنَ عِنْدَهُمُ الْعِزَّةَ فَاِنَّ
الْعِزَّةَ لِلّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا ؕ 139

(4:139) who take the unbelievers for their allies in preference to the believers. Do they seek honour from them[169]whereas honour altogether belongs to Allah alone?

169. The term 'jzzah denotes a position which is at once exalted and secure. In other words, the term signifies 'inviolable honour and glory'.

وَقَدْ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتٰبِ اَنْ اِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ يُكْفَرُ بِهَا وَيُسْتَهْزَاُ بِهَا فَلَا
تَقْعُدُوْا مَعَهُمْ حَتّٰى يَخُوْضُوْا فِيْ حَدِيْثٍ غَيْرِهٖٓ ۚ صلے اِنَّكُمْ اِذًا مِّثْلُهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ جَامِعُ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ
وَالْكٰفِرِيْنَ فِيْ جَهَنَّمَ جَمِيْعَا ۙ 140

(4:140) Allah has enjoined upon you in the-Book that when you hear the signs of Allah being rejected and scoffed at, you will not sit with them until they engage in some other talk, or else you will become like them.[170] Know well, Allah will gather the hypocrites and the unbe-lievers in Hell - all together.

170. A person who professes Islam and yet enjoys the company of those who indulge in blasphemy against God, and who bears with equanimity their scoffing at God and His Messenger, is no different' from the unbelievers mentioned here. (For the injunction in this verse, see also (Surah al-An'am 6: 68) below.

الَّذِيْنَ يَتَرَبَّصُوْنَ بِكُمْ ۚ فَاِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فَتْحٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ قَالُوْٓا اَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَّعَكُمْ ۖ صلے وَاِنْ
كَانَ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ نَصِيْبٌ ۙ قَالُوْٓا اَلَمْ نَسْتَحْوِذْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَنَمْنَعْكُمْ مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ؕ فَاللّٰهُ
يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ وَلَنْ يَّجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ سَبِيْلًا ۧ 141

(4:141) These hypocrites watch you closely: if victory is granted to you by Allah, they will say: 'Were we not with you?' And were the unbelievers to gain the upper hand, they will say: 'Did we not have mastery over you, and yet we protected you from the believers?'[171] It is Allah Who will judge between you on the Day of Resurrection, and He will not allow the unbelievers, in any way, to gain advantage over the believers.

171. This is typical of the hypocrites of every age. Such people try to avail themselves of all the benefits which can accrue from a verbal profession of Islam and identification with the Islamic community. They also try to secure the advantages to be obtained by associating with the unbelievers, by assuring them in every possible way about themselves that they are not 'fanatic Muslims', that their association with the Muslims is only nominal. On the other hand, they never fail to assure the unbelievers that their loyalties and concerns are the same as theirs, that in mental outlook, cultural orientation and taste they are in harmony with them, and that if a decisive conflict between Islam and unbelief were to take place, their weight will certainly be on the side of the latter.

إِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ يُخٰدِعُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَهُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ ۚ وَإِذَا قَامُوْٓا إِلَى الصَّلٰوةِ قَامُوْا كُسَالٰى ۙ
يُرَآءُوْنَ النَّاسَ وَلَا يَذْكُرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ إِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ۙ 142

(4:142) Behold, the hypocrites seek to deceive Allah, but it is they who are being deluded by Him. When they rise to Prayer, they rise reluctantly, and only to be seen by men. They remember Allah but little.[172]

172. In the time of the Prophet (peace be on him) no one, unless he prayed regularly, could be reckoned as belonging to the Islamic community. We know that secular associations consider the absence of any member from their meetings, without a valid excuse, a sign of lack of interest, and that in the event of continued absence, they cancel his membership. The early Islamic community did the same with those who absented themselves from congregational Prayers. In those days a person's absence from congregational Prayers was considered a clear indication of his indifference towards Islam: if he absented himself from them repeatedly he was no longer held to be a Muslim. In those days, therefore, even the worst hypocrites had to attend the five daily Prayers in the mosque. What distinguished a true believer from the hypocrite was that the former came to the mosque with devotion, fervour and eagerness, came there well before the appointed time for the Prayer, and did not rush out of the mosque as soon as the Prayer was over. In short, everything about him indicated that his heart was in the Prayer. Whereas the call to the Prayer for the hypocrite seemed like the announcement of an unavoidable calamity. When such a person set off for the mosque, he seemed to do so in spite of himself. He walked as if he were dragging the entire weight of his being. No wonder, then, that as soon as the Prayer was over, he escaped like a prisoner released from jail. His entire demeanour testified that the remembrance of God was not what he really had his heart in.

مُّذَبْذَبِيْنَ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ لَآ إِلٰى هٰٓؤُلَآءِ وَلَآ إِلٰى هٰٓؤُلَآءِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهٗ
سَبِيْلًا 143

(4:143) They dangle between the one and the other (faith and disbelief), and belong neither to these nor to those completely. And he whom Allah lets go astray, for him you can find no way.[173]

173. Here an important fact has been stated about the person who remained unguided to the Truth despite his acquaintance with the Book of God and with the life of His Prophet (peace be on him). He was a person who was so disinclined to the Truth and so infatuated with error that even God let him go forth along the same erroneous direction that he had chosen for himself, a person on whom the door of true guidance had been shut and the way towards error had been made smooth by God. It is virtually beyond the power of human-beings to direct such a person to the Truth.

We may be able to grasp this if we consider the case of man's livelihood. God controls all the sources of man's livelihood. Thus, anyone who receives any portion of livelihood receives it from God alone. At the same time, God grants every man livelihood through the means he has himself sought. If a man seeks his livelihood through lawful means and strives accordingly, God opens the door to honest living to him and closes the avenues of dishonest earnings in proportion to his earnestness. On the other hand, there is the person who is bent upon fattening himself on dishonest earnings and strives accordingly. God permits such a person to continue making an unlawful living, and no one has the power to help him secure an honest means of living.

The same applies to man's belief and conduct in this life. In this respect too, the ultimate control rests with God. No human being can proceed along any path, whether it be good or evil, unless God lets him proceed along it, and bestows upon him the means to do so. However, it is up to man himself to choose his own path, and after he has made the choice, God will let him proceed along it, and will even pave the way for him. If a person really cares about God, genuinely seeks the truth and earnestly tries to pursue the path charted by God, God permits him to follow his choice, and even provides the means necessary to proceed along his chosen path. On the other hand, God shuts the door of true guidance on the person who chooses error and strives to proceed only along wrong paths, and further enables him to follow the path of his choice. It is beyond the power of any human being to prevent such a person from thinking wrongly, acting wrongly and using up his energies in wrong directions. If a man loses the road to his success and is subsequently deprived of true guidance by God, in whose power does it lie, then, to restore to him his lost treasure?

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ لَا تَتَّخِذُوا۟ ٱلْكَٰفِرِينَ أَوْلِيَآءَ مِن دُونِ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۚ أَتُرِيدُونَ أَن
تَجْعَلُوا۟ لِلَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطَٰنًا مُّبِينًا 144

(4:144) Believers! Do not take the unbelievers as your allies in preference to the believers. Do you wish to offer Allah a clear proof of guilt against yourselves?

إِنَّ ٱلْمُنَٰفِقِينَ فِى ٱلدَّرْكِ ٱلْأَسْفَلِ مِنَ ٱلنَّارِ ۖ وَلَن تَجِدَ لَهُمْ نَصِيرًا ۙ 145

(4:145) Surely the hypocrites shall be in the lowest depth of the Fire and you shall find none to come to their help,

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَاعْتَصَمُوا بِاللَّهِ وَأَخْلَصُوا دِينَهُمْ لِلَّهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۖ وَسَوْفَ يُؤْتِ اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا 146

(4:146) except those who re-pent and mend their ways and hold fast to Allah and make their faith exclusive to Allah.[174] Those people shall be numbered with the believers and Allah will certainly bestow on the believers a great reward.

174. To make one's faith exclusively to God means to concentrate one's loyalties, concerns, affections, and adorations on God, and not to allow any attachments to strike such deep roots in one's heart that one may cease to be capable of sacrificing them for His sake.

مَا يَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ بِعَذَابِكُمْ إِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ وَآمَنْتُمْ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ شَاكِرًا عَلِيمًا 147

(4:147) Why should Allah deal chastisement to you if you are grateful[175] to Him and believe? Allah is All-Appreciative,[176] All-Knowing.

175. Shukr denotes an acknowledgement of benefaction and a feeling of gratitude. This verse states if a person does not behave ungratefully towards God then there is no reason why God should punish him.

The attitude of gratefulness to God consists of acknowledging His benefaction in one's heart, in confessing it in one's speech and by manifesting it in one's deeds. It is the sum-total of these which is termed shukr. This attitude requires:

(1) that a person should ascribe the benefaction to its real source, letting no one share in either the gratitude or the acknowledgement of benevolence;

(2) that his heart should be overflowing with love for, and loyalty to, the Benefactor, and that he should have no attachment to His opponents;

(3) that he should obey the Benefactor and should not use His bounties contrary to His directives.

176.The word used here is shakir which we have translated as 'All-Appreciative'. In the context of the God-man relationship, when the word shukr is used in respect of God, it denotes 'appreciation of services'. When it is used in respect of man, it denotes his acknowledgement of God's benefaction and his sense of gratitude to Him. To say that God 'thanks' His creatures stresses that God is fully appreciative of the services which His servants have rendered and will recompense them liberally. This contrasts sharply with the attitude of human beings, who are generally slow and uncharitable in appreciating the services rendered to them, and quick and severe in censuring people for their omissions. As

for God, He is lenient and prone to overlook man's omissions. On the contrary, He rewards man manifold for his good deeds.

لَا يُحِبُّ اللّٰهُ الْجَهْرَ بِالسُّوْٓءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ اِلَّا مَنْ ظُلِمَ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ سَمِيْعًا عَلِيْمًا 148

(4:148) Allah does not like speaking evil publicly unless one has been wronged. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

اِنْ تُبْدُوْا خَيْرًا اَوْ تُخْفُوْهُ اَوْ تَعْفُوْا عَنْ سُوْٓءٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا قَدِيْرًا 149

(4:149) (Even though you have the right to speak evil if you are wronged), if you keep doing good -whether openly or secretly -or at least pardon the evil (then that is the attribute of Allah). Allah is All-Pardoning and He has all the power to chastise.[177]

177. This verse embodies a moral directive of very high value to the Muslims. The hypocrites, the Jews and the polytheists were all bent on placing all kinds of obstacles in the way of the spread of Islam: They eagerly persecuted the Muslims and used all possible means, however malicious, against them. Such an attitude inevitably created anger and resentment. It was in the context of this storm of bitter feelings that God told the Muslims that He did not consider speaking ill of people as praiseworthy. No doubt the Muslims had been wronged, and if a wronged person speaks out against a wrong-doer, he is quite justified in doing so. Even though this is a person's right, it is more meritorious to continue to do good both in public and in private, and to ignore the misdeeds of others. For one's ideal should be to try to approximate to God's way as far as possible. God with whom one wants to be close is lenient and forbearing; He provides sustenance even to the worst criminals and seeks mitigating circumstances in even the most serious offences. In order to become close to God, one ought to be generous in spirit and full of tolerance.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَيُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يُّفَرِّقُوْا بَيْنَ اللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ
نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَّنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ ۙ وَّيُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يَّتَّخِذُوْا بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ سَبِيْلًا ۙ 150

(4:150) There are those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messengers and seek to differentiate between Allah and His Messengers, and say: 'We believe in some and deny others, and seek to strike a way between the two.'

اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ حَقًّا ۚ وَاَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابًا مُّهِيْنًا 151

(4:151) It is they, indeed they, who are, beyond all doubt, unbelievers;[178] and for the unbelievers We have prepared a humiliating chastisement.

178. Insofar as being an unbeliever is concerned, there is no difference between

(1) those who believe neither in God nor in the Prophets,

(2) those who believe in God but not in the Prophets, and

(3) those whobelieve in some Prophets but reject others.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَلَمْ يُفَرِّقُوْا بَيْنَ اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ اُولٰٓئِكَ سَوْفَ يُؤْتِيْهِمْ
اُجُوْرَهُمْ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ع 152

(4:152) For those who believe in Allah and His Messengers, and do not differentiate between them, We shall certainly give them their reward.[179] Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate [180]

179. This means that only those who acknowledge God to be their sole object of worship and their only sovereign, and who commit themselves to follow all the Prophets, will merit reward for their acts in the Hereafter. What that reward will be depends on the nature and extent of their acts of goodness. Those who do not either acknowledge the exclusive sovereignty of God or who rebelliously reject some Messengers of God and believe only in those whom they choose to, will not be rewarded, for in God's sight their apparently good acts are essentially not valid.

180. God will be lenient and forgiving in judging the conduct of those who believe in Him and the Prophets.

يَسْـَٔلُكَ اَهْلُ الْكِتٰبِ اَنْ تُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ كِتٰبًا مِّنَ السَّمَاۗءِ فَقَدْ سَاَلُوْا مُوْسٰٓى اَكْبَرَ
مِنْ ذٰلِكَ فَقَالُوْٓا اَرِنَا اللّٰهَ جَهْرَةً فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الصّٰعِقَةُ بِظُلْمِهِمْ ۚ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ مِنْۢ
بَعْدِ مَا جَاۗءَتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ فَعَفَوْنَا عَنْ ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَاٰتَيْنَا مُوْسٰى سُلْطٰنًا مُّبِيْنًا 153

(4:153) The People of the Book now ask of you to have a Book come down on them from heaven;[181] indeed they asked of Moses even greater things than this, for they said: 'Make us see Allah with our own eyes' - whereupon the thunderbolt suddenly smote them for their wickedness.[182] Then they took to worshipping the calf after clear signs had come to them.[183] Still, We forgave them, and conferred a manifest commandment upon Moses,

181. One of the odd demands which the Jews of Madina made to the Prophet (peace be on him) was that if he wanted them to accept his claim to prophethood he should have them

either witness a book descending from the heavens or that each one of them should receive a writ from on high, confirming Muhammad's prophethood and the absolute necessity of believing in him.

182. The purpose here is not to describe the details of any particular event, but merely to mention, in brief, the crimes of the Jews. Hence passing references are made to the main incidents in the national history of the Jews. The particular event referred to has been mentioned earlier in Surah al-Baqarah. (See Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 2: 55; also n. 71.)

183. 'Clear signs' refer here to the signs which people had constantly witnessed from the time of Moses' appointment to his prophetic office, to the drowning of Pharaoh and the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt. It is clear that He Who had secured the deliverance of the Israelites from the clutches of the powerful Egyptian empire was not the calf, but God, the Lord of the Universe. One is simply staggered at the overpowering predisposition of the Jews to error, as evidenced by the fact that at that very juncture in their history when they had experienced the most illustrious signs of God's power and grace they bowed down before the image of the calf, rather than before God, their Benefactor.

وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَهُمُ الطُّوْرَ بِمِيْثَاقِهِمْ وَقُلْنَا لَهُمُ ادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَّقُلْنَا لَهُمْ لَا تَعْدُوْا فِي
السَّبْتِ وَاَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمْ مِّيْثَاقًا غَلِيْظًا 154

(4:154) and We raised the Mount high above them and took from them a covenant[184] (to obey the commandment), and ordered them: 'Enter the gate in the state of prostration.'[185] And We said to them: 'Do not violate the law of the Sabbath', and took from them a firm covenant.[186]

184. This 'manifest commandment' refers to the commandments hichhad been handed over to Moses on tablets. (For a more detailed account of this incident see (Surah al-A'raf 7, verses 143 ff.).The covenant referred to here is that which had been entered into by the representatives of Israel in the valley of Mount Sinai. For this see (Surah al-Baqarah 2: 63)and (Surah al-A'raf 7:171.)

185. See Towards Understanding the Qur'an. vol. I, (Surah 2: 58-9 and n. 75).

186. See ibid., (Surah 2: 65 and nn. 82-3).

فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِمْ مِّيْثَاقَهُمْ وَكُفْرِهِمْ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَقَتْلِهِمُ الْاَنْۢبِيَآءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَّقَوْلِهِمْ
قُلُوْبُنَا غُلْفٌ ؕ بَلْ طَبَعَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهَا بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ۠ 155

(4:155) (They have incurred Allah's wrath) for their breaking the covenant, and their rejection of the signs of Allah, and for slaying Prophets without right, and for saying: 'Our hearts are wrapped up in covers'[187] -even though in fact Allah has sealed their hearts because of their unbelief, so that they scarcely believe[188]

187. This statement of the Jews has already been mentioned in (Surah al-Baqarah 2: 88). In fact, like all ignorant worshippers of falsehood, these people also boasted that their faith in the ideas and prejudices, customs and usages of their forefathers was so firm that they could never be made to forsake them. Whenever the Messengers of God tried to admonish them, they have been told point-blank that no matter what argument or evidence the latter might adduce in support of their message, they would never be prepared to alter their viewpoint. (See Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 2, n. 94.)

188. This is a parenthetical statement.

وَّبِكُفْرِهِمْ وَقَوْلِهِمْ عَلٰى مَرْيَمَ بُهْتَانًا عَظِيْمًا ۙ 156

(4:156) and for their going so far in unbelief[189] as uttering against Mary a mighty calumny,[190]

189. This marks the resumption of the main theme of the discourse.

190. The Jews had ho grounds for suspicion regarding the miraculous birth of Jesus. The day he was born God made the entire Jewish people witness that it was the birth of an extraordinary person, and that his birth had taken place miraculously rather than as the result of an act of moral corruption. When this unmarried girl, of a highly esteemed and pious Israelite family, produced a new-born infant, thousands of people of all age groups thronged to her house out of curiosity. Instead of replying to their queries verbally, Mary pointed to the baby, indicating that he would himself reply. The wonder-struck crowd inquired if they were expected to direct their questions to the infant child who lay in the cradle. To their amazement the child addressed the crowd in a clear and eloquent style: 'I am indeed a servant of God, and to me has He vouchsafed Revelation, me has He made a Prophet'. (Surah Maryam 19: 30.)

Thus God demolished every basis for casting doubt on the birth of Jesus. When Jesus was young no one accused Mary of either unchastity or Jesus of being born illegitimately. When Jesus reached the age of thirty he launched his prophetic mission, censuring the Jews for their misdeeds and reproaching the rabbis and the Pharisees for their hypocrisy. He also called attention to the moral degeneration to which they had sunk, urging people to rise up and engage in the perilous struggle to establish the hegemony of God's religion. Such a struggle called for all kinds of sacrifices and involved confrontation with Satanic forces on all fronts. Once Jesus launched this mission these criminals decided to spare no weapon, however base, in their bid to silence this fearless voice of truth. It was at this point that they flung at Mary the accusation of unchastity and at Jesus that of illegitimate birth. They made these accusations despite full knowledge that both mother and child were absolutely chaste and innocent. That is why this accusation is not characterized as either a wrong or a falsehood. It is rather branded as disbelief (kufr) since the calumny was motivated chiefly by

the desire to obstruct the path of true faith and not just to bring an innocent woman into disrepute.

وَّقَوْلِهِمْ اِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيْحَ عِيْسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَمَا قَتَلُوْهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوْهُ وَلٰكِنْ
شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ ۭ وَاِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ لَفِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ ۭ مَا لَهُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ عِلْمٍ اِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ ۚ
وَمَا قَتَلُوْهُ يَقِيْنًۢا ۙ 157

(4:157) and their saying: 'We slew the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary', the Messenger of Allah[191] - whereas[192] in fact they had neither slain him nor crucified him but the matter was made dubious to them[193] - and those who differed about it too were in a state of doubt! They have no definite knowledge of it, but merely follow conjecture;[194] and they surely slew him not,

191. Their criminal boldness had reached such proportions that they attempted to put an end to the life of the one they themselves knew to be a Prophet, and subsequently went around boasting of this achievement. The least reflection on the incident of Jesus talking in his cradle (see the preceding note) makes it clear that there was no strong reason to doubt his prophethood. Moreover, the miracles of Jesus which they themselves witnessed (see Surah Al 'Imran 3: 49) had firmly established his claim to prophethood. Thus, whatever treatment they meted out to him was not based on any misconception, for they were fully aware that the person whom they were subjecting to criminal treatment had been appointed by God as the bearer of His message. It seems strange that a people should recognize a man to be a Prophet in their hearts and still try to assassinate him. The ways of degenerate nations are indeed strange. Such people are absolutely unprepared to tolerate the existence of those who reproach them for their corruption and seek to prevent them from evil. Hence the reformers, including Prophets, who arise among corrupt nations are always persecuted; they are imprisoned and even put to death. The Talmud mentions that:

Nebuchadnezzar laid waste the land of Israel. . . when the city had been captured, he marched with his princes and officers into the Temple ... on one of the walls he found the mark of an arrow's head, as though somebody had been killed or hit nearby, and he asked: 'Who was killed here?' 'Zachariah, the son of Yohoyadah, the high priest', answered the people. 'He rebuked us incessantly on account of our transgressions, and we tired of his words, and put him to death.' (The Talmud Selections by H. Polano, London, Frederick Warne & Co.)

The Bible also mentions that when the corrupt practices of Israel exceeded all limits, and Jeremiah warned them that God would have them overrun by other nations in punishment for their wickedness, his warning was greeted by the Jews with the accusation that he was a collaborator with the Chaldeans and hence a traitor. And under that pretext Jeremiah was sent to prison. In the same manner, about two and a half years before Jesus' crucifixion, John the Baptist suffered a cruel fate. On the whole the Jews knew him to be a Prophet, or at least

acknowledged him to be one of the most religious people in the nation. But when he criticized the royal court of Herod, the King of Judah, he was first thrown into prison, and then, in response to the demand of a dancing girl, who was Herod's favourite 'mistress', his head was cut off.

If this record of the Jews is kept in mind, it does not seem surprising that, after having subjected Jesus - according to their belief - to crucifixion, they might have been overcome by jubilation and in a fit of self-congratulation might have boastfully exclaimed: 'Yes, we have put a Prophet of God to death!' (For similar incidents see Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 2, n. 79 - Ed.)

192. This again is a parenthetical statement.

193. This verse categorically states that Jesus was raised on high before he could be crucified, and that the belief of both the Jews and the Christians that Jesus died on the cross is based on a misconception. As a result of a comparative study of the Qur'anic and Biblical versions we are persuaded that, so far as the trial at the court of Pilate is concerned, it was probably Jesus who was tried. Pilate sentenced him to death after the Jews showed their deep hostility to Truth and righteousness by openly declaring that, in their view, the life of a thief was of higher value than that of a man with such a pure soul as Jesus. It was then that God raised Jesus up to heaven. The person the Jews subsequently crucified was someone else who, for one reason or another, was mistaken for the person of Jesus. The fact that the person who had actually been crucified was someone other than Jesus does not in any way detract from the guilt of those Jews, for in their minds it was Jesus whose head they were crowning with thorns, in whose face they were spitting, and whom they were subjecting to crucifixion. We are not in a position now to find out how and why such a confusion arose. As no authentic source of information is available to us, it would be inappropriate to conjecture and speculate about the cause of the misapprehension which led the Jews to believe that they had crucified Jesus, the son of Mary, whereas he had already passed far beyond their grasp.

194. "Those who differed' refers to the Christians. The Christians have dozens of different versions, rather than one universally agreed view, regarding the crucifixion of the Messiah. This in itself is an eloquent testimony that the Christians were doubtful about the actual event. Some of them held the view that the one who was crucified was someone other than-Jesus and that Jesus himself in fact remained standing somewhere nearby, laughing at their folly. Others were of the opinion that the one who was crucified was certainly Jesus himself, but that he did not die on the cross and was still alive when brought down from it. Others asserted that though Jesus died on the cross, he later returned to life, met his disciples and conversed with them about ten times. Again, some believe that the human body of Jesus suffered death and was buried, while the spirit of godhead in him was taken up on high. Yet others believe that after his death the Messiah was resurrected physically and was subsequently taken up to heaven in physical form. Had the truth been fully known and well-established so many divergent views could not have gained currency.

(4:158) but Allah raised him to Himself.[195] Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.

195. This is the truth revealed by God. What is categorically asserted here is merely that the Jews did not succeed in killing the Messiah, but that God raised him unto Himself. The Qur'an furnishes no detailed information about the actual form of this 'raising'. It neither states categorically that God raised him from the earthly sphere to some place in heaven in both body and soul, nor that his body died on earth and his soul alone was raised to heaven. Hence neither of the two alternatives can be definitely affirmed nor denied on the basis of the Qur'an. If one reflects on the Qur'anic version of the event one gets the impression that, whatever the actual form of this 'raising', the event was of an extraordinary character. This extraordinariness is evident from three things:

First, the Christians believed in the ascension of the Messiah in both body and soul, which was one of the reasons for large sections of people to believe in the godhead of Jesus. The Qur'an does not refute that idea but employs the same term, raf (i.e. 'ascension'), employed by the Christians. It is inconceivable that the Qur'an, which describes itself as the 'Clear Book', would employ an expression that might lend support to a misconception it seeks to repudiate.

Second, one might assume that either the ascension of the Messiah was of the kind that takes place at every person's death or that this 'ascension' meant merely the exaltation of a Prophet's position, like that of Idris: 'And We raised him to an exalted station' (Surah Maryam 19: 57). Had it been so, this idea would have been better expressed by a statement such as: And indeed they did not kill the Messiah; Allah delivered him from execution and caused him to die a natural death. The Jews had wanted to slight him but Allah granted him an exalted position.

Third, if this raf (exaltation, ascension) referred to in the verse: 'Allah raised him to Himself was of an ordinary kind, the statement which follows, namely that 'Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise', would seem altogether out of context. Such a statement is pertinent only in the context of an event which manifested, in a highly extraordinary manner, by the overwhelming power and wisdom of God.

The only Qur'anic argument that can be adduced to controvert this view is the verse in which the expression mutawaffika see (Surah Al 'Imran 3: 55))is employed. But as we have pointed out (see Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 3, n. 51), this word can denote either God's taking a man unto Himself in soul or taking him unto Himself in both body and soul. Arguments based on the mere use of this word are not enough to repudiate the arguments we have already adduced. Some of those who insist on the physical death of Jesus support their argument by pointing out that there is no other example of the use of the word tawaffa for God's taking unto Himself a man in body as well as in soul. But this argument is not tenable since the ascension of Jesus was a unique event in human history and, therefore, the quest for another example of the use of this term in the same context is meaningless. What is worth exploring is whether or not the use of the word in such a sense is valid according to Arabic usage. If it is, we will have to say that the choice of this particular word lends support to belief in the ascension of Jesus.

If we reflect on this verse in the light of the assumption that Jesus died physically, it appears

strange that the Qur'an does not employ those terms which would exclude signifying the simultaneous physical and spiritual ascension of Jesus. On the contrary, the Qur'an prefers a term which, since it is liable to both interpretations (i.e. it can mean both spiritual and physical ascension), lends support to belief in the physical ascension of Jesus, even though that notion was used as a basis to support the false belief in the godhead of Jesus.

Belief in the physical ascension of Jesus is further reinforced by those numerous traditions which mention the return of Jesus, son of Mary, to the world and his struggle against the Anti-Christ before the end of time. (For these traditions see our appendix to Surah 33.) These traditions quite definitively establish the second coming of Jesus. Now it is for anybody to judge which is more reasonable: Jesus' return to this world after his death, or his being alive somewhere in God's universe, and returning to this world at some point in time?

وَإِنْ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ إِلَّا لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهٖ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهٖ ۚ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ يَكُوْنُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيْدًا ۚ
159

(4:159) There are none among the People of the Book but will believe in him before his death,[196] and he will be a witness against them on the Day of Resurrection.[197]

196. The death mentioned here could refer either to the death of Jesus or to the death of each and every person among 'the People of the Book'. The text lends itself to both meanings. We have adopted the first in our translation. If we accept the alternative meaning, the verse would mean: "There is no one among the People of the Book who, before his death, will not believe in Jesus.' The expression, 'People of the Book' here refers to the Jews and possibly even to the Christians. In the light of this latter meaning, the purpose of the verse would be to affirm that at the time when the physical death of Jesus takes place, all the living 'People of the Book' would have come to believe in him (i.e. in his prophethood). Alternatively, the verse would mean that the prophethood of Jesus will become manifest to every person among the People of the Book just before he dies so that they will believe in him, but at a time when believing would be of no avail. Both these views have been supported by several Companions, Successors and outstanding scholars of Qur'anic exegesis. The truth of the matter is best known to God alone.

197. This means that on the Day of Judgement Jesus will stand in the court of the Almighty and testify to the treatment meted out to him and to the message he brought. (For the nature of this testimony see (Surah al-Ma'idah 5: 109 ff.) below.)

فَبِظُلْمٍ مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ طَيِّبٰتٍ أُحِلَّتْ لَهُمْ وَبِصَدِّهِمْ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ
كَثِيْرًا ۙ 160

(4:160) Thus,[198] We forbade them many clean things which had earlier been made lawful for them,[199] for the wrong-doing of those who became Jews, for their barring many from the way of Allah,[200]

198. After this parenthetical statement, the main discourse is once again resumed.

199. This may refer to the regulation mentioned in (Surah al-An'am 6: 146), that all beasts with claws, and the fat of both oxen and sheep, were prohibited to the Jews. It might also refer, however, to the highly elaborate set of prohibitions found in Judaic Law. To restrict the choice of alternatives in their life is indeed a kind of punishment for a people. (For a fuller discussion see (Surah al-An'am 6, n. 122)below.

200. The Jews, on the whole, are not satisfied with their own deviation from the path of God. They have become such inherent criminals that their brains and resources seem to be behind almost every movement which arises for the purpose of misleading and corrupting human beings. And whenever there arises a movement to call people to the Truth, the Jews are inclined to oppose it even though they are the bearers of the Scripture and inheritors of the message of the Prophets. Their latest contribution is Communism - an ideology which is the product of a Jewish brain and which has developed under Jewish leadership. It seems ironical that the professed followers of Moses and other Prophets should be prominent as the founders and promoters of an ideology which, for the first time in human history, is professedly based on a categorical denial of, and an undying hostility to God, and which openly strives to obliterate every form of godliness. The other movement which in modern times is second only to Communism in misleading people is the philosophy of Freud. It is a strange coincidence that Freud too was a Jew.

وَّاَخۡذِهِمُ الرِّبٰوا وَقَدۡ نُهُوۡا عَنۡهُ وَاَكۡلِهِمۡ اَمۡوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالۡبَاطِلِ ؕ وَاَعۡتَدۡنَا لِلۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ

مِنۡهُمۡ عَذَابًا اَلِيۡمًا 161

(4:161) and for their taking interest which had been prohibited to them,[201] and for their consuming the wealth of others wrongfully. And for the un believers among them We have prepared a painful chastisement.[202]

201. The Torah categorically lays down the injunction: 'And if you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be to him as a creditor, and you shall not exact interest from him. If ever you take your neighbour's garment in pledge, you shall restore it to him before the sun goes down; for that is his only covering, it is his mantle for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate' (Exodus 22: 25-7). This is one of several passages of the Torah which embody the prohibition of interest. The followers of the Torah, however, are most conspicuously engaged in transactions involving interest and have become notorious the world over for their meanness and hard-heartedness in monetary matters.

202. God has kept in store a painful punishment both in this world and in the Next for those Jews who have deviated from the course of true faith and sincere obedience to God, and are

steeped in rejection of faith and rebellion against God. The severe punishment which has befallen the Jews in this world is unique and should serve as a lesson for all. Two thousand years have gone by and they have remained scattered all over the world and have been treated everywhere as outcasts. There has been no period during the last two millennia when they have not been looked on ignominiously and there is no part of the world where they are respected despite their enormous riches. What is more, this nation has been left dangling between life and death, unlike other nations which once appeared on the stage of history and then vanished. Their condemnation to this state of suspension makes them a lesson for all nations till the end of time. It marks the tragic fate that meets a people who, despite enjoying the guidance of the Book of God, dare to defy God. It would seem that their punishment in the Hereafter must be even more severe than in the present world. (For the questions which arise about the validity of our view, in spite of the establishment of the state of Israel, see Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 3: 112, n. 90.)

لٰكِنِ الرّٰسِخُوْنَ فِي الْعِلْمِ مِنْهُمْ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ مِنْ
قَبْلِكَ وَالْمُقِيْمِيْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَالْمُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ
سَنُؤْتِيْهِمْ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ۧ 162

(4:162) Those among them who are firmly rooted in knowledge and the believers, such do believe in what has been revealed to you and what was revealed before you.[203] (Those who truly believe) establish the Prayer and pay Zakah, those who firmly believe in Allah and in the Last Day, to them We shall indeed pay a great reward.

203. Those well acquainted with the true teachings of the Scriptures, and whose minds are free from prejudice, obduracy, blind imitation of their forefathers and bondage to animal desires, will be disposed to follow those teachings. Their attitude is bound to be altogether different from the general attitude of those Jews apparently immersed in unbelief and transgression. Such people realize, even at first glance, that the Qur'anic teaching is essentially the same as that of the previous Prophets, and hence feel no difficulty in affirming it.

اِنَّآ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ كَمَآ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰى نُوْحٍ وَّالنَّبِيّٖنَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ ۚ وَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰٓى اِبْرٰهِيْمَ
وَاِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَاِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ وَالْاَسْبَاطِ وَعِيْسٰى وَاَيُّوْبَ وَيُوْنُسَ وَهٰرُوْنَ وَسُلَيْمٰنَ ۚ
وَاٰتَيْنَا دَاوٗدَ زَبُوْرًا ۚ 163

(4:163) (O Muhammad!) We have revealed to you as We revealed to Noah and the Prophets after him,[204] and We revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the offspring of Jacob, and Jesus and Job, and Jonah, and Aaron and Solomon, and We gave to David Psalms.[205]

204. This emphasizes that Muhammad (peace be on him) did not introduce any innovations, and that his essential message was no different from the earlier revelations. What Muhammad (peace be on him) expounded was the same truth which had previously been expounded by the earlier Prophets in various parts of the world and at different periods of time. Wahy means 'to suggest; to put something into someone's heart; to communicate something in secrecy; to send a message'.

205. The 'Psalms' embodied in the Bible are not the Psalms of David. The Biblical version contains many 'psalms' by others and they are ascribed to their actual authors. The 'psalms' which the Bible does ascribe to David do indeed contain the characteristic lustre of truth. The book called 'Proverbs', attributed to Solomon, contains a good deal of accretion, and the last two chapters, in particular, are undoubtedly spurious. A great many of these proverbs, however, do have a ring of truth and authenticity. Another book of the Bible is ascribed to Job. Even though it contains many gems of wisdom, it is difficult to believe that the book attributed to Job could in fact be his. For the portrayal of Job's character in that book is quite contrary to the wonderful patience for which he is applauded in the Qur'an and for which he is praised in the beginning of the Book of Job itself. The Book of Job, quite contrary to the Qur'anic portrayal of him, presents him as one who was so full of grievance and annoyance" with God throughout the entire period of his tribulation that his companions had to try hard to persuade him that God was not unjust. In fact Job is shown in the Bible as one whom even his companions failed to convince that God was just.

In addition to these, the Bible contains seventeen other books of the Israelite Prophets. The greater part of these seem to be authentic. In Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos and certain other books, in particular, one often encounters whole sections which stir and move one's soul. These sections without doubt have the lustre of Divine revelation. While going through them one is struck by the vehemence of moral admonition, the powerful opposition to polytheism, the forceful exposition of monotheism, and the strong denunciation of the moral corruption of the Israelites which characterize them. One inevitably senses that these books, the orations of Jesus embodied in the Gospels, and the glorious Qur'an are like springs which have arisen from one and the same Divine source.

وَرُسُلًا قَدْ قَصَصْنٰهُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَرُسُلًا لَّمْ نَقْصُصْهُمْ عَلَيْكَ ؕ وَكَلَّمَ اللّٰهُ مُوْسٰى
تَكْلِيْمًا ۚ 164

(4:164) We revealed to the Messengers We have already told you of, and to the Messengers We have not told you of; and to Moses Allah spoke directly.[206]

206. Revelation in the case of other Prophets meant either that they heard a voice or received a message from an angel. The privileged treatment accorded to Moses was that God

communicated with him directly. This communication was similar to one that takes place between two persons, as is fully illustrated by the conversation reported in (Surah Ta Ha 20: 11 ff). This unique privilege of Moses is mentioned in the Bible as well, and in much the same manner. It mentions that the Lord used to speak to Moses 'face to face, as a man speaks to his friend' (Exodus 33: 11).

رُسُلًا مُّبَشِّرِيْنَ وَمُنْذِرِيْنَ لِئَلَّا يَكُوْنَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللّٰهِ حُجَّةٌۢ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَزِيْزًا حَكِيْمًا 165

(4:165) These Messengers were sent as bearers of glad tidings and as warners[207] so that after sending the Messengers people may have no plea against Allah.[208] Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.

207. It is emphasized that the essential function of all the Prophets was the same: to announce good tidings of salvation and felicity to those who believe in the teachings revealed by God and mend their conduct accordingly, and to warn those who persist in false beliefs and evil ways that they will have to face dire consequences.

208. God's purpose in sending the Prophets was to establish His plea against mankind. God did not want criminals to have any basis on which to plead that their actions were done in ignorance. Prophets were therefore sent to all parts of the world, and many Scriptures were revealed. These Prophets communicated knowledge of the Truth to large sections of people, and left behind Scriptures which have guided human beings in all ages. If anyone falls a prey to error, in spite of all this, the blame does not lie with God or the Prophets. The blame lies rather with those who have spurned God's message even after having received it, and with those who knew the Truth but failed to enlighten others.

لٰكِنِ اللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اِلَيْكَ اَنْزَلَهٗ بِعِلْمِهٖ ۚ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يَشْهَدُوْنَ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ شَهِيْدًا ؕ 166

(4:166) (Whether people believe or not) Allah bears witness that whatever He has revealed to you, He has revealed with His knowledge, and the angels bear witness to it too, though the witness of Allah is sufficient.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ قَدْ ضَلُّوْا ضَلٰلًۢا بَعِيْدًا 167

(4:167) Those who denied this truth and barred others from the way of Allah have indeed strayed far.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَظَلَمُوا لَمْ يَكُنِ اللَّهُ لِيَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ طَرِيقًا ﴿168﴾

(4:168) Likewise, Allah will neither forgive those who denied the truth and took to wrong-doing nor will He show them any other way.

إِلَّا طَرِيقَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۚ وَكَانَ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا ﴿169﴾

(4:169) save that of Hell wherein they will abide. And that is easy for Allah.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمُ الرَّسُولُ بِالْحَقِّ مِن رَّبِّكُمْ فَآمِنُوا خَيْرًا لَّكُمْ ۚ وَإِن تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿170﴾

(4:170) O men! Now that the Messenger has come to you bearing the Truth from your Lord, believe in him; it will be good for you. If you reject, know well that to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth.[209] Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.[210]

209. By disobeying one cannot hurt the Lord of the heavens and the earth. One can only hurt one's own self.

210. They are being told that their Lord was not at all unaware of the wickedness in which they indulged, nor did He lack the capacity to deal severely with those who only violated His commands.

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ ۚ إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُ أَلْقَاهَا إِلَىٰ مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحٌ مِّنْهُ ۖ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ۖ وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةٌ ۚ انتَهُوا خَيْرًا لَّكُمْ ۚ إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ ۖ سُبْحَانَهُ أَن يَكُونَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ ۘ لَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿171﴾

(4:171) People of the Book! Do not exceed the limits in your religion,[211] and attribute to Allah nothing except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was only a Messenger of Allah, and His command[212] that He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him (which led to Mary's conception).[213] So believe in Allah and in His Messengers,[214] and do not say: (Allah is a) trinity[215]. Give up this assertion; it would be better for you. Allah is indeed just one God. Far be it from His glory that He should

have a son.[216] To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth.[217] Allah is sufficient for a guardian.[218]

211. The expression 'People of the Book' refers here to the Christians and the word ghuluw denotes the tendency to exceed the limits of propriety in support of something. The fault of the Jews was that they had exceeded the limits of propriety in rejecting and opposing Jesus, whereas the crime of the Christians was that they had gone beyond the proper limits in their love for and devotion to Jesus.

212. What is meant by sending the 'command' to Mary is that God ordered Mary's womb to become impregnated without coming into contact with sperm. In the beginning the Christians were told that this was the secret of the fatherless birth of Jesus. Later on, under the misleading influence of Greek philosophy, they equated this with the 'Logos', which was subsequently interpreted as the Divine attribute of speech. The next step in this connection was the development of the notion that this Divine attribute entered into the womb of Mary and assumed the physical form of Jesus. Thus there developed among the Christians the false doctrine of the godhead of Jesus, and the false notion that out of His attributes God caused that of speech to appear in the form of Jesus.

213. Here Jesus himself is called 'a spirit from God'. The same idea is also expressed elsewhere in the Qur'an: 'And We supported him with the spirit of holiness' (Surah al-Baqarah 2: 87).The import of both verses is that God endowed Jesus with a pure, impeccable soul. He was therefore an embodiment of truth, veracity, righteousness, and excellence. This is what the Christians had been told about Christ. But they exceeded the proper limits of veneration for Jesus. The 'spirit from God' became the 'spirit of God', and the 'spirit of holiness' was interpreted to mean God's own Spirit which became incarnate in Jesus. Thus, along with God and Jesus, there developed the third person of God - the Holy Ghost. It was this unjustified exaggeration which led the Christians to even greater error. Ironically, however, Matthew contains the statement that: 'But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.' (The Bible, Authorized version, p. 771.)

214. The followers of Christ are urged to acknowledge God as the only God and to believe in the prophethood of all the Prophets, and that Jesus was one of them. This was the teaching of Christ and a basic truth which his followers ought to recognize.

215. They are urged to abandon the trinitarian doctrine, regardless of the form in which it was found. The fact is that the Christians subscribe simultaneously to the unity and the trinity of God. The statements of Jesus on this question in the Gospels, however, are so categorical that no Christian can easily justify anything but the clear, straightforward doctrine that God is One and that there is no god but He. The Christians, therefore, find it impossible to deny that monotheism is the very core of true religion. But the original confusion that in Jesus the Word of God became flesh, that the Spirit of God was incarnate in him, led them to believe in the godhead of Jesus and of the Holy Ghost along with that of God. This gratuitous commitment gave rise to an insoluble riddle: how to combine monotheism with the notion of trinity. For over eighteen centuries Christian theologians have grappled with this self-created riddle. The concept of the trinity is capable of such a

myriad of interpretations that literally dozens of sects have arisen as a result of its ambiguity. And it has been largely responsible for the various Christian churches indulging in mutual excommunication. Moreover, it is logically impossible to maintain belief in trinity without impairing belief in One God. This problem has arisen because of the extravagance in which the Christians have indulged. The easiest course to get out of the morass is to give up the innovated belief in the godhead of Jesus and of the Holy Ghost, acknowledge God as the Only God, and accept Jesus as His Messenger rather than as God's partner in godhead.

216. This is the refutation of the fourth extravagance in which the Christians have indulged. Even if the reports embodied in the New Testament are considered authentic, the most that can be inferred from them (particularly those embodied in the first three Gospels) is that Jesus likened the relationship between God and His servants to that between a father and his children, and that he used to employ the term 'father' as a metaphor for God. But in this respect Jesus was not unique. From very ancient times the Israelites had employed the term 'father' for God. The Old Testament is full of examples of this usage. Jesus obviously employed this expression in conformity with the literary usage of his people. Moreover, he characterized God not merely as his own father but as the father of all men. Nevertheless, the Christians exceeded all reasonable limits when they declared Jesus to be the only begotten son of God. Their strange doctrine on this question is that since Jesus is an incarnation, an embodiment of the Word and Spirit of God, he is therefore the only son of God, who was sent to the earth in order to expiate the sins of humanity through his crucifixion. The Christians hold this to be their basic doctrine even though they cannot produce one shred of evidence from the statements of Jesus himself. This doctrine was a later product of their fancies, an outcome of the extravagance in which they indulged as a result of their impression of the awe-inspiring personality of their Prophet.

God does not repudiate here the doctrine of expiation, for this is not an independent doctrine but a corollary of recognizing Jesus as the son of God, and is a mystical and philosophical answer to the query as to why the only begotten son of God died an accursed death on the cross. The doctrine of expiation automatically falls apart by repudiating the dogma that Jesus was the son of God and by dispelling the misapprehension that he was crucified.

217. This strongly emphasizes that the true relationship between God and His creatures is one between the Lord and His slave. This repudiates the idea that the relationship which exists is one between a father and his offspring.

218. God is Himself sufficiently powerful to govern His dominion and has no need of a son to assist Him.

لَنْ يَّسْتَنْكِفَ الْمَسِيْحُ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ عَبْدًا لِّلّٰهِ وَلَا الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ الْمُقَرَّبُوْنَ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّسْتَنْكِفْ

عَنْ عِبَادَتِهٖ وَيَسْتَكْبِرْ فَسَيَحْشُرُهُمْ اِلَيْهِ جَمِيْعًا 172

(4:172) The Messiah neither did disdain to be a servant of Allah nor do the angels who are stationed near to Him; and whoever disdains to serve Him, and waxes arrogant, Allah will certainly muster them all to Him.

فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَيُوَفِّيْهِمْ اُجُوْرَهُمْ وَيَزِيْدُهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۚ وَاَمَّا
الَّذِيْنَ اسْتَنْكَفُوْا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا فَيُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ۙ وَّلَا يَجِدُوْنَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ
وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا 173

(4:173) He will grant those who have believed and done good deeds their rewards in full, and will give them more out of His bounty. He will bestow upon those who have been disdainful and arrogant a painful chastisement; and they will find for themselves neither a guardian nor a helper besides Allah.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ بُرْهَانٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَاَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكُمْ نُوْرًا مُّبِيْنًا 174

(4:174) O men! A proof has come to you from your Lord, and We have sent down unto you a clear light.

فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَاعْتَصَمُوْا بِهٖ فَسَيُدْخِلُهُمْ فِيْ رَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَفَضْلٍ ۙ وَّيَهْدِيْهِمْ
اِلَيْهِ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيْمًا ؕ 175

(4:175) Allah will surely admit those who believe in Him and hold fast to Him to His mercy and bounty, and will guide them on to a straight way to Himself.

يَسْتَفْتُوْنَكَ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُفْتِيْكُمْ فِي الْكَلٰلَةِ ؕ اِنِ امْرُؤٌا هَلَكَ لَيْسَ لَهٗ وَلَدٌ وَّلَهٗٓ اُخْتٌ
فَلَهَا نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ ۚ وَهُوَ يَرِثُهَآ اِنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَّهَا وَلَدٌ ؕ فَاِنْ كَانَتَا اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُمَا الثُّلُثٰنِ
مِمَّا تَرَكَ ؕ وَاِنْ كَانُوْٓا اِخْوَةً رِّجَالًا وَّنِسَآءً فَلِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ ؕ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ
اَنْ تَضِلُّوْا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ۧ 176

(4:176) People[219] ask you to pronounce a ruling concerning inheritance from those who have left behind no lineal heirs (kalalah).[220] Say: 'Allah pronounces for you the

ruling: should a man die childless but have a sister,[221] she shall have one half of what he has left behind; and should the sister die childless, his brother shall inherit her.[222] And if the heirs are two sisters, they shall have two-thirds of what he has left behind.[223] And if the heirs are sisters and brothers, then the male shall have the share of two females. Allah makes (His commandments) clear to you lest you go astray. Allah has full knowledge of everything.

219. This verse was revealed long after the revelation of the rest of this surah. According to certain traditions, this verse was the very last Qur'anic verse to be revealed. (For these traditions, see Ibn Kathir's comments on this verse - Ed.) Even if this is disputed, it shows at least that this verse was revealed in 9 A.H., whereas the Muslims had been reciting the present surah, al-Nisa, for quite some time before that. It was for this reason that this verse was not included among the verses relating to inheritance mentioned at the beginning of the surah, but was attached to it at the end as an appendix.

220. There is disagreement about the meaning of the word kalalah. According to some scholars, it means one who dies leaving neither issue nor father nor grandfather. According to others, it refers to those who die without issue (regardless of whether succeeded by either father or grand father). On this question 'Umar remained undecided up to the last. But the majority of jurists accept the opinion of Abu Bakr that the former meaning is correct. The Qur'an also seems to support this, for here the sister of the kalalah has been apportioned half of the inheritance whereas, had his father been alive, the sister would not have inherited from him at all. (For relevant traditions on the subject see the commentary on this verse by Ibn Kathir. For legal discussion on the question see the commentaries of Jassas and Qurtubi - Ed.)

221. The apportioned shares in inheritance mentioned here are those of brothers and sisters, whether related through both parents or through a common father only. Abu Bakr gave this interpretation in one of his pronouncements and none of the Companions expressed any dissent. This view is, therefore, considered to be supported by consensus (ijma').

222. This means that if there is no other legal heir the brother will receive the entire inheritance. In the presence of other heirs (such as husband), the brother will receive all the residual inheritance after the other heirs have received their apportioned shares.

223. The same also applies to more than two sisters.

5. Surah Al Maidah (The Table Spread)

Name

This Sarah takes its' name from verse 112 in which the word mai'dah occurs. Like the names of many other surahs, this name has no special relation to the subject of the Surah but has been used merely as a symbol to distinguish it from other surahs.

Period of Revelation

The theme of this Surah indicates, and traditions support it, that it was revealed after the treaty of Hudaibiyah at the end of 6 A. H. or in the beginning of 7 A. H. That is why it deals with those problems that arose from this treaty.

The Holy Prophet with 1400 Muslims went to Makkah in Zil-Qaadah 6 A.H. to perform `Umrah, but the Quraish spurred by their enmity, prevented him from its performance, though it was utterly against all the ancient religious traditions of Arabia. After a good deal of hard and harsh negotiations, a treaty was concluded at Hudaibiyah according to which it was agreed that he could perform `Umrah the following year. That was a very appropriate occasion for teaching the Muslims the right way of performing a pilgrimage to Makkah with the true Islamic dignity, and enjoining that they should not prevent the disbelievers from performing pilgrimage to Makkah as a retaliation for their misbehavior. This was not difficult at all as many disbelievers had to pass through Muslim territory on their way to Makkah. This is why the introductory verses deal with the things connected with pilgrimage to Makkah and the same theme has been resumed in vv. 101-104. The other topics of this Surah also appear to belong to the same period.

The continuity of the subject shows that most probably the whole of the Surah was revealed as a single discourse at one and the same time. It is also possible that some of its verses were revealed at a later period and inserted in this Surah at different places where they fitted in. But there appears to be not the least gap anywhere in the Surah to show that it might have comprised two or more discourses.

Occasion of Revelation

This Surah was revealed to suit the requirements of the changed conditions which were now different from those prevailing at the time of the revelation of Al-i-'Imran and An- Nisa. Then the shock of the set-back at Uhd had made the very surroundings of Al-Madinah dangerous for the Muslims, but now Islam had become an invulnerable power and the Islamic State had extended to Najd on the east, to the Red Sea on the west, to Syria on the north and to Makkah on the south. This set-back which the Muslims had suffered at Uhd had not broken their determination. It had rather spurred them to action. As a result of their continuous struggle and unparalleled sacrifices, the power of. the surrounding clans, within a radius of 200 miles or so, had been broken. The Jewish menace which was always threatening Al-Madinah had been totally removed and the Jews in the other parts of Hijaz had-become tributaries of the State of Al-Madinah. The last effort of the Quraish to suppress Islam had been thwarted in the Battle of the Ditch. After this, it had become quite obvious to the Arabs that no power could suppress the Islamic movement. Now Islam was not merely a

creed which ruled over the minds and hearts of the people but had also become a State which dominated over every aspect of the life of the people who lived within its boundaries. This had enabled the Muslims to live their lives without let or hindrance, in accordance with their beliefs.

Another development had also taken place during this period. The Muslim civilization had developed in accordance with the principles of Islam and the Islamic viewpoint. This civilization was quite distinct from all other civilizations in all its' details, and distinguished the Muslims clearly from the non Muslims in their moral, social and cultural behavior. Mosques had been built in all territories, prayer had been established and' Imam (leader) for every habitation and clan had been appointed. The Islamic civil and criminal laws had been formulated in detail and were being enforced through the Islamic courts. New and reformed ways of trade and commerce had taken the place of the old ones. The Islamic laws of marriage and divorce, of the segregation of the sexes, of the punishment for adultery and calumny and the like had cast the social life of the Muslims in a special mold. Their social behavior, their conversation, their dress, their very mode of living, their culture etc., had taken a definite shape of its own. As a result of all these changes, the non-Muslims could not expect that the Muslims would ever return to their former fold.

Before the treaty of Hudaibiyah, the Muslims were so engaged in their struggle with the non-Muslim Quraish that they got no time to propagate their message. This hindrance was removed by what was apparently a defeat but in reality a victory at Hudaibiyah. This gave the Muslims not only peace in their own territory but also respite to spread their message in the surrounding territories. Accordingly the Holy Prophet addressed letters to the rulers of Iran, Egypt and the Roman Empire and the chiefs of Arabia, inviting them to Islam. At the same time the missionaries of Islam spread among the clans and tribes and invited them to accept the Divine Way of Allah. These were the circumstances at the time when Al-Ma'idah was revealed.

Topics

It deals with the following three main topics:

1. Commandments and instructions about the religious, cultural and political life of the Muslims.

   In this connection, a code of ceremonial rules concerning the journey for Haj has been prescribed; the observance of strict respect for the emblems of Allah has been enjoined; and any kind of obstruction or interference with the pilgrims to the Kaabah has been prohibited. Definite rules and regulations have been laid down for what is lawful and unlawful in the matter of food, and self-imposed foolish restrictions of the pre-Islamic age have been abolished. Permission has been given to. take food with the people of the Book and to marry their women. Rules and regulations for the performance of Wudu (ablutions) and bath and purification and tayammum (ablutions with dust) have been prescribed. Punishment for rebellion, disturbance of peace and theft have been specified. Drinking and gambling have absolutely been made unlawful. Expiation for the breaking of oath has been laid down and a few more things have been added to the law of evidence.

2. Admonition to the Muslims.

   Now that the Muslims had become a ruling body, it was feared that power might corrupt them. At this period of great trial, Allah had admonished them over and over again to stick to justice and to guard against the wrong behavior of their predecessors, the people of the Book. They have been enjoined to remain steadfast to the Covenant of obedience to Allah and His Messenger, and to observe strictly their commands and prohibitions in order to save them- selves from the evil consequences which. befell the Jews and the Christians who had violated them. They have been instructed to observe the dictates of the Holy Quran in the conduct of all their affairs and warned against the attitude of hypocrisy.

3. Admonition to the Jews and the Christians.

   As the power of the Jews had been totally weakened and almost all their habitations in north Arabia had come under the rule of the Muslims, they have been warned again about their wrong attitude and invited to follow the Right Way. At the same time a detailed invitation has also been extended to the Christians. The errors of their creeds have been clearly pointed out and they have been admonished to accept the guidance of the Holy Prophet. . Incidentally, it may be noted that no direct invitation has been made to the Majusis and idolaters living in the adjoining countries, because there was no need for a separate address for them as their condition. had already been covered by the addresses to the mushrik Arabs.

Subject:Consolidation of the Islamic Community

In continuation of the instructions about the consolidation of the Islamic Community given in Surah An-Nisa, the Muslims have been directed to observe and fulfill all their obligations: further regulations have been prescribed to train the Muslims for that purpose.

They have also been particularly warned as rulers to guard against the corruption, of power and directed to observe the Covenant of the Quran. They have also been exhorted to learn lessons from the failings of their predecessors, the Jews and the Christians, who in their turn have been admonished to give up their wrong attitudes towards the Right Way and accept the guidance taught by Prophet Muhammad (God's peace be upon him).

Topics and their Interconnection

The Believers have been exhorted to fulfill scrupulously all of their obligations and follow the regulations prescribed by the Divine Law about food, sex, Salat, justice, etc. **1 - 10**

The Muslims have been warned to guard against the errors of their predecessors; they should follow the Right Path and avoid the bad example of the Jews and the Christians, who broke their Covenants and went astray into evil ways. They, in their turn, have been admonished to give up their wrong ways and accept Islam. **11 - 26**

The story of the two sons of Adam has been related to reproach the Jews for their plot to kill the Holy Prophet and his Companions. (v. 11 & E.N. 30). The story has also been used to emphasize the sanctity of human life. **27 - 32**

To achieve this object, punishments have been prescribed for those who create chaos in the Islamic State, and the Believers have been urged to exert their utmost to establish the Right Way; the sanctity of property has also been emphasized. **33 - 40**

The Holy Prophet (and through him the Muslims) has been reassured that he should not mind the enmity, the evil designs and the machinations of the Jews, but continue exerting his utmost to establish the Right Way in accordance with the Guidance of the Quran; for nothing better could be expected from those who had forsaken their own Torah. He should deal with the Christians likewise, for they, too, had forsaken their Gospel. **41 - 50**

In view of the degenerate moral condition of the Jews and the Christians, the Believers have been warned not to make them their friends and confidants. Likewise they should be on their guard against the evil designs of the hypocrites, the disbelievers and the like and should rely on the true Believers alone. The people of the Book have, in their turn been exhorted to give up their enmity and adopt the right attitude, for they cannot get salvation without this. **51 - 69**

The theme of the corruptions of the Jews and Christians has been resumed. The Christians especially have been reproved for their errors in regard to the doctrine of Tauhid. At the same time they have been preferred to the hard hearted Jews, for there are among them some who are more inclined towards the Truth. **70 - 86**

In this portion of the Surah, further regulations about the lawful and the un-lawful, in addition to those contained in vv. 1 - 10, have been given. **87 - 108**

At the end of the Surah, the mention of the conversation that will take place between Allah and His Prophets on the Day of Judgment, has been made for the benefit of the erring people to serve as a corrective to their creeds. The conversation with Prophet Christ has been cited as a specimen to warn particularly the Christians, who profess to believe in him, and generally all those people who put false hopes in their Prophets, etc. **109 - 119**

Conclusion: "O man-kind! The Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah: therefore you should become His true servants and fear Him, for He has full powers over everything." **120**

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

یٰۤاَیُّهَا الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اَوۡفُوۡا بِالۡعُقُوۡدِ ؕ اُحِلَّتۡ لَـکُمۡ بَهِیۡمَةُ الۡاَنۡعَامِ اِلَّا مَا یُتۡلٰی عَلَیۡکُمۡ غَیۡرَ مُحِلِّی الصَّیۡدِ وَاَنۡتُمۡ حُرُمٌ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ یَحۡکُمُ مَا یُرِیۡدُ ۱

(5:1) Believers! Honour your bonds![1] All grazing beasts of the flock[2] are permitted to you except those which are recited to you hereinafter, but you are not allowed to hunt in the state of Ihram (a state of pilgrim sanctity).[3] Indeed Allah decrees as He wills.[4]

1. People should abide by the limitations and prohibitions laid down in this surah and elsewhere in the law of God. This brief introductory statement is followed by an enunciation of those prohibitions which people are required to observe.

2. The Arabic word an'am (cattle) denotes camels, oxen, sheep and goats, whereas the word bahimah means all grazing quadrupeds. Had God said that an'am had been made lawful for them, this permission would have included only those animals to which the term an'am is applicable. But the terms in which the injunction is conveyed are bahimat al-an'am (all grazing beasts of the flock). Hence the permission is of wider import and embraces all grazing quadrupeds of the cattle type, i.e. which do not possess canine teeth, which feed on plants rather than animals, and which resemble the cattle found in Arabia in other characteristics. This implies that the flesh of those animals which have canine teeth and are carnivorous is not permissible. This implication was elucidated by the Prophet (peace be on him) and is embodied in a tradition in which he prohibited those beasts which kill and eat other animals. Likewise, the Prophet (peace be on him) also prohibited birds with claws and those that feed on carrion. According to a tradition transmitted by Ibn 'Abbas: "The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) prohibited all beasts with canine teeth and all birds with claws.' (Bukhari, 'Dhaba'ih', 28, 29; 'Tibb', 53; Abu Da'ud, 'At'imah', 32; Tirmidhi, 'At'imah', 9, 11; Muslim, 'Sayd', 11-16; Nasa'i, 'Sayd wa Dhaba'ih', 28, 30, 33; Ibn Majah, 'Sayd', 13; etc. - Ed.)

3. Ihram is the name of the simple apparel worn at the time of Pilgrimage. In every direction around the Ka'bah, there are certain fixed points beyond which no Pilgrim may proceed without donning this special Pilgrim's garment in place of his normal clothes. This apparel consists of two sheets of untailored cloth, one of which is wrapped around the lower part of the body while the other is thrown over the upper part. This manner of dressing is termed ihram because once a man has assumed it he must treat as prohibited a number of things which are ordinarily lawful, for example either shaving or trimming the hair, or using perfumes and other items of toiletry and the gratification of sexual desires. These restrictions also extend to both killing and hunting, and to leading anyone else to either kill or hunt an animal.

4. God is the absolute sovereign and has absolute authority to issue whatever command He might will. His creatures do not have the right to complain about any of these orders. Even though wisdom (hikmah) underlies the ordinances of God, a true believer does not obey them because he considers them either appropriate or conducive to his best interests. He obeys them simply because they are the ordinances of his Lord. He holds unlawful all that God has declared unlawful, because God has so decreed it; whatever He has declared lawful is regarded as such for no other reason than that God, the Lord of all, has allowed His servants the use of it. Hence the Qur'an establishes very firmly the principle that nothing except permission from the Lord - or lack of it - is to be taken into consideration in deciding what is lawful and what is not.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ لَا تُحِلُّواْ شَعَآئِرَ ٱللَّهِ وَلَا ٱلشَّهۡرَ ٱلۡحَرَامَ وَلَا ٱلۡهَدۡيَ وَلَا ٱلۡقَلَآئِدَ وَلَآ
ءَآمِّينَ ٱلۡبَيۡتَ ٱلۡحَرَامَ يَبۡتَغُونَ فَضۡلٗا مِّن رَّبِّهِمۡ وَرِضۡوَٰنٗاۚ وَإِذَا حَلَلۡتُمۡ فَٱصۡطَادُواْۚ وَلَا
يَجۡرِمَنَّكُمۡ شَنَـَٔانُ قَوۡمٍ أَن صَدُّوكُمۡ عَنِ ٱلۡمَسۡجِدِ ٱلۡحَرَامِ أَن تَعۡتَدُواْۘ وَتَعَاوَنُواْ عَلَى ٱلۡبِرِّ
وَٱلتَّقۡوَىٰۖ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُواْ عَلَى ٱلۡإِثۡمِ وَٱلۡعُدۡوَٰنِۚ وَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَۖ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ شَدِيدُ ٱلۡعِقَابِ 2

(5:2) Believers! Neither desecrate the symbols of (devotion to) Allah,[5] nor the holy month, nor the animals of offering, nor the animals wearing collars indicating they are for sacrifice, nor ill-treat those who have set out for the Holy House seeking from their Lord His bounty and good pleasure.[6] But once you are free from Pilgrimage obligations, you are free to hunt.[7] Do not let your wrath against the people who have barred you from the Holy Mosque move you to commit undue transgressions;[8] rather, help one another in acts of righteousness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and transgression. Fear Allah. Surely Allah is severe in retribution.

5. Whatever characteristically represents either a particular doctrine, creed, way of thought or conduct is recognized as its symbol. For example, official flags, uniforms of the armed forces, coins, notes and stamps are symbols used by governments so that their subjects - in fact all those who live within their sphere of influence - treat them with proper respect. Cathedrals, altars and crosses are symbols of Christianity. A special bunch of hair on the head, a special kind of bead-rosary and the temple are symbols of Hinduism. A turban, bracelet and Kirpan (a special dagger kept by the Sikhs) are symbols of the Sikh religion. The hammer and sickle are the symbols of Communism. The swastika has been the symbol of Aryan racialism. The followers of these ideologies are required to treat these symbols with respect. If a man insults any symbol associated with a particular ideology it is regarded as an act of hostility; and if the person concerned is himself a follower of that ideology then that insult is considered tantamount to an abandonment of, and a revolt against it.

The expression 'sha'a'ir Allah' refers to all those rites which, in opposition to polytheism and outright disbelief and atheism, are the characteristic symbols of an exclusive devotion to God. Muslims are required to respect these symbols, regardless of the people among whom they are found, provided their underlying spirit is one of godliness and that they have not been tainted by either polytheistic or pagan associations. Hence, whenever a Muslim encounters something in either the creed or practice of a non-Muslim, which embodies any element of devotion and service to the One True God, he will identify himself with it and show respect to the symbols which represent it. For this true element in their religious life constitutes the point of agreement between them and the Muslims. The point of dispute is not that they serve God, but that they associate others in that service.

It should be recalled that this directive to treat the symbols of God with due respect was given at a time when a state of belligerency existed between the Muslims and the polytheists

of Arabia, and Makka was under the occupation of the latter. Polytheistic tribes from all over Arabia used to visit the Ka'bah for Pilgrimage, and the routes of many of these tribes were within the reach-of the Muslims if they decided to attack. It was in such circumstances that the Muslims were told that, even though those people were polytheists, they should not be molested if they were proceeding towards the 'House of God'; that they should not be attacked during the months of Pilgrimage; and that the animals which they were carrying for sacrificial offering should not be touched. The element of godliness which persisted in their otherwise distorted religious life deserved to be respected.

6. Following a general directive that the symbols of God should be treated with proper respect a few such symbols are mentioned specifically lest war fever lead even to the desecration of religious rites and symbols. The enumeration of these particular symbols does not mean that respect is due to these alone.

7. Ihram is also one of the symbols of God and violation of any of the prohibitions which should be observed in that state is an act of sacrilege. The prohibition of hunting while in the state of ihram is mentioned in connection with the desecration of the symbols of God. When ihram is over, the prohibitions become void, and one is permitted to hunt.

8. The unbelievers had prevented the Muslims from visiting the Ka'bah. In fact, in violation of the ancient usage of Arabia they had even deprived them of their right to make Pilgrimage. As a result, the Muslims felt inclined to prevent the pagan tribes from making their pilgrimage by not letting them pass along the routes to Makka which lay close to the Islamic domains, and to attack their trading caravans during the time of Pilgrimage (Hajj). God prevented them from carrying out this plan through the revelation.

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالدَّمُ وَلَحْمُ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَآ أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِۦ وَالْمُنْخَنِقَةُ
وَالْمَوْقُوذَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيحَةُ وَمَآ أَكَلَ السَّبُعُ إِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ ۖ وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصُبِ
وَأَن تَسْتَقْسِمُوا بِالْأَزْلَٰمِ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ فِسْقٌ ۗ ٱلْيَوْمَ يَئِسَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِن دِينِكُمْ فَلَا
تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِ ۚ ٱلْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِى
وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَٰمَ دِينًا ۚ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ فِى مَخْمَصَةٍ غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِّإِثْمٍ ۙ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ
غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ 3

(5:3) Forbidden to you are carrion,[9] blood, the flesh of swine, the animal slaughtered in any name other than Allah's,[10] the animal which has either been strangled, killed by blows, has died of a fall, by goring or that devoured by a beast of prey - unless it be

that which you yourselves might have slaughtered while it was still alive[11] - and that which was slaughtered at the altars.[12]-[13] You are also forbidden to seek knowledge of your fate by divining arrows.[14]All these are sinful acts. This day the unbelievers have fully despaired of your religion. Do not fear them; but fear Me.[15] This day I have perfected for you your religion, and have bestowed upon you My bounty in full measure, and have been pleased to assign for you Islam as your religion. (Follow, then, the lawful and unlawful bounds enjoined upon you.)[16] As for he who is driven by hunger, without being wilfully inclined to sin, surely Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.[17]

9.'Carrion' signifies the animal which has died a natural death.

10. This refers to the practice of pronouncing the name of anyone or anything other than God and dedicating the animal, as an offering, to either a holy personage, god or goddess before slaughtering. (For details see Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 2, n. 171.)

11. It is lawful to eat the flesh of an animal which may have suffered from any of the above-mentioned accidents providing it was still alive until slaughtered. This verse also makes it clear that the flesh of an animal becomes lawful only by slaughtering ritually, and that no other method of killing is valid. The words dhabh and dhakah belong to the technical terminology of Islam and denote slitting the throat so that the blood is completely drained from the animal's body. The disadvantage of killing an animal by either guillotine or strangulation is that the greater part of the blood remains within the body, and at various places it sticks to the flesh and forms congealed lumps. If an animal is slaughtered by slitting the throat, on the other hand, the connection between mind and body remains intact for a short while, with the result that the blood is thoroughly drained out from all the veins and the flesh becomes fully cleansed of blood. We have just come across the injunction prohibiting the eating of blood. So only that flesh which has been purged of blood is declared lawful.

12. The word nusub signifies all the places consecrated for offerings to others than the One True God, regardless of whether they are images of wood, stone or something else.

13. The division of objects of eating and drinking into lawful and unlawful is based on their moral rather than their medicinal properties. God has left matters relating to the physical world to be tackled by man's own effort and striving. It is for man himself to discover by his own efforts which items of food and drink provide him with healthy nourishment and which are useless and harmful. The Law (Shari'ah) does not take upon itself to guide man in such matters. Had it undertaken such a task, perhaps one of the first things for it to do would have been to pronounce the prohibition of arsenic oxide. But one will notice that the Qur'an and Hadith mention neither arsenic oxide nor other things which either singly or jointly are fatal for man. The underlying considerations of the Law with regard to the various items of eating and drinking are their possible effects on man's morals and on the purity of his soul. This is in addition to the judgements that the Law makes with regard to the various means adopted by man in his quest for food - whether they are appropriate according to Islamic standards or not. It is impossible for man to determine what is beneficial and what is harmful for his morals; he has not been endowed with the capacities

needed to arrive at sound conclusions on these matters, and so he frequently stumbles into error. Hence the Law undertakes to guide him in these matters and these matters alone. Whatever has been prohibited by Islam has been prohibited because of its bad effects on human morals, because of its repugnance to spiritual purity, and because of its association with false beliefs. Things which have been declared lawful have been so declared because they are untainted by these evils.

It may be asked why God did not specify the considerations underlying the prohibition of various things for this would have afforded us very valuable insights. In reply, it must be pointed out that it is impossible for us to fully grasp such considerations. The kind of questions we face are for instance: What are the corrupting effects of the consumption of either blood or the flesh of swine and carrion on our morals? The extent to which this corruption affects our morals, and the way in which certain things affect our morals is a matter that we are incapable of investigating, for we do not possess the means of weighing and measuring the moral properties of various things. To mention some of these bad effects would carry little weight with the sceptic, for how could he test the soundness of statements on such questions? Hence, God considers faith rather than man's own judgement as the main basis for observing the standards of lawfulness and prohibition. Whoever is fully convinced that the Qur'an is the Book of God, that the Prophet (peace be on him) was designated by Him, and that God is All-Knowing and All-Wise, will necessarily commit himself to observe the restrictions enjoined by God regardless of whether he is able to grasp the wisdom underlying them or not. Whoever lacks this basic conviction will avoid only those evils which are fully evident to human beings, and will remain a prey to all those which have not yet become apparent but which in fact are intrinsically harmful.

14. The things which are prohibited in this verse fall into the following categories:

(1) Polytheistic divination, which is a form of omen-seeking whereby knowledge either about one's future or about matters beyond human perception, is sought from gods and goddesses. The polytheists of Makka had consecrated the idol Hubal in the Ka'bah for this purpose. Seven arrows had been placed at its altars and on each of them different words and sentences had been inscribed. Whenever people were faced with the question whether a certain course was wise or not, or they wanted to trace something lost, or sought a judgement in a murder case, or had other similar problems, they would approach the oracle of Hubal, present him with an offering as his fee, and pray to Hubal to issue a verdict on the question concerned. Then the oracle would draw arrows, and the inscription on the arrow which fell to a person's lot was deemed to represent the verdict of Hubal.

(2) Superstitious divination, which has also been prohibited, means that instead of deciding the problems of life in a rational way one should decide them on fanciful grounds. Or it could mean deciding matters by arbitrary interpretation of accidental events, or to have one's future prophesied by means which have not been reasonably established as adequate for obtaining knowledge about the future. This includes geomancy, astrology, fortune-telling and the numerous other methods adopted to determine omens.

(3) Games of chance are also prohibited and include all those transactions in which what one receives depends on chance and other purely accidental factors rather than on rational

considerations such as either due payment or recompense for services rendered. This applies, for instance, to lotteries where the holder of an arbitrarily-drawn number receives a huge amount of money which has been obtained from thousands of other people. It also applies to crossword puzzles were the award of prizes does not depend on the actual correctness of the solution (since several correct solutions are possible) but on accidental conformity with the particular solution which is arbitrarily chosen as the only correct one by the sponsors of the puzzle. After prohibiting each of these three categories, the only kind of lot-drawing which Islam permits is that which one resorts to when obliged to make a decision either in favour of one of numerous permissible options or in favour of one out of two or more equally legitimate claimants. For instance, two persons have an equal claim over a thing which neither of them is prepared to relinquish, and at the same time there is no reasonable basis for preferring one to the other. In such a case, with the consent of the claimants, the matter may be settled by drawing lots. The Prophet (peace be on him) himself used to resort to drawing lots when he had to make a decision between two equal claimants, and when preferring one of them would cause distress and grievance to the other. (For such instances see Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 4, p. 373; Bukhari, 'Nikah', 97 and 'Shahadat', 30; Muslim, 'Fada'il al-Sahabah', 88; Ibn Majah, 'Ahkam', 20, etc. - Ed.)

15. 'This day', here, does not signify a particular day or specific date. It refers to that period of time when these verses were revealed. In our own usage, too, expressions like 'today' or 'this day' often have the sense of the 'present time'. 'This day the unbelievers have fully despaired of your religion' refers to the fact that the Muslims' religion had developed into a full-fledged system of life, reinforced by the authority and governmental power which it had acquired. The unbelievers who had hitherto resisted its establishment now despaired of destroying Islam and of forcing the believers back to their former state of Ignorance. The believers therefore no longer needed to fear men: they should fear God alone instead. Indeed, the Muslims were repeatedly asked to fear God, for they would not be treated lightly if they failed to carry out His commands, especially as there was no longer any justifiable excuse for such failure. If they still violated the law of God, there could be no basis for supposing that they did so under constraint: it must mean that they simply had no intention of obeying Him.

16. The 'perfection of religion' mentioned in this verse refers to making it a self-sufficient system of belief and conduct, and an order of social life providing its own answers to the questions with which man is confronted. This system contains all necessary guidance for man, either by expounding fundamental principles from which detailed directives can be deduced or by spelling out such directives explicitly so that in no circumstances would one need to look for guidance to any extraneous source.

The bounty referred to in the statement: 'I have bestowed upon you My bounty in full measure', is the bounty of true guidance.

The statement: 'I have been pleased to assign for you Islam as your religion' means that, since the Muslims had proved by their conduct and their striving that they were honest and sincere about the commitment they had made to God in embracing Islam - the commitment to serve and obey Him - He had accepted their sincerity and created conditions in which they were no longer yoked in bondage to anyone but Him. Thus the Muslims were not

prevented from living in submission to God out of extraneous constraints just as there were no constraints preventing them from subscribing to true beliefs. Having recounted these favours, God does not point out what should be the proper response to those favours. But the implication is obvious: the only appropriate response on the part of the believers must be unstinting observance of the law of God out of gratitude to Him.

According to authentic traditions this verse was revealed in 10 A.H. on the occasion of the Prophet's Farewell Pilgrimage. The context however, seems to indicate that it was revealed soon after the conclusion of the Treaty of Hudaybiyah (i.e. in 6 A.H.). All parts of the discourse in which this verse occurs are so tightly interwoven and so closely inter-connected that it hardly seems conceivable that it should have been inserted here several years later. My own estimate - and true knowledge of this lies with God alone - is that this verse was originally revealed in its present context (i.e. commenting upon the conditions prevailing at the time of the Treaty of Hudaybiyah). It is conceivable that the true significance of the verse was not then fully appreciated. But later on, when Islam prevailed over the whole of Arabia and the power of Islam reached a high point, God once again revealed this sentence to His Messenger and ordered him to proclaim it.

17. See Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 2, n. 172).

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ مَاذَآ اُحِلَّ لَهُمْ ؕ قُلْ اُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتُ ۙ وَمَا عَلَّمْتُمْ مِّنَ الْجَوَارِحِ
مُكَلِّبِيْنَ تُعَلِّمُوْنَهُنَّ مِمَّا عَلَّمَكُمُ اللّٰهُ ۫ فَكُلُوْا مِمَّآ اَمْسَكْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ
ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ 4

(5:4) They ask you what has been made lawful to them. Say: 'All clean things have been made lawful to you,[18] and such hunting animals as you teach, training them to hunt, teaching them the knowledge Allah has given you - you may eat what they catch for you[19] - but invoke the name of Allah on it.[20] Have fear of Allah (in violating His Law). Allah is swift in His reckoning.'

18. There is a certain subtlety in how the query is answered. Religious- minded people often fall into a prohibitionist mentality by tending to regard as unlawful everything not expressly declared as lawful. This makes them excessively fastidious and over-suspicious, and inclined to ask for a complete list of all that is lawful and permitted. The Qur'an's response to this question seems to be aimed, in the first place, at the reform of this mentality. The questioners want a list of what is lawful so they can treat everything else as prohibited, but the Qur'an provides them with a list of what is prohibited and then leaves them with the guiding principle that all 'clean things' are lawful. This means a complete reversal of the old religious outlook according to which everything that has not been declared lawful is considered prohibited. This was a great reform, and it liberated human life from many unnecessary constraints. Henceforth, except for a few prohibitions, the lawful domain embraced virtually everything.

The lawfulness of things has been tied, however, to the stipulation of their being clean so that no one can argue for the lawfulness of things which are unclean. The question which arises at this point is: How are we to determine which things are clean? The answer is that everything is clean apart from those things which can be reckoned unclean either according to any of the principles embodied in the Law or which are repellent to man's innate sense of good taste or which civilized human beings have generally found offensive to their natural feelings of cleanliness and decency.

19.The expression 'hunting animals' signifies hounds, cheetahs, hawks and all those beasts and birds which men use in hunting. It is a characteristic of animals which have been trained to hunt that they hold the prey for their masters rather than devour it. It is for this reason that while the catch of these trained animals is lawful, that of others is prohibited.

There is some disagreement among the jurists as to the hunting animals whose catch is lawful. Some jurists are of the opinion that if the hunting animal, whether bird or beast, eats any part of the game, it becomes prohibited since the act of eating signifies that the animal hunted for its own sake rather than for the sake of its master. This is the doctrine of Shafi'i. Other jurists hold that the prey is not rendered unlawful even if the hunting animal has eaten part of the game; even if it has devoured one-third of the animal, the consumption of the remaining two-thirds is lawful, irrespective of whether the hunting animal is a bird or a beast. This is the view of Malik. A third group of jurists is of the opinion that if the hunting animal which has eaten part of the game is a beast it becomes prohibited, but not so if the hunting animal is a bird. The reason for this distinction is that hunting beasts can be trained to hold the game for their master whereas experience shows that hunting birds are not fully capable of receiving such instruction. This is the opinion of Abu Hanifah and his disciples. 'Ali, however, is of the opinion that it is unlawful to eat the catch of hunting birds because they cannot be trained to refrain from eating the game and to hold it merely for the sake of their master. (See the commentaries of Ibn Kathir, Jassas, Ibn al-'Arabi and Qurtubi on this verse. See also Ibn Rushd, Bidayat al-Mujtahid, vol. 2, pp. 440 ff. -Ed.)

20.They should pronounce the name of God at the time of dispatching animals to the hunt. It is mentioned in a tradition that 'Adi b. Hatim asked the Prophet (peace be on him) whether he could use hounds for hunting. The Prophet (peace be on him) replied: 'If you have pronounced the name of God while dispatching your trained hound, eat what he has caught for, you. And if it has eaten from the game, then do not eat for I fear that the hound had caught the game for itself.' Then he inquired what should be done if one had pronounced the name of God while dispatching one's own hound, but later found another hound close to the prey. The Prophet (peace be on him) replied: 'Do not eat that, for you have pronounced the name of God on your own hound, but not on the other one.' (For relevant traditions see Bukhari, 'Dhaba'ih', 4, 10; Ibn Majah, 'Sayd', 3; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 1, p. 231 and vol. 4, p. 195 - Ed.) The verse under discussion makes it clear that it is necessary to pronounce the name of God while dispatching a hound to the hunt. If a man later finds the prey alive he should slaughter it. But if he does not find it alive it will still be lawful to eat it since the name of God has already been pronounced. The same rule applies with regard to shooting arrows in hunting.

اَلْيَوْمَ اُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتُ ؕ وَطَعَامُ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ حِلٌّ لَّكُمْ ۖ وَطَعَامُكُمْ
حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ ۫ وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ
اِذَآ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ مُحْصِنِيْنَ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحِيْنَ وَلَا مُتَّخِذِيْٓ اَخْدَانٍ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ
بِالْاِيْمَانِ فَقَدْ حَبِطَ عَمَلُهٗ ۫ وَهُوَ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ۧ 5

(5:5) This day all good things have been made lawful to you. The food of the People of the Book is permitted to you, and your food is permitted to them.[21] And permitted to you are chaste women, be they either from among the believers or from among those who have received the Book before you,[22] provided you become their protectors in wedlock after paying them their bridal-due, rather than go around committing fornication and taking them as secret-companions. The work of he who refuses to follow the way of faith will go waste, and he will be among the utter losers in the Hereafter.[23]

21. The food of the People of the Book includes the animals slaughtered by them. The rule that 'our food is lawful to them and theirs lawful to us' signifies that there need be no barriers between us and the People of the Book regarding food. We may eat with them and they with us. But this general proclamation of permission is preceded by a reiteration of the statement: 'All good things have been made lawful to you.' This indicates that if the People of the Book either do not observe those principles of cleanliness and purity which are considered obligatory by the Law or if their food includes prohibited items, then one should abstain from eating them. If, for instance, they either slaughter an animal without pronouncing the name of God or if they slaughter it in the name of anyone else but God it is not lawful for us to eat that animal. Likewise, if intoxicating drinks, the flesh of swine, and any other prohibited thing is found on their dining table we may not justify our partaking of such items on the ground that the persons concerned are People of the Book.

The same applies to those non-Muslims who are not People of the Book, except for one difference - that whereas the animals slaughtered by the People of the Book are lawful provided they have pronounced the name of God at the time of slaughtering them, we are not permitted to eat the animals killed by non-Muslims who are not People of the Book.

22.This expression signifies the Jews and the Christians. Of non-Muslim women, Muslims may marry only Christians and Jews, and of them only those who have been characterized as muhsanat (i.e. 'well-protected women').

There are differences among jurists as to the detailed application of this rule. The view of Ibn 'Abbas is that the expression 'People of the Book' here signifies only those People of the Book who are subjects of the Domain of Islam (Dar al-Islam). It is also unlawful to marry Jewish and Christian women who are either living in the Domain of War (Dar al-Harb) or in

the Domain of Disbelief (Dar al-Kufr). The Hanafi jurists hold a slightly different opinion. Although they disapprove of marrying such women, it is not considered unlawful. Sa'id b. al-Musayyib and Hasan al-Basri are of the opinion that the verse warrants general application and hence there is no need to differentiate between those who are ahl al-Dhimmah (the non-Muslim subjects of the Islamic State) and those who are not.

There is also disagreement among the jurists about the connotation of the term muhsanat. 'Umar considered this word to signify only those women who are chaste and possess good moral character, and hence ahl al-Kitab women who are of loose character are excluded from this permission. This is also the opinion of Hasan al-Basri, Sha'bi and Ibrahim al-Nakha'i and of the Hanafi jurists. But Shafi'i considers this expression to have been used as an antonym of 'slave women', and hence it signifies all those ahl al-Kitab women who are not slaves. (Cf. the commentaries of Ibn Kathir, Ibn al-'Arabi and Qurtubi - Ed.)

23.The declaration that marriage to ahl al-Kitab women is permitted is immediately followed by this warning which, in effect, means that those who avail themselves of this permission ought to be mindful of their faith and morals. They are urged to beware of infatuation with disbelieving women lest they also become enamoured of the ideas and beliefs which they cherish, thereby allowing their faith to dissipate. They are warned against adopting social patterns and modes of conduct inconsistent with the true requirements of their faith.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى ٱلصَّلَوٰةِ فَٱغْسِلُوا۟ وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى ٱلْمَرَافِقِ
وَٱمْسَحُوا۟ بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى ٱلْكَعْبَيْنِ ۚ وَإِن كُنتُمْ جُنُبًا فَٱطَّهَّرُوا۟ ۚ وَإِن
كُنتُم مَّرْضَىٰٓ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَآءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنكُم مِّنَ ٱلْغَآئِطِ أَوْ لَٰمَسْتُمُ ٱلنِّسَآءَ فَلَمْ
تَجِدُوا۟ مَآءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا۟ صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَٱمْسَحُوا۟ بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُم مِّنْهُ ۚ مَا يُرِيدُ ٱللَّهُ
لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُم مِّنْ حَرَجٍ وَلَٰكِن يُرِيدُ لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ وَلِيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُۥ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَشْكُرُونَ 6

(5:6) Believers! When you stand up for Prayer wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows, and wipe your heads, and wash your feet up to the ankles.[24] And if you are in the state of ritual impurity, purify yourselves (by taking a bath).[25] But if you are either ill, travelling, have satisfied a want of nature or have had contact with women and find no water then have recourse to clean earth and wipe your faces and your hands therewith.[26] Allah does not want to lay any hardship upon you; rather He

wants to purify you and complete His favours upon you[27] so that you may give thanks.

24. The explanation of this injunction by the Prophet (peace be on him) indicates that washing of the face includes rinsing one's mouth and inhaling water into the nostrils. Unless this is done the washing of the face is not considered complete. Likewise, since the ears are part of the head, 'wiping the head' includes wiping one's hands over the external and internal parts of the ears as well. Moreover, before starting to wash the other parts one should first wash one's hands so that the instruments of washing are themselves clean.

25. Janabah (the state of major ritual impurity) - whether caused by the sexual act or merely by seminal discharge - renders it unlawful to perform the ritual Prayer and to touch the Qur'an for further details see (Surah 4, nn. 67-9)above.

26. For explanation see (Surah 4, nn. 69-70)above.

27. Just as purity of the soul is a blessing, so is cleanliness of the body. God's favour to man can be completed only when he has received comprehensive direction in respect of both spiritual purity and physical cleanliness.

وَاذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمِيْثَاقَهُ الَّذِيْ وَاثَقَكُمْ بِهٖٓ ۙ اِذْ قُلْتُمْ سَمِعْنَا وَاَطَعْنَا ۡ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ 7

(5:7) Remember Allah's favour upon you[28] and His covenant which He made with you when you said: 'We have heard and we obey.' So do fear Allah. Allah has full knowledge even of that which is hidden in the breasts of people.

28. The 'favour' mentioned here denotes illuminating the Straight Way, and entrusting to the believers the task of guidance and leadership of the whole world.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كُوْنُوْا قَوّٰمِيْنَ لِلّٰهِ شُهَدَاۗءَ بِالْقِسْطِ ۡ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلٰٓي اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا ۭ اِعْدِلُوْا ۣ هُوَ اَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوٰى ۡ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ 8

(5:8) Believers! Be upright bearers of witness for Allah,[29] and do not let the enmity of any people move you to deviate from justice. Act justly, that is nearer to God-fearing. And fear Allah. Surely Allah is well aware of what you do.

29. See (Surah 4, nn. 164-5)above.

وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ ۙ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّاَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ 9

(5:9) Allah has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds forgiveness from sins and a great reward.

وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَحِيْمِ 10

(5:10) As for those who disbelieve and give the lie to Our signs, they are destined for the Blazing Flame.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ هَمَّ قَوْمٌ اَنْ يَّبْسُطُوْٓا اِلَيْكُمْ
اَيْدِيَهُمْ فَكَفَّ اَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ۭ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ع 11

(5:11) Believers! Remember Allah's favour upon you. When a certain people decided to stretch their hands against you, He restrained their hands from you.[30] Do fear Allah. Men of faith should put their trust in Allah alone.

30. This alludes to the incident reported by Ibn 'Abbas when a group of Jews invited the Prophet (peace be on him) and a number of his close Companions to dinner. They had in fact hatched a plot to pounce upon the guests and thus undermine the very foundation of Islam. But by the grace of God the Prophet (peace be on him) came to know of the plot at the eleventh hour and did not go. Since the following section is addressed to the Children of Israel, this incident is alluded to here in order to mark the transition to a new subject.

The discourse which begins here has two purposes. The first is to warn the Muslims against following the ways of their predecessors, the People of the Book. The Muslims are told, therefore, that the Israelites and the followers of Jesus had made a covenant with God in the past, in the manner that the Muslims had recently done so. The Muslims should, therefore, take heed lest they also break their covenant and fall a prey to error and misguidance as their predecessors had done.

The second is to sensitize the Jews and Christians to the errors they have committed and invite them to the true religion.

وَلَقَدْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيْثَاقَ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَاۗءِيْلَ ۚ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَقِيْبًا ۭ وَقَالَ اللّٰهُ اِنِّىْ
مَعَكُمْ ۭ لَىِٕنْ اَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَيْتُمُ الزَّكٰوةَ وَاٰمَنْتُمْ بِرُسُلِيْ وَعَزَّرْتُمُوْهُمْ وَاَقْرَضْتُمُ
اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا لَّاُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ وَلَاُدْخِلَنَّكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْاَنْهٰرُ ۚ فَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ مِنْكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاۗءَ السَّبِيْلِ 12

(5:12) Surely Allah took a covenant with the Children of Israel, and We raised up from them twelve of their leaders,[31]and Allah said: 'Behold, I am with you; if you establish Prayer and pay Zakah and believe in My Prophets and help them,[32] and lend Allah a good loan,[33] I will certainly efface from you your evil deeds,[34] and will surely cause you to enter the Gardens beneath which rivers flow. Whosoever of you disbelieves thereafter has indeed gone astray from the right way.[35]

31. The word naqib in Arabic denotes supervisor and censor. There were twelve tribes among the Israelites and each tribe was required to appoint one of its members as a naqib, to look after their affairs and try to prevent them from becoming victims of irreligiousness and moral corruption. Although the Book of Numbers in the Bible does mention these twelve men, it does not seem to convey the sense of their being religious and moral mentors, as the term naqib employed by the Qur'an does. The Bible simply mentions them as the chiefs and dignitaries of their tribes.

32. The assurance of God's support is made conditional upon their continuous response to the call of God and for support of His Prophets.

33. This expression signifies spending one's wealth for the sake of God. Since God has promised to return to man every penny that he spends in His way along with His reward, which will be several-fold, the Qur'an characterizes this spending as a loan to God. This spending is considered a loan provided it is a 'good loan', that is, provided the money spent in the cause of God has been acquired by legitimate means and has been spent in accordance with the laws of God and with sincerity and earnestness.

34. To efface someone's evil deeds signifies two things. First, that if a man decides to follow the Straight Path and strives to follow God's directives in both thought and action his soul will be purged of many evils and his way of life will gradually become free of corruption. Second, if, in spite of this reform, weaknesses still persist in a man's life he is assured that God will not punish him and will have his failing erased from his record. For God is not too exacting over trivial errors, providing a man has sincerely accepted the basic guidance and reformed his character.

35. That is, they once found the 'right way' and then allowed it to be lost and thus put themselves on the road to perdition. We have translated the Qur'anic expression 'sawa' al-sabil' as the 'right way' for the sake of brevity. A better rendering could be, 'the highroad of balance and moderation', but even this would fail to bring out the meaning fully.

In order to grasp the full significance of what is being said here one should bear in mind that in himself man constitutes a microcosm of society. He has innumerable powers and potentialities, myriad desires, feelings and inclinations, and a host of divergent urges. Social life consists of a huge network of complex relationships, and with the growth of civilization and culture the complexity of these relationships increases. There is also a rich fund of resources in the world and there are countless possibilities for their utilization; as a result, man is confronted with a plethora of choices and problems.

The fact that man has inherent limitations means that he is incapable of viewing in one sweep and in a balanced way the entire span of existence. Hence, man is in no position to

prescribe for his kind a judicious way of life - a way of life wherein justice is done to all his powers and capacities; in which a wholesome balance is maintained between all his inherent potentialities; in which all his urges are given their due; in which his two-fold need for inner satisfaction and external self-realization is fully met; in which various aspects of human life are taken into proper consideration, giving birth to an integrated scheme with a built-in capacity to harmonize the multifarious strains and stresses of social life; in which material resources are fully exploited in the best interests of both the individual and society and within the framework of equity, justice and righteousness. When man takes upon himself the task of prescribing the guidelines for his life and becomes his own law-maker, his mind tends to become preoccupied with one specific aspect of human life, with one of the numerous demands of his nature, with one of the myriad problems calling for solution. His mental involvement is liable to be so intense that he adopts - consciously or otherwise - an unjust attitude towards all the other aspects, requirements and problems of human life. Consequently, when such opinions are imposed, the balance which ought to prevail in man's life is disrupted and he begins to swing either towards one extreme or the other. Gradually, this deviation assumes intolerable proportions. A reaction sets in, and justice is demanded for the neglected aspects of human life. Still, human life remains deprived of justice. The reason for this failure is that man's reaction to imbalance is itself devoid of balance. The new dispensation in turn persists in excessive preoccupation with either one specific aspect, problem or requirement of human life at the expense of all the others. Thus human life is denied judicious and balanced progress. Man continues to stumble hither and thither; from one form of self-destruction to another. All courses of life charted by man himself are winding and crooked. They move in the wrong direction, reach the wrong end and then turn back in another wrong direction.

Among these numerous ways - all false - there is just one way that lies exactly in the middle. This way alone does full justice to all of man's various potentialities and urges, to all his instincts and predispositions, to all the multifarious claims of both the body and the spirit; in short, to all aspects of his life. In this way there is no crookedness; it is the one course of life in which nothing is given either too much consideration or too little, and nothing suffers inequity and injustice. Man's very nature thirsts for such a way, and the succession of revolts against false ways of life is merely a manifestation of his constant quest for this right and straight way. Left to himself, man is incapable of charting this way. It is God alone Who can direct him to it; and indeed the Prophets were sent for this very purpose.

The Qur'an designates this way as sawa al-sabil ('the right way') in the present verse and elsewhere as al-sirat al-mustaqim ('the straight way'). (See Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 1, verse 5, and n. 8.) This is the road which goes amidst the countless winding and crooked paths of life; the road which leads man, disregarding all the curved and crooked paths, straight on to his success, right from this world to the Hereafter. Whoever goes along it enjoys rectitude in this world and success and felicity in the Next, but whoever loses this road is bound to become a victim of false beliefs and false ways of conduct and thus comes to have a wrong orientation in life. This will lead him to Hell, where all bent and crooked paths end. The following illustrates man's dilemma.

In modern times some philosophers have been so impressed by this constant swinging in human life, from one extreme to another, as to have mistakenly argued that the dialectical

process is the natural course of human life. They conclude, therefore, that the only way for human life to progress is that a thesis should first swing it in one direction, and then an antithesis swing it in the opposite direction, after which there will emerge a synthesis which constitutes the course of human progress. These curved lines from one extreme to the other do not indicate the correct course of human progress. Rather they represent the tragic stumblings which again and again obstruct the true progress of human life. Every extreme thesis sets life on a certain course and continues to pull it in that direction for some time. When human life is thus thrown off its 'right course' the result is that certain realities of life - which had not received their due - rise up in revolt, and this revolt often assumes the form of an antithesis. This revolt begins to pull life in the opposite direction. As the 'right way' is approached the conflicting ideas - the thesis and antithesis - begin to effect some kind of mutual compromise, leading to the emergence of a synthesis. This synthesis comprises many elements conducive to the good of mankind. But since societies which do not submit to the guidance of the Prophets are deprived both of the signposts that might indicate the 'right way' and of faith to help steady man's feet thereon this synthesis does not permit human life to maintain the golden mean. Its momentum is so powerful that it once more pushes life to the opposite extreme. At this point, certain realities are once again denied their due, with the result that another antithesis emerges in reaction to the iniquities of the earlier ideology. Had the light of the Qur'an been available to these short-sighted philosophers, and had they been able to perceive the 'right way' envisaged by the Qur'an, they would have realized that this was the true course of human progress.

فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِمْ مِّيْثَاقَهُمْ لَعَنّٰهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوْبَهُمْ قٰسِيَةً ۚ يُحَرِّفُوْنَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَّوَاضِعِهٖ ۙ
وَنَسُوْا حَظًّا مِّمَّا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهٖ ۚ وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلٰى خَآئِنَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا مِّنْهُمْ فَاعْفُ
عَنْهُمْ وَاصْفَحْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ 13

(5:13) Then, for their breach of the covenant We cast them away from Our mercy and caused their hearts to harden. (And now they are in such a state that) they pervert the words from their context and thus distort their meaning, and have forgotten a good portion of the teaching they were imparted, and regarding all except a few of them you continue to learn that they committed acts of treachery. Pardon them, then, and overlook their deeds. Surely Allah loves those who do good deeds.

وَمِنَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا نَصٰرٰٓى اَخَذْنَا مِيْثَاقَهُمْ فَنَسُوْا حَظًّا مِّمَّا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهٖ ۠ فَاَغْرَيْنَا
بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَآءَ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ وَسَوْفَ يُنَبِّئُهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِمَا كَانُوْا
يَصْنَعُوْنَ 14

(5:14) We also took a covenant from those who said: 'We are Christians';[36] but they forgot a good portion of the teaching they had been imparted with. Wherefore We aroused enmity and spite between them till the Day of Resurrection, and ultimately Allah will tell them what they had contrived.

36. Some are of the opinion that the word Nasara (meaning Christians) is derived from Nasirah (Nazareth), the birth-place of the Messiah. In fact this word is not derived from Nasirah (Nazareth) but from the word nusrah, and the basis of this derivation is the question posed by the Messiah to his disciples: 'Who are my supporters (ansari) in the way of God?' In response to this they had said: 'We are the supporters (ansar) (in the way) of God.' Christian authors have been misled by the resemblance between the words Nasirah and Nasara into believing that the name of the sect founded in the early history of Christianity, and contemptuously characterized as either Nazarenes or Ebonites served as the basis of the Qur'anic designation of the Christians. But here the Qur'ijo categorically states that they had declared that they were 'Nasara' and it is obvious that the Christians never called themselves 'Nazarenes'.

In this connection it should be recalled that Jesus never called his followers 'Christians' for he had not come to found a new religion named after him. His mission was to revive the religion of Moses and of all the Prophets who preceded him as well as of the one who was to appear after him. Hence, he neither formed any cult divorced from the Israelites and the followers of the Mosaic Law nor designated his followers by any distinctive name. Likewise, his early followers neither considered themselves to be separate from the Israelite community nor developed into an independent group nor adopted any distinctive symbol and name. They worshipped in the temple of Jerusalem along with other Jews and considered themselves to be followers of the Mosaic Law (see Acts 3:1-10; 21: 14-15,21). Later on the process of alienation began to operate on both sides. On the one hand, Paul, one of the followers of Jesus, declared independence from the Mosaic Law holding that faith in Christ was all that one needed for salvation. On the other hand, the Jewish rabbis declared the followers of Christ to be heretics and excommunicated them. Despite this, for some time the new sect had no distinct appellation of its own. The followers of Christ variously described themselves as 'disciples', as 'brethren', as 'those who believed', and as 'saints' (see Acts 2: 44; 4: 32; 9: 26; 11: 29; 13: 52; 15: 1; 23: 1 and Romans 15: 25 and Colossians 1: 2). The Jews sometimes designated them as 'Galileans' and as 'the sect of Nazarenes' (see Acts 24: 5; Luke 13: 2). These nicknames, which were originally contrived in,.ojder to ridicule them, referred to Nazareth, the home town of Jesus in the district of Galilee. These names, however, did not gain sufficient popularity to become the permanent names of the followers of Christ. They were called 'Christians' for the first time by the people of Antioch in 43 A.D. or 44 A.D. when Paul and Barnabas went there and began to preach their religion (Acts 11: 26). This appellation was flung at them by the opponents of the followers of Christ precisely in order to tease them by using an appellation which was unacceptable to them. But when their enemies began to call them consistently by this name their leaders reacted by saying that if they were called Christians because of their allegiance to Christ they had no reason to be ashamed of it (1 Peter 4: 16). It was thus that the followers of Christ also gradually began to call themselves by the same name which had originally been conferred upon them sarcastically. In the course of time the Christians ceased to realize that theirs had originally been a derogatory appellation chosen for them by outsiders rather than by themselves.

The Qur'an, therefore, does not refer to the followers of Christ as Christians. It reminds them rather that they belong to those who responded to the query of Jesus: 'Who are my supporters (ansari) in the way of God?' by saying that they were his ansar (supporters) in God's cause. See (Surah al-Saff 61: 14 - Ed.) It is an irony of fate that far from feeling grateful at being referred to by a dignified appellation Christian missionaries take offence at the fact that the Qur'an designates them as Nasara rather than as 'Christians'.

يَٰٓأَهۡلَ ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ قَدۡ جَآءَكُمۡ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمۡ كَثِيرٗا مِّمَّا كُنتُمۡ تُخۡفُونَ مِنَ ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ
وَيَعۡفُواْ عَن كَثِيرٖۚ قَدۡ جَآءَكُم مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ نُورٞ وَكِتَٰبٞ مُّبِينٞ 15

(5:15) People of the Book! Now Our Messenger has come to you: he makes clear to you a good many things of the Book which you were wont to conceal, and also passes over many things.[37] There has now come to you a light from Allah, and a clear Book.

37. God discloses some of the dishonest and treacherous dealings of theirs where He deems it necessary in order to strengthen the cause of the true religion, and ignores the disclosure of those which are not truly indispensable.

يَهۡدِي بِهِ ٱللَّهُ مَنِ ٱتَّبَعَ رِضۡوَٰنَهُۥ سُبُلَ ٱلسَّلَٰمِ وَيُخۡرِجُهُم مِّنَ ٱلظُّلُمَٰتِ إِلَى ٱلنُّورِ بِإِذۡنِهِۦ
وَيَهۡدِيهِمۡ إِلَىٰ صِرَٰطٖ مُّسۡتَقِيمٖ 16

(5:16) through which Allah shows to all who seek to please Him the paths leading to safety.[38] He brings them out, by His leave, from darkness to light and directs them on to the straight way.

38. The word 'safety' here denotes safety from false perception and outlook, safety from misdeeds and their consequences. Whoever seeks guidance from the Book of God and from the example of the Messenger (peace be on him) can find out how to keep himself safe from errors at each of life's crossroads.

لَقَدۡ كَفَرَ ٱلَّذِينَ قَالُوٓاْ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ هُوَ ٱلۡمَسِيحُ ٱبۡنُ مَرۡيَمَۚ قُلۡ فَمَن يَمۡلِكُ مِنَ ٱللَّهِ شَيۡـًٔا
إِنۡ أَرَادَ أَن يُهۡلِكَ ٱلۡمَسِيحَ ٱبۡنَ مَرۡيَمَ وَأُمَّهُۥ وَمَن فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِ جَمِيعٗاۗ وَلِلَّهِ مُلۡكُ
ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضِ وَمَا بَيۡنَهُمَاۚ يَخۡلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُۚ وَٱللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيۡءٖ قَدِيرٞ 17

(5:17) Indeed those who said: 'Christ, the son of Mary, he is indeed God', disbelieved.[39] Say (O Muhammad!): 'Who could have overruled Allah had He so

willed to destroy Christ, the son of Mary, and his mother, and all those who are on earth?' For to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them; He creates what He wills.[40] Allah is All-Powerful.

39. The original mistake committed by the Christians in declaring Jesus to be a combination of human and divine essences turned Jesus into a mystery for them, and the more the Christian scholars tried to solve this mystery by resorting to conjecture and rhetorical extravagance the more involved the whole matter became. Those who were more impressed by the humanity of Jesus stressed his being the son of God and considered him to be one of the three gods. Those who were more impressed by the divinity of Jesus considered him to be none other than God, stressing that he was the human incarnation of God, and worshipped him as God. Those who tried to strike a middle path spent all their efforts hammering out subtle verbal formulations of the Trinity that would allow people to consider the Messiah to be God and man at one and the same time, to affirm that God and the Messiah are independent and simultaneously constitute an inseparable whole see (Surah 4, nn. 212, 213, 215) above.

40. This statement hints at the childishness of those who have been misled into believing that the Messiah himself is God either because of his miraculous birth or because of his flawless moral character or because of the miracles which he performed. The Messiah is merely a sign of the innumerable wonders of God's creation; a sign which somehow dazzled the eyes of those superficial people. Had their perception been wider they would have been able to see that there are even more inspiring examples of His creation and infinite power. If anything their attitude was indicative of the intellectual puerility of those who were so overawed by the excellence of a creature as to mistake him for the Creator. Those whose intelligence penetrates through the excellence of creatures, who look upon them merely as signs of the magnificent power of God, and who are led by such observations to a reinforcement of faith in the Creator are truly wise.

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ وَالنَّصٰرٰى نَحْنُ اَبْنٰٓؤُا اللّٰهِ وَاَحِبَّآؤُهٗ ۭ قُلْ فَلِمَ يُعَذِّبُكُمْ بِذُنُوْبِكُمْ ۭ بَلْ
اَنْتُمْ بَشَرٌ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ ۭ يَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ ۭ وَلِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ۡ وَاِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيْرُ 18

(5:18) The Jews and the Christians say: 'We are Allah's children and His beloved ones.' Ask them: 'Why, then, does He chastise you for your sins?' You are the same as other men He has created. He forgives whom He wills and chastises whom He wills. And to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them. To Him is the eventual return.

يٰٓاَهۡلَ الۡكِتٰبِ قَدۡ جَآءَكُمۡ رَسُوۡلُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَـكُمۡ عَلٰى فَتۡرَةٍ مِّنَ الرُّسُلِ اَنۡ تَقُوۡلُوۡا مَا
جَآءَنَا مِنۡۢ بَشِيۡرٍ وَّلَا نَذِيۡرٍ ۫ فَقَدۡ جَآءَكُمۡ بَشِيۡرٌ وَّنَذِيۡرٌ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرٌ ۧ 19

(5:19) People of the Book! After a long interlude during which no Messengers have appeared there has come to you Our Messenger to elucidate the teaching of the true faith lest you say: 'No bearer of glad tidings and no warner has come to us.' For now there indeed has come to you a bearer of glad tidings and a warner, Allah is All-Power-ful.[41]

41. In the present context this sentence is extremely eloquent and subtle. It signifies that the same God who had sent warners and bearers of glad tidings to men in the past has now sent Muhammad (peace be on him) with the same task. At the same time it also means that they {should not treat the message of this warner and bearer of glad tidings lightly. They should bear in mind that if they disregard the injunctions of God, He can chastise them as He wills, for He is All-Powerful and All-Mighty.

وَاِذۡ قَالَ مُوۡسٰى لِقَوۡمِهٖ يٰقَوۡمِ اذۡكُرُوۡا نِعۡمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيۡكُمۡ اِذۡ جَعَلَ فِيۡكُمۡ اَنۡۢبِيَآءَ
وَجَعَلَكُمۡ مُّلُوۡكًا ۖ صلے ۚ وَّاٰتٰٮكُمۡ مَّا لَمۡ يُؤۡتِ اَحَدًا مِّنَ الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ 20

(5:20) Remember when Moses said to his people: 'My people, remember Allah's favour upon you when He raised Prophets amongst you and appointed you rulers, and granted to you what He had not granted to anyone else in the world.[42]

42. This refers to the glory the Israelites enjoyed before the time of Moses. There had appeared among them such great Prophets as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. Moreover, from the time of Joseph they were able to achieve very considerable power and authority in Egypt. For a considerable period they were the greatest rulers of the civilized world, reigning supreme in Egypt and the surrounding territories. People are generally inclined to regard the time of Moses as the starting point for the rise of the Israelites. The Qur'an, however, states categorically that the truly glorious period of their history had passed long before Moses, and that Moses himself drew the attention of his people to that period as their time of glory.

يٰقَوۡمِ ادۡخُلُوا الۡاَرۡضَ الۡمُقَدَّسَةَ الَّتِىۡ كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَـكُمۡ وَلَا تَرۡتَدُّوۡا عَلٰٓى اَدۡبَارِكُمۡ
فَتَنۡقَلِبُوۡا خٰسِرِيۡنَ 21

(5:21) My people! Enter the holy land which Allah has ordained for you;[43] and do not turn back for then you will turn about losers.[44]

43. This signifies Palestine which had been the homeland of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. After their exodus from Egypt, God ordered the Israelites to go forth to Egypt and conquer it.

44. This statement of Moses refers to the second year after they had come out of Egypt when he and his people lived in tents in the wilderness of Paran. This desert lies in the Sinai peninsula adjacent to the northern borders of Arabia and the southern borders of Palestine.

قَالُوْا يٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنَّ فِيْهَا قَوْمًا جَبَّارِيْنَ ۖ وَاِنَّا لَنْ نَّدْخُلَهَا حَتّٰى يَخْرُجُوْا مِنْهَا ۚ فَاِنْ يَّخْرُجُوْا مِنْهَا فَاِنَّا دٰخِلُوْنَ 22

(5:22) They answered: 'Moses, therein live a ferocious people: we will not enter unless they depart from it; but if they do depart from it then we will surely enter it.'

قَالَ رَجُلٰنِ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَخَافُوْنَ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمَا ادْخُلُوْا عَلَيْهِمُ الْبَابَ ۚ فَاِذَا دَخَلْتُمُوْهُ فَاِنَّكُمْ غٰلِبُوْنَ ۚ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَتَوَكَّلُوْٓا اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ 23

(5:23) Two from among these who were frightened but upon whom Allah had bestowed His favour[45] said: 'Enter upon them through the gate - for if you do enter - you will be the victors. And put your trust in Allah if indeed you are men of faith.'

45. This could have two meanings: either that two of those who feared the high-handed people of the Promised Land made that statement or that two of those who feared God did so. (However, most Qur'anic commentators subscribe to the latter meaning - Ed.)

قَالُوْا يٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنَّا لَنْ نَّدْخُلَهَآ اَبَدًا مَّا دَامُوْا فِيْهَا فَاذْهَبْ اَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَآ اِنَّا هٰهُنَا قٰعِدُوْنَ 24

(5:24) Nevertheless they said: 'O Moses! Never shall we enter it as long as they are there. Go forth, then, you and your Lord, and fight, both of you. As for us, we will sit here.'

قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّيْ لَآ اَمْلِكُ اِلَّا نَفْسِيْ وَاَخِيْ فَافْرُقْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ الْقَوْمِ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ 25

(5:25) Thereupon Moses said: 'My Lord! I have control over none but my own self and my brother; so distinguish between us and the transgressing people.'

قَالَ فَاِنَّهَا مُحَرَّمَةٌ عَلَيْهِمْ اَرْبَعِيْنَ سَنَةً ۚ يَتِيْهُوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ ۗ فَلَا تَاْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ع 26

(5:26) Allah said: 'This land will now be forbidden to them for forty years and they will remain wandering about on the earth.[46] Do not grieve over the condition of these transgressing people.[47]

46. The details of this incident are found in the Bible in Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua. The essence of the story is that Moses sent twelve heads of Israel to spy out Palestine. They returned after forty days and said: 'We came to the land to which you sent us; it flows with milk and honey. Yet the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large; and besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there . . . and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature. And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim); and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.' Then all the congregation cried out: 'Would that we had died in the land of Egypt; or would that we had died in this wilderness; why does the Lord bring us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey; would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?' At this they were censured for cowardice by two of the twelve heads who had spied out Palestine, Joshua and Caleb. Caleb suggested that they should go and seize Palestine. Then both of them said: 'If the Lord delights in us, He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the Lord; and do not fear the people of the land ... for the Lord is with us; do not fear them' (Numbers 14: 1-9). But the congregation responded to this by crying out that both ought to be stoned. This so provoked the wrath of God that He commanded that their bodies would fall dead in the wilderness and that of all their numbers numbered from twenty years old and upward, who had murmured against Him, none would come into the promised land except Caleb and Joshua; that only after an entire generation had passed away and a new generation had sprung up would they be enabled to conquer Palestine. Because of this divine decree, it took the people of Israel thirty-eight years to reach Transjordan from Paran. During this period all those who had left Egypt in their youth had perished. After the conquest of Transjordan Moses died (Ibid., 14: 10 ff.).

WANDERINGS OF THE ISRAELITES IN THE SINAI PENINSULA

The Prophet Moses (peace be on him) led the Israelites out of Egypt and brought them to Mount Sinai by way of Marah, Elim and Rephaim in the Sinai Peninsula. Here he stayed for a little over a year and received most of the Commandments of the Torah. Then he was commanded to lead the Israelites towards Palestine and conquer it, for that land was to be given to them as an inheritance. So, he led them through Taberah and Nazareth and came to the desert of Paran from where he despatched a deputation of prominent Israelites to spy out Palestine. The deputation returned after forty days and made their report at Kadesh. Except for the encouraging picture presented by Joshua and Caleb, the report made by the other members was so disappointing that the Israelites cried out in disgust and refused to march on to Palestine. Thereupon God decreed that they would wander for forty years in

the wilderness and none of their older generation except Joshua and Caleb would see Palestine. Thus, the Israelites wandered homeless in the wilderness of Paran, Shur and Zin, fighting and struggling against the Amalekites, the Amorites, the Edomites, the Midianites and the Moabites. When the forty years was about to end, the Prophet Aaron (peace be on him) died in Mount Hor, near the border of Edom. At about this time the Prophet Moses (peace be on him) entered Moab at the head of the Israelites, conquered the whole area and reached Heshbon and Shittim. After him Joshua, his first successor, crossed the River Jordan from the east and captured Jericho, the first Palestinian city to fall to the Israelites. Later on the whole of Palestine was conquered by them within a short period.

Ailah (present-day Aqaba) on this map is the place where probably the well-known incident of the Sabbath-breakers, as mentioned in (Surah al-Baqarah 2: 65) and (Surah al-A'raf 7: 166), took place.

Later on during the caliphate (sic) of Joshua the Israelites became capable of conquering Palestine.

In view of the fact that the followers of all the Prophets are Muslims, the author has used a peculiarly Islamic term - caliphate, rather than kingship, etc. - to signify the predominantly religious (or shall we say, Islamic) quality of his rule and to distinguish it from systems of government not animated by the religious spirit - Ed.

47. The purpose of referring to this event becomes clear if we reflect upon the context. It seems to be to bring home to the Israelites that the punishment to which they would be subjected if they adopted a rebellious attitude towards Muhammad (peace be on him) would be even more severe than the .one to which they had been subjected in the time of Moses.

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَاَ ابْنَيْ اٰدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ ۘ اِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقُبِّلَ مِنْ اَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقَبَّلْ مِنَ
الْاٰخَرِ ۭ قَالَ لَاَقْتُلَنَّكَ ۭ قَالَ اِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللّٰهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ 27

(5:27) Narrate to them in all truth the story of the two sons of Adam. When they made an offering and it was accepted from one of them and was not accepted from the other, the latter said: 'I will surely kill you.' Thereupon the former said: 'Allah accepts offerings only from the God-fearing.[48]

48. God's refusal to accept the sacrifice of one of the two brothers was not due to any wrong the other brother might have committed but to his own lack of piety. Hence, rather than attempt to kill his brother he should be concerned with cultivating piety.

لَئِنۢ بَسَطتَّ اِلَيَّ يَدَكَ لِتَقۡتُلَنِىۡ مَاۤ اَنَا بِبَاسِطٍ يَّدِىَ اِلَيۡكَ لِاَقۡتُلَكَ ۚ اِنِّىۡۤ اَخَافُ اللّٰهَ رَبَّ

الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ 28

(5:28) Even if you stretch forth your hand against me to kill, I will not stretch forth my hand to kill you.[49] Surely, I fear Allah, the Lord of the entire universe.

49. This does not mean, that his brother assured him that when the latter stepped forward to kill him he would keep his hands tied and stretch out his own neck to be cut down rather than defend himself. What this statement amounts to is an assurance on the part of the first brother that, even though the other was intent on killing him, he himself had no such intention. In other words, he assured his brother that even though the latter was busy planning his murder he would not take the initiative in killing him despite his knowledge of the latter's intent.

Righteousness does not demand at all that when a man is subjected to wrongful aggression he should surrender to the aggressor rather than defend himself. Righteousness, however, demands that a man should not take the initiative and try to kill someone even though he knows him to be bent on killing him. He should rather wait for the act of aggression to be initiated by the other person. And this is exactly what was intended by the statement of the righteous son of Adam.

اِنِّىۡۤ اُرِيۡدُ اَنۡ تَبُوۡٓاَ بِاِثۡمِىۡ وَاِثۡمِكَ فَتَكُوۡنَ مِنۡ اَصۡحٰبِ النَّارِ ۚ وَذٰلِكَ جَزٰٓؤُا الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ ۚ

29

(5:29) I would desire that you be laden with my sin and with your sin,[50] and thus become among the inmates of the Fire. That indeed is the right recompense of the wrong-doers.'

50. The righteous son of Adam told his brother that rather than both of them becoming sinners by trying to kill each other, he would prefer to see the entire sin fall on the lot of the one who was intent on the murder - the sin of the aggressor's attempt to murder, as well as the sin of any injury that might be inflicted on him in self-defence.

فَطَوَّعَتۡ لَهٗ نَفۡسُهٗ قَتۡلَ اَخِيۡهِ فَقَتَلَهٗ فَاَصۡبَحَ مِنَ الۡخٰسِرِيۡنَ 30

(5:30) At last his evil soul drove him to the murder of his brother, and he killed him, whereby he himself became one of the losers.

فَبَعَثَ اللّٰهُ غُرَابًا يَّبْحَثُ فِي الْاَرْضِ لِيُرِيَهٗ كَيْفَ يُوَارِيْ سَوْءَةَ اَخِيْهِ ؕ قَالَ يٰوَيْلَتٰٓى
اَعَجَزْتُ اَنْ اَكُوْنَ مِثْلَ هٰذَا الْغُرَابِ فَاُوَارِيَ سَوْءَةَ اَخِيْ ۚ فَاَصْبَحَ مِنَ النّٰدِمِيْنَ ۙ 31

(5:31) Thereupon Allah sent forth a raven who began to scratch the earth to show him how he might cover the corpse of his brother. So seeing he cried: 'Woe unto me! Was I unable even to be like this raven and find a way to cover the corpse of my brother?[51] Then he became full of remorse at his doing.[52]

51. In this way God made this errant son of Adam realize his ignorance and folly. Once his attention turned to self-appraisal, his regret was not confined to realizing that in his effort to hide his brother's corpse he proved to be even less efficient than the raven. He also began to feel how foolish he was to have killed his own brother. The later part of the sentence indicates this remorse.

52.The purpose of mentioning this particular incident is to reproach the Jews subtly for the plot they had hatched to assassinate the Prophet (peace be on him) and some of his illustrious Companions see (n. 30) above. The resemblance between the two incidents is evident. God honoured some of the illiterate people of Arabia and disregarded the ancient People of the Book because the former were pious while the latter were not. But rather than reflect upon the causes of their rejection by God, and do something to overcome the failings which had led to that rejection, the Israelites were seized by the same fit of arrogant ignorance and folly which had once seized the criminal son of Adam, and resolved to kill those whose good deeds had been accepted by God. It was obvious that such acts would contribute nothing towards their acceptance by God. They would rather earn them an even greater degree of God's disapproval.

مِنْ اَجْلِ ذٰلِكَ ۚ كَتَبْنَا عَلٰى بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اَنَّهٗ مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًۢا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ اَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي
الْاَرْضِ فَكَاَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيْعًا ؕ وَمَنْ اَحْيَاهَا فَكَاَنَّمَآ اَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيْعًا ؕ وَلَقَدْ
جَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ ۫ ثُمَّ اِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ فِي الْاَرْضِ لَمُسْرِفُوْنَ 32

(5:32) Therefore We ordained for the Children of Israel[53] that he who slays a soul unless it be (in punishment) for murder or for spreading mischief on earth shall be as if he had slain all mankind; and he who saves a life shall be as if he had given life to all mankind.[54] And indeed again and again did Our Messengers come to them with clear directives; yet many of them continued to commit excesses on earth.

53.Since the same qualities which had been displayed by the wrong doing son of Adam were manifest in the Children of Israel, God strongly urged them not to kill human beings and couched His command in forceful terms. It is a pity that the precious words which

embody God's ordinance are to be found nowhere in the Bible today. The Talmud, however, does mention this subject in the following words:

To him who kills a single individual of Israel, it shall be reckoned as if he had slain the whole race and he who preserves a single individual of Israel, it shall be reckoned in the Book of God as if he had preserved the whole world. The Talmud also mentions that in trials for murder, the Israelite judges used to address the witnesses as follows:

Whoever kills one person, merits punishment as if he had slain all the men in the world.

54. This means that the survival of human life depends on everyone respecting other human beings and in contributing actively to the survival and protection of others. Whosoever kills unrighteously is thus not merely guilty of doing wrong to one single person, but proves by his act that his heart is devoid of respect for human life and of sympathy for the human species as such. Such a person, therefore, is an enemy of all mankind. This is so because he happens to be possessed of a quality which, were it to become common to all men, would lead to the destruction of the entire human race. The person who helps to preserve the life of even one person, on the other hand, is the protector of the whole of humanity, for he possesses a quality which is indispensable to the survival of mankind.

إِنَّمَا جَزَٰٓؤُا۟ ٱلَّذِينَ يُحَارِبُونَ ٱللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُۥ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا أَن يُقَتَّلُوٓا۟ أَوْ
يُصَلَّبُوٓا۟ أَوْ تُقَطَّعَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُم مِّنْ خِلَٰفٍ أَوْ يُنفَوْا۟ مِنَ ٱلْأَرْضِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ لَهُمْ خِزْىٌ
فِى ٱلدُّنْيَا ۖ وَلَهُمْ فِى ٱلْءَاخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ۙ 33

(5:33) Those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger, and go about the earth spreading mischief[55] -indeed their recompense is that they either be done to death, or be crucified, or have their hands and feet cut off from the opposite sides or be banished from the land.[56] Such shall be their degradation in this world; and a mighty chastisement lies in store for them in the World to Come

55. The 'land' signifies either the country or territory wherein the responsibility of establishing law and order has been undertaken by an Islamic state. The expression 'to wage war against Allah and His Messenger' denotes war against the righteous order established by the Islamic state. It is God's purpose, and it is for this very purpose that God sent His Messengers, that a righteous order of life be established on earth; an order that would provide peace and security to everything found on earth; an order under whose benign shadow humanity would be able to attain its perfection; an order under which the resources of the earth would be exploited in a manner conducive to man's progress and prosperity rather than to his ruin and destruction. If anyone tried to disrupt such an order, whether on a limited scale by committing murder and destruction and robbery and brigandry or on a large scale by attempting to overthrow that order and establish some unrighteous order instead, he would in fact be guilty of waging war against God and His Messenger. All this is

not unlike the situation where someone tries to overthrow the established government in a country. Such a person will be convicted of 'waging war against the state' even though his actual action may have been directed against an ordinary policeman in some remote part of the country, and irrespective of how remote the sovereign himself is from him.

56. These penalties are mentioned here in brief merely to serve as guidelines to either judges or rulers so they may punish each criminal in accordance with the nature of his crime. The real purpose is to indicate that for any of those who live in the Islamic realm to attempt to overthrow the Islamic order is the worst kind of crime, for which any of the highly severe punishments may be imposed.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِن قَبْلِ أَن تَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ۝34

(5:34) except for those who repent before you have overpowered them. Know well that Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.[57]

57. If they give up subversion and abandon their endeavour to disrupt or overthrow the righteous order, and their subsequent conduct shows that they have indeed become peace-loving, law-abiding citizens of good character, they need not be subjected to the punishments mentioned here even if any of their former crimes against the state should come to light. If their crime involves violation of the rights of other men they may not be absolved from their guilt. If, for instance, they have either killed a person, seized someone's property or committed any other crime against human life or property they will be tried according to the criminal law of Islam. They will not, however, be accused of either rebellion and high treason or of waging war against God and His Messenger.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَابْتَغُوا إِلَيْهِ الْوَسِيلَةَ وَجَاهِدُوا فِي سَبِيلِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ۝35

(5:35) Believers! Fear Allah and seek the means to come near to Him,[58] and strive hard in His way;[59] maybe you will attain true success.

58. People are urged to solicit all means which might bring them close to God and enable them to please Him.

59. The English imperative 'strive hard' does not do full justice to the actual word used in the Qur'an: jahidu. The verbal form mujahadah signifies and carries the nuance of doing something in defiance of, or in opposition to someone. The true sense of the Qur'anic injunction 'strive hard' in the way of Allah is that the Muslims ought to use all their strength and engage in vigorous struggle against those forces which either forcefully prevent them from living in obedience to God or force them to live in obedience to others than God. It is this struggle which is likely to lead man to his true success and bring him to a close relationship with God.

This verse directs the believer to engage in a ceaseless, multifrontal struggle. On one side is the accursed Satan with his horde. Then comes the animal spirit of man, with its defiant and refractory desires. Then there are many men who have turned away from God, but with whom one is linked by social, cultural and economic ties. Then there are false religious, cultural and social systems which rest on rebellion against God and which force man to worship falsehood rather than Truth. These rebellious forces use different means to achieve their end, but those ends are always the same - to make men serve them rather than God. But man's true progress and his attainment of close communion with God depends entirely on his total obedience to God, on his serving God unreservedly in the inner as well as in the external aspects of his life. He cannot achieve this objective without engaging in simultaneous combat with all the forces which are defiant and rebellious towards God, carrying on an unceasing struggle against them and trampling down all obstructions to his advancement along God's path.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْ أَنَّ لَهُم مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لِيَفْتَدُوا بِهِ مِنْ عَذَابِ
يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَا تُقُبِّلَ مِنْهُمْ ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ 36

(5:36) For those who disbelieved - even if they had all that is in the earth, and the like of it with it, and offered it all as ransom from chastisement on the Day of Resurrection, it will not be accepted of them - a painful chastisement lies in store for them.

يُرِيدُونَ أَن يَخْرُجُوا مِنَ النَّارِ وَمَا هُم بِخَارِجِينَ مِنْهَا ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ 37

(5:37) They will wish to come out of the Fire, but they will not. Theirs will be a long-lasting chastisement.

وَالسَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطَعُوا أَيْدِيَهُمَا جَزَاءً بِمَا كَسَبَا نَكَالًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ
حَكِيمٌ 38

(5:38) As for the thief -male or female - cut off the hands of both.[60] This is a recompense for what they have done, and an exemplary punishment from Allah. Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.

60. The injunction is to cut off one not both hands. There is consensus among jurists that in the event of the first theft the right hand should be cut off. This punishment has been laid down for theft alone. The Prophet (peace be on him) declared: "There is no cutting off of a hand for he who embezzles.' (Abu Da'ud, 'Hudud', 14; Tirmidhi, 'Hudud', 18; Ibn Majah, 'Hudud', 36; Nasa'i, 'Qat' al-Sariq', 13 - Ed.) This shows that the punishment prescribed for theft does not cover acts involving embezzlement and other dishonest practices. It is applicable only to acts involving the seizure, by stealth, of someone else's property.

The Prophet (peace be on him) also instructed that the punishment of cutting off a hand should not be applied in cases where the value of the article stolen is less than that of a shield. In the time of the Prophet (peace be on him) according to a tradition from Ibn 'Abbas, this was ten dirhams; according to a tradition from Ibn 'Umar, it was three dirhams; according to a tradition from Anas b. Malik, it was five dirhams; and according to another tradition from 'A'ishah, it was a quarter of a dinar. Owing to this discrepancy, there is disagreement among jurists regarding the minimum value of the goods stolen which merits the punishment of cutting off a hand. This value, according to Abu Hanifah, is ten dirhams whereas according to Malik, Shafi'i and Ahmad b. Hanbal, it is one quarter of a dinar (three dirhams). (For traditions on objects and amounts of things on which the hand of the thief is to be cut off, see Bukhari, 'Hudud', 13; Muslim, 'Hudud', 1-7; Abu Da'ud, 'Hudud', 12, 13; Tirmidhi, 'Hudud', 16; Nasa'i, 'Qat' al-Sariq', 5, 8-10 - Ed.)

Moreover, there are several things the theft of which would not necessitate cutting off a hand. The Prophet (peace be on him) directed, for instance, that no hand should be cut off if the stolen article was food. According to a tradition from 'A'ishah: '(The hand of) the thief was not cut off during the time of the Messenger of Allah for the theft of trivial things.' (Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 3, p. 464; Darimi, 'Hudud', 4, 7 - Ed.) Furthermore, 'Ali and 'Uthman gave the judgement - and none of the Companions disagreed with it - that a person's hand should not be cut off for stealing birds. 'Umar and 'Ali did not cut off the hands of those who had stolen from the public treasury, and on this question no disagreement on the part of any Companion has been reported. On these grounds the founders of the schools of Islamic Law exempted certain things from the application of this penal injunction.

According to Abu Hanifah a man's hand should not be cut off for stealing vegetables, fruit, meat, cooked food, grain which is not stored in a barn, and instruments of music and play. Likewise, he is of the opinion that a hand should not be cut off for either stealing animals grazing in the forest or for stealing from the public treasury. The founders of the other schools of Islamic Law have also exempted the stealing of certain things from the punishment of cutting off a hand. But this exemption does not mean that the guilty parties should receive no punishment at all. (See the commentaries of Ibn Kathir, Ibn al-'Arabi, Qurtubi and Jassas on this verse. See also Ibn Rushd, Bidayat al-Mujtahid, vol. 2, pp. 441 ff. - Ed.)

فَمَنْ تَابَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ظُلْمِهٖ وَاَصْلَحَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَتُوْبُ عَلَيْهِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ 39

(5:39) But he who repents after he has committed wrong, and makes amends, Allah will graciously turn to him.[61] Truly Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

61. Forgiveness on the part of Allah does not mean that the hand of the thief should not be cut off. It means rather that one who repents and becomes righteous by purging his soul of the sin of stealing will be spared the wrath of God, Who will remove the stain of that sin from him. But if after his hand has been cut off the person concerned does not purge himself of evil intent and continues to nurture the same impure feelings which led to his stealing

and thus to the cutting off of his hand, it is evident that even though his hand has been severed from his body, stealing remains ingrained in his soul. The result will be that he will continue to merit God's wrath as he did before his hand was cut off. The Qur'an therefore directs the thief to seek pardon from God and to try to reform himself. For the hand of that thief was cut off for the sake of the judicious administration of human society and the cutting off of a hand did not automatically purify the soul of the person on whom the punishment was carried out. Purity of soul can be achieved only by repentance and turning oneself to God. Traditions mention that after the hand of a thief had been cut off in compliance with the Prophet's order, he was summoned by the Prophet (peace be on him) himself who said to him: 'Say: "I seek pardon from God, and to Him do I turn in repentance."' The thief uttered these words as directed by the Prophet (peace be on him) who then prayed for the thief, saying: 'O God, accept his repentance.' (Abu Da'ud, 'Hudud', 8 - Ed.)

اَلَمۡ تَعۡلَمۡ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهٗ مُلۡكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ؕ يُعَذِّبُ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ وَيَغۡفِرُ لِمَنۡ يَّشَآءُ ؕ
وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرٌ 40

(5:40) Do you not know that to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth? He chastises whom He wills and forgives whom He wills. Allah is All-Powerful.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الرَّسُوۡلُ لَا يَحۡزُنۡكَ الَّذِيۡنَ يُسَارِعُوۡنَ فِى الۡكُفۡرِ مِنَ الَّذِيۡنَ قَالُوۡۤا اٰمَنَّا بِاَفۡوَاهِهِمۡ
وَلَمۡ تُؤۡمِنۡ قُلُوۡبُهُمۡ ۛ وَمِنَ الَّذِيۡنَ هَادُوۡا ۛ سَمّٰعُوۡنَ لِلۡكَذِبِ سَمّٰعُوۡنَ لِقَوۡمٍ اٰخَرِيۡنَ ۙ لَمۡ
يَاۡتُوۡكَ ؕ يُحَرِّفُوۡنَ الۡكَلِمَ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَوَاضِعِهٖ ۚ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ اِنۡ اُوۡتِيۡتُمۡ هٰذَا فَخُذُوۡهُ وَاِنۡ لَّمۡ
تُؤۡتَوۡهُ فَاحۡذَرُوۡا ؕ وَمَنۡ يُّرِدِ اللّٰهُ فِتۡنَتَهٗ فَلَنۡ تَمۡلِكَ لَهٗ مِنَ اللّٰهِ شَيۡـًٔا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيۡنَ لَمۡ
يُرِدِ اللّٰهُ اَنۡ يُّطَهِّرَ قُلُوۡبَهُمۡ ؕ لَهُمۡ فِى الدُّنۡيَا خِزۡىٌ ۖ وَّلَهُمۡ فِى الۡاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ
عَظِيۡمٌ 41

(5:41) O Messenger! Do not be grieved on account of those who vie with one another in disbelieving:[62] even though they be those who say with their mouths: 'We believe' even though their hearts have no faith; or they be Jews who have their ears eagerly turned to falsehood[63] and spy for other people who did not chance to come to

you,[64] who pervert the words of Allah, taking them out of their proper context in order to distort their meaning.[65] They say to people: 'If such and such teaching is given to you, accept it; if you are not given that, then beware![66] You can be of no avail to him whom Allah wills to fall into error.[67] Those are the ones whose hearts Allah does not want to purify.[68]For them there is degradation in this world and a mighty chastisement in the Next.

62. This verse refers to those who devoted all their capacities and efforts to ensure that the status quo ante of Jahiliyah remained intact, and that the reformative mission of Islam should fail to set right the corruption that had come down to them from the past. Disregarding all moral scruples, these people used the vilest methods against the Prophet (peace be on him). They deliberately suppressed the truth and resorted to lying, deceit, treachery and low cunning in order to frustrate the mission of the Prophet (peace be on him) who was engaged in a tireless struggle actuated by absolute selflessness and benevolence, and who sought the welfare of all human beings, including that of his opponents. All this naturally hurt the Prophet (peace be on him). A sincere person must feel heartbroken when he sees men of low moral character, driven by ignorance, blind selfishness and bigotry, resort to vile methods in opposition to his mission, which is actuated by charity and goodwill towards all men. Hence the purpose of God's directive here is not to ask the Prophet (peace be on him) to abstain from this natural feeling of grief but rather that he should not allow such feelings to undermine his morale and that he should persevere in his task. As for the opponents of the Prophet (peace be on him), in view of their low morals, their mean conduct was not at all contrary to expectations.

63. This has two meanings. First, that since such people are slaves to their desires they cannot have the least interest in the Truth, falsehood alone gratifies them. It is with falsehood alone that they like to fill their ears, for nothing else quenches the thirst of their souls. Second, it is the same love of falsehood which motivates them when they come and spend some time in the company of the Prophet (peace be on him) and the Muslims. They want to distort whatever they see or hear, to taint the facts with their fabrications, and then circulate them among those who have had no contact with the Prophet (peace be on him) and the Muslims in order to scandalize them.

64. This also has two meanings. First, that they socialized with the Prophet (peace be on him) and the Muslims in order to pry into their affairs and communicate them to the enemy. Second, that they went about collecting information to try to slander them. Their objective was to create misgivings about the Prophet (peace be on him) and the Muslims among those who were unacquainted with them.

65. They deliberately tamper with those injunctions of the Torah that do not accord with their desires, and by altering the meanings of the words occurring in the text they deduce laws that suit their interests.

66. This refers to the Jews who went about telling the ignorant masses that they should follow the teachings of the Prophet (peace be on him) only if they conformed to the teachings of the Jews.

67.God's will to put someone to the test means that God confronts one in whom He sees the growth of evil with the opportunities of doing just that, so that he experiences the struggle between good and evil. If the person is not yet fully inclined towards evil, his moral health improves and his latent potentialities for resisting evil are revived. But if he has become excessively inclined towards evil, and goodness has been totally crushed from within his being, then every such test is bound to entangle him still more tightly in evil. The well-wisher is now powerless to rescue him. It might be added that not only individuals but also nations are put to this kind of test.

68. God did not will that their hearts be purified for they themselves did not want them to be purified. It is not God's way to deprive of purity those who love it and strive for it; but God does not wish to purify those who do not seek their own purification.

سَمّٰعُوْنَ لِلْكَذِبِ اَكّٰلُوْنَ لِلسُّحْتِ ؕ فَاِنْ جَآءُوْكَ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ اَوْ اَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ ۚ
وَاِنْ تُعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ فَلَنْ يَّضُرُّوْكَ شَيْـًٔا ؕ وَاِنْ حَكَمْتَ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ ؕ اِنَّ
اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِيْنَ 42

(5:42) They are listeners of falsehood and greedy devourers of unlawful earnings.[69] If they come to you you may either judge between them or turn away from them. And were you to turn away from them they shall not be able to harm you; and were you to judge between them judge with justice. Surely Allah loves the just.[70]

69. Here pointed reference is made to judges and jurisconsults who accept false evidence and invent reports in order to issue verdicts contrary to justice and in favour of either those who bribe them or with whom their illegitimate interests lie.

70. Until then the Jews had not become full-fledged subjects of the Islamic state. Their relations with that state were based on agreements according to which the Jews were to enjoy internal autonomy, and their disputes were to be decided by their own judges and in accordance with their own laws. They were not legally bound to place their disputes either before the Prophet (peace be on him) for adjudication or before the judges appointed by him. But in cases where it appeared against their interests to have their disputes judged according to their own religious law they approached the Prophet (peace be on him) in the hope that the Prophet might have a different ruling.

The particular case referred to here was that of a woman belonging to a respectable family, who was found to be involved in an unlawful sexual relationship with a man. The punishment for this in the Torah was that both be stoned to death (see Deuteronomy 22: 23-4). But the Jews did not want to enforce this punishment. Hence they deliberated among themselves and decided to put the case before the Prophet (peace be on him), with the reservation that his judgement be accepted only if it was other than stoning. The Prophet (peace be on him) decided that the punishment should, in fact, be stoning. When the Jews

declined to accept the judgement, the Prophet (peace be on him) asked their rabbis what punishment had been prescribed for such a case in their religion. They replied that it was to strike the culprit with lashes, to blacken the face and to make the person concerned ride on a donkey. The Prophet (peace be on him) asked them under oath if the Torah had indeed prescribed that as punishment for adultery committed by married men and women. They repeated the same false reply. However, one of them called Ibn Sawriya who, according to the Jews themselves, was the greatest living scholar of the Torah at that time, kept silent. The Prophet (peace be on him) asked him to state on oath in the name of God, Who had emancipated them from Pharaoh and had given them the Law, whether the punishment for adultery provided for in the Torah was what they had mentioned. He replied: 'Had you not put me under such a heavy oath, I would not have volunteered the correct information. The fact is that the prescribed punishment for adultery is indeed stoning, but when adultery became common among us our rulers adopted the rule that when respectable people committed adultery they were left unpunished, whereas when ordinary people were convicted they were punished by stoning. Later on when this caused resentment among the common people we altered the law of the Torah and adopted the rule that adulterers and adulteresses would be lashed, their faces would be blackened, and they would be made to ride on donkeys, seated in a backward-looking position.' This left the Jews with nothing to say and the adulterer and adulteress were, in accordance with the order of the Prophet (peace be on him), stoned to death. (Ibn Kathir, Tafsir, vol. 3, pp. 574-5 - Ed.)

وَكَيْفَ يُحَكِّمُونَكَ وَعِنْدَهُمُ التَّوْرٰىةُ فِيهَا حُكْمُ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّوْنَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ ۭ وَمَآ
أُولٰٓئِكَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ع 43

(5:43) Yet how will they appoint you a judge when they have the Torah with them, wherein there is Allah's judgement - and still they turn away from it?[71] The fact is, they are not believers.

71. In this verse, God unmasks completely the dishonesty of these people. It shows how these so-called religious people who had cast the spell of their religious piety and knowledge of the Scriptures over the whole of Arabia had set aside a categorical injunction of the book which they themselves recognized to be the Book of God, and which they professed to believe in. They had referred that judicial case to the Prophet (peace be on him) for his decision even though they vehemently denied his prophethood. This made it quite clear that there was nothing to which they subscribed sincerely. Their true religion consisted merely of worshipping their interests and desires. They were ready to turn their backs upon the very book which they recognized as the Book of God merely because some of its injunctions were unpalatable to them, and in such cases they did not mind approaching one whom they regarded as an imposter (may God be our refuge from such a blasphemy) in the hope that they might be able to obtain a judgement to their liking.

إِنَّآ أَنزَلْنَا التَّوْرٰىةَ فِيهَا هُدًى وَّنُورٌ ۚ يَحْكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّونَ الَّذِينَ أَسْلَمُوا لِلَّذِينَ هَادُوا
وَ الرَّبَّانِيُّونَ وَالْأَحْبَارُ بِمَا اسْتُحْفِظُوا مِنْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ وَكَانُوا عَلَيْهِ شُهَدَآءَ ۚ فَلَا تَخْشَوُا
النَّاسَ وَاخْشَوْنِ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا بِاٰيٰتِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۭ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَآ أَنزَلَ اللّٰهُ
فَأُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْكٰفِرُونَ 44

(5:44) Surely We revealed the Torah, wherein there is guidance and light. Thereby did Prophets - who had submitted themselves (to Allah) - judge for the Judaized folk;[72] and so did the scholars and jurists.[73] They judged by the Book of Allah for they had been entrusted to keep it, and bear witness to it. So (O Jews!) do not fear men but fear Me, and do not barter away My signs for a trivial gain. Those who do not judge by what Allah has revealed are indeed the unbelievers.

72.Here the verse tells the Jews that all the Prophets were muslims (submitters to God) whereas the Jews had deviated from islam (submission to God), and true to their chauvinistic sectarianism, were content with remaining merely 'Jews'.

73.Rabbani = religious scholars, theologians. Ahbar = religious jurists.

وَكَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ فِيهَآ أَنَّ النَّفْسَ بِالنَّفْسِ ۙ وَالْعَيْنَ بِالْعَيْنِ وَالْأَنفَ بِالْأَنفِ وَالْأُذُنَ
بِالْأُذُنِ وَالسِّنَّ بِالسِّنِّ ۙ وَالْجُرُوحَ قِصَاصٌ ۚ فَمَنْ تَصَدَّقَ بِهِ فَهُوَ كَفَّارَةٌ لَّهُ ۚ وَمَنْ لَّمْ
يَحْكُمْ بِمَآ أَنزَلَ اللّٰهُ فَأُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُونَ 45

(5:45) And therein We had ordained for them: 'A life for a life, and an eye for an eye, and a nose for a nose, and an ear for an ear, and a tooth for a tooth, and for all wounds, like for like.[74] But whosoever forgoes it by way of charity, it will be for him an expiation.[75] Those who do not judge by what Allah has revealed are indeed the wrong-doers.

74. Cf. Exodus 21: 23-5.

75. Whoever forgoes his right of retaliation does a good deed which will atone for many of his sins. The same is confirmed by a tradition of the Prophet (peace be on him) in which he said: 'Whoever receives an injury on his body, then pardons (the inflictor of the injury), his sins are atoned for to the measure of his pardoning.' (Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 5, pp. 316, 329 - Ed.)

وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلٰٓى اٰثَارِهِمْ بِعِيْسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرٰىةِ ۖ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ
الْاِنْجِيْلَ فِيْهِ هُدًى وَّنُوْرٌ ۙ وَّمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرٰىةِ وَهُدًى وَّمَوْعِظَةً
لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ۝46

(5:46) And We sent Jesus, the son of Mary, after those Prophets, confirming the truth of whatever there still remained of the Torah. And We gave him the Gospel, wherein is guidance and light, and which confirms the truth of whatever there still remained of the Torah,[76] and a guidance and admonition for the God-fearing.

76.The Messiah did not expound a new religion. That very religion which had been the religion of all the Prophets was also his religion, and it is towards that religion that he called people. He believed in the true teachings of the Torah which were extant in his time, and the Gospels (Injil) confirm this (see, for example, Matthew 5: 17-18). The Qur'an repeatedly stresses the fundamental fact that none of the Prophets of God, no matter in which part of the world they appeared, denied the Prophets who had preceded them. On the contrary, each Prophet confirmed the message of his predecessors and sought to promote the mission which was the sacred legacy of them all. God did not reveal any of the Books in order to repudiate the previous ones; each confirmed and supported the preceding ones.

وَلْيَحْكُمْ اَهْلُ الْاِنْجِيْلِ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ فِيْهِ ۭ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ فَاُولٰۗىِٕكَ هُمُ
الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ۝47

(5:47) Let the followers of the Gospel judge by what Allah has revealed therein, and those who do not judge by what Allah has revealed are the transgressors.[77]

77. Here three judgements are issued against those who do not judge in accordance with the Law revealed by God. The first is that they are kafir (unbelievers); the second, that they are zalim (wrong-doers); and the third, that they are fasiq (transgressors). This clearly means that one who, in disregard of God's commandments and of the Laws revealed by Him, pronounces judgements according to man-made laws (whether made by himself or by others) is guilty of three major offences. First, his act amounts to rejecting the commandment of God, and this rejection is equivalent to kufr (infidelity, unbelief). Second, his act is contrary to justice, for only the laws made by God are in complete accord with the dictates of justice. Any judgement in contravention of God's injunctions amounts, therefore, to committing injustice (zulm). Third, when he enforces either his own or anyone else's law in disregard of the Laws of his Lord he steps out of the fold of subjection and obedience, and this constitutes fisq (transgression).

Kufr, zulm and fisq are essential elements in deviation from God's commandments. One

finds them wherever there is deviation from the commandment of God. There is variation in the degree of deviation and hence in the degree of these three offences. Whoever passes judgement on something in opposition to an injunction of God, believing that injunction to be false, and holds either his own or anyone else's judgement to be sound, is an unbeliever (kafir), wrong-doer (zalim) and transgressor (fasiq). A man who is convinced that the injunctions of God are right but makes judgements contrary to them in practice is not an unbeliever in the sense that he ceases to remain a member of the Islamic community, but he is guilty of adulterating his faith by blending it with kufr, zulm and fisq. In the same manner, those who deviate from the injunctions of God in all matters are unbelievers, wrong-doers and transgressors. For those who are obedient in some respects and disobedient in others, the blending of faith and submission to God with the opposite attributes of unbelief, wrong-doing and transgression in their lives will be exactly in proportion to the mixture of their obedience to and their deviation from God's commands.

Some commentators have attempted to restrict the application of these verses to the People of the Book alone. The verses, however, hardly lend themselves to such a restrictive interpretation. The best answer to such a restrictive interpretation has been given by the Companion Hudhayfah. When someone told him that these verses related merely to the Israelites, meaning that the unbelievers, wrong-doers and transgressors were only the Jews who passed judgement contrary to the injunctions revealed by God, Hudhayfah remarked: 'What good brothers these Israelites are to you! Whatever is bitter goes to them; whatever is sweet comes to you. Nay, by God, you will follow their way, your steps following theirs.'

وَأَنْزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتٰبِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ فَاحْكُمْ
بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَآ أَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَآءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَآءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ ؕ لِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ
شِرْعَةً وَّمِنْهَاجًا ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً وَّلٰكِنْ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِيْ مَآ اٰتٰىكُمْ
فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرٰتِ ؕ إِلَى اللّٰهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيْعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيْهِ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ۙ 48

(5:48) Then We revealed the Book to you (O Muhammad!) with Truth, confirming whatever of the Book was revealed before,[78] and protecting and guarding over it.[79] Judge, then, in the affairs of men in accordance with the Law that Allah has revealed, and do not follow their desires in disregard of the Truth which has come to you. For each of you We have appointed a Law and a way of life.[80] And had Allah so willed, He would surely have made you one single community; instead, (He gave each of you a Law and a way of life) in order to test you by what He gave you. Vie, then, one with another in good works. Unto Allah is the return of all of you; and He will then make you understand the truth concerning the matters on which you disagreed.[81]

78. This points to a fact of major significance. It could also have been said that the Qur'an confirms all those parts of the earlier divine books which are still extant in their true and original form. But the sense has been conveyed by employing the word 'the Book' rather than 'the previous Books'. This expression reveals that the Qur'an and all those Books sent down by God at various times and in different languages in reality constitute one and the same Book. Their Author is one and the same; their aim and purpose are the same; their teaching is the same; and the knowledge which they seek to impart to mankind is the same. The difference between these Books lies in their modes of expression, and this was necessarily so since they were addressed to different audiences. It is, therefore, not merely that these divine books support rather than contradict each other but that they are actually different editions of one and the same book - 'the Book'.

79. In Arabic, haymana, yuhayminu, hayamanah signify 'to protect, to witness, to keep trust, to back and to support'. The expression 'haymana al-rajul al-shay' means that the man protected and guarded the thing. Likewise, 'haymana al-ta'ir 'alafirdkhih' means that the bird took its young ones under the protection of its wings. Once 'Umar said to the people: 'Inni da'in fa hayminu' ('I am praying; support me by saying amen'). To say that the Qur'an is muhaymin of al-kitab means that it preserves all the true teachings of the earlier divine books; that it has secured them from loss. The Qur'an also confirms those Books in that the contents of the Qur'an testify to the truth of those parts which are indeed from God. The Qur'an is, further, a witness over those Books in the sense that, with its help, the elements which embody true revelations from God can be distinguished from the accretions which have corrupted them. Whatever in these Books accords with the Qur'an is from God, and whatever is not in conformity with it is from human beings.

80. This is a parenthetical phrase, the purpose of which is to elucidate a question which is likely to arise in the mind of the reader who has read the above section and might feel uneasy. The question is: Why do the religious laws propounded by the various Prophets differ in matters of detail even though the Prophets and their Books preach one and the same religion (din) and even confirm and support each other? Why is it that in regard to the prescribed forms of worship, the regulations concerning what is permitted and what is prohibited, and the detailed legal regulations governing the social and collective life, there is some disagreement among the various laws propounded by the different Prophets and the divine Books?

81. This constitutes a detailed answer to the above question (see n. 80). It consists of the following points:

(1) It is a mistake to think that variations in religious laws result from a difference of source. It is God Himself Who altered the legal prescriptions to suit different nations at different times and in different circumstances.

(2) It was indeed possible, by divising one legal code for all human beings, for all men to have been made into one nation (ummah). But one of the many benevolent considerations keeping the religious laws of various Prophets different from one another was that God wanted this difference to become a means of testing people. Those who understand true religion, who have grasped its spirit and essence, and who are aware of the true importance of the different legal prescriptions, always recognize the Truth and accept it whatever its

form. They have no hesitation in accepting the new ordinances of God in place of the old ones, in contrast to those who are not conversant with the spirit of true religion and who seem to identify it with a specific body of legal minutiae. Such people have overlaid God-given principles with their own legal deductions, and have sub sequently fossilized this entire amalgam, seeking to preserve it in its entirety. They have grown so attached to it that, in order to preserve it, they spurn every directive which subsequently comes to them from God. In order to distinguish the people of the first category from those of the second God made the legal prescriptions of the various Prophets vary.

(3) The real purpose of all the divine religious laws is the attainment of goodness and righteousness. This purpose can be achieved only when a man obeys whatever commandment he receives from God at a particular time. The proper mode of conduct for people who keep their eyes fixed on this true purpose is to strive for God's good pleasure rather than quarrel about differences in the legal prescriptions of the various Prophets.

(4) The differences which have arisen because of the unjustified rigidity, prejudice, obduracy and erroneous attitudes of the human mind can be finally settled neither in the debating hall nor on the battlefield. The final judgement will be made by God Himself. Then the reality of everything will be fully uncovered, and it will be clear how much truth and falsehood underlay the squabbles which whole lives were wasted over.

وَاَنِ احْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ وَاحْذَرْهُمْ اَنْ يَّفْتِنُوْكَ عَنْۢ
بَعْضِ مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْكَ ؕ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمْ اَنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يُّصِيْبَهُمْ بِبَعْضِ
ذُنُوْبِهِمْ ؕ وَاِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ لَفٰسِقُوْنَ 49

(5:49) Therefore, judge bet-ween them (O Muhammad!)[82] by what Allah has revealed and do not follow their desires, and beware lest they tempt you away from anything of what Allah has revealed to you. And if they turn away, then know well that Allah has indeed decided to afflict them for some of their sins. For surely many of them are transgressors.

82. Following this parenthetical clause, the previous subject is resumed.

اَفَحُكْمَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَبْغُوْنَ ؕ وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ حُكْمًا لِّقَوْمٍ يُّوْقِنُوْنَ ع 50

(5:50) (If they turn away from the Law of Allah) do they desire judgement according to the Law of Ignorance?[83] But for those who have certainty of belief whose judgement can be better than Allah's?

83. The word jahiliyah (literally 'ignorance') is used as an antonym to Islam. Islam is the way of 'ilm (true knowledge), since it is God Himself Who has shown this way, and His

knowledge embraces everything. In contrast is the way that diverges from Islam - the path of Ignorance (jahiliyah). The pre-Islamic period in Arabia is designated as jahiliyah because this was the era when human beings derived their norms from either superstitious beliefs, conjectures and imagination or from their desires. Whenever such an attitude is adopted, it is bound to be designated as Ignorance. The appellation 'jahiliyah' will apply to every aspect of life which is developed in disregard of the knowledge made available by God, based only on man's partial knowledge blended with imagination, superstitious fancies, conjectures and desires.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُوْدَ وَالنَّصٰرٰٓى اَوْلِيَآءَ ۘ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ ۭ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّهُمْ مِّنْكُمْ فَاِنَّهٗ مِنْهُمْ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ 51

(5:51) Believers! Do not take the Jews and the Christians for your allies. They are the allies of each other. And among you he who takes them for allies, shall be regarded as one of them. Allah does not guide the wrong-doers.

فَتَرَى الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ يُّسَارِعُوْنَ فِيْهِمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ نَخْشٰٓى اَنْ تُصِيْبَنَا دَاۗىِٕرَةٌ ۭ فَعَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ بِالْفَتْحِ اَوْ اَمْرٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِهٖ فَيُصْبِحُوْا عَلٰي مَآ اَسَرُّوْا فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ نٰدِمِيْنَ ۭ 52

(5:52) Indeed you see those afflicted with the disease of hypocrisy race towards them, saying: 'We fear lest some misfortune overtakes us.[84] And it may happen that Allah will either bring you a decisive victory or bring about something else from Himself?[85] and then they will feel remorseful at their hypocrisy which they have kept concealed in their breasts -

84. The outcome of the conflict in Arabia between Islam and unbelief (kufr) had not crystallized. Although Islam had become a formidable force owing to the daring, courage and sacrifices of its followers, the forces opposed to it were also tremendously powerful. To an objective observer it must have seemed that either party had an equal chance of success, and so the hypocrites, apparently an integral part of the Muslim body politic, sought to maintain good relations with the Jews and the. Christians as well. They expected refuge and protection from the Jews in case Islam was defeated. Moreover, the Jews and Christians held the greatest economic power in Arabia insofar as the banking system and the greenest and most fertile regions of Arabia were in their possession. For these reasons the hypocrites were keen to maintain good relations with them: they thought that to regard the conflict between Islam and unbelief as crucially important, and to sever their relations with all those currently in conflict with Islam, would be too great a risk both politically and economically.

85. They were looking for a conclusive victory, or at least something not far short of it, to inspire confidence that the conflict would end in favour of Islam.

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَهَٰؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ أَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ ۙ إِنَّهُمْ لَمَعَكُمْ ۚ حَبِطَتْ
أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَأَصْبَحُوا خَاسِرِينَ 53

(5:53) while those who believe will exclaim: 'Are these the self-same people who solemnly swore by Allah that they were with you?' All their acts have gone to waste and now they are the losers.[86]

86. However much they might profess to follow Islam - by performing Prayers, by observing Fasts, by paying Zakah, by taking part in wars in the cause of God - all was reduced to naught because they had not devoted themselves to the service of the One True God. In pursuit of their worldly ambitions they had split their souls into two, distributing half to God and half to those in rebellion against Him.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَن يَرْتَدَّ مِنكُمْ عَن دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ ۙ
أَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ۖ يُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ ۚ
ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ 54

(5:54) Believers! If any of you should ever turn away from your faith, remember that Allah will raise up a people whom He loves, and who love Him; a people humble towards the believers, and firm towards the unbelievers;[87] who will strive hard in the way of Allah and will not fear the reproach of the reproacher.[88] This is the favour of Allah which He grants to whom He wills. Allah is vast in resources, All-Knowing.

87. To be 'humble towards believers' signifies that a person should never use his strength against the believers. His native intelligence, shrewdness, ability, influence, wealth, physical prowess should not be used for the purpose of either suppressing, persecuting or causing harm to the Muslims. Among themselves, the Muslims should always find him gentle, merciful, sympathetic and mild tempered.

To be 'firm towards unbelievers', on the contrary, means that by virtue of the intensity of his faith, the sincerity of his conviction, his strict adherence to his principles, his strength of character and his insight and perspicacity born of faith, a man should be firm as a rock in his dealings with the opponents of Islam, so that they find it impossible to dislodge him. There should be no doubt in their minds that the believer would rather lay down his life than compromise his position by yielding to external pressures.

88.In following the religion of God, in implementing His injunctions, in judging things to be either right or wrong according to the criteria of the faith, the believer will be afraid of nothing. He will be impervious to opposition, reproach, denunciation, name-calling and scorn. Even when public opinion happens to be hostile, and his efforts to follow Islam single him out for the scorn of the whole world, the man of faith will still follow the way which he recognizes in his heart to be true.

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ 55

(5:55) Only Allah, His Messenger, and those who believe and who establish Prayer, pay Zakah, and bow (before Allah) are your allies.

وَمَن يَتَوَلَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَإِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ ع 56

(5:56) All those who take Allah and His Messenger and those who believe as their allies, should remember that the party of Allah will be triumphant.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَكُمْ هُزُوًا وَلَعِبًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ وَالْكُفَّارَ أَوْلِيَاءَ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ 57

(5:57) Believers! Do not take for your allies those who make a mockery and sport of your faith, be they those given the Book before you or other unbelievers. Fear Allah if you indeed believe.

وَإِذَا نَادَيْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ اتَّخَذُوهَا هُزُوًا وَلَعِبًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْقِلُونَ 58

(5:58) And when you call for Prayer, they take it for a mockery and sport.[89] That is because they are a people who do not understand.[90]

89. When they hear the call to Prayer the unbelievers make fun of it by mimicry, pervert its words to ridicule it, and utter disparaging and taunting remarks about it.

90. These are merely acts of stupidity on the part of unbelievers. Had they not been ignorant and foolish they would not have stooped to such base tactics, despite their significant differences with the Muslims on religious questions. After all, can any reasonable person be happy to see the people who call to the worship of God be ridiculed and mocked?

قُلْ يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ هَلْ تَنْقِمُوْنَ مِنَّآ اِلَّآ اَنْ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْنَا وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ مِنْ
قَبْلُ ۙ وَاَنَّ اَكْثَرَكُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ 59

(5:59) Say to them: 'People of the Book! Do you hate us for anything else except that we believe in Allah, and in the teaching which has been revealed to us and in the teaching which was revealed before? Indeed most of you are transgressors.'

قُلْ هَلْ اُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِشَرٍّ مِّنْ ذٰلِكَ مَثُوْبَةً عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ۭ مَنْ لَّعَنَهُ اللّٰهُ وَغَضِبَ عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلَ
مِنْهُمُ الْقِرَدَةَ وَالْخَنَازِيْرَ وَعَبَدَ الطَّاغُوْتَ ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا وَّاَضَلُّ عَنْ سَوَاۗءِ
السَّبِيْلِ 60

(5:60) Then say to them: 'Shall I tell you about those whose retribution with Allah is even worse? They are the ones whom Allah has cursed, and who incurred His wrath and some of whom were changed into apes and swine, and who served the false deities. Such have an even worse rank and have strayed farther away from the right path.[91]

91. This alludes to the Jews whose history shows that they were subjected, over and over again, to the wrath and scourge of God. When they desecrated the law of the Sabbath the faces of many of them were distorted, and subsequently their degeneration reached such a low point that they took to worshipping Satan quite openly. The purpose of saying all this is to draw attention to their criminal boldness while they had sunk to the lowest level of evil, transgression and moral decadence, they vigorously opposed all those who, thanks to their faith, lived a truly pious and righteous life.

وَاِذَا جَاۗءُوْكُمْ قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا وَقَدْ دَّخَلُوْا بِالْكُفْرِ وَهُمْ قَدْ خَرَجُوْا بِهٖ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا كَانُوْا
يَكْتُمُوْنَ 61

(5:61) Whenever they come to you they say: 'We believe,' whereas, in fact, they come disbelieving, and go away disbelieving, and Allah knows all that they hide.

وَتَرٰى كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ يُسَارِعُوْنَ فِى الْاِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَاَكْلِهِمُ السُّحْتَ ؕ لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوْا

يَعْمَلُوْنَ 62

(5:62) You will see many of them hastening towards sin and transgression and devouring unlawful earnings. Indeed what they do is evil.

لَوْلَا يَنْهٰهُمُ الرَّبّٰنِيُّوْنَ وَالْاَحْبَارُ عَنْ قَوْلِهِمُ الْاِثْمَ وَاَكْلِهِمُ السُّحْتَ ؕ لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوْا

يَصْنَعُوْنَ 63

(5:63) Why is it that their scholars and jurists do not forbid them from sinful utterances and devouring unlawful earnings? Indeed they have been contriving evil.

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ يَدُ اللّٰهِ مَغْلُوْلَةٌ ؕ غُلَّتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَلُعِنُوْا بِمَا قَالُوْا ۘ بَلْ يَدٰهُ مَبْسُوْطَتٰنِ ۙ

يُنْفِقُ كَيْفَ يَشَآءُ ؕ وَلَيَزِيْدَنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ مَّآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَّكُفْرًا ؕ وَاَ

لْقَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَآءَ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ كُلَّمَآ اَوْقَدُوْا نَارًا لِّلْحَرْبِ اَطْفَاَهَا

اللّٰهُ ۙ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ فَسَادًا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ 64

(5:64) The Jews say: 'The Hand of Allah is fettered. [92] It is their own hands which are fettered,[93] and they stand cursed for the evil they have uttered.[94] No! His Hands are outspread; He spends as He wills. Surely the message that has been revealed to you from your Lord has increased many of them in their in-surgence and unbelief,[95] and so We have cast enmity and spite among them until the Day of Resurrection. And as often as they kindle the fire of war, Allah extinguishes it; and they go about trying to spread mischief on earth, whereas Allah does not love those who spread mischief.

92. To say that someone's hands are tied, in Arabic usage, is to say that he is niggardly, that something prevents him from being generous and bountiful. Thus the Jewish observation does not mean that God's Hand is literally tied but that He is niggardly and miserly. For centuries the Jews had lived in humiliation and misery. Their past greatness had become legend, seemingly too remote ever to be restored, and so they would blasphemously lament that God had become a miser and that as the door to His treasury was now permanently locked, that He had nothing to offer them except suffering and calamity. This attitude, however, is not confined to the Jews. When confronted with trials and tribulations foolish

people of other nations, too, are prone to utter such blasphemies rather than turn to God with humble prayer and supplication.

93. They accused God of the miserliness from which they themselves had suffered and had become notorious for.

94. If they entertained the hope that by such insolent and taunting expressions they might evoke God's munificence, and that His bounties would begin to shower upon them, they were dreaming of the impossible. Indeed, such insolence was bound to have the opposite effect - to alienate them further from God's bounty, to cast them even further from His mercy.

95. Instead of learning any lessons from the Book of God, instead of recognizing their own mistakes and wrongs and then trying to make amends for them, instead of probing their miserable situation and then turning to reform, they reacted by launching a violent campaign of opposition to truth and righteousness. Rather than take to the right way as a result of being reminded of the forgotten lesson of righteousness, they attempted to suppress the voice which sought to remind them and others of such things.

وَلَوْ اَنَّ اَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ اٰمَنُوْا وَاتَّقَوْا لَكَفَّرْنَا عَنْهُمْ سَيِّاٰتِهِمْ وَلَاَدْخَلْنٰهُمْ جَنّٰتِ

النَّعِيْمِ 65

(5:65) Had the People of the Book only believed and been God-fearing, We should surely have effaced from them their evil deeds, and caused them to enter Gardens of Bliss.

وَلَوْ اَنَّهُمْ اَقَامُوا التَّوْرٰىةَ وَالْاِنْجِيْلَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ لَاَكَلُوْا مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِنْ

تَحْتِ اَرْجُلِهِمْ ؕ مِنْهُمْ اُمَّةٌ مُّقْتَصِدَةٌ ؕ وَكَثِيْرٌ مِّنْهُمْ سَآءَ مَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ع 66

(5:66) Had the People of the Book observed the Torah and the Gospel, and all that had been revealed to them from their Lord, sustenance would have been showered over them from above and risen from beneath their feet.[96] Some among them certainly keep to the right path; but many of them do things which are evil.

96. In the Old Testament, Leviticus (chapter 26) and Deuteronomy (chapter 28) record a sermon of Moses in which he impresses upon Israel, in great detail, the bounties and blessings of God with which they would be endowed if they obeyed His commandments, and the afflictions, scourges and devastations that would descend upon them if they disobeyed Him and rejected the Book of God. That sermon of Moses is the best explanation of this verse of the Qur'an.

يَاَيُّهَا الرَّسُوْلُ بَلِّغْ مَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ ؕ وَاِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسٰلَتَهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ
يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ 67

(5:67) O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord, for if you fail to do that, you have not fulfilled the task of His messengership. Allah will certainly protect you from the evil of men. Surely Allah will not guide the unbelievers (to succeed against you).

قُلْ يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لَسْتُمْ عَلٰى شَىْءٍ حَتّٰى تُقِيْمُوا التَّوْرٰىةَ وَالْاِنْجِيْلَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ
مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ؕ وَلَيَزِيْدَنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ مَّآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَّ كُفْرًا ۚ فَلَا تَاْسَ
عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ 68

(5:68) Say to them: 'People of the Book! You have no solid ground to stand on unless you establish the Torah and the Gospel and all that had been revealed to you from your Lord.[97] Indeed the message revealed to you from your Lord will aggravate insurgence and unbelief in many of them.[98] So do not grieve for those who disbelieve.

97. By 'establishing the Torah and the Gospel' is meant observing them honestly and making them the law of life.

It should be noted here that the Scriptures which comprise the Bible consist of two kinds of writings. One was composed by the Jewish and Christian authors themselves. The second consists of those portions which have been recorded as either the injunctions of God or as the utterances of Moses, Jesus and other Prophets. Such portions are those in which it has been categorically stated that God said so and so, or that a particular Prophet said so and so. If we were to exclude the portions belonging to the first category and carefully study those belonging to the second we would notice that their teachings are not perceptibly different from those of the Qur'an. It is true that the second category has not altogether escaped the tamperings of translators, scribes and exegetes, and the errors of oral transmitters. Nevertheless, one cannot help feeling that the teachings embodied in the second category call man to the same pure monotheism as the Qur'an, that they propound those very beliefs propounded by the Qur'an and that they direct man to the same way of life as that to which the Qur'an seeks to direct him. Hence, had the Jews and the Christians adhered to the teaching attributed in their Scriptures to God and the Prophets they would certainly have become a truth-loving and truth-oriented group of people and would have been able to see in the Qur'an that very light which illuminates the earlier divine Scriptures. There would then have been no question of their abandoning their religion in order to follow the Prophet (peace be on him). To follow him would have caused neither break nor discontinuity; they would simply have gone one stage further along the same road.

98. Instead of reflecting on this seriously and dispassionately, they were seized by a fit of intransigence which intensified their opposition.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّابِئُونَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ
وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ 69

(5:69) (Know well, none has an exclusive claim to the Truth.) For all those who believe in Allah and in the Last Day and do good deeds - be they either believers, Jews, Sabaeans or Christians - neither fear shall fall upon them, nor shall they have any reason to grieve.[99]

99. See Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 2, verse 62, and n 80).

لَقَدْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ رُسُلًا ۖ كُلَّمَا جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا
تَهْوَىٰ أَنْفُسُهُمْ ۙ فَرِيقًا كَذَّبُوا وَفَرِيقًا يَقْتُلُونَ ۖ 70

(5:70) And We took a covenant from the Children of Israel and sent to them many Messengers. But whenever any Messenger brought to them something that did not suit their desires, they gave the lie to some of them and killed the others,

وَحَسِبُوا أَلَّا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ فَعَمُوا وَصَمُّوا ثُمَّ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ عَمُوا وَصَمُّوا كَثِيرٌ
مِنْهُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ 71

(5:71) thinking that no harm would come from it. Thus they became blind and deaf (to the Truth). Thereafter Allah turned towards them in gracious forgiveness; but many of them became even more deaf and blind (to the Truth). Allah sees all that they do.

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ۖ وَقَالَ الْمَسِيحُ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ
اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ ۖ إِنَّهُ مَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَأْوَاهُ
النَّارُ ۖ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ 72

(5:72) And surely they disbelieved when they said: 'Christ, the son of Mary, is indeed God'; whereas Christ had said: 'Children of Israel! Serve Allah, Who is your Lord and

my Lord.[99a]' Allah has forbidden Paradise to those who associate anything with Him in His divinity and their refuge shall be the Fire. No one will be able to help such wrong-doers.

99a. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." (Matthew 4 : 10).

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ ثَالِثُ ثَلٰثَةٍ ۘ وَمَا مِنْ اِلٰهٍ اِلَّآ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ؕ وَاِنْ لَّمْ يَنْتَهُوْا

عَمَّا يَقُوْلُوْنَ لَيَمَسَّنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ 73

(5:73) Those who said: 'Allah is one of the Three', certainly they disbelieved, for there is no god save the One God. And if they do not give up this claim, all who have disbelieved among them shall be subjected to painful chastisement.

اَفَلَا يَتُوْبُوْنَ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ 74

(5:74) Will they not, then, turn to Allah in repentance, and ask for His forgiveness? Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

مَا الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ اِلَّا رَسُوْلٌ ۚ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ؕ وَاُمُّهٗ صِدِّيْقَةٌ ؕ كَانَا

يَاْكُلٰنِ الطَّعَامَ ؕ اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُبَيِّنُ لَهُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ ثُمَّ انْظُرْ اَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ 75

(5:75) The Messiah, son of Mary, was no more than a Messenger before whom many Messengers have passed away; and his mother adhered wholly to truthfulness, and they both ate food (as other mortals do). See how We make Our signs clear to them; and see where they are turning away![100]

100. In these few words the Christian doctrine of the divinity of Christ is repudiated. The nature of the Messiah is clear from the indications given here; he was merely a human being. He was one born from the womb of a woman, who had a known genealogy, who possessed a physical body, who was subject to all the limitations of a human being and who had all the attributes characteristic of human beings. He slept, ate, felt the discomfort of heat and cold and was so human that he was even put to the test by Satan. How could any reasonable person believe that such a being was either God or a partner or associate of God in His godhead? But the Christians continue to insist on the divinity of the Messiah, whose life has been portrayed in their own Scriptures as that of a human. The fact of the matter is that they do not believe at all in the historical Messiah. They have woven a Messiah out of their imagination and have deified that imaginary being.

قُلْ اَتَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَّلَا نَفْعًا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ

الْعَلِيْمُ 76

(5:76) Say: 'Do you serve, beside Allah, that which has no power either to harm or benefit you, whereas Allah alone is All-Hearing, All-Knowing?'

قُلْ يٰۤاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لَا تَغْلُوْا فِيْ دِيْنِكُمْ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْۤا اَهْوَآءَ قَوْمٍ قَدْ ضَلُّوْا مِنْ

قَبْلُ وَاَضَلُّوْا كَثِيْرًا وَّضَلُّوْا عَنْ سَوَآءِ السَّبِيْلِ ع 77

(5:77) Say: 'People of the Book! Do not go beyond bounds in your religion at the cost of truth, and do not follow the caprices of the people who fell into error before, and caused others to go astray, and strayed far away from the right path.[101]

101. This refers to those misguided nations from whom the Christians derived their false beliefs and ways, particularly to the Hellenistic philosophers under the spell of whose ideas the Christians had veered from the straight way they had originally followed. The beliefs of the early followers of the Messiah were mainly in conformity with the reality they had witnessed, and conformed to the teachings they had received from their guide and mentor. But they later resorted to an exaggerated veneration of Jesus, and interpreted their own beliefs in the light of the philosophical doctrines and superstitious ideas of the neighbouring nations. Thus they invented an altogether new religion not even remotely related to the original teachings of the Messiah. In this connection the observations of a Christian theologian, the Reverend Charles Anderson Scott are significant. In a lengthy article entitled 'Jesus' Christ', published in the fourteenth edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica, he writes:

. . . there is nothing in these three Gospels to suggest that their writers thought of Jesus as other than human, a human being specially endowed with the Spirit of God and standing in an unbroken relation to God which justified His being spoken of as the 'Son of God'. Even Matthew refers to Him as the carpenter's son and records that after Peter had acknowleged Him as Messiah he 'took Him aside and began to rebuke Him' (Matthew, xvi. 22). And in Luke the two disciples on the way to Emmaus can still speak of Him as 'a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people' (Luke, xxiv. 19). It is very singular that in spite of the fact that before Mark was composed 'the Lord' had become the description of Jesus common among Christians, He is never so described in the second Gospel (nor yet in the first, though the word is freely used to refer to God). All three relate the Passion of Jesus with a fullness and emphasis of its great significance; but except the 'ransom' passage (Mark, x. 45) and certain words at the Last Supper there is no indication of the meaning which was afterwards attached to it. It is not even suggested that the death of Jesus had any relation to sin or forgiveness.

A little further on he writes:

That He ranked Himself as a prophet appears from a few passages such as 'It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem'. He frequently referred to Himself as the Son of Man; but while this must be maintained in face of influential opinions to the contrary, the result for our purpose is less important than we might expect, for the possible meanings of the phrase are as numerous as the sources from which it may possibly have been derived. They range from simple 'man' through 'man in his human weakness' and the representative 'Man' to the supernatural man from heaven foreshadowed in Daniel. If we had to postulate one source and one meaning for the phrase as used by Jesus of Himself, it would probably be found in Psalm Ixxx., where the poignant appeal to God for the redemption of Israel runs out on the hope of a 'son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself. The same author adds:

Certain words of Peter spoken at the time of Pentecost, 'A man approved of God', described Jesus as He was known and regarded by His contemporaries. He was 'found in fashion as a man', that is, in all particulars which presented themselves to outward observation He Appeared and behaved as one of the human race. He 'was made man'. The Gospels leave no room for doubt as to the completeness with which these statements are to be accepted. From them we learn that Jesus passed through the natural stages of development, physical and mental, that He hungered, thirsted, was weary and slept, that He could be surprised and require information, that He suffered pain and died. He not only made no claim to omniscience, He distinctly waived it. This is not to deny that He had insight such as no other ever had, into human nature, into the hearts of men and the purposes and methods of God. But there is no reason to suppose that He thought of the earth as other than the centre of the solar system, of any other than David as the author of the Psalms, or did not share the belief of His age that demons were the cause of disease. Indeed, any claim to omniscience would be not only inconsistent with the whole impression created by the Gospels, it could not be reconciled with the cardinal experiences of the Temptation, of Gethsemane and of Calvary. Unless such experiences were to be utterly unreal, Jesus must have entered into them and passed through them under the ordinary limitations of human knowledge, subject only to such modifications of human knowledge as might be due to prophetic insight or the sure vision of God.

There is still less reason to predicate omnipotence of Jesus. There is no indication that He ever acted independently of God, or as an independent God. Rather does He acknowledge dependence upon God, by His habit of prayer and in such words as 'this kind goeth not forth save by prayer'. He even repudiates the ascription to Himself of goodness in the absolute sense in which it belongs to God alone. It is a remarkable testimony to the truly historical character of these Gospels that though they were not finally set down until the Christian Church had begun to look up to the risen Christ as to a Divine Being, the records on the one hand preserve all the evidence of His true humanity and on the other nowhere suggest that He thought of Himself as God.

The same author also observes that:

He proclaimed that at and through the Resurrection Jesus had been publicly installed as Son of God with power; and if the phrase has not wholly lost its official Messianic connotation, it certainly includes a reference to the personal Sonship, which Paul elsewhere makes clear by

speaking of Him as God's 'own Son' . . .

It may not be possible to decide whether it was the primitive community or Paul himself who first put full religious content into the title 'Lord' as used of Christ. Probably it was the former. But the Apostle undoubtedly adopted the title in its full meaning, and did much to make that meaning clear by transferring to 'the Lord Jesus Christ' many of the ideas and phrases which in the Old Testament had been specifically assigned to the Lord Jehovah. God 'gave unto Him that name that is above every name - the name of "Lord"'. At the same time by equating Christ with the Wisdom of God and with the Glory of God, as well as ascribing to Him Sonship in an absolute sense, Paul claimed for Jesus Christ a relation to God which was inherent and unique, ethical and personal, eternal. While, however, Paul in many ways and in many aspects, equated Christ with God, he definitely stopped short of speaking of him as 'God'.

In another article in Encyclopaedia Britannica (xiv edition), under the title 'Christianity', the Reverend George William Knox writes as follows about the fundamental beliefs of the Church:

Its moulds of thought are those of Greek philosophy, and into these were run the Jewish teachings. We have thus a peculiar combination - the religious doctrines of the Bible, as culminating in the person of Jesus, run through the forms of an alien philosophy.

The Doctrine of the Trinity. The Jewish sources furnished the terms Father, Son and Spirit. Jesus seldom employed the last term and Paul's use of it is not altogether clear. Already in Jewish literature it had been all but personified (Cf. the Wisdom of Solomon). Thus the material is Jewish, though already doubtless modified by Greek influence: but the problem is Greek; it is not primarily ethical nor even religious, but it is metaphysical. What is the ontological relationship between these three factors? The answer of the Church is given in the Nicene formula, which is characteristically Greek, . . .

Also significant in this connection are the following passages of another article in Encyclopaedia Britannica (xiv edition), entitled 'Church History': The recognition of Christ as the incarnation of the Logos was practically universal before the close of the 3rd century, but His deity was still widely denied, and the Arian controversy which distracted the Church of the 4th century concerned the latter question. At the Council of Nicaea in 325 the deity of Christ received official sanction and was given formulation in the original Nicene Creed. Controversy continued for some time, but finally the Nicene decision was recognised both in East and West as the only orthodox faith. The deity of the Son was believed to carry with it that of the Spirit, who was associated with Father and Son in the baptismal formula and in the current symbols, and so the victory of the Nicene Christology meant the recognition of the doctrine of Trinity as part of the orthodox faith. The assertion of the deity of the Son incarnate in Christ raised another problem which constituted the subject of dispute in the Christological controversies of the 4th and following centuries. What is the relation of the divine and human natures in Christ? At the Council of Chalcedon in 451 it was declared that in the person of Christ are united two complete natures, divine and human, which retain after the union all their properties unchanged. This was supplemented at the 3rd Council of Constantinople in 680 by the statement that each of the natures

contains a will, so that Christ possesses two wills. The Western Church accepted the decisions of Nicaea, Chalcedon and Constantinople, and so the doctrines of the Trinity and of the two natures in Christ were handed down as orthodox dogma in West as well as East.

Meanwhile in the Western Church the subject of sin and grace, and the relation of divine and human activity in salvation, received special attention; and finally, at the 2nd Council of Orange in 529, after both Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism had been epudiated, a moderate form of Augustinianism was adopted, involving the theory that every man as a result of the Fall is in such a condition that he can take no steps in the direction of salvation until he has been renewed by the divine grace given in baptism, and that he cannot continue in the good thus begun except by the constant assistance of that grace, which is mediated only by the Catholic Church.

It is evident from these statements of Christian scholars that it was exaggerated love and veneration of Christ which led the early Christians astray. This exaggeration and the use of expressions such as 'Lord' and 'Son of God' led to Jesus being invested with divine attributes and to the peculiar Christian notion of redemption, even though these could not be accommodated into the body of the teachings of Christ. When the Christians came to be infected with philosophical doctrines, they did not abandon the original error into which they had fallen, but tried to accommodate the errors of their predecessors through apologetics and rational explanations. Thus, instead of returning to the true teachings of Christ, they used logic and philosophy to fabricate one false doctrine after another. It is to this error that the Qur'an calls the Christians' attention in these verses.

لُعِنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْۢ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ عَلٰي لِسَانِ دَاوٗدَ وَعِيْسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ ۭ ذٰلِكَ بِمَا

عَصَوْا وَّكَانُوْا يَعْتَدُوْنَ 78

(5:78) Those of the Children of Israel who took to unbelief have been cursed by the tongue of David and Jesus, son of Mary, for they rebelled and exceeded the bounds of right.

كَانُوْا لَا يَتَنَاهَوْنَ عَنْ مُّنْكَرٍ فَعَلُوْهُ ۭ لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوْا يَفْعَلُوْنَ 79

(5:79) They did not forbid each other from committing the abominable deeds they committed.[102] Indeed what they did was evil.

102. The corruption of any nation begins with that of a few individuals. If the collective conscience of that nation is alive, the pressure of public opinion keeps those persons in check and prevents the nation as a whole from becoming corrupted. But if instead of censuring such individuals, the nation leaves them free to behave corruptly, the corruption originally confined to a few continues to spread till it engulfs the whole nation. It was this which ultimately caused the degeneration of Israel. (For the curse against Israel in the words of David and Jesus see Psalms 10, 50 and Matthew 23.)

تَرٰى كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتَوَلَّوْنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ؕ لَبِئْسَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ لَهُمْ اَنْفُسُهُمْ اَنْ سَخِطَ

اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَفِى الْعَذَابِ هُمْ خٰلِدُوْنَ 80

(5:80) And now you can see many of them taking the unbelievers (instead of the believers) for their allies. Indeed they have prepared evil for themselves. Allah is angry with them, and they shall abide in chastisement.

وَلَوْ كَانُوْا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالنَّبِىِّ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِ مَا اتَّخَذُوْهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءَ وَلٰكِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ

فٰسِقُوْنَ 81

(5:81) For had they truly believed in Allah and the Messenger and what was sent down to him, they would not have taken unbelievers (instead of believers) for their allies.[103] But many of them have rebelled against Allah altogether.

103. It seems natural that those who believe in God and the Prophets and the Scriptures, compared with the polytheists, would naturally be more sympathetic to those who at least share with them belief in God, in prophethood and in .revelation (whatever their disagreements on other religious issues). It was ironic, therefore, that the Jews should openly support the polytheists in the struggle between polytheism and monotheism, and that their sympathies in the conflict between those who rejected prophethood and those who believed in it should lie expressly with the former. Despite all this, they brazenly claimed to be true believers in God, in the Prophets and in the Scriptures.

لَتَجِدَنَّ اَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا الْيَهُوْدَ وَالَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْا ۚ وَلَتَجِدَنَّ اَقْرَبَهُمْ

مَّوَدَّةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا نَصٰرٰى ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ مِنْهُمْ قِسِّيْسِيْنَ وَرُهْبَانًا وَّاَنَّهُمْ

لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ 82

(5:82) Of all men you will find the Jews and those who associate others with Allah in His divinity to be the most hostile to those who believe; and you will surely find that of ail people they who say: 'We are Christians', are closest to feeling affection for those who believe. This is because there are worshipful priests and monks among them, and because they are not arrogant.

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ تَرَىٰ أَعْيُنَهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُوا مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۖ
يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ 83

(5:83) And when they hear what has been revealed to the Messenger you see that their eyes overflow with tears because of the Truth that they recognize and they say: 'Our Lord! We do believe; write us down, therefore, with those who bear witness (to the Truth).

وَمَا لَنَا لَا نُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا جَاءَنَا مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَنَطْمَعُ أَن يُدْخِلَنَا رَبُّنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ
الصَّالِحِينَ 84

(5:84) And why should we not believe in Allah and the Truth which has come down to us when we do fervently desire that our Lord include us among the righteous?'

فَأَثَابَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِمَا قَالُوا جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۚ وَذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ
الْمُحْسِنِينَ 85

(5:85) So Allah rewarded them for these words with Gardens beneath which rivers flow so that they would abide there for ever. Such is the reward of the people who do good.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ ۝ 86

(5:86) Those who disbelieved and gave the lie to Our signs are rightfully the inmates of the Blazing Flame.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُحَرِّمُوا طَيِّبَاتِ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ
الْمُعْتَدِينَ 87

(5:87) Believers! Do not hold as unlawful the good things which Allah has made lawful to you,[104] and do not exceed the bounds of right.[105] Allah does not love those who transgress the bounds of right.

104. This verse embodies two directives. The first is that man should not attribute to himself the authority to proclaim things either lawful or unlawful according to his own wishes. Only that which God has held to be lawful is lawful, and only that which God has declared unlawful is unlawful. If men were to declare certain things either lawful or unlawful on their own authority, they would not be following the law of God but their own laws. The second directive is that they should not adopt the course of world-renunciation and abstention from worldly pleasures as the Christian monks, Hindu mendicants, Buddhist bhikshus and illuminist mystics did. Religious-minded and virtuous people have always tended to consider their physical and carnal desires an impediment to spiritual growth. They have considered suffering, deprivation from worldly pleasures and abstention from the means of worldly sustenance to be acts of goodness and indispensable for achieving proximity to God. Even some of the Companions leaned in this direction. The Prophet (peace be on him) once came to know that some Companions had resolved that they would fast without interruption, that instead of spending the night on their beds they would remain awake praying, that they would consume neither meat nor fat, and would have no (sexual) relations with women. The Prophet (peace be on him) addressed the people on this subject and said: 'I have not been commanded to do so. Even your own self has rights against you. So, fast on certain days and refrain from fasting on others. Stay awake praying at night and also sleep. Look at me; 1 sleep as well as stay awake (praying); sometimes I fast and sometimes I don't. I consume meat as well as fat. Whosoever dislikes my way does not belong to me.' He then added: 'What has happened to people that they have prohibited for themselves women, good food, perfumes, sleep and the pleasures of the world, whereas I have not taught you to become monks and priests. In my religion there is neither abstention from women nor from meat, neither seclusion nor withdrawal.

For the purposes of self-control my religion has fasting. As for monasticism, all its benefits can be derived from jihad (struggle in the way of God). Serve God and associate none with Him. Perform Hajj and 'Umrah, establish Prayers, dispense Zakah and observe the fasts of Ramadan. Those who were destroyed before you were destroyed because they were severe with themselves, and when they became severe with themselves God became severe with them as well. It is the remnants of such people who you see in the oratories and hermitages of monks.' (Ibn Kathir, vol. 2, pp. 626 and 628-9 - Ed.)

There are traditions to the effect that the Prophet (peace be on him) once came to know that one of his Companions was always so preoccupied with worship and devotion that he did not approach his wife for long periods. The Prophet (peace be on him) called for him and directed him to go to his wife. On being told that he was fasting, the Prophet (peace be on him) asked him to break the fast and proceed to his wife. During the reign of 'Umar a lady once lodged the complaint that her husband fasted all day and prayed all night and had no relations with her. 'Umar appointed the famous Successor (Tabi'i), Ka'b b. Thawr al-Azdi to look into the matter. He issued the judgement that the husband had the right to spend three nights in Prayer if he so wished, but every fourth night was the right of his wife. (Fiqh al-Sunnah, vol. 2, p. 164 - Ed.)

105. 'Do not exceed the bounds of right' has a broad signification. To hold the things which are lawful to be unlawful, and to shun the things declared by God to be clean as if they were unclean, is in itself an act of wrongful excess. It should be remembered, at the same time,

that extravagant indulgence even in clean things is an act of wrongful excess. Likewise, to overstep the limits of the permissible is also an act of wrongful excess. God disapproves of all three kinds of excess.

وَكُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا ۖ وَّاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْتُمْ بِهٖ مُؤْمِنُوْنَ 88

(5:88) And partake of the lawful, good things which Allah has provided you as sustenance, and refrain from disobeying Allah in Whom you believe.

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِيْٓ اَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ يُّؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا عَقَّدْتُّمُ الْاَيْمَانَ ۚ فَكَفَّارَتُهٗٓ اِطْعَامُ عَشَرَةِ مَسٰكِيْنَ مِنْ اَوْسَطِ مَا تُطْعِمُوْنَ اَهْلِيْكُمْ اَوْ كِسْوَتُهُمْ اَوْ تَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ ۭ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلٰثَةِ اَيَّامٍ ۭ ذٰلِكَ كَفَّارَةُ اَيْمَانِكُمْ اِذَا حَلَفْتُمْ ۭ وَاحْفَظُوْٓا اَيْمَانَكُمْ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ 89

(5:89) Allah does not take you to task for the oaths you utter vainly, but He will certainly take you to task for the oaths you have sworn in earnest. The expiation (for breaking such oaths) is either to feed ten needy persons with more or less the same food as you are wont to give to your families, or to clothe them, or to set free from bondage the neck of one man; and he who does not find the means shall fast for three days. This shall be the expiation for your oaths whenever you have sworn (and broken them.)[106] But do keep your oaths.[107] Thus does Allah make clear to you His commandments; maybe you will be grateful.

106. Since some people had taken an oath prohibiting for themselves the things which He had permitted, God laid down this injunction regarding oaths made inadvertently. The injunction makes it unnecessary to feel bound by the terms of inadvertent oaths, and for which one will not be reproached by God. And if a person had deliberately made an oath which entails sin he should not abide by his oath and should expiate it (see Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 2,nn. 243-4); for expiation see (Surah 4, n. 125) above.

107. To be mindful of one's oaths has several meanings. First, one should make proper use of oaths and should not employ them either frivolously or sinfully. Second, when a person takes an oath, he should take care not to forget it lest he be led to break it. Third, when a man deliberately takes an oath regarding something sound in itself he should pay the penalty if he happens to violate it.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ إِنَّمَا ٱلْخَمْرُ وَٱلْمَيْسِرُ وَٱلْأَنصَابُ وَٱلْأَزْلَٰمُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ

ٱلشَّيْطَٰنِ فَٱجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ 90

(5:90) Believers! Intoxicants, games of chance, idolatrous sacrifices at altars, and divining arrows[108] are all abominations, the handiwork of Satan. So turn wholly away from it that you may attain to true success.[109]

108.For 'altars' and divination by arrows see (nn.12)and 14)above. For games of chance see (n. 14) above.

While divination by arrow-shooting essentially constitutes a game of chance there is nevertheless a certain difference between the two, since divination by arrow-shooting, in addition to being a game of chance, is also tainted with polytheistic beliefs and superstitions. As for games of chance, this expression is applied to those games and acts in which accidental factors are considered the criteria for acquisition, fortune-making and the division of goods and property.

109. In this verse four things are categorically prohibited:

(1) intoxicants;

(2) games of chance;

(3) places consecrated for the worship of anyone else besides God, and altars for either sacrifices or offerings in the name of others than God; and

(4) polytheistic divination by arrow-shooting.

The last three items have already been explained. (See Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I,(Surah 2: 219, n. 235)and (Surah 5: 3, n. 14 above). Two injunctions had already been revealed concerning the prohibition of intoxicants See (Surahs 2: 219)and(4: 43). Before the revelation of the last injunction, the Prophet (peace be on him) had warned the people that intoxicants were highly displeasing to God. Hinting at the possibility of their being prohibited, he advised people to dispose of intoxicants if they had any. A little later on the present verse was revealed and the Prophet (peace be on him) then proclaimed that those who had intoxicants should neither consume nor sell them, but rather destroy them. Intoxicating liquors were poured into the streets of Madina. When asked if such liquor might be offered to the Jews as a gift the Prophet (peace be on him) replied in the negative and said: 'He Who has prohibited it has also required it not to be given away as a gift.' Some people inquired whether it was permitted to make vinegar out of such liquor. The Prophet (peace be on him) told them not to do so, but to throw it away instead. Another person asked insistently whether or not an intoxicant could be used as medicine. The Prophet (peace be on him) replied that far from being a remedy for any malady it was in itself a malady. Others sought permission to consume intoxicating liquor on the plea that they lived

in a very cold region and had to work very hard, and that the people of that region habitually drank intoxicants to combat exhaustion and cold. The Prophet (peace be on him) inquired if the drink concerned did cause intoxication. On being told that it did, he said that they should abstain from it. They pointed out that the people of their region would not accept this, to which the Prophet (peace be on him) replied that they should fight them.

It is reported by 'Abd Allah Ibn 'Umar that the Prophet (peace be on him) said: 'God has cursed khamr (wine) and him who drinks it, him who provides it to others and him who buys or sells it, him who squeezes (the grapes) into wine and him who causes others to squeeze grapes (in order to make wine), him who carries it and him to whom it is carried.' (See Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 2, p. 97; vol. 1, p. 316; Abu Da'ud, 'Ashribah', 2 - Ed.)

According to another tradition the Prophet (peace be on him) instructed not to eat at the table where intoxicating drinks were being taken. In the beginning the Prophet (peace be on him) even forbade the use of vessels in which intoxicating drinks had either been made or served. Later on, when the prohibition of drinks was completely observed the Prophet (peace be on him) withdrew the interdiction regarding the use of these vessels. (See Abu Da'ud, 'At'imah', 18; Tirmidhi, 'Adab', 43; Darimi, 'Ashribah', 15; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 1, p. 20; vol. 3, p. 339 - Ed.) Though the word khamr in Arabic means literally 'the drink made from grapes', it was also used figuratively for intoxicating liquors made from wheat, barley, raisins, dates and honey. The Prophet (peace be on him) applied the prohibition of wine to all intoxicants. In this regard we find categorical statements from the Prophet (peace be on him) embodied in traditions: 'Every intoxicant is khamr, and every intoxicant is prohibited.'

'Every drink which causes intoxication is prohibited.' 'I forbid everything which intoxicates.' In a Friday sermon 'Umar defined khamr in the following manner: 'Whatever takes hold of the mind is khamr.' (See Bukhari, 'Wudu", 71; 'Maghazi', 60, 'Ashribah', 4,10, 'Adab', 8, 'Ahkam', 22; Muslim, 'Ashribah', 67-9; Abu Da'ud, 'Ashribah', 5, 71; Ibn Majah, 'Ashribah', 9, 13, 14; Darimi, 'Ashribah', 8, 9; Muwatta', 'Dahaya', 8; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 1, pp. 274, 289, 350; vol. 2, pp. 16, 158, 171, 185, 429, 501; vol. 3, pp. 63, 66, 112, 119, 361; vol. 4, pp. 41, 416; vol. 6, pp. 36, 71, 72, 97, 131, 190 and 226 - Ed.)

The Prophet (peace be on him) also enunciated the following principle: 'If anything causes intoxication when used in large quantity, even a small quantity of it is prohibited.' 'If a large quantity of something causes intoxication, to drink even a palmful of it is prohibited.' (See Abu Da'ud, 'Ashribah', 5; Ibn Majah, 'Ashribah', 10; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 2, pp. 167, 179 and vol. 3, p. 343 - Ed.)

In the time of the Prophet (peace be on him) no specific punishment had been laid down for drinking. A person caught drunk would be struck with shoes, fists, and whips made of twisted cloth and palm sticks. The maximum number of lashes to which any culprit was subjected was forty. In the time of Abu Bakr the punishment continued to be forty lashes. In the time of 'Umar the punishment initially remained at forty lashes also, but when he saw people persist in drinking he fixed the punishment at eighty lashes after consulting the Companions. This was considered the prescribed legal punishment for drinking by Malik and Abu Hanifah, and even by Shafi'i according to one tradition. But Ahmad b. Hanbal, and,

according to a variant tradition, Shafi'i, considered the punishment to consist of forty lashes, and 'Ali is reported to have preferred this opinion.

According to Islamic Law, it is the bounden duty of an Islamic government to enforce this prohibition. In the time of 'Umar the shop of a member of the Thaqif tribe, by the name of Ruwayshid, was burnt down because he carried on the sale of liquor. On another occasion a whole hamlet was set on fire because it had become a center of illegal traffic in liquor.

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَٰنُ أَن يُوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَآءَ فِى الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ وَيَصُدَّكُمْ
عَن ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلَوٰةِ ۖ فَهَلْ أَنتُم مُّنتَهُونَ 91

(5:91) By intoxicants and games of chance Satan only desires to create enmity and hatred between you, and to turn you away from the remembrance of Allah and from Prayer. Will you, then, desist?

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَاحْذَرُوا ۚ فَإِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُوٓا أَنَّمَا عَلَىٰ رَسُولِنَا الْبَلَٰغُ
الْمُبِينُ 92

(5:92) Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and beware. But if you turn away, then know well that Our Messenger had merely to deliver the message clearly.

لَيْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّٰلِحَٰتِ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا طَعِمُوٓا إِذَا مَا اتَّقَوا وَّءَامَنُوا
وَعَمِلُوا الصَّٰلِحَٰتِ ثُمَّ اتَّقَوا وَّءَامَنُوا ثُمَّ اتَّقَوا وَّأَحْسَنُوا ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ۝ 93

(5:93) There will be no blame on those who believe and do righteous deeds for whatever they might have partaken (in the past) as long as they refrain from things prohibited, and persist in their belief and do righteous deeds, and continue to refrain from whatever is forbidden and submit to divine commandments, and persevere in doing good, fearing Allah. Allah loves those who do good.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَيَبْلُوَنَّكُمُ اللَّهُ بِشَىْءٍ مِّنَ الصَّيْدِ تَنَالُهُۥٓ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَرِمَاحُكُمْ
لِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَن يَخَافُهُۥ بِالْغَيْبِ ۚ فَمَنِ اعْتَدَىٰ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ فَلَهُۥ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ 94

(5:94) Believers! Allah will surely try you with a game which will be within the range of your hands and lances so that He might mark out those who fear Him, even though He is beyond the reach of human perception. A painful chastisement awaits whosoever transgresses after that the bounds set by Allah.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَقْتُلُوا الصَّيْدَ وَاَنْتُمْ حُرُمٌ ۭ وَمَنْ قَتَلَهٗ مِنْكُمْ مُّتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاۗءٌ
مِّثْلُ مَا قَتَلَ مِنَ النَّعَمِ يَحْكُمُ بِهٖ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِّنْكُمْ هَدْيًۢا بٰلِغَ الْكَعْبَةِ اَوْ كَفَّارَةٌ طَعَامُ
مَسٰكِيْنَ اَوْ عَدْلُ ذٰلِكَ صِيَامًا لِّيَذُوْقَ وَبَالَ اَمْرِهٖ ۭ عَفَا اللّٰهُ عَمَّا سَلَفَ ۭ وَمَنْ عَادَ
فَيَنْتَقِمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْهُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ 95

(5:95) Believers! Do not kill game while you are in the state of pilgrim sanctity.[110] Whoever of you kills it wilfully there shall be a recompense, the like of what he has killed in cattle - as shall be judged by two men of equity among you - to be brought to the Ka'bah as an offering, or as an expiation the feeding of the needy, or its equivalent in fasting[111] in order that he may taste the grievousness of his deed. Allah has pardoned whatever has passed; but Allah will exact a penalty from him who repeats it. Allah is All-Mighty. He is fully capable of exacting penalties.

110. When a person is in the state of pilgrim sanctity (ihram) it is prohibited for him both to hunt and to assist in hunting animals. Indeed, even if an animal has been hunted for him by someone else he may not eat it. However, if someone hunts an animal for himself and makes a gift of it to such a person, there is no harm in his eating it. There is an exception to this injunction and that is with regard to harmful animals. Snakes, scorpions, mad dogs and other such animals which cause injury to man may be killed even by one in the state of ihram. (See Bukhari, 'Talaq', 24; 'Sayd', 2; Abu Da'ud, 'Manasik', 40, 41; Tirmidhi, 'Hajj', 27; 'Sayd', 26 - Ed.)

111. It would also be 'two men of equity' (Surah al-Ma'idah 5: 95) to judge as to the number of persons one should feed or the number of days one should fast by way of expiation for killing a certain animal.

اُحِلَّ لَكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَحْرِ وَطَعَامُهٗ مَتَاعًا لَّكُمْ وَلِلسَّيَّارَةِ ۚ وَحُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَرِّ مَا
دُمْتُمْ حُرُمًا ۭ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ 96

(5:96) The game of the water and eating thereof[112] are permitted to you as a provision for you (who are settled) and for those on a journey; but to hunt on land while you

are in the state of Pilgrim sanctity is forbidden for you. Beware, then, of disobeying Allah to Whom you shall all be mustered.

112. Since one often runs out of provisions during a voyage and is left with no alternative but to catch sea creatures, fishing in the sea has been made lawful.

جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ الْكَعْبَةَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ قِيٰمًا لِّلنَّاسِ وَالشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَالْهَدْيَ وَالْقَلَآئِدَ ؕ

ذٰلِكَ لِتَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ

عَلِيْمٌ 97

(5:97) Allah has appointed the Ka'bah, the Sacred House, as a means of support for (the collective life of) men, and has caused the holy month (of Pilgrimage), and the animals of sacrificial of-fering and their distinguishing collars to assist therein.[113] This is so that you may know that Allah is aware of all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth; and that Allah has knowledge of everything.[114]

113. In Arabia, the Ka'bah was not merely a sacred place of worship. Thanks to its central position and its sanctity, it nurtured the economic and cultural life of the whole peninsula. Since the entire populace was drawn towards the Ka'bah for the performance of Hajj and 'Umrah, their coming together brought about a measure of unity in the life of the Arabs which was otherwise rent with disunity. This enabled the people of various regions and tribes to establish social and cultural ties among themselves. Moreover, the security which reigned in the vicinity of the Ka'bah provided an impetus to creative literary activity, with the result that in the fairs held in the sacred territory, poets placed their poetic compositions before the audience, trying to excel one another. This led to the growth and flowering of their language and literature. Thanks, again, to the peace and security which reigned in the sacred territory, it became a major centre of trade and commerce. Moreover, since certain months of the year were regarded as sacred months in which there could be no bloodshed, the Arabs enjoyed peace and security for about a quarter of the year. It was during this period that caravans moved in freedom and with ease from one end of the peninsula to the other. The custom of consecrating animals for sacrifice, marked off from others by the collars around their necks, also facilitated the movement of caravans, for whenever the Arabs saw those animals with their collars signifying consecration for sacrifice, they-bent their heads in reverence and no predatory tribe had the courage to molest them.

114. Were they to consider even the social and economic aspects of the life of their people, the existing arrangements would provide them with clear testimony to the fact that God has deep and thorough knowledge of the interests and requirements of His creatures, and that He can ensure immensely beneficial effects on many sectors of human life by just one single commandment. During the several centuries of anarchy and disorder which preceded the advent of the Prophet (peace be on him), the Arabs were themselves unaware of their own interests and seemed bent upon self-destruction. God, however, was aware of their needs and requirements and by merely investing the Ka'bah with a central position in Arabia He

ensured their national survival. Even if they disregarded innumerable other facts and reflected on this alone they would become convinced that the injunctions revealed by God were conducive to their well-being, and that underlying them were a great many benefits and advantages for them which they themselves could neither have grasped nor achieved by their own contriving.

اِعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۝98

(5:98) Know well that Allah is severe in retribution, and that Allah is also All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

مَا عَلَى الرَّسُوْلِ اِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُوْنَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُوْنَ ۝99

(5:99) The Messenger is bound only to deliver the message, whereafter Allah knows well all that you disclose and all that you conceal.

قُلْ لَّا يَسْتَوِي الْخَبِيْثُ وَالطَّيِّبُ وَلَوْ اَعْجَبَكَ كَثْرَةُ الْخَبِيْثِ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ يٰٓاُولِي الْاَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ۝100

(5:100) (O Messenger!) Say to them: "The bad things and the good things are not equal, even though the abundance of the bad things might make you pleased with them.[115] Men of understanding, beware of disobeying Allah; then maybe you will attain true success.'

115. This verse enunciates a standard of evaluation and judgement quite distinct from the standards employed by superficial people. For the latter, for instance, a hundred dollars are worth more than five dollars, since a hundred is more than five. But, according to this verse, if those hundred dollars have been earned in a manner entailing the disobedience of God the entire amount becomes unclean. If, on the contrary, a man earns five dollars while obeying God then this amount is clean; and anything which is unclean, whatever its quantity, cannot be worth that which is clean. A drop of perfume is more valuable than a heap of filth; a palmful of clean water is much more valuable than a huge cauldron brimming with urine. A truly wise person should therefore necessarily be content with whatever he acquires by clean, permissible means, however small and humble its quantity may be. He should not reach out for what is prohibited, however large in quantity and glittering in appearance.

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ لَا تَسْـَٔلُوا۟ عَنْ أَشْيَآءَ إِن تُبْدَ لَكُمْ تَسُؤْكُمْ ۚ وَإِن تَسْـَٔلُوا۟ عَنْهَا
حِينَ يُنَزَّلُ ٱلْقُرْءَانُ تُبْدَ لَكُمْ ۖ عَفَا ٱللَّهُ عَنْهَا ۗ وَٱللَّهُ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ 101

(5:101) Believers! Do not ask of the things which, if made manifest to you, would vex you;[116] for, if you should ask about them while the Qur'an is being revealed, they will be made manifest to you. Allah has pardoned whatever happened in the past. He is All-Forgiving, All-Forbearing.

116. People used to ask the Prophet (peace be on him) many questions which were of no practical relevance to either religious or day-to-day affairs. Once, for instance, a person asked the Prophet (peace be on him) in the presence of a crowd: 'Who is my real father?' Likewise, many people used to ask unnecessary questions about legal matters. By these uncalled for inquiries they sought knowledge of matters which had for good reasons, been deliberately left undetermined by the Law-giver. In the Qur'an, for example. Pilgrimage had been declared obligatory. A person who became aware of this came to the Prophet (peace be on him) and inquired: 'Has it been made obligatory to perform it every year?' To this the Prophet (peace be on him) made no reply. When he inquired for the second time the Prophet (peace be on him) again stayed silent. On being asked for the third time, he said: 'Pity on you! Had I uttered "Yes" in reply to your question, it would have become obligatory to perform it every year. And then you would not have been able to observe it and would have been guilty of disobedience.' (See Bukhari, 'Riqaq', 22; 'Zakah', 53; I'tisam', 3; 'Adab', 6; Muslim, 'Aqdiyah', 10, 11, 13, 14; Darimi, 'Riqaq', 38; Muwatta', 'Kalam', 20; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 2, pp. 327, 360, 367; vol. 4, pp. 246, 249, 250, 251, 255 - Ed.)

The Prophet (peace be on him) discouraged people from being over-inquisitive and unnecessarily curious about every question. We find in the Hadith the following saying from the Prophet (peace be on him): 'The worst criminal among the Muslims is the one who inquired about something which had not been made unlawful, and then it was declared so, because of his inquiry.' (Bukhari, I'tisam', 3; Muslim, Fada'il', 132, 133; Abu Da'ud, 'Sunnah', 6 - Ed.) According to another tradition the Prophet (peace be on him) said: 'God has imposed upon you certain obligations, do not neglect them; He has imposed certain prohibitions, do not violate them; He has imposed certain limits, do not even approach them; and He has remained silent about certain matters - and has not done so out of forgetfulness - do not pursue them.' (See Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 2, n. 110 - Ed.)

In both these traditions an important fact has been called to our attention. In matters where the Law-giver has chosen to lay down certain injunctions only broadly, without any elaborate details, or quantitative specifications, He has done so not because of neglect or forgetfulness. Such seeming omissions are deliberate, and the reason thereof is that He does not desire to place limitations upon people, but prefers to allow them latitude and ease in following His commandments. Now there are some people who make unnecessary inquiries, cause elaborately prescribed, inflexibly determined and restrictive regulations to be added to the Law. Some others, in cases where such details are in no way deducible from the text, resort to analogical reasoning, thereby turning a broad general rule into an elaborate law full

of restrictive details, and an unspecified into a specified rule. Both sorts of people put Muslims in great danger. For, in the area of belief, the more detailed the doctrines to which people are required to subscribe, the more problematic it becomes to do so. Likewise, in legal matters, the greater the restriction, the greater the likelihood of violation.

قَدْ سَأَلَهَا قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَبْلِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَصْبَحُوا بِهَا كٰفِرِينَ 102

(5:102) Indeed some people before you had asked such questions and in consequence fell into unbelief.[117]

117. Some people first indulged in hair-splitting arguments about their laws and dogma, and thereby wove a great web of credal elaborations and legal minutiae. Then they became enmeshed in this same web and thus became guilty of dogmatic errors and the violation of their own religious laws. The people referred to here are the Jews, and the Muslims who followed in their footsteps and left no stone unturned, despite the warnings contained in the Qur'an and in the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him).

مَا جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ بَحِيرَةٍ وَّلَا سَآئِبَةٍ وَّلَا وَصِيلَةٍ وَّلَا حَامٍ ۙ وَّلٰكِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ ؕ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ 103

(5:103) Allah has neither appointed (cattle devoted to idols such as) Bahirah, Sa'ibah, Wasilah nor Ham;[118] but those who disbelieve forge lies against Allah and of them most have no understanding (and therefore succumb to such superstitions).

118. Just as, in the Indian subcontinent, cows, oxen and goats are set free after being consecrated either to God or to some idol or shrine or to some saintly person, and just as people consider it prohibited either to put them to work, to slaughter them or to derive any other kind of benefit from them, so the Arabs of the Jahiliyah period also let loose certain animals after consecrating them. Such animals were variously named.

Bahirah was the name of a female camel which had already borne five young, the last of which was a male. The practice was to slit the ear of such a camel and then let her loose. Thereafter no one could ride her, use her milk, slaughter her or shear her hair. She was entitled to graze and drink water wherever she liked.

Sa'ibah was the name of either a male or female camel which had been let loose after consecration as a mark of gratitude in fulfilment of a vow taken for either the recovery from some ailment or delivery from some danger. In the same way the female camel which had borne ten times, and each time a female, was also let loose.

Wasilah. If the first kid born to a goat was a male, it was slaughtered in the name of the deities; but if it was a female, it was kept by the owners for themselves. If twins were born and one of them was a male and the other a female goat, the male was not slaughtered but rather let loose in the name of the deities. This male goat was called wasilah.

Ham. If the young of camels in the second degree of descent had become worthy of riding they were let loose. Likewise, if ten offspring had been borne by a female camel she was also let loose, and called ham.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ وَإِلَى الرَّسُولِ قَالُوا حَسْبُنَا مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا ۖ
أَوَلَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ 104

(5:104) When they are asked: 'Come to what Allah has revealed, and come to the Messenger', they reply: 'The way of our refathers suffices us.' (Will they continue to follow their forefathers) even though their forefathers might have known nothing, and might have been on the wrong way?

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ ۖ لَا يَضُرُّكُم مَّن ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ ۚ إِلَى اللَّهِ
مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ 105

(5:105) Believers! Take heed of your own selves. If you are rightly guided, the error of he who strays will not harm you.[119] To Allah will all of you return; then He will let all of you know what you did.

119. What is stressed here is that rather than occupying himself unduly with examining faults in the belief and conduct of others, a man should pay greater attention to a critical examination of his own conduct. His primary concern should be with his own faith and conduct. If a man is himself obedient to God, observes his duties to Him and to His creatures including his duty to promote what is good and forbid what is evil, and lives according to the dictates of righteousness and honesty, he has fulfilled his obligation and if others persist either in false beliefs or in moral corruption their errors cannot harm him.

This verse in no way means that a man should care only for his own salvation and should remain unconcerned with the reform of others. Abu Bakr removed this misconception in one of his sermons when he remarked: 'You recite this verse but interpret it erroneously. I have heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) say that when people see corruption but do not try to change it; and when they see a wrong-doer commit wrong but do not prevent him from doing so, it is not unlikely that God's chastisement will seize them all. By God, it is incumbent upon you that you bid what is good and forbid what is evil or else God will grant domination upon you to those who are the worst among you. They will greatly chastise you and then when your righteous ones pray to God, their prayers will not be answered.'

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا شَهَادَةُ بَيْنِكُمْ اِذَا حَضَرَ اَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ حِيْنَ الْوَصِيَّةِ اثْنٰنِ ذَوَا
عَدْلٍ مِّنْكُمْ اَوْ اٰخَرٰنِ مِنْ غَيْرِكُمْ اِنْ اَنْتُمْ ضَرَبْتُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ فَاَصَابَتْكُمْ مُّصِيْبَةُ
الْمَوْتِ ؕ تَحْبِسُوْنَهُمَا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ الصَّلٰوةِ فَيُقْسِمٰنِ بِاللّٰهِ اِنِ ارْتَبْتُمْ لَا نَشْتَرِىْ بِهٖ ثَمَنًا وَّلَوْ
كَانَ ذَا قُرْبٰى ۙ وَلَا نَكْتُمُ شَهَادَةَ اللّٰهِ اِنَّآ اِذًا لَّمِنَ الْاٰثِمِيْنَ 106

(5:106) Believers! When death approaches you, let two men of equity among you act as witnesses when you make your bequest;[120] or let two of those from others than yourselves act as witnesses if you are on a journey when the affliction of death befalls you.[121] Then if any doubt occurs you shall detain both of them (in the mosque) after the Prayer, and they shall swear by Allah: 'We shall neither sell our testimony in return for any gain even though it concerns any near of kin nor shall we conceal our testimony which we owe to Allah, for then we should become among sinners.' .

120. That is, pious, straightforward and trustworthy Muslims.

That is, non-Muslims - Ed.

121. This shows that the testimony of non-Muslim witnesses in cases involving Muslims is appropriate only when no Muslim is available as a witness.

فَاِنْ عُثِرَ عَلٰٓى اَنَّهُمَا اسْتَحَقَّآ اِثْمًا فَاٰخَرٰنِ يَقُوْمٰنِ مَقَامَهُمَا مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اسْتَحَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ
الْاَوْلَيٰنِ فَيُقْسِمٰنِ بِاللّٰهِ لَشَهَادَتُنَآ اَحَقُّ مِنْ شَهَادَتِهِمَا وَمَا اعْتَدَيْنَآ ۖ اِنَّآ اِذًا لَّمِنَ
الظّٰلِمِيْنَ 107

(5:107) Then if it is discovered later that the two are guilty of such sin, then two others shall stand in their place from among those against whom the two had sinfully deposed, and swear by Allah: 'Our testimony is truer than the testimony of the other two, and we have not transgressed in our statement; for then indeed we would become wrong-doers.'

ذٰلِكَ اَدۡنٰٓى اَنۡ يَّاۡتُوۡا بِالشَّهَادَةِ عَلٰى وَجۡهِهَآ اَوۡ يَخَافُوۡۤا اَنۡ تُرَدَّ اَيۡمَانٌۢ بَعۡدَ اَيۡمَانِهِمۡ‌ؕ وَاتَّقُوا
اللّٰهَ وَاسۡمَعُوۡا‌ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهۡدِى الۡقَوۡمَ الۡفٰسِقِيۡنَ ع 108

(5:108) Thus it is more likely that they will either bear the right testimony or else they will at least fear that their oaths may be rebutted by other oaths. Have fear of Allah and pay heed. Allah does not direct the disobedient to the right way.

يَوۡمَ يَجۡمَعُ اللّٰهُ الرُّسُلَ فَيَقُوۡلُ مَاذَاۤ اُجِبۡتُمۡ‌ؕ قَالُوۡا لَا عِلۡمَ لَنَا‌ؕ اِنَّكَ اَنۡتَ عَلَّامُ
الۡغُيُوۡبِ 109

(5:109) The Day[122] when Allah will gather together the Messengers[123] and say: 'What answer were you given?' They will reply: 'We have no real knowledge of it.[124] You alone fully know all that lies beyond the reach of human perception.

122. This refers to the Day of Judgement.

123. The reference here is to the response of the world to the call of the Prophets.

124. This reply indicates that the Prophets would say that their knowledge was confined to that limited, outward response which they had encountered during their lifetimes. The true reaction to their call at various places and in different forms would only be known completely to God Himself.

اِذۡ قَالَ اللّٰهُ يٰعِيۡسَى ابۡنَ مَرۡيَمَ اذۡكُرۡ نِعۡمَتِىۡ عَلَيۡكَ وَعَلٰى وَالِدَتِكَ‌ۘ اِذۡ اَيَّدتُّكَ بِرُوۡحِ
الۡقُدُسِ‌ؕ تُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِى الۡمَهۡدِ وَكَهۡلًا‌ ۚ وَاِذۡ عَلَّمۡتُكَ الۡكِتٰبَ وَالۡحِكۡمَةَ وَالتَّوۡرٰٮةَ
وَالۡاِنۡجِيۡلَ‌ ۚ وَاِذۡ تَخۡلُقُ مِنَ الطِّيۡنِ كَهَيۡـئَةِ الطَّيۡرِ بِاِذۡنِىۡ فَتَنۡفُخُ فِيۡهَا فَتَكُوۡنُ طَيۡرًا بِاِذۡنِىۡ‌ ۚ وَ
تُبۡرِئُ الۡاَكۡمَهَ وَالۡاَبۡرَصَ بِاِذۡنِىۡ‌ ۚ وَاِذۡ تُخۡرِجُ الۡمَوۡتٰى بِاِذۡنِىۡ‌ ۚ وَاِذۡ كَفَفۡتُ بَنِىۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ
عَنۡكَ اِذۡ جِئۡتَهُمۡ بِالۡبَيِّنٰتِ فَقَالَ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا مِنۡهُمۡ اِنۡ هٰذَاۤ اِلَّا سِحۡرٌ مُّبِيۡنٌ 110

(5:110) Imagine, then, when Allah will say:[125] 'Jesus, son of Mary, recall My favour upon you and your mother, and when I strengthened you with the spirit of holiness so that you talked to men in the cradle and also when you became of age; and when I

taught you the Book and Wisdom, and the Torah and the Gospel; and when, by My leave, you fashioned from clay the likeness of a bird and you breathed into it, and by My leave it became a bird; you healed, by My leave, the blind from birth and the leprous; and when, by My leave, you caused the dead to come to life.[126] And recall when I restrained the Israelites from you when you came to them with clear proofs whereupon those of them who disbelieved said: "This is nothing but clear magic."

125. The initial question would be addressed to all Prophets as such. Then each of them would be called upon to bear witness separately, as stated in several places in the Qur'an. In this connection the question that will be addressed to Jesus is specifically mentioned here.

126. That is, with God's command Jesus brought people to life from the state of death.

وَإِذْ أَوْحَيْتُ إِلَى الْحَوَارِيِّينَ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِي وَبِرَسُولِي ۖ قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَاشْهَدْ بِأَنَّنَا
مُسْلِمُونَ 111

(5:111) And recall when I revealed to the disciples to believe in Me and in My Messenger, they said: "We do believe, and we bear witness that we indeed are the ones who submit to Allah"[127]

127. Jesus is being told that the faith of the disciples in him was also the result of God's grace and succour, for he, himself, did not have the power to produce even one man of faith in that land of disbelief. It is also made clear that the true religion of the disciples of Jesus was Islam.

إِذْ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ هَلْ يَسْتَطِيعُ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا مَائِدَةً مِنَ
السَّمَاءِ ۖ قَالَ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ 112

(5:112) Also recall when the disciples asked Jesus,[128] son of Mary: 'Jesus, son of Mary, has your Lord the power to send down to us a repast from the heaven?' There- upon Jesus said: 'Fear Allah if you do indeed have faith.'

128. Since the disciples have been mentioned here, the continuity of the subject is interrupted momentarily in order to introduce another incident connected with the disciples. This clearly shows that those who had been directly instructed by Jesus considered him merely a human being and a slave of God; they had no conception of their master either being God or a partner of God or the son of God. Jesus had, rather, presented himself to them as a slave of God with no claims to divine authority.

One might feel inclined here to raise the question: What is the occasion for this parenthetical interjection in a conversation that is to take place on the Day of Judgement? This parenthesis, in my opinion, is not in fact part of such a conversation, but rather forms part of a discussion

in this world regarding a conversation that will take place on the Day of Judgement. The conversation that will take place on the Day of Judgement is mentioned here precisely in order that the Christians may derive a lesson from it and direct themselves to the right way. Hence, the mention of this incident regarding the disciples - even though it seems to interrupt the continuity of narration - is in no sense out of place.That is, are Muslims - Ed.

قَالُوْا نُرِيْدُ اَنْ نَّاْكُلَ مِنْهَا وَتَطْمَئِنَّ قُلُوْبُنَا وَنَعْلَمَ اَنْ قَدْ صَدَقْتَنَا وَنَكُوْنَ عَلَيْهَا مِنَ
الشّٰهِدِيْنَ 113

(5:113) They said: 'We desire to partake of it that our hearts be satisfied and we know that you did speak the truth to us, and that we are its witnesses.'

قَالَ عِيْسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ اللّٰهُمَّ رَبَّنَآ اَنْزِلْ عَلَيْنَا مَآئِدَةً مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ تَكُوْنُ لَنَا عِيْدًا
لِّاَوَّلِنَا وَاٰخِرِنَا وَاٰيَةً مِّنْكَ ۚ وَارْزُقْنَا وَاَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرّٰزِقِيْنَ 114

(5:114) Jesus, son of Mary, then prayed: 'O Allah, our Lord, send down to us a repast from the heavens that shall be a festival for the first of us and for the last of us, and a sign from You. And provide us with sustenance, for You are the best Provider of sustenance.'

قَالَ اللّٰهُ اِنِّيْ مُنَزِّلُهَا عَلَيْكُمْ ۚ فَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بَعْدُ مِنْكُمْ فَاِنِّيْٓ اُعَذِّبُهٗ عَذَابًا لَّآ اُعَذِّبُهٗٓ اَحَدًا
مِّنَ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ع 115

(5:115) Allah said: 'I shall indeed send it down to you;[129] then, I shall afflict whoever among you who disbelieves with a chastisement wherewith I will afflict none in the worlds.'

129. The Qur'an is silent on the question of whether this meal was sent down in response to this prayer. There is also no other authoritative basis to help us arrive at a clear conclusion. It is possible that the repast was actually sent down. It is also possible that the disciples withdrew their prayer after hearing the stern warning in response to it.

وَإِذْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ يٰعِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ءَأَنتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَأُمِّيَ إِلٰهَيْنِ مِن دُونِ اللّٰهِ ۖ
قَالَ سُبْحٰنَكَ مَا يَكُونُ لِيٓ أَنْ أَقُولَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي ۖ بِحَقٍّ ۚ إِن كُنتُ قُلْتُهُۥ فَقَدْ عَلِمْتَهُۥ ۚ تَعْلَمُ
مَا فِي نَفْسِي وَلَآ أَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِكَ ۚ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ عَلَّٰمُ الْغُيُوبِ 116

(5:116) And imagine when thereafter Allah will say: 'Jesus, son of Mary, did you say to people: "Take me and my mother for gods beside Allah?"[130] and he will answer: "Glory to You! It was not for me to say what I had no right to. Had I said so, You would surely have known it. You know all what is within my mind whereas I do not know what is within Yours. You, indeed You, know fully all that is beyond the reach of human perception.

130. The Christians were not content merely with deifying Jesus and the Holy Spirit. They even turned Mary, the mother of Jesus, into a full-fledged object of worship. The Bible does not contain even the remotest suggestion that Mary was in any way either divine or superhuman. During the first three centuries after the Messiah, such a concept was totally alien to Christian thinking. Towards the end of the third century of the Christian era, however, some theologians of Alexandria employed, for the first time, the expression 'Mother of God' in connection with Mary. Subsequently, belief in Mary's divinity and the practice of Mariolatry began to spread among Christians. Even then, however, the Church was not prepared to accord official approval to this belief and denounced the Mariolaters as heretics. It was not until the Council of Ephesus in 431 that the Church officially used the expression 'Mother of God' for Mary. The result was that Mariolatry began to spread fast within the Church itself, so much so that, by the time of the revelation of the Qur'an, Mary had become so important a deity that she obscured even the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Statues of Mary adorned the cathedrals. She became the object of rites and worship. People addressed their prayers to her. She was regarded as the one who responded to people's supplications, who heeded people's grievances and complaints, who relieved them in distress, who provided support and succour to the helpless. For a devout Christian there could be no greater source of comfort and inner strength than the belief that he enjoyed the support and patronage of the 'Mother of God'. In the preamble of his code, Justinian had declared Mary to be the defender and supporter of his empire, and his general, Marses, sought Mary's guidance on the battlefield. Heraclius, a contemporary of the Prophet (peace be on him), had a picture of Mary on his standard and he was confident that by her grace the standard would never be lowered. Several centuries later the Protestants argued strongly against Mariolatry during the movement which led to the Reformation. The Roman Catholic Church has, nevertheless, managed so far to cling to Mariolatry in one form or another.

مَا قُلْتُ لَهُمْ اِلَّا مَآ اَمَرْتَنِيْ بِهٖٓ اَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ رَبِّيْ وَرَبَّكُمْ ۚ وَكُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيْدًا مَّا
دُمْتُ فِيْهِمْ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِيْ كُنْتَ اَنْتَ الرَّقِيْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۭ وَاَنْتَ عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
شَهِيْدٌ 117

(5:117) I said to them nothing except what You commanded me, that is: 'Serve Allah, my Lord and your Lord.' I watched over them as long as I remained among them; and when You did recall me, then You Yourself became the Watcher over them. Indeed, You are Witness over everything.

اِنْ تُعَذِّبْهُمْ فَاِنَّهُمْ عِبَادُكَ ۚ وَاِنْ تَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ فَاِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ 118

(5:118) If You chastise them, they are Your servants; and if You forgive them, You are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise."'

قَالَ اللّٰهُ هٰذَا يَوْمُ يَنْفَعُ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ صِدْقُهُمْ ۭ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ
خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ۭ رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوْا عَنْهُ ۭ ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ 119

(5:119) Thereupon Allah will say: 'This day truthfulness shall profit the truthful. For them are Gardens beneath which rivers flow. There they will abide for ever. Allah is well- pleased with them, and they well-pleased with Allah. That indeed is the mighty triumph.'

لِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا فِيْهِنَّ ۭ وَهُوَ عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ع 120

(5:120) To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them and He has full power over everything.

6. Surah Al Anaam (The Cattle)

Name

This Surah takes its name from vv. 136, 138 and 139 in which some superstitious beliefs of the idolatrous Arabs concerning the lawfulness of some cattle (*an`am*) and the unlawfulness of some others have been refuted.

Period of Revelation

According to a tradition of Ibn Abbas, the whole of the Surah was revealed at one sitting at Makkah. Asma, a daughter of Yazid and a first cousin of Hadrat Mu'az-bin Jabl, says, "During the revelation of this Surah, the Holy Prophet was riding on a she-camel and I was holding her nose-string. The she-camel began to feel the weight so heavily that it seemed as if her bones would break under it." We also learn from other traditions that the Holy Prophet dictated the whole of the Surah the same night that it was revealed.

Its subject-matter clearly shows that it must have been revealed during the last year of the Holy Prophet's life at Makkah. The tradition of Asma, daughter of Yazid, also confirms this. As she belonged to the *Ansar* and embraced Islam after the migration of the Holy Prophet to Yathrib, her visit to the Holy Prophet at Makkah must have taken place during the last year of his life there. For before this, his relations with those people were not so intimate that a woman from there might have come to visit him at Makkah.

Occasion of Revelation

After determining the period of its revelation, it is easier to visualize the background of the Surah. Twelve years had passed since the Holy Prophet had been inviting the people to Islam. The antagonism and persecution by the Quraish had become most savage and brutal, and the majority of the Muslims had to leave their homes and migrate to Habash (Abyssinia). Above all, the two great supporters of the Holy Prophet. Abu Talib and Hadrat Khadijah, were no more to help and give strength to him. Thus he was deprived of all the worldly support. But in spite of this, he carried on his mission in the teeth of opposition. As a result of this, on the one hand, all the good people of Makkah and the surrounding clans gradually began to accept Islam ; on the other hand, the community as a whole, was bent upon obduracy and rejection. Therefore, if anyone showed any inclination towards Islam, he was subjected to taunts and derision, physical violence and social boycott. It was in these dark circumstances that a ray of hope gleamed from Yathrib, where Islam began to spread freely by the efforts of some influential people of Aus and Khazraj, who had embraced Islam at Makkah. This was a humble beginning in the march of Islam towards success and none could foresee at that time the great potentialities that lay hidden in it. For, to a casual observer, it appeared at that time as if Islam was merely a weak movement it had no material backing except the meager support of the Prophet's own family and of the few poor adherents of the Movement. Obviously the latter could not give much help because they themselves had been cast out by their own people who had become their enemies and were persecuting them.

Topics

These were the conditions, when this discourse was revealed. The main topics dealt with in this discourse may be divided under seven headings:

1. Refutation of *shirk* and invitation to the creed of *Tauhid*.
2. Enunciation of the doctrine of the "Life-after- death." and refutation of the wrong notion that there was nothing beyond this worldly life.
3. Refutation of the prevalent superstitions.
4. Enunciation of the fundamental moral principles for the building up of the Islamic Society.
5. Answers to the objections raised against the person of the Holy Prophet and his mission.
6. Comfort and encouragement to the Holy Prophet and his followers who were at, that time in a state of anxiety and despondency because of the apparent failure of the mission.
7. Admonition, warning and threats to the disbelievers and opponents to give up their apathy and haughtiness. It must, however, be noted that the above topics have not been dealt with one by one under separate headings, but the discourse goes on as a continuous whole and these topics come under discussion over and over again in new and different ways.

The Background of Makki Surahs

As this is the first long Makki Surah in the order of the compilation of the Quran, it will be useful to explain the historical background of Makki Surahs in general, so that the reader may easily understand the Makki Surahs and our references to its different stages in connection with our commentary on them.

First of all, it should be noted that comparatively very little material is available in regard to the background of the revelation of Makki Surahs whereas the period of the revelation of all the Madani Surahs is known or can be determined with a little effort. There are authentic traditions even in regard to the occasions of the revelation of the majority of the verses. On the other hand, we do not have such detailed information regarding the Makki Surahs. There are only a few Surahs and verses which have authentic traditions concerning the time and occasion of their revelation. This is because the history of the Makki period had not been compiled in such detail as that of the Madani period. Therefore we have to depend on the internal evidence of these Surahs for determining the period of their revelation: for example, the topics they discuss, their subject. matter, their style and the direct or indirect references to the events and the occasions of their revelation. Thus it is obvious that with the help of such evidence as this, we cannot say with precision that such and such Surah or verse was revealed on such and such an occasion. The most we can do is to compare the internal evidence of a Surah with the events of the life of the Holy Prophet at Makkah, and then come to a more or less correct conclusion as to what particular stage a certain Surah belongs.

If we keep the above things in view, the history of the mission of the Holy Prophet at Makkah can be divided into four stages.

The first stage began with his appointment as a Messenger and ended with the proclamation of Prophethood three years later. During this period the Message was given secretly to some selected persons only, but the common people of Makkah were not aware of it.

The second stage lasted for two years after the proclamation of his Prophethood. It began with opposition by individuals: then by and by, it took the shape of antagonism, ridicule, derision,, accusation, abuse, and false propaganda then gangs were formed to persecute those Muslims who were comparatively poor, weak' and helpless.

The third stage lasted for about six years from the beginning of the persecution to the death of Abu Talib and Hadrat Khadijah in the tenth year of Prophethood. During this period, the persecution of the Muslims became' so savage and brutal that many of them were forced to migrate to Habash. Social and economic boycott was applied against the Holy Prophet and the members of his family, and those Muslims who continued to stay in Makkah were forced to take refuge in Shi'b-i-A'bi Talib which was besieged.

The fourth stage lasted for about three years from the tenth to the thirteenth year of Prophethood. This was a period of hard trials and grievous sufferings for the Holy Prophet and his followers. Life had become unendurable at Makkah and there appeared to be no place of refuge even outside it. So much so that when the Holy Prophet went to Ta'if, it offered no shelter or protection. Besides this, on the occasion of Haj, he would appeal to each and every Arab clan to accept his invitation to Islam but met with blank refusal from every quarter. At the same time, the people of Makkah were holding counsels' to get rid of him by killing or imprisoning or banishing him from their city. It was at that most critical time that Allah opened for Islam the hearts of the *Ansar* of Yathrab where he migrated at their invitation.

Now that we have divided the life of the Holy Prophet at Makkah into four stages, it has become easier for us to tell, as far as possible, the particular stage in which a certain Makki Sarah was revealed. This is because the Surahs belonging to a particular stage can be distinguished from those of the other stages with the help of their subject matter and style. Besides this, they also contain such references as throw light on the circumstances and events that form the background of their revelation. In the succeeding Makki Surahs, we will determine on the basis of the distinctive features of each stage, and point out in the Preface, the particular stage in which a certain Makki Surah was revealed.

Subject :Islamic Creed.

This Surah mainly discusses the different aspects of the major articles of the Islamic Creed: *Tauhid*, Life-after-death, Prophethood and their practical application to human life. Side by side with this, it refutes the erroneous beliefs of the "opponents and answers their objections, warns and admonishes them and comforts the Holy Prophet and his followers, who were then suffering from persecution.

Of course, these themes have not been dealt with under separate heads but have been blended in an excellent manner.

Topics and their Interconnection

These verses are of introductory and admonitory nature. The disbelievers have been warned that if they do not accept the Islamic Creed and follow the 'Light' shown by the Revelation from the All-Knowing and All-Powerful Allah, they would go to the same doom as the former disbelievers did. Their arguments for rejecting the Prophet and the Revelation sent down to him have been refuted and a warning has been given to them that they should not be deluded by the respite that is being granted to them. **1 - 12**

These verses inculcate *Tauhid*, and refute *shirk* which is the greatest obstacle in the way of its acceptance. **13 - 24**

In these verses, a graphic scene of the life in the Hereafter has been depicted in order to warn the disbelievers of the consequences of the rejection of the Articles of Faith. **25 - 32**

Prophethood is the main theme which has been discussed from the point of view of the Holy Prophet, his Mission, the limitations of his powers, the attitude towards his followers and also from the point of view of the disbelievers. **33 - 73**

In continuation of the same theme, the story of Prophet Abraham has been related to bring home to the pagan Arabs that the Mission of Prophet Muhammad, which they were opposing, was the same as that of Prophet Abraham (Allah's peace be upon them). This line of argument was adopted because they considered themselves to be his followers, especially the Quraish who were proud of being his descendants as well. **74 - 90**

Another proof of his Prophethood is the Book, which has been sent down to him by Allah, for its teachings show the right guidance in regard to creed and practice. **91 - 108**

Divine restrictions have been contrasted with the superstitious restrictions of the pagan Arabs in order to show the striking differences between the two and thus prove the Quran to be a Revealed Book. **109 - 154**

The Jews, who were criticized in vv. 144 - 147 along with the pagan Arabs, have been urged to compare the teachings of the Quran with those of the Torah so that they might recognize their similarity and give up their lame excuses against it, and adopt its Guidance to escape the retribution on the Day of Resurrection. **155 - 160**

This is the conclusion of the discourse: the Holy Prophet has been instructed in a beautiful and forceful manner to proclaim fearlessly the articles of the Islamic Creed and their implications. **161 - 165**

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اَلۡحَمۡدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِىۡ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضَ وَجَعَلَ الظُّلُمٰتِ وَالنُّوۡرَ ؕ ثُمَّ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا بِرَبِّهِمۡ يَعۡدِلُوۡنَ 1

(6:1) All praise is for Allah alone, Who created the heavens and the earth, and brought into being light and darkness, and yet those who have rejected the call of the Truth ascribe others to be equals to their Lord.[1]

1. Remember that, although polytheists, the Arabs to whom these verses are addressed did acknowledge God as the Creator of the heavens and the earth, Who causes day to alternate with night, and Who has brought into existence the sun and the moon. None of them attributed any of these acts to either al-LAt, al-Hubal, al-'UzzA or any other deities. Why, then,'should they prostrate themselves before others beside the Creator? Why should they offer their prayers and supplicatiom to any but God? (See Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 1, n.2), and (Surah 2, n.163) The actual word that has been used in the original text for 'darkness' is in the plural. The contrast with the singular 'light' is significant: whereas light is one, there can be innumerable degrees of darkness, which is the absence of light.

هُوَ الَّذِىۡ خَلَقَكُمۡ مِّنۡ طِيۡنٍ ثُمَّ قَضٰٓى اَجَلًا ؕ وَاَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى عِنۡدَهٗ ثُمَّ اَنۡتُمۡ تَمۡتَرُوۡنَ 2

(6:2) He it is Who has created you out of clay,[2] and then decreed a term (of life), and has also appointed another term, a term determined with Him.[3] Yet you are in doubt!

2. The elements composing the human organism are all, without exception, derived from the earth. Hence it is said that man has been created out of clay.

3. This alludes to the Hour of Judgement when human beings, regardless of the age in which they lived, will be broought back to life and summoned to render an account before their Lord.

وَهُوَ اللّٰهُ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَفِى الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ يَعۡلَمُ سِرَّكُمۡ وَجَهۡرَكُمۡ وَيَعۡلَمُ مَا تَكۡسِبُوۡنَ 3

(6:3) And He it is Who is One True God in the heavens and in the earth. He knows your deeds - both secret and open - and knows fully whatever you earn.

وَمَا تَاۡتِيۡهِمۡ مِّنۡ اٰيَةٍ مِّنۡ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمۡ اِلَّا كَانُوۡا عَنۡهَا مُعۡرِضِيۡنَ 4

(6:4) Yet every time a sign of their Lord comes to them, they turn away from it,

فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ ۖ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِيهِمْ أَنبَٰٓؤُا۟ مَا كَانُوا۟ بِهِۦ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ 5

(6:5) and thus they gave the lie to the Truth that has now come to them. Soon they will come upon some news concerning what they had mocked at.[4]

4. The allusion is to the Migration (Hijrah) and the numerous victories destined to follow it in quick succession. When this allusion was made, the unbelievers could not have guessed what kind of news they would receive, and even the Muslims could not have imagined those developments. Infact, the Prophet himself (peace be on him) was not fully aware of the posibilities which lay in store.

أَلَمْ يَرَوْا۟ كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِن قَبْلِهِم مِّن قَرْنٍ مَّكَّنَّٰهُمْ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ مَا لَمْ نُمَكِّن لَّكُمْ وَأَرْسَلْنَا ٱلسَّمَآءَ عَلَيْهِم مِّدْرَارًا ۖ وَجَعَلْنَا ٱلْأَنْهَٰرَ تَجْرِى مِن تَحْتِهِمْ فَأَهْلَكْنَٰهُم بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَأَنشَأْنَا مِنۢ بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا ءَاخَرِينَ 6

(6:6) Have they not seen how many a people We have destroyed before them? People whom We had made more powerful in the earth than you are and upon them We showered from the heavens abundant rains, and at whose feet We caused the rivers to flow? And then (when they behaved ungratefully) We destroyed them for their sins, and raised other peoples in their place.

وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ كِتَٰبًا فِى قِرْطَاسٍ فَلَمَسُوهُ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ لَقَالَ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوٓا۟ إِنْ هَٰذَآ إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ 7

(6:7) (O Messenger!) Had We sent down to you a book incribed on parchment, and had they even touched it with their own hands, the unbelievers would still have said: 'This is nothing but plain magic.'

وَقَالُوا۟ لَوْلَآ أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ ۖ وَلَوْ أَنزَلْنَا مَلَكًا لَّقُضِىَ ٱلْأَمْرُ ثُمَّ لَا يُنظَرُونَ 8

(6:8) They also say: 'Why has no angel been sent down to this Prophet?'[5] Had We sent down an angel, the matter would surely have long been decided and no respite would have been granted them.[6]

5. The unbelievers were saying that if Muhammed (peace be on him) had indeed been endowed with prophethood, an angel should have been sent down from heaven to announce that he was the Messenger of God, and that that people would be punished if they

did not follow his directives. It was atonishing to these ignorant objectors that the Creator of the heavens and the earth should appoint someone as His Messenger and then leave him without protection against the physical hurts and insults that were flung at him. They would have expected the envoy of a Sovereign as great as the Creator of the universe to be accomplied by at least some heavenly constable, if not a large retinue, to protect him!

6. The unbelievers' objection is refuted by this remark. it warns them that the time available for accepting the true faith and bringing about the required reform in their lives will last only as long as Ultimate Reality remains concealed from human perception by the wheel of the Unseen. Once that wheel is removed, there will be no more respite: the summons to God's rekoning will have come. This earthly life is a test of whether a man is able to recognize the Ultimate Reality - even though it lies hidden from his sence perception - by the correct excecise of his reason and intelect and of whether, having once recognized it, he is able to behave in conformity with that Reality by exercising control over his animal self and its lusts. This test necessarily requires that the Reality should remain concealed. Thereafter man will be confronted with the result of the test rather than by any further test. Until God has decided to bring the term of their test to a close, it is not possible to respond to such requests by sending angels to them in their true form. (See also Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 2, n.228.)

وَلَوْ جَعَلْنٰهُ مَلَكًا لَّجَعَلْنٰهُ رَجُلًا وَّلَلَبَسْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَّا يَلْبِسُوْنَ 9

(6:9) Had We appointed an angel, We would have sent him down in the form of a man - and thus We would have caused them the same doubt which they now entertain.[7]

7. This is the second point in response to the unbelievers' objection. One possible form in which the angel could have appeared is in its true, non-terrestrial form. It has already been pointed out that the time for this has not arrived. Alternatively, angels could have come down in human form. But this would have left the unbelievers facing the same difficulty as they faced with regard to whether the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) had been designated by God or not.

وَلَقَدِ اسْتُهْزِئَ بِرُسُلٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَحَاقَ بِالَّذِيْنَ سَخِرُوْا مِنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ

يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ع 10

(6:10) And indeed before your time (O Muhammad!) many a Messenger has been scoffed at; but those who mocked at them were encompassed by the Truth they had scoffed at.

قُلْ سِيْرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ ثُمَّ انْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ 11

(6:11) Say: 'Go about journeying the earth, and behold the end of those who gave the lie (to the Truth).'[8]

8. The archaeological remains and historical records of the ancient nations testify to how they met their tragic ends through turning away from truth and honesty and stubbornly persisting in their devotion to falsehood.

قُلْ لِّمَنْ مَّا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ قُلْ لِّلّٰهِ ؕ كَتَبَ عَلٰى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ ؕ لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ اِلٰى
يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ ؕ اَلَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ 12

(6:12) Ask thern: 'To whom belongs all that is in the heavens and on the earth?'[9] Say: 'Everything belongs to Allah.' He has bound Himself to the exercise of mercy (and thus does not chastise you for your disobedience and excesses instantly). Surely He will gather you all together on the Day of Resurrection - the coming of which is beyond doubt; but those who have courted their own ruin are not going to believe.

9. The subtlety of this expression should not go unnoticed. The unbelievers are asked to whom belongs whatever exists in either the heavens or on the earth. The inquirer then pauses to wait for the answer. Those questioned are themselves convinced that all belongs to God, yet while they dare not respond falsely, they are nevertheless not prepared to give the correct answer. Fearing that their response may be used as an argument against their polytheistic beliefs, they keep quiet. At this, the inquirer is told to answer the question himself and to say that all belongs to God.

وَلَهٗ مَا سَكَنَ فِي الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ ؕ وَهُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ 13

(6:13) And to Him belongs all that dwells in the night and the day. He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

قُلْ اَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ اَتَّخِذُ وَلِيًّا فَاطِرِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَهُوَ يُطْعِمُ وَلَا يُطْعَمُ ؕ قُلْ اِنِّيْٓ
اُمِرْتُ اَنْ اَكُوْنَ اَوَّلَ مَنْ اَسْلَمَ وَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ 14

(6:14) Say: 'Shall I take for my guardian anyone other than Allah - the Originator of the heavens and earth; He Who feeds and Himself is not fed?'[10] Say: 'Surely I have been commanded to be the first among those who submit (to Allah) and not to be one of those who associate others with Allah in His divinity (even though others may do so).'

10. This remark contains a subtle sarcasm. Far from providing sustenance to their followers, the beings whom the polytheists set up as deities beside the true God were dependent upon them for their sustenance. No Pharaoh can maintain the pomp and splendour connected

with his godhead unless his subjects pay their tax dues and make him other offerings. No deity can attract worshippers unless some of its devotees make an idol, place it in some magnificent temple, and decorate it lavishly. All these counterfeit gods are totally dependent upon their own servants. It is the Lord of the Universe alone Who is the True God, Whose godhead rests solely upon His.own power; Who needs the help of no one, whereas no one can dispense with His.

قُلْ اِنِّیْۤ اَخَافُ اِنْ عَصَیْتُ رَبِّیْ عَذَابَ یَوْمٍ عَظِیْمٍ 15

(6:15) Say: 'Surely do I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the chastisement of an awesome Day.

مَنْ یُّصْرَفْ عَنْهُ یَوْمَىٕذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمَهٗ ؕ وَ ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْمُبِیْنُ 16

(6:16) Whosoever has been spared chastisement on that Day, Allah has bestowed His mercy upon him. That is the manifest triumph.

وَ اِنْ یَّمْسَسْكَ اللّٰهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهٗۤ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ وَ اِنْ یَّمْسَسْكَ بِخَیْرٍ فَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِیْرٌ 17

(6:17) Should Allah touch you with affliction, there is none to remove it but He; and should He touch you with good, He has the power to do everything.

وَ هُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهٖ ؕ وَ هُوَ الْحَكِیْمُ الْخَبِیْرُ 18

(6:18) He has the supreme hold over His servants. He is All-Wise, All-Aware.

قُلْ اَیُّ شَیْءٍ اَكْبَرُ شَهَادَةً ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ ۙ۫ قف شَهِیْدٌۢ بَیْنِیْ وَ بَیْنَكُمْ ۫ قف وَ اُوْحِیَ اِلَیَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنُ لِاُنْذِرَكُمْ بِهٖ وَ مَنْۢ بَلَغَ ؕ اَىِٕنَّكُمْ لَتَشْهَدُوْنَ اَنَّ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اٰلِهَةً اُخْرٰى ؕ قُلْ لَّاۤ اَشْهَدُ ۚ قُلْ اِنَّمَا هُوَ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ وَّ اِنَّنِیْ بَرِیْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُوْنَ ۘ 19

(6:19) Ask them: 'Whose testimony is the greatest?' Say: 'Allah is the witness between me and you;[11] and this Qur'an was revealed to me that I should warn you thereby and also whomsoever it may reach.' Do you indeed testify that there are other gods with Allah?[12] Say: 'I shall never testify such a thing.'[13] Say: 'He is the One God and I am altogether averse to all that you associate with Him in His divinity.'

11. God Himself witnesses that the Prophet (peace be on him) has been designated by Him and that what he communicated was by His command.

12. In order to bear witness to something, mere guesswork and imagination are not sufficient. What is required is knowledge on the basis of which a person can state something with full conviction. Hence. the question means: Did they really have knowledge of anyone other than God who could lay claim to man's worship and absolute service by dint of being the omnipotent sovereign, the one whose will prevailed throughout the universe?

13. The interlocutor is instructed to tell people that if they wanted to bear false witness and testify without knowledge, they could do so, but that he himself could not do something so unreasonable.

اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يَعْرِفُوْنَهٗ كَمَا يَعْرِفُوْنَ اَبْنَآءَهُمْ ۘ اَلَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ 20

(6:20) Those whom We have given the Book will recognize this just as they recognize their own ofspring;[14] but those who have courted their own ruin will not believe.

14. Those who have knowledge of the Scriptures know for sure that God is One alone and that no one shares His godhead with Him. It is true that one can spot one's own child even in the midst of a large crowd of children. The same can be said about those well-versed in the Scriptures. Even if the true concept of godhead were interspersed among numerous false beliefs and concepts about God, those well-versed in the scriptural lore would be able to recognize without doubt which doctrine was true.

وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اَوْ كَذَّبَ بِاٰيٰتِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ 21

(6:21) And who could be more wrong-doing than he who either foists a lie on Allah[15] or gives the lie to His signs? [16]Surely such wrong-doers shall not attain success.

15. This refers to those who asserted that there were also other beings which shared with God in His godhead, were possessed of divine attributes and powers, and rightly deserved to claim from man worship and absolute service. It is also a slander to claim that God has selected certain beings to be His chosen intimates and that lie has commanded - or is at least agreeable to the idea - that they should he considered to possess divine attributes, and that people should serve and revere them as they would serve and revere God, their Lord.

16. By 'signs of God' are meant the signs found within man's own being, as well as those scattered throughout the universe. They also include the signs which are manifest from the lives and achievements of the Prophets, as well as those embodied in the Scriptures. All these point towards one and the same truth - that in the entire realm of existence there is one God alone and that all else are merely His subjects. Who could be more unjust than one who, in utter disregard of all these signs, invests others than the One True God with attributes of

godhead, considering them to merit the same rights as God. And does so merely on grounds of either conjecture, or speculation or out of blind adherence to the beliefs of his forefathers although there is not so much as a shred of evidence founded on true knowledge, observation or experience in support of such beliefs. Such a person subjects truth and reality to grave injustice. He also wrongs his own self and everything else in this universe with which he has to deal on the basis of this false assumption.

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ نَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا أَيْنَ شُرَكَاؤُكُمُ الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ 22

(6:22) And on the Day when We shall gather them all together, We shall ask those who associated others with -Allah in His divinity: 'Where, now, are your partners whom you imagined (to have a share in the divinity of Allah)?'

ثُمَّ لَمْ تَكُنْ فِتْنَتُهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا وَاللَّهِ رَبِّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِينَ 23

(6:23) Then they will be able to play no mischief but will say (falsely): 'By Allah, our Lord, we associated none (with You in Your divinity).'

انْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَذَبُوا عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ 24

(6:24) Behold, how they will lie against themselves and how their forged deities will forsake them!

وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَسْتَمِعُ إِلَيْكَ ۚ وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا ۖ وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كُلَّ آيَةٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءُوكَ يُجَادِلُونَكَ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَٰذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ 25

(6:25) And of them there are some who appear to pay heed to you, but upon their hearts We have laid coverings so they understand it not; and in their ears, heaviness (so they hear not).[17] Even if they were to witness every sign, they would still not believe in it so much so that when they come to you, they dispute with you, those who disbelieve contend: 'This is nothing but fables of the ancient times.'[18]

17. It is noteworthy that God attributes to Himself all that happens in the world as a result of the laws of nature. Since these laws were made by God Himself, the effects which result from their operation are also ultimately due to the will and permission of God. The refusal

on the part of unbelievers to heed the call of the Truth even when it is clear and audible stems from their obstinacy, prejudice, mental rigidity and inertia. It is a law of nature that when a man is not prepared to rise above prejudice in his quest for the Truth, his heart closes to every truth which is opposed to his desires. We can describe this condition by saying that the heart of that person has become sealed and when God describes it He does so by saying that He had sealed the heart of the person concerned. The explanation of this Paradox is that whereas we describe merely an incident, God describes its ultimate cause.

18. Whenever ignorant people are called to the Truth they are liable to say that there is nothing novel about it, that it is merely a repetition of things that have come down from the past, as if in their view every truth must be new, and whatever is old must of necessity be false, although Truth has always been one and the same and will remain so. All those who have come forward to lead people in the light of God-given knowledge have been preaching one and the same Truth from time immemorial, and all those who will benefit from this valuable source of human knowledge in the future are bound to repeat the same old truths. Novelties can be invented only by those who, being bereft of the light of Divine guidance, are incapable of perceiving the eternal Truth, preferring to weave altogether new ideas out of their imagination and to put them forward as truth.

وَهُمْ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ وَيَنْـَٔوْنَ عَنْهُ ۚ وَاِنْ يُّهْلِكُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ 26

(6:26) As for others, they prevent them from embracing the Truth; and themselves, they flee from it (so as to harm you). But they court their own ruin, although they do not realize it.

وَلَوْ تَرٰٓى اِذْ وُقِفُوْا عَلَى النَّارِ فَقَالُوْا يٰلَيْتَنَا نُرَدُّ وَلَا نُكَذِّبَ بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّنَا وَنَكُوْنَ مِنَ

الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ 27

(6:27) If you could but see when they shall be made to stand by the Fire! They will plead: 'Would that we were brought back to life? Then we would not give the lie to the signs of our Lord and would be among the believers.'

بَلْ بَدَا لَهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يُخْفُوْنَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۭ وَلَوْ رُدُّوْا لَعَادُوْا لِمَا نُهُوْا عَنْهُ وَاِنَّهُمْ

لَكٰذِبُوْنَ 28

(6:28) No! They will say this merely because the Truth which they had concealed will become obvious to them;19 or else if they were sent back, they would still revert to what was forbidden to them. (So this plea of theirs would be a lie too) for they are just liars.

19. At that moment such a statement on their part would not be indicative of either any true change of heart or of any genuinely revised judgement based on serious reflection and reasoning. It would rather be the result of direct observation of reality at a time when even the staunchest unbeliever would find it impossible to deny it.

وَقَالُوْٓا اِنْ هِيَ اِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوْثِيْنَ 29

(6:29) They say now: 'There is nothing but the life of this world, and we shall not be raised from the dead.'

وَلَوْ تَرٰٓى اِذْ وُقِفُوْا عَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ ۭ قَالَ اَلَيْسَ هٰذَا بِالْحَقِّ ۭ قَالُوْا بَلٰى وَرَبِّنَا ۭ قَالَ فَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ ع 30

(6:30) If you could but see when they will be made to stand before their Lord. He will say: 'Is not this the truth?' They will say: 'Yes indeed, by our Lord.'Whereupon He will say: 'Taste the chastisement, then, for your denying the Truth.'

قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِلِقَاۗءِ اللّٰهِ ۭ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَاۗءَتْهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً قَالُوْا يٰحَسْرَتَنَا عَلٰي مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِيْهَا ۙ وَهُمْ يَحْمِلُوْنَ اَوْزَارَهُمْ عَلٰي ظُهُوْرِهِمْ ۭ اَلَا سَاۗءَ مَا يَزِرُوْنَ 31

(6:31) Those who consider it a lie that they will have to meet Allah are indeed the losers so much so that when that Hour comes to them suddenly they will say: 'Alas for us, how negligent we have been in this behalf .' They will carry their burden (of sins) on their backs. How evil is the burden they bear!

وَمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَآ اِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَّلَهْوٌ ۭ وَلَلدَّارُ الْاٰخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّقُوْنَ ۭ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ 32

(6:32) The life of this world is nothing but a sport and a pastime,[20] and the life of the Hereafter is far better for those who seek to ward off their ruin. Will you not, then, understand?

20. This does not mean that earthly life has nothing serious about it and that it has been brought into being merely as a sport and pastime. What this observation means is that, compared with the true and abiding life of the Hereafter, earthly life seems, as it were, a sport, a transient pastime with which to amuse oneself before turning to serious business. Earthly life has been likened to a sport and pastime for another reason as well. Since

Ultimate Reality is hidden in this world, the superficially minded ones who lack true perception encounter many a thing which causes them to fall a prey to misconceptions. As a result of these misconceptions such persons indulge in a variety of actions which are so blatantly opposed to reality that their life seems to consist merely of sport and pastime. One who assumes the position of a king in this world, for instance, is no different from the person who plays the part of a king on the stage of a theatre. His head is bedecked with a crown and he goes about commanding people as if he were a king, even though he has no royal authority. He may later, if the director of the theatre wishes, be either dismissed from his royal office, put into prison or even be sentenced to death Plays of this kind go on all over the world. Saints and man-made deities are deemend to respond to human supplications even though they do not have a shred of authority to do so. Again, some people try to unravel the Unseen even though to do so lies altogether beyond their reach. There are those who claim to provide sustenance to others despite the fact that they are themselves dependent on others for their own sustenance. There are still others who think that they have the power either to bestow honour and dignity on human beings or to degrade them, either to confer benefits or to harm them. Such people go about trumpeting their own glory but their own foreheads bear the stamp of their humble bondage to their Creator. By just one twist of fortune such people may fall of their pededstrals and be trampled under the feet of those upon whom they have been imposing their God-like authority.

All these people come to a sudeen end with death.As soon as man crosses the boundaries of this world and steps into the Next, the reality will be fully manifest, all the misconceptions that he has entertained will be peeled away, and he will be shown the true worth of his belief and actions.

قَدْ نَعْلَمُ إِنَّهُ لَيَحْزُنُكَ الَّذِي يَقُولُونَ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يُكَذِّبُونَكَ وَلَٰكِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ يَجْحَدُونَ 33

(6:33) (O Muhammad!) We know indeed that the things they say grieve you, though in truth it is not you whom they give the lie to, but it is the signs of Allah that these wrong-doers reject[21].

21. The fact is that before the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) began to preach the message of God, all his people regarded him as truthful and trustworthy and had full confidence in his veracity. Only after he had begun to preach the message of God did they call him a liar. Even during this period none dared to say that the Prophet (peace be on him) had ever been guilty of untruthfullness in personal matters. Even his worst enemies never accused him of lying in any worldly affairs. When they did accuse him of falsehood, they did so in respect of his prophetic mission. Abu Jahl for instance, was one of his staunchest enemies. According to a tradition from 'Ali, Abu Jahl once said to the Prophet (peace be on him): 'We do not disbelieve you. We disbelieve your message.' On the occasion of the Battle of Badr, Akhnas b. Shariq asked Abu Jahl, when they were alone, to confide whether he considered Muhammad to be truthful or not. He replied: ' By God, Muhammad is a veracious person. He has never lied in all his life. But if every honorable office-liwa'

(standard-bearing in war), siqayah (provision of water to the pilgrims), hijabah (gaurdian ship of the ka'bah) and nubuwah (prophethood) - were to fall to the share of the decendents of Qusayy, what would be left for the rest of the Quraysh?' (Ibn Kathir,vol.3, pp.17-18-Ed.)
Here God consoled the Prophet(peace be on him) by telling him that by charging him with falsehood the unbelievers were calling God untruthful. Since God has endured this accusation with mild forbearance, leaving them free to persist in their blasphemy, the Prophet (peace be on him) need not feel undue disquiet.

وَلَقَدْ كُذِّبَتْ رُسُلٌ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَصَبَرُوا عَلَىٰ مَا كُذِّبُوا وَأُوذُوا حَتَّىٰ أَتَاهُمْ نَصْرُنَا ۚ وَلَا
مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكَ مِن نَّبَإِي الْمُرْسَلِينَ 34

(6:34) Messengers before you have been given the lie to, and they endured with patience their being given the lie to and being persecuted until the time when Our help reached them. None has the power to alter the words of Allah[22]. Indeed some account of the Messengers has already reached you.

22. The point emphasized here is that no one has the power to change God's Law regarding the conflict between Truth and falsehood. Lovers of Truth must of necessity pass through trials and persecution so as to be gradually tempered. Their endurance, their honastyy of conviction, their readiness to sacrifice and to undertake all risk for their cause, the strength of their faith and the extent of their trust in God must be tested. They must pass through this phase of persecution to develop in thenselves those qualities which can be developed nowhere else but on earth. They are also required to defeat the forces of ignorance by virtue of their moral excellence and the nobility of their character. Only after they have established their moral superiority over their adversaries will God's help arrive. No one can secure that help before hand.

وَإِن كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكَ إِعْرَاضُهُمْ فَإِنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ أَن تَبْتَغِيَ نَفَقًا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَوْ سُلَّمًا فِي
السَّمَاءِ فَتَأْتِيَهُم بِآيَةٍ ۚ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَمَعَهُمْ عَلَى الْهُدَىٰ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ
الْجَاهِلِينَ 35

(6:35) Nevertheless, if their turning away grieves you, then seek - if you can - either a way down into the earth or a ladder to the heavens, and try to bring to them some sign.[23] Had Allah so willed, He would have gathered them all to the true guidance. Do not, then, be among the ignorant.[24]

23. The Prophet (peace be on him) saw that even though he had spent a long time admonishing his people, they did not seem inclined to heed his call. As a result he

sometimes wished for the appearance of some extraordinary sign of God that would undermine the stubbornness of his people and lead them to accept his guidance. This verse embodies God's response to the Prophet's desire. He is told not to be impatient. He must persist in his striving and continue to work. in conformity with God's directive. Had it been God's purpose to work miracles, He would have done so. But God did not consider that to be either the appropriate method for bringing to a successful completion the required intellectual and moral revolution or for the evolution of a sound, healthy civilization. Well, then, if the Prophet (peace be on him) could not bear patiently with the attitude of stubbornness and rejection prevalent among his people, and if he thought it necessary to make them witness a tangible sign of God, let him muster all his strength and try to cleave the earth, or climb a ladder to the heaven and bring forth a miracle powerful enough to change the unbelief of the unbelievers into belief. He is told, however, that in this regard he should not expect God to fulfil his wish, for such things have no place in God's scheme.

24. Had it been required that all people should be driven to the Truth, there would have been no need to send Prophets, to reveal heavenly Books, to direct believers to engage in struggles against unbelievers, and to make the message of Truth pass through the necessary stages until fulfilment is reached. The result could have been achieved by a single sign of God's creative will. God, however, did not want things to happen that way. He preferred the Truth to be set before people with its supporting arguments so that by a proper exercise of their rational judgement, they should recognize it for what it was and thereafter freely choose to embrace it as their faith. By moulding their lives in conformity with this Truth such people should demonstrate their moral superiority over the devotees of falsehood. They should continually attract men of sound morals by the force of their arguments, by the loftiness of their ideals, by the excellence of their principles and by the purity of their lives. They should thus reach their goal - the establishment of the hegemony of the true faith - by the natural and gradual escalation of strife against falsehood. God will guide them in the performance of this task and will provide them with whatever help they merit during the various stages of their struggle. But if anyone wishes to evade this natural course and wants God to obliterate corrupt ideas and to spread healthy ones in their stead, to root out a corrupt civilization and put a healthy one in its place by exercising His omnipotent will, let him know that this will not come about. The reason is that such is contrary to the scheme according to which God has created man as a responsible being, bestowed upon him a degree of power which he may exercise, granted him the freedom to choose between obedience and disobedience to God, awarded him a certain term of life in order to demonstrate his worth, and determined that at an appointed hour He will judge him for either reward or punishment in the light of his deeds.

إِنَّمَا يَسْتَجِيبُ الَّذِينَ يَسْمَعُونَ ۘ وَالْمَوْتَىٰ يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ 36

(6:36) Only they who listen can respond to the call of the Truth; as for the dead,[25] Allah will raise them and then to Him they will be returned.

25. 'Those who hear' refers to those whose consciences are alive, who have not atrophied their intellect and reason, and who have not closed their hearts to the Truth out of irrational prejudice and menta! inflexibility. In contrast to such people are those who are characterized

as 'dead' - who blindly follow the old familiar beaten tracks, and can never deviate from the ways they have inherited, even when these ways are plainly at variance with the Truth.

وَقَالُوْا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ اٰيَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَادِرٌ عَلٰٓى اَنْ يُّنَزِّلَ اٰيَةً وَّلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ 37

(6:37) And they say: 'Why has no miraculous sign been sent down to him from his Lord?' Say: 'Surely Allah has the power to send down a sign, but most of them do not know.[26]

26. The word ayah here signifies a tangible miracle. The purpose of the verse is to point out that the reason for not showing a miraculous sign is not God's powerlessness. The true reason is something else which those people in their immaturity, have failed to comprehend.

وَمَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلَا طٰٓئِرٍ يَّطِيْرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ اِلَّآ اُمَمٌ اَمْثَالُكُمْ ؕ مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِى الْكِتٰبِ مِنْ شَىْءٍ ثُمَّ اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُوْنَ 38

(6:38) There is no animal that crawls on the earth, no bird that flies with its two wings, but are communities like you. We have neglected nothing in the Book (of decree). Then to their Lord will they all be mustered.

وَالَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا صُمٌّ وَّبُكْمٌ فِى الظُّلُمٰتِ ؕ مَنْ يَّشَاِ اللّٰهُ يُضْلِلْهُ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّشَاْ يَجْعَلْهُ عَلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ 39

(6:39) Those who gave the lie to Our signs are deaf and dumb and blunder about in darkness.[27] Allah causes whomsoever He wills to stray in error, and sets whomsoever He wills on the straight way.' [28]

27. If they are concerned with miraculous signs in order to determine whether or not the message of the Prophet (peace be on him) is indeed true, then, let them look around with open and attentive eyes. If they actually do so they will find the world full of such signs. Let them take any species of animal or bird they like. They can reflect upon the superbness of its organic structure. They will notice how its instinctive urges are in complete conformity with its natural requirements. They will also observe how wonderfully adequate are the arrangements for providing it with nourishment; how marvellously well-determined are the limits within which -it lives; how tremendously efficient is the system under which each living creature is protected, provided for, looked after and directed towards self-fulfilment; how strictly each one is fitted into the framework of the discipline devised for it, and how

very smooth is the operation of the whole system of birth, procreation and death. Were one to reflect on this alone from among the innumerable signs of God, one would perceive fully how true the teaching of the Prophet (peace he on him) is concerning the unity and other attributes of God and how necessary it is to live a righteous life in conformity with the concept of God propounded by him. But their eyes were neither open to perceive the Truth nor their ears open to heed admonition. Instead, they remained ignorant, preferring to be entertained by the performance of wondrous feats.

28. God's act of misguiding a man consists in not enabling one who cherishes his ignorance to observe the signs of God. The fact is that if a biased person - one who has no real love of the Truth - were to observe the signs of God, he might still fail to perceive it. Indeed, all those things which cause misconception and confusion would probably continue to alienate him from it. God's act of true guidance consists in enabling a seeker after the Truth to benefit from the sources of true knowledge, so that he constantly discovers sign after sign, leading him ultimately to the Truth.
A myriad of cases are encountered daily to illustrate this. We notice that a great many people pass inattentively over the countless signs of God that are scattered all over the world, and ignore even those signs which are manifest in human beings as well as in animals. It is little wonder, then, that they derive no lesson from all these signs. There are many who study zoology, botany, biology, geology, astronomy, physiology, anatomy and other branches of natural science. Others study history, archaeology and sociology. During the course of such studies they come across many signs of God which, if they cared to look at them in the correct perspective, might fill their hearts with faith. But since they commence their study with a bias, and are actuated only by the desire to acquire earthly advantages, they fail to discover the signs which could lead them to the Truth. On the contrary, each of those very signs of God contributes to pushing them towards atheism, materialism and naturalism. At the same time, the world is not empty of those truly wise ones who view the universe with open eyes. For them even the most ordinary phenomenon of the universe directs them to God.

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتَكُمْ اِنْ اَتٰىكُمْ عَذَابُ اللّٰهِ اَوْ اَتَتْكُمُ السَّاعَةُ اَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ تَدْعُوْنَ ۚ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ

صٰدِقِيْنَ 40

(6:40) Say: 'What do you think if some chastisement of Allah or the Hour suddenly overtakes you: do you cry to any other than Allah? Answer, if you speak the truth.

بَلْ اِيَّاهُ تَدْعُوْنَ فَيَكْشِفُ مَا تَدْعُوْنَ اِلَيْهِ اِنْ شَآءَ وَتَنْسَوْنَ مَا تُشْرِكُوْنَ ۧ 41

(6:41) Lo, it is to Him alone that you cry and then, if He so wills, He removes the distress for which you had cried to Him. Then you forget the partners you had set up with Allah.[29]

29. Attention is now drawn towards another sign - one observable even in the lives of those who deny the Truth. When either some great calamity befalls a man or when death starkly

stares him in the face, it is only to God that he turns for refuge. On such occasions even the staunchest polytheists forget their false gods and cry out to the One True God, and even the most rabid atheists stretch out their hands in prayer to Him. This phenomenon is mentioned here in order to draw an instructive lesson. It shows that devotion to God and monotheism are ingrained in the human soul. No matter how overlaid this truth might be, some day it shakes off man's heedlessness and ignorance and manifests itself fully. It was the observation of this sign which had led 'Ikrimah, the son of Abu Jahl, to the true faith. For when Makka was conquered at the hands of the Prophet (peace be on him), 'Ikrimah fled to Jeddah and sailed from there towards Abyssinia. During the voyage the boat ran into a severe storm which threatened to capsize it. At first people began calling on their gods and goddesses. Later on, when the storm grew even worse and the passengers were sure that the boat would sink, they began to feel it was time to call on God alone, for He alone could save them. This opened the eyes of 'Ikrimah, whose heart cried out to him that if there was no effective helper for them in that situation, how could there he one elsewhere? He also recalled that this was precisely what the Prophet (peace be on him) had constantly told people, and that it was precisely because of this preaching that they had been engaged in unnecessary violent conflict with him. This was a turning-point in 'Ikrimah's life. He instantly made up his mind that if he survived the storm he would go straight to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) and place his hand in his, binding himself in allegiance. Thereafter he not only remained true to his word by becoming a Muslim, but spent the rest of his life struggling in the cause of Islam.

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَآ اِلٰٓى اُمَمٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَاَخَذْنٰهُمْ بِالْبَاْسَآءِ وَالضَّرَّآءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُوْنَ 42

(6:42) And We did indeed send Messengers to other nations before you and then We seized those nations with misfortune and hardship so that they might humble themselves (before Us).

فَلَوْلَآ اِذْ جَآءَهُمْ بَاْسُنَا تَضَرَّعُوْا وَلٰكِنْ قَسَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ 43

(6:43) But when misfortune befell them from Us why did they not humble themselves? Their hearts had hardened and Satan had made their deeds seem fair to them.

فَلَمَّا نَسُوْا مَا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهٖ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ اَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا فَرِحُوْا بِمَآ اُوْتُوْٓا اَخَذْنٰهُمْ بَغْتَةً فَاِذَا هُمْ مُّبْلِسُوْنَ 44

(6:44) So, when they forgot what they had been reminded of, We opened the gates of all things so that while they rejoiced in what they had been granted We seized them suddenly and they were plunged into utter despair.

فَقُطِعَ دَابِرُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا ؕ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ 45

(6:45) Thus the last remnant of those wrongdoing people was cut off. All praise is for Allah, the Lord of the entire universe, (for having punished them so).

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ سَمْعَكُمْ وَ اَبْصَارَكُمْ وَخَتَمَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِكُمْ مَّنْ اِلٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللّٰهِ

يَاْتِيْكُمْ بِهٖ ؕ اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ الْاٰيٰتِ ثُمَّ هُمْ يَصْدِفُوْنَ 46

(6:46) Say (O Muhammad!): What do you think? If Allah should take away your hearing and your sight and seal your hearts[30] - who is the god, other than Allah, who could restore them to you? Behold, how We put forth Our signs in diverse forms, and yet they turn away from them.

30. If Allah should deprive you of the powers of thinking and understanding.

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتَكُمْ اِنْ اَتٰىكُمْ عَذَابُ اللّٰهِ بَغْتَةً اَوْ جَهْرَةً هَلْ يُهْلَكُ اِلَّا الْقَوْمُ

الظّٰلِمُوْنَ 47

(6:47) Say: 'If the chastisement of Allah were to overtake you unawares or openly shall any except the wrong-doing people be destroyed?'

وَمَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ اِلَّا مُبَشِّرِيْنَ وَمُنْذِرِيْنَ ۚ فَمَنْ اٰمَنَ وَاَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ

وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ 48

(6:48) We do not send Messengers except as bearers of glad tidings and warners. So, he who believes in their message and mends his conduct need have no fear and need not grieve;

وَالَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يَمَسُّهُمُ الْعَذَابُ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَفْسُقُوْنَ 49

(6:49) whereas those who give the lie to Our signs, chastisement will visit them for their transgression.

قُلْ لَّآ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِيْ خَزَآئِنُ اللّٰهِ وَلَآ اَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَآ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ اِنِّيْ مَلَكٌ ۚ اِنْ
اَتَّبِعُ اِلَّا مَا يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيَّ ۭ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْاَعْمٰى وَالْبَصِيْرُ ۭ اَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ۝ 50

(6:50) (O Muhammad!) Say: 'I do not say to you I have the treasures of Allah. Nor do I have knowledge of what is beyond the reach of human perception. Nor do I say to you: I am an angel. I only follow what is revealed to me.'[31]Then ask them: 'Are the blind and the seeing alike?'[32] Do you not then reflect?

31. Feeble-minded people have always entertained the foolish misconception that the more godly a man is, the more liberated he should be from the limitations of human nature. They expect a godly person to be able to work wonders. By a mere sign of his hand, whole mountains should be transmuted into gold. At his command, the earth should begin to throw up all its hidden treasures. He should have miraculous access to all relevant facts about people. He should be able to point out the locations of things which have been lost, and show how they can be retrieved. He should be able to predict whether or not a patient will survive his disease; whether a pregnant woman will deliver a boy or a girl. Moreover, he should be above all human disabilities and limitations. How can a genuinely godly person feel hunger or thirst? How can he be overcome by sleep? How can he have a wife and children? How can he engage in buying and selling to meet his material requirements? How can he be impelled by force of circumstances to resort to such mundane acts as making money? How can he feel the pinch of poverty and paucity of resources? False conceptions such as these dominated the minds of the contemporaries of the Prophet (peace be on him). When they heard of his claim, in order to test his veracity they asked him regarding things that lie beyond the ken of human perception and to work wonders, and blamed him when they saw him engaged in such acts as eating and drinking, and taking care of his wife and children, and walking about the bazaars like other ordinary human beings. It is misconceptions such as these that this verse seeks to remove.

32. The statement of a Prophet in such matters amounts to a testimony based on first-hand observation. For the truths which a Prophet propounds are those which he himself has observed and experienced and which have been brought within the range of his knowledge by means of revelation. On the contrary, those who are opposed to the truths propounded by the Prophets are blind since the notions they entertain are based either on guess-work and conjecture or on blind adherence to ideas hallowed by time. Thus the difference between a Prophet and his opponents is as that between a man who has sound vision and a man who is blind. Obviously the former is superior, by dint of this gift of knowledge from God rather than because he has access to hidden treasures, because of his knowledge of the unseen world, and because of his freedom from physical limitations.

وَاَنْذِرْ بِهِ الَّذِيْنَ يَخَافُوْنَ اَنْ يُّحْشَرُوْٓا اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖ وَلِيٌّ وَّلَا شَفِيْعٌ لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُوْنَ 51

(6:51) And warn with this (revealed message) those who fear that they shall be mustered to their Lord, that there will be none apart from Allah to act as their protector and intercessor; then maybe they will become God-fearing.[33]

33. Those who are too deeply immersed in the allurements of earthly life to think either of death or of their being brought to stand before God for His judgement can hardly benefit from such admonitions. Likewise, such admonitions can have no wholesome effect on those who cherish the illusion that because of their attachment to some holy personage who will intercede on their behalf, they will come to no harm in the Hereafter. The same applies to those who believe that someone has already obtained their redemption by expiating their sins. The Prophet (peace be on him) is therefore asked to disregard such persons and to attend to those who are conscious, those with no false illusions. Only these people are susceptible to admonitions and can be expected to reform themselves.

وَلَا تَطْرُدِ الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدٰوةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيْدُوْنَ وَجْهَهٗ ؕ مَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ وَّمَا مِنْ حِسَابِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَتَطْرُدَهُمْ فَتَكُوْنَ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ 52

(6:52) And do not drive away those who invoke their Lord in the morning and the evening, seeking His pleasure all the time.[34] You are by no means accountable for them just as they are by no means accountable for you. If you still drive them away, you will become among the wrong-doers.[35]

34. One of the objections raised by the chiefs and the affluent members of the Quraysh was that the Prophet (peace be on him) had gathered around him a host of slaves, clients (mawali) and others belonging to the lower strata of society. They used to scoff at the fact that men of such humble social standing as Bilal, 'Ammar. Suhayb and Khabbab had joined his ranks. They wondered if they happened to be the only chosen ones of the Quraysh in the sight of God! They not only poked fun at the financial distress of these people but also attacked them for any weakness of character they had before accepting Islam. They went about saying sarcastically that those who had been such and such in the past had now become part of the 'chosen' community.

35. That is, everyone is personally responsible for his deeds, whether good or bad. The Prophet (peace he on him) is told that he will neither have to explain to God the conduct of the converts nor will the latter be required to explain his conduct. They can neither usurp

his good deeds, nor transfer their own misdeeds to his account. There is, therefore, no reason for the Prophet (peace be on him) to alienate those who approach him as seekers after Truth.

وَكَذٰلِكَ فَتَنَّا بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لِّيَقُوْلُوْٓا اَهٰٓؤُلَآءِ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْۢ بَيْنِنَا ؕ اَلَيْسَ اللّٰهُ
بِاَعْلَمَ بِالشّٰكِرِيْنَ 53

(6:53) Thus We have made some of them a means for testing others[36] so that they should say: 'Are these the ones among us upon whom Allah has bestowed His favour?' Yes, does Allah not know well who are the thankful ?

36. By enabling the poor and the indigent, the people who have a low station in society to precede others in believing, God has put those who wax proud of wealth and honour to a severe test.

وَاِذَا جَآءَكَ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلٰى نَفْسِهِ
الرَّحْمَةَ ۙ اَنَّهٗ مَنْ عَمِلَ مِنْكُمْ سُوْٓءًا بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ وَاَصْلَحَ ۙ فَاَنَّهٗ غَفُوْرٌ
رَّحِيْمٌ 54

(6:54) And when those who believe in Our signs come to you, say to them: 'Peace be upon you. Your Lord has made mercy incumbent upon Himself so that if anyone of you does a bad deed out of ignorance and thereafter repents and makes amends, surely you will find Him All-Forgiving, AllCompassionate.'[37]

37. Several of those who came to believe in the Prophet (peace be on him) had committed many serious sins before they embraced Islam. Even though their lives had altogether changed following their conversion, the opposition continued to play up the weaknesses and misdeeds of their past life. The Prophet (peace he on him) is asked to comfort such persons and to tell them that God does not punish those who sincerely repent their sins and mend their ways.

وَكَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ وَلِتَسْتَبِيْنَ سَبِيْلُ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ع 55

(6:55) Thus We clearly set forth Our signs so that the way of the wicked might become distinct.[38]

38. 'And thus' refers to the whole of the foregoing discussion, beginning with (verse 37): 'And they say: Why has no miraculous sign been sent down to him?' The purpose of this remark is to stress that the persistence of some people in their denial of the Truth and in

their disbelief, in spite of a host of unmistakably clear signs and arguments, was sufficient to prove beyond doubt that they were merely a bunch of criminals. If they persisted in error and transgression it was neither through any lack of strong arguments in support of the Truth nor, conversely, because of strong arguments in support of falsehood. The reason was rather that they had delilibrately chosen to fall into error and transgression.

قُلْ إِنِّي نُهِيتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ۖ قُلْ لَا أَتَّبِعُ أَهْوَاءَكُمْ ۙ قَدْ ضَلَلْتُ
إِذًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ 56

(6:56) Say (O Muhammad!): 'I have been forbidden to serve those to whom you call other than Allah.' Say: 'I do not follow your desires, for were I to do that, I would go astray and would not be of those who are rightly guided .'

قُلْ إِنِّي عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّي وَكَذَّبْتُمْ بِهِ ۖ مَا عِنْدِي مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ ۖ إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ ۖ
يَقُصُّ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْفَاصِلِينَ 57

(6:57) Say: 'I take stand upon a clear evidence from my Lord and it is that which you have given the lie to. That which you desire to be hastened is not within my power.[39] Judgement lies with Allah alone. He declares the Truth, and He is the best judge.'

39. This alludes to God's punishment. The adversaries questioned why it was that they had openly rejected a Prophet sent by God, but had not been struck down by God's wrarth? They said that the fact of his appointment by God meant that anyone who either disbelieved or insulted him would, at once, be either plunged into the earth or struck by lightning. And yet, they pointed out, the Messenger of God and his followers faced new sufferings and humiliations whereas those who abused and persecuted him enjoyed prosperity.

قُلْ لَوْ أَنَّ عِنْدِي مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ لَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ
بِالظَّالِمِينَ 58

(6:58) Say: 'If what you demand so hastily were in my power, the matter between me and you would have been long decided. But Allah knows best how to judge the wrong-doers.

وَعِنْدَهٗ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَآ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِى الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ؕ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَّرَقَةٍ
اِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٍ فِىْ ظُلُمٰتِ الْاَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٍ وَّلَا يَابِسٍ اِلَّا فِىْ كِتٰبٍ مُّبِيْنٍ 59

(6:59) He has the keys to the realm that lies beyond the reach of human perception; none knows them but He. And He knows what is on the land and in the sea; there is not a leaf which falls that He does not know about and there is not a grain in the darkness of the earth or anything green or dry which has not been recorded in a Clear Book.

وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ يَتَوَفّٰىكُمْ بِالَّيْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا جَرَحْتُمْ بِالنَّهَارِ ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُكُمْ فِيْهِ لِيُقْضٰٓى اَجَلٌ
مُّسَمًّى ۚ ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ۚ 60

(6:60) He recalls your souls by night, and knows what you do by day; and then He raises you back each day in order that the term appointed by Him is fulfilled. Then to Him you will return whereupon He will let you know what you have been doing. .

وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهٖ وَيُرْسِلُ عَلَيْكُمْ حَفَظَةً ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَآءَ اَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ
تَوَفَّتْهُ رُسُلُنَا وَهُمْ لَا يُفَرِّطُوْنَ 61

(6:61) And He alone holds sway over His servants and sets guardians over you[40] till death approaches any of you and Our deputed angels take his soul, neglecting no part of their task.

40. The angels who keep watch and maintain a record of everything, i.e. all their movements, deeds and so on.

ثُمَّ رُدُّوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ مَوْلٰهُمُ الْحَقِّ ؕ اَلَا لَهُ الْحُكْمُ ۫ وَهُوَ اَسْرَعُ الْحٰسِبِيْنَ 62

(6:62) Then all are restored to Allah, their true protector. Behold, His is the judgement. He is the swiftest of those who take account.'

قُلْ مَنْ يُّنَجِّيْكُمْ مِّنْ ظُلُمٰتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ تَدْعُوْنَهٗ تَضَرُّعًا وَّخُفْيَةً ۚ لَئِنْ اَنْجٰنَا مِنْ
هٰذِهٖ لَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ 63

(6:63) Ask them (O Muhammad!): 'Who is it that delivers you from dangers in the deep darknesses of the land and the sea, and to whom do you call in humility and in the secrecy of your hearts? To whom do you pray: "If He will but save us from this distress, we shall most certainly be among the thankful?"

قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُنَجِّيكُمْ مِّنْهَا وَمِنْ كُلِّ كَرْبٍ ثُمَّ اَنْتُمْ تُشْرِكُوْنَ 64

(6:64) Say: "It is Allah alone Who delivers you from this and from every distress, and yet you associate others with Allah in His divinity."[41]

41. That God alone possesses all power and authority, and has full control over the things which cause either benefit or harm to men, and that He alone holds the reins of their destiny are facts to which there is ample testimony in man's own being. For instance, whenever man is faced with a really hard time, and when the resources upon which he normally fails back seem to fail him, he instinctively turns to God. In spite of such a clear sign, people set up partners to God without any shred of evidence that anyone other than God has any share in His power and authority.

قُلْ هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلٰٓى اَنْ يَّبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابًا مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ اَوْ مِنْ تَحْتِ اَرْجُلِكُمْ اَوْ يَلْبِسَكُمْ شِيَعًا وَّيُذِيْقَ بَعْضَكُمْ بَاْسَ بَعْضٍ ؕ اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ الْاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَفْقَهُوْنَ 65

(6:65) Say: "It is He Who has the power to send forth chastisement upon you from above you, or from beneath your feet, or split you into hostile groups and make some of you taste each others' violence. Behold, how We set forth Our signs in diverse forms, so that maybe they will understand the Truth".[42]

42. God's punishment can strike in an instant. This is the warning to those who, supposing such punishment to he remote, were growing bolder in their hostility towards the Truth. They could be destroyed in a moment by a hurricane. Just a few earthquake trernors could raze villages and cities to the ground. Likewise, a few spark, of hostility could ultimately wreak such havoc among tribes. nations and countries that bloodshed and lawlessness plague them for years on end. Hence if they are spared punishments for a while that should not drug them to heedlessness and lead them to live in total disregard of distinctions between right and wrong. They should rather he grateful that God had given thern respite and by means of a number of signs He was making it possible for thern to recognize the Truth and foliow it.

وَكَذَّبَ بِهٖ قَوْمُكَ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ ؕ قُلْ لَّسْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيْلٍ ؕ 66

(6:66) Your people have denied it even though it is the Truth. Say: "I am not a guardian over You.[43]

43. A Prophet is neither required to compel People to see what they are not prepared to see nor to force into their hearts what they fail to comprehend. It is not a Prophet's task to chastise people for failing to see and comprehend the Truth. His task is merely to proclaim Truth as distinct from falsehood. If people fail thereafter to accept it, they will be overwhelmed by the very misfortunes against which that Prophet had warned.

لِّكُلِّ نَبَإٍ مُّسْتَقَرٌّ ۚ وَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ 67

(6:67) Every tiding has its appointed time; you yourselves will soon know (the end)."

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ يَخُوضُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ ۚ

وَإِمَّا يُنسِيَنَّكَ الشَّيْطَانُ فَلَا تَقْعُدْ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرَىٰ مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ 68

(6:68) When you see those who are engaged in blasphemy against Our signs, turn away from them until they begin to talk of other things; and should Satan ever cause you to forget,[44] then do not remain, after recollection, in the company of those wrong-doing people.

44. In case the Muslims fail to remember this directive and mistakenly continue to remain in the company of those who were indulging in making fun of their faith, they should withdraw from such company as soon as they remember this directive.

وَمَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِم مِّن شَيْءٍ وَلَٰكِن ذِكْرَىٰ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ 69

(6:69) For those who are God-fearing are by no means accountable for the others except that it is their duty to adinonish them; maybe then, they will shun evil.[45]

45. Those who avoid disobedience to God will not be held responsible for the errors of those who disobey. This being the case, the former have no justification for taking it upon themselves to persuade the latter to obedience or to consider themselves obliged to answer all their questions, however absurd and flimsy, until the Truth is forced down their throats. Their duty is merely to admonish and place the Truth before those whom they find stumbling about in error. If there is no response to this call except remonstration and obstinate argument they are under no obligation to waste their time and energy on them. They should rather devote their time and energy to instructing and admonishing those who have an urge to seek out the Truth.

وَذَرِ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ لَعِبًا وَّلَهْوًا وَّغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا وَذَكِّرْ بِهٖٓ اَنْ تُبْسَلَ
نَفْسٌۢ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ ۖ لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيٌّ وَّلَا شَفِيْعٌ ۚ وَاِنْ تَعْدِلْ كُلَّ عَدْلٍ لَّا
يُؤْخَذْ مِنْهَا ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ الَّذِيْنَ اُبْسِلُوْا بِمَا كَسَبُوْا ۚ لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيْمٍ وَّعَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌۢ
بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْفُرُوْنَ ع 70

(6:70) Leave alone those who have made a sport and a pastime of their religion and whom the life of the world has beguiled. But continue to admonish them (with the Qur'an) lest a man should be caught for what he has himself earned for there shall neither be any protector nor intercessor apart from Allah; and though he may offer any conceivable ransom it shall not be accepted from him, for such people have been caught for the deeds that they have themselves earned. Boiling water to drink and a painful chastisement to suffer for their unbelief is what awaits them.

قُلْ اَنَدْعُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُنَا وَلَا يَضُرُّنَا وَنُرَدُّ عَلٰٓى اَعْقَابِنَا بَعْدَ اِذْ هَدٰىنَا اللّٰهُ
كَالَّذِي اسْتَهْوَتْهُ الشَّيٰطِيْنُ فِي الْاَرْضِ حَيْرَانَ ۡ لَهٗٓ اَصْحٰبٌ يَّدْعُوْنَهٗٓ اِلَى الْهُدَى ائْتِنَا ۭ
قُلْ اِنَّ هُدَى اللّٰهِ هُوَ الْهُدٰى ۭ وَاُمِرْنَا لِنُسْلِمَ لِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۙ 71

(6:71) Ask them (O Muharnmad!): "Shall we invoke, apart from Allah, something that can neither benefit nor harm us, and thus be turned back on our heels after Allah has guided us? Like the one whom the evil ones have lured into bewilderment in the earth, even though he has friends who call him to true guidance saying: "Come to us." Say: "Surely Allah's guidance is the only true guidance, and we have been commanded to submit ourselves to the Lord of the entire universe,

وَاَنْ اَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاتَّقُوْهُ ۭ وَهُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ 72

(6:72) and to establish Prayer, and to have fear of Him. It is to Him that all of you shall be gathered.

وَهُوَ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ وَیَوْمَ یَقُوْلُ كُنْ فَیَكُوْنُ ۙ قَوْلُهُ الْحَقُّ ؕ
وَلَهُ الْمُلْكُ یَوْمَ یُنْفَخُ فِی الصُّوْرِ ؕ عٰلِمُ الْغَیْبِ وَ الشَّهَادَةِ ؕ وَهُوَ الْحَكِیْمُ الْخَبِیْرُ 73

(6:73) And He it is Who has created the heavens and the earth in truth;[46] and the very day He will say: "Be!" (resurrection) there will be. His word is the Truth and His will be the dominion[47] on the day when the-Trumpet is blown.[48] He knows all that lies beyond the reach of human perception as well as all that is visible to man;[49] He is the All-Wise, the All-Aware.'

46. It has been asserted again and again in the Qur'an that God created the heavens and the earth 'in truth'. This covers a wide range of meanings:
First, that the heavens and the earth have not been created just for the fun of it. This existence is not a theatrical play. This world is not a child's toy with which to amuse oneself as long as one wishes before crushing it to bits and throwing it away. Creation is rather an act of great seriousness. A great objective motivates it, and a wise purpose underlies it. Hence, after the lapse of a certain stage it is necessary for the Creator to take full account of the work that has been done and to use those results as the basis for the next stage. This is stated at various places in the Qur'an in the following manner:
Our Lord, You did not create this in vain (Surah Al 'Imran 3:191).
And We did not create the heavens and the earth and whatever lies in between them playfully (Surah Al-Anbiya' 21:16).
And did you think that We created you out of play and that you will not be brought back to Us? (Surah al-Mu'minun 23:115).
Second, it means that God has created this entire system of the universe on solid foundations of truth. The whole of the universe is based on justice, wisdom and truth. Hence, there is no scope in thesystem for falsehood to take root and prosper. The phenomenon of the prosperity of falsehood which we observe, is to be ascribed to the will of God, Who grants the followers of falsehood the opportunity, if they so wish, to expend their efforts in promoting unrighteousness, injustice and untruth. In the end, however, the earth wfll throw up all the seeds of untruth that have been sown, and in the final reckoning every follower of falsehood will see that the efforts he devoted to cultivating and watering this pernicious tree have all gone to waste.
Third, it means that God has founded the universe on the basis of right, and it is on the ground of being its Creator that He governs it. His command in the universe is supreme since He alone has the right to govern it, the universe being nothing but His creation. If anyone else's commands seem to be carried out in this world, this should not cause any misunderstanding. For in reality the will of no one prevails, and cannot prevail in the universe, for no one has any right to enforce his will.

47. This does not mean that the present dominion is not His. The purpose of this statement is rather to stress that when the veil which keeps things covered during the present phase of existence is lifted and the Truth becomes fully manifest, it will become quite clear that all those who seemed or were considered to possess power and authority are absolutely

powerless, and that the true dominion belongs to the One True God Who created the universe.

48. In what manner the Trumpet will be blown is difficult for us to grasp.What we know through the Qur'an is that on the Day of Judgement the Trumpet will be blown on God's command, whereupon all will die. Then after an indefinite period of time - a period that is known to God alone - the second Trumpet will be blown, whereupon all people of all epochs will be resurrected and will find themselves on the Plane of the Congregation.
Thus, when the first Trumpet is blown the entire order of the universe will be disrupted, while on the blowing of the second Trumpet a fresh order will be established, in a new form and with a new set of laws governing it.

49. Ghayb signifies all that is hidden from, and is beyond the ken of man's knowledge. Shahadah, as opposed to ghayb, signifies that which is manifest and thus can be known to man.

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرٰهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ ءَازَرَ أَتَتَّخِذُ أَصْنَامًا ءَالِهَةً ۖ إِنِّىٓ أَرٰىكَ وَقَوْمَكَ فِى ضَلٰلٍ

مُّبِينٍ 74

(6:74) And recall when Abraham said to his father, Azar: 'Do you take idols for gods?[50] I see you and your people in obvious error.'

50. The incident relating to Abraham (peace be on him) is adduced in order to confirm and reinforce the view that just as Muhammad (peace he on him) and his Companions - thanks to the guidance vouchsafed by God - had denounced polytheism and had turned away from all false gods, bowing their heads in obedience to the One True Lord of the universe, so had been done by Abraham in his time. In the same way as ignorant people were then opposing the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) and those who believed in him, Abraham, too, had been opposed in his day by the people among whom he lived. Furthermore, the answer Abraham gave to his people in the past can also be given by Muhammad (peace be on him) and his followers, for he was on the same path as Noah, Abraham and the other Prophets who had descended from Abraham. Those who had refused to follow the Prophet (peace be on him) should therefore take note that they had deviated from the way of the Prophets and were lost in error.
At this point it should also be noted that Abraham was generally acknowledged by the Arabs to be their patriarch and their original religious leader. The Quraysh, in particular, were proud of their devotion to Abraham, of being his progeny and of being servants to the shrine built by him. Hence, the mention of Abraham's doctrine of monotheism, of his denunciation of polytheism and his remonstration with his polytheistic people, amounted to demolishing the very basis on which the Quraysh had prided themselves. It also amounted to destroying the confidence of the people of Arabia in their polytheistic religion. This also proved to them that the Muslims stood in the shoes of Abraham himself, whereas their own position was that of an ignorant nation which had remonstrated with Abraham out of ignorance and folly.

وَكَذٰلِكَ نُرِيٓ إِبۡرٰهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ ٱلسَّمٰوٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ ٱلۡمُوقِنِينَ 75

(6:75) And thus We showed Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth,[51] so that he might become one of those who have sure faith.[52].

51. The adversaries are told that they can observe God's signs in the phenomena of the universe, just as Abraham could. The difference is that they see nothing, as if they were blind, whereas Abraham saw with open eyes. The sun, moon and stars which rise and set before their eyes day after day and night after night witness them as misguided at their setting as at their rising. Yet the same signs were observed by the perceptive Abraham, and the physical phenomena helped him arrive at the Truth.

52. To obtain a full understanding of this section, as well as of those verses which mention the dispute between Abraham and his people, it is necessary to cast a glance at the religious and cultural condition of the latter. Thanks to recent archaeological discoveries, not only has the, city where Abraham is said to have been born been located, but a good deal of information is also available about the condition of the people of that area during the Abrahamic period. We reproduce below a summary of the conclusions which Sir Leonard Wooley arrived at as a result of the researches embodied in his work, Abraham (London, 1935).

It is estimated that around 2100 B.C., which is now generally accepted by scholars as the time of the advent of Abraham, the population of the city of Ur was at least two hundred and fifty thousand, maybe even five hundred thousand. The city was a large industrial and commercial metropolis. Merchandise was brought to Ur from places as far away as Palmir and Nilgiri in one direction, and in the other it had developed trade relations with Anatolia. The state, of which this city was the capital, extended a little beyond the boundaries of modern Iraq in the north, and exceeded its present borders further to the west. The great majority of the population were traders and craftsmen. The inscriptions of that period, which have been discovered in the course of archaeological research, make it clear that those people had a purely materialistic outlook on life. Their greatest concern was to earn the maximum amount of wealth and enjoy the highest degree of comfort and luxury. Interest was rampant among them and their devotion to money-making seemed all-absorbing. They looked at one another with suspicion and often resorted to litigation. In their prayers to their gods, too, they generally asked for longer life, prosperity and greater commercial success, rather than for spiritual growth, God's pardon and reward in the Hereafter.

The population comprised three classes of people: (1) amelu, the priests, the government and military officers; (2) mushkinu, the craftsmen and farmers; and (3) the slaves.

The people of the first class mentioned, i.e. amelu, enjoyed special privileges. In both criminaI and civil matters, their rights were greater than those of the others, and their lives and property were deemed to be of higher value. It was in such a city and in such a society that Abraham first saw the light of day. Whatever information we possess with regard to him and his family through the Talmud shows that he belonged to the amelu class and that his father was the highest functionary of the state. See also Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. 1, (Surah 2, n.290).

In the inscriptions of Ur there are references to about five thousand deities. Each city had its own deity. Each city had a chief deity which it considered its chief protector and, therefore,

that deity was considered worthy of greater reverence than all the others. 'The chief deity of Ur was Nannar (the moon god), and it is for this reason that the city later became known as Kamarina. The other major city was Larsa, which replaced Ur as the capital of the kingdom. Its chief deity was Shamash (the sun god). Under these major deities there was a myriad of minor deities which had generally been chosen from among the heavenly bodies - stars and planets. People considered them responsible for granting their innumerable minor prayers. Idols had been carved in the image of these celestial and terrestrial gods and goddesses and were made objects of ritual worship.

Qamar is the Arabic word for 'moon'- Ed.

The idol of Nannar had been placed in a magnificent building on the top of the highest hill. Close to it was the temple of Nin-Gal, the wife of Nannar. The temple of Nannar resembled a royal palace. Every night a female worshipper went to its bedroom, adorned as a bride. A great number of women had been consecrated in the name of this deity and their position was virtually that of religious prostitutes. The woman who would sacrifice her virginity for the sake of her 'god' was held in great esteem. For a woman to give herself to some unrelated person 'for the sake of God' was considered a means to salvation. Needless to say, it was generally the priests who made most use of this institution. Nannar was not merely a deity, but the biggest landlord, the biggest trader, the biggest industrialist and the most powerful ruler. Many orchards, buildings and huge estates had been consecrated to his temple. In addition to this, cereals, milk, gold, cloth, etc., were brought as offerings to the temple by peasants, landlords and merchants, and there was a large staff in the temple to receive the offerings. Many a factory had been established on behalf of the temple. Large-scale trading was also carried out on its behalf. All these activities were conducted by the priests in the name of the deity. Moreover, the country's main court was also located in the temple. The priests functioned as judges and their judgements were equated with those of God. The authority of the royal family was derived from Nannar. The concept was that Nannar was the true sovereign and that the ruler of the country governed merely on his behalf. Because of this relationship, the king himself was raised to the rank of a deity and was worshipped.

The founder of the dynasty which ruled over Ur at the time of Abraham was Ur-Nammu. In 2300 B.C. he had established an extensive kingdom, stretching from Susa in the east to Lebanon in the west. Hence the dynasty acquired the name 'Nammu', which became Nimrud in Arabic. After the emigration of Abraham, both the ruling dynasty and the nation of Ur were subjected to a succession of disasters. Firstly, the Elamites sacked Ur and captured Nimrud along with the idols of Nannar. Later on, an Elamite state was established in Larsa which governed Ur as well. Later still, Babylon prospered under a dynasty of Arabian origin and both Larsa and Ur came under its hegemony. These disasters shook the people of Ur's faith in Nannar, for he had failed to protect them.

It is difficult to say much, with certainty, about the extent of the subsequent impact of the teachings of Abraham on these people. The laws which were codified by the Babylonian King Hammurabi in 1910 B.C. show the impress of the prophetic influence, whether direct or indirect. An inscription of this code was discovered in 1902 by a French archaeologist and its English translation by C. H. W. John was published in 1903 under the title The Oldest Code of Law. Many articles of this code, both fundamental principles and substantive laws, bear some resemblance to the Mosaic Law.

If the conclusions of these archaeological researchers are correct, it becomes quite evident that polytheism did not consist merely of a set of religious beliefs and polytheistic rites, it

rather provided the foundation on which the entire order of economic, cultural, political and social life rested. Likewise, the monotheistic mission which was undertaken by Abraham was not merely directed against the practice of idol-worship. It had far wider implications, so much so that it affected the position of the royal family both as rulers and deities. It also affected the social, economic and, political status and interests of the priestly class, and the aristocracy in general, and in fact the entire fabric of the social life of the kingdom. To accept the teaching of Abraham meant that the entire edifice of the existing society should be pulled down and raised anew on the basis of belief in the One God. Hence, as soon as Abraham launched his mission, ordinary people as well as the privileged classes, ordinary devotees as well as Nimrud. rose at once to oppose and suppress it.

فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ الَّيْلُ رَاٰ كَوْكَبًا ۚ قَالَ هٰذَا رَبِّيْ ۚ فَلَمَّآ اَفَلَ قَالَ لَآ اُحِبُّ الْاٰفِلِيْنَ 76

(6:76) Then, when the night outspread over him, he beheld a star, and said: 'This is my Lord.' But when it went down, he said: 'I do not love the things that go down.'

فَلَمَّا رَاَ الْقَمَرَ بَازِغًا قَالَ هٰذَا رَبِّيْ ۚ فَلَمَّآ اَفَلَ قَالَ لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَهْدِنِيْ رَبِّيْ لَاَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الضَّآلِّيْنَ 77

(6:77) Then, when he beheld the moon rising, he said: 'This is my Lord!' But when it went down, he said: 'Were that my Lord did not guide me, I surely would have become among the people who have gone astray.'

فَلَمَّا رَاَ الشَّمْسَ بَازِغَةً قَالَ هٰذَا رَبِّيْ هٰذَآ اَكْبَرُ ۚ فَلَمَّآ اَفَلَتْ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اِنِّيْ بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُوْنَ 78

(6:78) Then when he beheld the sun rising, he said: 'This is my Lord. This is the greatest of all.' Then, when it went down, he said: 'O my people! Most certainly I am quit of those whom you associate with Allah in His divinity.[53]

53. Here some light is thrown on the mental experience through which Abraham passed in the beginning and which led him to an understanding of the Truth before prophethood was bestowed on him. This experience shows how a right-thinking and sound-hearted man, who had opened his eyes in a purely polytheistic environment and had received no instruction in monotheism, was ultimately led to discover the Truth by careful observation of, and serious reflection on the phenomena of the universe. The account of the conditions prevailing among the people of Abraham shows that when he began to think seriously the scene was dominated by the worship of the heavenly bodies - the moon, the sun and the stars. It was natural, therefore, that when Abraham began his quest for the Truth, he should have been faced with the question: Is it possible that any of these - the sun, the moon and the stars - is

God? He concentrated his reflection on this central question and by observing that all the gods of his nation were bound by a rigid law under which they moved about like slaves, he concluded that those so-called gods were not possessed of even a shadow of the power of the One True Lord, Who alone had created them all and had yoked them to serve His will.

The Qur'anic passage describing Abraham's reactions on observing first a star, then the moon, and finally the sun, has puzzled some readers because the words seem to suggest that Abraham had never before witnessed these common phenomena. This misconception has made the whole narration such a riddle for some scholars that they could only solve it by inventing the strange anecdote that Abraham was born and grew to maturity in a cave and was thus deprived of the opportunity to observe the heavenly bodies. What is said, however, is so plain that one need not fall back on any such incident in order to comprehend it. It is well known, for instance, that when Newton saw an apple fall from a tree in his orchard this incident instantly raised in his mind the question: Why do things always fall to the ground? As a result of his reflection on this question he arrived at his theory of gravity. On reading this incident one might wonder if Newton had never before seen anything fall to the ground! Obviously, he must have seen things fall. For what reason, then, should the failing of an apple cause in his mind a reaction quite different irom those caused by hundreds of earlier observations of similar things failing? The answer is that a reflecting mind does not react uniformly to similar observations. A man may observe something over and over again without this observation creating any stir in his mind, but then there comes a moment when suddenly the same observation agitates his mind and his mental faculty begins to work in a different direction. It may also happen that while a man's mind is wrestling with a problem, he encounters something which is otherwise quite ordinary but which suddenly seems to provide the key. Something to this effect happened with Abraham. Certainly, he was as familiar as anyone else with nightfall and the ensuing daybreak. The sun, the moon and the stars had all risen before his eyes in the past and had then disappeared from sight. But on one particular day his observation of a star was to stimulate his thinking in a certain direction and to lead him in the end to perceive the truth of God's Oneness. It is possible that Abraham's mind was already engrossed in reflecting on whether, and if so to what extent, the beliefs which served as the foundation of the entire life-system of his people embodied the Truth. when he spotted a star which provided him with the initial key to the solution of the problem. It is also possible that the observation of a particular star first set him thinking about the problem.

Another question that arises is whether Abraham's statements about the star, the moon and the sun show that he lapsed into polytheism temporarily. The answer must be that, while a seeker after the Truth may pause on the way to his goal, what really matters is his direction and the end-point of his journey rather than the intermediary stages. These stages are inevitable for every seeker of the Truth. A man stops at them to inquire and question rather than to pronounce his final judgement. During these stages of the quest a man may seem to express the opinion: 'That is so', but what he is really doing is asking himself the question: 'Is it really so?' When serious investigation leads to a negative answer, he proceeds further and continues the quest. Hence, it would be wrong to think of such a seeker having temporarily fallen victim to polytheism and unbelief whenever he paused at an intermediary stage for critical reflection.

إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا وَّمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ج

79

(6:79) Behold, I have turned my face in exclusive devotion to the One Who originated the heavens and the earth, and I am certainly not one of those who associate others with Allah in His divinity.'

وَحَآجَّهٗ قَوْمُهٗ ط قَالَ أَتُحَآجُّوٓنِّي فِي اللّٰهِ وَقَدْ هَدٰىنِ ط وَلَآ أَخَافُ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ بِهٖٓ إِلَّآ أَنْ
يَّشَآءَ رَبِّي شَيْـًٔا ط وَسِعَ رَبِّي كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ط أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ 80

(6:80) His. people remonstrated with him whereupon Abraharn said: 'Do you remonstrate with me concerning Allah Who has guided me to the right way? I do not fear those whom you associate with Allah in His divinity. Only that which my Lord wills, indeed that alone will come by. My Lord embraces all things within His knowledge. Will you not take heed?[54]

54. The word used here is tadhakkur which conveys the sense that somebody who had been either heedless or negligent of something suddenly wakes up to its true meaning. The purpose of Abraham's statement was to recall them to their senses by reminding them that their true Lord was not uninformed about their deeds, for His knowledge encompasses everything.

وَكَيْفَ أَخَافُ مَآ أَشْرَكْتُمْ وَلَا تَخَافُونَ أَنَّكُمْ أَشْرَكْتُمْ بِاللّٰهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهٖ عَلَيْكُمْ
سُلْطٰنًا ط فَأَيُّ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ أَحَقُّ بِالْأَمْنِ ج إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ م 81

(6:81) Why should I fear those whom you have associated (with Allah in His divinity) when you do not fear associating others with Allah in His divinity - something for which He has sent down to you no authority. Then, which of the two parties has better title to security? Tell us, if you have any knowledge!

أَلَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوْا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوٓا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ أُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمُ الْأَمْنُ وَهُمْ مُّهْتَدُونَ ع 82

(6:82) Those who believe and did not tarnish their faith with wrong-doing for them there is security, and it is they who have been guided to the right way.'[55]

55. This entire section shows that those people did not deny the existence of God as the creator of the heavens and earth. Their real guilt was that they associated others in His

attributes and His rights over man. In the first place, Abraham himself clearly states that they associated others with God as His partners. In the second place, the way in which Abraham mentions God in addressing these people is suitable only for a people who did not deny the existence of God. We must, therefore, regard as incorrect the opinion of those Qur'anic commentators who try to explain this verse on the assumption that the people of Abraham either denied or were unaware of the existence of God, and considered their own deities to be the exclusive possessors of godhead.

The expression 'and did not tarnish their faith with wrong-doing' led some Companions to the misapprehension that perhaps this 'wrong-doing' signified 'disobedience'. But the Prophet (peace be on him) has made it clear that this wrong-doing signifies shirk (associating others with God in His divinity). The verse means, therefore, that they alone are fully secure and rightly-guided who believe in God and do not mix their faith with any polytheistic belief and practice.

It is interesting to learn that this incident, which is the starting-point of Abraham's prophetic career, has found no place in the Bible. It is mentioned only in the Talmud. The Talmudic version, however, is different from the Qur'anic version in two ways. First, in the Talmudic version Abraham's quest for the Truth begins with the sun and then proceeds by way of the stars to his discovery of the One True God. Second. it states that Abraham not only held the sun to be his Lord but even worshipped it, and that the same happened in connection with the moon.

وَتِلْكَ حُجَّتُنَآ اٰتَيْنٰهَآ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ عَلٰى قَوْمِهٖ ؕ نَرْفَعُ دَرَجٰتٍ مَّنْ نَّشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيْمٌ عَلِيْمٌ 83

(6:83) That was Our argument which We gave to Abraham against his people. We raise in ranks whom We will. Truly your lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing.

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهٗٓ اِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ ؕ كُلًّا هَدَيْنَا ۚ وَنُوْحًا هَدَيْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهٖ دَاوٗدَ وَسُلَيْمٰنَ وَاَيُّوْبَ وَيُوْسُفَ وَمُوْسٰى وَهٰرُوْنَ ؕ وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ۙ 84

(6:84) And We bestowed upon Abraham (offspring) Ishaq (Isaac) and Ya'qub (Jacob) and each of them did We guide to the right way as We had earlier guided Noah to the right way; and (of his descendants We guided) Da'ud (David) and Sulayman (Solomon), Ayyub (Job), Yusuf (Joseph), Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron). Thus do We reward those who do good.

وَزَكَرِيَّا وَيَحْيٰى وَعِيْسٰى وَاِلْيَاسَ ؕ كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ۙ 85

(6:85) (And of his descendants We guided) Zakariya (Zachariah), Yahya (John), Isa (Jesus) and Ilyas (Elias): each one of them was of the righteous.

وَإِسْمٰعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَيُونُسَ وَلُوطًا ۚ وَكُلًّا فَضَّلْنَا عَلَى الْعٰلَمِينَ ۙ 86

(6:86) (And of his descendants We guided) Isma'il (Ishmael), al-Yasa' (Elisha), Yunus (Jonah), and Lut (Lot). And each one of them We favoured over all mankind.

وَمِنْ اٰبَآئِهِمْ وَذُرِّيّٰتِهِمْ وَإِخْوَانِهِمْ ۚ وَاجْتَبَيْنٰهُمْ وَهَدَيْنٰهُمْ إِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ 87

(6:87) And likewise We elected for Our cause and guided on to a straight way some of their forefathers and their offspring and their brethren.

ذٰلِكَ هُدَى اللّٰهِ يَهْدِي بِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ ۚ وَلَوْ أَشْرَكُوا لَحَبِطَ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ 88

(6:88) That is Allah's guidance wherewith He guides those of His servants whom He wills. But if they ever associated others with Allah in His divinity, then all that they had done would have gone to waste.[56]

56. Had those people also ascribed partners to God like the people of Arabia, they would not have achieved the positions they had attained.Some might perhaps have earned places in the rogues' gallery of history as either ruthless conquerors or monuments to greed. But had they not shunned polytheism and adhered to their exclusive and unadulterated devotion to God, they would certainly neither have had the honour of becoming the source of light and guidance to others nor of assuming the leadership of the pious and the God-fearing.

أُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِينَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ ۚ فَإِنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِهَا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ فَقَدْ وَكَّلْنَا بِهَا قَوْمًا لَّيْسُوا بِهَا بِكٰفِرِينَ 89

(6:89) Those are the ones to whom We gave the Book, and judgement and prophethood.[57] And if they refuse to believe in it now, We will bestow this favour on a people who do believe in it.[58]

57. Here the Prophets are mentioned as having been endowed with three things: first, the revealed guidance embodied in the Book; second, hukm, i.e. the correct understanding of the revealed guidance, the ability to apply its principles to the practical affairs of life, the God-given capacity to arrive at right opinions regarding human problems; and third, prophethood, the office by virtue of which they are enabled to lead human beings in the light of the guidance vouchsafed to them.

58. God does not care if the unbelievers and polytheists choose to reject the guidance which has come down from Him, for He had already raised a sizeable group of men of faith to truly appreciate its worth.

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ فَبِهُدَاهُمُ اقْتَدِهْ ۗ قُل لَّا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا ۖ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا
ذِكْرَىٰ لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾

(6:90) (O Muhammad!) Those are the ones Allah guided to the right way. Follow, then, their way, and say: 'I ask of you no reward (for carrying on this mission); it is merely an admonition to all mankind.'

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ إِذْ قَالُوا مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ بَشَرٍ مِّن شَيْءٍ ۗ قُلْ مَنْ أَنزَلَ
الْكِتَابَ الَّذِي جَاءَ بِهِ مُوسَىٰ نُورًا وَهُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ تَجْعَلُونَهُ قَرَاطِيسَ تُبْدُونَهَا وَتُخْفُونَ
كَثِيرًا ۚ وَعُلِّمْتُم مَّا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنتُمْ وَلَا آبَاؤُكُمْ ۖ قُلِ اللَّهُ ۙ ثُمَّ ذَرْهُمْ فِي خَوْضِهِمْ
يَلْعَبُونَ ﴿٩١﴾

(6:91) They did not form any proper estimate of Allah when they said: 'Allah has not revealed anything to any man.'[59] Ask them: 'The Book which Moses brought as a light and guidance for men and which you keep in bits and scraps, some of which you disclose while the rest you conceal, even though through it you were taught that which neither you nor your forefathers knew -who was it who revealed it?'[60] Say: 'Allah!'- and then leave them to sport with their argumentation.

59. In the light of the foregoing discussion and commentary, it is quite evident that this statement comes from the Jews. Since the Prophet (peace be on him) had asserted that he was a Prophet and that a Book had been revealed to him, the unbelieving Quraysh and other polytheists of Arabia naturally used to approach the Jews and the Christians - who believed in the Prophets and in the Scriptures - and tried to solicit a candid answer from them as to whether God's words had indeed been revealed to Muhammad (peace be on him). Whatever answer they gave was then disseminated on all sides by the active opponents of the Prophet (peace be on him) in order to create revulsion against Islam. This is the reason for mentioning, and then refuting, this statement by the Jews, which had been used by the opposition as an argument against Islam.
One might wonder how a Jew, who believes in the Torah as a revealed Book of God, could say that God had revealed nothing to anyone. At times blind obstinacy and bigotry cause people to resort to arguments which strike at the roots of their own belief. These people were bent upon denying the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be on him), and this

fanaticism had come to dominate them so much that they went so far as to deny the very institution of prophethood.
To say that peopte have not formed any proper estimate of God means that they have erred grossly in assessing His wisdom and power. Whoever says that God did not reveal knowledge of Reality and the code for man's guidance has fallen into one of two errors. Either he considers it impossible for man to become the recipient of God's revelation, and this constitutes a gross misjudgement of God's power, or he thinks that even though God has equipped man with intelligence and with the power to act as he chooses, He has nevertheless made no arrangement for his guidance, but has left him in this world altogether unguided and thus conferred upon him the right to behave in any way he likes. This is obviously a misjudgement of God's wisdom.

60. The revelation of the Torah to Moses (peace be on him) is adduced by way of evidence since the Jews, to whom this response is addressed, believed that it had been revealed. It is obvious that their recognition of the Torah as the Book revealed to Moses negated their standpoint that God had never revealed anything to any human being. Their belief in the Torah at least proved that revelation to man is possible, and had actually taken place.

وَهٰذَا كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ مُبٰرَكٌ مُّصَدِّقُ الَّذِىْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَلِتُنْذِرَ اُمَّ الْقُرٰى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا ؕ
وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ وَهُمْ عَلٰى صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُوْنَ 92

(6:92) (Like that Book) this too is a Book which We have revealed; full of blessing, confirming what was revealed before it so that you might warn the people of the Mother of Cities (Makka) and those around it. Those who believe in the Hereafter believe in it, and are evermindful of their Prayers.[61]

61. The point argued above was that God's word can be, and in the past has been, revealed to human beings. The next point is that the message of Muhammad (peace be on him) is indeed the revealed word of God. In order to establish this, four things are adduced as evidence: First, that this Book is overflowing with God's grace and beneficence. In other words, it contains the best possible principles for the well-being and salvation of mankind. It lays down the true doctrines of belief. It urges man to righteous conduct and inspires him to moral excellence. It contains guidance as to how one may live a life of purity. And above all, it is free from any trace of the ignorance, egocentricity, narrow-mindedness, iniquity, obscenity and other corruptions with which the Jews and the Christians had overlaid their revealed Scriptures. Second, this Book does not propound any guidance which is essentially divergent from that previously revealed; rather it confirms and supports it. Third, the purpose of the revelation of this Book is the same as that of the revelation of Scriptures in the past, viz., to shake people out of their heedlessness and warn them of the evil consequences of their corruption. Fourth, that the call of this Book did not attract those who merely worshipped worldly advantages and were slaves of their animal desires. On the contrary, it attracted those whose vision goes beyond the narrow limits of worldly life. Moreover, the revolution wrought in the lives of people under the influence of this Book has rendered them conspicuously distinct from others in respect of piety and godliness.

A Book with such characteristics and with such a wholesome impact on human beings can only be from God.

وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اَوْ قَالَ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيَّ وَلَمْ يُوْحَ اِلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ وَّمَنْ قَالَ
سَاُنْزِلُ مِثْلَ مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَلَوْ تَرٰٓى اِذِ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ فِيْ غَمَرٰتِ الْمَوْتِ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ بَاسِطُوْٓا
اَيْدِيْهِمْ ۚ اَخْرِجُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ ؕ اَلْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ الْهُوْنِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَقُوْلُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ
غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَكُنْتُمْ عَنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ تَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ 93

(6:93) Who can be more unjust than he who places a lie on Allah and who says: 'Revelation has come to me' when in fact nothing was revealed to him, and who says: 'I will produce the like of what Allah has revealed?' If you could but see the wrongdoers in the agonies of death, and the angels stretching out their hands (saying): 'Yield up your souls! Today you will be recompensed with the chastisement of humiliation for the lie you spoke concerning Allah, and for you waxing proud against His signs.'

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وَلَقَدْ جِئْتُمُوْنَا فُرَادٰى كَمَا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَّتَرَكْتُمْ مَّا خَوَّلْنٰكُمْ وَرَآءَ ظُهُوْرِكُمْ
وَمَا نَرٰى مَعَكُمْ شُفَعَآءَكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ زَعَمْتُمْ اَنَّهُمْ فِيْكُمْ شُرَكٰٓؤُا ؕ لَقَدْ تَّقَطَّعَ بَيْنَكُمْ
وَضَلَّ عَنْكُمْ مَّا كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُوْنَ ع 94

(6:94) (And Allah will say): 'Now you have come to Us all alone even as We had created you in the first instance, and you have left behind all that We had bestowed upon you in the world. We do not see with you your intercessors whom you imagined to have a share with Allah in your affairs. You have now been cut off from one another and all those whom you imagined (to be Allah's associates in your affairs) have failed you.'

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ فَالِقُ الْحَبِّ وَالنَّوٰى ؕ يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَمُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ ؕ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ
فَاَنّٰى تُؤْفَكُوْنَ 95

(6:95) Truly it is Allah Who causes the grain[62] and the fruit-kernel to sprout. He brings forth the living from the dead and brings forth the dead from the living.[63] Such is Allah. So whither are you tending in error?

62. The one who causes the seed-grain to split open under the surface of the earth and then makes it grow and appear on the surface as a plant is no other than God.

63. To 'bring forth the living from the dead' means creating living beings out of dead matter. Likewise, 'to bring out the dead from the living' means to remove the lifeless elements from a living organism.

فَالِقُ الْإِصْبَاحِ ۚ وَجَعَلَ الَّيْلَ سَكَنًا وَّالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ حُسْبَانًا ۚ ذٰلِكَ تَقْدِيْرُ الْعَزِيْزِ الْعَلِيْمِ 96

(6:96) It is He Who causes the dawn to split forth, and has ordained the night for repose, and the sun and the moon for reckoning time. All this is determined by Allah the Almighty, the All-Knowing.

وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ النُّجُوْمَ لِتَهْتَدُوْا بِهَا فِىْ ظُلُمٰتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ۚ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ 97

(6:97) It is He Who has made for you the stars that you may follow the right direction in the darkness of the land and the sea. We have indeed spelled out signs for the people who have knowledge.[64]

64. By 'signs' are meant all that support the proposition that there is only one God, that is, no one has either the attributes of God or any share in His authority or can rightfully claim any of the rights which belong exclusively to Him. But the ignorant cannot benefit from these signs, which are scattered all around, in order to arrive at an understanding of the Truth. Only those who observe the phenomena of the universe in a careful and systematic manner, and do so with a correct perspective, can truly benefit from these signs.

وَهُوَ الَّذِىْٓ اَنْشَاَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ فَمُسْتَقَرٌّ وَّمُسْتَوْدَعٌ ۚ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّفْقَهُوْنَ 98

(6:98) It is He Who created you out of a single being,[65] and appointed for each of you a time-limit and a resting place. We have indeed spelled out Our signs for those who can understand.[66]

65. This means that God caused the human race to originate from one human being.

66. If one were to observe carefully the creation of the human species, its division into male and female, the proliferation of the human race by procreation, the passing of life through its several stages in the womb of the mother from conception to childbirth, one would perceive innumerable signs to help one grasp the truth mentioned above. But only those who make proper use of their intellect can be led by means of these signs to an understanding of Reality. Those who live like animals, who are concerned merely with the satisfaction of their lusts and desires, can perceive nothing significant in these phenomena.

وَهُوَ الَّذِیۡۤ اَنۡزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً ۚ فَاَخۡرَجۡنَا بِهٖ نَبَاتَ كُلِّ شَیۡءٍ فَاَخۡرَجۡنَا مِنۡهُ خَضِرًا
نُّخۡرِجُ مِنۡهُ حَبًّا مُّتَرَاكِبًا ۚ وَمِنَ النَّخۡلِ مِنۡ طَلۡعِهَا قِنۡوَانٌ دَانِیَةٌ وَّجَنّٰتٍ مِّنۡ اَعۡنَابٍ
وَّالزَّیۡتُوۡنَ وَالرُّمَّانَ مُشۡتَبِهًا وَّغَیۡرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ ؕ اُنۡظُرُوۡۤا اِلٰی ثَمَرِهٖۤ اِذَاۤ اَثۡمَرَ وَیَنۡعِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ فِیۡ
ذٰلِكُمۡ لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّقَوۡمٍ یُّؤۡمِنُوۡنَ 99

(6:99) And it is He Who has sent down water from the heavens, and thereby We have brought vegetation of every kind, and out of this We have brought forth green foliage and then from it close-packed ears of corn, and out of the palm-tree from the sheath of it - thick clustered dates, hanging down with heaviness, and gardens of vines, and the olive tree, and the pomegranate - all resembling one another and yet so different. Behold their fruit when they bear fruit and ripen! Surely, in all this there are signs for those who believe.

وَجَعَلُوۡا لِلّٰهِ شُرَكَآءَ الۡجِنَّ وَخَلَقَهُمۡ وَخَرَقُوۡا لَهٗ بَنِیۡنَ وَبَنٰتٍۢ بِغَیۡرِ عِلۡمٍ ؕ سُبۡحٰنَهٗ وَتَعٰلٰی
عَمَّا یَصِفُوۡنَ ۚ 100

(6:100) And yet, some people have come to associate the jinn with Allah in His divinity,[67] even though it is He Who created them; and in ignorance they impute to Him sons and daughters.[68] He is Holy and Exalted far above that which they attribute to Him.

67. Because of man's imaginativeness and superstitious disposition, he has often held other invisible beings to be associated with God in His governance of the universe and in making and marring man's destiny. For example, the deity of rain, and the deity of vegetation, the god of wealth and the god of health, and so on. Such beliefs are found among all the polytheistic nations of the world.

68. The ignorant Arabs considered angels to be the daughters of God. In the same way, other polytheistic nations wove a network of bloodrelationships with God, producing thereby a whole crop of gods and goddesses descended from the Creator.

بَدِيْعُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ اَنّٰى يَكُوْنُ لَهٗ وَلَدٌ وَّلَمْ تَكُنْ لَّهٗ صَاحِبَةٌ ؕ وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ ۚ
وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ 101

(6:101) He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth. How can He have a son when He has had no mate? And He has created everything and He has full knowledge of all things.

ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ ۚ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ فَاعْبُدُوْهُ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ
وَّكِيْلٌ 102

(6:102) Such is Allah, your Lord. There is no god but He - the Creator of all things. Serve Him alone - for it is He Who is the guardian of everything.

لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْاَبْصَارُ ۫ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْاَبْصَارَ ۚ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيْفُ الْخَبِيْرُ 103

(6:103) No visual perception can encompass Him, even though He encompasses all visual perception. He is the All-Subtle, the All-Aware.

قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ بَصَآئِرُ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ۚ فَمَنْ اَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ عَمِىَ فَعَلَيْهَا ؕ وَمَاۤ اَنَا
عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيْظٍ 104

(6:104) The lights of clear perception have now come to you from your Lord. Then, he who chooses to see clearly, does so for his own good; and he who chooses to remain blind, does so to his own harm. I am not your keeper.[69]

69. Even though this statement is from God, it is expressed through the mouth of the Prophet (peace be on him). We observe that in the Qur'an the speaker frequently changes - sometimes it is God Who is speaking, sometimes it is the angel who carries the revelation, and sometimes a group of angels; on some occasions it is the Prophet (peace be on him) who is speaking, while on others it is the men of faith. Likewise, those addressed by the Qur'an also change - sometimes it is the Prophet (peace be' on him); sometimes it is the men of faith; sometimes it is the People of the Book; sometimes it is the unbelievers and the polytheists; sometimes it is the Quraysh; sometimes it is the Arabs; and sometimes, mankind as a whole.

Regardless of these changes, however, the content of the message always remains the same - it consists of God's guidance to mankind.
The statement 'I am not your keeper' signifies that the task of the Prophet is confined to carrying the light of true guidance to others, it is then up to them either to use it to perceive Reality for themselves or to keep their eyes closed. The Prophet (peace he on him) is not asked to compel those who deliberately kept their eyes shut to open them, forcing them to see what they did not wish to see.

وَكَذٰلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْاٰيٰتِ وَلِيَقُوْلُوْا دَرَسْتَ وَلِنُبَيِّنَهٗ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ 105

(6:105) Thus do We make Our signs clear in diverse ways that they might say: 'You have learned this (from somebody)'; and 'We do this in order that We make the Truth clear to the people of knowledge.'[70]

70. The same has been said earlier, viz. that genuine seekers after the Truth arrive at it even when it is couched in parables about such apparently trivial things as flies and gnats see (surah al-Baqarah 2:24). As for those who have been seized by a biased negativism, they are prone to ask, sarcastically: What have these trivial things to do with the Book of God? The same idea is expressed here in a slightly different form. The import of the statement is that the Book of God has become a touchstone, which helps mark off the true from the false. These include the sort of people who, once they have ceme to know the teachings of the Book of Ged, try in earnest to reflect on its substance and seek to benefit from the wisdom and admonition it contains. Another group reacts quite differently. When they hear or read the Book, their minds are not attracted by the substance of its message. Rather, their curiosity is aroused and they begin probing as to where this Prophet, who had no formal education, derived the teachings which the Book contains. And since a negative prejudice has already seized their hearts, they find it reasonable to conceive of any possibility except the possibility that the Qur'An is a revelation from God. Such people proclaim their opinion with such strong conviction that one might feel inclined to believe that they had indeed discovered the real 'source' of the Book by means of scientific investigation.

اِتَّبِعْ مَآ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ ۚ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ وَاَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ 106

(6:106) (O Muhammad!) Follow the revelation which has come to you from your Lord, other than Whom there is no god, and turn away from those who associate others with Allah in His divinity.

وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَآ اَشْرَكُوْا ۭ وَمَا جَعَلْنٰكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيْظًا ۚ وَمَآ اَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ

بِوَكِيْلٍ 107

(6:107) Had Allah so willed they would not have associated others with Him in His divinity; and We have not appointed you a watcher over them, and you are not their guardian.[71]

71. It is emphasized that the Prophet (peace be on him) is only required to preach the Truth and try to call people to embrace it. His responsibility ends at that for he is, after all, not their warden. His task is to present this guidance and spare no effort in elucidating the Truth. Anyone who still rejects it does so on his own responsibility. It is not part of the Prophet's task to compel anybody to follow the Truth, and he will not be held accountable for not having been able to bring an individual out of the fold of falsehood. Hence he should not overstrain his mind by his desire to make the blind see, or compel those bent on keeping their eyes shut, to observe. For, had it been an objective of God's universal plan not to allow anyone to remain devoted to falsehood, He need not have sent Prophets for that purpose. Could He not have turned all human beings, instantly, into devotees of the Truth by His mere will? Quite obviously God did not intend to do so. The entire basis of the Divine plan is that men should have free-will and be allowed to choose between the Truth and falsehood; that the Truth should be explained to them in order that they be tested with regard to their choice between truth and falsehood. The right attitude, therefore, is for them to follow the Straight Way which has been illuminated by the light bequeathed to them and to keep on calling others towards it. They should naturally value very highly all those who respond to the message of the Truth. Such persons should not be forsaken or neglected, however humble their station in the world. As for those who wilfully reject the message of God, one need not pursue them too far. They should rather be left alone to proceed towards their doom since they themselves wish so, and are insistent on doing so.

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ زَيَّنَّا لِكُلِّ
أُمَّةٍ عَمَلَهُمْ ۖ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِم مَّرْجِعُهُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ 108

(6:108) Do not revile those whom they invoke other than Allah, because they will revile Allah in ignorance out of spite. [72] For We have indeed made the deeds of every people seem fair to them.[73] Tlen, their return is to their Lord and He will inform them of what they have done.

72. The Prophet (peace be on him) and his followers are admonished not to allow their proselytizing zeal to dominate them so that their polemics and controversial religious discussions either lead them to be offensive to the beliefs of non-Muslims or to abuse their religious leaders and deities. Far from bringing people closer to the Truth, such an attitude is likely to alienate them from it further.

73. Here we should bear in mind, as we have pointed out earlier, that God declares those things which take place as a result of the operation of the laws of nature to be His own acts, for it is He Who has rnade those laws. Whatever results from the operation of those laws, therefore, results from His command. Whenever God states that a certain act was His, the same might be described by humans as occurring in the natural course of things.

وَاَقۡسَمُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ جَهۡدَ اَيۡمَانِهِمۡ لَئِنۡ جَآءَتۡهُمۡ اٰيَةٌ لَّيُؤۡمِنُنَّ بِهَا ؕ قُلۡ اِنَّمَا الۡاٰيٰتُ عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ
وَمَا يُشۡعِرُكُمۡ ۙ اَنَّهَاۤ اِذَا جَآءَتۡ لَا يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ 109

(6:109) They swear by Allah with their most solemn oaths that if a sign[74] comes to them, they will certainly believe in it. Say: 'Signs are in Allah's power alone.[75] What will make you realize that even if those signs were to come, they would still not believe?[76]

74. 'Sign' in this context signifies a tangible miracle which is so impressive that it leaves people with no alternative but to believe in the veracity of the Prophet (peace be on him) and the truth of his claim to have been appointed by God.

75. The Prophet (peace be on him) denies his ability to perform miracles. That power lies with God alone. If God wants a miracle to take place, He has the power; if He does not want miracles to take place, none will.
And so indeed does every Prophet of God - Ed.

76. These words are addressed to the Muslims. Driven by the restless yearning to see people embrace Islam - a yearning which they sometimes expressed in words - they wished some miracle to happen which might lead their erring brethren to the true faith. In response to this wish and longing they are told that their embracing the true faith does not depend upon their observing any miraculous sign.

وَنُقَلِّبُ اَفۡـِٕدَتَهُمۡ وَاَبۡصَارَهُمۡ كَمَا لَمۡ يُؤۡمِنُوۡا بِهٖۤ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَّنَذَرُهُمۡ فِىۡ طُغۡيَانِهِمۡ
يَعۡمَهُوۡنَ ع 110

(6:110) We are turning their hearts and eyes away from the Truth even as they did not believe in the first instance[77] - and We leave them in their insurgence to stumble blindly.

77. This shows that they still suffer from the same mentality which had made them reject the call of the Prophet (peace be on him) at the outset. Their outlook has undergone no change. The same mental confusion, the same opacity of vision which had kept them from developing sound understanding and.a correct perspective still warps their understanding and clouds their vision.

وَلَوْ اَنَّنَا نَزَّلْنَآ اِلَيْهِمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ وَكَلَّمَهُمُ الْمَوْتٰى وَحَشَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ قُبُلًا مَّا كَانُوْا
لِيُؤْمِنُوْٓا اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ يَجْهَلُوْنَ 111

(6:111) Even if We had sent angels down to them and the dead had spoken to them, and even if We had assembled before them all the things, face to face, they would still not believe unless it be Allah's will that they believe.[78] Most of them behave in utter ignorance.

78. The people under discussion are so perverse that they do not prefer to embrace the Truth in preference to falsehood by rightly exercising their choice and volition. The only way that is left for them to become lovers of the Truth is, therefore, that by His overpowering will God should render them truth-loving not by their choice and volition, but by metamorphizing their very nature. Such a course, however, goes against the wisdom which underlies the creation of man. Hence it is futile to expect God to intervene in the matter and to force those people to believe by the exercise of His will.

وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيٰطِيْنَ الْاِنْسِ وَالْجِنِّ يُوْحِيْ بَعْضُهُمْ اِلٰى بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ
الْقَوْلِ غُرُوْرًا ۭ وَلَوْ شَآءَ رَبُّكَ مَا فَعَلُوْهُ فَذَرْهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُوْنَ 112

(6:112) And so it is that against every Prophet We have set up the evil ones from among men and jinn, some of them inspire others with specious speech only by way of. delusion.[79] Had it been your Lord's will, they would not have done it.[80] Leave them alone to fabricate what they will.

79. The Prophet (peace be on him) is told that he should not be unnerved even if the evil ones among both mankind and the jinn stood united against him and opposed him with all their might. For this was not the first time that such a thing had happened. Whenever a Prophet came and tried to lead people to the Truth, all the satanic forces joined hands to defeat his mission. 'Specious talk' signifies all the trickery and manoeuvring to which the enemy resorts, all his efforts aimed at sowing doubts about Islam and undermining people's faith in it, so as to arouse them against both the Prophet (peace be on him) and his message. Taken as a whole, these are characterized as 'delusion', for the weapons used in their crusade by the opponents of the Truth have the effect of deluding others as well as themselves, no matter how beneficial and successful those weapons may appear to be.

80. Furthermore, we should always bear in mind that, according to the Qur'an, there is a tremendous difference between 'God's will' and 'God's good pleasure'. The failure to differentiate between the two often gives rise to serious misconceptions. If a certain thing takes place in accord with the universal will of God, and thus by His sanction, that does not necessarily mean that God is pleased with it. Nothing at all takes place in the world unless God permits it to take place, unless He makes it a part of His scheme, and unless He makes

it possible for that event to take place by creating its necessary conditions. The act of stealing on the part of a thief, the act of homicide on the part of a murderer, the wrong and corruption of the wrong-doer and the corrupt, the unbelief of the unbeliever and the polytheism of the polytheist - none of these are possible without the will of God. Likewise, the faith of the believer and the piety of the pious are inconceivable without the will of God. In short, both these require the will of God. But whereas the things in the first category do not please Him, those in the second do.

Even though the will of God is oriented to ultimate good, the course of the realization of that good is paved with conflict between the forces of light and darkness, of good and evil, of what is sound and pure on the one hand and what is corrupt and defiled on the other. With larger interests in view, God has endowed man with the disposition of obedience as well as of disobedience. He has created in man Abrahamic and Mosaic as well as Nimrodic and Pharaonic potentialities. Both the pure, unadulterated human nature and the satanic urges are ingrained in man's being and have been provided with the opportunity to work themselves out by coming into conflict with each other. He has granted those species of His creatures who are possessed of authority (viz. man and jinn) the freedom to choose between good and evil. Whosoever chooses to act righteously has been given the power to do so, and the same is the case with him who chooses to be evil. People of both categories are in a position to use material resources within the framework of the broader considerations underlying God's- governance of His universe. God will be pleased, however, only with those who are working for good. God likes His creatures to exercise their freedom of choice properly and commit themselves to good of their own volition.

Unlike the angels, who carry out God's commands without resistance from any quarter, the task entrusted to men is to strive to establish the way of life sanctioned by God in the face of opposition and hostility from evil-doers and rebels against Him. In the framework of His universal will, God allows even those who have chosen the path of rebellion to strive for the realization of their goals, even as He grants the believers every opportunity to strive along the path of obedience and service to God. Despite this granting of freedom and choice to all there is no doubt that God is pleased with, and guides, directs, supports and strengthens the believers alone because their overall direction is to His liking. Nevertheless, they should not expect that by His supernatural intervention God will either force those who are disinclined to believe into believing or that He will forcibly remove the satanic forces - among both men and jinn - who are resolved to spare neither their mental and physical energy nor their material resources to impede the triumph of the Truth. Those determined to strive in the cause of the Truth, and of virtue and righteousness are told that they must prove their earnest devotion by waging a fierce struggle against the devotees of falsehood. For had God wanted to use miracles to obliterate falsehood and usher in the reign of the Truth, He would not have required human beings to accomplish the task. He could have simply seen to it that no evil one remained in the world, leaving no possibility for polytheism and unbelief to exist.

وَلِتَصْغَىٰٓ إِلَيْهِ أَفْـِٔدَةُ ٱلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِٱلْـَٔاخِرَةِ وَلِيَرْضَوْهُ وَلِيَقْتَرِفُوا۟ مَا هُم

مُّقْتَرِفُونَ 113

(6:113) So that the hearts of those who do not believe in the Life to Come might incline towards this attractive delusion, and that they may be well pleased with it and might acquire the evils that they are bent on acquiring.

أَفَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَبْتَغِي حَكَمًا وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ مُفَصَّلًا ۚ وَالَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ
الْكِتَابَ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ مُنَزَّلٌ مِنْ رَبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ 114

(6:114) Shall I look upon anyone apart from Allah for judgement when it is He Who has revealed to you the Book in detail?[81] And those whom We gave the Book (before you) know that this (Book) has been revealed in truth by your Lord. Do not, then, be among the doubters.[82]

81. The implied speaker in this sentence is the Prophet (peace be on him) and the words are addressed to the Muslims. The purpose of the sentence is to impress upon the Muslims that God has elucidated the relevant truths, and has also proclaimed that in their endeavour to make the Truth prevail they will have to follow the path of striving and struggle. The devotees of the Truth should, therefore, resort to those means which human beings normally employ for the successful achievement of their objectives rather than wait for any supernatural intervention that would enable them to achieve their mission without struggle and sacrifice. Moreover, since God Himself had chosen that human effort rather than supernatural intervention should lead to the prevalence of the Truth, who had the power to change this basic fact and bring about the victory of the Truth without any resort to human effort and sacrifice.

82. This is no mere concoction designed to explain away the current problems. All those versed in the Scriptures, and possessing true understanding of the mission of the Prophets (peace be on them all), will confirm that everything in the Qur'an is perfectly true and in fact constitutes that eternal truth which cannot suffer any change or modification.

وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا وَعَدْلًا ۚ لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِهِ ۚ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ 115

(6:115) The Word of your Lord is perfect in truthfulness and justice; no one can change His words. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

وَإِنْ تُطِعْ أَكْثَرَ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يُضِلُّوكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ
إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ 116

(6:116) (O Muhammad!) If you obey the majority of those who live on earth, they will lead you away from Allah's path. They only follow idle fancies, indulging in conjecture.[83]

83. One need not follow the way of life of the majority, for the majority tend to follow their conjectures and fancies rather than sound knowledge. Their beliefs, their ideas and concepts, their philosophies of life, the guiding principles of their conduct, their laws - all these are founded on conjecture. On the contrary, the way of life which pleases God, was revealed by Him and hence is based on true knowledge rather than conjecture. Instead of trying to discover the way of life of the majority, a seeker after truth should, therefore, persevere in the way prescribed by God, even if he finds himself to be a solitary traveller.

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ مَن يَضِلُّ عَن سَبِيلِهِ ۚ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ 117

(6:117) And your - Lord knows well who stray from His path, and also those who are rightly-guided.

فَكُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ إِن كُنتُم بِآيَاتِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ 118

(6:118) If you believe in the signs of Allah, eat (the flesh) of that over which Allah's name has been pronounced.[84]

84. Many nations have imposed on themselves superfluous religious taboos, which include a variety of dietary restrictions. On the one hand, they have declared lawful many of the things which God has forbidden. On the other, there are many things which God has made lawful but which some people have forbidden to themselves. Some people have even gone so far as to consider eating animals slaughtered in the name of God as unlawful, while those slaughtered with no mention of God's name may be eaten. God repudiates this and urges the Muslims - if they really believe in Him and obey His injunctions - to smash the superstitious and prejudiced notions contrived by human beings in disregard of God's revealed guidance, and to recognize as unlawful all that God has declared to be unlawful, and as lawful all that God has declared to be lawful.

وَمَا لَكُمْ أَلَّا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَقَدْ فَصَّلَ لَكُم مَّا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِلَّا مَا اضْطُرِرْتُمْ إِلَيْهِ ۗ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا لَّيُضِلُّونَ بِأَهْوَائِهِم بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُعْتَدِينَ 119

(6:119) And how is it that you do not eat of that over which Allah's name has been pronounced even though He has clearly spelled out to you what He has forbidden you unless you are constrained to it?[85] Many indeed say misleading things without knowledge, driven merely by their lowly desires. But your Lord knows well the transgressors.

85. See (Surah al-Nahl 16:15). We may observe in passing that this allusion indirectly establishes that Surah al-Nahl was revealed before the present surah.

وَذَرُوا ظَاهِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَبَاطِنَهُ ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْسِبُونَ الْإِثْمَ سَيُجْزَوْنَ بِمَا كَانُوا
يَقْتَرِفُونَ 120

(6:120) Abstain from sin, be it either open or secret. Indeed those who commit sins shall surely be requited for all they have done.

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذْكَرِ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَفِسْقٌ ۗ وَإِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ لَيُوحُونَ إِلَىٰ
أَوْلِيَائِهِمْ لِيُجَادِلُوكُمْ ۚ وَإِنْ أَطَعْتُمُوهُمْ إِنَّكُمْ لَمُشْرِكُونَ ع 121

(6:121) Do not eat of (the animal) over which the name of Allah has not been pronounced (at the time of its slaughtering), for that is a transgression. And behold, the evil ones do inspire doubts and objections into the hearts of their friends so that they dispute with you;[86] but if you obey them, you will surely yourselves turn into those who associate others with Allah in His divinity.[87]

86. It has been reported in a tradition transmitted by 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas that the Jewish religious scholars used to prompt the ignorant people of Arabia to address many enquiries to the Prophet (peace be on him) so as to discredit him. One of the questions they taught them to ask was: 'Why is it that an animal killed by (the act of) God should be deemed prohibited, while one killed by us is considered lawful?'This is a common example of the warped mentality of the People of the Book. They strained their minds to contrive such questions so as to create doubts in people's minds and to provide them with intellectual weapons in their fight against the Truth.

87. To acknowledge the overlordship of God, yet to follow at the same time the orders and ways of those who have turned away from Him, amounts to associating others with God in His divinity. True belief in the unity of God consists in orienting one's entire life to the obedience and service of God. Those who believe that any other being besides God is to he acknowledged in principle as having an independent claim on man's unreserved obedience should know that such acknowledgement amounts to associating others with God in His divinity at the level of belief. On the other hand, if they actually do obey those who, in sheer disregard of God's guidance and injunctions, arrogate to themselves the right to declare according to their whims certain things to be lawful and others to be unlawful, and to bid and forbid people as they please, this amounts to associating others with God in His divinity at the level of action.

أَوَمَن كَانَ مَيْتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَٰهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُۥ نُورًا يَمْشِى بِهِۦ فِى ٱلنَّاسِ كَمَن مَّثَلُهُۥ فِى ٱلظُّلُمَٰتِ
لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْكَٰفِرِينَ مَا كَانُوا۟ يَعْمَلُونَ 122

(6:122) He who was dead and whom We raised to life,[88] and We set a light for him to walk among men - is he like the one steeped in darkness out of which he does not come out?[89]. Thus have their own doings been made to seem fair to the unbelievers.[90]

88. 'Death' signifies here the state of ignorance and lack of consciousness, whereas 'life' denotes the state of knowledge and true cognition, the state of awareness of Reality. He who cannot distinguish between right and wrong and does not know the Straight Way for human life, may be alive on the biological plane, but his essential humanity is not. He may be a living animal but is certainly not a living human being. A living human being is one who can distinguish right from wrong, good from evil, honesty from dishonesty.

89. The question is: 'How can they expect one who has been able to attain genuine consciousness of his true human nature and who, by virtue of his knowledge of the Truth, can clearly discern the Straight Way among the numerous crooked ways, to live like those who lack true consciousness and go on stumbling in the darkness of ignorance and folly?'

90. The law of God with regard to those to whom light is presented but who wilfully refuse to accept it, preferring to follow their crooked paths even after they have been invited to follow the Straight Way, is that in the course of time such people begin to cherish darkness, and to enjoy groping their way in the dark, stumbling and falling as they proceed. They tend to mistake cacti for orchids, thorns for roses. They find pleasure in every act of evil and corruption. They look forward to renewed experiences of corruption, hoping that where they were previously unsuccessful they will now find success.

وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا فِى كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ أَكَٰبِرَ مُجْرِمِيهَا لِيَمْكُرُوا۟ فِيهَا ۖ وَمَا يَمْكُرُونَ إِلَّا
بِأَنفُسِهِمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ 123

(6:123) Thus We have appointed the leaders of the wicked ones in every land to weave their plots; but in truth they plot only to their own harm, without even realizing it.

وَإِذَا جَآءَتْهُمْ اٰيَةٌ قَالُوْا لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ حَتّٰى نُؤْتٰى مِثْلَ مَآ اُوْتِىَ رُسُلُ اللّٰهِ ۘ اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ
يَجْعَلُ رِسٰلَتَهٗ ۗ سَيُصِيْبُ الَّذِيْنَ اَجْرَمُوْا صَغَارٌ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَعَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌ ۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا
يَمْكُرُوْنَ 124

(6:124) Whenever there comes to them a sign from Allah, they say: 'We will not believe until we are given what was given to the Messengers of Allah.'[91] Allah knows best where to place His message. Soon shall these wicked ones meet with humiliation and severe chastigement from Allah for all their evil plotting.

91. This shows that they were unwilling to believe in the statement of the Prophets that an angel of God came to each of them and delivered the message of God. They would believe, they said, only if the angel approached them directly and intimated God's message to them.

فَمَنْ يُّرِدِ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّهْدِيَهٗ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهٗ لِلْاِسْلَامِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ اَنْ يُّضِلَّهٗ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهٗ
ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا كَاَنَّمَا يَصَّعَّدُ فِى السَّمَآءِ ۗ كَذٰلِكَ يَجْعَلُ اللّٰهُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ لَا
يُؤْمِنُوْنَ 125

(6:125) Thus, (it is a fact that) whomsoever Allah wills to guide, He opens his breast for Islam;[92] and whomsoever He wills to let go astray, He causes his breast to become strait and constricted, as if he were climbing towards the heaven. Thus Allah lays the abomination (of flight from and hatred of Islam) on those who do not believe

92. 'To open someone's breast to Islam' means to make him feel fully convinced of the truth of Islam and to remove all his doubts, hesitations and reluctance.

وَهٰذَا صِرَاطُ رَبِّكَ مُسْتَقِيْمًا ۗ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّذَّكَّرُوْنَ 126

(6:126) even though this way is the straight way of your Lord, and We have distinguished its signs to those who heed to admonition.

لَهُمْ دَارُ السَّلٰمِ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَهُوَ وَلِيُّهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ 127

(6:127) Theirs shall be an abode of peace[93] with their Lord - their Protector - in recompense for all they have done.

93. The righteous will enjoy 'the Abode of Peace' since there he will be safe from every misfortune and evil.

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ۚ يٰمَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ قَدِ اسْتَكْثَرْتُمْ مِّنَ الْاِنْسِ ۚ وَقَالَ اَوْلِيٰٓـئُهُمْ مِّنَ
الْاِنْسِ رَبَّنَا اسْتَمْتَعَ بَعْضُنَا بِبَعْضٍ وَّبَلَغْنَآ اَجَلَنَا الَّذِىْٓ اَجَّلْتَ لَنَا ۭ قَالَ النَّارُ
مَثْوٰىكُمْ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اِلَّا مَا شَآءَ اللّٰهُ ۭ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيْمٌ عَلِيْمٌ 128

(6:128) And on the Day when He shall muster them all together, He will say (to the jinn):[94] 'O assembly of the jinn, you have seduced a good many of mankind.' And their companions from among the humans will say: 'Our Lord! We did indeed benefit from one another[95] and now have reached the term which You had set for us.' Thereupon Allah will say: 'The Fire is now your abode, and therein you shall abide.' Only those whom Allah wills shall escape the Fire. Surely your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing.[96]

94. The term finn here refers to the evil ones among the jinn.

95. This means that they had derived unfair benefit from one another and had served their selfish ends by mutual deception.

96. Even though God has the right to punish whoever He wishes and to forgive whoever He wishes, His punishing and forgiving will be neither arbitrary nor whimsical. It will rather be founded on absolute knowledge and wisdom. God will forgive those whom He knows not to be responsible for their guilt, and thus not liable to punishment according to His wisdom and justice.

وَكَذٰلِكَ نُوَلِّىْ بَعْضَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بَعْضًۢا بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ع 129

(6:129) In this manner We shall make the wrong-doers friends of each other (in the Hereafter) because they earned (evil together in the world).[97]

97. Just as the wrong-doers had been accomplices in sin and evil during their earthly life, they would remain companions in the After-life as well and share its punishment.

يٰمَعۡشَرَ الۡجِنِّ وَالۡاِنۡسِ اَلَمۡ يَاۡتِكُمۡ رُسُلٌ مِّنۡكُمۡ يَقُصُّوۡنَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ اٰيٰتِىۡ وَيُنۡذِرُوۡنَكُمۡ
لِقَآءَ يَوۡمِكُمۡ هٰذَا ؕ قَالُوۡا شَهِدۡنَا عَلٰٓى اَنۡفُسِنَا وَغَرَّتۡهُمُ الۡحَيٰوةُ الدُّنۡيَا وَشَهِدُوۡا عَلٰٓى
اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ اَنَّهُمۡ كَانُوۡا كٰفِرِيۡنَ 130

(6:130) (Then Allah will also ask them): 'O assembly of jinn and men! Did there not come to y ou Messengers from among yourselves, relating to you My signs, and warning you of the encounter of this your Day (of Judgement)?' They will say: 'Yes, we bear witness against ourselves.'[98] They have been deluded by the life of this world, and they will bear witness against themselves that they had disbelieved.[99]

98. The wrong-doers would confess that even though the Prophets had come, in succession, in order to inform them of the Truth, it was their own fault that they did not respond to their call.

99. They were deniers of, and disbelievers in, rather than ignorant of the Truth. They acknowledged tha! the Truth had been conveyed to them and that they had refused to accept it.

ذٰلِكَ اَنۡ لَّمۡ يَكُنۡ رَّبُّكَ مُهۡلِكَ الۡقُرٰى بِظُلۡمٍ وَّاَهۡلُهَا غٰفِلُوۡنَ 131

(6:131) (They will be made to bear this witness to show that) it is not the way of your Lord to destroy cities unjustly while their people were unaware of the Truth.[100]

100. God does not want His creatures to have any valid reason to complain that He had left them ignorant of the Right Way, and then convicted them of error. God has forestalled any such grievance by sending Prophets and revealing Holy Books to warn both jinn and human beings. If people continue to falter in spite of God's arrangements for their guidance, they themselves are to blame for the punishment they will receive, and they have no justification for blaming their misfortune on God.

وَلِكُلٍّ دَرَجٰتٌ مِّمَّا عَمِلُوۡا ؕ وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ 132

(6:132) Everyone is assigned a degree according to his deed. Your Lord is not heedless of what they do.

وَرَبُّكَ الْغَنِيُّ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ ۚ إِن يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفْ مِن بَعْدِكُم مَّا يَشَاءُ كَمَا
أَنشَأَكُم مِّن ذُرِّيَّةِ قَوْمٍ آخَرِينَ ۚ 133

(6:133) Your Lord is Self-Sufficient, full of compassion.[101] If He wills, He can put you away and cause whomever He wills to succeed you just as He has produced you from the seed of another people.

101. The Qur'anic statement: 'Your Lord is Self-Sufficient' signifies that God is in need of nothing from anyone, that none of His interests will be jeopardized by disobedience to Him, and that no benefit will accrue to Him from obedience. Even if all human beings became disobedient, God's dominion will not shrink. Nor will His dominion expand if everybody were to become obedient and serve and worship Him as they ought to. God is dependent neither upon their show of veneration nor upon their offerings. He lavishes His limitless treasures on human beings and seeks nothing in return.
The other statement, namely that 'Your Lord is full of compassion', has been made here to emphasize two things. First, that when God urges human beings to follow the Right Way, and asks them not to do anything in conflict with Ultimate Reality, He does not do so because their good behaviour benefits Him or their misconduct harms Him. He does so because good conduct is beneficial to man himself, as evil conduct is harmful to him. Hence it is out of sheer benevolence that God urges man to develop righteous conduct, for it will raise him to great heights, and He urges him to avoid evil conduct because it will lead to his own degradation. Second, that God is not unduly stern in judging man. He gets no pleasure from punishing people. He is not on the look-out for slight lapses for which to convict and persecute people. God is highly compassionate towards all His creatures and governs with utmost mercy and benevolence, and the same characterizes His dealings with human beings as well. Hence, He constantly forgives the sins of people. Many disobey, indulge in sins, commit crimes, disregard God's commands, even though they are nourished by the sustenance He provides. God, nevertheless, continually treats them with forbearance and forgives them. Again and again, He grants them respite in order that they may take heed, understand things properly and reform themselves. Had He been excessively stern, He could even have obliterated them instantly and raised up another people. He could have put an end to humanity and brought into being an altogether different species of creation.

إِنَّ مَا تُوعَدُونَ لَآتٍ ۙ وَمَا أَنتُم بِمُعْجِزِينَ 134

(6:134) Surely what you have been promised shall come to pass;[102] and you do not have the power to frustrate (Allah).

102. This refers to the Resurrection, when human beings of every epoch will be raised anew and made to stand before God for final judgement.

قُلْ يٰقَوْمِ اعْمَلُوْا عَلٰى مَكَانَتِكُمْ اِنِّيْ عَامِلٌ ۚ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ مَنْ تَكُوْنُ لَهٗ عَاقِبَةُ
الدَّارِ ۭ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ 135

(6:135) Say (O Muhammad!): 'O people! Work in your place; and I too am at work. [103] Soon you will know in whose favour the ultimate decision will be. Surely the wrong-doers will not prosper.'

103. If people prefer to ignore the Prophet's admonition and do not recant their misconduct, they are at liberty to follow their chosen path, but they should let the Prophet (peace be on him) follow his. The ultimate results of their conduct will, in due time, become evident to all - to the Prophet (peace be on him) as well as to his opponents.

وَجَعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ مِمَّا ذَرَاَ مِنَ الْحَرْثِ وَالْاَنْعَامِ نَصِيْبًا فَقَالُوْا هٰذَا لِلّٰهِ بِزَعْمِهِمْ وَهٰذَا
لِشُرَكَاۗىِٕنَا ۚ فَمَا كَانَ لِشُرَكَاۗىِٕهِمْ فَلَا يَصِلُ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ۚ وَمَا كَانَ لِلّٰهِ فَهُوَ يَصِلُ اِلٰى
شُرَكَاۗىِٕهِمْ ۭ سَاۗءَ مَا يَحْكُمُوْنَ 136

(6:136) They[104] assign to Allah a portion out of the produce and cattle that He has created, saying out of their fancy: 'This is for Allah' - so they deem -'and this is for the associates (of Allah) whom we have contrived.'[105] Then, the portion assigned to the beings whom they have set up as associates (of Allah) does not reach Allah, but the portion assigned to Allah reaches the beings they set up as associates (of Allah)! [106] Indeed evil is what they decide!

104. There now follows an elucidation of the 'ignorance' which those people-insistently clung to, and which they were not prepared to forsake. They are also told about that major 'wrong' which, if not abandoned, will bar their way to salvation.

105. They themselves acknowledged that the earth belongs to God, and that it is He Who causes the vegetation to grow. They also affirmed that God is the creator of the animals which were yoked to their service. They believed, however, that the grace of God for them was the outcome of the blessing and benediction of the angels, jinn, heavenly stars, spirits of their pious ancestors and so on, who cared for their well-being and were their patrons. They therefore used to make a two-fold division of their harvest and livestock offerings. One part was devoted to God in recognition of their gratitude to Him for having granted them farms and animals, while the rest was devoted to the household gods of either their family or tribes in order to ensure their continuing grace and benediction.
First, God censures them for this iniquity and asks them - since all those animals were created and had been granted to them by God alone - what justification there is for making offerings to others. Is it not sheer ingratitude to ascribe the acts of benevolence and grace of

the true Benefactor to the intercession of others, and to associate them with God in thanksgiving? Second, they are censured indirectly for assigning quite an arbitrary share in their offerings to God, as if they themselves were the law-maker who could ascribe shares to God and others as they wished. To God alone belong all the bounties He has given man, and only His Law should therefore determine what part of those bounties should be offered to Him in thanksgiving and how the remaining should be spent. Hence even if they spend something in the way of Allah, for the poor and the deprived, but according to their own will, that does not deserve to be accepted by Him.

106. This is subtle sarcasm at the trickery to which the polytheists resorted while dividing the offerings between God and the partners whom they had set up with Him. By one device and another they increased the share of the false deities, which only showed that their heart lay with those sham partners of God rather than with Him.
It is instructive to recall those tricks. If, while they were apportioning God's share of cereals and fruits, anything belonging to His share fell out of its place, it used to be added to the portion earmarked for the share of God's partners. On the contrary, if any part of the, partners' share fell out or got mixed up with the portion earmarked for God, they were most careful to return it to where it belonged. Whenever they were criticized for this, they had a number of interesting apologies to offer. They said, for instance, that being the Creator, God is Self-Sufficient and hence He does not care if His portion is in some way reduced. As for the 'partners', they were not after all self-sufficient and would therefore take them to task for the slightest diminution in their share.
In order to grasp what lay at the root of these superstitions, it is essential to know that the portion which these ignorant people earmarked for God was devoted to helping the indigent, the poor, travellers, orphans and so on. On the other hand, the portion earmarked for offerings to the partners' actually went either directly to the coffers of the priestly class or was offered at the shrines and thus ultimately reached the priests and caretakers of those shrines. Over the course of centuries these selfish religious leaders had impressed upon those simple-minded people that there was no harm in God's share being reduced, but that of God's dear ones, far from being diminished, should be increased.

وَكَذٰلِكَ زَيَّنَ لِكَثِيرٍ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ قَتْلَ اَوْلَادِهِمْ شُرَكَآؤُهُمْ لِيُرْدُوهُمْ وَلِيَلْبِسُوا
عَلَيْهِمْ دِينَهُمْ ۚ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَا فَعَلُوهُ ۖ فَذَرْهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُونَ 137

(6:137) And, likewise, the beings supposed to have a share in Allah's divinity have made the slaying of their offspring seem lawful to many of those who associate others with Allah in His divinity[107] so that they may ruin them[108] and confound them regarding their faith.[109] If Allah had so willed, they would not have done that. Leave them alone to persist in their fabrication. [110]

107. The word 'partners' is now used in a different sense. In this verse the word 'partners' denotes those human beings and devils who had legitimized infanticide and even represented it as a commendable act.
The reason for calling such people 'partners' is that just as God alone deserves to be

worshipped, so He alone has the right to make laws for His creatures and to determine the limits of what is lawful and what is unlawful. Also, just as consecrating acts of devotion to anyone other than God amounts to setting up partners with Him, so to follow man-made laws in the belief that human beings have the right to be their own law-makers amounts to acknowledging others as partners of God. Both these acts amount to setting up partners with Him, irrespective of whether or not man applies the word 'God' to those before whom he makes ritual offerings, or to those whose laws he considers to be essentially right and binding for men.

It is pertinent to recall that three forms of infanticide were practised among the Arabs, and the Qur'an alludes to each:

(1) Girls were put to death either to forestall the intrusion of a son-in-law, to prevent them from falling into the hands of enemies in the event of an outbreak of tribal feuding or to stop them from becoming a source of disgrace for any other reason.

(2) Both male and female children were killed if parents thought they would not be able to support them and that they would thus become an unendurable burden.

(3) Children of both sexes were placed as sacrificial offerings on the altars of the deities in order to gratify them.

108. The use of the word 'ruin' in this verse is significant. It denotes, in the first place, the moral ruination of a people. A man whose callousness and cruelty reach the point where he begins to kill his offspring with his own hands not only becomes bereft of the essence of humanity, but has sunk even lower than the animals. Moreover, this signifies the ruin of a people and of the human race. This is because infanticide necessarily leads to loss of population which is detrimental to the interests of mankind and also of each nation, since it prevents those who could have carried the legacy of a nation from either being born or puts an end to their lives after ,they are born. This rule also signifies the ultimate ruin, i.e. in the Hereafter. For indeed anyone who treats innocent children with such high-handedness, who cold-bloodedly slaughters the essence of his humanity, who acts so sordidly towards the human species as such, and even towards his own people, deserves severe punishment from God.

109. In the Jahiliyah, the Age of Ignorance, the Arabs both identified themselves with Abraham and Ishmael and were quite convinced that they were indeed followers of Abraham and Ishmael. They therefore considered their religion to be one that had been prescribed by God. The fact, however, was that over the course of centuries a number of innovations had overgrown the religion preached by Abraham and Ishmael. These innovations, which had been introduced by their religious leaders, the tribal chiefs and the elders of noted families, had become hallowed with the passage of time, and were considered an integral part of their original religion. No authentic traces of this original religion, however, existed in the Arab traditions, nor in written sources nor in historical records as such. Hence, when innovations made their inroads into their religious life, they failed to perceive both the innovations and the innovators. This rendered the entire religious tradition of the Arabs unauthentic in the sight of the people of Arabia themselves. They could not assert with conviction which elements were part of the original God-given religion, and which were mere innovations.

110. Had God not so willed, they could never have kept to their false ways. But God willed that everybody should be allowed to pursue his own choice. Hence, if people do not believe

in spite of the Prophet's admonition, and persist in their false ways, they must be allowed to do as they please. One need not hound such people and pester them into accepting the Truth.

وَقَالُوْا هٰذِهٖٓ اَنْعَامٌ وَّحَرْثٌ حِجْرٌ ۖ لَّا يَطْعَمُهَآ اِلَّا مَنْ نَّشَآءُ بِزَعْمِهِمْ وَاَنْعَامٌ حُرِّمَتْ
ظُهُوْرُهَا وَاَنْعَامٌ لَّا يَذْكُرُوْنَ اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهَا افْتِرَآءً عَلَيْهِ ۭ سَيَجْزِيْهِمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا
يَفْتَرُوْنَ 138

(6:138) They say: 'These animals and these crops are sacrosanct: none may eat of them save those whom we will' - imposing interdictions of their own contriving.[111] And they declare that it is forbidden to burden the backs of certain cattle, and these are the cattle over which they do not pronounce the name of Allah. [112] All these are false fabrications against Allah,[113] and He will soon requite them for all that they fabricate.

111. There was a practice among the people of Arabia whereby they used to consecrate certain animals and farms to certain shrines, and at offerings at certain altars. These consecrated offerings could not be used by everybody. An elaborate code laid down what kind of offering could be used by what kind of people. God not only judges such practices to be polytheistic, but also censures them as man-made innovations. God was the master of all that they had consecrated as offerings to the deities. He had neither encumbered human beings with the need to make any of those offerings and consecrations nor imposed those restrictions on what they might consume. These were the wilful inventions of headstrong and rebellious people who attributed to themselves the authority to make laws as they pleased.

112. Traditions indicate that there were certain ritual offerings, and that on certain occasions animals were consecrated for sacrifice at which it was deemed unlawful to pronounce the name of God. It was also prohibited to ride such animals during the Pilgrimage, since at that time the pilgrim pronounced the name of God when he recited the formula: Labbayk Allahumma Labbayk. Every care was taken not to pronounce the name of God at the time of milking, mounting, slaughtering and eating of such animals.

113. Even though those rules had not been laid down by God, people followed them under the false impression that they had been prescribed by Him. They could not adduce any injunction from God in support of such a belief, and all that they could claim was that it was an integral part of their ancestors' way of life.

وَقَالُوْا مَا فِيْ بُطُوْنِ هٰذِهِ الْاَنْعَامِ خَالِصَةٌ لِّذُكُوْرِنَا وَمُحَرَّمٌ عَلٰٓى اَزْوَاجِنَا ۚ وَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مَّيْتَةً
فَهُمْ فِيْهِ شُرَكَآءُ ۭ سَيَجْزِيْهِمْ وَصْفَهُمْ ۭ اِنَّهٗ حَكِيْمٌ عَلِيْمٌ 139

(6:139) And they say: 'What is within the bellies of such-and-such cattle is exclusively for our males and is forbidden to our females; but if it be born dead, they all may share in it.'[114] He will soon requite them for all that they (falsely) attribute to Allah. He is All-Wise, All-Knowing.

114. One of the provisions of this self-contrived religious code of the Arabs was that the flesh of the young, born of the animals consecrated as offerings to the deities, might be eaten by males but not by females. Persons of both sexes were allowed to eat its flesh if it had died either a natural death or was dead at birth.

قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِيْنَ قَتَلُوْٓا اَوْلَادَهُمْ سَفَهًۢا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَّحَرَّمُوْا مَا رَزَقَهُمُ اللّٰهُ افْتِرَاۗءً عَلَى
اللّٰهِ ۭ قَدْ ضَلُّوْا وَمَا كَانُوْا مُهْتَدِيْنَ ع 140

(6:140) Those who slayed their children in folly, without knowledge,.and forbade the sustenance that Allah has provided them, falsely ascribing that to Allah, are utter losers; they have gone astray, and are certainly not among those guided to the right way.[115]

115. It is put to them plainly that even though such practices had been introduced by their forefathers, religious guides and outstanding leaders, the fact remained that those practices were inherently unsound. That those practices had come down from their ancestors and venerated elders did not necessarily legitimize them. These callous people had introduced such inhuman customs as infanticide, and, without any justification whatsoever, had prohibited to the creatures of God food and drink which He had created. They had also introduced many innovations themselves, making them part of their religion and ascribing them to God. How could such people be considered either to have attained salvation or to be rightlyguided? Even though venerated by them as their ancestors, they were nevertheless misguided and were destined to see the evil consequences of their misdeeds.

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْشَاَ جَنّٰتٍ مَّعْرُوْشٰتٍ وَّغَيْرَ مَعْرُوْشٰتٍ وَّالنَّخْلَ وَالزَّرْعَ مُخْتَلِفًا اُكُلُهٗ
وَالزَّيْتُوْنَ وَالرُّمَّانَ مُتَشَابِهًا وَّغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ ۭ كُلُوْا مِنْ ثَمَرِهٖٓ اِذَآ اَثْمَرَ وَاٰتُوْا حَقَّهٗ يَوْمَ
حَصَادِهٖ ۠ وَلَا تُسْرِفُوْا ۭ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ 141

(6:141) It is He Who has brought into being gardens[116] - the trellised and untrellised - and the palm trees, and crops, all varying in taste, and.the olive and pomegranates, all resembling one another and yet so different. Eat of their fruits when they come to fruition and pay His due on the day of harvesting. And do not exceed the proper limits, for He does not love those who exceed the proper limits.

116. Tle Arabic expression "Jannaatim Ma'rushaatin wa khairu ma'rushatin" signifies two kinds of gardens: first, those consisting of trellised plants and, second, those consisting of trees which stand on their own.

وَمِنَ الْاَنْعَامِ حَمُوْلَةً وَّفَرْشًا ؕ كُلُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ
لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ۙ 142

(6:142) And of the cattle (He has reared) some for burden, and some whose flesh you eat and whose skins and hair you use to spread the ground.[117] Eat of the sustenance Allah has provided you and do not follow in the footsteps of Satan, for surely he is your open enemy.[118]

117. The word "Farasha" (which means 'to spread, to pave, to cover the ground, floor or path') has been used in the context of cattle either (1) because they are relatively short, and in moving about seem to be touching the ground, (2) because when they are slaughtered, they have to be laid on the ground, or (3) because their skins and hair are used for furnishing purposes.

118. It becomes clear from the context that God wants to emphasize three things. First, that the orchards, fields and cattle are all bounties of God. No one else has made any contribution to them and hence no one is entitled to any share in the thanks that man ought to give Him in return for these bounties. Second, since all those things are bounties of God, one ought to follow the laws of God alone while making use of them. No one else has the right to regulate their use. To acknowledge oneself bound by customs and practices laid down by others than God, and to make offerings out of a feeling of gratitude for beneficence to someone other than God constitute acts of rebellion and amount to following Satan. Third, as God has created all these things for the fulfilment of man's needs, they should not be unnecessarily suspended from use or be regarded as prohibited. All restrictions on the use of the means of sustenance and other bounties of God based on conjecture or superstition, are not to His liking at all.

ثَمٰنِيَةَ اَزْوَاجٍ ۚ مِنَ الضَّاْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَمِنَ الْمَعْزِ اثْنَيْنِ ؕ قُلْ ءٰٓالذَّكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ اَمِ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ
اَمَّا اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ اَرْحَامُ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ ؕ نَبِّـُٔوْنِيْ بِعِلْمٍ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ۙ 143

(6:143) These are eight couples, two of sheep, two of goats. Now ask them: 'Is it either the two males that Allah has forbidden or the two females, or what the wombs of the two females may contain? Tell me about this on the basis of sure knowledge, if you speak the truth.'[119]

119. That is, they should come forward with arguments based on sound, reliable knowledge, rather than with arguments which have no authority except that of ancestral tradition, conjecture or superstition.

وَمِنَ الْاِبِلِ اثْنَيْنِ وَمِنَ الْبَقَرِ اثْنَيْنِ ؕ قُلْ ءٰٓالذَّكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ اَمِ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ اَمَّا اشْتَمَلَتْ
عَلَيْهِ اَرْحَامُ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ ؕ اَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَآءَ اِذْ وَصّٰىكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِهٰذَا ۚ فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ
افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا لِّيُضِلَّ النَّاسَ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ
الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ع 144

(6:144) And likewise, of camels there are two, and of oxen there are two. Ask them: 'Is it either the two males that He has forbidden or the two females, or that which the wombs of the two females may contain?[120] Or were you present when Allah enjoined this commandment upon you?' Who, then, would be more unjust than he who fabricates a lie against Allah that he might lead people astray without knowledge. Surely Allah never guides such a wrong-doing folk.

120. Questions as to whether the male offspring is lawful and the female is unlawful are presented in some detail to show how unreasonable their superstitions are. That the male offspring of an animal should be considered lawful for eating while the female be prohibited, or vice versa; and that an animal should itself be considered lawful, but not its offspring, is so manifestly unreasonable that common sense simply refuses to accept it, and no intelligent man can ever conceive such absurdities to have been sanctioned by God. Just as the superstitions in vogue among the Arabs were absurd, as the Qur'an stresses, likewise many other nations of the world follow even now irrational dietary restrictions, and believe that food and drink become polluted merely by the touch of some other people.

قُلْ لَّآ اَجِدُ فِىْ مَآ اُوْحِىَ اِلَىَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلٰى طَاعِمٍ يَّطْعَمُهٗٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ مَيْتَةً اَوْ دَمًا
مَّسْفُوْحًا اَوْ لَحْمَ خِنْزِيْرٍ فَاِنَّهٗ رِجْسٌ اَوْ فِسْقًا اُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ بِهٖ ۚ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ
وَّلَا عَادٍ فَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ 145

(6:145) Tell them (O Muhammad!): 'I do not find in what has been revealed to me anything forbidden for anyone who wants to eat unless it is carrion, outpoured blood and the flesh of swine, all of which is unclean; or that which is profane having been slaughtered in a name other than that of Allah.[121] But whosoever is constrained to it by necessity - neither desiring to disobey nor exceeding the limit of necessity - your Lord is surely AllForgiving, All-Compassionate.

121. See for this (Surah al-Baqarah 2: 173), (Surah al-Md'idah 5: 3) and (Surah al-Nahl 16: 115.) The slight difference between this verse and (Surah al-Baqarah 2:173)is that whereas the latter mentions 'blood' as prohibited, the present verse qualifies it with 'outpoured', i.e. the blood which has flowed as a result of either injuring or slaughtering an animal. This, in fact, constitutes an elucidation of the former injunction rather than the revelation of a different one. Likewise,(Surah al-Ma'idah 5: 3)mentions the prohibition of certain other categories - animals strangled or killed by blows, those which have died from either falling or goring, and those devoured by a beast of prey, in addition to the four classes mentioned here. This is not an independent, divergent injunction; it is rather an explanation signifying that the animals thus killed fall into the category of 'carrion'.

There is a group of Muslim jurists who believe that prohibition is confined to these four classes of animal food, and that the eating of everything else is lawful. This was also the view of 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbas and 'A'ishah. Several traditions, however, indicate that the Prophet (peace be on him) either told people not to eat certain things or expressed his disapproval at their eating them, for example, domesticated donkeys, beasts with canine teeth and birds with claws. It is for this reason that the majority of jurists do not consider prohibition confined to these four classes but extend it to several others. These jurists disagree, however, on which of those things are unlawful and which are lawful. Abu Hanifah, Malik and Shafi'i, for example, consider domesticated donkeys to be unlawful. Others argue that the Prophet (peace be on him) forbade them on a special occasion and because of a special reason. To cite another example, the Hanafi jurists hold wild beasts, birds of prey and animals which feed on carrion to be absolutely unlawful, whereas Milik and Awza'i hold birds of prey to be lawful. Layth considers the cat to be lawful. In the same way, Shafi'i considers prohibition to be confined only to those beasts which actually attack man, such as lion, wolf, tiger and so on. In the opinion of another jurist, 'Ikrimah, both crow and badger are lawful. Likewise, whereas the Hanafi jurists declare all crawling creatures to be prohibited, Ibn Abi Layla, Malik and Awza'i hold the snake to be lawful.

Upon reflection of these divergent opinions and the arguments adduced in support of them, it becomes clear that categorical prohibition embraces only those four classes mentioned in the Qur'an. As for other types of animal food, regarding which the jurists have expressed a negative view, they seem to carry varying degrees of religious disapprobation. The things whose disapprobation is established by statements of the Prophet (peace be on him) transmitted to us through sound traditions, are relatively close to 'prohibition'. As for things regarding which them is disagreement among jurists, their religious disapprobation becomes doubtful.

Temperamental dislike, however, is quite a different matter. The Law Of God does not force anyone to eat everything which is not prohibited. At the same time, the Law does not entitle anybody to exalt his personal likes and dislikes into a criterion of what is lawful and unlawful. No one is justified in reproaching others for consuming lawful things which offend his tastes.

وَعَلَى الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا حَرَّمْنَا كُلَّ ذِيْ ظُفُرٍ ۚ وَمِنَ الْبَقَرِ وَالْغَنَمِ حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ
شُحُوْمَهُمَآ اِلَّا مَا حَمَلَتْ ظُهُوْرُهُمَآ اَوِ الْحَوَايَآ اَوْ مَا اخْتَلَطَ بِعَظْمٍ ۭ ذٰلِكَ جَزَيْنٰهُمْ
بِبَغْيِهِمْ ۠ وَاِنَّا لَصٰدِقُوْنَ 146

(6:146) And to those who had Judaized We have forbidden all beasts with claws, and the fat of oxen and sheep except the fat which is either on their backs or their entrails, or that which sticks to the bones. Thus did We requite them for their rebellion.[122] Surely We state the Truth.

122. This is discussed at three places in the Qur'an. (Surah AI 'Imran 3:93) states: 'All food was lawful to the Children of Israel except what Israel made unlawful to themselves before the revelation of the Torah. Tell them: "Bring the Torah and recite any passage of it if you are truthful".' (Surah al-Nisa' 4:160) mentions that because of the misdeeds of the Children of Israel: 'We forbade them many clean things which had earlier been made lawful to them.' And now the present verse says that because of the transgression of the Jews, God forbade unto them 'all beasts with claws; and the fat of oxen and the sheep except the fat which is either on their backs or their entrails or that which sticks to the bones'. If these three verses are taken together, it becomes clear that the differences between Islamic law and Jewish law with regard to what is lawful and what is unlawful in animal foods stem from two considerations. First, that several centuries before the revelation of the Torah, Isra'il (Jacob, peace be on him) had given up the use of certain things, which his descendants also abstained from consuming. The result was that Jewish jurists considered them to be absolutely unlawful and recorded their prohibition in the Torah. They included the camel, the hare and the rock-badger, the prohibition of which is mentioned in the fragments of the Torah embodied in the Bible. (See Leviticus ll: 4; Deuteronomy 14: 7) But the Our'an challenges the Jews to come forward with the Torah itself and show where any of those things had been declared unlawful. Their inability to do so shows that those interdictions must have been later interpolations into the Torah.

Second, when the Jews rebelled against the Law revealed by God and set themselves up as their own law-givers, they made several things unlawful for themselves, and as a punishment God allowed them to remain a prey to that misunderstanding. These include birds with claws such as the ostrich, seagull and water-hen, and also the fat of oxen and sheep. In the Bible prohibitions of these kinds have been interpolated among the injunctions of the Torah. (See Leviticus 3:17; 7:22-3; ll:16-18; Deuteronomy 14:14-16.) But (Surah al-Nisa' 4:160) shows that those things had not been made unlawful by the Torah itself. They had rather been prohibited after the time of Jesus, and history bears witness to the fact that the present Jewish law was given a definitive formulation by the Jewish jurist, Yehudah, towards the end of the second century of the Christian calendar.

It might be asked in view of what has been mentioned above, why the expression 'We forbade for them' is employed in (Surah al-Nisa' 4:160) The answer is that declaration through a Prophet or a heavenly Book is not God's only way of prohibiting. Another way is to allow fraudulent law-makers and sham jurists to gain predominating influence upon

God's rebels. These in turn deprive them of many good, clean things of life by making them believe that they are prohibited. The first kind of prohibition is an act of His mercy, whereas the second kind is in the nature of a curse and punishment from God.

فَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُلْ رَّبُّكُمْ ذُو رَحْمَةٍ وَّاسِعَةٍ ۚ وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَأْسُهُ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ
الْمُجْرِمِينَ 147

(6:147) 'Then if they give you the lie, say: 'Your Lord is of unbounded mercy; but His punishment shall not be averted from the guilty folk.'[123]

123. If they could still give up their disobedience and return to the true service of God, they would find Him ready to embrace them with His mercy. But if they persisted, they should remember that no one could save them from His wrath.

سَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَشْرَكْنَا وَلَا آبَاؤُنَا وَلَا حَرَّمْنَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ
كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ ذَاقُوا بَأْسَنَا ۗ قُلْ هَلْ عِندَكُم مِّنْ عِلْمٍ فَتُخْرِجُوهُ لَنَا ۖ
إِن تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ أَنتُمْ إِلَّا تَخْرُصُونَ 148

(6:148) Those who associate others with Allah in His divinity will now surely say: 'Had Allah willed, neither we nor our forefathers would have associated others with Allah in His divinity, nor would we have declared anything (which Allah did not forbid) as forbidden.'[124] Even so those who had lived before them gave the lie (to the Truth) until they tasted Our chastisement. Tell them: 'Have you any sure knowledge that you can produce before us? In fact you are only following idle fancies, merely conjecturing.'

124. Their apology for their crimes and misdeeds would be that which has always been advanced by criminals and wrong-doers - an apology based on the assumption of absolute determinism. They would plead that when they associated others with God in His divinity, or unwarrantedly regarded certain things as prohibited, they did so because those acts had been willed for them by God. Had He not so willed, they would not have been able to do what they did. Hence, since they were doing everything according to the will of God, everything was proper. If anyone was to blame, it was God and not they. They were under compulsion to do what they did, for the ability to do otherwise lay beyond their power.

قُلْ فَلِلَّهِ الْحُجَّةُ الْبَالِغَةُ ۚ فَلَوْ شَاءَ لَهَدَاكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ 149

(6:149) 'Then say to them: '(As against your argument) Allah's is the conclusive argument. Surely, had He willed, He would have guided you all to the Truth.[125]

125. This provides a complete refutation of their apology. In order to appreciate it fully, careful analysis is required. In the first place they are told that citing God's will to justify one's errors and misdeeds, and making it a pretext for refusing to accept true guidance was the practice of the evil-doers before them. But they should remember that this had led to their ruin and they themselves were witnesses to the evil consequences of deviation from the Truth.

Furthermore, it is being clarified that the plea of the unbelievers that the only reason for their error was that God had not willed that they be guided to the Truth, is based on fancy and conjecture rather than on sound knowledge. They refer to God's will without understanding the relationship between God's will and man's action. They entertain the misconception that if a man commits theft under the will of God, that does not mean that he will not be reckoned a criminal. For the fact is that whichever path a man chooses, be it that of gratitude or ungratitude to God of guidance or error, obedience or disobedience, God will open that path for him, and thereafter God will permit and enable him within the framework of His universal scheme, and to the extent that He deems fit - to do whatever he chooses to do whether it is right or wrong.

If their forefathers had been enabled by God's will to associate others with Him in His divinity and prohibit clean things, that did not mean that they were not answerable for their misdeeds. On the contrary, everyone will be held responsible for choosing false ways, for having a false intent, and for having striven for false ends.

The crucial point is succinctly made at the end in the words: 'Then say to- them, (As against your argument) Allah's is the conclusive argument. Surely, had He willed, He would have guided you all to the Truth.' The argument which they put forward, viz. 'If Allah had willed, neither we nor our forefathers could have associated others with Allah in His divinity', does not embody the whole truth. The whole truth is that 'had He willed, He would have guided you all to the Truth'. In other words, they were not prepared to take the Straight Way of their own choice and volition. As it was not God's intent to create them with inherent right guidance like the angels, they would be allowed to persist in the error they had chosen for themselves.

قُلْ هَلُمَّ شُهَدَآءَكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ يَشْهَدُوْنَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ حَرَّمَ هٰذَا ۚ فَاِنْ شَهِدُوْا فَلَا تَشْهَدْ
مَعَهُمْ ۚ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَالَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ وَهُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ
يَعْدِلُوْنَ ع 150

(6:150) Say to them: 'Call your witnesses to testify that Allah forbade such-and-such.' Then if they do testify, neither testify with them[126] nor follow the desires of those who have given the lie to Our signs and who do not believe in the Hereafter and set up equals with their Lord.

126. A person who is conscious that he should testify only to that which he knows, can never testify that the taboos regarding food and other customs prevalent in their society had been enjoined by God. But if some people are brazen enough to feel no compunction in bearing false witness, then at least the believers should not become their partners in lying. The real purpose in asking them to testify honestly whether their customs and practices had in fact been sanctioned by God, is to stimulate those with some sense of honesty to reflect on the character of their customs and practices. Perhaps when they realize that there is no evidence of those prohibitions having been prescribed by God, some of them may decide to get rid of them.

قُلْ تَعَالَوْا اَتْلُ مَا حَرَّمَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ اَلَّا تُشْرِكُوْا بِهٖ شَيْـًٔا وَّبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ اِحْسَانًا ۚ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوْٓا اَوْلَادَكُمْ مِّنْ اِمْلَاقٍ ؕ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَاِيَّاهُمْ ۚ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ ۚ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِيْ حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ وَصّٰىكُمْ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ 151

(6:151) Say to them (O Muhammad!): 'Come, let me recite what your Lord has laid down to you:[127] (i) that you associate nothing with Him;[128] (ii) and do good to your parents;[129] (iii) and do not slay your children out of fear of poverty. We provide you and will likewise provide them with sustenance; (iv) and do not even draw to things shameful[130] - be they open or secret; (v) and do not slay the soul santified by Allah except in just cause;[131] this He has enjoined upon you so that you may understand;

127. The restrictions which had shackled their lives were not those imposed by God. The really worthwhile restrictions are those prescribed by God in order to regulate human life. These have always served as the essential basis of all God-given codes (cf. Exodus. chapter 20).

128. The first principle is that they should associate none with God in His divinity: neither in His essence, nor in His attributes, nor in His powers and authority, nor in the rights He has against His creatures.
To associate someone with God in His divinity is to declare that the former shares the essence of God's divinity. Instances of associating others in God's essence are the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, the belief of the pagan Arabs that angels are daughters of God, and the belief of other polytheists in the divine character of their self-styled gods and goddesses and, in some cases, of their royalty. Likewise, a person associates others in the attributes of God when he considers someone other than God to be invested with those attributes which belong exclusively to God. One becomes guilty of this kind of polytheism if one believes somebody either to know all the mysteries of the Unseen or to be all-seeing and all-hearing or to be free of all defects and weaknesses and thus infallible. Again, a person associates others in the authority of God when he recognizes someone to be possessed of authority

which belongs to God alone by virtue of His godhead; for example, the power to either benefit or harm people in a supernatural manner, to fulfil the needs of people and rescue them from distress. to protect and shield them, to hear their prayers, to make or mar their fate. A person is guilty of the same when he recognizes someone as possessing the rightful authority to determine what is lawful and what is unlawful, and to make laws for the regulation of human life. Such authority belongs to God alone, and recognizing anyone other than God as possessing it is tantamount to associating others with God in His authority.

Moreover, to associate others with God in His divine rights means that one recognizes someone beside God as legitimately deserving that which may he asked of man by God alone, viz. bowing and prostrating, standing in awe and reverence with folded hands, devotional greeting and kissing the earth, slaughtering animals and making any other offerings in thanksgiving for his grace and benevolence and in acknowledgement of his overlordship, vowing offerings in his name, calling him to rescue one from one's affliction and misfortune, and all the other forms of worship, adoration and reverence which are exclusively for God. In the same way, no one has the-right to be loved to the exclusion of all other attachments, or to be held in such awe that one always fears his wrath and dreads the violation of his command, both openly and in secret. Likewise, it is God - and God alone - Who has the right to be obeyed unconditionally, and Whose guidance should be considered the only criterion of right and wrong. In the same way, man should not commit himself to obey any authority which is either independent of obedience to God or whose command lacks the sanction of God.

If someone accords any of these rights to anyone other than God, he is guilty of associating others with God in His divinity. His guilt is the same whether or not he calls such beings divine.

129. Accordingly, good treatment of one's parents includes showing them respect and reverence, obeying them, trying to keep them pleased, and serving them. The Qur'an always mentions this right of the parents immediately after mentioning the duty one owes to God alone. This makes it quite clear that the rights of parents have precedence over those of other human beings.

130. The word fawahish applies to all those acts whose abominable character is self-evident. In the Qur'an all extra-marital sexual relationships, sodomy, nudity, false accusations of unchastity, and taking as one's wife a woman who had been married to one's father, are specifically reckoned as 'shameful deeds' (fawahish). In Hadith, theft, taking intoxicating drinks and begging have been characterized as fawahish, as have many other brazenly indecent acts. Man is required to abstain from them both openly and in secret.

131. This means that human life, which has been declared inviolable by God, can only be destroyed for just cause. As for what is meant by 'just cause', we ought to remember that three cases are embodied in the Qur'an whereas two additional cases have been stated by the Prophet (peace be on him). The cases mentioned by the Qur'an are the following:

(1) That a man is convicted of deliberate homicide and thus the claim of retaliation is established against him.

(2) That someone resists the establishment of the true faith so that fighting against him might become necessary.

(3) That someone is guilty of spreading disorder in the Domain of Islam and strives to

overthrow the Islamic order of government.
The two cases mentioned in the Hadith are:
(1) That a person commits illegitimate sexual intercourse even after marriage.
(2) That a Muslim is guilty of apostasy and rebellion against the Muslim body-politic.
Except for these five reasons, slaying a human being is not permissible, regardless of whether he is a believer, a protected non-Muslim (dhimmi) or an ordinary unbeliever.

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوْا مَالَ الْيَتِيْمِ اِلَّا بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ اَحْسَنُ حَتّٰى يَبْلُغَ اَشُدَّهٗ ۚ وَاَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ
بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۚ وَاِذَا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُوْا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبٰى ۚ وَبِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ
اَوْفُوْا ۭ ذٰلِكُمْ وَصّٰىكُمْ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ۙ 152

(6:152) (vi) and do not even draw near to the property of the orphan in his minority except in the best manner;[132] (vii) and give full measures and weight with justice; We do not burden anyone beyond his capacity;[133] (viii) When you speak, be just, even though it concern a near of kin; (ix) and fulfil the covenant of Allah.[134] That is what He has enjoined upon you so that you may take heed.

132. That is, one's handling of the property of orphans should be based on maximum selflessness, sincerity and well-wishing for the orphans; it should be of a kind which lends itself to no reproach, either from God or man.

133. Even though this is a full-fledged postulate of the law of God, it is mentioned here in order to stress that one who tries to remain fair and just to the utmost of his ability, in giving weight and measure and in his dealings with people, will be acquitted of responsibility for error. If any mistakes in weight or measure occur out of oversight, and thus involuntarily, he will not be punished.

134. 'Covenant of Allah' signifies, in the first place, the commitment to God, as well as to human beings, to which man binds himself in His name. It also signifies that covenant between man and God, as well as between one human being and another which automatically takes place the moment a person is born onto God's earth and into human society. The first two covenants mentioned are voluntary and deliberate whereas the last one is natural. The last one is no less binding than the first two, even though man does not make it of his own volition. For when man enjoys his own existence, makes use of his physical and mental energy, benefits from the means of sustenance and natural resources - in other words, when he benefits from the world created by God and avails himself of the opportunities provided for him by the operation of natural laws - he incurs certain obligations towards God. In the same way, when one derives nourishment and sustenance from the blood of one's mother while in her womb, when one opens one's eyes in a family which is supported by the toil of one's father, when one benefits from the various institutions of human society, one is placed in varying degrees of obligation towards those individuals and institutions. This covenant between man and God and between man and

society is inscribed, not on a piece of paper, but on every fibre of man's being. Man has not entered into this covenant consciously and deliberately, yet the whole of his being owes itself to it. (Surah al-Baqarah 2:27) alludes to this covenant when it says that it is the transgressors 'who break the covenant of Allah after its firm binding, and cut asunder what Allah has commanded to be joined, and spread mischief on earth'. It is also mentioned in (Surah al-A'raf 7:172)in the following words: 'And recall when your Lord took the children of Adam from their loins and made them testify as to themselves saying, "Am I not your Lord?" (to which) they answered, "Yes, we do bear witness thereto. "

وَأَنَّ هَٰذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ ۖ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَن سَبِيلِهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُم بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ 153

(6:153) (x) This is My way -that which is straight: follow it, then, and do not follow other paths lest they scatter you from His path.[135] This is what He has enjoined upon you, so that you may beware.'

135. It is an essential corollary of the natural covenant mentioned above that man should follow the way prescribed by his Lord; any deflection from the orders of God, or serving anyone other than Him, constitutes a primary breach of that covenant. Once this breach has been committed every single article of the covenant is likely to be violated one after the other. Moreover, it should also be remembered that man cannot acquit himself of the highly delicate, extensive and complex set of responsibilities entailed by this covenant unless he accepts the guidance of God and tries to follow the way prescribed by Him.
Non-acceptance of God's guidance necessarily produces two grave and damaging consequences. First, by following any other way, one is inevitably led away from the true path and is thus deprived of the opportunity to approach God and please Him. Second, as soon as man deviates from the Straight Way prescribed by God, he encounters a whole labyrinth of highways and byways, causing the entire human species to fall a prey to total bewilderment and perplexity, and which shatters all dreams of a steady advance towards maturity and betterment. The words 'follow not other paths for they will scatter you away from His path' hint at this damage. See (Surah al-Ma'idah 5, n. 35) above.

ثُمَّ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ تَمَامًا عَلَى الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ وَتَفْصِيلًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لَّعَلَّهُم بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ 154

(6:154) Then We gave to Moses the Book, completing the benediction of Allah upon the one who acts righteously, spelling out everything clearly, a guidance and a mercy; so that they may believe in their meeting with their Lord.[136]

136. To believe in 'meeting with the Lord' signifies the conviction that one is answerable to God, and which leads one to adopt responsible behaviour in life.

The statement made here could mean two things. It might mean that the teachings of the heavenly Book vouchsafed to Moses could itself create a sense of responsibility among the Israelites. Alternatively, it might mean that when ordinary people observe the wonderful way of life prescribed by God, and note the beneficial effects of its merciful dispensation in the lives of righteous people, they will come to realize that belief in the After-life is, in all respects, a better basis for human life than its denial. In this way, their observation and study might turn them from rejection to true faith.

وَهٰذَا كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ مُبٰرَكٌ فَاتَّبِعُوْهُ وَاتَّقُوْا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ۙ 155

(6:155) And likewise We revealed this (Book) - a blessed one. Follow it, then, and become God-fearing; you may be shown mercy.

اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْٓا اِنَّمَآ اُنْزِلَ الْكِتٰبُ عَلٰى طَآئِفَتَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا ۪ وَاِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ دِرَاسَتِهِمْ لَغٰفِلِيْنَ ۙ 156

(6:156) (You may no longer) say now that the Book was revealed only to two groups of people before Us [137] and that we had indeed been unaware of what they read.

137. The allusion is to the Jews and the Christians.

اَوْ تَقُوْلُوْا لَوْ اَنَّآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْكِتٰبُ لَكُنَّآ اَهْدٰى مِنْهُمْ ۚ فَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةٌ ۚ فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَذَّبَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَصَدَفَ عَنْهَا ؕ سَنَجْزِي الَّذِيْنَ يَصْدِفُوْنَ عَنْ اٰيٰتِنَا سُوْٓءَ الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَصْدِفُوْنَ 157

(6:157) Nor may you claim that: 'Had the Book been revealed to us, we would have been better guided than they.' Surely clear evidence has come to you from your Lord, which is both a guidance and a mercy. Who, then, is more unjust than he who gave the lie to the signs of Allah and turned away from them?[138] And We shall soon requite those who turn away from Our signs with a severe chastisement for having turned away.

138. 'Signs of Allah' include the teachings embodied in the Qur'an. They are also manifest in the noble life of the Prophet (peace be on him), and the pure lives of those who believed in him. Tley also include the natural phenomena to which the Qur'an refers in support of its message.

هَلۡ يَنۡظُرُوۡنَ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ تَاۡتِيَهُمُ الۡمَلٰٓئِكَةُ اَوۡ يَاۡتِىَ رَبُّكَ اَوۡ يَاۡتِىَ بَعۡضُ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّكَ‌ؕ يَوۡمَ يَاۡتِىۡ
بَعۡضُ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّكَ لَا يَنۡفَعُ نَفۡسًا اِيۡمَانُهَا لَمۡ تَكُنۡ اٰمَنَتۡ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ اَوۡ كَسَبَتۡ فِىۡۤ اِيۡمَانِهَا
خَيۡرًا‌ؕ قُلِ انۡتَظِرُوۡۤا اِنَّا مُنۡتَظِرُوۡنَ 158

(6:158) What! Do they wait either for the angels to appear before them or for your Lord to come unto them or for some clear signs of your Lord1[139] to appear before them? When some clear signs of your Lord will appear, believing will be of no avail to anyone who did not believe before, or who earned no good deeds through his faith.[140] Say: 'Wait on; we too are waiting.'

139. That is, either tokens of the approach of the Day of Reckoning or God's scourge or any other sign that will uncover the Truth, after which there will be no reason left for testing man.

140. Those tokens will be so clear that after their appearance it will neither avail the unbeliever to repent of his unbelief nor the disobedient to forsake his disobedience. For faith and obedience have meaning and value only as long as the Truth remains hidden, as long as the tenure of life granted to people does not seem to have approached its end and the world with all its vanities continues to delude man that, as there may neither be God nor After-life, one should eat, drink and enjoy oneself as best one can.

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ فَرَّقُوۡا دِيۡنَهُمۡ وَكَانُوۡا شِيَعًا لَّسۡتَ مِنۡهُمۡ فِىۡ شَىۡءٍ‌ؕ اِنَّمَاۤ اَمۡرُهُمۡ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ
يُنَبِّئُهُمۡ بِمَا كَانُوۡا يَفۡعَلُوۡنَ 159

(6:159) Surely you have nothing to do with those who have made divisions in their religion and become factions.[141]Their matter is with Allah and He will indeed tell them (in time) what they have been doing.

141. This is addressed to the Prophet (peace be on him) and through him to all followers of the true faith. The import of this statement is that true faith has always consisted, and still consists, in recognizing the One True God as one's God and Lord; in associating none with God in His divinity - neither in respect of His essence, nor of His attributes, nor of His claims upon His creatures; in believing in the Hereafter and hence considering oneself answerable before God; and in living according to those principles and values which have been communicated by God to mankind through His Prophets and Books. This was the religion entrusted to man at the beginning of human life. The religions which emerged later stemmed from the perverted ingenuity of man, from his baser lusts, and from an exaggerated sense of devotion to venerable personalities. Such factors corrupted the original religion and overlaid it with harmful innovations. Hence, people modified and distorted the

original beliefs by mixing them with products of their conjecture and philosophical thinking. More and more innovations were added to the original laws of the true religion. Putting aside the Law of God, men set themselves up as their own law-makers, indulged in hair-splitting elaborations, and exaggerated the importance of disagreements in minor legal problems. They showed excessive veneration for some Prophets of God and some standard-bearers of the true religion, and directed their rancour and hatred against the others. Thus there emerged innumerable religions and sects, the birth of each leading to the fragmentation of humanity into an ever-increasing number of mutually hostile groups. Anyone who decides to follow the true religion must therefore cut himself off from all factions and chart an independent course.

مَنْ جَآءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهٗ عَشْرُ اَمْثَالِهَا ۚ وَمَنْ جَآءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزٰٓى اِلَّا مِثْلَهَا وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ 160

(6:160) Whoever will come to Allah with a good deed shall have ten times as much, and whoever will come to Allah with an evil deed, shall be requited with no more than the like of it. They shall not be wronged.

قُلْ اِنَّنِيْ هَدٰىنِيْ رَبِّيْٓ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ۚ دِيْنًا قِيَمًا مِّلَّةَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ حَنِيْفًا ۚ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ 161

(6:161) Say: 'As for me, my Lord has guided me on to a straight way, a right religion, the way of Abraham[142] who adopted it in exclusive devotion to Allah, and he was not of those who associated others with Allah in His divinity.'

142. The 'Way of Abraham' is one further indication of the way of true religion which one is required to follow. This way could also have been designated as the way of Moses or of Jesus But since their names have become falsely associated with Judaism and Christianity respectively, it was necessary to call it the 'Way of Abraham'. Moreover, Abraham was acknowledged by both the Jews and the Christians as rightly-guided and both knew, of course, that he lived long before either Judaism or Christianity was born. In the same way, the polytheists of Arabia also considered Abraham to be rightly-guided. Despite their ignorance, they at least acknowledged that that righteous man, who had founded the Ka'bah, was a worshipper of God exclusively and no idolator.

قُلْ اِنَّ صَلَاتِيْ وَنُسُكِيْ وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِيْ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۙ 162

(6:162) Say: 'Surely my Prayer, all my acts of worship, [143] and my living and my dying are for Allah alone, the Lord of the whole universe.

143. 'The Arabic word nusuk used here signifies ritual sacrifice as well as the other forms of devotion and worship.

لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ۚ وَبِذَٰلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ 163

(6:163) He has no associate. Thus have I been bidden, and I am the foremost of those who submit themselves (to Allah).`

قُلْ أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَبْغِي رَبًّا وَهُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ۚ وَلَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلَّا عَلَيْهَا ۚ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ۚ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُم مَّرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ 164

(6:164) Say: 'Shall I seek someone other than Allah as Lord when He is the Lord of everything?'[144] Everyone will bear the consequence of what he does, and no one shall bear the burden of another. [145] Thereafter, your return will be to your Lord, whereupon He will let you know what you disagreed about.

144. Since God is the Lord of the entire universe, how could anyone be His lord? Since the entire universe is yoked to obedience to God, man is an integral part of the universe, how can he reasonably, look for another lord in that area of his life in which he uses his own volition,ind judgement? Is it appropriate for him to move in diametrical opposition to the entire universe?

145. Every person is responsible for whatever he does; and no one is responsible for the deeds of others.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ ۖ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ 165

(6:165) For He it is Who has appointed you vicegerent over the earth, and has exalted some of you over others in rank that He may try you in what He has bestowed is upon you.[146] Indeed your Lord is swift in retribution, and He is certainly AllForgiving, All-Compassionate.

146. This statement embodies three important truths: First, that human beings as such are vicegerents of God on earth, so that God has entrusted them with many things and endowed them with the power to use them. Second, it is God Himself Who has created differences of rank among His vicegerents. The trust placed in some is more than that of

others. Some men have been granted control of more resources than others. Some are more gifted in respect of their abilities. Likewise, some human beings have been placed under the trust of others. Third, all this is indeed designed to test man. The entire life. of man is in fact, a vast examination wherein man is being tested about the trust he has received from God: how sensitive he is to that trust, to what extent he lives up to it, and to what extent he proves to be competent with it. What position man will be able to attain in the Next Life depends on the result of this test.

7. Surah Al Aaraf (The Heights)

Name

This Surah takes its name from vv. 46-47 in which mention of A'araf occurs.

Period of Revelation

A study of its contents clearly shows that the period of its revelation is about the same as that of Al-An'am, i. e., the last year of the Holy Prophet's life at Makkah, but it cannot be asserted with certainty which of these two was sent down earlier. Anyhow the manner of its admonition clearly indicates that it belongs to the same period. As both have the same historical background the reader should keep in view the preface to Al-An'am.

Topics of Discussion

The principal subject of this surah is "invitation to the Divine Message sent down to Muhammad" (Allah's peace be upon him), which is couched in a warning. This is because the Messenger had spent a long time in admonishing the people of Makkah without any tangible effect on them. Nay, they had turned a deaf ear to his message and become so obdurate and antagonistic that, in accordance with the Divine Design, the Messenger was going to be commanded to leave them and turn to other people,. That is why they are being admonished to accept the Message but, at the same time, they are being warned in strong terms of the consequences that followed the wrong attitude of the former people towards their Messengers. (Now that the Holy Prophet was going to" migrate from Makkah the concluding portion of the address has been directed towards the people of the Book with whom he was going to come into contact. This meant that the time of migration was coming near and the "invitation" was going to be extended to mankind in general, and was not to be confined to his own people in particular as before.

During the course of the address to the Jews, the consequences of their hypocritical conduct towards Prophethood have also been pointed out clearly, for they professed to believe in Prophet Moses but in practice opposed his teachings, disobeyed him and worshiped falsehood and consequently were afflicted with ignominy and disgrace.

At the end of the Surah, some instructions have been given to the Holy Prophet and his followers for carrying out the work of the propagation of Islam with wisdom. The most important of these is that they should show patience and exercise restraint in answer to the provocations of their opponents. Above all, they have been advised that under stress of the excitement of feeling, they should not take any wrung step that might harm their cause.

Subject: Invitation to the Divine Message

Topics and their Interconnection

In this passage, the people have been invited to follow the Message sent down to them through Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) and warned of the consequences of its rejection. **1 - 10**

The story of Adam has been related with a view to warning his descendants against the evil devices of Satan who is ever ready to mislead them as he did in the case of Adam and Eve. **11 - 25**

This passage contains some Divine instructions, and contrasts these with Satan's instructions, and depicts a graphic picture of the results and the consequences of the two. **26 - 53**

As the Message has been sent down by Allah (Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and everything in them), it should be followed, for it is like the rain He sends down to give life to the dead earth. **54 - 58**

Events from the lives of some well-known Prophets - Noah, Hud, Salih, Lot, Shu`aib, Moses (Allah's peace be upon them all) -- have been related to show the consequences of the rejection of the Message, and the addressees of Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) have been admonished to accept and follow the Message in order to escape perdition. **59 - 171**

As the Covenant with the Israelites was mentioned at the end of the preceding passage, the whole mankind has been reminded very appropriately of the Covenant that was made at the time of the appointment of Adam as the Vicegerent of Allah so that all of his descendants should remember it and accept and follow the Message that was delivered by the Holy Prophet. **172 - 174**

The example of the one who had the knowledge of the Message but discarded it, has been cited as a warning to those who were treating the Message as false; they have been exhorted to use their faculties to recognize the Message; otherwise Hell would be there abode. **175 - 179**

In this concluding portion of the Surah, some deviations of those who do not use their faculties properly to understand the Message have been dealt with and they have been admonished, reproved and warned of the serious consequences of their antagonistic attitude towards the Message of the Holy Prophet. **180 - 198**

In conclusion, instructions have been given to the Holy Prophet, and through him to his followers, about the attitude they should adopt towards those who reject the Message and deviate from it. **199 - 206**

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

الٓمّٓصٓ 1

(7:1) Alif-Lam-Mim-Sad.

کِتٰبٌ اُنۡزِلَ اِلَیۡکَ فَلَا یَکُنۡ فِیۡ صَدۡرِکَ حَرَجٌ مِّنۡہُ لِتُنۡذِرَ بِہٖ وَ ذِکۡرٰی لِلۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ 2

(7:2) This is a Book revealed to you. [1] Let there be no impediment in your heart about it.[2] (It has been revealed to you) that you may thereby warn [the unbelievers], that it may be a reminder to the believers.[3]

1. The word 'Book', in this context, signifies this very surah, al-A'raf.

2. The Prophet (peace be on him) is directed to preach his Message without fear and hesitation, and to disregard his opponents' response. Such opponents may well be offended by his preaching of the Message, or may, hold it to ridicule, or go about maliciously twisting it, or acting with greater hostility.All this notwithstanding, the Message of Islam must be preached.

The Arabic word haraj (which we have translated as straitness), signifies an intractable bush. (See Ibn Manzur. Lisan al 'Arab and Firuzabadi, al-qamus, q.v. 'Harajah'.) 'Straitness or constriction in the breast' refers to the reluctance of a person to go ahead in the face of opposition. The following Qur'anic verse would seem to allude to this mental state of the Prophet (peace he on him): 'We do indeed know how your heart feels distressed at what they say' (al-Hijr 15: 97). What painfully concerned the Prophet (peace be on him) was to find out how he could direct a people, whose adamance and opposition to truth had reached such high proportions, to the Right Way. The same state of mind is again reflected in the Qur'anic verse: 'Perhaps you might feel inclined to part with a portion of what has been revealed to you, and your heart feels straitened lest they, say: "Why is a treasure not sent down unto him; or why does an angel not come with him?" ' (Hud 11:12).

3. The main purpose of this surah is to jolt the people out of their heedlessness and to warn them of the dire consequences that will follow if they reject the call of the Prophet (peace be on him). Additionally , this surah also seeks to serve as a reminder to the belivers - a purpose which is achieved, incidentally, by the warning made to the unbelievers.

اِتَّبِعُوْا مَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اَوْلِيَآءَ ؕ قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ 3

(7:3) [0 men!] Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord and follow no masters other than Him.[4] Little are you admonished.

4. The central theme of the whole surah, and of the present discourse, is the guidance which man needs in order to live a wholesome life, the knowledge which he requires in order to understand the reality of the universe and his own being and the purpose of his existence; the principles which he needs to serve as the basis for morality and social life as well as culture and civilization. In this regard man should look to God alone and follow exclusively, the Guidance which He has communicated to mankind through His Messenger. To look to anyone other than God is dangerous for it has always spelled disaster in the past, and will always spell disaster in the future. In this verse the word awliya' (masters) refers to those whom one follows, regardless of whether one idolizes or curses them, and whether one acknowledges their patronship or strongly, denies it. For further explanation see Tafhim al-Qur'an,(al-Shurai 42, n.6).

وَكَمْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ اَهْلَكْنٰهَا فَجَآءَهَا بَاْسُنَا بَيَاتًا اَوْهُمْ قَآئِلُوْنَ 4

(7:4) How many a township We have destroyed! Our scourge fell upon them at night, or when they were taking midday rest.

فَمَا كَانَ دَعْوٰىهُمْ اِذْ جَآءَهُمْ بَاْسُنَآ اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا كُنَّا ظٰلِمِيْنَ 5

(7:5) And when Our scourge fell upon them their only cry was: 'We are indeed transgressors.'[5]

5. People can learn a lesson from the tragic fate of those nations that spurned God's Guidance. and instead followed the guidance of others; and they became so degenerate that their very existence became an intolerable burden on the earth. Eventually, God's scourge seized them. and the earth was cleansed of their filthy existence.

The words uttered by, the evil-doers: 'We are indeed transgressors', emphasizes two points, First, that it is pointless for one to realize and repent of one's wrong-doing after the time for such repentance is past. Individuals and communities who allow the term granted to them to be wasted in heedlesness and frivolity, who turn a deaf car to those who invite them to the truth, have so often been overtaken in the past by God's punishmet. Second, there are numerous instances of individuals as well as communities which incontrovertibly prove that when the wrong-doings of a nation exceed a certain limit, the term granted to it expires and God's punishment suddenly overtakes it. And once a nation is subjected to God's punishment, there is no escape from it. Since human history abounds in such instances, there is no reason why people should persist in the same iniquity, and repent only when the time for repentance has passed.

فَلَنَسْـَٔلَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اُرْسِلَ اِلَيْهِمْ وَلَنَسْـَٔلَنَّ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ۙ 6

(7:6) So We shall call to account those to whom Messengers were sent,[6] and We shall call to account the Messengers (to see how dutifully they conveyed the Message, and how people responded to it).[7]

6. The words 'call to account' refers to the questioning people will be subjected to on the Day of Judgement. For it is the reckoning on the Day, of Judgement that really matters. Punishment dealt upon corrupt individuals and communities in this world does not constitute their true punishment. Punishment in this world is no more than what happens when a criminal, who has been strutting scot-free, is suddenly arrested. The arrest constitutes no more than depriving the criminal of the opportunity to perpetrate further crimes. The annals of history are filled with instances where corrupt nations have been punished, proving that man has not been granted absolute licence to go about doing whatever he pleases. Rather, there is a Power above all that allows man to act freely but only to a certain extent, no more. And when man exceeds those limits, that Power administers a series of warnings in order that he might heed the warnings and give up his wickedness. But when man fails totally to respond to such warnings, he is punished.

Anyone who considers the events of history, will conclude that the Lord of the universe must have certainly appointed a Day of Judgement in order to hold the wrong-doers to account for their actions and to punish them. That the Qur'an refers to the recurrent punishment of wicked nations as an argument in support of the establishment of the final judgement in the Hereafter is evidenced by the fact that the present (verse- 6)- opens with the word so'.

7. This shows that on the Day of Judgement Prophethood will be the main basis of reckoning. On the one hand, the Prophets will be questioned about the efforts they made to convey God's Message to mankind. On the other hand, the people to whom the Prophets were sent will be questioned about their response to the message. The Qur'an is not explicit about how judgements will be made with regard to individuals and communities who did not receive God's Message. It seems that God has left judgement - to borrow a contemporary judicial expression - reserved. However, with regard to individuals and communities who did receive God's Message through the Prophets, the Qur'an states explicitly, that they will have no justification whatsoever to put forward a defence of their disbelief and denial, of their transgression and disobedience. They are doomed to be east into Hell in utter helplessness and dejection.

فَلَنَقُصَّنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ بِعِلْمٍ وَّمَا كُنَّا غَآئِبِيْنَ 7

(7:7) Then We shall narrate to them with knowledge the whole account. For surely, We were not away from them.

وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذِ ِۨالْحَقُّ ۚ فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ 8

(7:8) The weighing on that Day will be the true weighing:[8] those whose scales are heavy will prosper.

8. This means that when the Balance is fixed on the Day of Judgement, 'truth' and weight will be identical. The more truth one has to one's credit, the more truth one has to one's credit, the more the weight in one's scale; and vice versa. One will be judged solely on the basis of this weight. In other words, no consideration other than truth will enter into the calculation. A life of falsehood, however long it lasted, and however full of worldly achievements, will carry no weight at all. Weighed in the Balance, the devotees of falsehood will discover that their life-long deeds do not even weigh so much as a birds feather. The same point has been expatiated upon in (al-Kahf 18:103-5) : 'Shall We tell you of those who are greatest losers in respect of their deeds? It is those whose efforts have been wasted in this life while they kept believing that they were acquiring good by their deeds. they are those who deny the Signs of their Lord and the fact of their having to meet Him (in the Hereafter). So their works are in vain and we shall attach no weight to them on the Day of Judgement.'

وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يَظْلِمُوْنَ 9

(7:9) and those whose scales are light will be the losers,[9] for they, are the ones who have been unjust to Our signs.

9. For a full appreciation of this point it is necessary, to remember that man's deeds will be classified into positive and negative categorics. The positive category will consist of knowing the truth, believing in it, acting upon it, and striving to make it prevail. It is such acts alone which will have weight in the Hereafter. Conversely, whenever someone follows and goes after lusts or blindly follows other humans or satans, his acts will be reckoned as 'negative'. Such acts will not only be of no value at all, but will also have the effect of reducing the total weight of one's positive acts.

Thus, a man's success in the Hereafter requires that his good acts outweigh his evil ones to such an extent that even if his evil acts cause the effacement of some of his good acts, he should still have enough left in his credit to ensure his scale is inclined towards the positive. As for the man whose evil acts outweigh his good acts, he will be like the bankrupt businessman who, even after spending all his assets, remains under the burden of debt.

وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنّٰكُمْ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَعَايِشَ ؕ قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُوْنَ ع 10

(7:10) We assuredly established you in the earth and arranged for your livelihood in it. Little do you give thanks.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنٰكُمْ ثُمَّ صَوَّرْنٰكُمْ ثُمَّ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسْجُدُوْا لِاٰدَمَ ۖ صلے فَسَجَدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِبْلِيْسَ ؕ لَمْ يَكُنْ مِّنَ السّٰجِدِيْنَ 11

(7:11) We initiated your creation, then We gave you each a shape, and then We said to the angels: 'Prostrate before Adam.') [10] They all prostrated except Iblis: he was not one of those who fell Prostrate.

10. These verses should he read in conjunction with (al-Baqarah 2: 30-9). The words in which the command to prostrate before Adam is mentioned may give rise to the misapprehension that it was Adam as such who is the object of prostration. This misapprehension should be removed by what has been said here. The text makes it very clear that prostration before Adam was in his capacity, as the representative of all mankind and not in his personal capacity.

The successive stages of man's creation mentioned in the present verse ('We initiated your creation, then We gave you each a shape'), means that God first planned the creation of man, made ready the necessary materials for it, and then gave those materials a human form. Then, when man had assumed the status of a living being, God asked the angels to prostrate before him. The Qur'an says: And recall when your Lord said to the angels: 'I am about to

create man from clay. When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit then fall You down in prostration before him' (Sad 38: 71-2).

Mention has been made in these verses, though in a difterent way, of the same three stages of creation: man's creation from clay; giving him a proportionate human shape; and bringing Adam into existence by breathing into him God's spirit. The following verses also have the same import:

And recall when your Lord said to the angels: 'I am about to create man, from sounding clay moulded into shape from black mud. When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall you all down in prostration before him' (al-Hijr 15: 28-9).

It is quite difficult for one to appreciate fully the details of the origin of man's creation. We cannot fully grasp how man was created out of the elements drawn from the earth; how he was given a form and a well-proportioned one at that and how God's Spirit was breathed into him. It is quite obvious, though, that the Qur'anic version of man's creation is sharply at odds with the theory, of creation propounded by Darwin and his followers in our time. Darwinism explains man's creation in terms of his evolution from a variety of non-human and sub-human stages culminating in homo sapiens. It draws no clear demarcation line that would mark the end of the non-human stage of evolution and the beginning of the species called 'man'. Opposed to this is the Qur'anic version of man's creation where man starts his career from the very beginning as an independent species, having in his entire history no essential relationship at all with any non-human species. Also, man is conceived as having been invested by God with full consciousness and enlightenment from the very start of his life.

These are two different doctrines regarding the past of the human species. Both these doctrines give rise to two variant conceptions about man. If one were to adopt the Darwinian doctrine, man is conceived as essentially a species of the animal genre. Acceptance of this doctrine leads man to derive the guiding principles of his life, including moral principles, from the laws governing animal life. Given the basic premises of such a doctrine, animal-like behaviour is to be considered quite natural for man. The only, difference between man and animal lies in the fact that animals act without the help of the tools and instruments used by humans, and their behaviour is devoid of culture.

Were one to accept the other doctrine, man would be conceived as a totally, distinct category. Man is no longer viewed simply as a talking or gregarious animal. He is rather seen as God's Vicegerent on earth. What distinguishes man from other animals, according to this doctrine, is not his capacity to speak or his gregariousness but the moral responsibility and trust with which he has been invested. Thus, one's whole perspective with regard to man and everything relating to him is changed. Rather than looking downwards to species of being lower than the human, man will turn his gaze upwards. It is claimed by some that however dignified the Qur'anic doctrine might be from a moral and psychological point of view, Darwinism should still be preferred on the basis of its being scientifically established. However, the very claim that Darwinism has been scientificaly established is itself questionable. Only those who have a very superficial acquaintance with modern science can entertain the misconception that the Darwinian theory of evolution has been scientifically,

established. Those who know better are fully, aware that despite the vast paraphernalia of evidence in its support, it remains merely a hypothesis. The arguments marshalled in support of this theory at best succeed in establishing it as a possibility, but certainly not as an incontrovertible fact. Hence at the most what can he said is that the evolution of the species is as much a possibility as its direct creation.

قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ اَلَّا تَسْجُدَ اِذْ اَمَرْتُكَ ؕ قَالَ اَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ ۚ خَلَقْتَنِيْ مِنْ نَّارٍ وَّخَلَقْتَهٗ مِنْ طِيْنٍ 12

(7:12) Allah said: 'What prevented you from prostrating, when I commanded you to do so?' He said: 'I am better than he. You created me from fire, and him You created from clay.'

قَالَ فَاهْبِطْ مِنْهَا فَمَا يَكُوْنُ لَكَ اَنْ تَتَكَبَّرَ فِيْهَا فَاخْرُجْ اِنَّكَ مِنَ الصّٰغِرِيْنَ 13

(7:13) Allah said: 'Then get you down from here. It does not behove you to be arrogant here. So be gone. You will be among the humiliated.'[11]

11. Implicit in the Qur'anic expression (sagharin) is the idea of contentment with one's disgrace and indignity, for saghir is he who invites disgrace and indignity, upon himself. Now, Satan was a victim of vanity and pride, and for that very reason defied God's command to prostrate himself before Adam. Satan was therefore, guilty of self-inflicted degradation. False pride, baseless notions of glory, ill-founded illusions of greatness failed to confer any greatness upon him. They could only bring upon him disgrace and indignity. Satan could blame none but himself for this sordid end.

قَالَ اَنْظِرْنِيْٓ اِلٰى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُوْنَ 14

(7:14) Satan replied: 'Give me respite till the Day they shall be raised.'

قَالَ اِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنْظَرِيْنَ 15

(7:15) Allah said: 'You are granted respite.'

قَالَ فَبِمَآ اَغْوَيْتَنِيْ لَاَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ ۙ 16

(7:16) Satan said: 'Since You have led me astray, I shall surely sit in ambush for them on Your Straight Path.

ثُمَّ لَاٰتِيَنَّهُمْ مِّنۢ بَيْنِ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ اَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَآئِلِهِمْ ؕ وَلَا تَجِدُ

اَكْثَرَهُمْ شٰكِرِيْنَ 17

(7:17) Then I will come upon them from the front and from the rear, and from their right and from their left. And You will not find most of them thankful.'[12]

12. This was the challenge thrown down by Satan to God. What it meant is that Satan would make use of the respite granted to him until the Last Day, and he would do so in order to prove that nian did not deserve a position superior to his and this had after all been bestowed upon him by God. So doing, he would expose how ungrateful, thankless and disloyal a creature man is.

The respite asked for by Satan and granted to him by God includes not only the time but also the opportunity to mislead Man and to prove his point by appealing to man's weaknesses. The Qur'an makes a pointed statement about this in (Banu Isra'il 17: 61-5). These verses make it clear that God had granted Satan the opportunity to try to mislead Adam and his offspring At the same time it has also been made quite clear that Satan was not granted the power to lead men into error against their will. 'As for my servants', says the Qur'an, 'you shall have no power over them' (Banu Isra'il 17: 65). Thus all that Satan can do is to cause misunderstanding, to make people cherish false illusions, to make evil and error seem atractive, and to invite people to evil ways by holding out to them the promise of immense pleasure and material benefits. He would have no power, however, to forcibly pull them to the Satanic way and to prevent them from following the Right Way. Accordingly, the Qur'an makes it quite plain elsewhere that on the Day of Judgement, Satan would address the men who had followed him in the following words: 'I had no power over you except to call you; but you listened to me: then reproach me not, but reproach your own selves' (Ibrahim 14: 22).

As for Satan's allegation that God Himself caused him to fall into error see (verse 16) it is an attempt on the part of Satan to transfer the blame which fails squarely on him to God. Satan's grivance seems to be that God was responsible for his deviation insofar as He hurt Satan's pride by asking him to prostrate before Adam, and that it was this which led him to disobey God. It is thus clear that Satan wanted to continue enjoying his vain arrogance and that he was incensed that his weakness - arrogance - was seen through and brought to full light. The underlying stupidity of the statement is too patently obvious to call for any refutation, and hence God took no notice of it.

قَالَ اخْرُجْ مِنْهَا مَذْءُوْمًا مَّدْحُوْرًا ؕ لَمَنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ لَاَمْلَئَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْكُمْ

اَجْمَعِيْنَ 18

(7:18) Allah said: 'Go away from here - disgraced and expelled. I shall fill the Hell with all those that follow you.

وَيٰٓاٰدَمُ اسْكُنْ اَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ فَكُلَا مِنْ حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هٰذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ
فَتَكُوْنَا مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ 19

(7:19) 0 Adam! Live you and your spouse in the Garden and both of you eat from it wherever you will, but never approach the tree or you shall become wrongdoers.'

فَوَسْوَسَ لَهُمَا الشَّيْطٰنُ لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَا وٗرِيَ عَنْهُمَا مِنْ سَوْاٰتِهِمَا وَقَالَ مَا نَهٰىكُمَا
رَبُّكُمَا عَنْ هٰذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَكُوْنَا مَلَكَيْنِ اَوْ تَكُوْنَا مِنَ الْخٰلِدِيْنَ 20

(7:20) But Satan made an evil suggestion to both of them that he might reveal to them their shame that had remained hidden from them. He said: 'Your Lord has forbidden you to approach this tree only to prevent you from becoming angels or immortals.'

وَقَاسَمَهُمَآ اِنِّيْ لَكُمَا لَمِنَ النّٰصِحِيْنَ ۙ 21

(7:21) And he swore to them both: 'Surely I am your sincere adviser.'

فَدَلّٰىهُمَا بِغُرُوْرٍ ۚ فَلَمَّا ذَاقَا الشَّجَرَةَ بَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْءٰتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفٰنِ عَلَيْهِمَا
مِنْ وَّرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ ۭ وَنَادٰىهُمَا رَبُّهُمَآ اَلَمْ اَنْهَكُمَا عَنْ تِلْكُمَا الشَّجَرَةِ وَاَقُلْ لَّكُمَآ اِنَّ
الشَّيْطٰنَ لَكُمَا عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ 22

(7:22) Thus Satan brought about their fall by deceit. And when they tasted of the tree, their shame became vislible to them, and both began to cover themselves with leaves from the Garden. Then their Lord called out to them: 'Did I not forbid you from that tree, and did I not warn you that Satan 'is your declared enemy?'

قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَآ اَنْفُسَنَا وَاِنْ لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ 23

(7:23) Both cried out: 'Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us and do not have mercy on us, we shall surely be among the losers.'[13]

13. The narrative sheds light on the following significant points:

(i) Modesty and bashfulness are inherent in human nature. The primary manifestation of this instinct is seen in the sense of shame that one feels when one is required to expose the private parts of one's body in the presence of others. According to the Qur'an, this bashfulness is not artificial, nor an outcome of advancement in human culture and civilization. Nor is it something acquired as some misguided thinkers contend. On the contrary, modesty has been an integral part of human nature from the very beginning.

(ii) The very first stratagem adopted by Satan in his bid to lead man astray from the Right Path consisted of undermining man's sense of modesty, to direct him towards lewdness and make him sexually deviant. In other words, the sexual instincts of man were taken by Satan as the most vulnerable aspect of human nature. Accordingly, he sought to weaken man's natural instincts of modesty and bashfulness. This devilish stratagem is still followed by the disciples of Satan in our time. For them, progress is inconceivable without exposing woman to the gaze of all and making her strip before others in one form or another.

(iii) Such is human nature that man scarcely responds to an unambiguous invitation to evil. Those who seek to propagate evil are, therefore, forced to present themselves as sincere well-wishers of humanity.

(iv) Man is naturally, drawn towards lofty ideals such as the attainment of superhuman positions and the securing of immortality. Satan achieved his first victory in his bid to mislead man by appealing to the latter's inherent desire to attain immortality. Satan's most effective weapon is to promise man a more elevated position than his present one, and then set him on a course that leads instead to his degradation.

(v) Here the Qur'an refutes the fairly popular view that Satan first misled Eve and later used her as an instrument to mislead Adam. (See Ibn Kathir's comments on (verses 22-3 - Ed.) The Qur'anic version of the story is that Satan attempted to mislead both Adam and Eve, and in fact both fell prey to his guile. At first sight, this might seem of trivial significance. However, all those who are acquainted with the impact of this version of Adam's fall on the moral, legal and social degradation of women will appreciate the significance of this Qur'anic statement.

(vi) There is hardly any basis to assume that the forbidden tree had certain inherent qualities which could result in the exposure of Adam and Eve's private parts as soon as they had tasted its fruit. Instead of the forbidden tree possessing any extraordinary qualities, it was rather man's disobedience to God which led to his fall from his original state. Initially, Adam and Eve's private parts had remained hidden on account of special arrangements made by God. Once they disobeyed, they were deprived of that special Divine arrangement, and were left to themselves to cover their nakedness if they so wished.

(vii) This was a way, of conveying to mankind for all time that whenever he disobeys God, he will sooner or later be exposed; that man will enjoy God's support and protection only so long as he remains obedient to Him. Once man transgresses the bounds of his obedience, he will be deprived of God's care and protection and left to his own self. This idea is also

embodied in many traditions from the Prophet (peace be on him). According to a tradition, the Prophet (peace be on him) prayed:

'O God! I seek Your Mercy. Do not leave me to my own care even for the wink of an eye!' (Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 5, P. 421 - Ed.)

(vii) Satan wanted to prove that man did not deserve, not even for a moment, the superior status which had been granted to him by God. However, Satan failed in the very first round of his efforts to discredit man. Granted, man did not fully succeed in obeying God's command; rather, he fell prey to the machinations of his arch-enemy, Satan, and deviated from the path of obedience. Nevertheless, it is evident even in the course of this first encounter that man is a morally superior being. This is clear from many a thing. First, whereas Satan laid claim to superiority, man made no such claim rather a superior status was bestowed upon him by God. Second, Satan disobeyed God out of sheer pride and arrogance. But far from openly revolting against God out of his own prompting, man was disobedient under Satan's evil influence. Third, when man disobeyed God, he did so unwittingly, not realizing that he was committing a sin. 'Man was beguiled into disobedience by Satan ,who appeared in the garb of man's well-wisher. It was Satan who persuaded him to believe that in the fruit of the forbidden tree lay his good, that his action would lead him to the heights of goodness, not to the depths of evil. Fourth, when Satan was warned, rather than confessing his mistake and repenting, he clung even more adamantly to disobedience. But when man was told that he had sinned, he did not resort to continued transgression as Satan did. As soon as man realized his mistake, he confessed his fault, returned to the course of obedience and sought refuge in God's mercy.

This story draws a clear line between the way of Satan and the way that befits man. Satan's way is characterized by rebellion against God, by arrogantly persisting in that rebellion even after having been warned, and by trying to mislead the righteously disposed towards sin and disobedience. As opposed to this, the way that befits man is to resist the evil promptings of Satan and to be constantly vigilant against Satanic machinations. But, if in spite of all these precautions, a man does swerve from the course of obedience, he should turn, as soon as he realizes his fault, to God in penitence and remorse and make amends.

This is the lesson that God conveys to man through this anecdote. The Qur'an seeks to impress upon the opponents of the Prophet (peace be on him) that the way, they are following is the way of Satan. To become indifferent to God's Guidance, to take satans among men and jinn as their protectors and to persist in disobedience despite repeated warnings, amounts to adopting a Satanic attitude. It demonstrates that they have fallen prey to the snares of the arch-enemy and have been totally overpowered by him. This attitude will lead to their total undoing just as it led to Satan's undoing. Anyone who has even an iota of understanding should heed and emulate the example of his foreparents - Adam and Eve - who repented and made amends after their disobedience.

قَالَ اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ ۚ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ 24

(7:24) Allah said: 'Go down; [14] you are enemies one of the other. For you there is dwelling and provision on the earth for a while.'

14. God's command that Adam and Eve 'go down' should not be misunderstood to mean that their departure from Paradise was by way of punishment. The Qur'an has made it clear many a time that God accepted Adam and Eve's repentance and pardoned them. Thus the order does not imply punishment. It rather signifies the fulfilment of the purpose for which man was created. (For elaboration see Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. 1, (al-Baqarh 2: nn. 48 and 53, pp. 63-4 and 66 - Ed.)

قَالَ فِيهَا تَحْيَوْنَ وَفِيهَا تَمُوتُونَ وَمِنْهَا تُخْرَجُونَ ع 25

(7:25) He continued: 'You shall live there, and there shall you die, and from it you shall be raised to life.'

يٰبَنِيٓ اٰدَمَ قَدْ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُّوَارِيْ سَوْاٰتِكُمْ وَرِيْشًا ط وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوٰى لا ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ ط ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ 26

(7:26) 0 Children of Adam![15] Indeed We have sent down to you a garment which covers your shame and provides protection and adornment. But the finest of all is the garment of piety. That is one of the signs of Allah so that they may take heed.

15. By referring to an important aspect of Adam and Eve's story, the attention of the people of Arabia of those days was drawn to the evil influence of Satan upon their lives. Under Satan's influence they had begun to see dress merely as a shield of protection against the inclemencies of the weather and as a means of adornment. The basic purpose of dress to cover the private parts of the body - had receded into the background. People had no inhibition about the immodest exposure of the private parts of their body in public. To publicly take a bath absolutely naked, to attend to the call of nature on thoroughfares, were the order of the day. To crown it all, in the course of Pilgrimage they used to circumambulate around the Ka'bah in stark nakedness. Women even surpassed men in immodesty. In their view, the performance of religious rites in complete nudity was an act of religious merit.

Immodesty, however, was not an exclusive characteristic of the people of Arabia. Many nations indulged in it in the past, and many nations continue to indulge in it even now. Hence the message embodied in these verses is not directed just to the people of Arabia. It is rather directed to all men. Mankind, which is the progeny of Adam, is warned against this particular aspect of Satanic influence on their lives. When men show indifference to God's Guidance and turn away from the Message of the Prophets, they virtually place themselves at the mercy of Satan. For it is Satan who makes them abandon way's that are consistent with true human nature and who leads them to immodesty in the same way he did with Adam and Eve. Were man to reflect on this, it would become quite evident that when he is

deprived of the guidance of the Prophets, he cannot even appreciate, let alone fulfil, the primary requirements of his true nature.

يٰبَنِيٓ اٰدَمَ لَا يَفْتِنَنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ كَمَآ اَخْرَجَ اَبَوَيْكُمْ مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ يَنْزِعُ عَنْهُمَا لِبَاسَهُمَا
لِيُرِيَهُمَا سَوْءٰتِهِمَا ۭ اِنَّهٗ يَرٰىكُمْ هُوَ وَقَبِيْلُهٗ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ ۭ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيٰطِيْنَ
اَوْلِيَاۗءَ لِلَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ 27

(7:27) Children of Adam! Let not Satan deceive you in the manner he deceived your parents out of Paradise, pulling off from them their clothing to reveal to them their shame. He and his host surely see you from whence you do not see them. We have made satans the guardians of those who do not believe. [16]

16. These verses bring into focus several important points.

First, that the need to cover oneself is not an artificial urge in man; rather it is an important dictate of human nature. Unlike animals, God did not provide man with the protective covering that He provided to animals. God rather endowed man with the natural instincts of modesty and bashfulness. Moreover, the private parts of the body are not only, related to sex, but also constitute 'sawat' that is, something the exposure of which is felt to be shameful. Also, God did not provide man with a natural covering in response to man's modesty and bashfulness, but has inspired in him see (verse 26)the urge to cover himself. This is in order that man might use his reason to understand the requirements of his nature, use the resources made available by God, and provide himself a dress.

Second, man instinctively knows that the moral purpose behind the use of dress takes precedence over the physical purpose. Hence the idea that man should resort to dress in order to cover his private parts precedes the mention of dress as a means of providing protection and adornment to the human body. In this connection man is altogether different from animals, With regard to the latter, the natural covering that has been granted serves to protect them from the inclemencies of weather and also to beautify their bodies. However, that natural covering is altogether unrelated to the purpose of concealing their sexual organs. The exposure of those organs is not a matter of shame for them and hence their nature is altogether devoid of the urge to cover them. However, as men fell prey to Satanic influences, they developed a false and unhealthy notion about the function of dress. They were led to believe that the function of dress for human beings is no different from that for animals, viz., to protect them from the inclemencies of weather and to make them look attractive. As for concealing the private parts of the body, the importance of that function has been belittled. For men have been misled into believing that their private parts are, in fact, like other organs of their body. As in the case of animals, there is little need for human beings to conceal their sex organs.

Third, the Qur'an emphasizes that it is not enough for the dress to cover the private parts

and to provide protection and adornment to the human body. Man's dress ought to be the dress of piety. This means that a man's dress ought to conceal his private parts. It should also render a man reasonably presentable - the dress being neither too shabby and cheap nor overly expensive and extravagant relative to his financial standing. Nor should dress smack of pride or hauteur, or reflect that pathological mental state in which men prefer characteristically feminine dresses and vice versa: or that the people belonging to one nation mimic people of other nations so as to resemble them, thereby becoming a living emblem of collective humiliation and abasement. The Qur'anic ideal can only be achieved by those who truly believe in the Prophets and sincerely try to follow God's Guidance. For as soon as man decides to reject God's Guidance, Satan assumes his patronage and by one means or another manages to lead him into error after error.

Fourth, the question of dress constitutes one of the numerous signs of God which is visible virtually throughout the world. When the facts mentioned above are carefully considered it will be quite clear as to why dress is an important sign of God.

وَإِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهَا آبَاءَنَا وَاللَّهُ أَمَرَنَا بِهَا ۗ قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَأْمُرُ
بِالْفَحْشَاءِ ۖ أَتَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ 28

(7:28) And when such people commit an indecent act they say: 'We found our fathers doing that, and Allah has enjoined it on us.[17] Say: 'Surely Allah never enjoins any indecency.[18] Do you say things regarding Allah that you do not know?'

17. This refers to the pre-islamic Arabian practice of circumambulating around the Ka'bah in stark nakedness. The people of those day's thought that nakedness during circumambulation had been enjoined by God.

18. The simple and succinct Qur'anic statement that 'Allah never enjoins any, indecency' (verse 29)stands as the overwhelming argument against many false beliefs that were entertained by the people of Arabia. For a fuller appreciation of this argument the following points should be kept in mind:

First, that the people of Arabia totally stripped themselves while performing certain religious rites under the mistaken notion that it had been so enjoined. But on the other hand they were agreed that nudity was a shameful thing so that no Arab of any standing could ever approve of appearing naked in any respectable assembly or market-place.

Second, notwithstanding their reservation about nudity, they strippeel themselves totally while performing certain religious rites on the ground that religion was from God. Hence there was nothing objectionable about performing a religious act in a state of nakedness for God had so enjoined them regarding the performance of that rite. Here the Qur'an confronts them with a clear question: How can they believe that God could order them to do something which involves nakedness and which they know to be inherently shameful? What is implied is that God could not command them to commit indecency, and if their

religion contained elements of indecency then this is positive proof of its not being from God.

قُلْ اَمَرَ رَبِّیْ بِالْقِسْطِ ۫ وَاَقِیْمُوْا وُجُوْهَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَّادْعُوْهُ مُخْلِصِیْنَ لَهُ الدِّیْنَ ؕ كَمَا بَدَاَكُمْ تَعُوْدُوْنَ ؕ 29

(7:29) Say to them (O Muhammad): 'My Lord enjoins justice; and that you set your faces aright at the time of every Prayer; and that you call upon Him, exclusively dedicating your faith to Him. You shall return to Him as you were created.'[19]

19. The verse seeks to suggest that God has nothing to do with their foolish rituals. So far as the religion truly prescribed by Him is concerned, its fundamental principles are the following:

(1) That man should base his life on justice and righteousness.

(2) That man's worship should have the right orientation, i.e. that it should he directed to God alone and should be free of every trace of devotion to others than God, that man should reserve his absolute enthralment and bondage for the One True God alone. All these should have only one direction - the One that is truly worthy of worship.

(3) Man should invoke God alone to keep him rightly directed, to grant him help and succour, to favour him with protection and security. This should be done provided one's life is oriented to serving God. Invoking help from God would be ludicrous if man's life is based on unbelief, polytheism, disobedience to God, or serving a variety of gods other than the One True God. Such a prayer would amount to asking God's help in strengthening one in one's rebellion against Him.

(4) That man should have full conviction that in the same way as God caused him to he born in the world, He will also restore him to life after death and will make him stand before Himself so as to render an account of his life.

فَرِیْقًا هَدٰی وَفَرِیْقًا حَقَّ عَلَیْهِمُ الضَّلٰلَةُ ؕ اِنَّهُمُ اتَّخَذُوا الشَّیٰطِیْنَ اَوْلِیَآءَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَیَحْسَبُوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ مُّهْتَدُوْنَ 30

(7:30) A party He has guided to the Right Way, and for another party straying is justly its due for they have taken satans, rather than Allah, as their guardians, even though they think that they are rightly-guided.

يٰبَنِيٓ اٰدَمَ خُذُوْا زِيْنَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَّكُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوْا ۚ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ
الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ۚ 31

(7:31) Children of Adam! Take your adornment at every time of Prayer;[20] and eat and drink without going to excesses. For Allah does not like those who go to excess.[21]

20. The word zina which occurs in this verse refers to full and proper dress. While performing Prayer people are required not only to cover the private parts of their body, but also to wear a dress that serves the two-fold purpose of covering and giving one a decent appearance.

The directive to pray in a proper and decent dress is aimed at refuting the misconception entertained by ignorant people down the ages that man should worship God either in a nude or semi-naked state, or at least have a shabby and unkempt appearance while worshipping. In this verse people are being told the opposite of this. At the time of worship they should not only be free from all kinds of nudity and indecency, but should also be in a decent dress.

21. God does not want to subject man to want and misery or starvation or to deprive him as such of the good things of this worldly life. On the contrary, it pleases Him that man should appear in good decent dress and enjoy the clean food provided for him by God. There is nothing sinful in that. As for sin, it consists in transgressing the bounds set by God. This transgression could be committed in both ways: by making the unlawful lawful, or by making the lawful unlawful.

قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِيْنَةَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِيْٓ اَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهٖ وَالطَّيِّبٰتِ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ ۭ قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فِي
الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَّوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ 32

(7:32) Say (O Muhammad): 'Who has forbidden the adornment which Allah has brought forth for His creatures or the good things from among the means of sustenance?'[22] Say: 'These are for the enjoyment of the believers in this world, and shall be exclusively theirs on the Day of Resurrection.'[23] Thus do We clearly expound Our revelations for those who have knowledge.

22. Since it is God Himself Who has created all good and pure things for man, it obviously could not have been His intent to make them unlawful. Now, if there is any religion, or any ethical or social system which forbids those things, or considers them an insurmountable barrier to man's spiritual growth, it has an intellectual orientation which itself is evident proof of its not having been prescribed by God.

This is an important argument which the Qur'an advances in refutation of false creeds. An

appreciation of this argument would help one understand the Qur'anic line of argumentation as such.

23. All the clean and beautiful things created by God are meant, in principle, for the believers even in this world, for they are God's faithful subjects, and it is fidelity to God that makes one deserve enjoyment of the things which are God's. However, all men are under a test in this world. Hence even those who are disloyal to God have been granted respite to mend their ways and are, therefore, not denied His worldly bounties. In fact with a view to testing those disloyal to God these bounties are at times lavished upon them even more abundantly than on God's faithful servants. But the character of the Next Life will be totally different. For one's station there will be determined entirely by one's righteousness and justice. God's bounties in the Next Life, therefore, will be for the faithful alone. As for the unfaithful, those who were disloyal to God even though every fibre of their being was nourished by the sustenance provided by Him, they will have no share whatsoever of those bounties in the Next Life.

قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ وَالْإِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَنْ
تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ 33

(7:33) Tell them (O Muhammad): 'My Lord has only forbidden indecent acts, whether overt or hidden;[24] all manner of sin;[25] wrongful transgression;[26] and [He has forbidden] that you associate with Allah in His divinity that for which He has sent down no sanction; and that you ascribe to Allah things of which you have no sure knowledge that they are from Him.'

24. For an elaboration of hidden and overt indecencies see Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. 11,(al-An'am, 6: nn. 128 and 131, pp. 290-2).

25. The word ithm denotes negligence, dereliction of duty. Athimah signifies the she-camel which, though capable of running at a fast pace, deliberately moves slowly. The meaning of the word, therefore, carries the idea of sin. Viewed in the context of man, the word convey's the sense of man's deliberate neglect of his duty to God, his failure to pursue God's good pleasure despite his having the capacity to obey and follow Him.

26. To exceed the limits set by God and to enter an area which has been declared out of bounds for man constitute rebellion and transgression. According to this definition of baghy, the charge of rebellion will apply to all those who act according to their whims rather than in accordance with the directives of God. It is applicable to those who behave as though they are the true masters of God's Kingdom, claiming for themselves the prerogatives of God. It also applies to all those who usurp the rights of others.

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ ۚ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ 34

(7:34) For every community there is an appointed term; and when its term arrives, they cannot tarry behind a moment, nor can they get ahead.[27]

27. The expression 'fixed term' used in the verse should not give rise to the misconception that the term of a nation expires on a definite day, month or year. What the statement really means is that God has laid down a minimum proportion between the good and evil deeds of a nation. As long as that nation is able to maintain that minimum proportion, its existence is tolerated in order that it might be able to show its performance. Once a nation crosses that minimum limit, it is denied any further respite. (For further explication of this point see (Nuh 71: 4-10 and 12.)

يٰبَنِيٓ اٰدَمَ اِمَّا يَاْتِيَنَّكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ يَقُصُّوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِيْ ۙ فَمَنِ اتَّقٰى وَاَصْلَحَ فَلَا
خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ 35

(7:35) Children of Adam! If Messengers come to you from amongst yourselves who rehearse to you My signs, then those who shun disobedience and mend their ways shall have nothing to fear, nor shall they grieve.

وَالَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا عَنْهَآ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا
خٰلِدُوْنَ 36

(7:36) And those who reject Our revelations as false and turn away from them in arrogance, they shall be the inmates of Hell; and there shall they abide.[28]

28. Reference to the continuous unremitting punishment of the unbelievers occurs invariably on occasions where the Qur'an narrates the coming down of Adam and Eve from Paradise. See (al-Baqarah 2: 38-9); (Ta Ha 20: 123-4.) What has been said here should be considered in relation to the fact that at the very start of man's earthly life he was informed of the evil results of unbelief. (See Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. 1, (AI 'Imran 3: n.69, pp.268-9 - Ed.)

فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اَوْ كَذَّبَ بِاٰيٰتِهٖ ۭ اُولٰٓئِكَ يَنَالُهُمْ نَصِيْبُهُمْ مِّنَ
الْكِتٰبِ ۭ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَاۗءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا يَتَوَفَّوْنَهُمْ ۙ قَالُوْٓا اَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ۭ
قَالُوْا ضَلُّوْا عَنَّا وَشَهِدُوْا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ اَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا كٰفِرِيْنَ 37

(7:37) Who is more unjust then he who invents a falsehood, ascribing it to Allah, or who rejects His revelation as false? Their full portion of God's Decree shall reach them,[29] until Our deputed angels come to them to take charge of their souls, and say: 'Where are the deities now, those whom you invoked besides Allah?' They will say: 'They are all gone away from us.' And they shall bear witness against themselves that they were unbelievers.

29. All men, whether good or bad, have been granted a definite term in this world which they will spend and obtain their share of worldly happiness and misery.

قَالَ ادْخُلُوا فِيْٓ اُمَمٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ فِي النَّارِ ۭ كُلَّمَا دَخَلَتْ اُمَّةٌ
لَّعَنَتْ اُخْتَهَا ۭ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا ادَّارَكُوْا فِيْهَا جَمِيْعًا ۙ قَالَتْ اُخْرٰىهُمْ لِاُوْلٰىهُمْ رَبَّنَا هٰٓؤُلَاۗءِ
اَضَلُّوْنَا فَاٰتِهِمْ عَذَابًا ضِعْفًا مِّنَ النَّارِ ۭ قَالَ لِكُلٍّ ضِعْفٌ وَّلٰكِنْ لَّا تَعْلَمُوْنَ 38

(7:38) Allah will say: 'Enter the fire of Hell and join the nations of jinn and men that have gone before You.' As a nation enters Hill, it will curse the one that went before it, and when all are gathered there, the last of them shall say of the first: 'Our Lord! These are the ones who led us astray. Let their torment be doubled in Hell-Fire.' He will answer: 'Each will have a doubled torment; although you do not know.'[30]

30. As it is, each group of people is followed, even as it is preceded, by others. A group which inherits an error of outlook and conduct from its predecessors passes on the same, in turn, to future generations. In addition, whereas a group owes its wrong-doing partly to the wrong-doing of its predecessors, it will also be held responsible for leaving behind an evil legacy for the future generations. The Qur'an, therefore, pronounces a double punishment on such a group: it will incur punishment for its own misdeeds and also for leaving behind such a legacy for the coming generations. A number of traditions elucidate this point. According to one such tradition the Prophet (peace be on him) said: 'He who introduces a misleading innovation which does not please God and His Messenger shall be held guilty for the sins of all those who follow that innovation without lessening in the least the burden [of sins] of those who followed the innovation,' (Cf. Ibn Majah, Muqaddimat Bab Man Ahya Sunnah qad umitat, where the words are slightly different - Ed.) According to another tradition, he said: 'The responsibility for all the murders committed in the world is shared by the first son of Adam [i.e. Cain] for he was the first to have innovated murder.' (See Bukhari, Kitab al-Jana'iz, Bab Qawlih 'alay al-Salam Yu'addhab al-Mayyit bi Ba'd Buka'i ahlih 'alayh - Ed.)

We thus know that the individual or group responsible for introducing a wrong idea or practice is not only responsible to the extent of those sins, but shares the responsibility of the sins of all those who are influenced by him. As long as the evil effects of that influence continue, their sins will be continually added to his account. This also shows that a person is not only accountable for the good or bad deeds that he commits. In fact he is also

accountable for the influence of those deeds on others.

This may be illustrated by considering the case of someone who indulges in unlawful sex. All those whose bad examples, evil company, and inducements to evil caused a man to indulge in such an act have a share in the sin that he committed. The persons who influenced him in turn had been influenced by others. Were this chain of influence traced back to its ultimate origin, the blame would be fixed on the first person who demonstrated this unlawful way for satiating the sexual urge.

This does not detract from the fact that anyone who indulged in fornication is also accountable for the sin he committed. This is so because when he committed a sin he did so because he failed to make proper use of his capacity to distinguish between good and evil with which he had been endowed. He also did not pay due heed to the voice of his conscience, and mobilize the power of self-control given him. Nor did he benefit from the knowledge of good and evil transmitted to him by pious men nor was he inspired by the noble examples of the God-fearing. Nor did he learn any lesson from the evil consequences of sexual misconduct. Instead, he totally succumbed to blind sexual lust which sought gratification at all cost. This much relates to the responsibility of the person who indulged in sexual misconduct.

But there is another dimension of that person's evil conduct - his propagation of that same evil among others which ruined the lives of countless people belonging to his own generation and to the generations that follow. It is also possible that he might have been afflicted by some general disease which he then communicated to his own generation and also to the generations that followed. His sexual misconduct might also have given birth to illegitimate children, unjustly passing on the burden of their upbringing to others, and making his offspring - without any justification - co-sharers in the fortunes and even the inheritance of others. The wrong that is thus perpetrated persists for many generations. Likewise, it is also possible that the said criminal might, by his cunning, have led an innocent girl to sexually corrupt behaviour. That in turn is likely to awaken evil propensities in her which wreck the lives and homes of countless families, even generations. Also, by setting an evil example for his children, relatives, friends and the society at large a fornicator is likely to cast a bad influence on people around him and infect others with moral corruption. The evil consequences of such an act thus linger on for a long time. The moral corruption that ultimately, engulfs the society owes its origin to the person who initially introduced an evil. Justice, therefore, demands that such a culprit should also be held responsible for the subsequent evils which may be traced back to his initial act of corruption.

The same holds true for good deeds. The reward for the heritage of goodness left behind by our predecessors from the earliest times should inevitably go to the credit of those men of the past who have continually transmitted that heritage to posterity down to our own time. If our own generation takes good care of that heritage, enriches it and passes it on to the coming generation, it also deserves due reward for that. As long as our good acts leave a trace of good influence on history and continue to cast a good influence on people, mankind will reap the benefits of those acts.

This is the Qur'anic view of retribution. Every sensible person will agree that such a dispensation alone can ensure perfect justice. Appreciation of this concept should dispel the idea of those who believe that men can be fully rewarded or punished for their deeds within the confines of this worldly life. Likewise, such an appreciation should also dispel the views of those who believe that the transmigration of souls alone can ensure full justice to all men. Such people have blundered because they have neither grasped fully the nature and consequences of human acts nor the nature and requirements of perfect justice. It is obvious that the consequences of individuals' acts are not visible during their life-span - say sixty or seventy years or so. Instead, human activities, both good and evil, influence the lives of countless people belonging to countless generations. One cannot, therefore, be brought to justice during one's own lifetime, since only a small part of the consequences of those acts have yet come to the surface. Moreover, the limited possibilities available in the present world are quite inadequate for bringing people to justice. Just consider the hideous crime of someone who pushes us to a world war. As things stand, the catastrophic consequences of such a crime would affect the lives of billions of men through the ages. Is there any punishment - physical, spiritual or material - which can be deemed even remotely, proportionate to that crime? Likewise, no worldly reward, however valuable, can adequately recompense for the noble services rendered by a philanthropist which will benefit numerous people for thousands of years.

Having viewed the question from this angle. one readily, concludes that there must necessarily be life in the Hereafter such that full justice can be meted out to everyone. Here all human beings are brought together, their full records are made available, and the reckoning is made by God Himself Whose knowledge embraces literally everything. Additionally, men should be granted unlimited spans of life, and infinite possibilities should be made available for receiving compensation.

A little reflection on this will help us see how false the doctrine of the transmigration of souls is. Those who subscribe to this doctrine fail to realize that eternal life is needed to mete out recompense to people for the deeds they commit during their relatively brief spans of life. If one were to believe in the unending cycle of life and death it would become impossible to reward or punish anyone for his actions, for each span of life would go on accumulating endlessly. The arrears would never be cleared.

وَقَالَتْ أُولَىٰهُمْ لِأُخْرَىٰهُمْ فَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِن فَضْلٍ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ ﴿39﴾

(7:39) Then the preceding ones will say to the succeeding ones: 'You were in no way superior to us; taste, then, this torment for your deeds.' [31]

31. In addition to the above verse, the Qur'an elsewhere recounts the mutual incriminations of the dwellers of Hell. For example, it occurs in Sarah al-Saba' in the following words: 'Could you but see when the wrong-doers will be made to stand before their Lord, throwing back the word (of blame) on one another! Those who had been abased will say to the

arrogant ones: "Had it not been for you, we should certainly have been believers!" The arrogant ones will say, to those who had been abased: "Was it we who kept you back from Guidance after it reached you? Nay, rather it was you yourselves who transgressed" ' (al-Saba' 34: 31-2). This means that since the misguided people themselves were not keen on receiving the right guidance, they fell victims even more to the forces of misguidance. Out of their own excessive worldliness they chose to follow their ungodly leaders. Granted that it was the forces of misguidance which had invented ideologies such as materialism, excessive worldliness, and nationalism. But when people were attracted to these false ideologies, they did so out of their own weaknesses. These forces of evil achieved success because what they offered was to the utmost liking of the people. Again, the people who were tempted to embrace counterfeit religious ideologies were themselves to blame for falling prey to them since there was an inner urge in them to accept such ideologies. Rather than submitting to the One True God and to rigorous moral discipline, they looked for deities that would help them to achieve their worldly purposes. Naturally, they invented deities of their own liking. They also desired the intercession of those who would let them grow in worldiness and godlessness, and yet who would also ensure their redemption in the Next World. As they preferred a religion that would not make their life a bit dry, permissive religious cults which did not object to any kind of self-indulgence were developed. This establishes clearly that the external forces of evil alone are not to blame. The people who succumb to evil and error equally share the blame. This neither condones the role of those who seek to mislead others, nor detracts from the responsibility of those who choose to be misled.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا لَا تُفَتَّحُ لَهُمْ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ
الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّىٰ يَلِجَ الْجَمَلُ فِي سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ ۚ وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُجْرِمِينَ 40

(7:40) Surely the gates of Heaven shall not be opened for those who reject Our signs as false and turn away ' from them in arrogance; nor shall they enter Paradise until a camel passes through the eye of a needle. Thus do We reward the guilty ones.

لَهُمْ مِنْ جَهَنَّمَ مِهَادٌ وَمِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ غَوَاشٍ ۚ وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ 41

(7:41) Hell shall be their bed, and also above them their covering. Thus do We reward the wrong-doers.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ ۖ
هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ 42

(7:42) And those who believe and do good - We do not impose upon any of them a burden beyond his capacity. They are the people of Paradise. And there they shall abide.

وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِنْ غِلٍّ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهَارُ ۚ وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي
هَدَانَا لِهَٰذَا ۖ وَمَا كُنَّا لِنَهْتَدِيَ لَوْلَا أَنْ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ ۚ لَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ ۖ
وَنُودُوا أَنْ تِلْكُمُ الْجَنَّةُ أُورِثْتُمُوهَا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ 43

(7:43) We shall strip away all rancour from their hearts,[32] and rivers shall flow beneath them, and they shall say: 'All praise be to Allah Who has guided us on to this. Had it not been for Allah Who granted us guidance, we would not be on the Right Path. Surely the Messengers of our Lord did indeed come down with truth.' Then a voice will cry out to them: 'This is the Paradise which you are made to inherit as a reward for your deeds.' [33]

32. If there develops any rancour or ill-will among good people during the course of their worldly lives, such rancour and will be removed in the Hereafter. Their hearts will be purged of all hostile feelings and they will enter Paradise as cordial friends. They will not feel envious towards those who had formerly been opposed or hostile to them that they share with them the bounties of Paradise. Significantly, 'Ali once recited this very verse and remarked: 'I wish that I and 'Uthman and Talhah and al-Zubayr will be among those about whom God has said: "And We shall take away all rancour from their hearts" ' (verse 43). (See Qurtubi's comments on verse 43 - Ed.)

Reflection on the verse leads one to conclude that out of His mercy, God will first purge the righteous of their blemishes. This will be done before admitting them to Paradise. Thus they will enter Paradise in a state of untainted purity.

33. This refers to something of a fine and delicate character that will take place in Paradise. Instead of boasting about their virtuous deeds which led them to Paradise, the righteous will thank and praise God profusely and acknowledge His grace and mercy without which they could never have entered Paradise. On the other hand, God will not impress His bounty upon the righteous; He will rather emphasize that Paradise is granted to them by way of compensation for their righteous conduct, that it is the fruit of their hard labour; that it is not like the crumbs of charity but a fair recompense for their striving. The subtlety involved here is further brought into relief by the fact that the above response will not be made by God. It will rather be just announced to them.

What is said above about the Hereafter may be discerned in the attitude of the righteous in the world itself. The wicked and arrogant ones take great pride in their worldly attainments and ascribe them to their own efforts. They firmly, believe that what they have achieved is the fruit of their labour. Swaved by such notions, they continue to act even more haughtily. Conversely the righteous look upon all the bounties which they receive as favours from God. Accordingly, they thank and praise Him out of gratitude. The more they are lavished with worldly favours, the more humble and generous they become. Moreover, they do not suffer from the illusion that their righteousness will certainly earn them their salvation. On the

contrary, they consistently repent over their lapses and earnestly turn to God in the hope that He will pardon them out of His grace and mercy. They are always fearful of God's reckoning lest their evil deeds are found to outweigh their good deeds. According to a tradition the Prophet (peace he on him) said: 'Know well that none will he able to enter Paradise by dint of his good deeds.' When asked if that would apply to him as well, the Prophet (peace he on him) replied: 'Yes, in my case as well; unless God covers me with His mercy and favour.' (Bukhari, Kitab al-Riqaq, 'Bab al-Qasd wa a Mudawamah ala al-Amal' - Ed.)

وَنَادٰٓى اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ اَصْحٰبَ النَّارِ اَنْ قَدْ وَجَدْنَا مَا وَعَدَنَا رَبُّنَا حَقًّا فَهَلْ وَجَدْتُّمْ
مَّا وَعَدَ رَبُّكُمْ حَقًّا ؕ قَالُوْا نَعَمْ ۚ فَاَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌۢ بَيْنَهُمْ اَنْ لَّعْنَةُ اللّٰهِ عَلَى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۙ 44

(7:44) And the people of Paradise shall cry to the people of Hell: 'Surely we have found our Lord's promise to us to be true. have you also found true what your Lord has promised you?' 'Yes', they shall answer; and a herald shall cry out among them: 'Allah's curse be upon the wrong-doers';

الَّذِيْنَ يَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَيَبْغُوْنَهَا عِوَجًا ۚ وَهُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ كٰفِرُوْنَ ۘ 45

(7:45) upon those who hinder men from the path of Allah and seek to make it crooked; and disbelieve in the Hereafter.'

وَبَيْنَهُمَا حِجَابٌ ۚ وَعَلَى الْاَعْرَافِ رِجَالٌ يَّعْرِفُوْنَ كُلًّۢا بِسِيْمٰهُمْ ۚ وَنَادَوْا اَصْحٰبَ
الْجَنَّةِ اَنْ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ۫ لَمْ يَدْخُلُوْهَا وَهُمْ يَطْمَعُوْنَ 46

(7:46) And between the two there will be a barrier, and on the Heights will be men who will recognize each person by his mark and will cry, out to the people of Paradise: 'Peace be to you.'These will be the ones who had not yet joined them in Paradise, though they long to do so.[34]

34. The people of A'raf (Heights) will be the people who are neither righteous enough to enter Paradise nor wicked enough to he cast into Hell. They will, therefore, dwell at a place situated between the two.

وَاِذَا صُرِفَتْ اَبْصَارُهُمْ تِلْقَآءَ اَصْحٰبِ النَّارِ ۙ قَالُوْا رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ
الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ع 47

(7:47) And when the eyes of the people of the Heights will be turned towards the people of Hell they will say: 'Our Lord! Do not cast us among the wrongdoing people.'

وَنَادٰٓى اَصۡحٰبُ الۡاَعۡرَافِ رِجَالًا يَّعۡرِفُوۡنَهُمۡ بِسِيۡمٰهُمۡ قَالُوۡا مَاۤ اَغۡنٰى عَنۡكُمۡ جَمۡعُكُمۡ

وَمَا كُنۡتُمۡ تَسۡتَكۡبِرُوۡنَ 48

(7:48) And the people of the Heights will cry out to the men whom they would recognize by their marks. saving: 'Neither your numbers nor the riches of which you were proud availed you.

اَهٰٓؤُلَاۤءِ الَّذِيۡنَ اَقۡسَمۡتُمۡ لَا يَنَالُهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِرَحۡمَةٍ ؕ اُدۡخُلُوا الۡجَنَّةَ لَا خَوۡفٌ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَلَاۤ

اَنۡتُمۡ تَحۡزَنُوۡنَ 49

(7:49) Are these not the ones of whom you swore that Allah shall grant them nothing of His mercy?' To such it will be said: 'Enter Paradise. You have no cause to fear, nor shall you grieve.'

وَنَادٰٓى اَصۡحٰبُ النَّارِ اَصۡحٰبَ الۡجَنَّةِ اَنۡ اَفِيۡضُوۡا عَلَيۡنَا مِنَ الۡمَآءِ اَوۡ مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ ؕ

قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ حَرَّمَهُمَا عَلَى الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ ۙ 50

(7:50) And the people of the Fire will cry out to the people of Paradise: 'Pour out some water on us or throw at us something of what Allah has bestowed upon you.' They will reply: 'Allah has forbidden them to the deniers of the truth,

الَّذِيۡنَ اتَّخَذُوۡا دِيۡنَهُمۡ لَهۡوًا وَّلَعِبًا وَّغَرَّتۡهُمُ الۡحَيٰوةُ الدُّنۡيَا ۚ فَالۡيَوۡمَ نَنۡسٰىهُمۡ كَمَا نَسُوۡا

لِقَآءَ يَوۡمِهِمۡ هٰذَا ۙ وَمَا كَانُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يَجۡحَدُوۡنَ 51

(7:51) who have made their religion a sport and play. and whom the life of the world has beguiled. So on that Day We shall forget them in the manner they forget their meeting of this Day with Us and persist in denying Our revelations.'[35]

35. The trialogue between the People of Paradise, the People of the Fire. and the People of the Heights gives some indication of the tremendous range of human faculties in the Next World. These faculties would increase to such an extent that the People of Paradise, the

People of the Fire and the People of the Heights will be able to see, hear and talk to one another. Other Qur'anic statements about the Hereafter enable us to realize that the laws operating in the Next World will be altogether different from those in the present. Notwithstanding this, men's personalities will not undergo any such change.

Those who cannot perceive any thing beyond the present limited world and who are incapable of imagining scales bigger than the ones relating to the present world, make fun of the statements in the Qur'an and Hadith about life in the Hereafter. This only betrays their poverty of understanding and imagination. The fact, however, is that the possibilities for life are not as narrow and limited as their minds.

وَلَقَدْ جِئْنٰهُمْ بِكِتٰبٍ فَصَّلْنٰهُ عَلٰى عِلْمٍ هُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ 52

(7:52) Surely We have brought them a Book which We expounded with knowledge;[36] a guidance and a mercy to those who believe ' [37]

36. The Qur'an has spelled out in some detail what constitutes the fundamental reality, explained the attitude that man ought to adopt, and laid down the fundarnentals of the way of life that he ought to follow. The tails laid down in the Book in this regard are based on sound knowledge rather than on conjecture and fancy.

37. The contents and teachings of the Book are perspicuous enough to show one the right way. Moreover, the life-style of those who believe in this Book also bears out, by the beneficial effects it produces on human life, how well it guides man. The blessings of the Qur'an become evident if man first notes the healthy changes that it brings about in his outlook, character and morals.

The above verse in fact alludes to the wonderful effect belief in the Qur'an had on the lives of the Companions of the Prophet (peace be on him).

هَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّا تَاْوِيْلَهٗ ؕ يَوْمَ يَاْتِيْ تَاْوِيْلُهٗ يَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ نَسُوْهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ جَآءَتْ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ ۚ فَهَلْ لَّنَا مِنْ شُفَعَآءَ فَيَشْفَعُوْا لَنَآ اَوْ نُرَدُّ فَنَعْمَلَ غَيْرَ الَّذِيْ كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ ؕ قَدْ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ع 53

(7:53) Are they waiting for the fulfilment of its warning?[38] On the Day that warning is fulfilled, those that have neglected it before will say: 'The Messengers of Our Lord did indeed bring forth the truth. Are there any intercessors who will now plead on our behalf? Or, can we be restored to life that we might perform differently from that which we did? '[39] They surely ended in utter loss, and the lies they had fabricated failed them.

38. The position of the people in question is as follows. The difference between good and evil was first explained to them, and yet they turned a deaf ear to it. Then some people established a good example by following the right path notwithstanding the dominant trend towards error. The wholesome effect of righteous conduct became evident from the lives of such people, but it made no impression on the people concerned. Their persistence in error could only mean one thing: that they would only learn the lesson the hard way when they saw the painful effects of their error. Such people are like stupid patients who neither follow the directions of the physician, nor learn any lesson from their own observations of the many patients who have been cured of their diseases by following the directions of physicians. Thesc people will realize - if they realize at all - on their death-bed that their ways were foolish and fatal.

39. Such people will long to return to the world, pleading that they will believe in the truth which they had rejected since they have now witnessed it. They will also ensure that their attitude will be different from that which had been before. For a fuller discussion of this plea and the rejoinder to it see (al-An'am 6: 27-8); (Ibrahim 14: 44 and 45); (al-Sajdah 32: 12-13); (al-Fatir 35: 37); (al-Zumar 39: 56-9); and (al-Mu'min 40: 11-12).

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ فِيْ سِتَّةِ اَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۣ
يُغْشِي الَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهٗ حَثِيْثًا ۙ وَّالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُوْمَ مُسَخَّرٰتٍۭ بِاَمْرِهٖ ۭ اَلَا لَهُ
الْخَلْقُ وَالْاَمْرُ ۭ تَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ 54

(7:54) Surely your Lord is none other than Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days,[40] and then ascended His Throne;[41] Who causes the night to cover the day and then the day swiftly pursues the night; Who created the sun and the moon and the stars making them all subservient to His command. Lo! His is the creation and His is the command.[42] Blessed is Allah,[43] the Lord of the universe.

40. The word 'day' in the above verse has been used either in the usual sense of the twenty-four hour unit of time, or in a more general sense of 'period' of time such as in the following verses of the Qur'an:

Verily a Day in the sight of your Lord is like a thousand years of your reckoning (al-Hajj 22: 47).

The angels and the Spirit ascend unto Him on a Day the measure of which is fifty thousand years (al-Ma'arij 70: 4). For further explanation see (Fussilat 41, nn. 12-15.)

41. It is quite difficult to appreciate fully the exact nature of the Qur'anic statement: '(Allah) ascended the Throne.' One possibility is that after the creation of the universe God focused His effulgence at a particular point in His Kingdom which is known as the Throne, from where He showers the blessings of life and power, and governs the whole universe.

It is possible that the word 'Throne' stands for dominion and authority and that God's ascending the Throne signifies His actual taking over the reins of the universe after having created it. Whatever the exact meaning of the expression '(Allah) ascended the Throne', the main thrust of the verse is that God is not just the creator of the universe, but is also its sovereign and ruler; that after creating the universe He did not detach Himself from, nor become indifferent to, His creation. On the contrary, He effectively rules over the universe as a whole as well as every part of it. All power and sovereignty rest with Him. Everything in the universe is fully in His grip and is subservient to His will. Every atom is bound in obedience to Him. The fate of everything existent is in His Hands. Thus the Qur'an undermines the very basis of the misconception which leads man at times to polytheism, and at others to self-glorification and so to rebellion against God. This is the natural corollary of considering God divorced from the affairs of the universe. In such cases, there are two possibilities. One, that beings other than God are considered to have the power to make or mar man's destiny. Here, man is bound to turn to those beings in devotion and subservience. The second possibility is for man to consider himself as the master of his own destiny. Here, man considers himself independent of, and indifferent to, any higher being.

It is significant that the words and figures of speech employed by the Qur'an to denote the relationship between God and man are closely related to kingship, dominion, and sovereignty. This is too conspicuous a fact to be missed by any careful student of the Qur'an. It is strange, however, that it has led some superficial critics and persons of biased outlook to conclude that the Qur'an reflects the milieu in which man's outlook was dominated by monarchical concepts, and that therefore its 'author', who in their view was the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him), presented God as a sovereign ruler, an absolute monarch.

Quite contrary to this is the fundamental truth which the Qur'an emphatically affirms - God's sovereignty over the heavens and the earth. It negates, with equal emphasis, that sovereignty belongs to anyone else. Such a doctrine demolishes the very assumption on the basis of which the above erroneous conclusion was derived. The Qur'anic concept of God's sovereignty is in sharp contrast to the idea that creatures of God may lay claim to sovereignty and kingship. In contrast to the weak, mortal kings of the world, God is eternal and all-powerfuL This undermines the very basis of the misconceived criticism that Islam has a monarchical basis since no hunian being can conform to the Islamic description of the sovereign. All sovereignty vests in the One True God. Hence, all those who claim total or partial sovereignty either for any person or group of people are merely cherishing an illusion. It is evident, therefore, that it is totally inappropriate for man, who is a part of the universe created and governed by God, to adopt any other attitude than that of acknowledging God as the only object of worship and as the only sovereign in a societal and political sense.

42. This is an elaboration of the idea propounded in the note immediately above explaining the meaning of God's ascension to the Throne. To reiterate, God is not merely the sole creator but also the only One Who commands and governs. He has not detached Himself from His creation, leaving it to the care of others who might rule over it as they please. Nor has He granted independence to His creation or any part of it so that they might function as they, wish. On the contrary, His grip over the entire universe is very firm. He rules over it

according to His sovereign will. If we find alternation taking place between day and night, it is a result of God's command. God has full power both to hold that process in abeyance, or to alter the very system which causes the alternation. The heavenly bodies - the sun, the moon, and the stars - are all absolutely powerless. They are totally subservient to God's overpowering will, and have been yoked to function according to His command.

43. The word barakah signifies growth and increase. The notions of elevation and greatness as well as of permanence and stability are also an essential part of the word's meaning. Besides these the word inalienably carries nuances of goodness and beneficence. To say that God is full of barakah means that His goodness knows no bounds; that endless beneficence emanates from Him; that He is the Exalted One Whose loftiness knows no end; that His beneficence and loftiness are permanent, and thus they will never vanish or suffer decline. (For further elaboration see Tafhim al-Qaradn, (al-Furqan 25: nn. 1 and 19.)

ۚ ۚ ادْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً ۚ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ۚ 55

(7:55) Call upon your Lord with humility and in secret. Surely He does not love transgressors.

ۚ وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا ۚ إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ 56

(7:56) Anddo not make mischief in the earth after it has been set in order,[44] and call upon Him with fear and longing.[45] Surely Allah's mercy is close to those who do good.

44. The command not to make mischief in the earth means not to vitiate the right order of life. What basically, constitutes 'mischief-making' is to surrender oneself to one's lusts, to commit acts in subservience to other human beings and to subscribe to base morals, social orders, civilizations, principles and laws derived from sources other than God's Guidance. This is the essential mischief from which innumerable evils issue and which the Qur'an seeks to eradicate. The Qur'an also emphasizes that sound order is the original condition, and disorder and mischief occurred later as accidents resulting from man's ignorance and transgression. In other words, man's life on earth did not start with ignorance, savagery, polytheistic beliefs, rebellion against God and moral disorder whereafter reforms were gradually introduced. On the contrary, man's life began with good order and was later corrupted because of man's perversity and folly. God sent Prophets from time to time in order to eradicate the disorder that had set in and to restore the original, good order. These Prophets constantly ehorted people to refrain from disrupting the original order and creating mischief.

Thus the Qur'anic view on this question is altogether different from that of the proponents of the false doctrine of evolution, who postulate that man has gradually come out of darkness into light; that life has advanced in a unilinear fashion, towards increasinly better conditions. The Qur'an rather postulates that human life began in the full light of Divine

Guidance, that the original state of affairs was in accord with the Right Way prescribed by God. The blame for corruption goes to man who, failing victim to Satan's allurements, veered towards darkness and corrupted the right order of human life again and again. As for God, He continually sent Prophets in order to summon men from darkness to light, and to ask them to eschew evil and wickedness. (See Towards Understanding the Qur'an, (al-Baqarah 2, n. 230, pp. 165-6 - Ed.)

45. This clearly shows what the expression 'mischief-making' in the verse signifies. It consists of man's turning to others than God as his guardian, patron and helper, and calling them to his aid and support. To bring about reform, therefore, consists of man's turning exclusively to God as his guardian and helper.

'Calling upon Allah with fear and longing' conveys the idea that man should fear God alone, and to Him alone he should look for the fulfilment of his wishes. While calling upon God man should realize that he is totally dependent on God's favour and that he can attain success only if God helps and guides him to it. Similarly, man should also bear in mind that once he is deprived of God's support, he is doomed to utter failure and undoing.

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ يُرْسِلُ الرِّيٰحَ بُشْرًۢا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَآ اَقَلَّتْ سَحَابًا ثِقَالًا سُقْنٰهُ
لِبَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ فَاَنْزَلْنَا بِهِ الْمَآءَ فَاَخْرَجْنَا بِهٖ مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتٰى
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ 57

(7:57) And it is He Who sends forth winds as glad tidings in advance of His Mercy, and when they have carried a heavy-laden cloud We drive it to a dead land, then We send down rain from it and bring forth therwith fruits of every kind. In this manner do We raise the dead that you may take heed.

وَالْبَلَدُ الطَّيِّبُ يَخْرُجُ نَبَاتُهٗ بِاِذْنِ رَبِّهٖ ۚ وَالَّذِيْ خَبُثَ لَا يَخْرُجُ اِلَّا نَكِدًا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ
نُصَرِّفُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّشْكُرُوْنَ ع 58

(7:58) As for the good land, vegetation comes forth in abundance by the command of its Lord, whereas from the bad land, only poor vegetation comes forth.[46] Thus do We expound Our signs in diverse ways for a people who are grateful.

46. It is necessary to grasp the subtle point made here in order to appreciate the full purport of what is being said. The reference to rain and its advantages is intended to bring into focus God's power, and to affirm life after death. Moreover, it is also intended to draw attention in allegorical, albeit graphic, terms to the blessings of prophethood, and how it helps men to distinguish between good and evil, between pure and impure. The intimation of Divine

Guidance through the Prophets is compared to the movement of winds, the appearance of rain-laden clouds, and the fall of life-sustaining raindrops. In the same way as rainfall causes dead earth to be revived and makes the hidden treasures of life burst forth from its womb, so the impact of the teachings of the Prophets also brings dead humanity back to life, causing the hidden goodness in men to burst forth.

This allegory also hints at another important fact. In the same way that only fertile soil profits from rainfall, so only men of a righteous nature can profit from the blessings of prophethood. As for the wicked, they are like wasteland. Rainfall can cause such a land to bring forth only thorny bushes and cacti. Similarly, when the wicked come into contact with the teaching of the Prophets, the hidden evils of their nature come into full play.

This allegory is followed by a well-sustained account with illustrations from history showing that whenever the Prophets preach their Message, men Split into two camps. The righteous receive the blessings of prophethood and flourish, bringing forth the fruit of their goodness. As for the wicked, once the criterion provided by the Prophets is applied their impurities are fully exposed. This enables human society to purge itself of impurities in the same way as the goldsmith purges precious metals of alloy.

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۖ إِنِّي أَخَافُ

عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ 59

(7:59) Indeed We sent forth Noah to his people [47] and he said: '0 my people! Serve Allah, you have no other god than Him [48] Indeed I fear for you the chastisement of an awesome Day.'

47. This historical narrative opens with an account of the Prophet Noah and his people. For the people of Noah were the first to drift away from the right way of life which was followed by the Prophet Adarn and his descendants. God, therefore, sent Noah to guide and reform them.

In light of the Qur'anic allusions and Biblical statements it seems certain the people of Noah inhabited the land presently known as Iraq. This view is also supported by inscriptions of pre-Biblical times discovered in the course of archaeological excavations in Babylonia. Those inscriptions contain almost the same account which is recounted in the Qur'an and the Torah. The locale of the event is the vicinity of Mosul. Kurdish and Armenian traditions also corroborate this account insofar as they mention that it was in this area that Noah's Ark anchored. Some relies ascribed to Noah are still found in Jazirat Ibn 'Urnar, situated to the north of Mosul and on the frontiers of Armenia in the vicinity of the Ararat mountain mass. The inhabitants of Nakhichevan believe to this day that their town was founded by Noah.

Traditions similar to the story of Noah are also found in classical Greek Egyptian, Indian and Chinese literature. Moreover, stories of identical import have been popular since time immemorial in Burma, Malaya, the East Indies, Australia, New Guinea and various parts of

Europe and America. This shows clearly that the event took place at some point in the dim past when men lived together in one region and it was after Noah's Flood that they dispersed to different parts of the world. This is why traditions of all nations mention the Flood of the early time. This is notwithstanding the fact that the actual event has increasingly been shrouded in mystery, and the authentic elements of the event overlaid with myth and legend.

48. It is evident from the above verse and from other Qur'anic descriptions of the people of Noah that they were neither ignorant of, nor denied the existence of God, nor were they opposed to the idea of worshipping Him. Their real malady was polytheism. They had associated others with God in His godhead, and considered them akin to God in their claim that human beings should worship them as well. This basic error gave rise to a number of evils among them. There had arisen among them a class of people representing the false gods they themselves had contrived. Gradually this class of people virtually monopolized all religious, economic and political authority. This class also introduced a hierarchical structure of society which led to immense corruption and injustice. The moral degeneration which this system promoted sapped the roots of mankind's higher characteristics. When corruption reached a high peak, God sent Noah to improve the state of affairs. For long, Noah strove with patience and wisdom to bring about reform. All his efforts, however, were thwarted by the clergy which craftily kept people under its powerful hold. Eventually Noah prayed to God not to spare even a single unbeliever on the face of the earth, for they would go about misguiding human beings, and their progeny would likewise be wicked and ungrateful. (For a detailed discussion see(Hud 11: 25-48), (al-Shu'ara' 26: 105-22) and (Nuh 71: 1-28.)

قَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِن قَوْمِهِ إِنَّا لَنَرَاكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ 60

(7:60) The leading men of his people replied: 'We see that you are in palpable error.'

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِي ضَلَالَةٌ وَلَٰكِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ 61

(7:61) He said: '0 my people! There is no error in me, but I am a Messenger from the Lord of the universe.

أُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّي وَأَنصَحُ لَكُمْ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ 62

(7:62) I convey to you the messages of my Lord, give you sincere advice, and I know from Allah that which you do not know.

أَوَعَجِبْتُمْ أَن جَاءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَلَىٰ رَجُلٍ مِّنكُمْ لِيُنذِرَكُمْ وَلِتَتَّقُوا وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ 63

(7:63) Do you wonder that admonition should come to you from your Lord through a man from amongst yourselves that he may warn you, that you may avoid evil and that mercy may be shown to you?'[49]

49. There were striking similarities between Muhammad and Noah (peace be on them). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) received the same treatment from his people as did Noah from his. The message that each of them sought to preach was also the same. Likewise, the doubts and objections raised by the people of Muhammad (peace be on him) with regard to his prophethood were the same as those raised by Noah's people several thousand years ago. Again, what Muhammad (peace be on him) said in response to the doubts and objections raised against him were exactly the same as what Noah had said.

The Qur'anic narration of the stories of the Prophets makes it amply clear that the attitude of the nations to whom the Prophets were sent had always been the same as that of the Makkans towards the Message of Muhammad (peace be on him). Apart from this, the accounts of the various Prophets and their people, display the same striking resemblances. Likewise, the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be on him) vindication of his teaching in response to the Makkans is identical with similar attempts by other Prophets to vindicate their teachings. So doing, the Qur'an seeks to emphasize that in the same way as the error and misguidance of which men become victims have remained essentially the same throughout the ages, the Message of God's Messengers has also been the same in all places and at all times. Again, there is a striking resemblance in the ultimate fate of all those peoples who reject the message of the Prophets and who persist in their erroneous and evil ways. This too has also been the same, namely utter destruction.

فَكَذَّبُوْهُ فَاَنْجَيْنٰهُ وَالَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗ فِى الْفُلْكِ وَاَغْرَقْنَا الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا
قَوْمًا عَمِيْنَ ۚ 64

(7:64) But they charged him with falsehood. Thereupon We delivered Noah and those who were with him in the Ark, and caused those who rejected Our signs as false to be drowned.[50] Surely they were a blind folk.

50. An uninitiated reader of the Qur'an may, mistakenly conceive that the mission of each Prophet - to call his people to God - would have finished after the few attempts they made in that connection. Some people might even entertain a rather simplistic image of their mission. It might be thought that a Prophet would have suddenly risen and proclaimed to his people that he had been designated by God as a Prophet. This would have been followed by the raising of objections to that claim. Subsequently, the Prophet concerned would have explained the matter and might have removed their misgivings. The people would have stuck to their position, would have rejected the Prophet's claim and called him a liar. whereupon God must have visited that people with punishment.

The fact of the matter, however, is that the Qur'an has narrated in just a few lines a story that was worked out over a long period of time. The brevity of the Qur'anic description owes itself to the fact that the Qur'an is not interested per se in story-telling; that its narration and

purpose are didactic. Hence, while recounting a historical event, the Qur'an mentions only those fragments of the event which are relevant, ignoring those details which are irrelevant to Qur'anic purposes. Again, at different places in the Qur'an the same event is mentioned for a variety of reasons. On every occasion only those fragments of the story which are relevant to a specific purpose are mentioned and the rest are left out. An instance in point is the above narrative about Noah. In narrating Noah's story the Qur'an aims to point out the consequences attendant upon the rejection of the Prophet's Message. Since the total period spent on conveying the Message does not have any direct relationship with that purpose, the Qur'an altogether ignores it here. However, in passages where the Prophet and the Companions have been asked to remain patient, the long duration of the Prophet Noah's missionary, effort has been mentioned. This has been done precisely, with a view to raising the morale of the believers and to prevent them from feeling low because they did not see any, good results coming out of that struggle. By mentioning how Noah strove patiently for such a long period of time and in the face of discouraging circumstances is quite relevant in this context as it helps to teach the lesson which is intended. That lesson is to persist in serving the cause of the truth and to refuse to be daunted by the adversity of the circumstances. See(al-'Ankabut 29: 14).

It would be appropriate to remove, at this stage, a doubt which might agitate the minds of some people. For one frequently reads in the Qur'an accounts of nations which rejected their Prophets and charged them with lying. One also reads about the Prophets warning them of God's punishment, and then about its sudden advent, scourging the nation and totally destroying it. This gives rise to the question: Why do such catastrophic incidents not take place in our own time? Nations still rise and fall, but the phenomenon of their rise and fall is of a different nature. We do not see it happen that a nation is served with a warning, and is then totally destroyed by a calamity such as an earthquake. a flood, a storm, or a thunderbolt.

In order to understand this it should be remembered that a nation which has directly received God's Message from a Prophet is treated by God in a different manner from nations which have not witnessed a Prophet. For if a nation directly witnesses a Prophet - an embodiment of righteousness - and receives God's Message from his tongue, it has no valid excuse left for rejecting that Message. And if it still rejects the Message, it indeed deserves to be summarily punished. Other nations are to be placed in a different category since they received God's Message indirectly. Hence, if the nations of the present time are not visited by; the devastating punishments which struck the nations of the Prophets in the past, one need not wonder since prophethood came to an end with the advent of Muhammad (peace be on him). One should indeed have cause to wonder if one saw the opposite happen - that is, if the nations of the present were visited by punishments from God which had afflicted those nations that rejected their Prophets face to face.

This does not mean, however, that God has ceased to inflict sevire punishments on nations which turn away from God and are sunk in ideological and moral error. The fact is that God's punishments still afflict different nations of the world. These punishments are both minor and major. Minor punishments are aimed at warning those nations, and the major ones are of a much more serious character and cause considerable damage. However, in the absence of the Prophets who are wont to draw attention to moral degeneration as the basic

cause of these calamities, the historians and thinkers of our time only scratch the surface and explain these in terms of physical laws or historical causes. These sophisticated explanations are of little help. On the contrary, nations so afflicted with heedlessness and moral stupor are thereby further prevented from appreciating that God has always warned evil-doing nations against following their evil ways, and that when they wilfully disregard these warnings and adamantly stick to their erroneous ways. He ultimately inflicts disastrous punishments upon them.

وَإِلَىٰ عَادٍ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا ۚ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۚ أَفَلَا
تَتَّقُونَ 65

(7:65) And to 'Ad[51] We sent forth their brother Hud. He said: '0 my people! Serve Allah; you have no other god than Him. Will you, then, not avoid evil?'

51. 'Ad, an ancient Arab people, were well-known throughout Arabia. They were known for their proverbial glory and grandeur. And when they were destroyed, their extinction also became proverbial. So much so that ttre word 'Ad has come to be used for things ancient and the word 'adiyat for archaeological remains. The land whose owner is unknown and which is lying fallow, from neglect is called 'adi al-ard.

The ancient Arabic poetry is replete with references to this people. Arab genealogists consider the 'Ad as the foremost among the extinct tribes of Arabia. Once a person of the Banel Dhuhl b. Shayban tribe, who was a resident of the 'Ad territory, called on the Prophet (peace be on him). He related stories to the Prophet about the people of 'Ad, stories handed down to the people of that region from generation to generation. (See Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 3, p. 482 - Ed.)

According to the Qur'an the people of 'Ad lived mainly in the Ahqaf region which is situated to the south-west of the Empty Quarter (al-Rub' al-Khali) and which lies between Hijaz, Yemen and Yamamah. It was from there that the people of 'Ad spread to the western coast of Yemen and established their hegemony in Oman, Hadramawt and Iraq. There is very little archaeological evidence about the 'Ad. Only a few ruins in South Arabia are ascribed to them. At a place in Hadramawt there is a grave which is considered to be that of the Prophet Hud. James R. Wellested, a British naval officer, discovered an ancient inscription in 1837 in a place called Hisn al-Ghurab which contains a reference to the Prophet Hud. The contents unmistakably bear out that it had been written by those who followed the Shari'ah of Hud. (For details see Tafhim al-Qur'an, (al-Al. Ahqaf 46, n. 25.)

قَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ إِنَّا لَنَرَاكَ فِي سَفَاهَةٍ وَإِنَّا لَنَظُنُّكَ مِنَ
الْكَاذِبِينَ 66

(7:66) The unbelievers among the leading men of his people said: 'Indeed we see you in folly, and consider you to be liars.'

قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِيْ سَفَاهَةٌ وَّلٰكِنِّيْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ 67

(7:67) He said: '0 my people! There is no folly in me; rather I am a Messenger from the Lord of the universe.

اُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسٰلٰتِ رَبِّيْ وَاَنَا لَكُمْ نَاصِحٌ اَمِيْنٌ 68

(7:68) I convey to you the messages of my Lord, and I give you sincere advice.

اَوَعَجِبْتُمْ اَنْ جَآءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ عَلٰى رَجُلٍ مِّنْكُمْ لِيُنْذِرَكُمْ ؕ وَاذْكُرُوْٓا اِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ ۚ خُلَفَآءَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ قَوْمِ نُوْحٍ وَّزَادَكُمْ فِي الْخَلْقِ بَصْۜطَةً فَاذْكُرُوْٓا اٰلَآءَ اللّٰهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ 69

(7:69) Do you wonder that an exhortation should come to you from your Lord through a man from amongst yourselves that he may warn you? And do call to mind when He made you successors after the people of Noah and amply increased you in stature. Remember then the wondrous bounties[52] of Allah, that you may prosper.'

52. The word ala' used in the above verse stands for bounties, wondrous works of nature, and praiseworthy qualities. The purpose of the verse is to impress upon man to gratefully, recognize the favours God has lavished upon him, bearing in mind that God also has the Power to take them away.

قَالُوْٓا اَجِئْتَنَا لِنَعْبُدَ اللّٰهَ وَحْدَهٗ وَنَذَرَ مَا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ اٰبَآؤُنَا ۚ فَاْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَآ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ 70

(7:70) They said: 'Have you come to us that we should worship none other than Allah and forsake all whom our forefathers were wont to worship?[53] Then bring upon us the scourge with which you have threatened us if you are truthful?'

53. It is worth noting that the people of 'Ad neither disbelieved in God nor refused to worship Him. They did not, however, follow, the teachings of Hud who proclaimed God alone should he worshipped, and that none other may be associated in servitude to Him.

قَالَ قَدْ وَقَعَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ رِجْسٌ وَّغَضَبٌ ؕ اَتُجَادِلُوْنَنِيْ فِيْٓ اَسْمَآءٍ سَمَّيْتُمُوْهَآ
اَنْتُمْ وَاٰبَآؤُكُمْ مَّا نَزَّلَ اللّٰهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطٰنٍ ؕ فَانْتَظِرُوْٓا اِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ مِّنَ
الْمُنْتَظِرِيْنَ 71

(7:71) Hud warned them: 'Surely punishment and wrath from your Lord have befallen upon you. Do you dispute with me about mere names that you and your forefathers have concocted[54] and for which Allah has sent down no sanction?[55] Wait, then, and I too am with you among those who wait.'

54. They looked to gods of rain and gods of wind, wealth, and health. But none of these enjoys godhead. There are many instances in our own time of people whose beliefs are no different from the ones mentioned above. There are people who are wont to call someone Mushkil Kusha, 'the remover of distress' or to call someone else Ganjbakhsh, 'the bestower of treasures'. But God's creatures cannot remove the distresses of other creatures like themselves, nor do they have any treasure that they might give away to others. Their titles are merely empty words, bereft of the qualities attributed to them. All argumentation aimed at justifying those titles amounts to a lot of sound and fury about nothing.

55. The Makkans could produce no sanction from Allah - Whom they themselves acknowledged as the Supreme God - that He had transferred to their false gods any of His power or authority. None has any authorization from God to remove distress from, or bestow treasures on, others. It is the Makkans themselves who arbitrarily chose to confer parts of God's power on those beings.

فَاَنْجَيْنٰهُ وَالَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا وَقَطَعْنَا دَابِرَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَمَا كَانُوْا
مُؤْمِنِيْنَ ع 72

(7:72) Then We delivered Hud and his companions by Our mercy, and We utterly cut off the last remnant of those who called the lie to Our signs and would not believe.[56]

56. The Qur'an informs us that God brought about the total extermination of the 'Ad, a fact borne out by both Arabian historical traditions and recent archaeological discoveries. The 'Ad were so totally destroyed and their monuments so completely effaced that the Arab historians refer to them as one of the umam ba'idah (extinct peoples) of Arabia. The Arab tradition also affirms that the only people belonging to the 'Ad who survived were the followers of the Prophet Hud. These survivors are known as the Second 'Ad ('Ad Thaniyah). The Hisn al-Ghurib inscriptions referred to earlier (n. 51) above are among the remaining monuments of these people. One inscription, which is generally considered to date from the eighteenth century B.C., as deciphered by the experts, contains the following sentences:

We have lived for a long time in this fort in full glory, free of all want. Our canals were always full to the brim with water . . . Our rulers were kings who were far removed from evil ideas, who dealt sternly with mischief-makers and governed us according to the Law of Hud. Their edicts were recorded in a book. We believed in miracles and resurrection.

The above account fully corroborates the Qur'anic statement that it was only the companions of Hud who survived and inherited the glory and prosperity of the 'Ad.

وَإِلَىٰ ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَٰلِحًا ۘ قَالَ يَٰقَوْمِ ٱعْبُدُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُۥ ۖ قَدْ جَآءَتْكُم
بَيِّنَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ ۖ هَٰذِهِۦ نَاقَةُ ٱللَّهِ لَكُمْ ءَايَةً فَذَرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِىٓ أَرْضِ ٱللَّهِ وَلَا تَمَسُّوهَا
بِسُوٓءٍ فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ 73

(7:73) And to Thamud[57] We sent forth their brother. Salih. He said to them: '0 my people! Serve Allah, you have no other god than Him. Truly there has come to you a clear proof from your Lord. This she-camel from Allah is a Divine portent for you.[58] So leave her alone to pasture on Allah's earth, and touch her with no evil lest a painful chastisement should seize you.

57. The Thamud are another ancient Arab people, next only to the 'Ad in fame. Legends relating to them were quite popular in pre-Islamic Arabia. In fact poetry and orations of the pre-Islamic (Jahiliyah) period abound with references to them. They are also mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions and in the Greek, Alexandrian and Roman works of history and geography. Some descendants of the Thamud survived to a little before the birth of Jesus. The Roman historians mention that they entered into the Roman army and fought against the Nabateans, their arch-enemy.

The Thamud lived in the north-western part of Arabia which is still called al-Hijr. In the present time there is a station on the Hijaz railway, between Madina and Tabuk. This is called Mada'in Salih, which was the capital town of Thamud and was then known as al-Hijr, the rock-hewn city. This has survived to this day and is spread over thousands of acres. It was once inhabited by no less than half a million people. At the time of the revelation of the Qur'an Arab trade caravans passed through the ruins of this city.

While the Prophet (peace be on him) was on his way, to Tabuk, he directed the Muslims to look upon these monuments and urged them to learn the lessons which sensible persons ought to learn from the ruins of a people that had been destroyed because of their evil-doing. The Prophet (peace be on him) also pointed to the well from which the she-camel of the Prophet Salih used to drink. He instructed the Muslims to draw water from that well alone and to avoid all other wells. The mountain pass through which that she-camel came to drink was also indicated by the Prophet (peace be on him). The pass is still known as Fajj al-Naqah. The Prophet (peace be on him) then gathered all the Muslims who had been directed to look

around that city of rocks, and addressed them. He drew their attention to the tragic end of the Thamud, who by their evil ways had invited God's punishment upon themselves. The Prophet (peace he on him) asked them to hastily move ahead for the place was a grim reminder of God's severe punishment and he hence called for reflection and repentance. (See waqidi, al-maghazi, vol. 3, pp. 1006-8. See also the comments of Ibn Kathir on verses 73-8 - Ed.)

58. The context seems to indicate that the clear proof referred to in the verse stands for the she-camel which is also spoken of as 'a Divine portent'. In(al-Shu'ara' 26: 154-8) it is explicitly mentioned that the Thamud themselves had asked the Prophet Salih to produce some sign which would support his claim to be God's Messenger. Responding to it, Salih pointed to the she-camel.

This illustrates clearly that the appearance of the she-camel was a miracle. Similar miracles had been performed earlier by other Prophets with a view to fulfilling the demand of the unbelievers and thus of vindicating their claim to prophethood. The miraculous appearance of the she-camel reinforces the fact that Salih had presented it as a 'Divine portent' and warned his people of dire consequences if they harmed it. He explained to them that the she-camel would graze freely in their fields; that on alternate days she and other animals would drink water from their well, They were also warned that if they harmed the she-camel they would be immediatelv seized by a terrible chastisemen' from God.

Such statements could obviously only have been made about an animal which was known to be of a miraculous nature. The Thamud observed the she-camel graze freely in their fields and she and the other camels drank water on alternate days from their well. The Thamud, though unhappy with the situation, endured this for quite some time. Later, however, after prolonged deliberations, they killed her. Such lengthy deliberations demonstrate that they were afraid to kill the she-camel. It is clear that the object of their fear was none other than the she-camel as they had no reason to be afraid of Salih, who had no power to terrify them. Their sense of awe for the she-camel explains why they let her graze freely on their land. The Qur'an, however, does not provide any detailed information as to what the she-camel looked like or how she was born. The authentic Hadith too provide no information about its miraculous birth. Hence, one need not take too seriously the statements of some of the commentators on the Qur'an about the mode of her birth. However, as far as the fact of her miraculous birth is concerned, that is borne out bv the Qur'an itself.

وَاذْكُرُوٓا إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَآءَ مِنۢ بَعْدِ عَادٍ وَّبَوَّأَكُمْ فِى الْأَرْضِ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْ سُهُولِهَا
قُصُورًا وَّتَنْحِتُونَ الْجِبَالَ بُيُوتًا ۚ فَاذْكُرُوٓا ءَالَآءَ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِى الْأَرْضِ
مُفْسِدِينَ 74

(7:74) And call to mind when He made you successors after 'Ad and gave you power in the earth so that you took for yourselves palaces in its plains and hewed out

dwellings in the mountains.[59] Remember, then, the wondrous bounties of Allah and do not go about creating mischief in the land.'[60]

59. The Thamud were highly skilful in rock-carving, and made huge mansions by carving the mountains, as we have mentioned earlier see (n. 57)above. In this regard the works of the Thamud resemble the rock-carvings in the Ajanta and Ellora caves in India and several other places. A few buildings erected by the Thamud are still intact in Mada'in Salih and speak of their tremendous skills in civil engineering and architecture.

60. The Qur'an asks people to draw a lesson from the tragic end of the 'Ad. For just as God destroyed that wicked people and established Muslims in positions of power and influence previously occupied by them, He can also destroy the Muslims and replace them by Others if they should become wicked and mischievous. (For further elaboration see (n. 52)above.

قَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا مِن قَوْمِهِ لِلَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا لِمَنْ آمَنَ مِنْهُمْ أَتَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ
صَالِحًا مُّرْسَلٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ ۚ قَالُوا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلَ بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ 75

(7:75) The haughty elders of his people said to those believers who had been oppressed: 'Do you know that Salih is one sent forth with a message from his Lord?' They, replied: 'Surely we believe in the message with which he has been sent.'

قَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا إِنَّا بِالَّذِي آمَنتُم بِهِ كَافِرُونَ 76

(7:76) The haughty ones remarked. 'Most certainly we disbelieve in that which you believe.'

فَعَقَرُوا النَّاقَةَ وَعَتَوْا عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِمْ وَقَالُوا يَا صَالِحُ ائْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا إِن كُنتَ مِنَ
الْمُرْسَلِينَ 77

(7:77) Then they hamstrung the she-camel,[61] disdainfuliy disobeyed the commandment of their Lord, and said: '0 Salih! Bring upon us the scourge with which you threatened us if you are truly a Messenger [of Allah].'

61. Although the she-camel was killed by an individual, as we learn also from surahs al-Qamar (54) and al-Sharns (91), the whole nation was held guilty since it stood at the killer's back. Every sin which is committed with the approval and support of a nation, is a national crime even if it has been committed by one person. In fact the Qur'an goes a step further and declares that a sin which is committed publicly in the midst of a gathering is considered to be the collective sin of the people who tolerate it.

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جٰثِمِينَ 78

(7:78) Thereupon a shocking catastrophe seized them,[62] so that they lay prostrate in their dwellings.

62. Other Qur'anic expressions used for the calamity are 'rajifah' (earthquake) (al-Nazi'at 79: 6); 'sayah' (awesome cry) (Hud 11: 67); 'Sa'iqah' (thunderbolt) (al-Baqarah 2: 55); and 'taghiyah'' (roaring noise) (al-Haqqah 69: 5).

فَتَوَلّٰى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ لَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسَالَةَ رَبِّي وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ لَّا تُحِبُّونَ النّٰصِحِينَ 79

(7:79) And Salih left them, saying: 'O my people! I conveyed to you the message of my Lord and gave you good advice; but you have no liking for your well-wishers.'

وَلُوطًا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّنَ الْعٰلَمِينَ 80

(7:80) And remember when We sent Lot [as a Messeng to his people and he said to them:[63] 'Do you realize you practise an indecency of which no other people in the world were guilty of before you?

63. The land inhabited by the people of Lot, which lies between Iraq and Palestine, is known as Trans-Jordan. According to the Bible, its capital town was Sodom, which is situated either somewhere near the Dead Sea, or presently lies submerged under it.. Apart from Sodom, according to the Talmud, there were four other majour cities, and the land lying between these cities was dotted with such greenery and orchards that the whole area looked like one big garden enchanting any onlooker. However, the whole nation was destroyed and today wc can find no trace of it. So much so that it is difficult to even locate the main cities which they inhabited. If anything remains as a reminder of this nation it is the Dead Sea which is also called the Sea of Lot. The Prophet Lot who was a nephew of the Prophet Abraham, accompanied his uncle as he moved away from Iraq. Lot sojourned to Syria, Palestincand Egypt forawhile and gained practical experience of preaching his message. Later God bettowed prophethood upon him and assigned to him the mission of reforming his misguided people. The people of Sodom have been referred to as the people of Lot presumably because Lot may have established matrimonial ties with those people.

One of the many accusations recorded gainst Lot in the Bible - and the Bible has been tampered with extensively by the Jews - is that Lot migrated to Sodom after an argument with Abraham (Genesis 13: 10-12).

The Qur'an refutes this baseless charge and affirms that Lot was designated by God to work as His Messenger among his people.

The author refers to an argument between Abraham and Lot which he considers to be a fabrication of Jews.The obvious basis of this is that such an argument between the Prophets is inconceivable since it is unbecoming of them as Prophets. The basis of this inference is a statement in Genesis 13:1-12.

It seems that there has been some confusion with regard to this inference. The verses of Genesis in question make no reference to any strife between the two Prophets. The strife to which it refers allegedly took place between the two Prophets. In addition, when the two Prophets parted company it was on a pleasant note for Abraham had suggested that since there was an abundance of land, Lot should choose that part of the land he preffered so as to exclude all possibilities of strife between their herdsmen. (See Genesis 13:1-5-Ed.)

إِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِّن دُونِ النِّسَاءِ ۚ بَلْ أَنتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُونَ 81

(7:81) You approach men lustfully in place of women. You are a people who exceed all bounds.'[64]

64. The Qur'an refers elsewhere to the many evil deeds of the people of Lot. Here the Qur'an confines itself to mentioning that most ignominious of crimes which invited God's scourge upon them.

The hideous act of sodomy, for which the people of Lot earned notoriety, has no doubt been committed by perverts in all times. The Greeks philosophers had the distinction of glorifying it as a moral virtue. It was left, however, for the modern West to vigorously propagate sodomy so much so that it was declared legal by the legislatures of a few countries. All this has been done in the face of the obvious fact that this form of sexual intercourse is patently unnatural. God created distinctions between the sexes of all living beings for the purposes of reproduction and perpetuation of the species. As far as the human species is concerned, their creation into two sexes is related to another end as well: that the two should come together in order to bring into existence the family and establish human civilization. In view of this, not only were human beings divided into two sexes, but each sex was made attractive to the other. The physical structure and psychological make-up of each sex was shaped in keeping with the purpose of forging bonds of mutual cordiality between the members of the two sexes. The sexual act, which is intensely pleasurable is at once a factor leading to the fulfilment of nature's purposes as underlined by the sexual division of humankind as well as a reward for fulfilling these purposes.

Now, the crime of the person who commits sodomy in flagrant opposition to this scheme of things, is not limited to that act alone. In fact he commits along with it a number of other crimes. First, he wages war against his own nature, against his inherent psychological predilection. This causes a major disorder which leads to highly negative effects on the lives of both the parties involved in that unnatural act - effects which are physical, psychological as well as moral. Second, he acts dishonestly with nature since while he derives sexual pleasure he fails to fulfil the societal obligation of which this pleasure is a recompense. Third, such a person also acts dishonestly with human society. For, although he avails himself of the advantages offered by various social institutions, when he has an opportunity to act, he

uses his abilities in a manner which not only fails to serve that society but which positively harms it. Apart from neglecting the abligations he owes to society, he renders himself incapable of serving the human race and his own family. He also produces effeminacy in at least one male and potentially pushes at least two females towards sexual corruption and moral depravity.

وَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهٖٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوْٓا اَخْرِجُوْهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْيَتِكُمْ ۚ اِنَّهُمْ اُنَاسٌ يَّتَطَهَّرُوْنَ 82

(7:82) Their only answer was: 'Banish them from your town. They are a people who pretend to be pure.' [65]

65. It is evident from the present verse that the people of Lot Were not only shameless and corrupt, but were also a people who had sunk in moral depravity to such a degree that even the presence of a few righteous persons had become intolerable to them. Their moral degradation left them with no patience for anyone who sought to bring about any moral reform. Even the slightest element of purity found in their society was too much for them, and they simply wished to have their society purged of it.

When these people reached such a low point of wickedness and hostility to good, God decreed that they be wiped out altogether. When the collective life of a people becomes totally bereft of goodness and purity, it forfeits the right to exist on earth. Their example is like that of a basket of fruit. As long as some fruit remains firm, there is some justification to keep that basket. But the basket has to be thrown away when the fruit becomes rotten.

فَاَنْجَيْنٰهُ وَاَهْلَهٗٓ اِلَّا امْرَاَتَهٗ ۖ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغٰبِرِيْنَ 83

(7:83) Then We delivered Lot and his household save his wife who stayed behind,[66]

66. As the Qur'an mentions elsewhere, Lot's wife supported her disbelieving relatives to the last. Hence, when God directed Lot and his followers to migrate from that corrupt land, He ordained that Lot's wife be left behind.

This seems to be an inference from(al- Tahrim 66: 10 - Ed).

وَاَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَّطَرًا ۭ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ۧ 84

(7:84) and We let loose a shower [of stones] upon them,[67] Observe, then, the end of the evil-doers.[68]

67. The 'rainfall' in the verse does not refer to the descent of water from the sky. It refers rather to the volley of stones. The Qur'an itself mentions that their habitations were turned upside down and ruined. See (verse 85); also (Hud 11:82-3); (al-Hijr 15:74-E.)

68. In light of this verse and other references in the Qur'an, sodomy is established as one of the deadliest sins; and that it incurred God's scourge on those who indulged in it. We also know from the teachings of the Prophet (peace be on him) that the Islamic state should purge society of this crime and severely punish those guilty of it. There are several traditions from the Prophet (peace be on him) which mention that very severe punishments were inflicted on both partners of this act. According to one tradition, the Prophet (peace be on him) ordered that both partners be put to death. (See Ibn Majah, Kitab al-Hudud, 'Bab man 'amila 'Amal Qawm ut'- Ed.) In another tradition it has been added that the culprits should be put to death whether they are married or un-married. (Ibn Majah, Kitab al-Hudad - Ed.) In another tradition it has been said that both parties should be stoned (to death). (Ibn Majah, Kitab al-Hudad, 'Bab man 'amila 'Amal Qawm Lut ' - Ed.) However, since no case of sodomy was reported in the lifetime of the Prophet (peace be on him), the punishment did not acquire a very clear and definitive shape. Among the Companions, 'Ali is of the view that such sinners should be beheaded and instead of being buried should be cremated. Abu Bakr also held the same view. However, 'Urnar and 'Uthman suggest that the sinners be made to stand under the roof of a dilapidated building, which should then be pulled down upon them. Ibn 'Abbas holds the view that those guilty of such a sinful act should be thrown from the top of the tallest building of the habitation and then pelted with stones. (See al-Fiqh 'ala al-Madhahib al-Arba'ah, vol. 5, pp. 141-2 - Ed.) As for the jurists, Shafi pronounces the punishment of death on both partners to sodomy irrespective of their marital status, and of their role whether it be active or passive. According to Sha'bi, Zuhri, Malik and Ahmad b. Hanbal, they should be stoned to death. Sa'id b. al-Musayyib, 'Ata', Hasan Basri, Ibrahim Nakha'i, Sufyan Thawri and Awa'i believe that such sinners deserve the same punishment as laid down for unlawful sexual-intercourse: that unmarried ones should be lashed a hundred times and exiled, and that married ones should be stoned to death. Abu Hanifah, however, does not recommend any specific punishment. For him, the sinner should be awarded, depending on the circumstances of each case, some deterrent punishment. According to one of the reports, the same was the view of Shafi'i. (See Ibn Qudamah, al-Mughni, vol. 8, pp. 187-8 - Ed.)

It should also be made clear that it is altogether unlawful for the husband to perpetrate this act on his wife. The Prophet (peace be on him), according to a tradition in Abu Da'ud, said: 'Cursed be he who commits this act with a woman.' (Abu Da'ud, Kitab al-Nikah, 'Bab fi Jami ' al Nikah' - Ed.) In other collections of Hadith such as Sunan of Ibn Majah and Musnad of Ahmad b. Hanbal. we find the following saying of the Prophet (peace be on him): 'God will not even look at him who commits this act of sodomy with his wife in her rectum.' (Ibn Majah, Kitab al-Nikah', 'Bab al-Nahy'an Ityan al-Nisa' fi Adbarihinn', Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 2, p. 344 - Ed.) Likewise the following saying of the Prophet (peace be on him) is mentioned in Tirmidhi: 'He who makes sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman, or indulges in sodomy with a woman. or calls on a soothsayer, believing him to be true, denies the faith sent down to Muhammad (peace be on him).' (Ibn Majah, Kitab al-Taharah, 'Bab al-Nahy 'an ityan al-Ha'id'- Ed.)

وَإِلَىٰ مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا ۗ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۖ قَدْ
جَاءَتْكُم بَيِّنَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ ۖ فَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَالْمِيزَانَ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا
تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ ۚ 85

(7:85) And to Midian[69] We sent forth their brother Shu'ayb He exhorted them: O my people! Serve Allah, you have no god but Him. Indeed a clear proof has come to you from your Lord. So give just weight and measure and diminish not to men their things '[70] and make no mischief on the earth after it has been set in good order.[71] That is to your own good, if you truly believe .[72]

69. The territory of Madyan (Midian) lay to the north-west of Hijaz and south of Palestine on the coast of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba, and part of the territory stretched to the northern border of the Sinai Peninsula. The Midianites and their towns were situated at the crossroads of the trade routes from Yemen through Makka and Yanbu' to Syria along the Red Sea coast, and from Iraq to Egypt. Midian was, therefore, quite well known to the Arabs. In fact it persisted in their memory long after its destruction for the Arab trade caravans en route to Syria and Egypt passed through territories which were full of the ruins of their monuments.

Another point worth noting about the people of Midian is that they were reckoned to be descendants of Midyan, a son of the Prophet Abraharn born of his third wife, Qatura. According to a custom of the time, persons who attached themselves to a notable family were gradually counted as members of that family, as the descendants of that family's ancestor. It is for this reason that a large majority of Arabs were called the descendants of Ismai'l. Likewise those who embraced faith at the hands of Ya'qab's sons bore the general name 'the People of Israel'. Now, since the inhabitants of Midian owed allegiance to Midyan, son of Abraham, they were referred to as the descendants of Midyan and their territory was called Midian.

In view of this it should not be thought that the Prophet Shu'ayb invited them, for the first time, to follow Divine Guidance. At the time of the advent of Shu'ayb their state was no different from that of the Israelites at the time of the advent of Moses. They too were originally a Muslim people who had subsequently moved far away from Islam. For six to seven centuries they lived amongst a people who were steeped in polytheism and moral corruption, and this led to their contamination with polytheism and moral corruption. Despite their deviation and corruption, however, they claimed to be the followers of the true faith, and were proud of their religious identification.

70. This shows that the people of Midian suffered from two major ailments - polytheism and dishonesty in business. Shu'ayb devoted his efforts to purging them of those evils.

71. The import of this statement has been explained earlier in (notes 44-5) above. In his exhortations to his people, Shu'ayb emphasized that they should not allow the order of life, established by the previous Prophets on the foundations of true faith and sound morals, to be corrupted by false beliefs and moral depravity.

72. This clearly shows that the people concerned claimed to be believers, as we have already pointed out. In fact, they were originally Muslims who had drifted away from Islam, who had become enmeshed in a range of evils. They not only professed to be believers, but took great pride in being so. See(n. 69) above - Ed. Shu'ayb made this fact the starting-point of his preaching. He told them that if they indeed were believers they should live up to that fact; they should consider their salvation to lie in practising goodness and virtue, honesty and integrity; and they should distinguish between good and evil on the basis of the standards followed by righteous people rather than of those who believed neither in God nor in the Hereafter.

وَلَا تَقْعُدُوا بِكُلِّ صِرَاطٍ تُوعِدُونَ وَتَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِهِ وَتَبْغُونَهَا
عِوَجًا ۚ وَاذْكُرُوا إِذْ كُنْتُمْ قَلِيلًا فَكَثَّرَكُمْ ۖ وَانْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ
الْمُفْسِدِينَ 86

(7:86) And do not lie in ambush by every path [of life] seeking to overawe or to hinder from the path of Allah those who believe, nor seek to make the path crooked. Remember, how you were once few, and then He multiplied you, and keep in mind what was the end of mischiefmakers.

وَإِنْ كَانَ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْكُمْ آمَنُوا بِالَّذِي أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ وَطَائِفَةٌ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا فَاصْبِرُوا حَتَّىٰ
يَحْكُمَ اللَّهُ بَيْنَنَا ۚ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ 87

(7:87) And if there are some among you who believe in the message that I bear while some do not believe, have patience till Allah shall judge between us. He is the best of those who judge.'

قَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ لَنُخْرِجَنَّكَ يَا شُعَيْبُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَكَ مِنْ
قَرْيَتِنَا أَوْ لَتَعُودُنَّ فِي مِلَّتِنَا ۚ قَالَ أَوَلَوْ كُنَّا كَارِهِينَ 88

(7:88) The haughty elders of his people said: 'O Shu'ayb! We shall certainly banish you and your companions-in-faith from our town, or else you shall return to our faith.' Shu'ayb said: 'What! Even though we abhor [your faith]?

قَدِ افْتَرَيْنَا عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اِنْ عُدْنَا فِيْ مِلَّتِكُمْ بَعْدَ اِذْ نَجّٰىنَا اللّٰهُ مِنْهَا ؕ وَمَا يَكُوْنُ لَنَاۤ اَنْ
نَّعُوْدَ فِيْهَاۤ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّنَا ؕ وَسِعَ رَبُّنَا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ؕ عَلَى اللّٰهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا ؕ رَبَّنَا افْتَحْ
بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ قَوْمِنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَاَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْفٰتِحِيْنَ 89

(7:89) If we return to your faith after Allah has delivered us from it we would be fabricating a lie against Allah. nor can we return to it again unless it be by, the will of Allah, our Lord.[73] Our Lord has knowledge of all things, and in Allah we put our trust. Our Lord! Judge rightly between us and our people, for You are the best of those who judge.'

73. This phrase signifies substantively what is meant by the commonly used Islamic formula In-sha' Allah ('If Allah so wills'). Its meaning is evident from(al-Kahf 18: 23-4), in which the believers are directed not to make definitive statements about what they will do without making such actions contingent on God's will. This is understandable since a believer firmly believes in God's power and is ever conscious that his destiny is inalienably tied to God's will. It is impossible for such a person to make foolish statements about what he will do and what he will not do. He is bound to make it clear that he will accomplish what he intends only, if 'God so wills'.

وَقَالَ الْمَلَاُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ قَوْمِهٖ لَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتُمْ شُعَيْبًا اِنَّكُمْ اِذًا لَّخٰسِرُوْنَ 90

(7:90) The elders of his people who disbelieved said: 'Should you follow Shu'ayb, you will be utter losers.[74]

74. One should not pass cursorily over this short sentence; instead one must reflect upon it. What the leaders of Midian in effect told their people was that Shu'ayb's exhortations to practise honesty and righteousness, and to strictly adhere to moral values, would spell their disaster. They implied that they could not succeed in the business carried on by the people of Midian if they were totally honest and straightforward in their dealings. Were they to let trading caravans pass by unmolested, they would lose all the advantages of being located at the crossroads of the major trade routes and by their proximity to the civilized and prosperous countries such as Egypt and Iraq. Also, if they were to become peaceful and to cease their attacks upon the trade caravans, they would no longer be held in awe by neighbouring countries.

Such attitudes have not, however, been confined to the tribal chiefs of Shu'ayb. People who stray away from truth, honesty and righteousness, regardless of their age and clime, have always found in honesty a means of great loss. People of warped mentalities in every age

have always believed that trade, politics, and other worldly pursuits can never flourish unless they resort to dishonest and immoral practices. The main objection against the Message of truth in all ages has been that the pursuit of truth spells material doom.

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جٰثِمِينَ ۛ ج صلے 91

(7:91) Thereupon a shocking catastrophe seized them, and they remained prostrate in their dwellings.

الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا شُعَيْبًا كَأَنْ لَّمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيهَا ۚ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا شُعَيْبًا كَانُوا هُمُ الْخٰسِرِينَ 92

(7:92) Those who had charged Shu'ayb with lying became as though-they had never lived there; it is they who became utter losers.[75]

75. The destruction of the people of Midian remained proverbial in Arabia for a long time. As such the following lines in Psalms are significant:

Yea, they conspire with one accord;

against thee they make a covenant -

the tents of Edom and the Ish'maelites.

Moab and the Hagrites,

Gebal and Ammon and Am'alek,

Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;

Assyria also has joined them;

they are the strong arms of the children of Lot.

Do to them as thou didst to Mid'ian (Psalms 83: 5-9).

Note also the following statement in Isaiah:

A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness. For the Lord, the Lord of hosts, will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth. Therefore, thus says the Lord, the Lord of hosts: 'O my people, who dwell in Zion be not afraid of the Assyrians when they smite you with their rod

and lift up their staff against you as the Egyptians did. For in a very little while my indignation will come to an end, and my anger will be directed to their destruction. And the Lord of hosts will wield against them a scourge, as when he smote Mid'ian at the rock of Oreb . . .' (Isaiah 10: 21-6).

فَتَوَلّٰى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ لَقَدْ اَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسٰلٰتِ رَبِّيْ وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ ۚ فَكَيْفَ اٰسٰى عَلٰى
قَوْمٍ كٰفِرِيْنَ ع 93

(7:93) Shu'ayb then departed from his people, and said: '0 my people! Surely I conveyed to you the message of my Lord, and gave you sincere advice. How, then, can I mourn for a people who refuse to accept the truth?'[76]

76. The stories narrated here have a definite didactic purpose and were narrated with a view to highlighting their relevance to the time of the Prophet (peace be on him). In each of these stories one of the parties is a Prophet who in respect of his teachings greatly resembles Muhammad (peace be on him), in summoning his people to the right way, in admonishing them, in sincerely seeking their welfare. At the other end of the scale in each narrative are the unbelieving nations who greatly resembled the Quraysh in the time of the Prophet (peace be on him) with regard to their disbelief and moral degeneration.

By recounting the tragic end of each of these unrighteous nations of the past, the Quraysh are reminded of the moral purpose of these stories. Through the stories they are told that if, because of their stubbornness they fail to follow the Messenger of God during the term of respite granted to them, they will be subjected to the same destruction which befell those past nations who persisted in wrong-doing and error.

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا فِيْ قَرْيَةٍ مِّنْ نَّبِيٍّ اِلَّآ اَخَذْنَآ اَهْلَهَا بِالْبَاْسَآءِ وَالضَّرَّآءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَضَّرَّعُوْنَ 94

(7:94) Never have We sent a Prophet to a place without trying its people with adversity and hardship that they may humble themselves.

ثُمَّ بَدَّلْنَا مَكَانَ السَّيِّئَةِ الْحَسَنَةَ حَتّٰى عَفَوْا وَّقَالُوْا قَدْ مَسَّ اٰبَآءَنَا الضَّرَّآءُ وَالسَّرَّآءُ
فَاَخَذْنٰهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَّهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ 95

(7:95) Then We changed adversity into ease until they throve and said: 'Our forefathers had also seen both adversity and prosperity.' So We suddenly seized them without their even perceiving it.[77]

77. After narrating individually the stories of how various nations responded to the Message of their Prophets, the Qur'an now spells out the general rule which has been operative throughout the ages. First, before the appearance of a Prophet in any nation, conditions that would conduce to the acceptance of his Message were created. This was usually done by subjecting the nations concerned to a variety of afflictions and punishments. They were made to suffer miseries such as famine, epidemics, colossal losses in trade and business, defeat in war. Such events usually have a healthy impact on people. They lead to a softening in their hearts. They generate humility and modesty. They enable people to shake off their pride and shatter their reliance on wealth and power and induce thern to trust the One Who is all-powerful and fully controls their destiny. Above all, such events incline people to heed the words of warning and to turn to God in humility.

But if the people continue to refrain from embracing the truth they are subjected to another kind of test - that of affluence. This last test signals the beginning of their destruction. Rolling in abundant wealth and luxury, people are inclined to forget the hard times they have experienced. Their foolish leaders also inculcate in their minds an altogether preposterous concept of history. They explain the rise and fall of nations and the alternation of prosperity and adversity among human beings by reference to blind natural forces, and in total disregard of moral values. Hence if a nation is seized by an affliction or scourge, such people see no reason why it should be explained in terms of moral failure. They are rather inclined to consider that a person's readiness to heed moral admonition or to turn humbly towards God, is a sign of psychological infirmity.

This foolish mentality has been portrayed all too well by the Prophet (peace be on him): 'A believer continually faces adversity until he comes out of it purified of his sins. As for the hypocrite, his likeness in adversity is that of a donkey who does not know why his master had tied him and why he later released him.' (Cited by Ibn Kathir in his comments on the verse - Ed.) Hence, when a people become so hard of heart that they neither turn to God in suffering, nor thank Him for His bounties in prosperity, they are liable to be destroyed at any moment.

It should be noted that the above rule which was applied to the nations of the previous Prophets, was also applied in the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him). When this surah was revealed the Quraysh displayed exactly the same characteristics and attitudes as those nations which had earlier been destroyed. According to a tradition narrated by both 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud and Abd Allah b. 'Abbas, as the Quraysh grew in defiance to the Prophet's call, he prayed to God that he might be assisted by inflicting famine on the Quraysh, as in the days of the Prophet Joseph. Accordingly, God subjected the Quraysh to such a severe famine that they took to subsisting on carcasses, the skins of animals, bones, and wool. Unnerved by this the Quraysh, led by Abu Sufyan, implored the Prophet (peace be on him) to pray to God on their behalf. But when the Prophets prayer helped to improve the situation somewhat, the Quraysh reverted to their arrogant and ignorant way's. (Bukhari, Kitab al-Taharah, Bab idha istashfa'a al-Mushrikun bi al-Muslim' - Ed.) The wicked ones among them tried to dissuade from God those who had derived some lesson from the famine. They argued that famines take place in course of operation of natural laws, that they are merely a recurrent physical phenomenon. They emphasized that the occurrence of famine should not mislead people into believing in Muhammad (peace be on him). It was

during this time that the surah under discussion was revealed. The above verses were thus quite relevant and it is against this backdrop that one appreciates their full significance. (For details see (Yunus 10: 21), (al-Nahl 16: 112), (al-Muminun 23: 75-6); and (al-Dukhan 44: 9-16.)

وَلَوْ اَنَّ اَهْلَ الْقُرٰٓى اٰمَنُوْا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ بَرَكٰتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ
وَلٰكِنْ كَذَّبُوْا فَاَخَذْنٰهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ 96

(7:96) Had the people of those towns believed and been God-fearing, We would certainly have opened up to them blessings from the heavens and the earth; but they gave the lie [to their Prophets] and so We seized them for their deeds. so.

اَفَاَمِنَ اَهْلُ الْقُرٰٓى اَنْ يَّاْتِيَهُمْ بَاْسُنَا بَيَاتًا وَّهُمْ نَآئِمُوْنَ ط 97

(7:97) Do the people of those towns feel secure that Our punishment will not come to them at night while they are asleep?

اَوَاَمِنَ اَهْلُ الْقُرٰٓى اَنْ يَّاْتِيَهُمْ بَاْسُنَا ضُحًى وَّهُمْ يَلْعَبُوْنَ 98

(7:98) Or, do the people of those towns feel secure that Our punishment will not come to them by daylight while they are at play?

اَفَاَمِنُوْا مَكْرَ اللّٰهِ ج فَلَا يَاْمَنُ مَكْرَ اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ع 99

(7:99) Do they feel secure against the design of Allah[78] None can feel secure against the design of Allah except the utter losers.

78. The expression makr signifies a secret strategy of which the victim has no inkling until the decisive blow is struck. Until then, the victim is under the illusion that everything is in good order.

اَوَلَمْ يَهْدِ لِلَّذِيْنَ يَرِثُوْنَ الْاَرْضَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اَهْلِهَآ اَنْ لَّوْ نَشَآءُ اَصَبْنٰهُمْ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ ج
وَنَطْبَعُ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ 100

(7:100) Has it not, then, become plain to those who have inherited the earth in the wake of the former generations that, had We so willed, We could have afflicted them for their sins,[79] (they, however, are heedless to basic facts and so) We seal their hearts so that they hear nothing.[80]

79. Every nation which rises in place of one that falls, can perceive the misdeeds which brought about the preceding nation's fall. Were such a people to make use of their reason, to appreciate the false ideas and misdeeds which led to the undoing of those who once strutted abroad in vainglory, they would have realized that the Supreme Being Who had once punished them for their misdeeds and deprived them of power and glory had not ceased to exist. Nor has that Supreme Being been deprived of the power to inflict a punishment on the people of the present times, a power with which He smote the nations of the past. Nor has God become bereft of the capacity to dislodge the wicked nations of today in the manner He did in the past.

80. Those people who derive no lesson from history, who thoughtlessly pass over the ruins of the past, remaining engrossed in heedlessness, are deprived by God of the capacity to think correctly and to pay due attention to the counsel of well-wishers. Such is the God-made law of nature that if someone closes his eyes, not even a single ray of sun-light will reach his sight. Similarly, if someone is bent upon closing his ears none can make him hear even a word.

تِلْكَ الْقُرٰى نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآئِهَا ۚ وَلَقَدْ جَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ ۚ فَمَا كَانُوْا
لِيُؤْمِنُوْا بِمَا كَذَّبُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ 101

(7:101) To those [earlier] communities - some of whose stories We relate to you - there had indeed come Messengers with clear proofs, but they would not believe what they had once rejected as false. Thus it is that Allah seals the hearts of those who deny the truth.[81]

81. The purpose behind the 'sealing of hearts' mentioned in the preceding verse is also explained in the present verse. It is clear from the two verses that the 'sealing of hearts' means that man's capacity to hear and understand the truth is seriously, impaired because of the operation of natural, psychological laws. Because of these laws, once a person turns away from the truth because of his irrational prejudices and the dominance of lust, he becomes enmeshed in his own obstinacy and adamance. With the passage of time this adamance is compounded to such an extent that despite all rational and empirical evidence in support of the truth, he continues to reject it.

وَمَا وَجَدْنَا لِاَكْثَرِهِمْ مِّنْ عَهْدٍ ۚ وَاِنْ وَّجَدْنَآ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَفٰسِقِيْنَ 102

(7:102) We did not find most of them true to their covenants; indeed We found most of them to he transgressors. [82]

82. The statement that 'We did not find most of them true to their covenants' signifies the general propensity of people not to honour their commitments. They are neither faithful to the primordial covenant which they made with God see (al-A'raf 7: 172) which is binding on every mortal as God's servant and creature, nor faithful to the collective covenant which is binding on every human being as a member of the human fraternity. Nor are men generally

faithful to the commitments which they make to God in hours of distress or in moments when their moral instincts are awake and astir. Violation of any of these covenants has been termed fisq (transgression).

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنۢ بَعْدِهِم مُّوسَىٰ بِـَٔايَٰتِنَآ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَإِْۦهِ فَظَلَمُوا۟ بِهَا ۚ فَٱنظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَٰقِبَةُ ٱلْمُفْسِدِينَ 103

(7:103) After those We sent forth Moses with Our signs to Pharaoh and his nobles,[83] but they dealt with Our signs unjustly.[84] Observe, then, what happened to the mischief-makers.

83. The stories narrated in the Qur'an bring home unmistakenly the point that people who reject God's Message are not spared; rather they are destroyed. In narrating at length the story of Moses, Pharaoh and the Israelites, the Qur'an provides some important lessons for the unbelieving Quraysh, the Jews, and also the believers.

The Quraysh are advised that the apparently large differences in the numerical strength of the forces of truth and falsehood in the early phase of the Islamic movement should not lead them to entertain any, kind of illusion. History, provides ample testimony that the Message of truth has always had a very humble beginning. That its proponent, initially, is in the hopelessly small minority of one; in fact, one in the whole world. He then proceeds, despite his resource lessness, to challenge the hegemony of falsehood, to declare war against it, despite the fact that falsehood is backed by powerful states and empires. And ultimately the truth triumphs. The Quraysh are also reminded that all conspiracies hatched against the Prophets and all the means employed to suppress the Message of truth are ultimately foiled. They are further told that God grants long terms of respite to the evil-doing nations so that they might mend their ways and reform themselves. But when they persistently disregard all warnings and learn no lesson from instructive events, He smites them with an exemplary punishment.

Some further lessons are meant to be conveyed to those who believed in the Prophet (peace be on him). First, that they should not feel disheartened by the paucity of resources, nor be overawed by the impressive numerical strength, pomp and grandeur of their enemies. Nor should they lose heart if they find that God's help does not come at the expected hour. Second, that those who follow in the footsteps of the Jews are bound, ultimately, to be seized by the same curse which afflicted the Jews.

As for the Israelites, they are warned against the evil effects of clinging to falsehood. Illustrations of this were provided by important events in their own history. They are also asked to purge the Message of the earlier Prophets of all accretions and distortions and to restore it to its original purity.

84. 'They dealt with Our signs unjustly' refers to their rejection of God's signs and to the fact that they dismissed them as sheer sorcery. If a person scoffs at a beautiful couplet, and dubs

it as amateurish rhyming, this amounts to committing an offence against poetry itself. Likewise, to brand those extraordinary acts of God as sorcery and magic - even though magicians declared that those acts were beyond their ability - constitutes a serious offence not only against God's signs but also against common sense and truth.

وَقَالَ مُوسٰى يٰفِرْعَوْنُ اِنِّيْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۙ 104

(7:104) And Moses said: '0 Pharaoh![85] I am a Messenger from the Lord of the universe.

85. 'Pharaoh' literally means 'the offspring of the sun-god'. The ancient Egyptians called the sun 'Ra', worshipped it as their supreme deity', and Pharaoh - Ra's physical manifestation and representative - was named after it. It was for this reason that all Egyptian rulers claimed their authority on the basis of their association with Ra, and every ruler who mounted the Egyptian throne called himself Pharaoh, trying thereby to assure his people that he was their supreme deity.

It may be noted that the Qur'anic narrative regarding Moses refers to two Pharaohs. The first of these was one during whose reign Moses was born and in whose palace he was brought up. The second Pharaoh to Whorn reference is made is the one whom Moses invited to Islam and who was asked to liberate the Israelites. It is this latter Pharaoh who was finally drowned. Modern scholarship is inclined to the view that the first Pharaoh was Rameses 11 who ruled over Egypt from 1292 B.C. to 1225 B.C. while the second Pharaoh was Minpetah, his son, who had become a co-sharer in his father's authority during the latter's lifetime and who, after his death, became the fully-fledged ruler of Egypt. This, however, is not fully established since Moses, according to the Egyptian calendar, died in 1272 B.C. In any case these are merely historical conjectures. It is quite difficult to establish a clear chronological framework owing to discrepancies in the Egyptian, Israeli and Christian calendars.

حَقِيْقٌ عَلٰٓى اَنْ لَّآ اَقُوْلَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الْحَقَّ ۭ قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِبَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ فَاَرْسِلْ مَعِيَ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَاۗءِيْلَ ۭ 105

(7:105) And it behoves me to say nothing about Allah except what is true. I have come to you with a clear sign of having been sent from your Lord. So let the Children of Israel go with me.'[86]

86. Moses was sent to Pharaoh to invite him to two things; first, to surrender himself to God (i.e. Islam); and second, to release the Israelites - who were already Muslims - from his oppressive bondage. The Qur'an refers occasionally to both these objectives, and occasionally confines itself to mentioning either of the two.

قَالَ اِنْ كُنْتَ جِئْتَ بِاٰيَةٍ فَاْتِ بِهَآ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ 106

(7:106) Pharaoh said: if you have brought a sign, then bring it forth if you are truthful.'

فَأَلْقَىٰ عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِينٌ ۖ 107

(7:107) Thereupon Moses threw his rod, and suddenly it was a veritable serpent.

وَنَزَعَ يَدَهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَاءُ لِلنَّاظِرِينَ ۚ 108

(7:108) Then he drew out his hand, and it appeared luminous to all beholders.[87]

87. Moses was granted these two miraculous signs in order to provide testimony to his being a Messenger of God, the creator and sovereign of the universe. As we have mentioned earlier, whenever the Prophets introduced themselves as God's Message-bearers, people asked them to produce some miraculous sign, to perform something supernatural. In response to those demands the Prophets produced what the Qur'an terms as 'signs', and which are called 'miracles' by theologians.

Those who tend to play down the supernatural character of such signs or miracles, and who try to explain them in terms of natural laws of causation, in fact attempt to build a mid-way house between believing and disbelieving in the statements of the Qur'an. Such an approach can hardly be considered reasonable. What it does demonstrate, however, is how such people can be pulled in two opposite directions. On the one hand, they are not inclined to believe in a Book which abounds in narrations of a supernatural kind. On the other hand, being born followers of their ancestral religion, they are not inclined to reject the Book which carries supernatural narrations.

With regard to miracles, there are two basic questions that people should ask themselves. Did God, after creating the universe and establishing a system of natural causations therein, suspend Himself such that it is no longer possible for Him to interfere in the workings of the universe? Or does He still hold the reins to His realm in His owns Hands so that His command is enforced every moment, and He does retain the power to alter the shape of things and the normal course of events - either partially or fully, - as and when He wills?

It is impossible for those who respond in the affirmative to the first question to accept the idea of miracles. For clearly miracles do not fit in with their concept of God and the universe. Honesty demands that instead of indulging in far-fetched explanations of Qur'anic statements on miracles, such people should clearly declare that they do not believe in the Qur'an. For quite obviously the Qur'an is explicit, even quite emphatic in affirming the former concept of God.

As for those who, being convinced by Qur'anic arguments, respond in the affirmative to the second question regarding God and the universe, for them there is no difficulty in accepting miracles. Let us take the instance mentioned in verse 107, namely, that the rod of Moses turned into a serpent. Now, there are those who believe that serpents can come into being only through one process - the known biological process. Such people are bound to reject the statement that Moses' rod changed into a serpent and later reverted to its original shape.

On the contrary, if you are fully convinced that it is God's command alone which causes life to arise from lifeless matter, and that God has full power to confer whichever kind of life He wills, the transformation of the rod into a serpent and its subsequent reversion to its original state is no stranger than the transformation of any other lifeless matter into a living entity. The fact that the latter happens virtually every day whereas the former took place only a few times in history is not enough to declare the first as incredibly, strange and the second as 'natural'.

قَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِن قَوْمِ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَسَاحِرٌ عَلِيمٌ ۙ 109

(7:109) The elders of Pharaoh's people said: 'Surely this man is a skilful magician

يُرِيدُ أَن يُخْرِجَكُم مِّنْ أَرْضِكُمْ ۖ فَمَاذَا تَأْمُرُونَ 110

(7:110) who seeks to drive you out from your land.[88] What would you have us do?'

88. The above account raises the question as to how a destitute member of the slave Israeli nation could pose such a serious threat to an emperor as mighty as Pharaoh. This is especially so when one considers that Pharaoh was not only an absolute ruler over territory which stretched in one direction from Syria to Libya and in the other from the Mediterranean coast to Ethiopia, but was even considered a deity deserving of worship,

One might also wonder how the transformation of Moses' rod into a serpent could he considered an event of such magnitude as to give rise to the fear that Moses would overthrow the entrenched empire and unseat the royal family as well as the entire ruling class. It might further seem strange that the mere declaration of prophethood and the demand to liberate the people of Israel caused such a furore even though no other political question had been touched upon.

The answer here lies in the fact that Moses' claim to prophethood implied the call to total change, obviously, including political change. For if a person lays claim to be God's Messenger, it implies that people obey him unreservedly. For God's Messengers are not sent to the world to obey other human beings and live in subordination to them; they rather ask others to accept them as their leaders and rulers. It is this which explains why Pharaoh and his coteric felt threatened by an all-out revolution -political, economic and social - when Moses came forth with his call.

There remains the question as to why the claim to prophethood was considered such a potential threat when Moses enjoyed the support of none except his brother, Aaron, and his claim was reinforced by only two miracles - those of the shining hand and the rod which turned into a serpent. This can be explained by two things. First, that Pharaoh and his courtiers knew very well about Moses. All were aware of his extraordinary abilities and his inherent calibre as a leader of men. Also, according to the traditions of the Talmud and Josephus - provided they are authentic -Moses had also learnt the martial arts and other skills which were available only exclusively to royalty and which were required in connection with their political and military leadership. Moreover, he had proved his mettle

as a good general during the expedition to Ethiopia. Furthermore, during the course of his eight years of life in Midian - rigorous years in the desert working as a shepherd - he had purged himself of all his weaknesses because of his association with the Pharaonic svstern. Hence. when the Pharaonic court was confronted by a mature, serene and pious man who came forth with the claim of prophethood, it was obviously impossible for them to give short shrift to his claim. Second, the miracles of the rod and the shining hand overawed Pharaoh and his courtiers to such an extent they were almost convinced that Moses did indeed enjoy the support of some supernatural power. That they were unnerved by the very first proof of his prophethood is borne out by the contradictions in their charges against Moses. On the one hand they dubbed Moses a sorcerer, and on the other hand they accused him of plotting to banish them from their own land. It is clear that had they taken Moses for a mere sorcerer, they would not have expressed fears of political upheaval. For sorcery has never brought about any political change in the world.

قَالُوْٓا اَرْجِهْ وَاَخَاهُ وَاَرْسِلْ فِى الْمَدَآئِنِ حٰشِرِيْنَ ۙ 111

(7:111) Then they advised Pharaoh: 'Put off Moses and his brother for a while, and send forth heralds to your cities

يَّاْتُوْكَ بِكُلِّ سَحَّارٍ عَلِيْمٍ 112

(7:112) to summon every skilful magician to your presence.'[89]

89. The plan of Pharaoh's courtiers clearly suggests that they knew the difference between mere sorcery and a miracle. They were well aware that miracles are effective and have the capacity to bring about actual transformation whereas sorcery results merely in optic illusion. Hence, they dubbed Moses a sorcerer so as to refute his claim to prophethood. They claimed instead that the transformation of the rod into a serpent was not a miracle; that it was rather a magical performance which could be undertaken by any sorcerer. Therefore, they asked all the sorcerers of the land to come together and display how rods could be magically transformed into serpents. They believed that such a magical show would remove the awesome effect created by Moses' miracles on the people, or at least sow doubts in their minds about those miracles.

وَجَآءَ السَّحَرَةُ فِرْعَوْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ لَنَا لَاَجْرًا اِنْ كُنَّا نَحْنُ الْغٰلِبِيْنَ 113

(7:113) And the magicians came to Pharaoh and said: 'Shall we have a reward if we win?'

قَالَ نَعَمْ وَاِنَّكُمْ لَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِيْنَ 114

(7:114) Pharaoh replied: 'Certainly, and you shall be among those who are near to me.'

قَالُوْا يٰمُوْسٰٓى اِمَّآ اَنْ تُلْقِيَ وَاِمَّآ اَنْ نَّكُوْنَ نَحْنُ الْمُلْقِيْنَ 115

(7:115) Then they said: '0 Moses, will you [first] throw your rod, or shall we throw?'

قَالَ اَلْقُوْا ۚ فَلَمَّآ اَلْقَوْا سَحَرُوْٓا اَعْيُنَ النَّاسِ وَاسْتَرْهَبُوْهُمْ وَجَآءُوْ بِسِحْرٍ

عَظِيْمٍ 116

(7:116) Moses said: 'You throw.' So when they threw [their rods], they enchanted the eyes of the people, and struck them with awe, and produced a mighty sorcery.

وَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰى مُوْسٰٓى اَنْ اَلْقِ عَصَاكَ ۚ فَاِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَاْفِكُوْنَ ۚ 117

(7:117) Then We directed Moses: 'Now you throw your rod.' And lo! it swallowed up all their false devices.[90]

90. It would be a mistake to believe that the rod of Moses swallowed up the rods and ropes cast by the other sorcerers and which had looked like serpents. The Qur'anic statement means that the rod of Moses swallowed up the falsehood faked by them. This clearly shows that wherever Moses' rod moved, it destroyed the magical effect which had caused the transformation of their ropes and rods. One blow of Moses' rod caused every other rod to revert to a rod, and every rope to revert to a rope. (For further elaboration see Tafhim al-Qur'an, (Ta Ha 20, n. 42)

فَوَقَعَ الْحَقُّ وَبَطَلَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ۚ 118

(7:118) Thus was the truth established, and their doings proved in vain.

فَغُلِبُوْا هُنَالِكَ وَانْقَلَبُوْا صٰغِرِيْنَ ۚ 119

(7:119) Pharaoh and his men were defeated and put to shame,

وَاُلْقِيَ السَّحَرَةُ سٰجِدِيْنَ ۙ 120

(7:120) and the magicians flung themselves prostrate,

قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۙ 121

(7:121) saying: 'We believe in the Lord of the universe,

رَبِّ مُوْسٰى وَهٰرُوْنَ 122

(7:122) the Lord of Moses and Aaron.'[91]

91. Thus God turned the tables on Pharaoh and his courtiers they arranged the magic show in the hope that it would convince the people that Moses was just a sorcerer, and thus make them sceptical about his claim to prophethood. But the actual outcome was quite the opposite. The sorcerers who had been assembled were defeated. Not only that, it was also unanimously acknowledged that the signs displayed by Moses in support of his claim were not feats of magic. Rather, his signs rather manifested the might of God, the Lord of the universe, and hence could not be overcome by magic.

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ اٰمَنْتُمْ بِهٖ قَبْلَ اَنْ اٰذَنَ لَكُمْ ۚ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَمَكْرٌ مَّكَرْتُمُوْهُ فِى الْمَدِيْنَةِ
ۚ لِتُخْرِجُوْا مِنْهَآ اَهْلَهَا ۚ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ 123

(7:123) Pharaoh said: 'What! Do you believe before you have my permission? Surely this is a plot you have contrived to drive out the rulers from the capital. So you shall see,

لَاُقَطِّعَنَّ اَيْدِيَكُمْ وَاَرْجُلَكُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ ثُمَّ لَاُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ 124

(7:124) I shall cut off your hands and feet on the opposite sides, and then crucify you all.'

قَالُوْٓا اِنَّآ اِلٰى رَبِّنَا مُنْقَلِبُوْنَ ۚ 125

(7:125) They replied: 'We shall surely return to our Lord.

وَمَا تَنْقِمُ مِنَّآ اِلَّآ اَنْ اٰمَنَّا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّنَا لَمَّا جَآءَتْنَا ؕ رَبَّنَآ اَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَّتَوَفَّنَا
مُسْلِمِيْنَ ع 126

(7:126) Will you punish us just because we believed in the signs of our Lord when they came to us? Our Lord! Shower us with perseverance and cause us to die as those who have submitted [to You].'[92]

92. Faced with utter failure Pharaoh finally resorted to branding the whole magic tournament as a conspiracy concocted by Moses and his accomplice sorcerers. Under threat of death and physical torture he asked the sorcerers to confess that they had acted in collusion with Moses. This last move by Pharaoh was ineffectual. For the sorcerers readily

agreed to endure every torture, clearly proving thereby that their decision to accept Moses' message reflected their sincere conviction and that no conspiracy was involved. Pharaoh was hardly left with any choice. He, therefore, gave up all pretence to follow truth and justice, and brazenly resorted to persecution instead.

The tremendous and instantaneous change which took place in the characters of the sorcerers is also of significance. The sorcerers had come all the way from their homes with the purpose of vindicating their ancestral faith and receiving pecuniary reward from Pharaoh for overcoming Moses. However, the moment true faith illumined their hearts, they displayed such resoluteness of will and love for the truth that they contemptuously turned down Pharaoh's offer, and demonstrated their full readiness to endure even the worst punishments for the sake of the truth that had dawned upon them.

وَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِ فِرْعَوْنَ أَتَذَرُ مُوسَىٰ وَقَوْمَهُ لِيُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَيَذَرَكَ وَآلِهَتَكَ ۚ
قَالَ سَنُقَتِّلُ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَنَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءَهُمْ ۚ وَإِنَّا فَوْقَهُمْ قَاهِرُونَ 127

(7:127) The elders of Pharaoh's people said: 'Will you leave alone Moses and his people to spread mischief in the land, and forsake you and your gods?' Pharaoh replied: 'We will kill their male children and spare their female ones.[93] For indeed we hold irresistible sway over them.'

93. There were two periods of persecution. The first was during the reign of Rameses 11 and took place before Moses' birth, whereas the second period of persecution started after Moses' assumption to the office of prophethood. Common to both periods is the killing of the male issue of Israelites while the female was spared. It was a calculated design to rob the Israelites of their identity and to bring about their forcible assimilation. An inscription discovered during the archaeological excavations of 1896 probably belongs to this period. According to this inscription, Pharaoh Minpetah rounds off the narration of his achievements and victories in these words: 'The Israel have been exterminated, and no seed of them is left.' For further explanation see (al-Mu'min 40: 25)

قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ اسْتَعِينُوا بِاللَّهِ وَاصْبِرُوا ۚ إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لِلَّهِ ۖ يُورِثُهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ
عِبَادِهِ ۚ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ 128

(7:128) Moses said to his people: 'Seek help from Allah and be steadfast. The earth is Allah's, He bestows it on those of His servants He chooses. The end of things belongs to the God-fearing.'

قَالُوْٓا اُوْذِيْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ تَاْتِيَنَا وَمِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جِئْتَنَا ؕ قَالَ عَسٰى رَبُّكُمْ اَنْ يُّهْلِكَ

عَدُوَّكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفَكُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ع 129

(7:129) The people of Moses replied: 'We were oppressed before your coming to us and after it.' Moses said: 'Your Lord will soon destroy your enemy and make you rulers in the land. Then He will see how you act.'

وَلَقَدْ اَخَذْنَآ اٰلَ فِرْعَوْنَ بِالسِّنِيْنَ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ 130

(7:130) We afflicted the people of Pharaoh with hard times and with poor harvest that they may heed.

فَاِذَا جَآءَتْهُمُ الْحَسَنَةُ قَالُوْا لَنَا هٰذِهٖ ۚ وَاِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَّطَّيَّرُوْا بِمُوْسٰى وَمَنْ مَّعَهٗ ؕ اَلَآ

اِنَّمَا طٰٓئِرُهُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ 131

(7:131) But whenever prosperity came their way, they said: 'This is our due.' And whatever hardship befell them, they attributed it to the misfortune of Moses and those who followed him. Surely, their misfortune had been decreed by Allah - but most of them do not know that.

وَقَالُوْا مَهْمَا تَاْتِنَا بِهٖ مِنْ اٰيَةٍ لِّتَسْحَرَنَا بِهَا ۙ فَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ 132

(7:132) And they said to Moses: 'Whatever sign you might produce before us in order to enchant us, we are not going to believe you.'[94]

94. Pharaoh's courtiers obstinately persisted in branding Moses' signs as sorcery although they knew well that sorcery had nothing in common with the miraculous signs granted to Moses. Even a fool would not he ready to believe that the country-wide famine and the consistent decrease in agricultural output could have been caused by magic. It is for this reason that the Qur'an says:

But when Our signs, which should have opened their eyes, came to them they said: 'This is clear sorcery! And they rejected those signs out of iniquity and arrogance even though they were inwardly convinced of it' (al-Naml 27: 13-14).

فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الطُّوفَانَ وَالْجَرَادَ وَالْقُمَّلَ وَالضَّفَادِعَ وَالدَّمَ آيَاتٍ مُّفَصَّلَاتٍ ۖ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِينَ 133

(7:133) Then We afflicted them with a great flood [95] and locusts, and the lice[96] , and the frogs, and the blood. All these were distinct signs and yet they remained haughty. They were a wicked people.

95. This probably refers to the torrential rain accompanied by hailstorm. While we do not totally exclude the possibility of other kinds of storms, we are inclined to the view, that it probably signifies hailstorm since the Bible specifically mentions that. (See Exodus 9: 23-4 - Ed.)

96. The word used in the text - qummal - denotes lice, fleas, small locusts, mosquitoes, and weevil. This rather general term has been used in the Qur'an probably to suggest that while men were afflicted with lice and fleas, weevil destroyed the barns. (Cf. Exodus 7-12. See also Tafhim al-ur'an, (al-Zukhruf 43, n. 43.)

وَلَمَّا وَقَعَ عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّجْزُ قَالُوا يَا مُوسَى ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ عِندَكَ ۖ لَئِن كَشَفْتَ عَنَّا الرِّجْزَ لَنُؤْمِنَنَّ لَكَ وَلَنُرْسِلَنَّ مَعَكَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ۖ 134

(7:134) Each time a scourge struck them they, said: '0 Moses! Pray for us to your Lord on the strength of the prophethood He has bestowed upon you. Surely, if you remove this scourge from us, we will truly believe in you, and will let the Children of Israel go with you.'

فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمُ الرِّجْزَ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ هُم بَالِغُوهُ إِذَا هُمْ يَنكُثُونَ 135

(7:135) But when We removed the scourge from them until a term - a term which they were bound to reach - they at once broke their promise.

فَانتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ 136

(7:136) So We inflicted Our retribution on them, and caused them to drown in the sea because they gave the lie to Our signs and were heedless of them.

وَأَوْرَثْنَا الْقَوْمَ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا يُسْتَضْعَفُونَ مَشَارِقَ الْأَرْضِ وَمَغَارِبَهَا الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا ۖ وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ الْحُسْنَىٰ عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ۛ بِمَا صَبَرُوا ۖ وَدَمَّرْنَا مَا كَانَ يَصْنَعُ فِرْعَوْنُ وَقَوْمُهُ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْرِشُونَ 137

(7:137) And We made those who had been persecuted inherit the eastern and western lands which We had blessed.[97] Thus your Lord's gracious promise was fulfilled to the Children of Israel, for they had endured with patience; and We destroyed all that Pharaoh and his people had wrought, and all that they had built.

97. The Israelites were made the inheritors of Palestine. This has been interpreted by some commentators of the Qur'an to mean that the Israelites were made the rulers of Egypt as well. This view, however, is neither supported by, the Qur'an nor by any other historical and archaeological evidence. We have, therefore, serious reservations about the correctness of this opinion. (See Tafhim a]-Qur'an, (al-Kahf 18, n. 57), and (al-Shuara' 26, n. 45)

وَجَاوَزْنَا بِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْبَحْرَ فَأَتَوْا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ يَعْكُفُونَ عَلَىٰ أَصْنَامٍ لَهُمْ ۚ قَالُوا يَا مُوسَى اجْعَل لَّنَا إِلَٰهًا كَمَا لَهُمْ آلِهَةٌ ۚ قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُونَ 138

(7:138) And We led the Children of Israel across the sea; and then they came upon a people who were devoted to the worship of their idols. They said: '0 Moses, make for us a god even as they have gods.'[98] Moses said: 'You are indeed an ignorant people.'

98. The point at which the Israelites probably crossed the Red Sea lies somewhere between the present Suez and Ismailia. After that they headed towards the south of the Sinai peninsula along the coastal route. The western and northern regions of the Sinai peninsula were then included in the Egyptian empire. In the southern part of the peninsula, in the area lying between the present towns of Tur and Abu Zanimah, there were copper and turquoise mines. Since these were of immense value to the Egyptians, a number of garrisons had been set up to ensure their security'. One such garrison was located at a place known as Mafqah, which also housed a big temple. The ruins of this temple can still be found in the south-western part of the peninsula. In its vicinity there was an ancient temple, dedicated to the moon-god of the Semites. Passing by these places the people of Israel, who had been subservient to the Egyptians for a long time and were thus considerably Egyptianized in their outlook, felt the desire to indulge in idol-worship.

The extent to which the Israelites had become degenerated as a result of their slavery may be gauged by Joshua's last address to the Israelites delivered seventy years after their exodus from Epypt:

Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (Joshua 24: 14-15).

This shows that even though the Israelites had been taught and trained by Moses for forty Years and by Joshua for twenty-eight years, they had still been unable to purge their minds of those influences which had warped their outlook and mentality during their period of bondage under Pharaoh. These Muslims had begun to look upon idol-worship as natural. Even after their exodus, the sight of a temple would incline them to indulge in the idolatrous practices which they had observed among their former masters.

اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ مُتَبَّرٌ مَّا هُمۡ فِيۡهِ وَبٰطِلٌ مَّا كَانُوۡا يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ 139

(7:139) The way these people follow is bound to lead to destruction; and all their works are vain.

قَالَ اَغَيۡرَ اللّٰهِ اَبۡغِيۡكُمۡ اِلٰهًا وَّهُوَ فَضَّلَكُمۡ عَلَى الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ 140

(7:140) Moses said: 'Should I seek any god for you other than Allah although it is He who has exalted you above all?'

وَاِذۡ اَنۡجَيۡنٰكُمۡ مِّنۡ اٰلِ فِرۡعَوۡنَ يَسُوۡمُوۡنَكُمۡ سُوۡٓءَ الۡعَذَابِ ۚ يُقَتِّلُوۡنَ اَبۡنَآءَكُمۡ وَ
يَسۡتَحۡيُوۡنَ نِسَآءَكُمۡ ؕ وَفِىۡ ذٰلِكُمۡ بَلَآءٌ مِّنۡ رَّبِّكُمۡ عَظِيۡمٌ ۚ 141

(7:141) And call to mind when We delivered you from Pharaoh's people who perpetrated on you a terrible torment, putting your males to death and sparing your females. Surely in it there was an awesome trial for you from your Lord.

وَوٰعَدۡنَا مُوۡسٰى ثَلٰثِيۡنَ لَيۡلَةً وَّاَتۡمَمۡنٰهَا بِعَشۡرٍ فَتَمَّ مِيۡقَاتُ رَبِّهٖۤ اَرۡبَعِيۡنَ لَيۡلَةً ۚ وَقَالَ
مُوۡسٰى لِاَخِيۡهِ هٰرُوۡنَ اخۡلُفۡنِىۡ فِىۡ قَوۡمِىۡ وَاَصۡلِحۡ وَلَا تَتَّبِعۡ سَبِيۡلَ الۡمُفۡسِدِيۡنَ 142

(7:142) And We appointed for Moses thirty nights, to which We added ten, whereby the term of forty nights set by his Lord was fulfilled.[99] And Moses said to Aaron, his brother: 'Take my place among my people, act righteously, and do not follow the path of those who create mischief.'[100]

99. After the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt which marks, on the one hand, the end of the constraints of slavery and on the other, the beginning of their life as an independent nation, Moses was summoned by God to Mount Sinai in order that he might receive the Law for Israel. He was initially summoned for a period of forty days so that he might single-mindedly devote himself to worshipping, fasting, meditation and reflection and thus develop the ability to receive the revelation which was to put a very heavy burden upon him.

In compliance with God's command, Moses left the Israelites at the place now known as the Wadi al-Shaykh which lies between Nabi Salih and Mount Sinai. The place where the Israelites had camped is presently called

Maydan al-Rahah. At one end of the valley is a hillock where, according to local tradition, the Prophet Salih pitched his tent after his migration from the land of Thamud. A mosque built as a monument to the Prophet Salih still adorns the landscape. Mount Harun is located at the other end of the valley where, again, according to local tradition, the Prophet Harun (Aaron) stayed after his exasperation with the Israelites because of their cow-worship. The top of the towering Mount Sinai, standing 7,359 feet high, is mostly enveloped by clouds. The cave to which Moses retired for forty days to devote himself to worship and meditation is situated at the top of the mountain, and still attracts many pilgrims. Close to the cave are a mosque and a church. Moreover, a monastery built in the Justinian period stands even today at the foot of the mountain. (See Tafhim al-Qur'an, (al-Naml 27: nn. 9-10).

100. Although Aaron was senior to Moses in age by three years, he was placed under the direction of the Prophet Moses and was required to assist him in connection with his mission, As explained elsewhere in the Qur'an, Aaron was not assigned independent prophethood; he was rather appointed a Prophet by God in response to Moses' prayer that he be appointed as his assistant. See (Ta Ha 20: 29-31 - Ed.)

وَلَمَّا جَآءَ مُوسٰى لِمِيقَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهٗ رَبُّهٗ ۙ قَالَ رَبِّ اَرِنِيْٓ اَنْظُرْ اِلَيْكَ ۭ قَالَ لَنْ تَرٰىنِيْ وَلٰكِنِ
انْظُرْ اِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَاِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهٗ فَسَوْفَ تَرٰىنِيْ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَجَلّٰى رَبُّهٗ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهٗ دَكًّا
وَّخَرَّ مُوْسٰى صَعِقًا ۚ فَلَمَّآ اَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحٰنَكَ تُبْتُ اِلَيْكَ وَاَنَا اَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ 143

(7:143) And when Moses came at Our appointment, and his Lord spoke to him, he said: 'O my Lord! Reveal Yourself to me, that I may look upon You!' He replied: 'Never can you see Me. However, behold this mount; if it remains firm in its place, only then you will be able to see Me.' And as soon as his Lord unveiled His glory to the mount, He crushed it into fine dust, and Moses fell down in a swoon. And when he recovered, he said: 'Glory be to You! To You I turn in repentance, and I am the foremost among those who believe.'

قَالَ يٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنِّى اصْطَفَيْتُكَ عَلَى النَّاسِ بِرِسٰلٰتِىْ وَبِكَلَامِىْ ۖ فَخُذْ مَآ اٰتَيْتُكَ وَكُنْ مِّنَ
الشّٰكِرِيْنَ 144

(7:144) He said: 'O Moses! I have indeed preferred you to all others by virtue of the Message I have entrusted to you and by virtue of My speaking to you. Hold fast therefore, to whatever I have granted you, and give thanks.'

وَكَتَبْنَا لَهٗ فِى الْاَلْوَاحِ مِنْ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ مَّوْعِظَةً وَّتَفْصِيْلًا لِّكُلِّ شَىْءٍ ۚ فَخُذْهَا بِقُوَّةٍ وَّاْمُرْ
قَوْمَكَ يَاْخُذُوْا بِاَحْسَنِهَا ۭ سَاُورِيْكُمْ دَارَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ 145

(7:145) And We ordained for Moses in the Tablets all manner of admonition, and instruction concerning all things,[101] and said to him: Hold to these, with all your strength. and bid your people to follow them in accord with their best understanding.[102] I shall soon show you the habitation of the wicked. [103]

101. The Bible categorically mentions that the tablets were of stone. The act of writing on these tablets is attributed in both the Qur'an and the Bible, to God. Nonetheless, it is not possible to ascertain whether the actual act of writing was as performed by God exercising His power directly, or by God in the sense of His assignment of the task to some angel or to Moses (cf. Exodus 31: 18, 32: 15-16; and Deuteronomyi, 5: 6-22).

102. The Israelites were asked to hold fast to the Law to follow it in its plain meaning, a meaning which can he grasped by an ordinary man of sound heart and good intent with the help of his common sense. This stipulation was added in order to discourage the chicanery and hair-splitting to which lawyers resort in order to accommodate the crooked aims of the people. The warning was necessary to emphasize that holding fast to the Law was not to be equated with following the chicanery of the lawyers.

103. The Israelites were told that on their way they would come across the ruins of earlier nations who had refused to turn to God and who had persisted in their evil way's. Observing those ruins would he instructive insofar as they eloquently spoke of the tragic end that meets those who indulge in such iniquity .

سَاَصۡرِفُ عَنۡ اٰيٰتِىَ الَّذِيۡنَ يَتَكَبَّرُوۡنَ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ بِغَيۡرِ الۡحَـقِّ‌ؕ وَاِنۡ يَّرَوۡا كُلَّ اٰيَةٍ لَّا
يُؤۡمِنُوۡا بِهَا‌ۚ وَاِنۡ يَّرَوۡا سَبِيۡلَ الرُّشۡدِ لَا يَتَّخِذُوۡهُ سَبِيۡلًا‌ۚ وَاِنۡ يَّرَوۡا سَبِيۡلَ الۡغَىِّ يَتَّخِذُوۡهُ
سَبِيۡلًا‌ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمۡ كَذَّبُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَكَانُوۡا عَنۡهَا غٰفِلِيۡنَ 146

(7:146) I shall turn away from My signs those who, without any right, behaved haughtily in the earth,[104] even if they may, witness each and every, sign, they shall not believe therein. And even if they see the right path, they shall still not follow it; but if they see the path of error. they shall choose it for their path. This is because they rejected Our signs as false and were heedless to them.

104. It is God's law that evil-doers do not and cannot take any lesson from the otherwise instructive events which they observe. The arrogance mentioned here refers to man's delusion that he is on a higher plane than God's creatures and servants. It is this which prompts him to disregard God's command and to adopt an attitude which suggests that he neither considers himself God's servant, nor God his Lord. Such egotism has no basis in fact; it is sheer vanity. For as long as man live on God's earth, what can justify his living as a servant of anyone other than the Lord of the universe? It is for this reason that the Qur'an declares this arrogance to be 'without any right'.

وَالَّذِيۡنَ كَذَّبُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَلِقَآءِ الۡاٰخِرَةِ حَبِطَتۡ اَعۡمَالُهُمۡ‌ؕ هَلۡ يُجۡزَوۡنَ اِلَّا مَا كَانُوۡا
يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ع 147

(7:147) Vain are the deeds of those who reject Our signs as false and to the meeting of the Hereafter. [105] Shall they be recompensed, except according to their deeds?'

105. That the acts of such persons are vain and fruitless is evident from the fact that the acceptance of man's acts by God is subject to two conditions. First, one's acts should conform to the Law laid down by God. Second, man should be prompted by the desire to achieve success in the Hereafter rather than merely in this world. If these conditions are not fulfilled, a person's acts will be of no consequence. He who performs an act in defiance of God's guidance, is guilty of rebellion and is undeserving of God's reward. He who acts only to obtain worldly success, is neither entitled to nor should expect any reward from God in the Hereafter. If someone uses another person's land contrary to his wish, what else can he expect from him than punishment? The same holds true for he who deliberately uses someone's land, knowing well that he is not entitled to any produce after the restoration of that land to its owner. There is no justification for him to expect any share of the produce of that land.

وَاتَّخَذَ قَوْمُ مُوْسٰى مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ مِنْ حُلِيِّهِمْ عِجْلًا جَسَدًا لَّهٗ خُوَارٌ ؕ اَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّهٗ لَا
يُكَلِّمُهُمْ وَلَا يَهْدِيْهِمْ سَبِيْلًا ۘ اِتَّخَذُوْهُ وَكَانُوْا ظٰلِمِيْنَ 148

(7:148) And in the absence of Moses[106] his people made the image of a calf from their ornaments, which lowed. Did they not observe that it could neither speak nor give them any guidance? And still they made it an object of worship. They were indeed wrong-doing. [107]

106. Here reference is made to the forty days which Moses spent on Mount Sinai in compliance with God's command when his people remained in the plain at the foot of the mountain called Maydan al-Rahah.

107. Their cow-worship was another manifestation of the Israelites' slavish attachment to the Egyptian traditions at the time of the Exodus. It is well-known that cow-worship was widespread in Egypt and it was during their stay there that the Israelites developed this strange infatuation. The Qur'an also refers to their inclination to cow-worship: 'Their hearts were overflowing with love for the calf because of their unbelief' (al-Baqarah 2: 93). What is more surprising about their turn to idolatry is that it took place just three months after their escape from Egypt. During that time they had witnessed the parting of the sea, the drowning of Pharaoh, and their own deliverance from what otherwise seemed inescapable slavery, to the Egyptians. They knew well that all those events had taken place owing to the unmistakable and direct interference of the all-powerful God. Yet they had the audacity to demand that their Prophet should make for them a false god that they might worship. Not only that, soon after Moses left them for Mount Sinai, they themselves contrived a false god. Disgusted with such conduct on the part of the Israelites, some Prophets have likened their people to a nymphomaniac who loves all save her husband and who is unfaithful to him even on their nuptial night.

وَلَمَّا سُقِطَ فِيْٓ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَرَاَوْا اَنَّهُمْ قَدْ ضَلُّوْا ۙ قَالُوْا لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَرْحَمْنَا رَبُّنَا وَيَغْفِرْ لَنَا
لَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ 149

(7:149) And when they were afflicted with remorse and realized that they had fallen into error, they said: 'If our Lord does not have mercy on us and does not pardon us, we shall be among the losers.'

وَلَمَّا رَجَعَ مُوْسٰٓى اِلٰى قَوْمِهٖ غَضْبَانَ اَسِفًا ۙ قَالَ بِئْسَمَا خَلَفْتُمُوْنِيْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِيْ ۚ اَعَجِلْتُمْ
اَمْرَ رَبِّكُمْ ۚ وَاَلْقَى الْاَلْوَاحَ وَاَخَذَ بِرَاْسِ اَخِيْهِ يَجُرُّهٗٓ اِلَيْهِ ؕ قَالَ ابْنَ اُمَّ اِنَّ الْقَوْمَ

اسْتَضْعَفُوْنِيْ وَكَادُوْا يَقْتُلُوْنَنِيْ ۫ فَلَا تُشْمِتْ بِيَ الْاَعْدَآءَ وَلَا تَجْعَلْنِيْ مَعَ الْقَوْمِ

الظّٰلِمِيْنَ 150

(7:150) And when Moses returned to his people, full of wrath and sorrow, he said: 'Vile is the course you have followed in my absence. Could you not patiently wait for the decree of your Lord?' And he threw down the Tablets [of the Law] and took hold of his brother's head, dragging him to himself. Aaron said: 'My mother's son, the people overpowered me and almost killed me. So let not my enemies gloat over me, and do not number me among the wrong-doing folk.'[108]

108. The above Qur'anic verse absolves Aaron of the charge levelled against him by the Jews. According to the Biblical version of the story of calf-worship, however, it was Aaron who had made the golden calf for the people of Israel. To quote:

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron, and said to him, 'Up, make up gods who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' And Aaron said to them, 'Take off the rings of gold which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.' So all the people took off the rings of gold which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, and made a molten calf; and they said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.' When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, 'Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord.' And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play (Exodus 32: 1--6).

The Qur'an, however, refutes the above account at many places and points out that it was Samiri the rebel of God rather than Aaron the Prophet who committed that heinous sin. For details see (Ta Ha 20: 90 ff.)

Strange though it may appear, the Israelites maligned the characters of those very people whom they believed to be the Messengers of God. The accusations they hurled at them included such heinous sins as polytheism, sorcery, fornication, deceit and treachery. Needless to say, indulgence in any of these sins is disgraceful for even an ordinary believer and decent human being, let alone Prophets. In the light of the history of Israeli morals, however, it is quite understandable why they maligned their own Prophets. In times of religious and moral degeneration when both the clergy and laity were steeped in sin and immorality, they tried to seek justification for their misdeeds. In order to sedate their own consciences they ascribed the very sins of which they were guilty to their Prophets and then their own inability to refrain from sins on the grounds that not even the Prophets could refrain.

The same characteristic is evident in Hinduism. When the Hindus reached the lowest point

in their moral degeneration, they produced a literature which presents a very perverted image of Hindu ideals. This literature portrayed their gods, hermits and monks as crass sinners. In doing so, they suggested that since such noble people could not refrain from indulging in grave sins, ordinary mortals are inevitably bound to commit them. Moreover, a person's indulgence in immoral acts should not make him remorseful for the same acts were committed earlier by their monks and hermits.

قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِيْ وَلِاَخِيْ وَاَدْخِلْنَا فِيْ رَحْمَتِكَ ۖ وَاَنْتَ اَرْحَمُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ ع 151

(7:151) Thereupon Moses said: 'O Lord! Grant forgiveness upon me and my brother and admit us to Your Mercy, for You are most merciful of the merciful.'

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ سَيَنَالُهُمْ غَضَبٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَذِلَّةٌ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۭ وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُفْتَرِيْنَ 152

(7:152) In reply they were told: 'Verily those who worshipped the calf will certainly incur indignation from their Lord, and will be abased in the life of this world. Thus do We reward those who fabricate lies.

وَالَّذِيْنَ عَمِلُوا السَّيِّاٰتِ ثُمَّ تَابُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهَا وَاٰمَنُوْٓا ۙ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ 153

(7:153) As for those who do evil, and later repent and have faith, such shall find their Lord All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate after (they repent and believe)

وَلَمَّا سَكَتَ عَنْ مُّوْسَى الْغَضَبُ اَخَذَ الْاَلْوَاحَ ۖ وَفِيْ نُسْخَتِهَا هُدًى وَّرَحْمَةٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِرَبِّهِمْ يَرْهَبُوْنَ 154

(7:154) And when the anger of Moses was stilled, he took up the Tablets again, the text of which comprised guidance and mercy to those who fear their Lord.

وَاخْتَارَ مُوْسٰى قَوْمَهٗ سَبْعِيْنَ رَجُلًا لِّمِيْقَاتِنَا ۚ فَلَمَّآ اَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ قَالَ رَبِّ لَوْ شِئْتَ اَهْلَكْتَهُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ وَاِيَّايَ ۭ اَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ السُّفَهَاۗءُ مِنَّا ۚ اِنْ هِيَ اِلَّا فِتْنَتُكَ ۭ تُضِلُّ

بِهَا مَنْ تَشَآءُ ۖ وَتَهْدِىْ مَنْ تَشَآءُ ۖ اَنْتَ وَلِيُّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا وَاَنْتَ خَيْرُ

الْغَافِرِيْنَ 155

(7:155) And out of his people Moses singled out seventy men for Our appointment. [109] Then, when violent shaking seized them, he addressed his Lord: 'Had You willed, O my Lord, You could have destroyed them and me long ago. Will You destroy us for what the fools amongst us did? That was nothing but a trial from You whereby You mislead whom You will and guide whom You will. [110] You alone are our guardian. Forgive us, then, and have mercy upon us. You are the best of those who forgive.

109. Moses was summoned for the second time to Mount Sinai along with seventy chiefs of the nation in order that they might seek pardon for their calf-worship and renew their covenant with God. Reference to this event is not found in the Bible and Talmud. They simply mention that Moses was summoned to receive new tablets as replacements for the ones he had thrown down and broken. (Cf. Exodus 34.)

110. When a people are put to the test it is an occasion of crucial importance for it helps to distinguish the righteous from the wicked. Like a winnow, it separates out of the mass the useful from the useless. Hence in his wisdom God subjects people to tests. Those who successfully pass through them, owe their success to the support and guidance they receive from God. As for those who are unsuccessful, their failure is the result of their not receiving that support and guidance. This does not detract from the fact that men neither arbitrarily receive or are denied God's support and guidance. Both extending and withholding support and guidance follow a rule which is based on wisdom and justice. The fact, however, remains that man can succeed in the test to which he is put only if God supports and guides him.

وَاكْتُبْ لَنَا فِىْ هٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَّفِى الْاٰخِرَةِ اِنَّا هُدْنَآ اِلَيْكَ ۖ قَالَ عَذَابِىْٓ اُصِيْبُ بِهٖ

مَنْ اَشَآءُ ۚ وَرَحْمَتِىْ وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ ۚ فَسَاَكْتُبُهَا لِلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّقُوْنَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ

وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ۚ 156

(7:156) And ordain for us what is good in this world and in the World to Come for to You have we turned.'He replied: 'I afflict whomsoever I wish with My chastisement. As for My mercy, it encompasses everything.[111] will show mercy to those who abstain from evil, pay Zakat and have faith in Our signs.'

111. It is false to assume that the general rule underlying God's governance of His realm is that of wrath which is occasionally tempered with mercy and benevolence. On the contrary,

the general rule is that of mercy and benevolence and wrath is the exception which is aroused when man's transgression and rebellion exceed all reasonable limits.

اَلَّذِيْنَ يَتَّبِعُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلَ النَّبِيَّ الْاُمِّيَّ الَّذِيْ يَجِدُوْنَهٗ مَكْتُوْبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرٰىةِ
وَالْاِنْجِيْلِ ۡ يَاْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهٰىهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ
عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبٰٓئِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ اِصْرَهُمْ وَالْاَغْلٰلَ الَّتِيْ كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۭ فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِهٖ
وَعَزَّرُوْهُ وَنَصَرُوْهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّوْرَ الَّذِيْٓ اُنْزِلَ مَعَهٗٓ ۙ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ۝ 157

(7:157) [To-day this mercy is for] those who follow the ummi Prophet, [112] whom they find mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel with them.[113] He enjoins upon them what is good and forbids them what is evil. He makes the clean things lawful to them and prohibits all corrupt things,[114] and removes from them their burdens and the shackles that were upon them.[115] So those who believe in him and assist him, and succour him and follow the Light which has been sent down with him, it is they who shall prosper.

112. The preceding verse concludes God's response to Moses' prayer. This was the appropriate moment to invite the Israelites to follow the Message preached by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him). The upshot of what is being said here is that people can even now attain God's mercy exactly as they could in the past. These conditions require that people should now follow the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him), since refusal to follow a Prophet after his advent amounts to gross disobedience to God. Those who do not commit themselves to follow the Prophet (peace be on him) cannot attain the essence of piety, no matter how hard they try to make a pretence of it by observing the minor details of religious rituals generally associated with piety.

Likewise, the Israelites had been told that paying Zakah was essential to win God's mercy. However, payment of Zakah is meaningless unless one supports the struggle to establish the hegemony of truth which was being carried on under the leadership of the Prophet (peace be on him). For unless one spends money to exalt the word of God, the very foundation of Zakah are lacking, even if a person spends huge amounts in the way of charity. They were also reminded that they had been told in the past that God's mercy was exclusively for those who believed in His Revelation. Now those who rejected the Revelation received by Muhammad (peace be on him) could never be considered believers in Revelation no matter how zealously they claim to believe in the Torah.

Reference to the Prophet (peace be on him) in this verse as umimi is significant as the Israelites branded all other nations as Gentiles (ummis). Steeped in racial prejudice, they did not consider members of other nations as their equals, let alone accept any person not belonging to them as a Prophet. The Qur'an also states the Jewish belief that they would not be taken to ask for whatever they might do to non-Jews. See (Al'Imran 3: 75). Employing the

same term which they themselves had used, the Qur'an tells them that their destiny was linked with the ummi Prophet. By obeying him they would become deserving of God's mercy. As for disobedience to the Prophet (peace be on him). it would continue to arouse God's wrath which had been afflicted upon them for centuries.

113. Pointed and repeated reference to the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is made in the Bible. (See Deuteronomy 18: 19; Matthew 21: 33-46; John 1: 19-25; 14: 15-17, 25-30; 15: 25-26; 16: 7-15.)

114. The Prophet declares the pure things which they had forbidden as lawful, and the impure things which they had legitimized as unlawful.

115. The Israelites had fettered their lives by undue restrictions which had been placed on them by the legal hair-splitting of their jurists, the pietistic exaggerations of their spiritual leaders, the introduction of superstitions and self-contrived laws and regulations by, their masses. The Prophet, by relieving them of every unnecessary burden and releasing them from every unjustified restriction, in fact liberated their shackled lives.

قُلْ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنِّيْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيْعًا ۨ الَّذِيْ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ لَآ
اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيٖ وَيُمِيْتُ ۠ فَاٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْاُمِّيِّ الَّذِيْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَكَلِمٰتِهٖ
وَاتَّبِعُوْهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ 158

(7:158) [Say, O Muhammad]: 'O men! I am Allah's Messenger to you all - of Him to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no god but He. He grants life and deals death. Have faith then, in Allah and in His Messenger, the ummi Prophet who believes in Allah and His words; and follow him so that you may be guided aright.'

وَمِنْ قَوْمِ مُوْسٰٓى اُمَّةٌ يَّهْدُوْنَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهٖ يَعْدِلُوْنَ 159

(7:159) Among the people of Moses'[116] there was a party who guided others in the way of the truth and established justice in its light. [117]

116. This marks the resumption of the main theme of the discourse which had been interrupted by the parenthesis see (verses 157-8)calling people to affirm the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be on him).

117. The translators generally render the verse as the following:

Of the people of Moses there is a section who guide and do justice in the light of truth. (Translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali.)

They do so because, in their view, the present verse describes the moral and intellectual state of the Israelites at the time when the Qur'an was revealed. However, the context seems to indicate that the above account refers to the state of the Israelites at the time of the Prophet Moses. Thus, the purpose of the verse is to emphasize that even in the days of their calf-worship when God rebuked them, all members of Israel were not corrupt; that a sizeable section of them was righteous.

وَقَطَّعْنٰهُمُ اثْنَتَيْ عَشْرَةَ اَسْبَاطًا اُمَمًا ؕ وَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰى مُوْسٰٓى اِذِ اسْتَسْقٰىهُ قَوْمُهٗٓ اَنِ
اضْرِبْ بِّعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ ۚ فَانْۢبَجَسَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا ؕ قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ اُنَاسٍ
مَّشْرَبَهُمْ ؕ وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْغَمَامَ وَاَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوٰى ؕ كُلُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا
رَزَقْنٰكُمْ ؕ وَمَا ظَلَمُوْنَا وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ 160

(7:160) And We divided them into twelve tribes, forming them into communities.[118] When his people asked Moses for water We directed him: 'Smite the rock with your rod.' Then twelve springs gushed forth from the rock and every people knew their drinking-places. And We caused thick clouds to provide them shade, and We sent down upon them manna and quails,[119] saying: 'Eat of the clean things that We have provided you.' They wronged not Us, but it was themselves that they wronged.

118. This refers to the organization of the people of Israel which has been mentioned in the Qur'an in (al-Ma'idah 5:12)and also described, at length, in the Bible in Numbers. According to these sources, in compliance with God's command the Prophet Moses first conducted the census of the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai. He registered their twelve tribes, ten of whom were descendants of the Prophet Jacob, and the remaining two descendants of the Prophet Joseph, as separate and distinct tribes. He appointed a chief for each tribe and assigned to him the duty to maintain moral, religious, social and military discipline within each tribe and to enforce the Law. The Levites, who were descendants of the Prophets Moses and Aaron, however, were organized as a distinct group entrusted with the task of providing religious guidance to all tribes.

119. This organization was one of the numerous favours which God had bestowed upon the Israelites. Mention is made of three other favours bestowed upon them. First, an extraordinary arrangement for their water supply was made in the otherwise arid Sinai peninsula. Second, the sky was covered with clouds such that they were protected from the scorching heat of the sun. Third, a unique meal, consisting of manna and quails was sent down on them. Had this Divine arrangement, catering as it did for the millions of wandering Israelites' basic necessities of life, not been made, they would certainly have perished.

On visiting that land even today it is difficult to visualize how such an arrangement providing shelter, food and water for millions of people was made. The population of this peninsula standseven today at a paltry, 55,000 people. (it may be noted that this statement was made in the fifties of the present century. However, the present population of the Sinai is 200,000 - Ed.) If a five or six hundred thousand strong army, were to camp there today, it would be quite a task for those at the helm to provide the necessary supplies for the army. Little wonder, then, that many scholars who belive neither in the Scripture nor in miracles, rule out the historical accuracy of the event. For them, the people of Israel camped in an area lying south of Palestine and north of Arabia. In view of the physical and economic geography of the Sinai peninsula, they consider it totally incredible that such a large population could have stayed there for years. What has made these scholars even more sceptical about the event is the fact that the Israelites were not then in a position to procure supplies from either the Egyptians or the 'Amaliqah' who inhabited respectively the eastern and northern parts of the peninsula, since both groups were hostile to them. It is against this background that one may appreciate the immense importance of the favours God conferred on the Israelites. Likewise, it also gives one some idea of the blatant ingratitude of the people of Israel since they consistently defied and betrayed God even though they had witnessed a great many divine signs. (See Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. 1, (al-Baqarah 2: nn. 72-3 and 76, pp. 76-7 - Ed.)

وَإِذْ قِيلَ لَهُمُ اسْكُنُوا هَٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ وَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ وَقُولُوا حِطَّةٌ وَادْخُلُوا
الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا نَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطِيئَاتِكُمْ ۚ سَنَزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ 161

(7:161) And recall[120] when it was said to them: 'Dwell in this town and eat plentifully of whatever you please, and say: "Repentance", and enter the gate prostrate. We shall forgive you your sins and shall bestow further favours on those who do good.'

120. This alludes to their constant defiance and rebellion in face of God' favours which eventually brought about their destruction.

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِجْزًا مِّنَ
السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَظْلِمُونَ ع 162

(7:162) Then the wrong-doers among them substituted another word in place of the one told them. So We sent upon them a scourge from the heaven as a punishment for their Wrong-doing. [121]

121. For details see Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. 1, (al-Baqarah 2: nn. 74-5, pp. 76-7).

وَسْـَٔلْهُمْ عَنِ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِيْ كَانَتْ حَاضِرَةَ الْبَحْرِ ۘ اِذْ يَعْدُوْنَ فِي السَّبْتِ اِذْ تَاْتِيْهِمْ
حِيْتَانُهُمْ يَوْمَ سَبْتِهِمْ شُرَّعًا وَّيَوْمَ لَا يَسْبِتُوْنَ ۙ لَا تَاْتِيْهِمْ ۚ كَذٰلِكَ ۚ نَبْلُوْهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا
يَفْسُقُوْنَ 163

(7:163) And ask the people of Moses concerning the town situated along the sea[122] how its people profaned the Sabbath when fish came to them breaking the water's surface on Sabbath days,[123] and would not come to them on other than Sabbath-days. Thus did We try them because of their disobedience.[124]

122. Most scholars identify this place with Eilat, Eilath or Eloth. (Cf. Encyclopaedia Britannica, XV edition, 'Macropaedia', vol. 3, art. 'Elat' -Ed.) The seaport called Elat which has been built by the present state of Israel (which is close to the Jordanian seaport, Aqaba), stands on the same site. It lies at the end of that long inlet of the Red Sea situated between the eastern part of the Sinai peninsula and the western part of Arabia. It was a major trading centre in the time of Israelite ascendancy. The Prophet Solomon took this city as the chief port for his fleet in the Red Sea.

The event referred to in the above verse is not reported in Jewish Scriptures. Nor do historical accounts shed any light on it. Nonetheless, it appears from the way it has been mentioned in the above verse and in al-Baqarah that the Jews of the early days of Islam were quite familiar with the event. (See Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. 1, (al-Baqarah 2: 65 and n.83, pp. 81-2 - Ed)). This view is further corroborated by the fact that even the Madinan Jews who spared no opportunity to criticize the Prophet (peace be on him) did not raise any objection against this (Qur'anic account.

123. 'Sabbath', which means Saturday, was declared for the Israelites as the holi day of the week. God declared the Sabbath as a sign of the perpetual covenant between God and Israel. (Exodus 31: 12-16.) The Israelites were required to strictly keep the Sabbath which meant that they may not engage in any worldly activity; they may not cook, nor make their slaves or cattle serve them. Those who violated these rules were to be put to death. The Israelites, however, publicly violated these rules. In the days of the Prophet Jeremiah (between 628 and 586 B.C.), the Israelites carried their merchandise through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day itself. Jeremiah, therefore, warned them that if they persisted in their flagrant violation of the Law, Jerusalem would be set on fire. (Jererniah 17: 21-7.) The same complaint is voiced in the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel (595-536 B.C.) who referred to their violation of the Sabbath rules as their major sin. (Ezekiel 20: 12-24.) In view of these Scriptural references it seems plausible that the event mentioned in the above Qur'anic verse is related to the same period.

124. Men are tested by God in a variety of ways. When a person or group of people begin to turn away from God and incline themselves towards disobedience, God provides abundant opportunities for them to disobey. This is done in order that the full potential for

disobedience, which had remained hidden because of lack of such an opportunity, might come to the surface.

وَإِذْ قَالَتْ أُمَّةٌ مِّنْهُمْ لِمَ تَعِظُونَ قَوْمًا ۙ اللَّهُ مُهْلِكُهُمْ أَوْ مُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا ۖ قَالُوا
مَعْذِرَةً إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ 164

(7:164) And recall when a party of them said: 'Why do you admonish a people whom Allah is about to destroy or punish severely?' They said: 'We admonish them in order to be able to offer an excuse before Your Lord, and in the hope that they will guard against disobedience.'

فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ أَنجَيْنَا الَّذِينَ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ السُّوءِ وَأَخَذْنَا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا
بِعَذَابٍ بَئِيسٍ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ 165

(7:165) Then, when they forgot what they had been exhorted, We delivered those who forbade evil and afflicted the wrong-doers with a grievous chastisement[125] because of their evildoing.

125. This shows that the people in that town were of three categories. One, those who flagrantly violated God's commands. Two, those who were silent spectators to such violations and discouraged those who admonished the criminals, pleading that their efforts were fruitless. Three, those who, moved by their religious commitment, actively enjoined good and forbade evil so that the evil-doers might make amends. In so doing, they were prompted by, a sense of duty, to bring back the evil-doers to the right path, and if the latter did not respond to their call, they would at least be able to establish before their Lord that for their part they had fulfilled their duty to admonish the evil-doers. So, when the town was struck by God's punishment, only the people belonging to the last category were spared for they had displayed God-consciousness and performed the duties incumbent upon them. As for the people of the other two categories, they were reckoned as transgressors and were punished in proportion to their crimes.

Some commentators on the Qur'an are of the opinion that whereas the Qur'an specifically, describes the fate of the people belonging to the first and third categories, it is silent about the treatment meted out to the people of the second category. It cannot be said, therefore, with certainty, whether they were spared or punished. It is reported that Ibn 'Abba's initially believed that God's punishment included the second category as well. It is believed that later his disciple Ikramah convinced him that only the people of the second category would be delivered in the same manner as the people of the third category.

A closer study of the Qur'anic account, however, shows that Ibn 'Abba's earlier viewpoint is sound. It is evident that the people of the town would inevitably have been grouped into

two categories on the eve of God's punishment: those who were spared and those who were not. Since the Qur'an states that the people of the third category, had been spared, it may be legitimately assumed that the people belonging to both the first and the second categories were punished. This view is also corroborated by the preceding verse:

Also recall when a party of them said: 'Why do you admonish a people whom Allah is about to destroy or punish severely? They said: 'We admonish them in order to he able to offer an excuse before your Lord, and in the hope that they will guard against disobedience.' (Verse 164).

Thus it clearly emerges from the above discussion that all the people of the place where evil deeds are publicly committed stand guilty, One cannot be absolved merely on the basis that one had not committed any evil. One may be acquitted only, in the event that one made every possible effort to bring about reform and actively worked in the cause of the truth. This constitutes the divine law pertaining to collective evil as is evident from the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith. The Qur'an says:

And guard against the mischief that will not only bring punishment to the wrong-doers among you. Know well that Allah is severe in punishment (Al-Anfal 8: 15).

Explaining the above verse the Prophet (peace be on him) remarked: 'God does not punish the generality of a people for the evil committed by a particular section of that people until they observe others committing evil and do not denounce it even though they are in a position to do so. And when they do that, God punishes all, the evil-doers and the people in general.' (Ahmad b. Hanbal. Musnad, vol. 4, p. 192 - Ed.)

Moreover. the verse in question seems to suggest that God's punishment afflicted the town concerned in two stages. The first stage is referred to as 'grevious chastisement', for in the next stage they were turned into apes. We may, therefore, hold that people belonging to both the first and the second categories were subjected to punishment. But the punishment of transforming the persistent evil-doers into apes was confined only to the people of the second category. (God knows best. If I am right that is from God. If I err, that is from me alone. God is All-Forgiving, All-Merciful.)

فَلَمَّا عَتَوْا عَنْ مَّا نُهُوْا عَنْهُ قُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُوْنُوْا قِرَدَةً خٰسِئِيْنَ 166

(7:166) And when they persisted in pursuing that which had been forbidden We said: 'Become despised apes.'[126]

126. For details see Towards Understanding the Q ur'an, vol. 1, (al-Baqarah 2: n. 83, pp. 81-2),

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكَ لَيَبْعَثَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَن يَسُومُهُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ
لَسَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ ۖ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ 167

(7:167) And recall when Your Lord proclaimed[127] that 'He would continually set in authority over them, till the Day of Judgement, those who would ruthless oppress thern.'[128] Surely, your Lord is swift in chastising; and yet He is All-Forgiving, All-Merciful.

127. The Qur'anic expression 'ta'adhdhana' means almost the same 'he warned; he proclaimed'.

128. Since the 8th century B.C. the Israelites were warned consistently. This is borne out by the contents of the Books of the Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and their successors. Jesus too administered the same warning which is borne out by many of his orations in the New Testament, This was also later confirmed by the Qur'an. History bears out the veracity of the statement made both in the Qur'an and the earlier scriptures. For throughout history, since the time the Jews were warned, they have continually been subjected to abject persecution in one part of the world or another.

وَقَطَّعْنَاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُمَمًا ۖ مِّنْهُمُ الصَّالِحُونَ وَمِنْهُمْ دُونَ ذَٰلِكَ ۖ وَبَلَوْنَاهُم بِالْحَسَنَاتِ
وَالسَّيِّئَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ 168

(7:168) And We dispersed them through the earth in communities - some were righteous, others were not -and We tested them with prosperity and adversity that they may turn back (to righteousness).

فَخَلَفَ مِن بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ وَرِثُوا الْكِتَابَ يَأْخُذُونَ عَرَضَ هَٰذَا الْأَدْنَىٰ وَيَقُولُونَ
سَيُغْفَرُ لَنَا ۚ وَإِن يَأْتِهِمْ عَرَضٌ مِّثْلُهُ يَأْخُذُوهُ ۗ أَلَمْ يُؤْخَذْ عَلَيْهِم مِّيثَاقُ الْكِتَابِ أَن لَّا
يَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ وَدَرَسُوا مَا فِيهِ ۗ وَالدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ ۗ أَفَلَا
تَعْقِلُونَ 169

(7:169) Then others succeeded them who inherited the scriptures, and yet kept themselves occupied in acquiring the goods of this world and kept saying: 'We shall

be forgiven.' And when there comes to them an opportunity for acquiring more of those goods, they seize it.[129] Was not the covenant of the Book taken from them that they would not ascribe to Allah anything but the truth? And they have read what is in the Book[130] and know that the abode of the Hereafter is better for the God-fearing.[131] Do you not understand?

129. The Jews knowingly commit sins in the belief that being God's chosen people they will necessarily be pardoned and spared God's punishment. As a result of this misconception, they neither repent nor refrain from committing sins. How unfortunate the Jews are! They received the Scriptures which could have made them leaders of all mankind. But they were so petty-minded that they aspired to nothing higher than paltry worldly benefits. Thus even though they had the potential of becoming the upholders of justice and righteousness across the world they ended up merely as worshippers of this world.

130. The people of Israel know well that the Torah does not unconditionally assure them salvation. They have never been promised by God or any of His Prophets that they will attain deliverance no matter what they do. Therefore they have absolutely no right to ascribe to God something which He never told them. What makes their crime even worse is that their claim to unconditional salvation constitutes a sacrilege of their covenant with God whereby they pledged never to attribute any false statement to God.

131. The above verse has two renderings. It may be either translated as above or it may be rendered thus: 'For the righteous, only the home in the Hereafter is the best.' Going by the first rendering, the verse means that salvation is not the exclusive privilege of a particular person or a family. It is absolutely out of the question that one will attain deliverance even if one commits sins, simply on account of being a Jew. A little reflection will help one realize that only the righteous and God-fearing will be rewarded in the Hereafter. In the light of the second rendering, only the unrighteous prefer worldly, gains to reward in the Hereafter. As for the righteous, they are conscious of the importance of the Hereafter and hence forego worldly benefits for the sake of reward in the Next World.

وَالَّذِيْنَ يُمَسِّكُوْنَ بِالْكِتٰبِ وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ ؕ اِنَّا لَا نُضِيْعُ اَجْرَ الْمُصْلِحِيْنَ 170

(7:170) Those who hold fast to the Book and establish Prayer - We shall not allow the reward of such righteous men to go to waste.

وَاِذْ نَتَقْنَا الْجَبَلَ فَوْقَهُمْ كَاَنَّهٗ ظُلَّةٌ وَّظَنُّوْۤا اَنَّهٗ وَاقِعٌۢ بِهِمْ ۚ خُذُوْا مَاۤ اٰتَيْنٰكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ

وَّاذْكُرُوْا مَا فِيْهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ ع 171

(7:171) And recall when We shook the mountain over them as though it were a canopy, and they thought that it was going to fall over them; and We said: 'Hold firmly to that which We have given you, and remember what is in it, that you may guard against evil.[132]

132. The allusion here is to the event which took place when Moses proclaimed God's Divine Law at the foot of Mount Sinai.

Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God; and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. And Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. (Exodus 19: 17-18.)

This awesome atmosphere was created by God at the time when He made the people of Israel enter into a covenant with Him in order to impress upon them the gravity of the event and the supreme importance of the covenant. It should not be mistakenly assumed, however, that the people of Israel, who were reluctant to make the covenant, were forced to enter into it. In fact they were all believers and had gone to the Mount merely to make the covenant. The extraordinary conditions which God created were such as to make the Israelites realize that making a covenant with God was not an ordinary matter. They were rather made to feel that they were entering into a covenant with none other than Almighty God and that violating it could spell their disaster.

This concludes the discourse especially addressed to the Israelites. From here on the discourse is directed to all mankind, and particularly to the people whom the Prophet (peace be on him) addressed directly.

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنۢ بَنِىٓ ءَادَمَ مِن ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ
بِرَبِّكُمْ ۖ قَالُوا۟ بَلَىٰ ۛ شَهِدْنَآ ۛ أَن تَقُولُوا۟ يَوْمَ ٱلْقِيَٰمَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَٰذَا غَٰفِلِينَ ١٧٢

(7:172) And recall (O Prophet)[133] when your Lord brought forth descendants from the loins of the sons of Adam, and made them witnesses against their ownselves. asking them: 'Am I not your Lord?' They said: 'Yes, we do testify.' [134]We did so lest you claim on the Day of Resurrection: 'We were unaware of this.'

133. The preceding discourse concluded with the note that God made the Israelites enter into a covenant with their Lord. In the following passages all men are told that a covenant with God is not the exclusive privilege of Israel. In fact all human beings are bound in a covenant with God and a Day will come when they will be made to answer how well they were able to observe that covenant.

134. This event, according to several traditions, took place at the time of the creation of Adam. Apart from the prostration of the angels before Adam and the proclamation that man would be God's vicegerent on earth, all the future progeny of Adam were gathered, and were endowed with both existence and consciousness in order to bear witness to God's lordship. The best interpretation of this event is found in a statement by, 'Ubayy b. Ka'b, who has probably given the substance of what he had heard from the Prophet (peace be on him):

God gathered all human beings, divided them into different groups, granted them human form and the faculty of speech, made them enter into a covenant, and then making them witnesses against themselves He asked them: 'Am I not your Lord?' They replied: 'Assuredly you are Our Lord.' Then God told them: 'I call upon the sky and the earth and your own progenitor, Adam, to be witness against you lest you should say on the Day of Judgement that you were ignorant of this. Know well that no one other than Me deserves to he worshipped and no one other than Me is your Lord. So do not ascribe any partner to Me. I shall send to you My Messengers who will remind you of this covenant which you made with Me. I shall send down to you My Books.' In reply all said: 'We witness that You are Our Lord and our Deity. We have no lord or deity other than You.' (Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 5, p. 135 - Ed.)

This event has also been interpreted by some commentators in a purely allegorical sense. They are of the opinion that the purpose of the Qur'an is merely to emphasize that the acceptance of God's lordship is innate in human nature. However, this was narrated in such a way as to suggest that the event did actually take place. We do not subscribe to this allegorical interpretation of the primordial covenant of man with God. For both the Qur'an and Hadith recount it not only as an actual happening, but also affirm that the covenant would be adduced as an argument against man on the Day of Judgement. There remains, therefore, no ground whatsoever to interpret the event in terms of mere allegory.

In our own view the event did take place. God caused all human beings whom He intended to create until the Last Day to come into existence. He endowed upon them life, consciousness and the faculty of speech, and brought home to them that there is no god or lord besides Him, and that Islam alone is the right way to serve Him.

If someone considers calling all human beings together in one assembly impossible, that shows, more than anything else the woeful paucity of his imagination. For if someone accepts that God has the power to create countless human beings in succession, there is no reason to suppose that He did not have the power to create them all at some given moment prior to the creation of the universe, or that He will be unable to resurrect them all at some given moment in the future. Again, it stands to reason that at a time when God wanted to designate man as His vicegerent on earth after endowing him with reason and understanding, He took from him an oath of allegiance. All this is so reasonable that the actual occurrence of the covenant should not cause any wonder. On the contrary, one should wonder if the event did not take place.

اَوۡ تَقُوۡلُوۡۤا اِنَّمَاۤ اَشۡرَكَ اٰبَآؤُنَا مِنۡ قَبۡلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِّنۡۢ بَعۡدِهِمۡ ۚ اَفَتُهۡلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ

الۡمُبۡطِلُوۡنَ 173

(7:173) Or say: 'Our forefathers before us who associated others with Allah in His divinity; we were merely their offspring who followed them. And would You destroy us for that which the unrighteous did?'[135]

135. The verse describes the purpose of the primordial covenant. The purpose is to make every person responsible for his deeds so that if he rebels against God he will be held fully accountable for that rebelfion. Because of the covenant, no one will be able either to plead for acquittal on grounds of ignorance, or blame his misdeeds on his ancestors. In other words, this primordial covenant has been mentioned as the reason for the inherent awareness in every single person that God is the only Lord and Deity. Thus, none can totally absolve himself of his responsibility on the plea that he was altogether ignorant, or transfer the blame for his error to the corrupt environment in which he was brought up. Now, it can be argued that even if the covenant did take place, no human being remembers its occurrence. No human being is aware that a long time ago, at the time of creation, he had affirmed, in response to God's query, that God indeed was his Lord. This being the case, it can be further argued that no charge can be legitimately brought against man on the ground of a covenant with God which he no longer remembers to have made. In response to this it can be said that had the covenant been made fully in man's conscious memory, it would be meaningless for God to put man to the test in this world. Hence, there can be no denying that the covenant is not preserved in man's conscious memory. But it has doubtlessly been preserved in man's sub-conscious mind. In this respect the primordial covenant is no different from other pieces of knowledge in man's sub-conscious mind. Whatever man has so far achieved in the way of culture and civilization can be attributed to his latent potentialities. All external factors and internal motivations simply account for helping the actualization of those potentialities. Neither education nor training nor environmental factors can bring out anything which is not potentially found in the human mind. Likewise, external factors have no power to root out man's latent potentialities. External factors may, at the most, cause a person to deflect from the course dictated by sound human nature. However, man's sound nature is inclined to resist the pressure of external forces and exert itself in order to find an outlet. As we have said earlier, this is not peculiar to man's religious propensity alone, but is equally true of all his mental potentialities. In this regard the following points are particularly noteworthy:

(1) All man's potentialities exist in the sub-conscious mind and prove their existence when they manifest themselves in the form of human action.

(2) The external manifestation of these potentialities requires external stimuli such as instruction, upbringing. and attitudinal orientation. In other words, our actions consist of the responses of our inherent potentialities to external stimuli.

(3) Man's inner potentialities can be suppressed both by false urges within him as well as external influences by trying to pervert and distort those latent potentialities. The potentialities themselves, however, cannot he totally rooted out.

The same holds true of man's intuitive knowledge regarding his position in the universe and his relationship with his Creator. In this connection the following points should be borne in mind:

(1) That man has always had such intuitive knowledue is evident from the fact that this knowledge has surfaced throughout history in every period and in every part of the world, and which no power has so far been able to extirpate.

(2) That this intuitive knowledge conforms to objective reality, is borne out by, the fact that whenever this knowledge has influenced human life, it has had beneficial results.

(3) That in order to manifest itself in his practical life, man's intuitive knowledge has always required external stimuli. The stimuli have consisted of the advent of the Prophets (peace be on them), the revelation of the Heavenly Books, and the striving of those who have tried to follow them and invite others to do the same. It is for this reason that the Qur'an has been desienated as mudhakkir (the reminder): dhikr (remembrance); tadhkirah (admonition). and the function of the Qur'an has been characterized as tadhkir(reminding). What this suggests is that the Prophets, the Heavenly Books and those who invite people to the truth do not seek to provide human beings with something new, something which exists outside of them. Their task rather consists of bringing to the surface and rejuvenating what is latent, though dormant, in man himself.

Throughout the ages man has always positively responded to this 'Reminder'. This itself is testimony to the fact that it is embodied in a knowledge which has always been recognized by; man's soul.

Forces arising from ignorance and obscurantism, lust and bigotry, and the erroneous teachings and promptings of devils - human as well as jinn - have always attempted to suppress, conceal, and distort the fact that the truth preached by the Prophets is embedded in man's soul. These attempts gave rise to polytheism, atheism, religious misdirection and moral corruption. Despite the combined efforts of the forces of falsehood, however, this knowledge has always had an imprint on the human heart. Hencel, whenever any effort was made to revive that knowledge, it has proved successful.

Doubtlessly those who are bent on denying the truth can resort to a great deal of sophistry in order to deny or at least create doubt and confusion about the existence of this knowledge. However on the Day of Resurrection the Creator will revive in man the memory of the first assembly when man made his covenant with God and accepted Him as his Only Lord. On that occasion God will provide evidence to the effect that the covenant always remained imprinted on man's soul. He will also show how from time to time man tried to suppress his inner voice which urged him to respond to the call of the covenant; how again and again his heart pressed him to affirm the truth; how his intuition induced him to denounce the errors of belief and practice; how the truth ingrained in his soul tried to express itself and respond to those who called to it; and how on each occasion he lulled his inner self to sleep because of his lust and bigotry.

However a Day will come when man will no longer be in a position to put forth specious arguments to justify his false claims. That will be the Day when man will have no option but to confess his error. It will then be impossible for people to say that they were ignorant, or negligent. In the words of the Qur'an: '...and they will bear witness against themselves that they had disbelieved' (al-An'am 6: 130).

وَكَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ 174

(7:174) And thus do We expound the signs[136] that they may turn back (to the right path).[137]

136. 'Signs' here refer to the imprints made by knowledge of the truth on the human heart which help towards cognition of the truth.

137. 'To return' here signifies giving up rebellion, and reverting to obedience to God.

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَاَ الَّذِيْٓ اٰتَيْنٰهُ اٰيٰتِنَا فَانْسَلَخَ مِنْهَا فَاَتْبَعَهُ الشَّيْطٰنُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْغٰوِيْنَ 175

(7:175) And recite to them [O Muhammad] the story of the man to whom We gave Our signs[138] and who turned away from them; then ultimately Satan caught up with him and he was led astray.

138. The words of the text seem to indicate that the person mentioned must indeed be a specific rather than an imaginary figure mentioned for the sake of parable. It may, be borne in mind that God and His Messenger (peace be on him) usually mention evil without specific references to any individual. This is obviously in keeping with their dignity. Only examples of evil are mentioned since those examples are meant for didactic purposes, and this is done without smearing anyone's reputation.

Some commentators on the Qur'an, however, have applied the statement made here to some persons who lived in the time of the Prophet (peace be on him) as well as before him. Some of them mention the name of Bal'am b. Ba'ura', others that of Umayyah b. Abi al-Salt, and still others that of Sayfi b. al-Rahib. (See the comments of Qurtubi on (verses 175 and 176 - Ed.) Nonetheless, in the absence of any authentic information about the identity of the persons under discussion, we might as well consider the description made here to fit a certain type of person.

وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنٰهُ بِهَا وَلٰكِنَّهٗٓ اَخْلَدَ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوٰىهُ ۚ فَمَثَلُهٗ كَمَثَلِ الْكَلْبِ ۚ اِنْ تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثْ اَوْ تَتْرُكْهُ يَلْهَثْ ۭ ذٰلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا ۚ فَاقْصُصِ الْقَصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ 176

(7:176) Now had We so willed We could indeed have exalted him through those signs, but he clung to earthly life and followed his carnal desires. Thus his parable is that of

the dog who lolls out his tongue whether you attack him or leave him alone.[139] Such is the parable of those who reject Our signs as false. Narrate to them these parables that they may reflect.

139. Since the statement here embodies a very significant point, it needs to be carefully examined. The person mentioned in the verse as the representative of the evil type possessed knowledge of God's signs, and hence of the truth. This should have helped him to give up an attitude which he knew to be wrong, and to act in a manner which he knew to be right. Had he followed the truth and acted righteously God would have enabled him to rise to higher levels of humanity. He, however, overly occupied himself with the advantages, pleasures, and embellishments of the worldly life. Instead of resisting worldly temptations, he totally, succumbed to them so much so that he abandoned altogether his lofty spiritual ambitions and became indifferent to the possibilities of intellectual and moral growth. He even brazenly, violated all those limits which, according to his knowledge. should have been observed. Hence when he deliberately turned away from the truth merely because of his moral weakness, he was misled by Satan who is ever ready to beguile and mislead man. Satan continually led him from one act of depravity to another until he landed him in the company of those who are totally under Satan's control and who have lost all capacity for rational judgement.

This is followed by a statement in which God likens the person in question to a dog. A dog's protruding tongue and the unceasing flow of saliva from his mouth symbolize unquenchable greed and avarice. The reason for likening the human character described above to a dog is because of his excessive worldliness. It is known that in several languages of the world it is common to call people overly devoted to worldliness as 'dogs of the world'. For what, after all, is the characteristic of a dog? It is nothing else but greed and avarice. Just look at the dog! As he moves around, he continuously sniffs the earth. Even if a rock is hurled at him he runs at it in the hope that it might be a piece of bone or bread. Before he discovers it to be a rock, he hastens to seize it in his mouth. Even a person's indifference does not deter a dog from waiting expectantly for food - panting for breath, his tongue spread out and drooping, and a whole world from one perspective alone - that of his belly! Even if he discovers a large carcass, he would not be content with his portion of it, but would try to make it exclusively his and would not let any other dog even come close. It seems that if any urge other than appetite tickles him, it is the sexual urge. This metaphor of the dog, highlights the fate of the worldly man who breaks loose from his faith and knowledge, who entrusts his reins to blind lust and who ends up as one wholly devoted to gratifying his own appetite.

سَآءَ مَثَلًا ۟ الْقَوْمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَاَنْفُسَهُمْ كَانُوْا يَظْلِمُوْنَ 177

(7:177) Evil is the example of the people who reject Our signs as false and perpetrate wrong against their own selves.

مَنْ يَّهْدِ اللّٰهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِيْ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ 178

(7:178) He whom Allah guides, he alone is rightly guided; and he whom Allah lets go astray - it is they who are the loser.'

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ ۖ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا ۖ وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ
لَّا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا ۖ وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَّا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ
هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ 179

(7:179) And certainly We have created for Hell many of the jinn and mankind;[140] they have hearts with which they fail to understand; and they have eyes with which they fail to see; and they have ears with which they fail to hear. They are like cattle - indeed, even more astray. Such are utterly heedless.

140. This does not mean that God has created some people for the specific purpose of fuelling Hell. What it does mean is that even though God has bestowed upon men faculties of observation, hearing and reasoning, some people do not use them properly. Thus, because of their own failings, they end up in Hell.

The words employed to give expression to the idea are ones which reflect deep grief and sorrow. This can perhaps be grasped by the occasional outbursts of sorrow by human beings. If a mother is struck by the sudden death of her sons in a war, she is prone to exclaim: 'I had brought up my sons that they might serve as cannon fodder!' Her exclamatory, utterance does not mean that that was the real purpose of the upbringing. What she intends to convey by such an utterance is a strong condemnation of those criminals because of whom all her painful efforts to bring up her sons have gone to waste.

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا ۖ وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ ۚ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا
كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ 180

(7:180) Allah has the most excellent names.[141] So call on Him by His names and shun those who distort them. They shall soon be requited for their deeds.[142]

141. Here the present discourse is nearing its end. Before concluding, people are warned in a style which combines admonition with censure against some basic wrongs. People are here being warrned particularly against denial combined with mockery which they, had adopted towards the teachings of the Prophet (peace be on him).

142. The name of a thing reflects how it is conceptualized. Hence, inappropriate concepts are reflected in inappropriate names, and vice versa. Moreover, the attitude a man adopts towards different things is also based on the concepts he entertains of those things. If a concept about a thing is erroneous, so will be man's relationship with it. On the other hand.

a right concept about a thing will lead to establishing, the right relationship with it. In the same way, as this applies to relationships with worldly objects, so it applies to relationships with God. If a man is mistaken about God - be it about His person or attributes - he will choose false words for God. And the falsity of concepts about God affects man's whole ethical attitude. This is understandable since man's whole ethical attitude is directly related to man's concept of God and God's relationship with the universe and man. It is for this reason that the Qur'an asks man to shun profanity in naming God. Only the most beautiful names befit God, and hence man should invoke Him by them. Any profanity in this respect will lead to evil consequences.

The 'most excellent names' used of God express His greatness and paramountcy, holiness, purity, and the perfection and absoluteness of all His attributes. The opposite trend has been termed ilhad in this verse. The word ilhad literally means 'to veer away from the straight direction'. The word is used, for instance, when an arrow misses the mark and strikes elsewhere. (See Raghib al-Isfahani, al-Mufradat, q.v. ilhad - Ed.) The commitment of ilhad in naming God mentioned in the verse consists of choosing names which are below His majestic dignity and which are inconsistent with the reverence due to Him; names which ascribe evil or defect to God, or reflect false notions about Him. Equally blasphemous is the act of calling some creature by a name which befits God alone, The Qur'anic exhortation in the above verse to 'shun those who distort God's names' implies that if misguided people fail to see reason, the righteous should not engross themselves in unnecessary argumentation with them. For such men will themselves suffer dire consequences.

وَمِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَآ أُمَّةٌ يَّهْدُوْنَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهٖ يَعْدِلُوْنَ ع 181

(7:181) And of those whom We have created there is a party who guide men through the truth and act justly according to it.

وَالَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ صلے 182

(7:182) As for those who reject Our signs as false, We shall lead them, step by step, to their ruin without their even perceiving it.

وَاُمْلِيْ لَهُمْ ۭ قف اِنَّ كَيْدِيْ مَتِيْنٌ 183

(7:183) And (for this purpose) I will grant them respite. My design is incontrovertible.

اَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْا ۭ مَا بِصَاحِبِهِمْ مِّنْ جِنَّةٍ ۭ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ 184

(7:184) Have they not pondered that their companion [i.e. the Prophet Muhammad] is not afflicted with insanity? He is only a plain warner.

أَوَلَمْ يَنْظُرُوا فِي مَلَكُوتِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۙ وَّأَنْ عَسٰى أَنْ
يَّكُونَ قَدِ اقْتَرَبَ أَجَلُهُمْ ۚ فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ 185

(7:185) Have they not observed the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and all that Allah has created[143] and that their term of life might have drawn near[144] After this warning from the Prophet, what will it be that will make them believe?

143. The word 'companion' here refers to the Prophet (peace be on him) who was born, brought up, grew into youth, in short, spent his whole life including his old age in their midst. Before the advent of his prophethood, Muhammad (peace be on him) was known to all the Quraysh as good natured and of sound mind. However, as he started calling people to accept the Message of God, they immediately dubbed him insane. Now it is obvious that they were not attributing insanity to him as regards his pre-prophetic life, for they had nothing evil to say about that period of his life. The charge of insanity, therefore, was levelled against the Message he began to preach when he was designated a Prophet.

The Qur'an, therefore, asks them to give serious thought to the teachings of the Prophet (peace be on him) and to see if there is anything that is inconsistent with sanity, or is meaningless and irrational. Had people reflected on the order of the universe, or carefully considered even one single creation of God, they would have been convinced of the truth of the teachings of the Prophet (peace be on him). They would have realized that whatever he said to refute polytheism, or to establish God's unity or the accountability of man in the Hereafter, or about the necessity of man's surrender to God, was corroborated by the entire order of the universe and every single atom of God's creation.

144. The unbelievers, feeble-minded as they are, fail to understand that no one knows when he will die. For death overtakes man totally unawares. This being the case, what will be the end of those who waste the time at their disposal until death overtakes them and fail to find the direction to their salvation?

مَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهٗ ۭ وَيَذَرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ 186

(7:186) For those whom Allah lets go astray, there is no guide; and He will leave them in their transgression to stumble blindly.

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ اَيَّانَ مُرْسٰىهَا ؕ قُلْ اِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّيْ ۚ لَا يُجَلِّيْهَا لِوَقْتِهَاۤ اِلَّا
هُوَ ؕ ثَقُلَتْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ لَا تَاْتِيْكُمْ اِلَّا بَغْتَةً ؕ يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ كَاَنَّكَ حَفِيٌّ عَنْهَا
قُلْ اِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ 187

(7:187) They ask you concerning the Hour, when will its coming be? Say: 'The knowledge of it is with my Lord alone: none but He will disclose it at its time. That will weigh heavily on the heavens and the earth; and it shall not come to you other than all of a sudden.' They ask you - as if you are eagerly inquisitive about it - concerning it. Say to them: 'The knowledge of it is with none except Allah. But most people are unaware of this reality.'

قُلْ لَّاۤ اَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِيْ نَفْعًا وَّلَا ضَرًّا اِلَّا مَا شَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَلَوْ كُنْتُ اَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ
لَاسْتَكْثَرْتُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ ۛۚ وَمَا مَسَّنِيَ السُّوْٓءُ ۛؕ اِنْ اَنَا اِلَّا نَذِيْرٌ وَّبَشِيْرٌ لِّقَوْمٍ
يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ع 188

(7:188) Tell them [O Muhammad]: 'I have no power to benefit or harm myself except as Allah may please. And had I knowledge of the unseen, I should have amassed all kinds of good, and no evil would have ever touched me.[145] I am merely a warner and the herald of glad tidings to those who have faith.'

145. The time of the advent of the Last Day is known to God alone Who knows the Unseen which, in fact, is not known even to the Prophet (peace be on him). Being human, he is not aware what the morrow has in store for him and his family. Had his knowledge encompassed everything - even things that lie beyond the ken of sense-perception and events that lie hidden in the future - he would have accumulated immense benefit and would have been able to avoid a great deal of loss owing to such foreknowledge. That being the case, it is sheer naivety to ask the Prophet about the actual time for the advent of the Last Day.

هُوَ الَّذِیۡ خَلَقَکُمۡ مِّنۡ نَّفۡسٍ وَّاحِدَۃٍ وَّجَعَلَ مِنۡہَا زَوۡجَہَا لِیَسۡکُنَ اِلَیۡہَا ۚ فَلَمَّا تَغَشّٰىہَا
حَمَلَتۡ حَمۡلًا خَفِیۡفًا فَمَرَّتۡ بِہٖ ۚ فَلَمَّاۤ اَثۡقَلَتۡ دَّعَوَا اللّٰہَ رَبَّہُمَا لَئِنۡ اٰتَیۡتَنَا صَالِحًا
لَّنَکُوۡنَنَّ مِنَ الشّٰکِرِیۡنَ 189

(7:189) It is He - Allah -Who created you from a single being, and out of it He made its mate, that he may find comfort in her. And when he covers her, she bears a light burden and goes about with it. Then, when she grows heavy, they pray to their Lord: 'If You bestow upon us a healthy child, we will surely give thanks.'

فَلَمَّاۤ اٰتٰىہُمَا صَالِحًا جَعَلَا لَہٗ شُرَکَآءَ فِیۡمَاۤ اٰتٰىہُمَا ۚ فَتَعٰلَی اللّٰہُ عَمَّا یُشۡرِکُوۡنَ 190

(7:190) But when He vouchsafes them a healthy child, they attribute to Him partners regarding what Allah had bestowed upon them. Subliminally exalted is Allah above that which they associate with Him.[146]

146. The present and succeeding (verses 190-8) seek to refute polytheism. These verses are devoted to highlighting the implications of the postulate which even the polytheists affirmed - that it is God Who originally created the human species. They also acknowledge that every human being owes his existence to God. God also holds absolute power over the entire process leading to man's birth, right from the fertilization of the ovurn in the uterus to its onward development in the form of a living being, then investing it with numerous faculties and ensuring its birth as a sound, healthy baby. No one has the power to prevent God, if He so willed, from causing a wornan to give birth to an animal or to odd creature, or to a physically or mentally handicapped baby. This fact is also equally acknowledged by monotheists and polytheists. It is for this reason that in the final stage of pregnancy, people are inclined to turn to God and pray for the birth of a sound and healthy baby.

It is, however, the very, height of man's ignorance and folly that after a sound and healthy baby has been born as a result of God's will, man makes offerings at the altars of false gods, goddesses, or saints. Occasionally the names given to the child (e.g., 'abd al-Rasul, 'abd al-'Uzza, 'abd Shams, etc.) also indicate that man feels grateful to others than God and regardsthe child as a gift either of sorne Prophet, some noted Companion of the Prophet (peace be on him), or some other noted personality such as his spiritual mentor rather than a gift from God.

There has been some misunderstanding with regard to the point emphasized here. This misunderstanding has been further reinforced by traditions of doubtful authenticity. The Qur'an mentions that human being's are created from a single person, and obviously here that person means Adam (peace be on him). Now this reference to one person is soon followed by reference to his spouse, and that both prayed to God for the birth of a sound and healthy baby. And when that prayer was accepted, the couple are mentioned as having

associated others with God in the granting of His favour.

The misunderstanding consists in considering this couple, who fell prey to polytheism, to be Adam and Eve. People resorted to unauthentic traditions to explain the above verse and the story which thus gained acceptance was the following. It was claimed that Eve suffered several mishaps since her offspring would die after birth. Satan seized this opportunity to mislead her into naming her baby Abd al-Harith (the slave of Satan). (See the comments of Ibn Kathir on verse 190. Cf. Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 5, p. 11 - Ed.) What is most shocking is that some of these unsubstantiated traditions have been ascribed to the Prophet (peace be on him). The fact, however, is that the above account does not have even an iota of truth. Nor is it, in any way, corroborated by the Qur'an itself. The only point brought home by the Qur'an is that it is God alone, to the total exclusion of every one else, Who brought the first human couple into being. And again it is God alone Who causes the birth of each baby born out of the intercourse between a man and a woman. The Qur'an also points out that the of this truth is innate in human nature which is evident from the fact that in states of distress and crisis man turns prayerfully to God alone. Ironically, however, after God blesses those prayers with acceptance, a number of people associate others with God in His divinity. The fact is that the present verses do not refer to any particular man and woman. The allusion is in fact to every man and woman enmeshed in polytheism.

Here another point deserves attention. These verses condemn the Arabian polytheists on account of the fact that when God granted them sound children in response to their prayers they associated others with God in offering thanks. But what is the situation of many Muslims of today who strongly believe in the unity of God? Their situation seems even worse. It is not uncommon for them to ask others than God to grant children. They, make vows during pregnancy to others than God, and make offerings to others than God after child-birth. Yet they are satisfied that they have a full guarantee of Paradise since they are believers in the One True God whereas the Arabian polytheists would inevitably be consigned to Hell. It is only the doctrinal errors of the pre-Islamic Arabian polytheists which may be condemned. The doctrinal errors of Muslims are beyond all criticism and censure.

191 اَيُشْرِكُوْنَ مَا لَا يَخْلُقُ شَيْـًٔا وَّهُمْ يُخْلَقُوْنَ ۖ صلے

(7:191) Do they associate (with Allah in His divinity) those who can create nothing; rather, they are themselves created?

192 وَلَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ لَهُمْ نَصْرًا وَّلَآ اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَنْصُرُوْنَ

(7:192) They have no power to help others. nor can they help themselves.

وَاِنۡ تَدۡعُوۡهُمۡ اِلَى الۡهُدٰى لَا يَتَّبِعُوۡكُمۡ ؕ سَوَآءٌ عَلَيۡكُمۡ اَدَعَوۡتُمُوۡهُمۡ اَمۡ اَنۡتُمۡ

صٰمِتُوۡنَ 193

(7:193) And if you call them to true guidance, they will not follow you. It is all the same for you whether you call them to true guidance or keep silent. [147]

147. As to the false gods set up by the polytheists, what is the extent of their power? Not only, do they not have the power to guide others, they do not even have the power to follow others or even to answer the call of their devotees.

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ تَدۡعُوۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ عِبَادٌ اَمۡثَالُكُمۡ فَادۡعُوۡهُمۡ فَلۡيَسۡتَجِيۡبُوۡا لَكُمۡ اِنۡ

كُنۡتُمۡ صٰدِقِيۡنَ 194

(7:194) Those whom you invoke other than Allah are creatures like you. So invoke them. and see if they answer your call, if what you claim is true.

اَلَهُمۡ اَرۡجُلٌ يَّمۡشُوۡنَ بِهَاۤ اَمۡ لَهُمۡ اَيۡدٍ يَّبۡطِشُوۡنَ بِهَاۤ اَمۡ لَهُمۡ اَعۡيُنٌ يُّبۡصِرُوۡنَ بِهَاۤ اَمۡ

لَهُمۡ اٰذَانٌ يَّسۡمَعُوۡنَ بِهَا ؕ قُلِ ادۡعُوۡا شُرَكَآءَكُمۡ ثُمَّ كِيۡدُوۡنِ فَلَا تُنۡظِرُوۡنِ 195

(7:195) Have they feet on which they can walk? Have they hands with which they can grasp? Have they eyes with which they can see? Have they ears with which they can hear?[148] Say [O Muhammad]: 'Invoke all those to whom you ascribe a share in Allah's divinity, then scheme against me and grant me no respite.

148. Polytheistic religions seem to have three characteristics: (1) idols and images that are held as objects of worship; (2) some persons and spirits that are considered deities represented in the form of idols and images, etc.; and (3) certain beliefs which underlie their polytheistic rites. The Qur'an denounces all these. At this place, however, the attack is directed against the objects to which the polytheists directed their worship.

اِنَّ وَلِيِّىَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِىۡ نَزَّلَ الۡكِتٰبَ ۖ وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصّٰلِحِيۡنَ 196

(7:196) My guardian is Allah Who has revealed the Book, and it is He Who protects the righteous.[149]

149. This is in response to the threats held out by the polytheists to the Prophet (peace he on him). They used to tell the Prophet (peace be on him) that if he did not give up opposing

their deities and denouncing them, he would be overwhelmed by the wrath of those deities and court utter disaster.

وَالَّذِيْنَ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ لَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ نَصْرَكُمْ وَلَآ اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَنْصُرُوْنَ 197

(7:197) And those whom you invoke other than Allah, they can neither help themselves nor you.

وَاِنْ تَدْعُوْهُمْ اِلَى الْهُدٰى لَا يَسْمَعُوْا ؕ وَتَرٰىهُمْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُوْنَ 198

(7:198) And if you were to call them to true guidance, they will not hear; and you observe them looking at you whereas they have no power to see.'

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَاْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَاَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ 199

(7:199) [O Prophet!] Show forgiveness, enjoin equity, and avoid the ignorant.

وَاِمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ 200

(7:200) And if it happens that a prompting from Satan should stir you up, seek refuge with Allah. He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا اِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طٰٓئِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ تَذَكَّرُوْا فَاِذَا هُمْ مُّبْصِرُوْنَ ۚ 201

(7:201) If the God-fearing are instigated by any suggestion of Satan, they instantly become alert, whereafter they clearly perceive the right way.

وَاِخْوَانُهُمْ يَمُدُّوْنَهُمْ فِى الْغَيِّ ثُمَّ لَا يُقْصِرُوْنَ 202

(7:202) As for their brethren [the Satans][149a], they draw them deeper into error and do not relax in their efforts.[150]

149a. That is, "Those who are under the influence of Satans".

150. Here some important directives are addressed to the Prophet (peace be on him) regarding how he should preach the Message of Islam and how he should guide and reform people. The object of these directives is not merely to instruct the Prophet (peace be on him), but also to instruct all those who would shoulder the same responsibility after the Prophet (peace be on him) was no longer amidst them. The major directives are as follows:

(1) The most important qualities that must be cultivated by anyone who calls others to the truth are tenderness, magnanimity, and forbearing. Such a person should also have the capacity to tolerate the lapses of his companions and to patiently endure the excesses of his opponents. He should also be able to keep his cool in the face of grave provocation and gracefully connive at the offensive behaviour of others. In facing the angry words, slander, persecution and mischief of his opponents, he should exercise the utmost self-restraint. Harshness, severity, bitterness. and vindictive provocativeness on his part are bound to undermine his mission. The same point seems to have been made in a Hadith in which the Prophet (peace be on him) says that he has been commanded by his Lord: '...to say the just word whether I am angry, or pleased; to maintain ties with nim who severs ties with me; and to give to him who denies me (my right); and to forgive him who wrongs me.' (See the comments of Qurtubi in his Tafsir on the verse - Ed.) The Prophet (peace be on him) also instructed all those whom he deputized for preaching: 'Give good news rather than arouse revulsion: make things easy rather than hard.' (Muslim, Kitab al-Ilm, Bab fi al-amr bi al-Taysir wa Tark al-Ta'sir'- Ed.) This distinguishing feature of the Prophet's personality has also been mentioned in the Qur'an.

It was thanks to Allah's mercy that you were gentle to them. Had you been rough, hard-hearted, they would surely have scattered away, from you (AI 'Imran 3:159).

(2) The second key to the success in da'wah work is to stay away from excessive theorizing and intellectual hair-splitting. One should rather call people in clear and simple terms to those virtues which are recognized as such by the generality of mankind and appeal to common sense. The great advantage of this method is that the Message of Islam finds its way right to the hearts of people at all levels of understanding. Those who then seek to oppose the Message are soon exposed and end up antagonizing the common people. For when the common people obserse on the one hand decent and righteous people being opposed for the simple reason that they are inviting people to universally-known virtues, and on the other hand observe those opponents resorting to all kinds of immoral and inhuman means, they are bound to incline to support the standard bearers of truth and righteousness. This process goes on until a point where the only opponents left are those whose self-interest is inextricably linked with the prevailing unrighteous system, or those's who have been totally blinded by their bigoted adherence to ancestral tradition or by their irrational biases.

The wisdom underlying the Prophet's method accounts for his phenomenal success and for the speedy spread of Islam in and around Arabia within a short span of time. People flocked to Islam in vast numbers so much so that in some lands eighty and ninety per cent of the population embraced Islam. In fact there are even instances of a hundred per cent of the population embracing Islam.

(3) The interest of the Islamic mission requires, on the one hand, that righteousness should be enjoined on those who have the propensity to become righteous. On the other hand, it also requires that those who are overly insistent in their adherence to falsehood, should be left alone, and that their acts of provocation be ignored. Those who seek to spread Islam should confine their efforts to persuading only those who are prepared to consider the

reasonable manner. When someone becomes altogether unreasonable and quarrelsome, and resorts to indecent methods of taunting and reviling Islam, Muslims should simply refuse to become adversative. For all the time and effort devoted to reforming such people will be totally wasted.

(4) The moment the proponent of the Islamic Message feels that he is being provoked by the excesses, mischief, and uncalled-for objections and accusation, he should realize that he is being influenced by Satan. In such a situation he should immediately seek refuge with God, and restrain himself lest his impulsiveness damage his cause. The cause of Islam can be served only by those who act cool-headedly. Only those steps are appropriate which have been taken after due consideration rather than under the influence of impulse and emotion. Satan, however, is ever on the look-out for opportunities to sabotage the efforts made in the cause of Islam. He, therefore, ensures that those who are working for the Islamic cause are subjected to unjust and mischievous attacks from their opponents. The purpose underlying this is to provoke the workers for the cause of Islam to engage in the senseless and harmful task of mounting counter-attacks against their opponents.

The appeal that Satan makes to those well-meaning, religious people is often couched in religious phraseology and is backed up by religious argument. But the fact is that those counter-attacks are undertaken merely under the impulse of man's lower self. The last two verses, therefore, make it clear that those who are God-fearing are always very sensitive to provocations under the impulse of Satan, and as soon as they become aware of such a provocation, they promote the best interests of the cause of truth rather than satisfy their vengeful feelings. As for those who are driven by egotistical impulses, they succumb to the promptings of Satan and are eventually set on an erroneous path. They fall victim to Satan, act virtually as his puppet, and subsequently their degradation knows no limit. They pay their opponents back in the same coin, tit for tat.

What has been said above also has another import. It seeks to remind the God-fearing that their ways should be perceptibly different from the ways of those who do not fear God. The God-fearing not only avoid evil, but the very idea of committing it pricks their conscience and rankles their hearts. They have an instinctive revulsion against evil, a revulsion similar to what a cleanliness-loving man feels at the sight of a big stain or a splash of filth on his clothes. This feeling causes the God-fearing to remove every stain of evil. Quite contrary are those who have no fear of God, who have no desire to stay away from evil and who are in harmony with the ways of Satan. Such people are always given to evil thoughts and wrong-doing.

وَإِذَا لَمْ تَأْتِهِم بِآيَةٍ قَالُوا لَوْلَا اجْتَبَيْتَهَا ۚ قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَتَّبِعُ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ مِن رَّبِّي ۚ هَٰذَا
بَصَائِرُ مِن رَّبِّكُمْ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ 203

(7:203) [O Prophet!] When you do not produce before them any miracle, they say: 'Why do you not choose for yourself a miracle?'[151] Say to them: 'I follow only what is revealed to me by my Lord. This is nothing but a means of insight into the truth, and guidance and mercy from your Lord to the people who believe.[152]

151. This question is a taunt rather than a simple query. What the utterance implies is that if the claim to prophethood is genuine, it should have been supported by some miracle. The next verse contains a fitting rejoinder to the taunt.

152. The Prophet (peace be on him) is being made to tell his opponents in clear terms that he has no power to get whatever he wants. Being God's Messenger, he is required to follow the directives of the One Who has sent him and has granted him the Qur'an which has the light of guidance. The major characteristic of this Book is that those who seek guidance from it do indeed find the right way. The moral excellence visible in the lives of those people who accept the Qur'an is testimony to the fact that they have been blessed with God's mercy.

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ 204

(7:204) So when the Qur'an is recited, listen carefully to it, and keep silent so that you may, be shown mercy.'[153]

153. The unbelievers are asked to shed their prejudice and to abandon their deliberate indifference to the Qur'an. Whenever the Qur'an is recited to them, they stuff their fingers into their ears and make a lot of noise lest they or any others hear the Qur'an. They should better behave more maturely and make an effort to grasp the teachings of the Qur'an. It is quite likely that their study, of the Book would ultimately make them share with Muslims the blessings of the Qur'an. This is an excellent, subtle and heart-winning approach which simply cannot be over-praised. Those who are interested in learning the art of effective preaching can benefit immensely by, pondering over this Qur'anic verse.

The main purpose of the verse has also been explained. By implication, however, the verse also enjoins people to be silent and to listen attentively to the Qur'an when it is being recited. The verse also provides the basis of the rule that when the leader (imam) is reciting verses of the Qur'an in Prayer, the followers in the congregation should (refrain from reciting and) listen to the recitation in silence. There is some disagreement among scholars on this issue. Abu Hanifah and his disciples are of the view that the followers in the congregation should remain silent, irrespective of whether the the imam is reciting the Qur'an aloud or silently in his mind. On the other hand, Malik and Ahmad b. Hanbal are of the opinion that the followers in the congregation should listen silently only when the Qur'an is being recited aloud. According to Shafi'i, the followers in the congrega tion should also recite the Qur'an regardless of whether the imam is reciting the Qur'an aloud or silently'. His view is based on

the Hadith that Prayer without recitation of al-Fatihah is void. (See Ibn Rushd, Bidayat al-Mujtahid, vol. 1, pp. 149-50; Ibn Qudamah, al-Mughni, vol. 1, pp. 562-9 - Ed.)

وَاذْكُرْ رَّبَّكَ فِيْ نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعًا وَّخِيْفَةً وَّدُوْنَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْاٰصَالِ وَلَا تَكُنْ مِّنَ الْغٰفِلِيْنَ 205

(7:205) And remember [O Prophet] your Lord in your mind, with humility and fear, and without raising your voice; remember Him in the morning and evening, and do not become of those who are negligent.[154]

154. The command to remember the Lord signifies remembrance in Prayer as well as otherwise, be it verbally or in one's mind. Again the directive to remember God in the morning and in the evening refers to Prayer at those times as well as remembering God at all times. The purpose of so saying is to emphasis constant remembrance of God. This admonition - that man ought to remember God always - constitutes the conclusion of the discourse lest man becomes heedless of God. For every error and corruption stems from the fact that man tends to forget that God is his Lord and that in his own part he is merely, a servant of God who is being tested in the world; that he will be made to render, after his death, a full account to his Lord of all his deeds. All those who care to follow, righteousness would, therefore, be ill-advised not to let these basic facts slip out of their minds. Hence Prayer, remembrance of God and keeping ones attention ever focused on God are frequently stressed in the Qur'an.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهٖ وَيُسَبِّحُوْنَهٗ وَلَهٗ يَسْجُدُوْنَ ۩ ع 206

(7:206) [The angels] who are near to Your Lord, never turn away from His service out of arrogance;[155] they rather glorify Him[156] and prostrate themselves before Him.[157]

155. It is Satan who behaves arrogantly and disdains to worship God, and such an attitude naturally brings about degradation and abasement. But an attitude marked by consistent surrender to God characterizes angels and leads people to spiritual elevation and proximity to God. Those interested in attaining this state should emulate the angels and refrain from following the ways of Satan.

156. To celebrate God's praise signifies that the angels acknowledge and constantly affirm that God is beyond any flaw, free from every defect, error and weakness; that He has no partner or peer; that none is like Him.

157. Whoever recites or hears this verse should fall in prostration so as to emulate the practice of angels. In addition. prostration also proves that one has no shred of pride, nor is one averse to the duty of being subservient to God.

In all, there are fourteen verses in the Qur'an the recitation of which requires one to prostrate. That one should prostrate on reading or hearing these verses is, in principle, an incontrovertible point. There is, however, some disagreement about it being obligatory (wajib). Abu Hanifah regards it as obligatory, while other authorities consider it to be recommended (Ibn Qudamah, Al-Mughni, vol. 1. p. 663; Al-Jaziri, Kitab al-Fiqh 'ala al Madhahib al-arba'ah, vol. 1. p. 464 - Ed.) According to traditions, while reciting the Qur'an in large gatherings, when the Prophet (peace be on him) came upon a verse the recitation of which calls for prostration, he prostrated, and the whole gathering followed suit. The traditions mention that sometimes some people did not have room to prostrate. Such people prostrated on the backs of others. (See Bukhari, Abwab sujud al-Quran 'Bab Izdiham al-Nas Idh'a qara'a al-Imam al-Sajdah'- Ed.) It is reported in connection with the conquest of Makka that in the course of the Qur'an-recitation, as the Prophet (peace be on him) read such a verse, those standing fell into prostration while those who were mounted on horses and camels performed prostration in that very state. It is also on record that while delivering a sermon from the pulpit the Prophet (peace be on him) came down from the pulpit to offer prostration, and resumed his sermon thereafter. (Abu da'ud, Kitab al-Salah, 'Bab al-Sujud fi Sad' - Ed.)

It is generally, believed that the conditions for this kind of prostration are exactly the same as required for offering Prayer - that one should be in a state of ritual purity, that one should be facing the Ka'bah, and that the prostration should be performed as in the state of Prayer. However, the traditions we have been able to find in the relevant sections of the Hadith collection do not specifically mention these conditions. It thus appears that one may perform prostration, irrespective of whether one fulfils these conditions or not. This view is corroborated by the practice of some of the early authorities. Bukhari, for instance, reports about 'Abd Allah b. 'Urnar that he used to perform prostration even though he would have required ablution if he wanted to perform Prayer. (See Bukhari, Abwab Sujud al-Quran, 'Bab Sujud al-Muslimin ma' al-Mushrikin'- Ed.) Likewise, it has been mentioned in Fath al-Bari about 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami that if he was reciting the Qur'an while moving, and he recited a verse calling for prostration, he would simply bow his head (rather than make full prostration). And he would do that even when he was required to make ablution for Prayer, and regardless of whether he was facing the Ka'bah or not.

In our view, therefore, while it is preferable to follow the general opinion of the scholars on the question, it would not be blameworthy if someone deviates from that opinion. The reason for this is that the general opinion of the scholars on this question is not supported by well-established Sunnah, and there are instances of deviation from it on the part of the early authorities.

8. Surah Al Anfal (The Spoils of War)

Name

The Surah takes its name Al-Anfal (The Bounties) from the first verse.

The Period of Revelation

It was revealed in 2 A. H. after the Battle of Badr, the first battle between Islam and kufr. As it contains a detailed and comprehensive review of the Battle, it appears that most probably it was revealed at one and the same time. But it is also possible that some of the verses concerning the problems arising as a result of this Battle might have been revealed later and incorporated at the proper places to make it a continuous whole. At any rate, in the whole Surah there is nothing that might show that it is a collection of a couple of discourses, that have been patched up together.

Historical Background

Before reviewing the Surah, it is worthwhile to consider the events that led to the Battle of Badr.

During the first decade or so of the Prophethood at Makkah, the Message had proved its firmness, and stability. This was the result of two things. First, the Messenger, who possessed the highest qualities of character, was performing his Mission with wisdom, foresight and magnanimity. He had shown by his conduct that he had made up his mind to carry the movement to a successful end and, therefore, was ready to face all sorts of dangers and obstacles in the way. Secondly, the Message was so charming that it attracted the minds and hearts of the people irresistibly towards itself. So much so that all obstacles of ignorance, superstition and petty prejudices failed to check, its advance. That is why the Arab upholders of the ways of "ignorance,' who looked down upon it in its initial stages, had' begun to reckon it as a serious menace during the last period of the stay of the Holy Prophet at Makkah, and were bent on crushing it with all the force at their command. But in spite of the above-mentioned strength, the movement still lacked certain things to lead it to victory:-

First, it had not yet been fully proved that it had gathered round it a sufficient number of such followers who not only believed in its truth, but also had such an intense devotion to its principles that they were ready to expend all their energies and all that they possessed in the struggle for its success and establishment. So much so that they were ready to sacrifice their lives in the fight against the whole world itself even though they should be their own nearest relative. It is true that the followers of Islam had endured the severest persecutions at the hands of the Quraish of Makkah and had given a good proof of the firmness of their faith and their strong relation with Islam, yet further trials were required to show that Islam had succeeded in acquiring such a band of followers which considered nothing dearer than its ideal and was ready to sacrifice life for it.

Secondly, though the voice of Islam had reached' every part of the country, its effects were yet scattered and its acquired strength was spread here and there: it had not yet gathered sufficient force essential for a decisive conflict with the old established order of "ignorance".

Thirdly, Islam had yet no home of its own and had not established itself firmly anywhere in the land where it could consolidate its power and make it a base for further action. For the Muslims were scattered all over the country and were living among the unbelievers as aliens whom their bloodthirsty enemies wanted to uproot from their own homes.

Fourthly, the Muslims had not yet had an opportunity to demonstrate practically the blessings of the system of life based on Islam. There was neither any Islamic culture, nor any social, economic or political system; nor were there any established principles of war and peace for their guidance. Therefore the Muslims had no opportunity for demonstrating those moral principles on which they intended to build their entire system of life; nor had it been proved on the touchstone of trial that the Muslims as a community were sincere in their proclamation of the Message.

Allah created opportunities for making up these deficiencies.

During the last four years or so of the Prophet's stay at Makkah, the voice of Islam had been proving effective at Yathrab and the people for various reasons had been accepting the message more readily than other clans of Arabia. So much so that in the twelfth year of Prophethood on the occasion of Haj a deputation of 75 people met the Holy Prophet in the darkness of night. These people not only accepted Islam, but also offered to give him and his followers a home. As this was a most epoch making opportunity provided by Allah, the Holy Prophet took advantage of it.

The significance of this offer was quite clear to the people of Yathrab, and they fully realized that this was not an invitation to a mere fugitive, but to the Messenger of Allah so that he should become their leader and ruler. Likewise they knew that they were not inviting the Muslim refugees to give them shelter from persecution but to assemble them from all over the country for their integration with themselves to form an organized community. Thus the offer of the people of Yathrab was to make Yathrab the "City of Islam." Accordingly the Holy Prophet accepted their invitation and made it the first "City of Islam" in Arabia.

And the people of Yathrab were fully aware of the implications of this offer. It was indeed a declaration of war against the whole of Arabia, and an invitation to their own social and economic boycott as well. And when the Ansar from Yathrab declared their allegiance to the Holy Prophet at Aqabah, they knew fully well its consequences. During the course of the formal declaration of allegiance, Asad-bin- Zurarah, the youngest of all the delegates from Yathrab, stood up and said, "0 people of Yathrab! Just listen to me and consider the matter carefully in all its aspects. Though we have come to him, regarding him only as a Messenger of Allah, we should know that we shall be inviting the enmity of the whole of Arabia. For when we take him away to Yathrab, we shall be attacked and our children may be put to the sword. Therefore if you have the courage in your hearts to face it, then and then only, you should declare your allegiance to him and Allah will give you its reward. But if you love your lives more than him and his Message, then leave this matter and frankly excuse yourselves, for at this time Allah may accept your excuses."

Abbas bin Ubadah bin Naalah, another member of the delegation, reiterated the same thing, saying,

Do you understand the implication of the declaration of your allegiance to this person?" (Voices, "Yes, we know it.") "You are challenging the whole world to war by your declaration of allegiance to him. There is every likelihood of a serious menace to your lives and properties. Therefore consider it well. If you have any idea lurking in your minds that you will then hand him over to his enemies, it is much better to leave him alone now, because that conduct shall bring shame and disgrace to you in this world and the next. On the other hand, if you have sincerely resolved that you will endure all kinds of consequences that will follow as a result of this invitation, then it would be the best thing to take the oath of allegiance to him because, by God, this will surely bring good to you in this world as well as in the next world."

At this all the members of the delegation cried with one voice, "We are ready and prepared to risk all our wealth and our noble kith and kin for his sake."

It was then that the famous oath of allegiance, which is known as the "Second Oath of Allegiance at Aqabah" was taken.

On the other side, the people of Makkah also understood fully well the implications of this matter from their own point of view. They realized that Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him), who, they knew well, had a great personality and possessed extraordinary abilities, was going to gain a strong footing, by this allegiance. For this would help integrate his followers, whose constancy, determination, and unwavering fidelity to the Messenger had been tried, into a disciplined community under his wise leadership and guidance. And they knew that this would spell death for their old ways of life. They also realized the strategic importance of. Al-Madinah to their trade, which was their chief means of livelihood.

Its geographical position was such that the Muslims could strike with advantage at the caravans traveling on the trade route between Yemen and Syria, and thus strike at the root of their economy and that of other pagan clans very effectively. The value of the trade done by the people of Makkah alone on this route, not to count that of Taif and other places, amounted to about two hundred thousand dinars annually.

As the Quraish were fully aware of the implications of the oath of allegiance at Aqabah, they were greatly perturbed when they got wind of it the same night. At first they tried to win over the people of Al-Madinah to their side. But when they saw that the Muslims were migrating to Al- Madinah in small groups, they realized that the Holy Prophet was also going to emigrate soon from there. Then they decided to adopt an extreme measure to prevent this danger.

A few days before his migration, the Quraish held a council to consider the matter. After a good deal of argument; they decided that one person should be taken from each of the families of Quraish other than that of Banu Hashim to put an end to the life of the Holy Prophet. This was to make it difficult for the family of the Holy Prophet to fight alone with all the other families of the Quraish and thus to force them to accept blood-money for his murder-instead of taking revenge from them, but by the grace of Allah their plot against the life of the Holy Prophet failed because of his admirable foresight and full trust in Allah, and he reached Al- Madinah safe and sound. When they could not prevent his emigration, it occurred to them to exploit Abdullah bin Ub`ai who had begun to cherish a grievance

against the Holy Prophet since his arrival at Al-Madinah. He was an influential chief of Al-Madinah and the people had agreed to make him their king. But when the majority of Aus and Khazraj clan became Muslims and acknowledged the Holy Prophet as their leader, guide and ruler, all his hopes of becoming a king came to an end. Therefore the Quraish wrote to him, "As you have given shelter to our enemy, we tell you plainly that you should either fight with him yourself or exile him from your city otherwise we swear by God that we will invade your city, kill your males and make your females our slave girls." This letter added fuel to the flames of his jealousy and he was inclined to do some mischief, but the Holy Prophet took timely precautions and defeated his evil designs.

The Quraish got another opportunity to hold out a threat. When Sa'ad bin Mu'az, another chief of Al-Madinah, went to Makkah to perform `Umrah, Abu Jahl interrupted him at the very door of the Kabah, saying, "Do you think we will let you perform `Umrah in peace while you give shelter and help to renegades from us? Had you not been a guest of Ummayyah bin Khalf, you would not have gone alive from here." Sa'ad replied, "By Allah, if you prevent me from this, I will retaliate in a worse manner and block your route near Al-Madinah." This incident virtually led to a declaration from the people of Makkah that they would prevent the Muslims from a pilgrimage to the Kabah, and from the people of Al-Madinah that as a retaliation they would block their trade route to Syria against the opponents of Islam. As a matter of fact there was no other alternative for the Muslims than to keep a strong hold on this route so as to force the Quraish, and the other clans, whose interests were vitally bound with this route, to reconsider their inimical and antagonistic attitude towards them. That is why the Holy Prophet attached the greatest importance to this problem. As soon as he was free from making the preliminary arrangements for organizing the newly formed Muslim Community and settling peace terms with the neighboring Jewish habitations, he adopted two measures in this connection:-

First, he entered into negotiations with those clans who lived between the Red Sea and this route so as to make alliances with them or at east to persuade them to make treaties of neutrality with the Muslims. He was successful in this, and he entered into a treaty of non-alignment with Juhainah, which was a very important clan of the hilly tract near the sea coast. Then, at the end of the first year of Hijrah, he made a treaty of defensive alliance with Bani Damrah, who lived near Yanb'u and Zawal Ushairah. In 2 A. H. Bani Mudlij also joined the alliance, as they were the neighbors and allies of Bani Damrah. Then ii so happened that quite a large number of these people were converted to Islam as a result of the missionary work done by the Muslims.

Secondly, he successively sent small bands of his men on this route to serve as a warning to the Quraish, and himself accompanied some of them. In the first year of Hijrah, four expeditions were sent there, that is, the expedition under Hamzah, the expedition under Ubaidah bin Harith, the expedition under Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqas and the Al-Abwa' expedition under the Holy Prophet himself. In the first month of the second year two more incursions were made on the same route. These are known as Buwat Expedition and Zawal Ushairah Expedition. Two things about all these expeditions are noteworthy. First, no blood was shed and no caravans were plundered in any of these expeditions. This proves that the real object of these expeditions was to show to the Quraish which way the wind was blowing. Secondly, not a single man from the people of Al-Madinah was sent by the Holy. Prophet on any of these incursions. All the bands consisted purely of the immigrants from

Makkah so that the conflict should remain between the people of the Quraish themselves and should not further spread by the involvement of other clans. On the other side, the Quraish of Makkah tried to involve others also in the conflict. When they sent bands towards Al-Madinah, they did not hesitate to plunder the people. For instance, an expedition under the leadership of Kurz bin Jabir al-Fihrl plundered the cattle of the people of Al-Madinah from the very vicinity of the city to show what their real intentions were.

This was the state of affairs when, in Sha'aban, 2 A. H. (February or March, 623 A. D.) a big trade caravan of the Quraish, carrying goods worth $50,000 or so, with only a guard of thirty to forty men, on its way back from Syria to Makkah, reached the territory from where it could be easily attacked from Al-Madinah. As the caravan was carrying trade goods worth thousands of pounds, and was scantily guarded, naturally Abu Sufyan, who was in charge of it, from his Past experience feared an attach from the Muslims. Accordingly, as soon as he entered the dangerous territory, he dispatched a camel rider to Makkah with a frantic appeal for help. When the rider reached Makkah, he, following an old custom of Arabia, tore open the ears of his camel, cut open his nose and overturned the saddle. Then rending his shirt from front and behind, he began to cry aloud at the top of his voice, "O people of Quraish dispatch help to protect your caravan from Syria under the charge of Abu Sufyan, for Muhammad with his followers is in pursuit of it; otherwise I don't think you will ever get your goods. Run, run for help." This caused great excitement and anger in the whole of Makkah and all the big chiefs of the Quraish got ready for war. An army, consisting of 600 armored soldiers and cavalry of 100 riders with great pomp and show marched out for a fight. They intended not only to rescue the caravan but also to put to an end, once for all, the new menace from the Muslims who had consolidated themselves at Al-Madinah. They wanted to crush that rising power and overawe the clans surrounding the route so as to make it absolutely secure for future trade.

Now the Holy Prophet, who always kept himself well informed of the state of affairs, felt that the decisive hour has come and that was the right time when he must take a bold step; otherwise the Islamic Movement would become lifeless for ever and no chance would be left for it to rise again. For if the Quraish invaded Al-Madinah, the odds would be against the Muslims. The condition of the Muslim Community was still very shaky because the immigrants (Muhajirin) had not been able to stabilize their economy during the short period (less than two years) of their stay at Al-Madinah; their helpers, (the Ansar) had not yet been tried; and the neighboring Jewish clans were antagonistic. Then there was a strong group of hypocrites and mushriks in Al- Madinah itself; above all, the surrounding clans lived in awe of the Quraish and had all their religious sympathies with them. The Holy Prophet, therefore, felt that the consequences of this possible invasion would not be favorable to the Muslims.

The second possibility was that they would not invade Al-Madinah but try only to escort their caravan safely and securely by a mere show of force. In that case, too, if the Muslim remained inactive, it would affect their reputation adversely. Obviously, this weak stand in the conflict would embolden the other Arabs also and make the position of the Muslims very insecure in the country and the surrounding clans would, at the instance of the Quraish, start hostilities against them, and the Jews, the hypocrites and the mushriks of Al- Madinah would openly rise against them and not only endanger their security of life, property and honor but make it difficult for them even to live there.

The Muslims would not be able to inspire the enemy with awe so as to keep safe from them their life, property and honor. A careful study of the situation led the Holy Prophet to make up his mind to take a decisive step and go into the battle with whatever little strength he could muster, for thus and thus only could he show whether the Muslim Community had the right to survive or was doomed to perish.

When he arrived at this momentous decision, he called the Muhajirin and the Ansar together and placed the whole position before them, without any reservation. He said, "Allah has promised that you will confront one of the two, the trade caravan coming from the north or the army of the Quraish marching from the south. Now tell me which of the two you want to attack!" A large majority of the people replied that they wanted to attack the caravan. But the Holy Prophet who had something else before him, repeated the same question. At this Miqdad bin 'Amr, a Muhajir, stood up and said, "0 Messenger of Allah! Please march to the side to which your Lord commands you; we will accompany you wherever you go. We will not say like the Israelites, 'Go and let you and your Lord fight we will wait'. In contrast to them we say, 'Let you and your Lord fight; we will fight by your side to our last breath'." Even then he did not announce any decision but waited for a reply from the Ansar who had not yet taken any part in any battle of Islam. As this was the first opportunity for them to prove that they were ready to fulfill their promise of fighting for the cause of Islam, he repeated the question without directly addressing them. At this, Sa'ad bin Mu'az, an Ansar, stood up and said, "Sir, it appears that you are putting the question to us." When the Holy Prophet said, "Yes", the Ansar replied, "We have believed in you and confirmed that what you have brought is the Truth, and have made a solemn pledge with you that we will listen to you and obey you. Therefore, 0 Messenger of Allah, do whatever you intend to do. We swear by Allah Who has sent you with the Truth that we are ready to accompany you to the sea shore and if you enter it, we will plunge into it. We assure you that not a single one of us will remain behind or forsake you, for we will not hesitate at all to go to fight, even if you should lead us to the battlefield tomorrow. We will remain steadfast in the battle and sacrifice our lives in the fight. We do hope that by the grace of Allah our behavior will gladden your heart. So, trusting in Allah's blessing, take us to the battlefield."

After these speeches it was decided that they should march towards the army of the Quraish and not towards the trade caravan. But it should be noted that the decision was of an ordinary nature. For the number of people, who came forward to go to the battlefield, was only a little more than three hundred (86 Muhajirs, 62 from Aus and 170 from Khazraj). Then the little army was ill-armed and hardly equipped for battle. Only a couple of them had horses to ride and the others had to take their turn in threes and fours on the back of a camel, out of the 70 they had in all. Above all, they had not got enough weapons for the battle; only 60 of them had armors. It is, therefore, no wonder that with the exception of those who were prepared to sacrifice their lives for the cause of Islam, the majority of those who had joined the expedition, were so filled with fear that they felt as if they were knowingly going into the jaws of death. Then there were people who always looked at things from a selfish point of view. Though they had embraced Islam, they did not realize that their faith would demand the sacrifice of their lives and properties from them; they were of the opinion that it was a mad expedition prompted by irrational enthusiasm for religion. But the Holy Prophet and the true Believers had realized the urgency of that critical hour which required the risk of life: therefore they marched straight to the south-west,

wherefrom the army of the Quraish was coming. This is a clear proof of the fact that from the very beginning they had gone out to fight with the army and not to plunder the caravan. For if they had aimed at plundering the caravan they would have taken the north- westerly direction and not the south- westerly one.

The two parties met in combat at Badr on the seventeenth of Ramadan. When the two armies confronted each other and the Holy Prophet noticed that the Quraish army outnumbered the Muslims by three to one and was much better equipped, he raised his hands up in supplication and made this earnest prayer with great humility: "O Allah! Here are the Quraish proud of their war material: they have come to prove that Thy Messenger is false. O Allah! now send that success that Thou hast promised to give me. O Allah! If this little army of Thy servants is destroyed, then there will be left none in the land to worship Thee."

In this combat the emigrants from Makkah were put to the hardest test for they had to fight against their own near and dear relatives and put to the sword their fathers, their sons, their paternal and maternal uncles and their brothers. It is obvious that only such people could have come out successful in this hardest of tests as had accepted the Truth sincerely and cut off all relations with falsehood. And in another way the test to which the Ansar were put was not less hard. So far they had only alienated the powerful Quraish and their allies by giving shelter to the Muslims against their wishes but now, for the first time, they were going to give fight to them and to sow the seeds of a long and bitter war with them. This was indeed a very hard test for it meant that a small town with a population of a few thousand inhabitants was going to wage a war with the whole of Arabia. It is obvious that only such people could take this bold step who believed in the Truth of Islam so firmly that they were ready to sacrifice every personal interest for its sake.

So Allah accepted the self-sacrifices of the Muhajirin and the Ansar because of their true faith, and rewarded them with His success. The proud, well- armed Quraish were routed by these ill-equipped devotees of Islam. Seventy men of their army were killed and seventy captured as prisoners and their arms and equipment came into the hands of the Muslims as spoils of war. All their big chiefs, who were their best soldiers and who had led the opposition to Islam, were killed in this Battle. No wonder that this decisive victory made Islam a power to be reckoned with. A Western research scholar says that before the Battle of Badr, Islam was merely a religion and a state but after the Battle it became the state religion, nay, the state itself.

Topics of Discussion

It is this great Battle that has been reviewed in this Surah. But let it be noted that in some respects this review is quite different from the reviews that are usually made by the worldly commanders after a great victory.

1. Instead of gloating over the victory, the moral weaknesses that had come to the surface in that expedition have been pointed out so that the Muslims should try their best to reform themselves.

2. It has been impressed upon them that the victory was due to the success of Allah rather -than to their own valor and bravery so that the Muslims should learn to rely on Him and obey Allah and His Messenger alone.
3. The moral lesson of the conflict between the Truth and falsehood has been enunciated and the qualities which lead to success in a conflict have been explained.
4. Then the Surah addresses the mushriks, the hypocrites, the Jews and the prisoners of this war in a very impressive manner that should teach them a good lesson.
5. It also gives instructions in regard to the spoils of war. The Muslims have bean told not to regard these as their right but as a bounty from Allah. Therefore they should accept with gratitude the share that is granted to them out of it and willingly accede to the share which Allah sets apart for His cause and for the help of the needy.
6. Then it also gives normal instructions concerning the laws of peace and war for these were urgently needed to be explained at the stage which the Islamic Movement had entered. It enjoined that the Muslims should refrain from ways of "ignorance" in peace and war and thus should establish their moral superiority in the world. It also meant, to demonstrate to the world in actual practical life the morality which it had been preaching to the world from the very beginning of Islam and had been enjoining that practical life should be based on the same.
7. It also states some articles of the Islamic Constitution which help differentiate the status of the Muslims living within the limits of Dar-ul-Islam (the Abode of Islam) from that of the Muslims living beyond its limits.

Subject: Problems of Jihad

This surah enunciates general principles of war (one aspect of Jihad) and peace while reviewing the Battle of Badr and uses them for the moral training of the Muslims.

Topics and their Interconnection

This portion deals with the problems of the "Spoils of War". The Quran says that these are not the spoils of war but the "Bounties of Allah" and proves this by showing that the victory at Badr (and in all other battles, too,) was won by His succor and not by the efforts of the Muslims. It also declares (in v. 40) that the war aim of the Muslims should be to eliminate all unfavorable conditions for the establishment of Islam and not to gain spoils. Moreover, the spoils, being the bounties of God, belong to Allah and His Messenger and they alone are entitled to allocate them. Then after conditioning the Muslims to accept these things, the different shares have been allocated in v. 41. **1 - 41**

The Battle of Badr was ordained by Allah so that Islam should triumph over "ignorance". The lesson from this is that the Muslims should trust in God and prepare themselves for war and should not be beguiled by Satan as the disbelievers were. **42 - 54**

Sanctity of treaties has been enjoined and the Muslims commanded to observe them as long as the other party does not break them. **55 - 59**

The Muslims should always be prepared for war on every front, but should be ready to make peace if the other party is inclined towards it. **60 - 66**

In these verses, instructions about prisoners of war have been given. **67 - 71**

In order to keep the Muslims joined together against their enemies, they have been taught to have cordial relations with one another. **72 - 75**

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

یَسۡـَٔلُوۡنَکَ عَنِ الۡاَنۡفَالِ ؕ قُلِ الۡاَنۡفَالُ لِلّٰہِ وَ الرَّسُوۡلِ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰہَ وَ اَصۡلِحُوۡا ذَاتَ

بَیۡنِکُمۡ ۪ وَ اَطِیۡعُوا اللّٰہَ وَ رَسُوۡلَہٗۤ اِنۡ کُنۡتُمۡ مُّؤۡمِنِیۡنَ 1

(8:1) They ask you concerning the spoils of war? Tell them: 'The spoils of war belong to Allah and the Messenger. So fear Allah, and set things right between you, and obey Allah and His Messenger if you are true believers. [1]

1. The critique of the battle opens with this unusual note. Some disagreements had arisen among the Muslims with regard to sharing the spoils of war. As it was their first experience of fighting under the banner of Islam, the Muslim soldiers had scarcely any notion of the regulations they were required to follow on the battlefield and for settling problems arising from warfare. Doubtlessly some preliminary instructions had been laid down for them in (Surah al-Baqarah 2)and (Surah Muhammad 47), (See 2: 190 ff. and 47: 4 ff. - Ed.) However the full set of regulations that could contribute to civilizing the conduct of warfare had yet to be laid down. Hence, when it came to war as with several other societal matters, the Muslims were still under the influence of pre-Islamic ideas and concepts. Going by the age-old Arab customs, those who had seized the spoils of war considered themselves their sole and legitimate owners. On the other hand, the Muslims who had concentrated on driving away the enemy rather than on collecting the spoils, claimed that they deserved an equal share of the spoils. They contended that had they slackened in their duty of pursuing the enemy, the latter might have struck back, turning the Muslim victory into a defeat. Similarly, another group of Muslims who had escorted the Prophet (peace he on him) on the battlefield, also laid claim to an equal share, For, they believed, it was they who had rendered an invaluable service insofar as neglect of duty on their part might have resulted in endangering the precious life of the Prophet (peace be on him), in which case the possibility of victory and its attendant spoils and their distribution would all have been totally out of the question. Nonetheless, the group of Muslims who already possessed the spoils saw no merit in these claims. Arguments and counter-arguments gave rise to bitterness and bad blood. (For disagreements among Muslims on the question of distribution of spoils of war see Ibn Hisham, vol. 1. pp. 641-2; al-Waqadi, vol. 1, p. 78. See also the comments on the verse in Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir - Ed.)

It was at this juncture that God revealed the present surah. The opening verse takes up this issue. 'They ask you concerning anfal' is the query with which the surah opens. The very use of the word anfal instead of ghana'im in the query implies the answer. For the word anfal, which is the plural of nafl, stands for that which is extra, that which is over and above what is obligatory. If this extra is from the servant, it denotes that additional service which he voluntarily renders over and above what is obligatory. On the other hand, when this extra is

from the master, it denotes the additional reward which the master awards his servant over and above what he is entitled to. What is being conveyed here by using the word anfal is, in fact, that all wrangling about spoils is out of place since it concerns not their rights, but the additional rewards they might receive from God. Any and all heated discussion in which they engaged was irrelevant since it was entirely for God to decide whether He should grant any extra reward or not; and if He should grant it, then how much, and to whom. In short, it was not for men to say who should and who should not receive any party of the spoils.

This was a major conceptual reform. The war that a Muslim wages is not in order to accumulate worldly benefits. He resorts to it for the moral and social reform of the world and does so when the opposing forces make it impossible to bring about reform by means of persuasion and preaching. Being reformers, the Muslims should focus their attentions on their goal - the reform of the world - rather than on the material benefits which accrue to them incidental by way of God's additional reward in lieu of their strivings. If the attention of Muslims is not diverted from material benefits to their true mission, it is likely that material benefits would become an end in themselves.

Moreover, the concept introduced by the Qur'an (see the verse above) also brought about a major administrative reform pertaining to war and the spoils of war. Before the advent of Islam, a soldier used to appropriate all that he could lay his hands on, claiming to be its rightful owner, or else spoils were seized either by; the king or the commander of the army. In the former case, mutual conflicts ensued among soldiers of the victorious army, with the frequent result that their victory turned into defeat. On the other hand, if the spoils were seized by the commander of the army or the ruler, soldiers often concealed and stole the spoils. By declaring that the spoils belong to God and His Messenger, the Qur'an made it obligatory on all soldiers to commit all the spoils of war to the custody of the commander, concealing not even something as trivial as a sewing needle. Subsequently the Qur'an laid down an elaborate set of laws to distribute the spoils of war. According to it, one-fifth of the spoils is to be deposited in the public treasury for public welfare and to provide support for the poor, while four-fifths is to be distributed among the soldiers. (al-Anfal 8: 41 - Ed.)It thus put an end to the evils inherent in the old system.

A subtle point implicit in the above verse should not he overlooked. In the opening verse of the Surah nothing has been said beyond affirming the principle that the spoils belong to God and His Messenger. The problem as to how the spoils should be distributed was not touched upon. The Qur'an does however subsequently treat the question of distribution see (verse 41) below. It is significant that in this second instance the word used is a verbal derivative of ghanimah (spoils, booty) see (verse 41)below whereas in the opening verse the word used is anfal.

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ
إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ۝ 2

(8:2) The true believers are those who, when Allah's name is mentioned, their hearts quake, and when His verses are recited to them their faith grows,[2] and who put their trust in their Lord;

2. A man's faith grows as he is able to confirm and submit to the command of God which he comes across. This is especially so where he submits to commands which go against his own personal predilections. A man's faith attains great heights if instead of trying to twist and distort the commands of God and the Prophet (peace he on him), he develops the habit of accepting and submitting to all the commands of God and the Prophet (peace be on him); if he strives to shape his conduct to the teachings which go against his personal opinions and conceptions, which are contrary to his habits, interests and convenience, which are not in consonance with his loyalties and friendships. For if he hesitates to respond positively to God's command, his faith is diminished. One thus learns that faith is not a static, immobile object. Nor is every, act of belief, or unbelief, of the same quality. An act of belief may be better or worse than another act of belief. Likewise, an act of unbelief may differ in quality from another act of unbelief. For both belief and unbelief, are capable of growth and decline.

All this concerns the essence of belief and unbelief. However, when belief and unbelief are mentioned as a basis for membership of the Muslim community or in connection with legal rights and responsibilities as necessary corollaries of that membership, a clear line of demarcation has to be drawn between those who believe and those who do not. In this respect the determination of who is a believer and who is not will depend on the basic minimum of belief regardless of quality of belief. In an Islamic society all those who believe will be entitled to the same legal rights and will be required to fulfil the same duties regardless of the differences in the quality of their faith. Likewise, all unbelievers - regardless of the differences in the quality of their unbelief - will be placed in the category of unbelievers disregarding the question whether their unbelief is of an ordinary quality or an extremely serious one.

الَّذِيْنَ يُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ۭ 3

(8:3) who establish Prayer and spend out of what We have provided them.

اُولٰۗىِٕكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ حَقًّا ۭ لَهُمْ دَرَجٰتٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ وَّرِزْقٌ كَرِيْمٌ ۚ 4

(8:4) Such people are indeed true believers. They have high ranks with their Lord, and forgiveness for their sins[3] and an honourable sustenance.

3. Even the best and the most devoted believers are liable to commit lapses. As long as man is man, it is impossible for his record to be filled exclusively with righteousness of the highest order and to be free from all lapses, shortcomings and weaknesses. Out of His infinite mercy, however, God overlooks man's shortcomings as long as he fulfils the basic duties incumbent upon him as God's servant, and favours him with a reward far greater than that warranted by his good works. Had it been a rule that man would be judged strictly on the basis of his deeds, that he would be punished for every evil deed and

rewarded for every good deed, no man, howsoever righteous, would have escaped punishment.

كَمَآ أَخۡرَجَكَ رَبُّكَ مِنۢ بَيۡتِكَ بِٱلۡحَقِّ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقٗا مِّنَ ٱلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ لَكَٰرِهُونَ 5

(8:5) (Now with regard to the spoils the same situation exists as when) your Lord brought you forth from your home in a righteous cause while a party among the believers were much averse to it.

يُجَٰدِلُونَكَ فِي ٱلۡحَقِّ بَعۡدَمَا تَبَيَّنَ كَأَنَّمَا يُسَاقُونَ إِلَى ٱلۡمَوۡتِ وَهُمۡ يَنظُرُونَ 6

(8:6) They disputed with you about the truth after that had become evident, as if they were being driven to death with their eyes wide open.[4]

4. When the people in question were required to fight, they were disinclined to do so for they felt that they were being driven to death and destruction. Their condition is somewhat similar for they are now required not to contend about spoils of war and wait for God's command as to how the spoils of war should be distributed.

This verse could also mean that if Muslims obeyed God and followed the Prophet (peace be on him) rather than their own desires, they would witness as good a result as they witnessed on the occasion of the Battle of Badr. On this occasion too many were reluctant to take on the Quraysh and considered it nothing short of suicide see(verse 6). But when they obeyed the command of God and His Prophet (peace be on him), it proved to be a source of life and survival.

Incidentally, this statement in the Qur'in implicitly negates reports usually mentioned in the works of Sirah and Maghazi and which suggest that the Prophet (peace be on him) and his Companions had initially set out from Madina in order to raid the trading caravan of the Quraysh, and that it was only when they came to know that the Quraysh army was advancing to provide protection to the trading caravan that the Muslims were faced with the option of either attacking the caravan or the Quraysh army. The Qur'anic version is quite contrary. Accordingly, from the moment when the Prophet (peace be on him) set out from his house, he was intent upon a decisive battlewith the Quraysh. In addition, the decision as to whether the Muslims should confront the trading caravan or the army was taken at the very beginning rather than later on. It is also evident that even though it was quite clear that it was essential to confront the Quraysh army, a group of Muslims tried to avoid it and kept pleading for their viewpoint. Even when a firm decision had been taken that the Muslims would attack the Quraysh army rather than the caravan, this group set out for the encounter with the view that they were being driven to death and destruction.See (verses 5-8). Cf. al-Waqidi. vol. 1, pp. 19-21; Ibn Sa'd, vol. 2. pp. 11-14 - Ed.)

وَاِذۡ يَعِدُكُمُ اللّٰهُ اِحۡدَى الطَّآئِفَتَيۡنِ اَنَّهَا لَـكُمۡ وَتَوَدُّوۡنَ اَنَّ غَيۡرَ ذَاتِ الشَّوۡكَةِ تَكُوۡنُ
لَـكُمۡ وَيُرِيۡدُ اللّٰهُ اَنۡ يُّحِقَّ الۡحَـقَّ بِكَلِمٰتِهٖ وَيَقۡطَعَ دَابِرَ الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ ۙ 7

(8:7) And recall when Allah promised you that one of the two hosts would fall to you,[5] and you wished that the one without arms should fall into your hands.[6] But Allah sought to prove by His words the truth to be true and to annihilate the unbelievers to the last remnant

5. God's promise was that the Muslims would be able to overcome whichever of the two parties they wished to attack - the trading caravan or the Quraysh army.

6. This refers to the trading caravan which had some 30 to 40 armed guards for protection.

لِيُحِقَّ الۡحَـقَّ وَيُبۡطِلَ الۡبَاطِلَ وَلَوۡ كَرِهَ الۡمُجۡرِمُوۡنَ ۚ 8

(8:8) that He might prove the truth to be true and the false to be false, however averse the evil-doers might be to it.[7]

7. This gives some idea of the prevalent situation at the time. As we have said earlier (see above, p. 128), the march of the Quraysh towards Madina meant that only one of the two would survive in Arabia - either Islam or the entrenched system of Jahiliyah (Ignorance). Had the Muslims not taken up the challenge, the very survival of Islam would have been imperilled. But since the Muslims took the initiative and dealt a severe blow to the military strength of the Quraysh it became possible for Islam to consolidate itself and subsequently the forces of Ignorance suffered a succession of humiliating reverses.

اِذۡ تَسۡتَغِيۡثُوۡنَ رَبَّكُمۡ فَاسۡتَجَابَ لَـكُمۡ اَنِّىۡ مُمِدُّكُمۡ بِاَلۡفٍ مِّنَ الۡمَلٰٓئِكَةِ مُرۡدِفِيۡنَ 9

(8:9) And recall when you implored your Lord for help and He responded to you: 'I will indeed reinforce you with a thousand angels, coming host after host.'

وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بُشۡرٰى وَلِتَطۡمَئِنَّ بِهٖ قُلُوۡبُكُمۡ ۚ وَمَا النَّصۡرُ اِلَّا مِنۡ عِنۡدِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
عَزِيۡزٌ حَكِيۡمٌ ۚ 10

(8:10) Allah meant this as glad tidings and that your hearts may be set at rest. For every help comes from Allah alone. Surely Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.

إِذْ يُغَشِّيكُمُ النُّعَاسَ أَمَنَةً مِّنْهُ وَيُنَزِّلُ عَلَيْكُم مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً لِّيُطَهِّرَكُم بِهِ وَيُذْهِبَ
عَنكُمْ رِجْزَ الشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيَرْبِطَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتَ بِهِ الْأَقْدَامَ ۝ 11

(8:11) And recall when Allah brought on you drowsiness,[8] giving you a feeling of peace and security from Him, and He sent down rain upon you from the sky that He might cleanse you through it and take away from you the pollution of Satan and strengthen your hearts, and steady your feet through it.[9]

8. In the Battle of Uhud the Muslims passed through a similar experience see (Al'Imran 3: 154) above. On both occasions, when prevalent conditions should have produced intense fear and panic among them, God filled their hearts with such peace and tranquillity that they were overpowered with drowsiness.

9. This refers to the heavy downpour on the night preceding the Battle of Badr. It helped the Muslims in three ways. First, it provided them with an abundant water supply which they quickly stored in large reservoirs. Second, rain compacted the loose sand in the upper part of the valley where the Muslims had pitched their tents. This helped the Muslims plant their feet firmly and facilitated their movement. Third, where the Quray'sh army was stationed in the lower part of the valley, the ground turned marshy.

The defilement caused by Satan which occurs in the verse refers to the fear and panic which initially, afflicted the Muslims.

إِذْ يُوحِي رَبُّكَ إِلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ أَنِّي مَعَكُمْ فَثَبِّتُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ۚ سَأُلْقِي فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا الرُّعْبَ فَاضْرِبُوا فَوْقَ الْأَعْنَاقِ وَاضْرِبُوا مِنْهُمْ كُلَّ بَنَانٍ ۚ 12

(8:12) And recall when your Lord inspired the angels: 'I am certainly with you. So make firm the feet of those who believe. I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. So strike at their necks and strike at every pore and tip.[10]

10. In view of the general principle propounded in the Qur'an we presume that the angels did not take part in the actual fighting. What we may suggest is that the angels helped the Muslims and as a result their blows became more accurate and effective.

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ شَاقُّوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ وَمَن يُشَاقِقِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ
الْعِقَابِ 13

(8:13) This is because they defied Allah and His Messenger. Whoever defies Allah and His Messenger must know that Allah is severe in punishment.[11]

11. In recounting the events of the Battle of Badr, the Qur'an aims to explain the significance of the word al-anfal (spoils of war). In the opening verse of the surah the Muslims were told that they should not deem the spoils to be a reward for their toil. Rather, the spoils should constitute a special reward granted to the Muslims by God, to Whom the spoils rightfully belong. The events recounted here support this. The Muslims could reflect on the course of events and see for themselves to what extent the victory they had achieved was due to God's favour, and to what extent it was due to their own efforts.

ذٰلِكُمْ فَذُوْقُوْهُ وَاَنَّ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابَ النَّارِ 14

(8:14) That is your punishment (from Allah). So taste this punishment,[12] and know that for the unbelievers is the punishment of the Fire.

12. Here the discourse is suddenly directed to the unbelievers who we mentioned in(verse 13) as deserving of God's punishment.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا لَقِيْتُمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا زَحْفًا فَلَا تُوَلُّوْهُمُ الْاَدْبَارَ ۚ 15

(8:15) Believers, whenever you encounter a hostile force of unbelievers, do not turn your backs to them in flight.

وَمَنْ يُّوَلِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ دُبُرَهٗٓ اِلَّا مُتَحَرِّفًا لِّقِتَالٍ اَوْ مُتَحَيِّزًا اِلٰى فِئَةٍ فَقَدْ بَآءَ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَمَاْوٰىهُ جَهَنَّمُ ۭ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ 16

(8:16) For he who turns his back on them on such ar occasion - except that it be for tactical reasons, or turning to join another company - he shall incur the wrath of Allah and Hell shall be his abode. It is an evil destination. [13]

13. The Qur'an does not forbid orderly retreat under strong pressure from the enemy provided it is resorted to as a stratagem of war, for example seeking reinforcements or joining another party in the rear. What the Qur'an does forbid is disorderly flight produced by sheer cowardice and defeatism. Such a retreat takes place because the deserter holds his life dearer than his cause. Such cowardice has been characterized as one of those three major sins which, if committed, can be atoned for by no other good deed whatsoever. These three sins are: ascription of divinity to anyone or anything other than God, violation of the rights of parents, and flight from the battlefield during fighting in the way of God. (See al-Mundhiri, 'Kitab al-Jihad', 'Bab al-Tarhib min al-Firar min al-Zahf'- Ed.) In another tradition the Prophet (peace be on him) has mentioned seven deadly sins which totally ruin a man's Next Life. One of these is flight from the battlefield in an encounter between Islam and Unbelief. (Muslim, 'K. al-lman', 'Bab al-Kabi'ir wa Akbaruha'; Bukhari, 'K. al-Wasaya', 'bab -

fi Qawl Allah - Tala: inna al-ladhina Ya'kuluna Amwal al-Yatami Zulman' - Ed.) This has been declared a deadly sin because in addition to being an act of sheer cowardice, it demoralizes others and can generate demoralization which can have disastrous consequences. An individual soldier's desertion might cause a whole platoon, or even a whole regiment, and ultimately the whole army, to take flight. For once a soldier flees in panic, it is hard to control the others.

فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوْهُمْ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَتَلَهُمْ ۚ وَمَا رَمَيْتَ اِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ رَمٰى ۚ وَلِيُبْلِيَ
الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ مِنْهُ بَلَآءً حَسَنًا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ 17

(8:17) So the fact is that it was not you, but it was Allah Who killed them; and it was not you when you threw [sand at them], but it was Allah Who threw it,[14] (and the believers were employed for the task) that He might cause the believers to successfully pass through this test. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

14. This refers to the occasion wnen the armies of the Muslims and the unbelievers stood face to face in the Battle of Badr and were on the verge of actual fighting. At that moment, the Prophet (peace be on him) threw a handful of dust at the enemy saying: 'May, their faces be scorched.' So saying the Prophet (peace be on him) made a gesture and the Muslims started their charge. (See Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 1, p. 368; Ibn Hisham, vol. 1, p. 668; Ibn Kathir, comments on the verse - Ed.)

ذٰلِكُمْ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ مُوْهِنُ كَيْدِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ 18

(8:18) This is His manner of dealing with you. As for the unbelievers, Allah will surely undermine their designs.

اِنْ تَسْتَفْتِحُوْا فَقَدْ جَاۗءَكُمُ الْفَتْحُ ۚ وَاِنْ تَنْتَهُوْا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ تَعُوْدُوْا نَعُدْ ۚ وَلَنْ
تُغْنِيَ عَنْكُمْ فِئَتُكُمْ شَيْـــًٔا وَّلَوْ كَثُرَتْ ۙ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۝ 19

(8:19) (Tell the unbelievers:) 'If you have sought a judgement, then surely a judgement has come to you. [15] And if you desist from disobedience, it is all the better for you. But if you revert to your mischief, We will again chastise you; and your host, howsoever numerous, will never be of any avail to you. Know well, Allah is with the believers.'

15. Before marching out from Makka the unbelievers held the covering of the Ka'bah and prayed: 'O God! Grant victory to the better of the two parties.' Abu Jahl, in particular invoked God's judgement: 'O God! Grant victory to the one who is in the right and cause humiliation to the wrong-doer.' God answered these prayers fully and the outcome of the battle clearly pointed to the party which was in the right.

صلج
يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَلَا تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَاَنْتُمْ تَسْمَعُوْنَ 20

(8:20) Believers! Obey Allah and His Messenger and do not turn away from him after you hear his command.

وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْا سَمِعْنَا وَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ 21

(8:21) And do not be like those who say: 'We hear', though they do not hearken.[16]

16. In the present context, 'hearing' means taking heed with a view to obey'. The verse alludes to those hypocrites who professed to believe and yet were not willing to carry out the commands of God.

اِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَآبِّ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ الصُّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ 22

(8:22) Indeed the worst kind of all beasts in the sight of Allah are the people that are deaf and dumb,[17] and do not understand.

17. These are the ones who neither hear nor speak the truth. So far as truth is concerned, their ears are deaf and their mouths dumb.

وَلَوْ عَلِمَ اللّٰهُ فِيْهِمْ خَيْرًا لَّاَسْمَعَهُمْ ؕ وَلَوْ اَسْمَعَهُمْ لَتَوَلَّوْا وَّهُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ 23

(8:23) And had Allah known in them any good He would surely, have made them hear; but (being as they, are) even if He made them hear, they would have surely turned away in aversion.[18]

18. Such people have neither any love for the truth nor any desire to strive for it. Hence even if they were enabled by God to go forth to the battlefield. they would have turned on their heels at the very first sight of danger. That such people should be a part of the Muslim army might have led to greater harm than good.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اسْتَجِيْبُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ اِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيْكُمْ ۚ وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ

يَحُوْلُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهٖ وَاَنَّهٗٓ اِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ 24

(8:24) Believers! Respond to Allah, and respond to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life. Know well that Allah stands between a man and his heart, and it is to Him that all of you shall be mustered.[19]

19. The most effective means of preventing man from failing prey to hypocrisy is to implant two ideas in his mind. First, that he will have to face the reckoning and judgement of God

Who knows what is in the deep recesses of his heart. Even man's intentions and desires, the purposes which he seeks to achieve, the ideas that he seeks to keep hidden in his heart, are all well known to God. Second, that ultimately every man will be mustered to God; that He is so powerful that none can escape His judgement. The deeper the roots of these convictions. the further is man removed from hypocrisy. Hence, while admonishing Muslims against hypocrisy, the Qur'an frequently resorts to emphasizing these two articles oi belief.

وَاتَّقُوا فِتْنَةً لَّا تُصِيبَنَّ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنكُمْ خَاصَّةً ۚ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ

الْعِقَابِ 25

(8:25) And guard against the mischief that will not only bring punishment to the wrong-doers among you.[20] Know well that Allah is severe in punishment.

20. This refers to those widespread social evils whose baneful effects are not confined only to those addicted to them, but which affect even those who, although they might not be addicted to those sins, are a part of that society. For example, if filth is found at just a few places in a locality it will possibly affect only those who have not kept themselves or their houses clean. However, if it becomes widespread and no one is concerned with removing uncleanliness and maintaining sanitary conditions, then everything including water and soil will become contaminated. As a result, if epidemics break out, they will not only afflict those who were responsible for spreading filth and themselves lived in unsanitary conditions, but virtually all the residents of that locality.

What is true of unsanitary conditions in a physical sense, also holds true for filth and uncleanliness in a moral sense. If immoral practices remain confined to a few people here and there but the overall moral concern of the society prevents those practices from becoming widespread and public, their harmful effects remain limited. But when the collective conscience of the society is weakened to a point whereby immoral practices are not suppressed, when people indulge in evils without any sense of shame and even go around vaunting their immoral deeds, when good people adopt a passive attitude and are content with being righteous merely in their own lives and are unconcerned with or silent about collective evils, then the entire society invites its doom. Such a society then becomes the victim of a scourge that does not distinguish between the grain and the chaff.

What God's directive seeks to impress upon people is that the reformatory mission of the Prophet (peace be on him) and the cause he was inviting people to was the source of life and well-being for them both individually and collectively. People should bear in mind that if they fail to participate wholeheartedly in the task to which they were invited and remain silent spectators to rampant evils, that would invite a scourge that would embrace all. It would afflict even those individuals who neither themselves committed evils nor were instrumental in spreading them and who might in fact have been righteous in their personal conduct. This point was emphasized earlier see (al-A'raf 7: 163-6)and was illustrated by

reference to the Sabbath-breakers, and constitutes the underlying Islamic philosophy for waging war for purposes of reform.

وَاذْكُرُوٓا اِذْ اَنْتُمْ قَلِيْلٌ مُّسْتَضْعَفُوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ تَخَافُوْنَ اَنْ يَّتَخَطَّفَكُمُ النَّاسُ
فَاٰوٰىكُمْ وَاَيَّدَكُمْ بِنَصْرِهٖ وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ 26

(8:26) And recall when you were few in numbers and deemed weak in the land, fearful lest people do away with you. Then He provided you refuge, strengthened you with His help, and provided you sustenance with good things that you may be grateful.[21]

21. The reference to gratefulness in the verse is worthy of reflection. Bearing in mind the subject under discussion, it appears that gratefulness does not simply mean that Muslims should acknowledge God's favour to them insofar as He rescued them from their state of abject weakness. God had not only salvaged them from an insecure life in Makka and provided them with a haven of security in Madina where they enjoyed an abundance of livelihood. Gratefulness does not simply require all that. Apart from acknowledging God's favour, gratefulness also demands that Muslims should faithfully obey God and His Messenger out of a consciousness of God's munificence, out of loyalty and devotion to the Prophet's mission, and should cast aside all dangers, hardships and misfortunes that might confront them. In their struggle for God's cause Muslims should have complete trust in God Who has helped them on earlier occasions and Who has delivered them from dangers. The Muslims should also have faith that if they work sincerely in God's cause He will certainly help and protect them. Hence, the gratefulness expected of the Muslims does not simply consist of a verbal acknowledgement of God's benefaction. Gratefulness to God should manifest itself in actual deeds as well. If someone were to acknowledge the favour of his Lord, and yet is slack in seeking His good pleasure, lacks sincerity in serving Him, and entertains doubts that God's benefaction will continue in the future, then that can hardly be characterized as gratitude.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَخُوْنُوا اللّٰهَ وَالرَّسُوْلَ وَتَخُوْنُوْٓا اَمٰنٰتِكُمْ وَاَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ 27

(8:27) Believers! Do not be unfaithful to Allah and the Messenger, nor be knowingly unfaithful to your trusts.[22]

22. 'Trusts' embrace all the responsibilities which are imparted to someone because he is trusted. These might consist of obligations arising out of an agreement or collective covenant. It might also consist of the secrets of a group. It might also consist of personal or collective property, or any office or position which might be bestowed upon a person by the group. (For further explanation see Towards Undersranding the Qur' an, vol. 11. (al-Nisa' 4, n. 88, pp. 49 f - Ed.)

وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَآ اَمْوَالُكُمْ وَاَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ ۙ وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ عِنْدَهٗٓ اَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ ع 28

(8:28) Know well that your belongings and your children are but a trial,[23] and that with Allah there is a mighty reward.

23. Excessive love of money and one's children often impair the sincerity of a person's faith and often lead man to hypocrisy, treachery and dishonesty. The Qur'an, therefore, clearly points out ihat since 1ove of wealth or children drives people off the right path, it constitutes a considerable test for them. One's property, one's business and one's offspring constitute a test for man since they have been in his custody so as to judge to what extent he observes the limits of propriety laid down by God and adequately performs his responsibilities. What is tested is how far man is able to control his animal self - which is strongly attached to worldly purposes - so that he is able to act as God's servant and render all the rights of worldly life in the manner laid down by God.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنْ تَتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ يَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ فُرْقَانًا وَّيُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ 29

(8:29) Believers! If you fear Allah He will grant you a criterion[24] and will cleanse you of your sins and forgive you. Allah is Lord of abounding bounty.

24. 'Criterion' signifies that which enables one to distinguish between true and false; between real and fake. This is the shade of meaning conveyed by the Qur'anic term 'furqan'. If a man is God-fearing and tries his best to refrain from acts which displease God, God will create in him the ability to discern for himself at every step which actions are proper and which are not; which attitude conduces to God's good pleasure and which is likely to incur His wrath. This inner light will serve as a pointer at every turn and crossing, at every up and down in life, guiding him as to when he should proceed and when he should refrain, telling him which is the path of truth and leads to God, and which is false and leads to Satan.

وَاِذْ يَمْكُرُ بِكَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لِيُثْبِتُوْكَ اَوْ يَقْتُلُوْكَ اَوْ يُخْرِجُوْكَ ۭ وَيَمْكُرُوْنَ وَيَمْكُرُ اللّٰهُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ خَيْرُ الْمٰكِرِيْنَ 30

(8:30) And recall how those who disbelieved schemed against you to take you captive, or kill you, or drive you away.[25] They schemed and Allah did also scheme. Allah is the best of those who scheme.

25. Apprehending the Prophet's migration to Madina, the Quraysh convened a high-level council attended by all the tribal chiefs at Dar al-Nadwah (Council House) to decide on a decisive course of action against the Prophet (peace be on him). They realized that once the Prophet (peace be on him) left Makka, he would be beyond their reach, rendering them

helpless in face of a formidable threat. A group of them was of the view that the Prophet (peace be on him) should be imprisoned for life and kept in chains. This proposal was, however, turned down on the ground that the Prophet's detention would not deter his followers from preaching Islam and that they would seize the first opportunity to release the Prophet (peace be on him) even at the risk to their own lives. Another group suggested that the Prophet (peace be on him) should be exiled, for this would remove the mischief and subversion far from Makka, and it would not matter where he spent his days nor what he did, for Makka would be immune from his influence. This proposal, too, was discarded for fear of the Prophet's persuasiveness and eloquence, and his ability to win the hearts of the people of other tribes and thus pose a greater threat in the future. Finally, Abu Jahl suggested that a band of young men drawn from all the different clans of the Quraysh should jointly pounce upon the Prophet (peace be on him) and kill him. In such a case the responsibility for his blood would rest upon all the clans of the Quray'sh. It would thus become impossible for 'Abd Manaf, the Prophet's clan. to take revenge on any one particular clan. Such a move would compel the Prophet's relatives to drop their claims for retaliation and force them to settle for blood-money. Accordingly, the young men charged with the execution of this plan were selected, and were advised of the exact place and time at which they were expected to carry out the crime. Not only that, the would-be assassins did indeed arrive at the appointed place at the appointed time. However, before they could harm him the Prophet (peace be on him) managed to escape safely. The Quraysh plot was thus frustrated at the eleventh hour. (See Ibn Hisham, vol. 1, pp. 480-2. See also Ibn Kathir's comments on the verse - Ed.)

وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتُنَا قَالُوْا قَدْ سَمِعْنَا لَوْ نَشَآءُ لَقُلْنَا مِثْلَ هٰذَآ ۙ إِنْ هٰذَآ إِلَّآ أَسَاطِيْرُ الْأَوَّلِيْنَ 31

(8:31) And when Our verses are recited to them, they say: 'We have heard. We could, if we willed, compose the like of it. They, are nothing but fables of the ancient times.'

وَإِذْ قَالُوا اللّٰهُمَّ إِنْ كَانَ هٰذَا هُوَ الْحَقَّ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ فَأَمْطِرْ عَلَيْنَا حِجَارَةً مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ أَوِ ائْتِنَا بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيْمٍ 32

(8:32) And also recall when they said: 'O Allah! If this indeed be the truth from You, then rain down stones upon us from heaven, or bring upon us a painful chastisement.'[26]

26. These words were uttered by way of challenge rather than a prayer to God. What they meant was that had the message of the Prophet (peace be on him) been true, and from God, its rejection would have entailed a heavy scourge, and stones would have fallen on them from heaven. Since nothing of the sort happened, it was evident that the message was neither true nor from God.

وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَاَنْتَ فِيْهِمْ ۚ وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ مُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ 33

(8:33) But Allah was not to chastise them while you are in their midst; nor was Allah going to chastise them while they sought His forgiveness. [27]

27. This is a rejoinder to the challenge implicit in the above-mentioned remark of the unbelievers. In response it was explained why people were spared heavenly scourge during the Makkan period of the Prophet's life. The first reason being that God does not punish a people as long as the Prophet is in their midst, busy inviting them to the truth. Such people are rather granted respite and are not deprived of the opportunity to reform themselves by sending a scourge all too quickly. Second, if there are a good number of people in a land who recognize that they have been negligent and heedless and have been guilty of iniquity, who seek God's forgiveness and strive to reform themselves, there remains no legitimate ground for subjecting them to a heavenly scourge. The time for such a scourge comes when a Prophet who has spared no efforts to reform his people feels that he has exhausted all his efforts, and concludes that his people have no justification to persist in their iniquity, and departs from that land or is banished from it by its people or is murdered by them. A scourge from on high then becomes imminent since the people of that land have proven by their deeds their inability to tolerate any righteous element in their midst.

وَمَا لَهُمْ اَلَّا يُعَذِّبَهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَهُمْ يَصُدُّوْنَ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَمَا كَانُوْٓا اَوْلِيَآءَهٗ ۭ اِنْ اَوْلِيَآؤُهٗٓ اِلَّا الْمُتَّقُوْنَ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ 34

(8:34) But what prevents Allah from chastising them now when they are hindering people from the Holy Mosque, even though they are not even its true guardians. For its true guardians are none but the God-fearing, though most of them do not know that.

وَمَا كَانَ صَلَاتُهُمْ عِنْدَ الْبَيْتِ اِلَّا مُكَاۗءً وَّتَصْدِيَةً ۭ فَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ 35

(8:35) Their Prayer at the House is nothing but whistling and handclapping.[28] Taste, then, this chastisement for your denying the truth.[29]

28. This is to dispel a misconception common among the Arabs of those days. They were generally inclined to assume that since the Quraysh were the guardians and keepers of the Ka'bah and were also engaged in worship at that holy spot, they were recipients of God's special favours. Here people are told that the defacto guardianship of the Ka'bah should not be confused with its de jure guardianship. For only the God-fearing and pious are the rightful guardians of the Ka,bah. As for the Quraysh, far from behaving in a manner

becoming of the guardians of the Ka'bah, they had virtually installed themselves as its masters, and were guilty of preventing people from worshipping there at will. This attitude blatantly betrayed their impiety, and un righteousness. As for their worship in the Ka'bah. it was altogether devoid of religious devotion and sincerity. They neither turned earnestly to God, nor displayed any genuine submission or humility, nor engaged in worshipfully remembering Him. Their worship consisted of meaningless noise and clamour, of acts which seemed closer to play and jest than acts of religious devotion. How could such a guardianship of the Ka'bah and such non-serious acts in the name of worship win God's favour for them, or secure for them immunity from God's scourge?

29. The Quraysh believed that God's punishment necessarily takes the form of some natural calamity or a rain of stones from the sky. They are, however, told that their decisive defeat in the Battle of Badr, which ensured the survival of Islam and spelled death for their much-cherished Jahiliyah was a form of God's punishment for them.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُنفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ لِيَصُدُّوا عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۖ فَسَيُنفِقُونَهَا ثُمَّ تَكُونُ
عَلَيْهِمْ حَسْرَةً ثُمَّ يُغْلَبُونَ ۗ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ يُحْشَرُونَ ۙ 36

(8:36) Surely those who deny the truth spend their wealth to hinder people from the way of Allah, and will continue to so spend until their efforts become a source of intense regret for them, and then they will be vanquished, and then these deniers of the truth will be driven to Hell,

لِيَمِيزَ اللَّهُ الْخَبِيثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ وَيَجْعَلَ الْخَبِيثَ بَعْضَهُ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ فَيَرْكُمَهُ جَمِيعًا
فَيَجْعَلَهُ فِي جَهَنَّمَ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ۚ 37

(8:37) so that Allah may separate the bad from the good, and join together all those who are bad into a pile one upon another, and cast them into Hell. They, it is they who are the losers.[30]

30. What can be more calamitous than a person's discovery at the end of the road that all the time, energy, ability and the very quintessence of his life which he has devoted has driven him straight to his utter ruin; that his investments far from yielding any interest or dividend will require from him the payment of a grievous penalty instead.

قُل لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِن يَنتَهُوا يُغْفَرْ لَهُم مَّا قَدْ سَلَفَ ۖ وَإِن يَعُودُوا فَقَدْ مَضَتْ سُنَّتُ
الْأَوَّلِينَ 38

(8:38) [O Prophet!] Tell the unbelievers that if they desist from evil, their past shall be forgiven and if they revert to their past ways, then it is well known what happened with the people of the past.

وَقَاتِلُوْهُمْ حَتّٰى لَا تَكُوْنَ فِتْنَةٌ وَّيَكُوْنَ الدِّيْنُ كُلُّهٗ لِلّٰهِ ۚ فَاِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا
يَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ 39

(8:39) And fight against them until the mischief ends and the way prescribed by Allah - the whole of it -prevail[31]Then, if they give up mischief, surely Allah sees what they do.

31. This is a reiteration of the purpose, mentioned earlier in al-Baqarah 2: 193, for which Muslims are required to wage war. The purpose is two-fold. Negatively speaking, the purpose is to eradicate 'mischief'. The positive purpose consists of establishing a state of affairs wherein all obedience is rendered to God alone. This alone is the purpose for which the believers may, rather should, fight. Fighting for any other purpose is not lawful. Nor does it behove men of faith to take part in wars for worldly purposes. (For further explanation see Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. 1, (al-Baqarah 2, nn.. 204 and 205, pp. 152-3 - Ed.)

وَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَوْلٰىكُمْ ۭ نِعْمَ الْمَوْلٰى وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيْرُ 40

(8:40) But if they turn away, then know well that Allah is your Protector - an excellent Protector and an excellent Helper.

وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَاَنَّ لِلّٰهِ خُمُسَهٗ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبٰى وَالْيَتٰمٰى
وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ ۙ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اٰمَنْتُمْ بِاللّٰهِ وَمَآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلٰي عَبْدِنَا يَوْمَ الْفُرْقَانِ
يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعٰنِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ 41

(8:41) Know that one fifth of the spoils that you obtain belongs to Allah, to the Messenger, to the near of kin, to the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer.[32] This you must observe if you truly believe In Allah and in what We sent down on Our servant[33] on the day when the true was distinguished from the false, the day on which the two armies met in battle. Allah has power over all things.

32. This verse lay's down the law for distributing the spoils of war. Spoils of war, as mentioned earlier, essentially belong to God and His Messenger. They alone have the right to dispose of them. As for the soldiers who fight, they are not the rightful owners of the spoils; whatever they do receive should be considered an extra reward from God rather than

their legitimate right.

Here it is stated how God and His Messenger decided to dispose of the spoils. The prescribed rule is that the soldiers should depbsit all the spoils with the ruler or the commander without making any effort to conceal anything. One-fifth of the spoils thus deposited would be assigned for the purposes mentioned in the present verse and four-fifths would be distributed among the soldiers who had taken part in the fighting. In keeping with the directive contained in the present verse, after every battle the Prophet (peace be on him) used to proclaim: 'These are your spoils. My own share in them is no more than one-fifth and even that fifth is spent on you. Bring everything, even if it be a piece of thread or a needle, or anything bigger or smaller, and take nothing by stealth (gulal), for taking by stealth is a shameful deed, and would lead to Hell.' (Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 5, p. 316 - Ed.)

It is pertinent to remember that the share of God and His Messenger (peace be on him) in the spoils signifies that a part of the spoils should be earmarked for the struggle to exalt the Word of God and to establish Islam as an operational system of life..

As to the word 'kinsmen' in the verse, during the Prophet's lifetime, it stood for his relatives. Since the Prophet (peace be on him) devoted all his time to the cause of Islam, he was not in a position to earn his own living. Hence, some arrangement had to be made for the maintenance of the Prophet (peace be on him) as well as for his family, and the relatives dependent upon him for financial support. Hence a part of khums (one-fifth of the spoils of war) was specified for that purpose. There is, however, some disagreement among jurists as to whom this share should go to after the Prophet's death. Some jurists are of the view that after the Prophet's death the rule stands repealed. According to other jurists, this part should go to relatives of those who succeeded him to Caliphate. Other jurists are of the view that this share should be distributed among the poor members of the Prophet's family. To the best of my knowledge, the Rightly-Guided Caliphs followed the last practice. (See the comments of Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir and Jassas on the verse. See also Ibn Rushd, Bidayat al-Mujtahid, vol. 1, pp. 377-8 - Ed.)

33. This refers to the support and help from God which brought about victory for the Muslims.

إِذْ أَنتُم بِالْعُدْوَةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُم بِالْعُدْوَةِ الْقُصْوَىٰ وَالرَّكْبُ أَسْفَلَ مِنكُمْ ۚ وَلَوْ تَوَاعَدتُّمْ
لَاخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِي الْمِيعَادِ ۙ وَلَٰكِن لِّيَقْضِيَ اللَّهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُولًا ۗ لِّيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَن بَيِّنَةٍ
وَيَحْيَىٰ مَنْ حَيَّ عَن بَيِّنَةٍ ۗ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَسَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ 42

(8:42) And recall when you were encamped at the nearer end of the valley (of Badr) and they were at the farther end and the caravan below you (along the seaside). Had you made a mutual appointment to meet in encounter, you would have declined. But

encounter was brought about so that Allah might accomplish what He had decreed, and that he who was to perish should perish through a clear proof, and who was to survive might survive through a clear proof.[34] Surely Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.[35]

34. The living and the dead spoken of in the above verse do not signify the individuals who survived the battle or those killed during it. The reference here is to the ideological entities of Islam and Jahiliyah.

35. God is neither blind nor deaf nor ignorant. On the contrary, He is All-Knowing, All-Seeing, All-Wise. Hence, we find reflection of God's knowledge, wisdom and justice in history.

إِذْ يُرِيكَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي مَنَامِكَ قَلِيلًا ۖ وَلَوْ أَرَاكَهُمْ كَثِيرًا لَّفَشِلْتُمْ وَلَتَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ
وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ سَلَّمَ ۚ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ 43

(8:43) And recall when Allah showed them to you in your dream to be few in number.[36] And had He showed them to you to be numerous, you would have flagged and disagreed with one another about fighting them. But Allah saved you. Surely Allah knows what is hidden in the breasts.

36. This refers to the time when the Prophet (peace be on him) was leaving Madina along with the Muslims, or was on his way to Badr for the encounter with the Quraysh and did not have any definite information about the strength of the enemy. In a dream, however, the Prophet (peace be on him) had a vision of the enemy. On the basis of that vision, the Prophet (peace he on him) estimated that the enemy, was not too powerful. Later when the Prophet (peace be on him) narrated his dream to the Muslims, they; were also encouraged and boldly went ahead to confront the enemy,

وَإِذْ يُرِيكُمُوهُمْ إِذِ الْتَقَيْتُمْ فِي أَعْيُنِكُمْ قَلِيلًا وَيُقَلِّلُكُمْ فِي أَعْيُنِهِمْ لِيَقْضِيَ اللَّهُ أَمْرًا
كَانَ مَفْعُولًا ۗ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ ۞ 44

(8:44) And recall when He made them appear as few in your eyes when you met them in the battle just as He lessened you in their eyes so that Allah might accomplish what had been decreed. To Allah are all matters referred for decision.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيتُمْ فِئَةً فَاثْبُتُوا وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ۚ 45

(8:45) Believers! When you encounter a host in battle, stand firm and remember Allah much that you may triumph.

وَاَطِيۡعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوۡلَهٗ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوۡا فَتَفۡشَلُوۡا وَتَذۡهَبَ رِيۡحُكُمۡ وَاصۡبِرُوۡا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ
الصّٰبِرِيۡنَ ۚ 46

(8:46) And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not quarrel with one another lest you should lose courage and your power depart. Be steadfast, surely Allah is with those who remain steadfast.[37]

37. The believers were asked to exercise self-restraint. They were required to refrain from haste, panic, consternation, creed and uncalled-for enthusiasm. They were counselled to proceed cool-headedly and to take well-considered decisions. They were also asked not to relent an inch even in the face of crave dangers: refrain from acting rashly under provocation; to desist from taking hasty action out of impatience. They were also asked to exercise control over themselves lest they were tempted by worldly gains. All these instructions are implicit in the Qur'anic directive of patience given to the Muslims. God extends all help and support to those who exercise 'patience' (sabr) in the above sense.

وَلَا تَكُوۡنُوۡا كَالَّذِيۡنَ خَرَجُوۡا مِنۡ دِيَارِهِمۡ بَطَرًا وَّرِئَآءَ النَّاسِ وَيَصُدُّوۡنَ عَنۡ سَبِيۡلِ
اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ مُحِيۡطٌ 47

(8:47) And be not like those who came forth from their homes exulting, with a desire to be seen of men, and hindering others from the way of Allah.[38] Allah encompasses all that they do.

38. This alludes to the army of the disbelieving Qurayash, which, when it proceeded on a military expedition against the Muslims, was accompanied by singing and dancing minstrels. (See Ibn Sa'd. vol. 2, p. 13 - Ed.) Whenever the army halted, dancing and drinking parties were held. Also the army arrogantly vaunted its military power and numerical strength before the tribes and localities which fell on the way, and boasted of its invincibility. (See al-Waqidi, vol. 1, p. 39 - Ed.) This much is about the moral state of the Quraysh army. What was even worse was the object of their fighting. They were not fighting for any lofty ideal. What they aimed at was merely to defeat the forces of truth and justice, to suppress and obliterate the only group which sought to uphold the truth. They simply did not want any one to champion the cause of truth and justice.

This occasion was considered appropriate to warn the Muslims not to let themselves degenerate into a group like the Quraysh. God had favoured them with faith and devotion to the truth. and gratitude to God for this favour required that they should purify both their conduct and their reason for fighting.

This directive was not meant just for the time in which it was revealed. It is equally applicable today, and will remain applicable in all times to come. The forces of Unbelief

today are no different from those in the time of the Prophet (peace he on him) for the moral state of the present-day armies is no better than of armies in the past. Arrangements for prostitution and drinking are as much a part of the present-day armies of unbelievers as ever before. The soldiers in these armies feel no shame in openly demanding the maximum amount of alcoholic drinks and as many call-girls as possible. Without any sense of shame the soldiers virtually ask their compatriots to make available to them their daughters and sisters for the gratification of their lust. That being the case how can one expect that the soldiers of today would not go about committing debauchery and polluting the life of the people in the lands which they happen to conquer?

Apart from moral corruption, the soldiers of the present-day armies are known for their arrogance and affrontery to the conquered peoples. Their gestures and conversation - both of ordinary soldiers and officers - bespeak of their arrogance. Arrogance is also reflected in the statements made by the statesmen of the militarily-strong and triumphant nations who in effect boastfully say to their people, in the words of the Quran: 'No one shall overcome you today' (al-Anfal 8: 48) and challenging the whole world in their vainglory: 'Who is greater than us in strength?' (Fusilat 41: 15).

These powers are evidently wicked, but the purposes for which they wage war are even more so. These powers are keen, out of sheer trickery, to assure the rest of the world that in waging war they are prompted only by the welfare of mankind. In actual fact, they might have either one motive for waging war or another, but it is absolutely certain that the motive is not the welfare of mankind. Their purpose is to establish their exclusive control and to exploit the resources created by God for all mankind. Their goal is to reduce other nations to the position of hewers of wood and drawers of water and to subject them to thraldom and servitude. Here Muslims are being told, in effect, that they should eschew the ways of non-Muslims and desist from devoting their lives, energy, and resources to the evil purposes for which non-Muslims engage in warfare.

وَإِذْ زَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ وَقَالَ لَا غَالِبَ لَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَإِنِّيْ جَارٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ
فَلَمَّا تَرَآءَتِ الْفِئَتٰنِ نَكَصَ عَلٰى عَقِبَيْهِ وَقَالَ إِنِّيْ بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّنْكُمْ إِنِّيْٓ اَرٰى مَا لَا تَرَوْنَ
إِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اللّٰهَ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ع 48

(8:48) And recall when Satan made their works seem fair to them and said: 'None shall overcome you today. and I am your supporter.' But when the two armies faced each other, he turned on his heels, and said: 'Surely I am quit of you for I behold that which you do not. Indeed I fear Allah, and Allah is stern in punishment.'

إِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنٰفِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ غَرَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ دِينُهُمْ ۗ وَمَن يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ
فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ 49

(8:49) And recall when the hypocrites and those whose hearts were diseased said: 'Their faith has deluded these (believers).[39] But he who puts his trust in Allah shall find Allah All-Mighty. All-Wise.'

39. Observing that a small band of resourceless Muslims was getting ready to confront the powerful Quraysh, the hypocrites as well as those who were heedless of God and cared only for worldly interests, often tended to say to one another that the religious passion of the Muslims had driven them to utter fanaticism and zealotry. They were sure that the Muslims would face a total rout on the battlefield. They were puzzled by how the Prophet (peace be on him), in whom the Muslims believed, had cast such a spell over them that they were altogether incapable of rational calculation and were hence rushing straight into the very mouth of death.

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰٓ إِذْ يَتَوَفَّى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۙ الْمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ يَضْرِبُونَ وُجُوهَهُمْ وَأَدْبَارَهُمْ ۚ وَذُوقُوا
عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ 50

(8:50) And if you could only see when the angels took away the souls of the unbelievers, striking them on their faces and backs, saying: 'Taste the torment of burning.

ذٰلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّٰمٍ لِّلْعَبِيدِ ۙ 51

(8:51) This is your punishment for what your hands wrought. Allah is not unjust in the least to His creatures.'

كَدَأْبِ اٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ وَالَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ كَفَرُوا بِاٰيٰتِ اللَّهِ فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ ۗ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ 52

(8:52) Their case is like that of the people of Pharaoh and those before them. They denied the signs of Allah and so Allah seized them for their sins. Surely Allah is All-Powerful, Stern in retribution.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَمۡ يَكُ مُغَيِّرًا نِّعۡمَةً اَنۡعَمَهَا عَلٰى قَوۡمٍ حَتّٰى يُغَيِّرُوۡا مَا بِاَنۡفُسِهِمۡ ۙ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ
سَمِيۡعٌ عَلِيۡمٌ ۙ 53

(8:53) This happened because Allah is not one to change the favour which He has bestowed upon a people until they have changed their attitude.[40], Surely Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

40. Unless a nation renders itself totally unworthy of God's favour, it is not deprived of it.

كَدَاۡبِ اٰلِ فِرۡعَوۡنَ ۙ وَالَّذِيۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِهِمۡ ؕ كَذَّبُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمۡ فَاَهۡلَكۡنٰهُمۡ بِذُنُوۡبِهِمۡ
وَاَغۡرَقۡنَاۤ اٰلَ فِرۡعَوۡنَ ۚ وَكُلٌّ كَانُوۡا ظٰلِمِيۡنَ 54

(8:54) Their case is like that of the people of Pharaoh and those before them: they rejected the signs of their Lord as false and so We destroyed them for their sins, and caused the people of Pharaoh to drown. For they were wrong-doers all.

اِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَآبِّ عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا فَهُمۡ لَا يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ۙ 55

(8:55) Surely the worst moving creatures in the sight of Allah are those who definitively denied the truth and are therefore in no way prepared to accept it;

الَّذِيۡنَ عٰهَدۡتَّ مِنۡهُمۡ ثُمَّ يَنۡقُضُوۡنَ عَهۡدَهُمۡ فِىۡ كُلِّ مَرَّةٍ وَّهُمۡ لَا يَتَّقُوۡنَ 56

(8:56) (especially) those with whom you entered into a covenant and then they broke their covenant time after time, and who do not fear Allah.[41]

41. This refers especially to the Jews. After arriving in Madina, the Prophet (peace be on him) concluded a treaty of mutual co-operation and good neighbourliness with them. Not only did the Prophet (peace be on him) take the initiative in this connection, he also tried his best to maintain pleasant relations with them. The Prophet (peace be on him) also felt greater affinity with the Jews than with the polytheists of Makka. As a rule he always showed preference to the customs and practices of the People of the Book over those of the polytheists. But somehow the Jewish rabbis and scholars were irked by the Prophet's preaching of pure monotheism and moral uprightness, let alone his scathing criticism of the deviations which appeared in Jewish belief and conduct. They were constantly engaged, therefore, in efforts to sabotage the new religious movement. In this respect, theyleft no stone unturned. They collaborated with the hypocrites who were apparently an integral part of the Muslim body-politic. To serve the same end they fanned flames to rejuvenate the old animosities between the Aws and Khazraj which had brought about bloodshed and fratricide in pre-Islamic times. They attempted to hatch conspiracies against Islam in

collaboration with the Quraysh and other tribes. What was all the more deplorable was that they indulged in these nefarious activities despite their treaty of friendship and co-operation with the Prophet (peace be on him).

When the Battle of Badr took place, they took it for granted that the Muslims would not be able to survive the very first attack of the Quraysh. However, when the outcome of the battle dashed their hopes, they became all the more spiteful. Apprehending that the victory in the Battle of Badr would help the Muslims consolidate their position, they carried out their hostile activities against Islam even more vigorously'. Ka'b b. Ashraf, a Jewish chief, went to Makka personally and recited stirring elegies for their dead warriors with a view to provoking the Quray'sh into hostile action against the Muslims. It was the same Ka'b b. Ashraf who considered the Muslim victory in the Battle of Badr such a catastrophe that he regarded death to be better than life. In his own words: 'The belly of the earth has become preferable to us than its back.' (Ibn Hisham, vol. 2. p. 51 - Ed.) Banu Qaynuqa', a Jewish tribe, in brazen violation of their agreement of friendship and alliance with the Muslims, took to indecent molestation and teasing the Muslim women who passed through their quarters. When the Prophet (peace be on him) reproached them for this shameful conduct, they threatened the Prophet (peace be on him), saying: 'Do not be deluded by your encounter with a people who had no knowledge of warfare, and so you had good luck with them. By God, if we were to wage war against you, you will know that we are the men.'(lbn Hisham, vol. 2, p. 47 - Ed.)

فَاِمَّا تَثْقَفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْحَرْبِ فَشَرِّدْ بِهِمْ مَّنْ خَلْفَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ 57

(8:57) So if you meet them in war, make of them a fearsome example for those who follow them[42] that they may he admonished.

42. The verse makes it lawful for Muslims to feel absolved of the obligations of a treaty with a people who, despite that alliance, threw the obligations of the treaty overboard and engaged in hostile actions against the Muslims. It would even be lawful for the Muslims to engage in hostilities against them. Likewise, if the Muslims are engaged in hostilities against a people and the non-Muslims who are bound in treaties of alliance or friendship with the Muslims, array themselves on the side of the enemy and fight against the Muslims, it would he lawful for the Muslims to treat them as enemies and kill them. For by their brazen violation of the obligations of the treaty concluded with their people, they had made it absolutely lawful for Muslims to disregard the terms of that treaty concerning the inviolability of the lives and properties of at least those individuals.

وَاِمَّا تَخَافَنَّ مِنْ قَوْمٍ خِيَانَةً فَانْۢبِذْ اِلَيْهِمْ عَلٰى سَوَآءٍ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْخَآئِنِيْنَ ع 58

(8:58) And if you fear treachery from any people (with whom you have a covenant) then publicly throw their covenant at them.[43] Allah does not love the treacherous.

43. According to the above verse, it is not lawful for Muslims to decide unilaterally that their treaty with an ally is annulled either because of their grievance that their ally did not fully observe the terms of the treaty in the past or on ground of the fear that he would

treacherously breach it in the future. There is no justification for Muslims to make such a decision nor to behave as if no treaty bound the two parties. On the contrary, whenever the Muslims are forced into such a situation they are required to inform the other party, before embarking on any hostile action, that the treaty was terminated. This step is necessary in order that both parties are clear in their minds as to where things stand. Guided by this principle, the Prophet (peace be on him) laid down a basic rule of Islamic international law in the following words: 'Whoever is bound in treaty with a people may not dissolve it until either its term expires, or he flings it at them (i.e. publicly declares that it had been annulled).' (Abu Da'ud, 'Jihad', Babfi al-Iman yakunbaynaha al-'Aduw 'Ahad, vol. 2, p. 75; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 4, pp. 111 and 113 - Ed.) The Prophet (peace be on him) further elucidated this by sayling: 'Do not be treacherous even to him who is treacherous to you' (Abu Da'ud, Kitab al-Buyu', 'Bab fi al-Rajul Ya'khudh Hakkahu man tahe Yadih', vol. 2, p. 260 - Ed.)

These directives were not given merely in order that preachers might preach them from the pulpit or embellish them in religious books. On the contrary, Muslims were required to foliow these directive in their everyday lives, and they did in fact do so. Once Mu'awiyah during his reign, concentrated his troops on the borders of the Roman Empire in order to carry out a sudden attack immediately after the expiry of the treaty. 'Amr b. 'Anbasah, a Companion, strongly opposed this manoeuvre. He supported his opposition by reference to a tradition from the Prophet (peace he on him) in which he condemned such an act of treachery. Ultimately Mu'awiyah had to yield and call off his troops. (See the comments on the verse by Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir. See also Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad , vol. 4, pp. 113 and 389 - Ed,)

To annul a treaty unilaterally and to launch an armed attack without any warning was common practice in the time of ancient jahiliyah (Ignorance). That practice remains in vogue in the civilized jahiliyah of the present day as well. Recent instances in point are the Russian invasion of Germany and the Russian and British military action against Iran during the Second World War. Such actions are usually justified on the ground that a previous warning would have put the enemy on the alert and would have enabled him to put up even stiffer resistance. It is also justified by saying that a military initiative has the effect of pre-empting a similar military initiative by the enemy. If such pleading can absolve people of their moral obligations, then every offence is justifiable. In such a case even those who commit theft, robbery, illegitimate sexual intercourse, homicide, or forgery can proffer either one pretext or the other for so doing. It is also amazing that acts which are deemed unlawful for individuals are deemed perfectly lawful when they are committed by nations.

It should also be pointed out that an unannounced attack. according to Islamic law, is lawful in one situation: when the ally has clearly violated the treaty and has blatantly indulged in hostile action. Only in such an eventuality it is not binding on Muslims to first declare the dissolution of the treaty. Not only that, in such a circumstance it is also lawful to launch an unannounced military action. In deriving this legal rule, Muslim jurists have drawn on the Prophet's own conduct in regard to the Quraysh who had breached the Hudaybiyah Treaty in dealing with Bana Khuza'ah. In this instance the Prophet (peace be on him) did not notify them that the treaty had been annulled. On the contrary, he invaded Makka without warning. (See Qurtubi's comments on the verse - Ed.) Nonetheless, while acting on this

exceptional provision one should be cautious and take into account the totality of circumstances in which the Prophet (peace be on him) took this step. That alone will help one to properly follow the Prophet's example. For one should try to imitate the Prophet's example in its totality rather than just one or other aspect of it depending on one's whim. What we know from the Sirah and Hadith with regard to this is the following:

First, that the Quraysh had so openly violated the treaty that its annulment had become absolutely clear. Even men of the Quraysh themselves acknowledged that the treaty was no longer in operation. It is because of this realization that the Qurayrsh had deputed Abu Sufyan to Madina to negotiate for its renewal (Al-Tabari. Ta'rikh, vol. 3, p. 46 -Ed.) This fact clearly indicates that the Quraysh were in no doubt that the treaty stood dissolved. It is immaterial whether the party which annulled the treaty verbally declared so or not for it had been violated so blatantly that no room for doubt was left.

Second, after the annulment of the treaty the Prophet (peace be on him) did not say anything, either in clear or ambiguous terms, which could justify the impression that he still regarded the Quraysh to be his allies or that the treaty relations with them were still intact. All relevant reports, on the contrary, suggest that when Abu Sufyan pleaded for the renewal of the treaty, the Prophet (peace be on him) did not accede to that request, (Ibn Hisham. vol. 2, p. 395 - Ed.)

Third, the Prophet (peace he on him) himself initiated military action against the Quraysh and he did so openly. There was no element of duplicity or fraud in the Prophet's behaviour; there was no trace of pretence to be at peace while secretly engaging in belligerent activities.

This is the full picture of the Prophet's attitude on the occasion. Hence the directive of flinging the treaty in the face of the other party as embodied in the above verse (i.e. informing the other party that the treaty had been terminated) may only be disregarded in very special circumstances such as those existing then. And should it be disregarded then this should be done in the straightforward and graceful manner adopted by the Prophet (peace be on him).

Moreover, if some dispute arises with a people with whom the Muslims have a treaty and the dispute remains unresolved even after direct negotiations or international mediation; or if the other party appears bent upon forcing a military solution to the problem, it would be lawful for Muslims to resort to force. However, according to the above verse, force may be used by Muslims after making a clear proclamation of the annulment of the treaty, and that the action taken should be overt. To carry out military action by stealth is an immoral act and can nowhere be found among the teachings of Islam.

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا سَبَقُوْا ؕ اِنَّهُمْ لَا يُعْجِزُوْنَ 59

(8:59) Let not the deniers of the truth be deluded that they will gain any advantage. Surely, they, can never overcome Us!

وَاَعِدُّوْا لَهُمْ مَّا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ قُوَّةٍ وَّمِنْ رِّبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُوْنَ بِهٖ عَدُوَّ اللّٰهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ
وَاٰخَرِيْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِمْ ۚ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَهُمْ ۚ اَللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ ۚ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوْا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ
يُوَفَّ اِلَيْكُمْ وَاَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُوْنَ 60

(8:60) Make ready for an encounter against them all the forces and well-readied horses you can muster[44] that you may overawe the enemies of Allah and your own enemies and others besides them of whom you are unaware but of whom Allah is aware. Whatever you may spend in the cause of Allah shall be fully repaid to you, and you shall not be wronged.

44. Muslims should he equipped with military resources and should have a standing army in a state of preparedness, in order that it may be used when needed. Never should it happen that the Muslims are caught unawares and have to hurriedly look around right and left to build up their defences and collect arms and supplies in order to meet the challenge of the enemy. For then it might be too late and the enemy might have accomplished its purpose.

وَاِنْ جَنَحُوْا لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۚ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ 61

(8:61) If they incline to peace, incline you as well to it, and trust in Allah. Surely He is All-Hearing. All-Knowing.

وَاِنْ يُّرِيْدُوْٓا اَنْ يَّخْدَعُوْكَ فَاِنَّ حَسْبَكَ اللّٰهُ ۚ هُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَيَّدَكَ بِنَصْرِهٖ
وَبِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۙ 62

(8:62) And should they seek to deceive you, Allah is sufficient for you.[45] He it is Who strengthened you with His succour and the believers

45. In international dealings Muslims should not act with timidity. They should rather have faith in God and should act with courage and bravery. However, as soon as the enemy is inclined to reconciliation, they should welcome the move and should not he reluctant to make peace even if they are unsure whether or not the enemy is sincere about peace, and whether or not he intends to use the settlement as a ruse to Commit later treachery.

Since it is impossible to know the true intention of others, allowance should be made for their words. If the enemy is sincere in his offer of reconcoliation, the Muslims should not continue bloodshed because his sincerity, in their eyes, is suspect. On the contrary, if the enemy is insincere, the Muslims should have courage, thanks to their trust in God, and

should go forth for reconciliation. They should stretch out the hand of peace in answer to the enemy's outstretched hand, for that is an index of their moral superiority. As for the hand of friendship which has been hypocritically stretched out in enemity, Muslims should have the strength to smash that hand to pieces.

وَاَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ؕ لَوْ اَنْفَقْتَ مَا فِى الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا مَّآ اَلَّفْتَ بَيْنَ قُلُوْبِهِمْ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ اَلَّفَ بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ 63

(8:63) and joined their hearts. Had you given away all the riches of the earth you could not have joined their hearts, but it is Allah Who joined their hearts.[46] Indeed He is All-Mighty. All-Wise.

46. Here the allusion is to that strong bond of love and brotherhood that developed among the Arabs who embraced Islam and whose conversion brought them solidarity. This strong solidarity existed despite the fact that they came from a variety of tribes which had long-standing traditions of mutual enmity. This was a special favour of God on the Muslims, especially evident in the case of the Aws and Khazraj. It was barely a couple of years before their acceptance of Islam that the two clans virtually thirsted for each other's blood. During the battle of Bu'ath both seemed set to exterminate each other. (Ibn Hisham, vol. 1. pp. 427-8-Ed.) To turn such severe enmity into deep cordiality and brotherhood within a span of two or three years and to join together mutually repellent elements into a unity as firm as that of a solid wall as was witnessed in regards to the Muslim community during the life of Prophet (peace be upon him) was doubtlessly beyond the power of any mortal. Were anyone to depend on worldly factors alone, it would have been impossible to bring about such an achievement. God's support was the deciding factor in this development and this only serves to emphasize that Muslims should always seek and depend on God's support and favour rather than on worldly factors.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِىُّ حَسْبُكَ اللّٰهُ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ع 64

(8:64) O Prophet! Allah is sufficient for you and the believers who follow you.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِىُّ حَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ عَلَى الْقِتَالِ ؕ اِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ عِشْرُوْنَ صٰبِرُوْنَ يَغْلِبُوْا مِائَتَيْنِ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ مِّائَةٌ يَّغْلِبُوْٓا اَلْفًا مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ 65

(8:65) O Prophet! Rouse the believers to fighting. If they be twenty of you who persevere they shall vanquish two hundred; and if there be of you a hundred, they

shall vanquish a thousand of those who disbelieve, for they are a people who lack understanding.[47]

47. What is nowadays called morale has been described as 'understanding' in the Qur'an. The Qur'anic expression is more scientific than the currently used word 'morale'. For the word in this context refers to the one who is fully cognizant of his objective, who is quiet clear in his mind that the cause for which he has staked his life is much more valuable than his own life, and hence if that cause is left unrealized, his life will lose all its worth and meaning. Such a conscious, comitted person actually becomes many times more powerful than he who fights without any consciousness of his cause, even though the two might be comparable in physical strength. Above all, he who has a clear understanding of reality of his own being, of God, of his relationship with God, of the reality of life and death, and of life after death, who is also well aware of the difference between truth and falsehood, and of the consequences of the victory of falsehood over truth, his strength surpasses by far the strength of others for whom, even though they 'understand', their consciousness is related to nationalism or patriotism or class conflict. It is for this reason that the Qur'an declares that a believer with understanding is ten times stronger than an unbeliever. For the believer understands the truth and a non-believer does not. It may be remembered, however, that the verse also mentions another important factor in addition to 'understanding' which makes a believer much stronger than an unbeliever, and that is 'patience'.

اَلْـٰٔنَ خَفَّفَ اللّٰهُ عَنْكُمْ وَعَلِمَ اَنَّ فِيْكُمْ ضَعْفًا ؕ فَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ مِّائَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ يَّغْلِبُوْا
مِائَتَيْنِ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ اَلْفٌ يَّغْلِبُوْٓا اَلْفَيْنِ بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ 66

(8:66) Allah has now lightened your burden for He found weakness in you. So if there be hundred of you who persevere, they shall vanquish two hundred; and if there be a thousand of you they shall, by the leave of Allah, vanquish two thousand.[48] Allah is with those who persevere.

48. This does not mean that since the faith of Muslims had declined, their ten times superiority ove the unbelievers has been reduced to twice only. What it means is that ideally a Muslim is ten times stronger than an unbeliever. However, since the Muslims had not as yet been throughly trained and had reached the desire level of maturity in their understanding, they are asked not to feel uneasy at least of challenging an enemy which is twice as strong. It should be borne in mind that the Qur'anic directive was given in 2A.H./624 C.E. when most of the Muslims, being recent converts to Islam, had undergone little trainning. As they gained maturity under the Prophet's guidance, the desired ratio of one to ten between the Muslims and the unbelievers was established. That Muslims are ten times stronger than unbelievers is a fact witnessed frequently in the battles during the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs.

مَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ اَنۡ يَّكُوۡنَ لَهٗۤ اَسۡرٰى حَتّٰى يُثۡخِنَ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ تُرِيۡدُوۡنَ عَرَضَ الدُّنۡيَا ۖ
وَاللّٰهُ يُرِيۡدُ الۡاٰخِرَةَ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيۡزٌ حَكِيۡمٌ 67

(8:67) It behoves not a Prophet to take captives until he has sufficiently suppressed the enemies in the land. You merely seek the gains of the world whereas Allah desires (for you the good) of the Hereafter. Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.

لَوۡلَا كِتٰبٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ سَبَقَ لَمَسَّكُمۡ فِيۡمَاۤ اَخَذۡتُمۡ عَذَابٌ عَظِيۡمٌ 68

(8:68) Had there not been a previous decree from Allah, a stern punishment would have afflicted you for what you have taken.

فَكُلُوۡا مِمَّا غَنِمۡتُمۡ حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا ۖ وَّاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِيۡمٌ ع 69

(8:69) So eat that which you have obtained - for it is lawful and clean--and fear Allah.[49] Surely Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

49. In attempting to explain the circumstantial background of the above verse, some commentators on the Qur'an have referred to the deliberations for deciding the fate of the Quraysh captives after the Battle of Badr. In that council Abu Bakr pleaded to release the captives in return for ransom while 'Umar suggested that they should be put to the sword. Preferring Abu Bakr's suggestion, the Prophet (peace be on him) set all the captives free in return for ransom. However, God disapproved the decision as is evident from the above-quoted verse. (See Muslim, 'Jihad', 'Bab al-lmdad bi al-Mala'ikah fi Ghazwah Badr'; and the comments on verses 67 and 68 by Ibn Kathir; and on verse 67 by Jassas and Qurtubi - Ed.) The viewpoint of the commentators can be faulted on the grounds that they failed to offer any persuasive explanation of this part of the same Qur'anic verse: 'Had it not been for a previous decree from Allah.' This could mean either the Divine decree in eternity which determines all that will happen, or, God's decree in eternity to make the spoils of war lawful for the Muslims. Now, it is evident that it is unlawful to take anything from someone unless it has been declared lawful according to Revealed Law. Hence, were the above view to be accepted, it would mean that all, including the Prophet (peace be on him), had committed a sin. Such an interpretation can hardly he entertained especially since this view is dependent on the authority of isolated ('ahad) traditions.

In my opinion, in order to understand the above verse it should be borne in mind that preliminary instructions about war had already been given in Surah Muhammad which was revealed before the Battle of Badr:

Therefore, when you meet, the Unbelievers (in fight), smite at their necks. At length, when you have thoroughly subdued them, bind a bond firmly (on them). Thereafter, either resort to generosity or to ransom until the war lays down its burden (Muhammad 47: 4).

This verse had already made it lawful for the Muslims to hold the enemy in captivity or to accept ransom contingent on the total suppression of the enemy. The Muslims had, therefore, acted in accordance with the permission granted by God to accept ransom. However, in so doing they had neglected the stipulation that the enemy should be fully subdued before the acceptance of ransom. (See the comments of Jassas on verses 67- 9-Ed.) While the Quraysh army was retreating, many Muslims took to collecting the spoils and taking the unbelievers as captives. It was only a few Muslims who chased the fleeing enemy. Had the Muslims made a concerted pursuit, a death-blow could have been struck at the Quraysh power, once and for all. God, therefore expressed His disapproal of this manner of dealing with the situation as the above-quoted verse suggests. It is obvious that it is not the Prophet (peace be on him) but the generality of Muslims at whom the reproach is directed.

The purpose of the verse is to impress upon the Muslims that they had not yet imbibed the mission of the Prophet (peace be on him). Prophets are not concerned with filling their coffers with spoils and ransom money. Rather their mission is to crush the power of the unbelievers. This was not the first instance when the Muslims had showed their worldliness. They had earlier expressed their preference to raid the trade caravan to fighting against the Quraysh army. Then, rather than try to crush the enemy, they turned to collecting spoils and taking captives, and later remonstrated about the distribution of booty. Had it not been that God had granted them permission to accept ransom see (Muhammad 47: 4), He would have severely punished them on that count. God, howeve, was merciful to them and permitted them to enjoy whatever they had seized. They should, therefore, refrain from behaviour which might be displeasing to God. It is pertinent to point out that Jassas in his Ahkam al-Qur'an, considers the above view a plausible interpretation of the verse. (See the comments of Jassas on this verse, vol. 3, pp. 72-3 - Ed.) Ibn Hisham also contains a report which supports the view. The report mentions that while the Muslims were engaged in seizing captives of war and collecting booty, the Prophet (peace be on him) observed signs of disapproval on the face of Sa'd b. Mu'adh. The Prophet (peace be on him) asked him: 'O Sa'd! It appears that you do not approve of the behaviour of these people.' He replied: 'Yes, O Messenger of God! It is the first encounter in which God has caused the rout of the unbelivers. This opportunity should have been better utilized for crushing the unbelievers thoroughly rather than for amassing captives of war.' (Ibn Hisham. vol. 1, p. 628 - Ed.)

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّبِيُّ قُل لِّمَن فِيٓ أَيۡدِيكُم مِّنَ ٱلۡأَسۡرَىٰٓ إِن يَعۡلَمِ ٱللَّهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمۡ خَيۡرٗا يُؤۡتِكُمۡ
خَيۡرٗا مِّمَّآ أُخِذَ مِنكُمۡ وَيَغۡفِرۡ لَكُمۡۚ وَٱللَّهُ غَفُورٞ رَّحِيمٞ 70

(8:70) O Prophet! Say to the captives in your hands: 'If Allah finds any goodness in your hearts He will give you that which is better than what has been taken away from you, and He will forgive you. Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful.'

وَإِن يُرِيدُواْ خِيَانَتَكَ فَقَدۡ خَانُواْ ٱللَّهَ مِن قَبۡلُ فَأَمۡكَنَ مِنۡهُمۡۚ وَٱللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٞ 71

(8:71) But if they seek to betray you, know that they had already betrayed Allah. Therefore He made you prevail over them. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آوَوا
وَّنَصَرُوا أُولَٰئِكَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يُهَاجِرُوا مَا لَكُم مِّن
وَلَايَتِهِم مِّن شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ يُهَاجِرُوا ۚ وَإِنِ اسْتَنصَرُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ فَعَلَيْكُمُ النَّصْرُ إِلَّا
عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُم مِّيثَاقٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ 72

(8:72) Surely those who believed and migrated and strove hard in the way of Allah with their possessions and their lives, and those that sheltered and helped them - they alone are the true allies of one another. And those who believed but did not migrate (to Dar-al-Islam), you are under no obligation of alliance unless they migrate.[50] And should they seek help from you in the matter of religion, it is incumbent on you to provide help unless it be against a people with whom you have a pact.[51] Allah is cognizant of all that you do.

50. The above verse is an important provision in Islamic constitutional law. For it prescribes that any agreement on guardianship would be applicable exclusively to Muslims who are either the original inhabitants of the territory which has become Dar al-Islam (the Domain of Islam) or Muslims who have migrated to the Dar al-Islam. As to Muslims living outside the jurisdiction of the Islamic state, the bond of religious brotherhood would doubtlessly exist between them and Muslim residents of the Islamic state. The two groups, however, would not have the relationship of walayah (mutual alliance). Likewise, a walayah relationship would not exist between Muslims who do not migrate to Dar al-Islam but come to it as Muslim subjects of a non-Muslim state.

The Arabic word walayah denotes the relationship of kinship, support, succour, protection, friendship, and guardianship. In the context of the present verse the word signifies the relationship of mutual support between the Islamic state and its citizens, and between the citizens themselves. Thus, this verse lays down that in a political and constitutional sense, only those Muslims who live within the territorial boundaries of the Islamic state will enjoy the privileges of walayah (guardianship) of the Islamic state. As for Muslims who are settled in a non-Islamic state, they are excluded from its political and constitutional guardianship.

It is difficult to spell out in detail the implications of this rule. Just to give some idea of it. it should be pointed out that because they lack guardianship the Muslims of Dar al-Kufr (the Domain of Unbelief) cannot inherit the property of a deceased Muslim in the Islamic state. Nor may they act as guardians of Muslim citizens of an Islamic state. Nor is it lawful for a matrimonial contract to be made between Muslims, one of whom is living in an Islamic state and the other outside of it. Likewise, the Islamic state may not appoint to an office of

authority those who have not surrendered their citizenship of the non-Islamic state. Above all, these provisions of Islamic law determine the foreign policy of the Islamic state. (Cf. Ibn Qudimah, al-Mughni, vol. 8, pp. 456-8 - Ed.) Since this clause restricts the role and control of the Islamic state over Muslims living within that state, the Islamic state is not obliged to look after the Muslims outside its domain. The following tradition embodies this point: 'I am acquit of every Muslim living among the polytheists.' (Abu Da'ud. 'Jihad', 'Bab al-Nahy'an, 'katl man i'tasama bi al-Sujud - Ed.) Islamic law, therefore, strikes at the root cause of the conflict which bedevils the relationship between different nations. For, whenever a state tries to champion the cause of the minority living outside its territory, it gives rise to intricate problems which cannot be resolved even by a succession of wars.

51. The above verse makes it clear that the Muslims living outside the Islamic state have no political bond with the Islamic state. This verse, however, does emphasize that those Muslims are not free of the bond of religious brotherhood. If Muslims living in a non-Islamic state are persecuted and seek help from the Islamic state or its citizens, it is incumbent upon the latter to help the persecuted Muslims.

While helping one's brethren-in-faith the Muslims are expected to act scrupulously. This help should be rendered without iritermitional oblioations and with due regard to the requirements of rnoral propriety.

If the Islamic state happens to be bound in a treaty relationship with a nation which inflicts wrong on Muslims, the oppressed Muslims will not be helped in a manner which is inconsistent with the moral obligations incumbent on the Islamic state as a result of that treaty .

The Qur'an uses the word mithaq for treaty. This expression is a derivative of an Arahic word which stands for trust and confidence. The expression, therefore, implies that the two parties trust each other, that there is no difference between-them irrespective of whether a no-war agreement has been formally, concluded or not.

The actual words of the verse "bainakum wa bainahum mithaq" ('[unless there be] a pact between you and them') make it plain that the treaty concluded by the Islamic state with a non-Muslim state does not merely bind the two governments. The moral obligations arising from that treaty are binding upon the Muslim nation as a whole including its individuals not to violate the obligations of the treaty into which an Islamic state has entered with some other state. However, it is only the Muslims of the Islamic state who are bound by the agreement signed by the Islamic state. Muslims living outside the Islamic state have no such obligations. This accounts for the fact that Abu Basir and Abu Jandal were not bound by the Hudaybiyah treaty concluded between the Prophet (peace he on him) and the Makkan unbelievers.

وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ ؕ اِلَّا تَفْعَلُوْهُ تَكُنْ فِتْنَةٌ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَفَسَادٌ
كَبِيْرٌ ؕ 73

(8:73) And those who disbelieve. they are allies of one another; and unless you act likewise. there will be oppression in the world and great corruption.[52]

52. If the words 'unless you also help one another' in the verse are regarded as a continuation of the preceding verse, they would mean that if Muslims do not support each other in the way, unbelielers do, this would give rise to much mischief and disorder in the world. However, if these words are considered to be connected with the directives embodied in (verse 72) onwards, their purpose would be to emphasize that the world would become full of mischief and disorder if the Muslims of Dar al-Islam (a) failed to help one another; (b) failed to provide political support and protection to the Muslims who have settled down in non-Islamic states and have not migrated to Dar al-lslam; (c) failed to help the Muslims living under oppression in territories outside Dar al-Islam when they ask for it, and (d) failed to sever their friendly ties with the unbelievers.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَهَاجَرُوْا وَجٰهَدُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰوَوْا وَّنَصَرُوْٓا اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ حَقًّا ؕ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّرِزْقٌ كَرِيْمٌ 74

(8:74) Those who believe and have migrated and strove in the way of Allah, and those who gave them refuge and help - it is they who are the true believers. Theirs shall be forgiveness and honourable sustenance.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدُ وَهَاجَرُوْا وَجٰهَدُوْا مَعَكُمْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مِنْكُمْ ؕ وَاُولُوا الْاَرْحَامِ
بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلٰى بِبَعْضٍ فِيْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ع 75

(8:75) And those who believed afterwards and migrated and strove along with you: they belong to you. But those related by blood are nearer to one another according to the Book of Allah.[53] Allah has knowledge of everything.

53. This is to remove a misunderstanding. After migration to AI-Madinah, the Holy Prophet had established the relationship of brotherhood between the Muhajirin and the Ansar, which gave rise to the misunderstanding that they had become the inheritors of one another. This verse says that inheritance shall be determined by the blood-relationship and not by the relationship of brotherhood in the Faith.

9. Surah At Taubah (The Repentance)

Name

This Surah is known by two names -- At-Taubah and Al-Bara'at. It is called At-Taubah because it enunciates the nature of taubah (repentance) and mentions the conditions of its acceptance.(vv. 102. 118). The second name Bara'at (Release) is taken from the first word of the Surah.

Omission of Bismillah

This is the only Surah of the Quran to which Bismillah is not prefixed. Though the commentators have given different reasons for this, the correct one that which has been given by Imam Razi: namely, this is because the Holy Prophet himself did not dictate it at the beginning of the Surah. Therefore the Companions did not prefix it and their successors followed them., This is a further proof of the fact that utmost care has been taken to keep the Quran intact so that it should remain in its complete and original form.

Discourses and Periods of Revelation

This Surah comprises three discourses:-

The first discourse (vv. 1-37), was revealed in Zil-Qa'adah A.H. 9 or thereabout. As the importance of the subject of the discourse required its declaration on the occasion of Haj the Holy Prophet dispatched Hadrat Ali to follow Hadrat Abu Bakr, who had already left for Makkah as leader of the Pilgrims to the Ka'abah. He instructed Hadrat Ali to deliver the discourse before the representatives of the different clans of Arabia so as to inform them of the new policy towards the mushriks.

The second discourse (vv., 38-72) was sent down in Rajab A.H. 9 or a little before this, when the Holy Prophet was engaged in making preparations for the Campaign, of Tabuk. In this discourse, the Believers were urged to take active part in Jihad, and the shirkers were severely rebuked for holding back their wealth and for hesitation to sacrifice their lives in the way of Allah because of their hypocrisy, weak faith or negligence.

The third discourse (vv. 73-129) was revealed on his return from the Campaign of Tabuk. There are some pieces in this discourse that were sent down on different occasions during the same period and were afterwards consolidated by the Holy Prophet into the Surah in accordance with inspiration from Allah. But this caused no interruption in its continuity because they dealt with the same subject and formed part of the same series of events. This discourse warns the hypocrites of their evil deeds and rebukes those Believers who had stayed behind in the Campaign of Tabuk. Then after taking them to task, Allah pardons those true Believers who had not taken part in the Jihad in the Way of Allah for one reason or the other.

Chronologically, the first discourse should have come last; but being the most important of the three in regard to its subject matter, it was placed first in the order of compilation.

Historical Background

Now let us consider the historical background of the Surah. The series of events that have been discussed in this Surah took place after the Peace Treaty of Hudaibiyah. By that time, one-third of Arabia had come under the sway of Islam which had established itself as a powerful, well organized and civilized Islamic State. This Treaty afforded further opportunities to Islam to spread its influence in the comparatively peaceful atmosphere created by it. After this Treaty, two events took place, which led to very important results:

Conquest of Arabia

The first was the Conquest of Arabia. The Holy Prophet was able to send missions among different clans for the propagation of Islam. The result was that during the short period of two years, it became such a great power that it made the old order of ignorance' feel helpless before it. So much so that the zealous elements from among the Quraish were so exasperated that they broke the Treaty in order to encounter Islam in a decisive combat. But the Holy Prophet took prompt action after the breach so as not to allow them any opportunity to gather enough force for this. He made a sudden invasion on Makkah in the month of Ramadan in A. H. 8 and conquered it. Though this conquest broke the backbone of the order of ignorance, it made still another attack on Islam in the battle-field of Hunain, which proved to be its death-knell. The clans of Hawazin Thaqif, Naur, Jushm and others gathered their entire forces in the battle field in order to crush the reformative Revolution, but they utterly failed in their evil designs. The defeat of 'ignorance' at Hunain paved the way for making the whole of Arabia the 'Abode of Islam' (Dar-ul-Islam). The result was that hardly a year had Passed after the Battle of Hunain, when the major portion of Arabia came within the fold of Islam and only a few upholders of the old order remained scattered over some corners of the country.

The second event that contributed towards making Islam a formidable power was the Campaign of Tabuk, which was necessitated by the provocative activities of the Christians living within or near the boundaries of the Roman Empire to the north of Arabia. Accordingly, the Holy Prophet, with an army of thirty thousand marched boldly towards the Roman Empire but the Romans evaded the encounter. The result was that the power of the Holy Prophet and Islam increased manifold and deputations from all corners of Arabia began to wait upon him on his return from Tabuk in order to offer their allegiance to Islam and obedience to him. The Holy Quran has described this triumph in Surah An-Nasr: "When the succor of Allah came and victory was attained and you saw people entering the fold of Islam in large numbers...

Campaign to Tabuk

The Campaign to Tabuk was the result of conflict with the Roman Empire, that had started even before the conquest of Makkah. One of the missions sent after the Treaty of Hudaibiyah to different parts of Arabia visited the clans which lived in the northern areas adjacent to Syria. The majority of these people were Christians, who were under the influence of the Roman Empire. Contrary to all the principles of the commonly accepted international law, they killed fifteen members of the delegation near a place known as Zat-u-Talah (or Zat-i-Itlah). Only Ka'ab bin Umair Ghifari, the head of the delegation, succeeded in

escaping and reporting the sad incident. Besides this, Shurahbll bin Amr, the Christian governor of Busra, who was directly under the Roman Caesar, had also put to death Haritli bin Umair, the ambassador of the Holy Prophet, who had been sent to him on a similar minion.

These events convinced the Holy Prophet that a strong action should be taken in order to make the territory adjacent to the Roman Empire safe and secure for the Muslims. Accordingly, in the month of Jamadi-ul-Ula A. H. 8, he sent an army of three thousand towards the Syrian border. When this army reached near Ma'an, the Muslims learned that Shurahbil was marching with an army of one hundred thousand to fight-with them and that the Caesar, who himself was at Hims, had sent another army consisting of one hundred thousand soldiers under his brother Theodore. But in spite of such fearful news, the brave small band of the Muslims marched on fearlessly and encountered the big army of Shurahbil at M'utah. And the result of the encounter in which the Muslims were fighting against fearful odds (the ratio of the two armies was 1:33), as very favorable, for the enemy utterly failed to defeat them. This proved very helpful for the propagation of Islam. As a result, those Arabs who were living in a state of semi independence in Syria and near Syria and the clans of Najd near Iraq, who were under the influence of the Iranian Empire, turned towards Islam and embraced it in thousands. For example, the people of Bani Sulaim (whose chief was Abbas bin Mirdas Sulaimi), Ashja'a, Ghatafan, Zubyan, Fazarah, etc., came into the fold of Islam at the same time. Above all, Farvah bin 'Amral Juzami, who was the commander of the Arab armies of the Roman Empire, embraced Islam during that time, and underwent the trial of his Faith in a way that filled the whole territory with wonder. When the Caesar came to know that Farvah had embraced Islam, he ordered that he should be arrested and brought to his court. Then the Caesar said to him, "You will have to choose one of the two things. Either give up your Islam and win your liberty and your former rank, or remain a Muslim and face death." He calmly chose Islam and sacrificed his life in the way of the Truth.

No wonder that such events as these made the Caesar realize the nature of the danger that was threatening his Empire from Arabia. Accordingly, in 9 A.H. he began to make military preparations to avenge the insult he had suffered at M'utah. The Ghassanid and other Arab chiefs also began to muster armies under him. When the Holy Prophet, who always kept himself well-informed even of the minutest things that could affect the Islamic Movement favorably or adversely, came to know of these preparations, he at once under- stood their meaning. Therefore, without the least hesitation he decided to fight against the great power of the Caesar. He knew that the show of the slightest weakness would result in the utter failure of the Movement which was facing three great dangers at that time. First the dying power of 'ignorance' that had almost been crushed in the battle-field of Hunain might revive again. Secondly, the Hypocrites of Al: Madinah, who were always on the look-out for such an opportunity, might make full use of this to do the greatest possible harm to it. For they had already made preparations for this and had, through a monk called Abu Amir, sent secret messages of their evil designs to the Christian king of Ghassan and the Caesar himself. Besides this, they had also built a mosque near Al-Madinah for holding secret meetings for this purpose. The third danger was of an attack by the Caesar himself, who had already defeated Iran, the other great power of that period, and filled with awe the adjacent territories.

It is obvious that if all these three elements had been given an opportunity of taking a concerted action against the Muslims, Islam would have lost the fight it had almost won. That is why in this case the Holy Prophet made an open declaration for making preparations for the Campaign against the Roman Empire, which was one of the two greatest empires of the world of that period. The declaration was made though all the apparent circumstances were against such a decision: for there was famine in the country and the long awaited crops were about to ripen: the burning heat of the scorching summer season of Arabia was at, its height and there was not enough money for preparations in general, and for equipment and conveyance in particular. But in spite of these handicaps, when the Messenger of Allah realized the urgency of the occasion, he took this step which was to decide whether the Mission of the Truth was going to survive or perish. The very fact that he made an open declaration for making preparations for such a campaign to Syria against the Roman Empire showed how important it was, for this was contrary to his previous practice. Usually he took every precaution not to reveal beforehand the direction to which he was going nor the name of the enemy whom he was going to attack; nay, he did not move out of Al-Madinah even in the direction of the campaign.

All the parties in Arabia fully realized the grave consequences of this critical decision. The remnants of the lovers of the old order of 'ignorance' were anxiously waiting for the result of the Campaign, for they had pinned all their hopes on the defeat of Islam by the Romans. The 'hypocrites' also considered it to be their last chance of crushing the power of Islam by internal rebellion, if the Muslims suffered a defeat in Syria. They had, therefore, made full use of the Mosque built by them for hatching plots and had employed all their devices to render the Campaign a failure. On the other side, the true Believers also realized fully that the fate of the Movement for which they had been exerting their utmost for the last 22 years was now hanging in the balance. If they showed courage on that critical occasion, the doors of the whole outer world would be thrown open for the Movement to spread. But if they showed weakness or cowardice, then all the work they had done in Arabia would -end in smoke.

That is why these lovers of Islam began to make enthusiastic preparations for the Campaign. Everyone of them tried to surpass the other in making contributions for the provision of equipment for it. Hadrat Uthman and Hadrat Abdur Rehman bin Auf presented large sums of money for this purpose. Hadrat Umar contributed half of the earnings of his life and Hadrat Abu Bakr the entire earnings of his life. The indigent Companions did not lag behind and presented whatever they could earn by the sweat of their labor and the women parted with their ornaments. Thousands of volunteers, who were filled with the desire of sacrificing their lives for Islam, came to the Holy Prophet and requested that arrangements for weapons and conveyance be made for them so that they should join the expedition. Those who could not be provided with these shed tears of sorrow; the scene was so pathetic that it made the Holy Prophet sad because of his inability to arm them. In short, the occasion became the touchstone for discriminating a true believer from a hypocrite. For, to lag behind in the Campaign meant that the very relationship of a person to Islam was doubtful. Accordingly, whenever a person lagged behind during the journey to Tabuk, the Holy Prophet, on being informed, would spontaneously say, "Leave him alone. If there be any good in him, Allah will again join him with you, and if there be no good in him, then thank Allah that He relieved you of his evil company".

In short, the Holy Prophet marched out towards Syria in Rajab A. H. 9, with thirty thousand fighters for the cause of Islam. The conditions in which the expedition was undertaken may be judged from the fact that the number of camels with them was so small that many of them were obliged to walk on foot and to wait for their turns for several had to ride at a time on each camel. To add to this, there was the burning heat of the desert and the acute shortage of water. But they were richly rewarded for their firm resolve and sincere adherence to the cause and for their perseverance in the face of those great difficulties and obstacles.

When they arrived at Tabuk, they learned that the Caesar and his allies had withdrawn their troops from the frontier and there was no enemy to fight with. Thus they won a moral victory that increased their prestige manifold and, that too, without shedding a drop of blood.

In this connection, it is pertinent to point out that the general impression given by the historians of the campaigns of the Holy Prophet about the Campaign of Tabuk is not correct. They relate the event in a way as if the news of the mustering of the Roman armies near the Arabian frontier was itself false. The fact is that the Caesar had begun to muster his armies, but the Holy Prophet forestalled him and arrived on the scene before he could make full preparations for the invasion. Therefore, believing that "discretion is the better part of valor," he withdrew his armies from the frontier. For he had not forgotten that the three thousand fighters for the cause of Islam had rendered helpless his army one hundred thousand strong at M'utah. He could not, therefore, even with an army of two hundred thousand, dare to fight against an army of thirty thousand, and that, too, under the leadership of the Holy Prophet himself.

When the Holy Prophet found that the Caesar had withdrawn his forces from the frontier, he considered thee question whether it would be worthwhile to march into the Syrian territory or to halt at Tabuk and turn his moral victory to political and strategical advantage. He decided on the latter course and made a halt for twenty days at Tabuk. During this time, he brought pressure on the small states that lay between the Roman Empire and the Islamic State and were at that time under the influence of the Romans, and subdued and made them the tributaries of the Islamic State. For instance, some Christian chiefs Ukaidir bin Abdul Malik Kindi of Dumatul Jaiidal, Yuhanna bin D'obah of Allah, and the chiefs of Maqna, Jarba' and Azruh also submitted and agreed to pay Jizyah to the Islamic State of Al-Madinah. As a result of this, the boundaries of the Islamic State were extended right up to the Roman Empire, and the majority of the Arab clans, who were being used by the Caesar against Arabia, became the allies of the Muslims against the Romans.

Above all, this moral victory of Tabuk afforded a golden opportunity to the Muslims to strengthen their hold on Arabia before entering into a long conflict with the Romans. For it broke the back of those who had still been expecting that the old order of 'ignorance' might revive in the near future, whether they were the open upholders of shirk or the hypocrites who were hiding their shirk under the garb of Islam. The majority of such people were compelled by the force of circumstances to enter into the fold of Islam and, at least, make it possible for their descendants to become true Muslims. After this a mere impotent minority of the upholders of the old order was left in the field, but it could not stand in the way of the Islamic Revolution for the perfection of which Allah had sent His Messenger.

Problems of the Period

If we keep in view the preceding background, we can easily find out the problems that were confronting the Community at that time. They were:

1. to make the whole of Arabia a perfect Dar-ul-Islam,
2. to extend the influence of Islam to the adjoining countries,
3. to crush the mischiefs of the hypocrites, and
4. to prepare the Muslims for Jihad against the non- Muslim world.

1. Now that the administration of the whole of Arabia had come in the hands of the Believers, and all the opposing powers had become helpless, it was necessary to make a clear declaration of that policy which was to be adopted to make her a perfect Dar-ul-Islam. Therefore the following measures were adopted:
    1. A clear declaration was made that all the treaties with the mushriks were abolished and the Muslims would be released from the treaty obligations with them after a respite of four months.(vv. 1-3). This declaration was necessary for uprooting completely the system of life based on shirk and to make Arabia exclusively the center of Islam so that it should not in any way interfere with the spirit of Islam nor become an internal danger for it.
    2. A decree was issued that the guardianship of the Ka`abah, which held central position in all the affairs of Arabia, should be wrested from the mushriks and placed permanently in the hands of the Believers, (vv. 12-18) that all the customs and practices of the shirk of the era of 'ignorance' should be forcibly abolished: that the mushriks should not be allowed even to come near the "House" (v. 28). This was to eradicate every trace of shirk from the "House" that was dedicated exclusively to the worship of Allah.
    3. The evil practice of Nasi, by which they used to tamper with the sacred months in the days of 'ignorance', was forbidden as an act of kufr(v. 37). This was also to serve as an example to the Muslims for eradicating every vestige of the customs of ignorance from the life of Arabia (and afterwards from the lives of the Muslims everywhere).
2. In order to enable the Muslims to extend the influence of Islam outside Arabia, they were enjoined to crush with sword the non- Muslim powers and to force them to accept the sovereignty of the Islamic State. As the great Roman and Iranian Empires were the biggest hindrances in the way, a conflict with them was inevitable. The object of Jihad was not to coerce them to accept Islam they were free to accept or not to accept it-but to prevent them from thrusting forcibly their deviations upon others and the coming generations. The Muslims were enjoined to tolerate their misguidance only to the extent that they might have the freedom to remain misguided, if they chose to be so, provided that they paid Jizyah (v. 29) as a sign of their subjugation to the Islamic State.
3. The third important problem was to crush the mischiefs of the hypocrites, who had hitherto been tolerated in spite of their flagrant crimes. Now that there was practically no pressure upon them from outside, the Muslims were enjoined to treat them openly as disbelievers (v. 73). Accordingly, the Holy Prophet set on fire the house of Swailim, where the hypocrites used to gather for consultations in order to dissuade the people from joining the expedition to Tabuk. Likewise on his return from Tabuk, he ordered

to pull down and burn the 'Mosque' that had been built to serve as a cover for the hypocrites for hatching plots against the true Believers.

4. In order to prepare the Muslims for Jihad against the whole non-Muslim world, it was necessary to cure them even of that slight weakness of faith from which they were still suffering. For there could be no greater internal danger to the Islamic Community than the weakness of faith, especially where it was going to engage itself single-handed in a' conflict with the whole non-Muslim world. That is why those people who had lagged behind in the Campaign to Tabuk or had shown the least negligence were severely taken to task, and were considered as hypocrites if they had no plausible excuse for not fulfilling that obligation. Moreover, a clear declaration was made that in future the sole criterion of a Muslim's faith shall be the exertions he makes for the uplift of the Word of Allah and the role he plays in the conflict between Islam and kufr. Therefore, if anyone will show any hesitation in sacrificing his life, money, time and energies, his faith shall not be regarded as genuine. (vv. 81-96).

   If the above-mentioned important points are kept in view during the study of this Surah, it will facilitate the understanding of its contents.

Subject: Problems of Peace and War

In continuation of Surah Al-Anfal, this Surah also deals with the problems of peace and war and bases the theme on the Tabuk Expedition.

Topics and their Interconnection

This portion deals with the sanctity of treaties and lays down principles, rules and regulations which must be kept in view before breaking them, in case the other party does not observe them sincerely. **1 - 12**

In this portion the Muslims have been urged to fight in the Way of Allah with the mushrik Arabs, the Jews and the Christians, who were duly warned of the consequences of their mischievous and inimical behavior. **13 - 37**

In this discourse, the Muslims have been told clearly and explicitly that they will inherit the rewards promised by Allah only if they take active part in the conflict with kufr, for that is the criterion which distinguishes true Muslims from hypocrites. Therefore true Muslims should take active part in Jihad, without minding dangers, obstacles, difficulties, temptations and the like. **38 - 72**

This portion deals with the problems of hypocrites and lays down rules and regulations governing the treatment that should be meted out to them and points out their distinctive marks from true Muslims. **73 - 90**

This portion deals with the case of those who remained behind and did not accompany the Holy Prophet for Jihad to Tabuk. For this purpose they have been separated in different categories, that is, the disabled, the sick, the indigent, the hypocrites, the believers who realized their guilt and punished themselves before the return of the Holy Prophet from Tabuk and those who confessed their error. Their cases have been dealt with in accordance with the nature and extent of their offense. **91 - 110**

In order to make their noble qualities look all the more conspicuous and dignified by contrast, the characteristics of the Believers have been mentioned, and they have been reassured that Allah, the Sovereign of the Universe, is their helper and guardian. Accordingly, because of their sincerity, He has forgiven the Three Believers who did not take part in the expedition. **111 - 118**

In the concluding portion, general instructions have been given to the Believers for their guidance. **119 - 127**

This is the conclusion: "Follow the Messenger who is gentle and compassionate and your greatest well-wisher, and trust in Allah, the Lord of the Universe". **128 - 129**

بَرَآءَةٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖٓ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ عٰهَدْتُّمْ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ۝١

[9:1] This is a declaration of disavowal[1] by Allah and His Messenger to those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity and with whom you have made treaties:[2]

1. As has already been stated in the preface to this Surah, this discourse (Ayats 1-37) was revealed in A.H.9, when Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) had left for Makkah as leader of the pilgrims to the Kaabah. Therefore the companions said to the Prophet (peace be upon him), “Send it to Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him), so that he may proclaim it on the occasion of Hajj.” He replied, “The importance and nature of the declaration demands that this should be proclaimed on my behalf by someone from my own family.” Accordingly, he entrusted this duty to Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) and instructed him to proclaim it openly before the pilgrims, and also make these four announcements: (1) No one who rejects Islam shall enter Paradise. (2) No mushrik should perform Hajj after this. (3) It is forbidden to move round the Kaabah in a naked state. (4) The terms of the treaties which are still in force (i.e. with those who have not broken their treaties with the Messenger of Allah up to that time) would be faithfully observed till the expiry of the term of the treaties.

In this connection, it will be worthwhile to know that the first Hajj of the Islamic period after the conquest of Makkah was performed in A.H. 8 according to the old customs. Then in A.H. 9 the second Hajj was performed by the Muslims in the Islamic way, and by the mushriks in their own way. But the third Hajj, known as "Hajja-tul- Widaa", was performed in A.H. 10 in the purely Islamic way under the guidance of the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself. He did not perform Hajj during the two previous years because up to that time the mushriks had not been forbidden from it, and so there were still some traces of shirk associated with it.

2. This declaration of the abrogation of the treaties with the mushriks was made in accordance with the law enjoined in Surah Al-Anfaal: 58 regarding the treacherous people, for it is treachery from the Islamic point of view to wage war against any people with whom a treaty of peace had been made, without openly declaring that the treaty had been terminated. That is why a proclamation of the abrogation of the treaties was necessitated against those clans who were always hatching plots against Islam in spite of the treaties of peace they had made. They would break the treaties and turn hostile on the first

opportunity for treachery, and the same was true of all the mushrik clans with the exception of Bani Kananah, Bani Damrah and one or two other clans.

This proclamation practically reduced the mushriks of Arabia to the position of outlaws and no place of shelter was left for them, for the major part of the country had come under the sway of Islam. As this released the Muslims from the obligations of the treaties made with them and forestalled them, they were driven into a tight corner. For, this smashed all their evil designs of creating trouble by inciting civil war at the time of a threat from the Roman and the Iranian Empires, or after the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him). But Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) turned the tables on them before the opportune moment for which they were waiting. Now the only alternatives left with them were either to accept Islam that had become the state religion of Arabia, or to fight against it and be exterminated, or to emigrate from the country.

The wisdom of this grand plan became apparent when the mischief of apostasy broke out in different parts of Arabia a year and a half after this at the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him). This disturbance was so sudden and violent that it shook to its foundations the newly created Islamic state and would have done a far greater harm if the organized power of shirk had not been broken beforehand by this abrogation. It may be asserted that, but for this timely action the mischief of apostasy, that rose at the very beginning of the caliphate of Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him), would have done tenfold harm by rebellion and civil war, and might have changed the whole history of Islam.

فَسِيحُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللَّهِ ۙ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مُخْزِي الْكَافِرِينَ 2

[9:2] "You may go about freely in the land, for four months,[3] but know well that you will not be able to frustrate Allah, and that Allah will bring disgrace upon those who deny the Truth."

3. The respite of four months from the tenth of Zil-Haj (the date of the proclamation) to the tenth of Rabi-uththani was granted to give time to the mushriks so that they should consider their position carefully and decide whether to make preparation for war or to emigrate from the country or to accept Islam.

وَأَذَانٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى النَّاسِ يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْأَكْبَرِ أَنَّ اللَّهَ بَرِيءٌ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ۙ وَ رَسُولُهُ ۚ فَإِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ ۖ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللَّهِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ۙ 3

[9:3] This is a public proclamation by Allah and His Messenger to all people on the day of the Great Pilgrimage:[4] "Allah is free from all obligation to those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity; and so is His Messenger. If you repent, it shall be for your own good; but if you turn away, then know well that you will not be able to frustrate Allah. So give glad tidings of a painful chastisement to those who disbelieve.

4. Hajj-i-akbar refers to the 10th of Zil-Hajjah and is also known as Yaum-un-Nahr. This has been explained by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in an authentic tradition. On the 10th of Zil-Hajjah, during the last Hajj of the Prophet (peace be upon him), he asked the people, "What is this day?" The people answered, "It is the day of sacrifice."

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "This is the day of Hajj-i-akbar". Here the word Hajj-i-akbar (greater pilgrimage) has been used in contrast to Hajj-i-asghar which the Arabs used for Umrah. Thus, the Hajj which is performed in the prescribed dates of Zil-Hajj is called Hajj-i-akbar.

اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ عٰهَدْتُّمْ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنْقُصُوْكُمْ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَمْ يُظَاهِرُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ
اَحَدًا فَاَتِمُّوْٓا اِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدَهُمْ اِلٰى مُدَّتِهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ 4

[9:4] In exception to those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity are those with whom you have made treaties and who have not violated their treaties nor have backed up anyone against you. Fulfil your treaties with them till the end of their term. Surely Allah loves the pious."[5]

5. "So, fulfill to them their treaty." For your violation in such cases shall be against piety. And Muslims should remain pious under all circumstances "Indeed, Allah loves those who are righteous" only.

فَاِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْاَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُّمُوْهُمْ وَخُذُوْهُمْ
وَاحْصُرُوْهُمْ وَاقْعُدُوْا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصَدٍ ۚ فَاِنْ تَابُوْا وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ
فَخَلُّوْا سَبِيْلَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ 5

[9:5] But when the sacred months expire[6] slay those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity wherever you find them; seize them, and besiege them, and lie in wait for them. But if they repent and establish the Prayer and pay Zakah, leave them alone.[7] Surely Allah is All-Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

6. Here "the sacred months" are not those four months during which war is forbidden for the sake of Hajj and Umrah but the four months that were made unlawful for the Muslims to attack those mushriks who were granted respite by Ayat 2.

7. That is, “Mere repentance from disbelief and shirk will not end the matter. But they shall have to perform the prescribed prayer and pay Zakat dues. Without these it will not be considered that they had given up disbelief and embraced Islam." Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) based his decision on this verse in the case of the apostates, after the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him), who argued that they were not rejecting Islam, because they offered Salat, even though they had refused to pay the Zakat dues. This argument roused doubts in the minds of the companions in general that they had no right to fight with such people as these. But Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) removed their doubts, saying, “Verse 5 enjoins us to let those people go their way who fulfill all the three conditions, repentance from shirk, the establishment of Salat, and the payment of Zakat. We cannot forbear them, because they do not fulfill one of these three conditions.”

وَاِنۡ اَحَدٌ مِّنَ الۡمُشۡرِكِيۡنَ اسۡتَجَارَكَ فَاَجِرۡهُ حَتّٰى يَسۡمَعَ كَلٰمَ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ اَبۡلِغۡهُ مَاۡمَنَهٗ ؕ
ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمۡ قَوۡمٌ لَّا يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ع 6

[9:6] And if any of those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity seeks asylum, grant him asylum that he may hear the Word of Allah, and then escort him to safety for they are a people who do not know.[8]

8. That is, if during a fight, an enemy makes a request that he should be given an opportunity to understand Islam, the Muslims should give him a surety of protection and allow him to visit them. They should then present Islam before him in order to make him understand it. If, after this, he does not embrace Islam, they should convey him safely to his place. Such a person who comes to Dar-ul-Islam under the above mentioned protection is called mustamin in the Islamic code.

كَيۡفَ يَكُوۡنُ لِلۡمُشۡرِكِيۡنَ عَهۡدٌ عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ وَعِنۡدَ رَسُوۡلِهٖۤ اِلَّا الَّذِيۡنَ عٰهَدۡتُّمۡ عِنۡدَ
الۡمَسۡجِدِ الۡحَرَامِ ۚ فَمَا اسۡتَقَامُوۡا لَكُمۡ فَاسۡتَقِيۡمُوۡا لَهُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الۡمُتَّقِيۡنَ 7

[9:7] How can there be a covenant with those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity be binding upon Allah and His Messenger, excepting those with whom you made a covenant near the Sacred Mosque?[9] Behave in a straight manner with them so long as they behave with you in a straight manner for Allah loves the Godfearing.

9. That is: Bani Kinanah and Bani Khuzaah and Bani Damrah.

كَيْفَ وَاِنْ يَّظْهَرُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ لَا يَرْقُبُوْا فِيْكُمْ اِلًّا وَّلَا ذِمَّةً ؕ يُرْضُوْنَكُمْ بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ
وَتَاْبٰى قُلُوْبُهُمْ وَاَكْثَرُهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ ۚ 8

[9:8] How can there be any covenant with the other polytheists for were they to prevail against you, they will respect neither kinship nor agreement. They seek to please you with their tongues while their hearts are averse to you,[10] and most of them are wicked.[11]

10. That is, "Though outwardly they negotiated for peace treaties, they cherished evil intentions in their hearts, and waited for an opportune moment to break them. And this was borne by later experiences."

11. They were evil-doers because they had no sense of moral responsibilities nor did they hesitate to break moral limits.

اِشْتَرَوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا فَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ سَآءَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ 9

[9:9] They have sold the revelations of Allah for a paltry price[12] and have firmly hindered people from His Path.[13]Evil indeed is what they have done.

12. That is, when they had to make a choice between the divine guidance and the transitory worldly ambitions, they chose the latter, because they did not comprehend the comparative values of the two. Whereas the revelations of Allah were inviting them to goodness, righteousness and observance of the divine law, which lead to eternal bliss. They chose to follow the unbridled lusts of their selves which gained some transitory worldly benefits for them, but consequently led them to eternal perdition.

13. Those evil-doers "hindered (people) from His Way", for they not only chose misguidance for themselves but also tried to prevent others from following the right way. They put every kind of obstruction in the way of the invitation to righteousness; nay, they tried their best to gag the mouths of those who were extending that invitation and make their lives hard for them. In short, they did all they could to prevent the establishment of the righteous system of life that Allah required the people to establish.

لَا يَرْقُبُوْنَ فِيْ مُؤْمِنٍ اِلًّا وَّلَا ذِمَّةً ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُعْتَدُوْنَ 10

[9:10] They neither have any respect for kinship nor for agreement in respect of the believers. Such are indeed transgressors.

فَاِنۡ تَابُوۡا وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ فَاِخۡوَانُكُمۡ فِى الدِّيۡنِ ؕ وَنُفَصِّلُ الۡاٰيٰتِ لِقَوۡمٍ يَّعۡلَمُوۡنَ 11

[9:11] But if they repent and establish Prayer and give Zakah they are your brothers in faith. Thus do We expound Our revelations to those who know.[14]

14. Here too, it has explicitly been stated that those who repent will not become your brethren in faith without the observance of Salat and Zakat.

"Then they are your brothers in religion": This means that if they fulfill those conditions, then not only shall their lives and properties become unlawful for you but also they shall enjoy equal rights with you in the Islamic community. There shall be no distinction between them and the other Muslims in regard to social, cultural, legal and political rights, and nothing will stand in their way to the progress for which they are otherwise qualified.

وَاِنۡ نَّكَثُوۡۤا اَيۡمَانَهُمۡ مِّنۡۢ بَعۡدِ عَهۡدِهِمۡ وَطَعَنُوۡا فِىۡ دِيۡنِكُمۡ فَقَاتِلُوۡۤا اَئِمَّةَ الۡكُفۡرِ ۙ اِنَّهُمۡ لَاۤ اَيۡمَانَ لَهُمۡ لَعَلَّهُمۡ يَنۡتَهُوۡنَ 12

[9:12] But if they break their pledges after making them and attack your faith, make war on the leaders of unbelief that they may desist[14a], for they have no regard for their pledged words.[15]

14a. ".....you should fight with them.....":perhaps the fear of war may force them to desist from breaking.

15. In the context, the words, oaths, and compacts mean the compact of the acceptance of Islam. Therefore, the question of making a new compact with them does not arise. As regards the old pacts, they had already broken all of them. It is on account of this that the declaration of immunity (from obligations) by Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) has been clearly made. It has also been stated that such people are not worthy of any treaty and they can only be let off if they repent of their disbelief and shirk and establish Salat and pay Zakat dues. This verse states clearly how the renegades should be treated. As a matter of fact, this verse forestalled the mischief of apostasy that broke out a year and a half after its revelation and Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) followed the guidance given in this verse to crush it.

اَلَا تُقَاتِلُوۡنَ قَوۡمًا نَّكَثُوۡۤا اَيۡمَانَهُمۡ وَهَمُّوۡا بِاِخۡرَاجِ الرَّسُوۡلِ وَهُمۡ بَدَءُوۡكُمۡ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ؕ اَتَخۡشَوۡنَهُمۡ ۚ فَاللّٰهُ اَحَقُّ اَنۡ تَخۡشَوۡهُ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ مُّؤۡمِنِيۡنَ 13

[9:13] Will you not fight[16] against those who broke their pledges and did all they could to drive the Messenger away and initiated hostilities against you? Do you fear them? Surely Allah has greater right that you should fear Him, if you are true believers.

16. In this passage the addressees are the Muslims. They have been urged to fight perseveringly in the Way of Allah, without paying the least heed to their ties of blood and relationship and to their worldly interests. In order to understand fully the spirit of this passage, the reader should keep in view the state of affairs at the time, when the abrogation of the treaties was declared. Though Islam was reigning supreme in the greater part of Arabia and there was no greater power to challenge its supremacy, still superficial observers saw a number of dangers in the extreme step which was being taken at that time.

First, it was feared that the abrogating of the treaties with all the mushrik clans at one and the same time, and debarring them from Hajj and changing the guardianship of the Kaabah and abolishing all the rituals of ignorance, would so incite the mushriks and the hypocrites and kindle such fire of enmity that they would be ready to shed the last drop of their blood for safeguarding their interests and prejudices.

Secondly, it was feared that the mushriks would be greatly enraged by this declaration which granted freedom of movement to the Muslims to perform Hajj, whereas it forbade the non-Muslims. Obviously this would also affect adversely their economic condition, for Hajj played a very important part in the economic life of Arabia during that period of her history.

Lastly, it was feared that this would put to a hard trial those people who had embraced Islam recently after the peace treaty of Hudaibiyah and the conquest of Makkah. For many of their kith and kin were still mushriks. Some of whom had their interests closely bound up with those offices of ignorance which were abolished. Now it was obvious that the total war against the mushriks demanded that these new Muslims should not only kill their own near and dear ones but should also themselves abolish those ancient offices and distinctions which they had enjoyed for centuries.

Though, it is true that none of these dangers took any practical shape, there were good reasons for these apprehensions, for none could foresee the trends of events at the time of the abrogation of the treaties. And the dangers were averted because these commandments had prepared them beforehand to meet them. More than that: this preparedness produced other good results. The delegates from the remnants of the mushriks, their chiefs and rulers began to visit Al-Madinah and take the oath of allegiance to Islam and obedience to the prophet (peace be upon him), who let them retain their old positions and offices. These things proved that if the Muslims had not been in a state of readiness to take immediate action for enforcing the terms of the declaration with the sword, the events which followed might have taken a different direction. Therefore it was the need of the hour that the Muslims should have been vehemently urged for Jihad, and their apprehensions removed. That is why it was being enjoined that they should not let anything hinder them from doing the will of Allah. And this is the theme of this discourse.

قَاتِلُوْهُمْ يُعَذِّبْهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِاَيْدِيْكُمْ وَيُخْزِهِمْ وَيَنْصُرْكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَيَشْفِ صُدُوْرَ قَوْمٍ
مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ۙ 14

[9:14] Make war on them. Allah will chastise them through you and will humiliate them. He will grant you victory over them, and will soothe the bosoms of those who believe,

وَيُذْهِبْ غَيْظَ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ؕ وَيَتُوْبُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ 15

[9:15] and will remove rage from their hearts, and will enable whomsoever He wills to repent.[17] Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

17. This was a subtle reference to the possibility of what actually was going to happen afterwards. "And He will remove": this was to remove the misunderstandings of the Muslims who apprehended a bloody war as a result of the declaration. They were told that it was also possible that some of the enemies might repent and embrace Islam. This was not made quite plain lest it should slacken the war preparations of the Muslims on one side and weaken the force of the warning to the mushriks on the other. The latter thing might have hindered the mushriks from giving a serious thought to the critical position they were in that finally led them to embrace Islam.

اَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ اَنْ تُتْرَكُوْا وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ جَاهَدُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ
اللّٰهِ وَلَا رَسُوْلِهٖ وَلَا الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَلِيْجَةً ؕ وَاللّٰهُ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ع 16

[9:16] Do you imagine that you will be spared without being subjected to any test? Know well that Allah has not yet determined who strove hard (in His cause), and has not taken any others instead of His Messenger and the believers as his trusted allies?[18] Allah is well aware of all that you do.

18. The addressees in Ayat 16 were those Muslims who had recently embraced Islam. It means to tell them plainly: "Now that you have embraced Islam, you shall have to give a genuine proof by a trial that you have accepted it because you believe in its truth and not because it has become supreme in the country by the exertions of the true believers. The trial is that you shall have to sacrifice your lives, wealth, and your near and dear ones for the sake of Allah and His Way. Then and only then, you will be regarded as true believers.

مَا كَانَ لِلۡمُشۡرِكِيۡنَ اَنۡ يَّعۡمُرُوۡا مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ شٰهِدِيۡنَ عَلٰٓى اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ بِالۡكُفۡرِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ
حَبِطَتۡ اَعۡمَالُهُمۡ ۖۚ وَفِى النَّارِ هُمۡ خٰلِدُوۡنَ 17

[9:17] It does not become those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity to visit and tend Allah's mosques while they bear witness of unbelief against themselves.[19] All their works have gone to waste.[20] They shall abide in the Fire.

19. This lays down the general principle for the guardianship of the places of worship that have been built exclusively for the worship of Allah. Obviously, those people who associate others with Allah in His essence, His rights and His powers cannot be the proper persons to be the guardians, the servants, the managers etc. of such sacred places. And when they themselves reject the invitations to Tauhid, and openly declare that they are not going to dedicate their worship and obedience exclusively o Allah, they automatically forfeit any right they had for the guardianship of such places of worship that had been built for the worship of Allah alone. Though the principle is of a general nature, it has been mentioned here with the particular object of removing the mushriks from the guardianship of the Kaabah and Masjid-i-Haram and establishing permanently the guardianship of the worshipers of one God over them.

20. "Their deeds have become worthless": including the little real service they did to the house of Allah because they mixed with it shirk and other practices of ignorance. Their little good was destroyed by their far greater evils.

اِنَّمَا يَعۡمُرُ مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ مَنۡ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالۡيَوۡمِ الۡاٰخِرِ وَاَقَامَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَى الزَّكٰوةَ وَلَمۡ
يَخۡشَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ فَعَسٰٓى اُولٰٓئِكَ اَنۡ يَّكُوۡنُوۡا مِنَ الۡمُهۡتَدِيۡنَ 18

[9:18] It only becomes those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and establish Prayer and pay Zakah and fear none but Allah to visit and tend the mosques of Allah. These are likely to be guided aright.

اَجَعَلۡتُمۡ سِقَايَةَ الۡحَآجِّ وَعِمَارَةَ الۡمَسۡجِدِ الۡحَرَامِ كَمَنۡ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالۡيَوۡمِ الۡاٰخِرِ
وَجٰهَدَ فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ لَا يَسۡتَوٗنَ عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهۡدِى الۡقَوۡمَ الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ ۘ 19

[9:19] Do you consider providing water to the Pilgrims and tending the Sacred Mosque equal in worth to believing in Allah and the Last Day and striving in the cause of Allah?[21] The two are not equal with Allah. Allah does not direct the wrong-doing folk to the Right Way.

21. This question has been posed to bring home the fact that the guardianship of a shrine or attendance at it or other religious acts that are done for show, and are exploited by worldly people to establish and maintain the show of their piety, have no value whatsoever in the sight of Allah. The real worth of a person with Allah is that he should be sincere in his beliefs and make sacrifices in the Way of Allah, no matter whether he enjoys or does not enjoy such distinctions or happens to descend or not from a family of saints. On the contrary, those people who lack these excellences have no value with Allah, no matter whether they be the descendants of saints or inherit the guardianship of shrines from a long line of saints, or perform some religious acts for show on special occasions. And it is not lawful in any way that the guardianship, etc. of sacred places and institutions should be left in the hands of these worthless people just because they happen to inhere such rights from their forefathers.

اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَهَاجَرُوْا وَجٰهَدُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ ۙ اَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً
عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفَآئِزُوْنَ 20

[9:20] The higher rank with Allah is for those who believed and migrated and strove in His cause with their belongings and their persons. It is they who are triumphant.

يُبَشِّرُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَرِضْوَانٍ وَّجَنّٰتٍ لَّهُمْ فِيْهَا نَعِيْمٌ مُّقِيْمٌ ۙ 21

[9:21] Their Lord gives them glad tidings of mercy from Him and of His good pleasure. For them await Gardens of eternal bliss.

خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عِنْدَهٗٓ اَجْرٌ عَظِيْمٌ 22

[9:22] Therein they shall abide forever. Surely with Allah a mighty reward awaits them.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوْٓا اٰبَآءَكُمْ وَاِخْوَانَكُمْ اَوْلِيَآءَ اِنِ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْكُفْرَ عَلَى
الْاِيْمَانِ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّهُمْ مِّنْكُمْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ 23

[9:23] Believers, do not take your fathers and your brothers for your allies if they choose unbelief in preference to belief. Whosoever of you takes them as allies those are wrong-doers.

قُلْ اِنْ كَانَ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ وَاَبْنَآؤُكُمْ وَاِخْوَانُكُمْ وَاَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيْرَتُكُمْ وَ
اَمْوَالُ ِۨاقْتَرَفْتُمُوْهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسٰكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَآ اَحَبَّ اِلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ
وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَجِهَادٍ فِيْ سَبِيْلِهٖ فَتَرَبَّصُوْا حَتّٰى يَاْتِيَ اللّٰهُ بِاَمْرِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ
الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ع 24

[9:24] Tell them, (O Prophet): "If your fathers and your sons and your brothers and your wives and your tribe and the riches you have acquired and the commerce of which you fear a slackening, and the dwellings that you love, if they are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His cause, then wait until Allah brings about His decree.[22] Allah does not guide the evil-doing folk."

22. That is: “The judgment will deprive them of the blessings of the true faith, and of the honor of bearing its standard and leading the world towards its guidance and bestow these on others”.

لَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللّٰهُ فِيْ مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيْرَةٍ ۙ وَّيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ ۙ اِذْ اَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ
عَنْكُمْ شَيْـًٔا وَّضَاقَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْاَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ ثُمَّ وَلَّيْتُمْ مُّدْبِرِيْنَ ۚ 25

[9:25] Surely Allah has succoured you before on many a battlefield, and (you have yourselves witnessed His succour to you)[23] on the day of Hunayn when your numbers made you proud, but they did you no good, and the earth, for all its vastness, constrained you, and you turned your backs in retreat.

23. This has been mentioned to allay the fears of those who were afraid of the consequences of the declaration of the abrogation of the treaties, as if to say, “Why are you afraid of war.” That Allah, Who helped you in far worse and dangerous situations on so many occasions before this, is there even now to help you. Had this mission depended on your might, it could not have come out victorious in the hard trials at Makkah, nor in the battle of Badr when the odds were heavily against you. This is because Allah’s power has been helping you, and past experiences have shown you how effective that power is. Rest assured that the same power will help you to succeed in your mission.

The battle of Hunain had taken place in the valley of Hunain between Taaif and Makkah in the month of Shawwal A.H. 8, a year or so before the revelation of this discourse. This was the first battle in which the Muslim army consisted of 12,000 fighters and this far outnumbered the army of the disbelievers. But in spite of this the archers of the Hawazin clan wrought havoc among the Muslim army and put them to rout. The Prophet (peace be

upon him) and a few of his bravest companions, however, firmly stood their ground and rallied the routed army, and ultimately won the victory. It was because of their perseverance that the army reassembled and the Muslims ultimately won the victory; otherwise they would have lost much more at Hunain than they had gained by the conquest of Makkah.

ثُمَّ أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَنزَلَ جُنُودًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا ۚ وَعَذَّبَ
الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۚ وَذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ 26

[9:26] Then Allah caused His tranquillity to descend upon His Messenger and upon the believers, and He sent down hosts whom you did not see, and chastised those who disbelieved. Such is the recompense of those who deny the Truth.

ثُمَّ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ مِن بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَىٰ مَن يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ 27

[9:27] Then (after so chastising the unbelievers), Allah enables, whomsoever He wills, to repent.[24] Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Merciful.

24. "Allah will accept repentance" refers to the large number of the disbelievers who embraced Islam after the victory at Hunain as a result of the kind and generous treatment they received from the Prophet (peace be upon him), in spite of their former antagonism. This was mentioned to allay the anxiety of those new Muslims who feared that, as a result of the declaration, all of their mushrik relatives would be put to death. (E.N. 16). They have been told to expect, in the light of the previous experiences, that the mushriks would be obliged to accept Islam, when they realize that neither any hope of the revival of the order of ignorance was left nor of any props to support it.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْمُشْرِكُونَ نَجَسٌ فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ
هَٰذَا ۚ وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ عَيْلَةً فَسَوْفَ يُغْنِيكُمُ اللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ إِن شَاءَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ
حَكِيمٌ 28

[9:28] Believers, those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity are unclean. So, after the expiry of this year, let them not even go near the Sacred Mosque.[25] And should you fear poverty, Allah will enrich you out of His bounty, if He wills. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

25. This prohibition was meant to root out all the vestiges of shirk and ignorance. For the mushriks were prohibited not only from the performance of Hajj and attendance at the AlMasjid-AlHaram but also from entering into its sacred precincts.

They are unclean in their creeds, in their morals, in their deeds, and in their ways of ignorance, and not in their physical bodies by themselves. That is the reason why they have been prohibited from entering the sacred precincts of the holy place.

This prohibition has been interpreted in different ways. Imam Abu Hanifah is of the view that it prohibits them only from the performance of Hajj and Umrah, and from the observance of the rites of ignorance in the holy precincts. But Imam Shafii is of the opinion that they have been forbidden even to enter the AlMasjid-AlHaram for any purpose whatsoever. Imam Malik is of the opinion that they are forbidden not only to enter AlMasjid-AlHaram but any mosque at all. It is, however, obvious that the last opinion is not correct, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself permitted mushriks to enter the Prophet's mosque at Al-Madinah.

قَاتِلُوا الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُوْنَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ وَلَا يَدِيْنُوْنَ دِيْنَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ حَتّٰى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَّدٍ وَّهُمْ صٰغِرُوْنَ ع 29

[9:29] Those who do not believe in Allah and the Last Day[26] - even though they were given the scriptures, and who do not hold as unlawful[27] that which Allah and His Messenger have declared to be unlawful, and who do not follow the true religion - fight against them until they pay tribute out of their hand and are utterly subdued.[28]

26. Though the people of the Book professed to believe in Allah and the Hereafter, in fact they believed in neither. For only that person really believes in Allah who acknowledges Him as the only one God and the only one Lord, and does not associate with Him any other, whatsoever, in His Being, in His characteristics, in His rights and in His powers and authority. But according to this definition of shirk both the Christians and the Jews were guilty of shirk as has been made plain in the verses that follow: therefore their profession of belief in Allah was meaningless. Likewise they did not really believe in the Hereafter, in spite of the fact that they believed in resurrection. For it is not enough: one must also believe that on that Day absolute justice will be done on the basis of one's belief and actions. One should also believe that no ransom and no expiation and no spiritual relationships with any saint shall be of any avail on that Day. It is absolutely meaningless to believe in the Hereafter without this. And the Jews and the Christians had polluted their faiths because they believed that such things would protect them against justice on that day.

27. The second reason why Jihad should be waged against them is that they did not adopt the law sent down by Allah through His Messenger.

28. This is the aim of Jihad with the Jews and the Christians and it is not to force them to become Muslims and adopt the Islamic way of life. They should be forced to pay jizyah in order to put an end to their independence and supremacy so that they should not remain rulers and sovereigns in the land. These powers should be wrested from them by the

followers of the true faith, who should assume the sovereignty and lead others towards the right way, while they should become their subjects and pay jizyah. Jizyah is paid by those non-Muslims who live as zimmis (proteges) in an Islamic state, in exchange for the security and protection granted to them by it. This is also symbolical of the fact that they themselves agree to live in it as its subjects. This is the significance of "they pay the tribute out of (their) hand," that is, "with full consent so that they willingly become the subjects of the believers, who perform the duty of the vicegerents of Allah on the earth."

At first this command applied only to the Jews and the Christians. Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself extended it to the Zoroastrians also. After his death, his companions unanimously applied this rule to all the non Muslim nations outside Arabia.

This is jizyah of which the Muslims have been feeling apologetic during the last two centuries of their degeneration and there are still some people who continue to apologize for it. But the way of Allah is straight and clear and does not stand in need of any apology to the rebels against Allah. Instead of offering apologies on behalf of Islam for the measure that guarantees security of life, property and faith to those who choose to live under its protection, the Muslims should feel proud of such a humane law as that of jizyah. For it is obvious that the maximum freedom that can be allowed to those who do not adopt the Way of Allah but choose to tread the ways of error is that they should be tolerated to lead the life they like. That is why the Islamic state offers them protection, if they agree to live as its zimmis by paying jizyah, but it cannot allow that they should remain supreme rulers in any place and establish wrong ways and impose them on others. As this state of things inevitably produces chaos and disorder, it is the duty of the true Muslims to exert their utmost to bring to an end their wicked rule and bring them under a righteous order.

As regards the question, "What do the non-Muslims get in return for jizyah", it may suffice to say that it is the price of the freedom which the Islamic state allows them in following their erroneous ways, while living in the jurisdiction of Islam and enjoying its protection. The money thus collected is spent in maintaining the righteous administration that gives them the freedom and protects their rights. This also serves as a yearly reminder to them that they have been deprived of the honor of paying Zakat in the Way of Allah, and forced to pay jizyah instead as a price of following the ways of error.

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ عُزَيْرٌ ابْنُ اللَّهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَى الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ اللَّهِ ۖ ذَٰلِكَ قَوْلُهُم بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ ۖ يُضَاهِئُونَ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِن قَبْلُ ۚ قَاتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ ۚ أَنَّىٰ يُؤْفَكُونَ 30

[9:30] The Jews say: "Ezra ('Uzayr) is Allah's son,"[29] and the Christians say: "The Messiah is the son of Allah." These are merely verbal assertions in imitation of the sayings of those unbelievers who preceded them.[30] May Allah ruin them. How do they turn away from the Truth?

29. Uzair (Ezra) lived during the period around 450 B.C. The Jews regarded him with great reverence as the revivalist of their Scriptures which had been lost during their captivity in Babylon after the death of prophet Solomon. So much so that they had lost all the

knowledge of their law, their traditions and of Hebrew, their national language. Then it was Ezra who re-wrote the Old Testament and revived the law. That is why they used very exaggerated language in his reverence which misled some of the Jewish sects to make him 'the son of God'. The Quran, however, does not assert that all the Jews were unanimous in declaring Ezra as the son of God. What it intends to say is that the perversion in the articles of faith of the Jews concerning Allah had degenerated to such an extent that there were some amongst them who considered Ezra as the son of God.

30. "Those who disbelieved before" were the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Persians, etc. The Jews and the Christians were so influenced by their philosophies, their superstitions and fancies that they also invented erroneous creeds like theirs. (See E.N. 101 of Al-Maidah).

اِتَّخَذُوْٓا اَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ اَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَالْمَسِيْحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ۚ وَمَآ اُمِرُوْٓا اِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلٰهًا وَّاحِدًا ۚ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۭ سُبْحٰنَهٗ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ 31

[9:31] They take their rabbis and their monks for their lords apart from Allah,[31] and also the Messiah, son of Mary, whereas they were commanded to worship none but the One True God. There is no god but He. Exalted be He above those whom they associate with Him in His Divinity.

31. "They have taken their rabbis and monks as their lords". The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself explained its true significance. According to a tradition, when Adi bin Hatim (may Allah be pleased with him), who was formerly a Christian, came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) with the intention of understanding Islam, he asked several questions in order to remove his doubts. One of these was: "This verse accuses us of taking our scholars and monks as our lords. What is its real meaning. For we do not take them as our lords."

As a reply to this, the Prophet (peace be upon him) put him a counter question: "Is it not a fact that you accept as unlawful what they declare to be unlawful, and lawful what they declare to be lawful?" Adi confessed, "Yes, it is so." The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied, "This amounts to making them your lords." Incidentally, this tradition shows that those who themselves set limits to the lawful and the unlawful without the authority of Allah's Book, assume for themselves the rank of godhead, and those who acknowledge their right of making laws take them as their lords.

It should be noted that they have been charged with (a) attributing sons to Allah, and (b) giving the right of making laws to others than Allah. These are to prove that their claim that they believed in Allah is false, even though they should believe in His existence. But such a wrong conception of Allah makes their belief in Allah meaningless.

يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يُّطْفِـُٔوْا نُوْرَ اللّٰهِ بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَيَاْبَى اللّٰهُ اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّتِمَّ نُوْرَهٗ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ

الْكٰفِرُوْنَ 32

[9:32] They seek to extinguish the light of Allah by blowing through their mouths; but Allah refuses everything except that He will perfect His light howsoever the unbelievers might abhor it.

هُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَرْسَلَ رَسُوْلَهٗ بِالْهُدٰى وَدِيْنِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهٗ عَلَى الدِّيْنِ كُلِّهٖ ۙ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ

الْمُشْرِكُوْنَ 33

[9:33] He it is Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the True Religion that He may make it prevail over all religions,[32] howsoever those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity might detest it.

32. The Arabic word ad-din has been translated into 'ways'. For the word deen, as has already been explained in E.N. 204, Al-Baqarah, is used for the 'way of life' or the 'system of life', which is followed in obedience to the supreme authority.

Now let us try to understand the significance of this verse. The object of the mission of the Messenger is to make the guidance and the right way he has brought from Allah dominant over all the other ways and systems of life. In other words, the Messenger is not sent to allow Allah's Way to remain subordinate to other ways in order to enjoy concessions from them. He is sent by the Sovereign of the earth and the heavens to make His Way dominant over all other ways. And if a wrong way is at all allowed to remain on the earth, it should be tolerated only under its own protection by the payment of jizyah under the limits conferred by the divine system as in the cast of the system of life of the zimmis who pay jizyah.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ الْاَحْبَارِ وَالرُّهْبَانِ لَيَاْكُلُوْنَ اَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ

وَيَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَالَّذِيْنَ يَكْنِزُوْنَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يُنْفِقُوْنَهَا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ

اللّٰهِ ۙ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ۙ 34

[9:34] Believers! Many of the rabbis and monks wrongfully devour mankind's possessions and hinder people from the Way of Allah.[33] And there are those who amass gold and silver and do not spend it in the Way of Allah. Announce to them the tidings of a painful chastisement

33. These religious leaders are guilty of two sins. First, they devour the wealth of the common people by selling false decrees, and by taking bribes, gifts and presents on different pretexts. They invent religious regulations and rituals as tempt people to buy their salvations and fortunes in life from them and make deaths and marriages dependent on the payment of due price to these monopolists of Paradise. To add to this another sin, they debar the people from the Way of Allah by involving them into different sorts of deviations and by obstructing the way of every righteous mission with the obstacles of learned doubts and pious suspicions.

يَّوۡمَ يُحۡمٰى عَلَيۡهَا فِىۡ نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكۡوٰى بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمۡ وَجُنُوۡبُهُمۡ وَظُهُوۡرُهُمۡ ؕ هٰذَا مَا
كَنَزۡتُمۡ لِاَنۡفُسِكُمۡ فَذُوۡقُوۡا مَا كُنۡتُمۡ تَكۡنِزُوۡنَ 35

[9:35] on a Day when they shall be heated up in the Fire of Hell, and their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded with it, (and they shall be told): "This is the treasure which you hoarded for yourselves. Taste, then, the punishment for what you have hoarded."

اِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُوۡرِ عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ اثۡنَا عَشَرَ شَهۡرًا فِىۡ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ يَوۡمَ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضَ
مِنۡهَاۤ اَرۡبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ ؕ ذٰلِكَ الدِّيۡنُ الۡقَيِّمُ ۙ فَلَا تَظۡلِمُوۡا فِيۡهِنَّ اَنۡفُسَكُمۡ ؕ وَقَاتِلُوا
الۡمُشۡرِكِيۡنَ كَآفَّةً كَمَا يُقَاتِلُوۡنَكُمۡ كَآفَّةً ؕ وَاعۡلَمُوۡۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الۡمُتَّقِيۡنَ 36

[9:36] Surely the reckoning of months, in the sight of Allah, is twelve months,[34] laid down in Allah's decree on the day when He created the heavens and the earth; and out of these months four are sacred. That is the true ordainment. Do not, therefore, wrong yourselves, with respect to these months.[35] And fight all together against those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity in the manner that they fight against you all together,[36] and know well that Allah is with the God-fearing.

34. This means that ever since Allah created the sun, the moon and the earth, the new moon takes place only once in a month; thus the year has always been of twelve months.

This has been mentioned to refute the practice of nasi (Ayat 37) whereby the pagan Arabs increased the number of the months of a year to 13 or 14 to enable them to interpose in the calendar the forbidden month which had been made lawful by them.

35. “So do not wrong yourselves in them.” Do not let go waste the good things for which fighting has been made unlawful during these months by creating disorder in them that will ultimately be harmful to you also. The four forbidden months are Zil-Qadah, Zil-Hajjah and Muharram for Hajj and Rajab for Umrah.

36. That is, “If the mushriks do not desist from fighting during these months, you should also fight them and present a united front against them, just as they put up a united front against you”. This verse has been explained by Ayat 194 of Al-Baqarah.

إِنَّمَا النَّسِيٓءُ زِيَادَةٌ فِي الْكُفْرِ يُضَلُّ بِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُحِلُّونَهُ عَامًا وَيُحَرِّمُونَهُ عَامًا
لِّيُوَاطِـُٔوا عِدَّةَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ فَيُحِلُّوا مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ ۚ زُيِّنَ لَهُمْ سُوٓءُ أَعْمَالِهِمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا
يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ۝ 37

[9:37] The intercalation (of sacred months) is an act of gross infidelity which causes the unbelievers to be led further astray. They declare a month to be lawful in one year and forbidden in another year in order that they may conform to the number of months that Allah has declared as sacred, and at the same time make lawful what Allah has forbidden.[37] Their foul acts seem fair to them. Allah does not direct those who deny the Truth to the Right Way.

37. The pagan Arabs practiced nasi in two ways. Whenever it suited them, they would declare a prohibited month to be an ordinary month in which fighting, robbery and murder in retaliation were lawful for them. Then they would declare an ordinary month to be a prohibited month instead of this month in order to make up for the deficiency caused in the number of the prohibited months.

The other way of nasi was the addition of a month in order to harmonize the lunar with the solar year so that the Hajj should always fall in the same season and they should be saved from the bother and inconvenience that are experienced by its observance according to the lunar year. In this way Hajj was observed for 36 years on dates other than the actual dates. Then in the thirty seventh year it was again observed on the 9th and 10th of Zil-Hajjah, as they should have actually fallen according to the lunar calendar. It so happened that on the occasion when the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed Hajja-tul-Widaa (his last Hajj). these dates by rotation coincided with the actual dates of Hajj according to the lunar calendar. So he declared during the course of his historic address at Arafat: “This year the dates of Hajj have again occurred exactly at their natural and proper time after a long period of circulation.” Accordingly, since that last Hajj of A.H. 9, it is being observed up to this day according to the correct dates of the lunar year.

By making nasi unlawful and forbidding it, the law declared that the two objects for which it was practiced were also sinful. First, they not only made lawful what Allah had made unlawful but also tried to practice deception on Allah by the seeming observance of the law. As regards the second object of making the season of Hajj fixed permanently according to the solar calendar, this too, was in fact the worst kind of rebellion against the divine law, although it appeared to be a harmless thing done for public good. But it defeated the very object of the divine law which prescribed the lunar calendar instead of the solar calendar for the observance of obligatory duties. Allah did this to ensure many good things for the

Muslims, one of which is that His servants should be so trained as to obey His commandments at all times of the year and under all circumstances. For instance, the month of Ramadan circulates among all the seasons of the year and the Muslims get used to obeying His commandments whether it be summer or winter, dry or rainy season. This gives them that excellent moral training which is the real object of all the obligatory duties imposed by the divine law. Likewise, the dates of Hajj according to the lunar calendar, fall during different seasons: therefore the servants of Allah have to travel during all the seasons, favorable and unfavorable. Thus they come out successful in the divine test under all the circumstances and learn to be steadfast in their obedience.

It is obvious that such a training will make them stand good in many other fields in which one has to fight the battle for the truth.

Now it would have become quite clear why nasi was made unlawful and forbidden. It was designed to fix the season of Hajj in order to suit their own conveniences though it defeated the divine purpose of Hajj and of the forbidden months. It meant that they had rebelled against Allah and become independent of Him; this is kufr. Besides this, Islam is a universal religion and for all human beings. It is obvious that the periods of fasting and performing Hajj cannot satisfy all if they be fixed in accordance with the months of the solar year. For if they are performed in fixed months according to the solar year, the one and the same month will not equally suit all for the simple reason that it will fall during the same seasons in different places, summer or winter or very hot or very cold or rainy or dry or harvesting or sowing, year after year.

In this connection it may also be kept in view that the proclamation about the prohibition of nasi was made on the occasion of Hajj in A.H. 9 and next year the Hajj was performed on right dates which were in accordance with the lunar year. Since that time Hajj is being performed according to exact dates.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَا لَكُمْ اِذَا قِيْلَ لَكُمُ انْفِرُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اثَّاقَلْتُمْ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ ؕ
اَرَضِيْتُمْ بِالْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ فَمَا مَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ اِلَّا
قَلِيْلٌ 38

[9:38] Believers![38] What is amiss with you that when it is said to you: "March forth in the cause of Allah," you cling heavily to the earth? Do you prefer the worldly life to the Hereafter? Know well that all the enjoyment of this world, in comparison with the Hereafter, is trivial.[39]

38. From here begins the discourse (Ayats 38-72) which was sent down at the time when the Prophet (peace be upon him) was engaged in making preparations for the campaign to Tabuk.

39. "The enjoyment of the life of this world" may imply two meanings. First: "When you will find that the life in the Hereafter is eternal and see that the good things and the provisions of enjoyment are countless, you will realize that the potential and the actual enjoyments of the temporary life of this world were nothing as compared with the blessings of that great kingdom. At that time you will regret why you deprived yourselves of this everlasting happiness and bliss for the sake of a very little and short lived enjoyments of the mortal life of this world." Second: "The goods of this worldly life are of no value in the Hereafter, howsoever abundant they might be. You shall have to give up each and everything as soon as you breathe your last. For nothing of this world can go with you to the next world. Of course, you will get credit for what you sacrificed for the pleasure and love of Allah, and love of Islam."

إِلَّا تَنفِرُوا يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ۙ وَيَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ وَلَا تَضُرُّوهُ شَيْئًا ۗ وَاللَّهُ
عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ 39

[9:39] If you do not march forth, Allah will chastise you grievously[40] and will replace you by another people,[41] while you will in no way be able to harm Him. Allah has power over everything.

40. A general rule of the Islamic conduct has been derived from, "If you do not go forth, He will punish you with a painful punishment." When the Muslims are commanded to go to Jihad by a public proclamation from their leader, it becomes an obligatory duty for those who are called upon to do Jihad, whether they belong to any particular group or region. So much so that the faith of those who do not go for Jihad without a genuine excuse becomes doubtful. But even in cases where the Muslims are called upon to go forth for Jihad and there is no command for the compulsory enrollment of every able-bodied Muslim of a particular group or region, it is a religious duty (though not obligatory), and it shall be considered to have been performed even if only some Muslims go forth for it.

41. That is, "Allah's work does not depend on you and will be accomplished only if you do it. It is Allah's grace and bounty that He is affording you the golden opportunity of serving the cause of His Way. Therefore if you miss this opportunity because of any foolish assumption, Allah will raise another people and bestow on them the opportunity and capability of doing His work, and you will be losers".

إِلَّا تَنصُرُوهُ فَقَدْ نَصَرَهُ اللَّهُ إِذْ أَخْرَجَهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثَانِيَ اثْنَيْنِ إِذْ هُمَا فِي الْغَارِ إِذْ
يَقُولُ لِصَاحِبِهِ لَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَنَا ۚ فَأَنزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَيَّدَهُ بِجُنُودٍ لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا
وَجَعَلَ كَلِمَةَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا السُّفْلَىٰ ۗ وَكَلِمَةُ اللَّهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ 40

[9:40] It will matter little if you do not help the Prophet, for Allah surely helped him when the unbelievers drove him out of his home and he was but one of the two when they were in the cave, and when he said to his companion: "Do not grieve. Allah is with us."[42] Then Allah caused His tranquillity to descend upon him, and supported him with hosts you did not see, He humbled the word of the unbelievers. As for Allah's Word, it is inherently uppermost. Allah is All-Powerful, All-Wise.

42. This refers to the occasion when the disbelievers had decided to assassinate the Prophet (peace be upon him), and the very night, fixed for his assassination, he had left Makkah for Al-Madinah. By that time most of the Muslims had migrated to Al-Madinah in twos and threes and only a few helpless ones had remained behind in Makkah. As he was sure that he would be pursued, he took only Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) with him and went southward instead of following the northern route to Al- Madinah and remained hidden in the Thaur cave for three days. In the meantime the blood thirsty enemies had begun to make a thorough search for him all around Makkah and some of them reached the very mouth of the cave where he was hidden. On this critical occasion Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) naturally felt alarmed lest they should peep into the cave, and see them. But the Prophet (peace be upon him) remained as calm as before and reassured his companion, saying, “Do not grieve, indeed Allah is with us.”

اِنْفِرُوْا خِفَافًا وَّثِقَالًا وَّجَاهِدُوْا بِاَمْوَالِكُمْ وَاَنْفُسِكُمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ
اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ 41

[9:41] March forth whether light or heavy,[43] and strive in the way of Allah with your belongings and your lives. That is best for you if you only knew it.

43. The words, “light-armed and heavy-armed” have a very comprehensive meaning: when it is enjoined to march forth for Jihad, you must go forth anyhow, whether you like it or not: whether you are in a state of prosperity or indigence, whether you are well-equipped or ill-equipped: whether the circumstances are favorable or adverse: whether you are young and healthy or old and weak.

لَوْ كَانَ عَرَضًا قَرِيْبًا وَّسَفَرًا قَاصِدًا لَّاتَّبَعُوْكَ وَلٰكِنْۢ بَعُدَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الشُّقَّةُ ؕ
وَسَيَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ لَوِ اسْتَطَعْنَا لَخَرَجْنَا مَعَكُمْ ۚ يُهْلِكُوْنَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ اِنَّهُمْ
لَكٰذِبُوْنَ ع 42

[9:42] Were it a gain at hand or a short journey, they would have surely followed you, but the distance seemed too far to them.[44] Still they will swear by Allah: "If only we

could, we would surely have gone forth with you." They merely bring ruin upon themselves. Allah knows well that they are liars.

44. They felt the journey to Tabuk to be hard because they had to fight with the army of the great and powerful Roman Empire: because they had to journey in the scorching heat of the summer season of the desert: because there was a famine in the country and the new harvest on which they had pinned their hopes was ready for reaping.

عَفَا اللّٰهُ عَنْكَ ۚ لِمَ اَذِنْتَ لَهُمْ حَتّٰى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكَ الَّذِيْنَ صَدَقُوْا وَتَعْلَمَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ 43

[9:43] (O Prophet), may Allah forgive you! Why did you give them leave to stay behind before it became clear to you as to who were truthful and who were liars?45

45. Allah did not approve of the exemption which the Prophet (peace be upon him) had granted to the hypocrites who had put forward lame excuses. Though he knew it well that they were inventing false excuses, he gave them leave to stay behind because of his inherent kindness. But Allah warned him that such a leniency was not well placed as he gave them an opportunity of hiding their hypocrisy. Had they remained behind without getting an exemption, the false profession of their faith would have been exposed.

لَا يَسْتَاْذِنُكَ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ اَنْ يُّجَاهِدُوْا بِاَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ ؕ

وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِالْمُتَّقِيْنَ 44

[9:44] Those who believe in Allah and the Last Day will never ask your leave to be excused from striving (in the cause of Allah) with their belongings and their lives. Allah fully knows the God-fearing.

اِنَّمَا يَسْتَاْذِنُكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَارْتَابَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِيْ

رَيْبِهِمْ يَتَرَدَّدُوْنَ 45

[9:45] It is only those who do not believe in Allah and the Last Day, and whose hearts are filled with doubt that seek exemption from striving (in the cause of Allah). They keep tossing to and fro in their doubt.46

46. This verse shows clearly that the conflict between Islam and kufr is the criterion to distinguish between a true believer and a hypocrite. The one who supports Islam in this conflict with the whole of his heart and expends all of his energies and resources in order to make it victorious and does not hesitate in the least to make any sacrifices for this purpose, is a true believer. On the contrary, the one who hesitates to support Islam in this conflict and refrains from making sacrifices in its way, when he confronts the threat of the victory of kufr, is a hypocrite, for such an attitude is itself a proof of the fact that there is no faith in his heart.

وَلَوْ اَرَادُوا الْخُرُوْجَ لَاَعَدُّوْا لَهٗ عُدَّةً وَّلٰكِنْ كَرِهَ اللّٰهُ انْۢبِعَاثَهُمْ فَثَبَّطَهُمْ وَقِيْلَ اقْعُدُوْا

مَعَ الْقٰعِدِيْنَ 46

[9:46] Had they truly intended to march forth to fight, they would have certainly made some preparation for it. But Allah was averse to their going forth, so He made them lag behind,[47] and they were told: "Stay behind with those that are staying behind."

47. Allah held them back for He did not like that they should join Jihad unwillingly without any sincere intention for it. As they had no mind to make sacrifices to exalt the cause of Islam, and, therefore, would have taken part in it half-heartedly to escape the taunts of the Muslims or to create mischief. This would have resulted in a greater evil, as has been stated explicitly in the next verse 48.

لَوْ خَرَجُوْا فِيْكُمْ مَّا زَادُوْكُمْ اِلَّا خَبَالًا وَّلَاَاَوْضَعُوْا خِلٰلَكُمْ يَبْغُوْنَكُمُ الْفِتْنَةَ ۚ

وَفِيْكُمْ سَمّٰعُوْنَ لَهُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِالظّٰلِمِيْنَ 47

[9:47] Had they gone forth with you, they would have only added to your trouble, and would have run about in your midst seeking to stir up sedition among you, whereas there are among you some who are prone to lend ears to them. Allah knows well the wrong-doers.

لَقَدِ ابْتَغَوُا الْفِتْنَةَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَقَلَّبُوْا لَكَ الْاُمُوْرَ حَتّٰى جَاۗءَ الْحَقُّ وَظَهَرَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ وَهُمْ

كٰرِهُوْنَ 48

[9:48] Surely they sought even earlier to stir up sedition, and turned things upside down to frustrate you until the Truth came and the decree of Allah appeared, however hateful this may have been to them.

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّقُوْلُ ائْذَنْ لِّيْ وَلَا تَفْتِنِّيْ ۭ اَلَا فِي الْفِتْنَةِ سَقَطُوْا ۭ وَاِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمُحِيْطَةٌۢ

بِالْكٰفِرِيْنَ 49

[9:49] And among them is he who says: "Grant me leave to stay behind, and do not expose me to temptation."[48] Lo! They have already fallen into temptation.[49] Surely Hell encompasses the unbelievers.[50]

48. Some of the hypocrites, who were requesting the Prophet (peace be upon him) to give them leave to stay behind on one pretext or the other, were so impudent that they were inventing excuses of a religious or moral nature for refraining from Jihad in the Way of Allah. One of these was Jad-bin-Qais, who, according to traditions came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said. "I am a lover of beauty and my people know that I am very weak in regard to women: therefore I am afraid to go forth lest the beauty of the Roman women should beguile me into sin. Therefore, "do not put me into trial."

49. Though they wanted exemption, they had already fallen as a prey to the temptations of telling lies, of double dealings and hypocrisy. They deluded themselves that they would be considered pious people, if they would put forward the fear of temptations to avoid Jihad, when, in fact; they had already fallen into the greatest possible temptation of refraining from Jihad in the conflict between Islam and kufr.

50. That is, "Such a show of piety has not taken them away from Hell; nay, on the other hand, the same thing has caused them to be entangled in the clutches of Hell."

إِنْ تُصِبْكَ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ ۚ وَإِنْ تُصِبْكَ مُصِيبَةٌ يَقُولُوا قَدْ أَخَذْنَا أَمْرَنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَيَتَوَلَّوا وَهُمْ فَرِحُونَ 50

[9:50] If good fortune befalls you, it vexes them; and if an affliction befalls you, they turn away in jubilation and say: "We have taken due care of our affairs in good time."

قُلْ لَنْ يُصِيبَنَا إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَنَا ۚ هُوَ مَوْلَانَا ۚ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ 51

[9:51] Say: "Nothing will befall us except what Allah has decreed for us; He is our Protector." Let the believers, then, put all their trust in Allah.[51]

51. In this passage a demarcation has been made between the attitudes of a man of the world and of a man of God. Whatever the man of the world does, he does it to please his own self. He exults if he attains some worldly ends but feels utterly dejected if he fails to attain them. Besides, he depends entirely on his material resources for his success and feels encouraged if these are favorable, but loses heart if these are unfavorable.

In contrast to the man of the world, whatever the man of God does, he does it to please Him and trusts in Him and not in his own powers nor in material resources. Therefore he is neither exultant over his success in the cause of Allah, nor loses heart by failure, for he believes that it is the will of God that is working in both the cases. Therefore he is neither disheartened by disasters nor is filled with conceit by successes. This is because he believes that both prosperity and adversity are from Allah and are nothing but a trial from Him.

Therefore his only worry is to do his best to come out successful in His test. Besides, as there are no worldly ends before him, he does not measure his success or failure by the achievement or failure of his ends. On the other hand, the only object before him is to sacrifice his life and wealth in the Way of Allah, and he measures the success or failure of his efforts by the standard he achieves in the performance of this duty. Therefore if he is satisfied that he has done his best to perform this duty, he believes that he has come out successful by the grace of God, though he might not have been able to accomplish anything from the worldly point of view; for he believes that his Allah in whose cause he has expended his life and wealth will not let go waste the reward of his efforts. As he does not depend on the material resources only, he is neither grieved if they are unfavorable, nor feels exultant when these are favorable. His entire trust is in God who is the controller of all the resources; therefore he goes on doing his duty even under the most unfavorable circumstances with the same courage and perseverance that is shown by the worldly people unfavorable circumstances alone. That is why Allah asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) to say to the hypocrites, "There is a basic difference between you and us in regard to the conduct of affairs. We believe that both the good and the bad are from Allah: therefore the apparent result does not make us happy or sad. Moreover, we depend on Allah in our affairs and you depend on material resources: so we are content and happy in all circumstances."

قُلْ هَلْ تَرَبَّصُوْنَ بِنَآ اِلَّآ اِحْدَى الْحُسْنَيَيْنِ ؕ وَنَحْنُ نَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمْ اَنْ يُّصِيْبَكُمُ اللّٰهُ
بِعَذَابٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِهٖٓ اَوْ بِاَيْدِيْنَا ۖ فَتَرَبَّصُوْٓا اِنَّا مَعَكُمْ مُّتَرَبِّصُوْنَ 52

[9:52] Tell them: "What you await to befall upon us is nothing but one of the two good things![52] And what we await for you is that Allah visit you with chastisement from Him or chastise you at our hands. So continue waiting; we too shall wait with you."

52. This is the answer to those who, as usual, were not taking any part in the conflict between Islam and kufr, but were very wisely watching it from a distance to see whether the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions would return victorious from Tabuk or would be totally destroyed by the powerful Roman army. They were told that either of the two results, they were awaiting, would be good for the Muslims. For it was obvious that it would be a good thing if they won victory. But even if they were killed in the Way of Allah, it would be a success from their point of view, though not in the sight of the world, as the Muslims' standard of measurement is different from that of the hypocrites and the like. A believer considers it his success if he sacrifices his life and wealth in the Way of Allah, irrespective of whether he succeeds in conquering some country, or in establishing a government or not. According to him the criterion of success or failure is whether he has extended or not all the powers of his body and soul, his head and his heart to elevate the word of Allah, though from the worldly point of view the result of his efforts might be nothing at all.

قُلۡ اَنۡفِقُوۡا طَوۡعًا اَوۡ كَرۡهًا لَّنۡ يُّتَقَبَّلَ مِنۡكُمۡ ؕ اِنَّكُمۡ كُنۡتُمۡ قَوۡمًا فٰسِقِيۡنَ 53

[9:53] Tell them: "Whether you spend your money willingly or unwillingly,[53] it shall not find acceptance (with Allah) for you are an evil-doing folk."

53. This ayat is a sharp retort to those hypocrites who desired exemption froth Jihad but, at the same time, wanted to make some monetary contributions in order to avoid the exposure of their hypocrisy, They said, “Please grant us leave from military service because we are unable to do this, but we are ready to make monetary contributions towards it.” To this Allah retorted, saying, “Whatever you may contribute, it shall not be accepted.”

وَمَا مَنَعَهُمۡ اَنۡ تُقۡبَلَ مِنۡهُمۡ نَفَقٰتُهُمۡ اِلَّاۤ اَنَّهُمۡ كَفَرُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ وَبِرَسُوۡلِهٖ وَلَا يَاۡتُوۡنَ الصَّلٰوةَ اِلَّا وَهُمۡ كُسَالٰى وَلَا يُنۡفِقُوۡنَ اِلَّا وَهُمۡ كٰرِهُوۡنَ 54

[9:54] Nothing prevents that their expendings be accepted except that they disbelieve in Allah and His Messenger, and whenever they come to the Prayer they do so lazily, and whenever they spend they do so grudgingly.

فَلَا تُعۡجِبۡكَ اَمۡوَالُهُمۡ وَلَاۤ اَوۡلَادُهُمۡ ؕ اِنَّمَا يُرِيۡدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمۡ بِهَا فِى الۡحَيٰوةِ الدُّنۡيَا وَتَزۡهَقَ اَنۡفُسُهُمۡ وَهُمۡ كٰفِرُوۡنَ 55

[9:55] Let neither their riches nor their children excite your admiration. Allah only wants to chastise them through these things in the present life,[54] and to cause them to die while they are unbelievers.[55]

54. “Allah only intends to punish them through them in the life of the world”, because of their great love for their children and wealth as these misled them to adopt the hypocritical attitude which, in turn, degraded them in the Muslim society. Consequently, in the Islamic system they would lose the respect, tire reputation and the prestige they enjoyed in the pre-Islamic society. On the contrary, even the Muslim slaves and the sons of slaves, the farmers and the shepherds, who proved the sincerity of their faith would win honor in the new system, and the big hereditary chiefs, who refrained from this because of their love of the world, would lose their fame, honor and prestige.

In order to illustrate the above, we cite an incident that happened during the caliphate of Umar (may Allah be pleased with him). Once some big chiefs of the Quraish including Suhail-bin-Amr and Harith-bin-Hisham, went to see caliph Umar and took their seats near him. Soon after this some humble people from among the Muhajirin and the Ansar came there. The caliph asked those chiefs to make room for them, and seated these humble people near his own seat. This went on for some time till these chiefs reached the remotest corner in the assembly. When they came out, Harith-bin-Hisham said to his companions, “You have

noticed what a humiliating treatment has been meted out to us today!" Suhail-bin-Amr replied, "It is no fault of Umar but it is our own fault. When we were invited to Islam, we turned away from it, but these humble people accepted it and made sacrifices for it." Then both of them returned to the meeting and said, "Today we have noticed your treatment and we feel that it is all due to our own shortcomings, but tell us if there is a way for us to make atonements for our past failures". The caliph did not give any reply but merely pointed towards the Roman territory, which meant that the only way of regaining their prestige was to expend their lives and wealth in doing Jihad there.

55. "Their souls shall pass away while they are disbelievers" because of their hypocrisy, which would not let them attain sincere faith till they die. Thus after ruining their moral and spiritual lives in this world, they would leave it in the state of unbelief, which will ruin their lives in the Hereafter in a far worse way.

وَيَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ اِنَّهُمْ لَمِنْكُمْ ؕ وَمَا هُمْ مِّنْكُمْ وَلٰكِنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ يَّفْرَقُوْنَ 56

[9:56] They swear by Allah that they are part of you whereas they are certainly not part of you. They are merely a people who dread you.

لَوْ يَجِدُوْنَ مَلْجَاً اَوْ مَغٰرٰتٍ اَوْ مُدَّخَلًا لَّوَلَّوْا اِلَيْهِ وَهُمْ يَجْمَحُوْنَ 57

[9:57] If they could find any shelter or any cavern, or any retreat, they would turn around and rush headlong into it.[56]

56. This was the condition of the hypocrites of Al- Madinah, the majority of whom were rich and old. We find from a list of the hypocrites, cited by Ibn-Kathir in Al- Badayah-wan-Nihayah, that only one of them was young and none was poor. These people had large properties and flourishing businesses in Al-Madinah. They were worldlywise and their wide experience had taught them expediency, but their sense of self-interest had put them into a dilemma. When Islam reached Al-Madinah and a large majority of the population embraced it sincerely and enthusiastically, they found themselves in a very perplexing situation. They could not reject it outright for the majority of their own people, nay, their own sons and daughters, were filled with enthusiasm for Islam. If they had remained unbelievers, they would have lost their high position, their prestige and reputation and run the risk of a rebellion by the Muslims of their own household. On the other hand, if they sincerely embraced Islam, they would incur the danger of war, not only with the whole of Arabia but also with the adjoining nations and empires. Above all, selfinterest had so blinded them that, in resolving the dilemma, they would not consider the problem from the point of view of truth and righteousness which by themselves are worthy of every sacrifice. Therefore they decided that the best thing for them was to profess Islam outwardly in order to make their positions, properties and businesses secure, but to adopt a hypocritical attitude towards it so that they might be able to avoid the losses and perils inherent in the sincere acceptance of Islam.

This verse 57 depicts the dilemma of the hypocrites, as if to say, "In reality these people are not Muslims, though they swear that they are Muslims like you; they profess Islam simply

because they are afraid of losses they might incur, if they reject it outright. Then they dare not stay at Al- Madinah as non-Muslims for they would lose the high positions they enjoyed and might even have to cut off their connection with their wives and children; and if they decided to emigrate from Al-Madinah, they would have to abandon their properties and business. But they are not prepared for these sacrifices for they have no sincere attachment even to kufr. Therefore they are compelled against their beliefs by the force of circumstances to remain in Al-Madinah: they offer their Salat but regard this as forced labor: they pay the Zakat dues but as a penalty, for they are in their hearts averse to these things. To add to their calamities they are asked every now and then to make sacrifices of their lives and their wealth and to go forth for Jihad and to fight with one enemy or the other. They are so much afraid of these calamities that, in order to escape from them, they would run in frantic haste to take refuge in any hole, if they hoped that it would provide immunity against these calamities.

وَمِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ يَّلۡمِزُكَ فِى الصَّدَقٰتِ ۚ فَاِنۡ اُعۡطُوۡا مِنۡهَا رَضُوۡا وَاِنۡ لَّمۡ يُعۡطَوۡا مِنۡهَاۤ اِذَا هُمۡ يَسۡخَطُوۡنَ 58

[9:58] (O Prophet), some of them find fault with you in the distribution of alms. If they are given something of it they are pleased, and if they are given nothing they are angry.[57]

57. The people referred to were the hypocrites, who felt depressed on every occasion of the distribution of the Zakat collections, for they thought that they were not being given their due share. Then they would taunt the Prophet (peace be upon him) with making unfair distributions. This happened when the payment of Zakat was made an obligatory duty on all those Muslims whose possessions exceeded the prescribed limits. They were required to contribute from their agricultural products, animals, commercial commodities, minerals dug out of mines and the gold and silver they possessed, at different rates, varying from 2.5% to 20%, and all these were collected and spent in a systematic way from a central place.

As a result of this so much wealth flowed into the hands of a single person, the Prophet (peace be upon him), that it had no parallel in the whole territory of Arabia. Naturally the materialists looked at these things with greedy eyes and wanted to grab as much as possible out of this wealth. But their greed could not be satisfied, for the Prophet (peace be upon him), who had made the use of Zakat fund unlawful for his own person and for his own relatives, could not be expected to give anything out of it to anyone who did not deserve it. It is thus obvious that they found fault with the Prophet (peace be upon him) not because he was unfair in the distribution of the Zakat collections but because he did not allow the hypocrites to grab anything from these without any right to them. They, however, very cunningly hid their real grievance, and accused the Prophet (peace be upon him) of showing partiality and injustice in the distribution of the Zakat collection.

وَلَوْ اَنَّهُمْ رَضُوْا مَآ اٰتٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ ۙ وَقَالُوْا حَسْبُنَا اللّٰهُ سَيُؤْتِيْنَا اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ وَ
رَسُوْلُهٗٓ ۙ اِنَّآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ رٰغِبُوْنَ ۝ 59

[9:59] Would that they were content with what Allah and His Messenger gave them,[58] and were to say: "Allah suffices for us, and Allah will give us out of His bounty and so will His Messenger.[59] It is to Allah alone that we turn with hope."[60]

58. That is, it would have been much better for them if they had been content with their share of the spoils which the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave them and what they earned by the grace of Allah and with the prosperity Allah had bestowed on them.

59. It would have been good for them to adopt this attitude: “Sufficient is Allah for us,” for they ought to have known that they would receive their due shares besides the Zakat collections out of the wealth that would come to the state treasury, just as they were receiving their shares previously.

60. “Indeed to Allah we are suppliants” means we give our attention to Allah and His grace and not to the world and its worthless riches and we desire to obey His will: we direct our expectations and hopes to Him and we are content with what He bestows on us.

اِنَّمَا الصَّدَقٰتُ لِلْفُقَرَآءِ وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَالْعٰمِلِيْنَ عَلَيْهَا وَالْمُؤَلَّفَةِ قُلُوْبُهُمْ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ
وَالْغٰرِمِيْنَ وَفِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ ۭ فَرِيْضَةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ۝ 60

[9:60] The alms are meant only for the poor[61] and the needy[62] and those who are in charge thereof,[63] those whose hearts are to be reconciled,[64] and to free those in bondage,[65] and to help those burdened with debt,[66] and for expenditure in the Way of Allah[67] and for the wayfarer.[68] This is an obligation from Allah. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

61. According to the Arabic usage, fuqara are all those people who depend on others for the necessities of life. The Arabic word fuqara is a general word for all those who are needy because of some physical defects, or old age, or temporarily out of living means, and can become selfsupporting if they are helped like orphans, widows, the unemployed, etc.

62. According to the Arabic usage, masakin are those indigent people who are in greater distress than the needy people usually are. The Prophet (peace be upon him) especially enjoined the Muslims to help such people as are unable to find the necessary means to satisfy their wants and are in very straitened circumstances, but are so selfrespecting that they would not beg for anything, nor would others judge from their outward appearance that they were deserving people. According to a tradition miskin is one who cannot make ends meet, though his appearance does not show that he needs help nor does he beg for help. In short, he is a self-respecting person who has become needy.

63. "Those employed to administer thereof" are those who collect Zakat dues, supervise the collections and keep accounts, and help in their distribution, irrespective of the fact whether or not they are needy or indigent; their remunerations shall be paid out of the Zakat funds. In this connection it should be noted well that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had declared the Zakat funds to be unlawful for himself and for the members of his own family (Bani Hashim). Accordingly, he never received any remuneration for collecting or distributing Zakat funds. As regards the other members of Bani Hashim, they were allowed to do this service without receiving any remuneration, but otherwise it is unlawful for them. On the contrary, the payment of the Zakat dues was obligatory on Bani Hashim if their possessions warranted this under the prescribed limits, but under no circumstances whatsoever were they allowed to accept anything out of Zakat collected from others.

There is, however, a difference of opinion as to whether they should accept anything out of the collections made from their own family or not. Imam Abu Yusuf opines that they are allowed to accept these when they are needy or poor or wayfarers, but the majority of the jurists regard this also unlawful.

64. A portion of Zakat funds may also be given to win over to Islam those who might be engaged in anti-lslamic activities or to those in the camp of the unbelievers who might be brought to help the Muslims or to those newly converted Muslims, who might be inclined to revert to kufr if no monetary help was extended to them. It is permissible to award pensions to them or give them lump sums of money to make them helpers of Islam or submissive to it or at least to render them into harmless enemies. A portion of the spoils or other incomes may be spent on them and, if need be, also a portion of Zakat funds. In such cases, the condition of being needy or indigent or on a journey etc. is also waived; nay, they might be even rich people or chiefs who are otherwise not eligible for anything from Zakat funds.

All are agreed that during the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) pensions and gifts were given under the category of winning over people, but there is a difference of opinion whether this category of expenditure was abolished or not after his death. Imam Abu Hanifah and his followers are of the opinion that it was abolished during the caliphate of Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), and now it is not lawful to spend anything under this category. Imam Shafii is of the opinion that something may be given to sinful Muslims under this category from Zakat funds but not to unbelievers, while other jurists are of the opinion that expenses under this category are lawful even now, if a need arises for them.

The Hanafis base their opinion on an incident that happened after the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Uyainah bin Hisan and Aqraa bin Habis came to Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) and asked him to allot to them a certain piece of land. So he gave them a written order for this. They took it to some other highly placed companions for further confirmation and some of them endorsed this order. But when they took it to Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), he tore the paper into pieces before their very eyes, saying, it is true that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to give something to win over your hearts because Islam was weak at that time, but now Allah has made Islam so strong that it does not stand in need of people like you. At this they went to Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) and complained to him about it and taunted him, saying" Are you the caliph or Umar (may Allah be pleased with him)? But he took no notice of this, nor did any of the companions differ with Umar's (may Allah be pleased with him) opinion. The Hanafis

conclude from this incident that when the number and power of Muslims increased by the grace of Allah and they no longer stood in need of any support from such people; the reason for which expenses under this category were permitted in the first instance remained no longer there. Therefore the companions unanimously abolished expenditure under this head.

Imam Shafii says that there is nothing to prove that the Prophet (peace be upon him) ever spent anything out of Zakat funds under this category. All the incidents mentioned in the traditions show that whatever he spent for the purpose of winning over hearts to Islam, was spent out of the spoils of war and not out of Zakat funds.

In my opinion there is nothing to show that the expenses for winning over hearts have been made unlawful forever up to the Last Day. There is no doubt that the action taken by Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) was absolutely right, for if and when the Islamic state does not consider it necessary to spend anything under this head, Islam does not make it obligatory to spend something for winning hearts. On the other hand, if need for this arises at any time, it is authorized to incur expenses under this category for Allah has kept a provision for this. Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) and the other companions agreed only on this that there was no need to give anything for this purpose at that time because the circumstances did not warrant it. But there is no reason to conclude from this that the companions disallowed forever the expenses that were permitted by the Quran under certain circumstances for the good of Islam.

As regards the opinion of Imam Shafii, it appears to be correct in so far as it is not lawful to spend anything under this category out of Zakat funds, if these expenses can be met out of other funds. But if it is necessitated that something should be spent under this category out of Zakat funds, there is no reason why a differentiation should be made in this regard between sinful Muslims and unbelievers. For the Quran has not allocated the share because of the faith of the prospective recipients but because Islam required to win their hearts for its own good and because this could not be achieved except by giving them a portion of wealth. Therefore the Quran allows the Amir of the believers to spend a part of the Zakat funds to achieve this end, if, when and where the required conditions exist. The fact that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not spend anything from the Zakat funds on unbelievers for this purpose does not mean that it is unlawful to do so, for he did not spend from this fund because there was enough money in other funds for this purpose. Had it been unlawful to spend anything from Zakat funds on unbelievers, he would have explicitly forbidden it.

65. A portion of Zakat funds may be spent for the ransoming of slaves in two ways. First, help may be given to a slave for the payment of the ransom money, if he enters into an agreement with his master that he will set him free, if the slave pays him a certain amount of money. The second way is that the Islamic government may itself pay the price of his freedom and set him at liberty. There is a consensus of opinion about the first way, but there is difference of opinion about the second way. Ali (may Allah be pleased with him), Said bin Jubair, Laith Thauri, Ibrahim Nakhi, Shaabi, and Muhammad bin Sirin, (Hanafis and Shafiis) consider this as unlawful while Ibn, Abbas, Hasan Basri, Malik, Ahmad and Abu Thaur consider this as lawful expenditure from this fund.

66. Help may be given out of Zakat funds to such debtors as would be reduced to a state of poverty, if they paid off all their debts out of their own possessions, irrespective of the fact

whether they are earning any money or not, whether they are indigent in the general sense or well off. According to some jurists, the only exceptions to this are those debtors who are spendthrifts or involve themselves in debts by spending money on wicked deeds. Help may be given to them only if and when they repent.

67. "For Allah's cause" is a general term which implies all those good works which please Allah. That is why some jurists are of the opinion that Zakat funds may be spent on every kind of good work. But the fact is, and the majority of the earliest Muslim scholars have opined, that here the 'Allah's cause' stands for Jihad in the path of Allah, that is, the struggle to eradicate the systems based on kufr and to establish the Islamic system in their stead. Therefore the Zakat funds may be utilized to meet the expenses of the journeys the people make, or for procuring means of conveyance, equipment, weapons and other articles needed for Jihad, irrespective of the fact whether they are so well off or not as to need any help for personal requirements. Likewise help of a temporary or permanent nature may also be given to those people who devote all of their time and energies, temporarily or permanently, for this work

It should also be noted that there has arisen a misunderstanding regarding the "cause of Allah" for the early scholars usually use for Jihad the Arabic word as (ghazyah) which is synonymous with "fight". They, therefore, are of the opinion that Zakat fund may only be used for the purpose of fighting. But Jihad in the Way of Allah is a much more comprehensive term than mere fighting in the Way of Allah. Jihad applies to all those efforts that are made to degrade the word of kufr and to exalt the word of Allah and to establish the Islamic system of life, whether by propagating the message of Allah in the initial stage or by fighting in the final stage of the struggle.

68. Help from Zakat funds may be given to a wayfarer on a journey even though he might be quite well off at home.

Some of the jurists are of the opinion that according to this verse only that wayfarer who does not undertake a journey for a sinful purpose may be helped out of Zakat funds. But no such condition has been laid down in the Quran or the Hadith to this effect. Besides this, we learn from the fundamental principles of Islam that the sins of a needy person would in no way prevent us from helping him. As a matter of fact, such a help may prove very useful in reforming sinful and depraved persons. For if they get a support in the time of need, it may reasonably be expected that they would turn towards purifying their souls.

وَمِنْهُمُ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْذُوْنَ النَّبِيَّ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ هُوَ اُذُنٌ ؕ قُلْ اُذُنُ خَيْرٍ لَّكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَيُؤْمِنُ
لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْذُوْنَ رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَ

[9:61] And of them there are some who distress the Prophet, saying: "He is all ears."[69] Tell them: "He listens for your good.[70] He believes in Allah and trusts the believers,[71] and is a mercy for those of you who believe. A painful punishment lies in store for those who cause distress to the Messenger of Allah."

69. This was one of the charges which the hypocrites leveled against the Prophet (peace be upon him). As he used to listen to everyone and let him say freely whatever he had to say, they would find fault with him, saying, "He is a credulous person. Everyone can approach him freely and may say whatever he pleases, and he readily believes whatever he hears" Though it was a good thing that he heard everyone, the hypocrites intentionally spread it as a vice, so that the poor and humble Muslims should be kept away from coming near the Prophet (peace be upon him). The hypocrites did not like that these true believers should inform the Prophet (peace be upon him) about their plots, mischief and hostile talks. They resented it very much that the Prophet (peace be upon him) listened to and believed in the talk of these humble people against such "respectable" people as themselves.

70. The answer to this charge implies two things. First, "Though the Prophet (peace be upon him) listens to everything, he attends only to that which is good and is for the welfare of the community, for he is not the one who would listen to or encourage mischievous things." Secondly, "It is good for yourselves that he listens patiently to everyone; otherwise he would not have allowed you to put forward lame excuses for your negligence from the struggle in the Way of Allah. Had he not been forbearing, he would not have paid attention to your false professions of faith and hypocritical expressions of good wishes for Islam, but would have taken you to task for your mischief and made it difficult for you to live at Al-Madinah. It is thus obvious that it is good for you that he listens to everyone.

71. That is, you are wrong that he listens to everyone. He puts his trust only in the true believers. Accordingly, he believed only in those things about you that were conveyed to him by good and trustworthy people, who were neither liars nor tale-bearers. Therefore, whatever they said about you was true and should have been taken as true.

يَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ لَكُمْ لِيُرْضُوْكُمْ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗٓ اَحَقُّ اَنْ يُّرْضُوْهُ اِنْ كَانُوْا

مُؤْمِنِيْنَ 62

[9:62] They swear by Allah to please you, while it is Allah and His Messenger whose pleasure they should seek if they truly believe.

اَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّهٗ مَنْ يُّحَادِدِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَاَنَّ لَهٗ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدًا فِيْهَا ۭ ذٰلِكَ الْخِزْيُ

الْعَظِيْمُ 63

[9:63] Are they not aware that Hell Fire awaits whosoever opposes Allah and His Messenger, and in it he shall abide? That surely is the great humiliation.

يَحْذَرُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ اَنْ تُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُوْرَةٌ تُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ؕ قُلِ اسْتَهْزِءُوْا ۚ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
مُخْرِجٌ مَّا تَحْذَرُوْنَ 64

[9:64] The hypocrites are afraid lest a surah should be revealed concerning them intimating to the believers what lay hidden in their hearts.[72] Tell them (O Prophet): "Continue your mockery if you will. Allah will surely bring to light all that whose disclosure you dread."

72. The hypocrites were afraid that their secret plans would be disclosed in the Quran to their great discomfort. Though they did not believe that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was a Messenger of Allah, they were convinced from their experience of the last nine years or so that he possessed some supernatural powers by which he learned their hidden secrets, and revealed these through the Quran (which according to them was written by him).

وَلَئِنْ سَاَلْتَهُمْ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اِنَّمَا كُنَّا نَخُوْضُ وَنَلْعَبُ ؕ قُلْ اَبِاللّٰهِ وَاٰيٰتِهٖ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ كُنْتُمْ
تَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ 65

[9:65] Should you question them what they were talking about, they would certainly say: "We were merely jesting and being playful."[73] Tell them: "Was it Allah and His revelation and His Messenger that you were mocking?"

73. This refers to the hypocrites who used to make fun of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the true Muslims in their secret meetings when they were making preparations for the expedition to Tabuk. In this way, they used to discourage those Muslims who sincerely and honestly intended to go forth for Jihad. We learn many things in this connection from the traditions. For instance, in one of their meetings, when the hypocrites were having a gossip, one of them remarked, “I say: Do you think that the Romans are no better than the Arabs? You will see that in the near future these brave men will be bound with ropes.” Another responded to this, “What a fun it would be if after this each one of them is lashed with a hundred stripes.” Still another, ridiculing the preparations by the Prophet (peace be upon him) for the expedition, remarked, “Look at this man, and his preparations. He intends to go forth to conquer the forts in Syria and the Roman Empire.”

لَا تَعْتَذِرُوْا قَدْ كَفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ اِيْمَانِكُمْ ؕ اِنْ نَّعْفُ عَنْ طَآئِفَةٍ مِّنْكُمْ نُعَذِّبْ طَآئِفَةًۢ
بِاَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا مُجْرِمِيْنَ ع 66

[9:66] Now, make no excuses. The truth is, you have fallen into unbelief after having believed. Even if We were to forgive some of you, We will surely chastise others because they are guilty.[74]

74. That is, "Those foolish buffoons, who take interest in such conversations and mock even at serious things because there is nothing serious in the world for them, may be pardoned. But there are others who mock at these serious things deliberately with evil intentions, because they consider the Messenger (peace be upon him) and the way taught by him as ridiculous in spite of their professions of faith. As their real object is to discourage the believers from making preparations for Jihad, they are criminals and not buffoons; therefore they shall not be pardoned at all."

اَلْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتُ بَعْضُهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْضٍ ۘ يَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمُنْكَرِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمَعْرُوْفِ
وَيَقْبِضُوْنَ اَيْدِيَهُمْ ۭ نَسُوا اللّٰهَ فَنَسِيَهُمْ ۭ اِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ 67

[9:67] The hypocrites, be they men or women, are all alike. They enjoin what is evil, and forbid what is good, and withhold their hands from doing good.[75] They forgot Allah, so Allah also forgot them. Surely the hypocrites are wicked.

75. These are the common characteristics of all hypocrites. All of them are interested in evil and inimical to good. If someone undertakes to do an evil thing, they would dedicate all their sympathies, counsels, encouragements, contributions, good wishes, praises, and their approvals to such a one. They would join hands to accomplish that evil thing and persuade others to take part in it and encourage others in every way. Moreover, they would show in every way their hearty pleasure if they perceived that the evil thing was progressing satisfactorily. On the other hand, if someone undertakes to do a good thing, they are shocked to bear the very news of it for it pains their hearts; nay, they do not even like that such a thing should be undertaken at all. Then, if they see someone coming forward to help it, they feel very uncomfortable and try their best to hinder him from it, and if he does not give it up, they would wish that he should fail in it. Then all of them have this common characteristic that they do not spend anything at all for good ends irrespective of the fact whether they be otherwise parsimonious or generous. At any rate, their wealth is either for hoarding or for evil deeds. As a matter of fact, they would spend large sums on evil works generously but would not be willing to spend a farthing for good things.

وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتِ وَالْكُفَّارَ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۭ هِىَ حَسْبُهُمْ ۚ
وَلَعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيْمٌ ۙ 68

[9:68] Allah has promised Hell-Fire to the hypocrites, both men and women, and to the unbelievers. They shall abide in it: a sufficient recompense for them. Allah has cursed them, and theirs is a lasting torment.

كَالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ كَانُوْٓا اَشَدَّ مِنْكُمْ قُوَّةً وَّاَكْثَرَ اَمْوَالًا وَّاَوْلَادًا ؕ فَاسْتَمْتَعُوْا بِخَلَاقِهِمْ
فَاسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِخَلَاقِكُمْ كَمَا اسْتَمْتَعَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ بِخَلَاقِهِمْ وَخُضْتُمْ كَالَّذِيْ
خَاضُوْا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ حَبِطَتْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ 69

[9:69] Your ways are like the ways of those who have gone before you.[76] They were mightier than you in power, and more abundant in riches and children. They enjoyed their lot for a while as you have enjoyed your lot, and you also engaged in idle talk as they did. Their works have come to naught in this world, and in the Hereafter they are surely the losers.

76. In the preceding verse, they were being mentioned in the third person, but here they are being addressed directly in the second person.

اَلَمْ يَاْتِهِمْ نَبَاُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قَوْمِ نُوْحٍ وَّعَادٍ وَّثَمُوْدَ ۙ وَقَوْمِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاَصْحٰبِ
مَدْيَنَ وَالْمُؤْتَفِكٰتِ ؕ اَتَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ ۚ فَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْٓا
اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ 70

[9:70] Have they not heard the accounts of those who came before them[77] - of the people of Noah and 'Ad and Thamud, and the people of Abraham and the dwellers of Madyan (Midian), and the cities that were overturned?[78]Their Messengers came to them with Clear Signs. Then, it was not Allah Who caused them any wrong; they rather wronged themselves.[79]

77. Again they are being mentioned in the third person.

78. These were the people of Lot.

79. “They used to wrong themselves” for they were themselves responsible for their destruction. Allah had no enmity with them and had no desire to destroy them. As a matter of fact, they themselves adopted the way of life that led to destruction, whereas Allah had sent His Messengers to them and afforded them the opportunities of thinking, understanding, and reforming. His Messengers admonished and warned them of the consequences of treading wrong paths, and presented very clearly before them the way that leads to success, and also the ways that lead to destruction. But when they did not benefit from the opportunities that were offered to them to mend their ways, and persisted in treading the ways that led to destruction, they inevitably met with the end for which they

were heading. And this horrible end was not due to Allah's will to be unjust to them but due to their own evil doings."

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتُ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ ۘ يَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ
وَيُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَيُطِيْعُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۭ اِنَّ
اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ 71

[9:71] The believers, both men and women, are allies of one another. They enjoin good, forbid evil, establish Prayer, pay Zakah, and obey Allah and His Messenger.[80] Surely Allah will show mercy to them. Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.

80. The contrast between the characteristics of the hypocrites (Ayat 67) and of the true believers (Ayat 71) clearly shows that the two are entirely different from each other, in spite of their outwardly similar profession of faith in Islam and obedience to it. The difference lies in their morals, conducts, habits, attitudes and ways of thinking. On the one hand, are the hypocrites whose tongues are never tired of professing faith in Islam, but who are void of sincere faith, and whose conduct belies their professions. They are, as it were, like bottles which have labels of musk, but contain cow-dung which may easily be recognized from its appearance and unpleasant odor. On the other hand, are the true believers, who are like those bottles which contain musk which may be tested in any way by its appearance, its smell and other characteristics to be the musk. Likewise, though the outward label of Islam apparently makes both of them one community of Muslims, the real characteristics of the hypocritical Muslims are so different from those of the true Muslims that they have, in fact, become two different communities. The hypocritical Muslims, men and women, form a separate community with those who have similar characteristics. They all are neglectful of Allah, take interest in evil things and deviate from all that is good and never cooperate with true believers. In short, they are allies to one another and practically dissociate themselves from true believers and form a group of their own. In contrast to them, the true believers, men and women, have practically become one community. All of them take interest in what is good, and abhor what is evil. They remember Allah day and night and cannot think of life without the constant remembrance of Allah. They are very generous in spending in the Way of Allah, and obey Him and His Messenger (peace be upon him) without any mental reservations. These common characteristics have dissociated them from the hypocrites and united them in one community and made them allies to one another.

وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا وَمَسٰكِنَ
طَيِّبَةً فِيْ جَنّٰتِ عَدْنٍ ۭ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ اَكْبَرُ ۭ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ۧ 72

[9:72] Allah has promised the believing men and believing women Gardens beneath which rivers flow. They shall abide in it. There are delightful dwelling places for them in the Gardens of Eternity. They shall, above all, enjoy the good pleasure of Allah. That is the great achievement.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّبِيُّ جَٰهِدِ ٱلْكُفَّارَ وَٱلْمُنَٰفِقِينَ وَٱغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ وَمَأْوَىٰهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۖ وَبِئْسَ

ٱلْمَصِيرُ 73

[9:73] O Prophet![81] Strive against the unbelievers and the hypocrites, and be severe to them.[82] Hell shall be their abode; what an evil destination!

81. From here begins the third discourse that was sent down after the expedition to Tabuk.

82. This command enunciated the change of policy towards the hypocrites. Up to this time, leniency was being shown to them for two reasons. First, the Muslims had not as yet become so powerful as to take the risk of an internal conflict in addition to the one with the external enemies. The other reason was to give enough respite to those people who were involved in doubts and suspicions so that they could get sufficient time for attaining to faith and belief. But now the time had come for a change of policy. The whole of Arabia had been subdued and a bitter conflict with the external enemies was about to start; therefore it was required that these internal enemies should be crushed down so that they should not be able to conspire with the external enemies to stir up any internal danger to the Muslims. And now it had become possible to crush them. As regards to the second reason, these hypocrites had been given respite for a period of nine years to observe, to consider and test the right way, and they could have availed of it, if they had any good in them. So there was no reason why any more leniency should be shown to them. Therefore, Allah enjoined the Muslims to treat the hypocrites on one and the same level with the disbelievers and start Jihad against them, and to give up the policy of leniency they had adopted towards them and adopt a fine and stern policy instead.

In this connection, it should also be noted that this verse does not enjoin the Muslims to fight with the hypocrites. It merely meant to end the policy of leniency that had hitherto been adopted towards them. This verse enjoined that they were no more to be considered a part and parcel of the Muslim community, nor were they to be allowed to take part in the management of its affairs, nor consulted about any matter, so that they might not be able to spread the poison of hypocrisy. This changed policy required that the true believers should expose all those, who adopted a hypocritical attitude and conduct and showed in any way that they were not sincere allies to Allah, His Messenger (peace be upon him) and the true Muslims. Each and every one of such hypocrites should be openly criticized and reproved so that there should remain for them no more place of honor and trust in the Muslim society. They should be socially boycotted and kept away from the consultations of the community. Their evidence in the courts of law should be regarded as untrustworthy. The doors of offices and positions of trust should be closed against them and they should be held in contempt in the social meetings. In short, every Muslim should show by his behavior to such a one that there was no place of honor or respect or trust for a hypocrite in the Muslim

society. Besides this, if any one of them was found to be guilty of treachery, there should be no connivance at his crime, nor should he be pardoned but openly tried in a court of law and should be duly punished.

This command was urgently needed at the time it came. It was obvious that in order to save the Muslim community from fall and degradation, it was essential to purge it of all the internal dangers to its solidarity. A community which nourishes hypocrites and traitors and allows the internal enemies to flourish with honor and security will inevitably be doomed to moral degradation and ultimate destruction. Hypocrisy is a plague and a hypocrite is the rat that carries and spreads its germs. Therefore to allow him the freedom of movement in the society is to expose the whole population to the danger of hypocrisy. Likewise, to give a place of honor and prestige to a hypocrite is to encourage many others in hypocrisy and treachery, for this shows that it is not sincerity, true faith, and its welfare that count in it. One may flourish and prosper in it even if one verbally professes to be a Muslim and at the same time indulges in dishonesty and treachery. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has expressed the same thing in a pithy saying. He said, "Whoso honors and respects the inventor of new practices which are un-Islamic, indeed helps to demolish the very structure of Islam."

يَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ مَا قَالُوْا ۗ وَلَقَدْ قَالُوْا كَلِمَةَ الْكُفْرِ وَكَفَرُوْا بَعْدَ اِسْلَامِهِمْ وَهَمُّوْا بِمَا لَمْ
يَنَالُوْا ۚ وَمَا نَقَمُوْٓا اِلَّآ اَنْ اَغْنٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۚ فَاِنْ يَّتُوْبُوْا يَكُ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ ۚ
وَاِنْ يَّتَوَلَّوْا يُعَذِّبْهُمُ اللّٰهُ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ۙ فِى الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ
وَّلَا نَصِيْرٍ 74

[9:74] They swear by Allah that they said nothing blasphemous whereas they indeed blasphemed,[83] and fell into unbelief after believing, and also had evil designs which they could not carry into effect.[84] They are spiteful against Muslims for no other reason than that Allah and His Messenger have enriched them through His bounty![85] So, if they repent, it will be to their own good. But if they turn away, Allah will sternly punish them in this world and in the Hereafter. None in the world will be able to protect or help them.

83. We cannot say with certainty what that "word of disbelief" was which they had uttered. There are, however, traditions that mention several things of unbelief which were uttered by the hypocrites during that time. For instance, it is related that a hypocrite, while he was talking to a young Muslim, a near relative of his, said, "If all that this man, referring to the Prophet (peace be upon him), is saying be true, then we are worse than donkeys." Another tradition relates that when, during the expedition to Tabuk, one of the she-camels of the Prophet (peace be upon him) went astray and the Muslims were moving about in search of it, a party of the hypocrites made a good deal of fun of this, saying to one another, "Just

consider the prophethood of this man. He tells news of heavens but cannot tell where his she-camel is."

84. This is a reference to the plots which the hypocrites had made during the Tabuk expedition. On the return journey they conspired to push the Prophet (peace be upon him) down into some ravine, while he would be passing over some hill at night. The Prophet (peace be upon him) got wind of the plot and ordered that the army should take the longer route through the valley round the hills, while he himself along with Ammar bin Yasir and Huzaifah bin- Yaman would make the short route over the hill. While they were on the way, suddenly they discovered that a dozen of the hypocrites, with covered faces, were following them. At this Huzaifah (may Allah be pleased with him) turned towards them so that he may drive away their camels but they were terrified when they saw him coming towards them and took to flight lest they should be recognized.

The other plot was to declare Abdullah bin Ubayy as king at Al-Madinah as soon as they should hear some bad news about the Muslim army, because according to their expectations, the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his faithful companions could never fare well against the armies of the great Roman Empire.

85. This is an insinuation to put to shame by an indirect suggestion the hypocrites of Al-Madinah. This refereed to the prosperity of Al-Madinah and its peoples, for Al- Madinah was a small town before the migration of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to it, and its two clans Aus and Khazraj did not hold any high position in regards to wealth or prestige. But within the short period of nine years or so, this small town became the capital of Arabia because of the residence of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and the sacrifices of the Ansar, the true Muslims. As a result of which, the former peasants Aus and Khazraj of Al- Madinah became the great ones of the Islamic state, and wealth began to flow into this central city on account of spoils of war and increased commercial activity. The hypocrites were rebuked in this verse that, instead of being grateful to the Prophet (peace be upon him), they showed anger and spite against him for no other reason than that he had brought forth prosperity among them.

وَمِنْهُم مَّنْ عَاهَدَ اللَّهَ لَئِنْ آتَانَا مِن فَضْلِهِ لَنَصَّدَّقَنَّ وَلَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ 75

[9:75] Some of them made a covenant with Allah: "If Allah gives us out of His bounty, we will give alms and act righteously."

فَلَمَّا آتَاهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ بَخِلُوا بِهِ وَتَوَلَّوا وَّهُم مُّعْرِضُونَ 76

[9:76] Then, when He gave them out of His bounty, they grew niggardly and turned their backs (upon their covenant).[86]

86. This is an instance of their ingratitude for which the hypocrites were rebuked in Ayat 74.

They broke their covenant with Allah which enjoined them to spend money in charity, if Allah enriched them by His bounty. This shows that they were confirmed criminals and

they did not care in the least for the agreements they made, and were niggardly and had no moral code to observe.

فَاَعۡقَبَهُمۡ نِفَاقًا فِىۡ قُلُوۡبِهِمۡ اِلٰى يَوۡمِ يَلۡقَوۡنَهٗ بِمَاۤ اَخۡلَفُوا اللّٰهَ مَا وَعَدُوۡهُ وَبِمَا كَانُوۡا يَكۡذِبُوۡنَ 77

[9:77] So He caused hypocrisy to take root in their hearts and to remain therein until the Day they meet Him because they broke their promise with Allah and because they lied.

اَلَمۡ يَعۡلَمُوۡۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعۡلَمُ سِرَّهُمۡ وَنَجۡوٰىهُمۡ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلَّامُ الۡغُيُوۡبِ ۚ 78

[9:78] Are they not aware that Allah knows what they conceal and what they secretly discuss, and that Allah has full knowledge even of all that is beyond the reach of perception.

اَلَّذِيۡنَ يَلۡمِزُوۡنَ الۡمُطَّوِّعِيۡنَ مِنَ الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ فِى الصَّدَقٰتِ وَالَّذِيۡنَ لَا يَجِدُوۡنَ اِلَّا جُهۡدَهُمۡ فَيَسۡخَرُوۡنَ مِنۡهُمۡ ؕ سَخِرَ اللّٰهُ مِنۡهُمۡ ۖ وَلَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ اَلِيۡمٌ 79

[9:79] He also knows (the rich that are niggardly) who taunt the believers that voluntarily give alms, they scoff at those who have nothing to give except what they earn through their hard toil.[87] Allah scoffs at them in return. A grievous chastisement awaits them.

87. This refers to the mean conduct which the hypocrites evinced on the occasion of the appeal of the Prophet (peace be upon him) for contributions towards the Tabuk expedition. The well-to-do hypocrites did not themselves make any contributions, but when the sincere Muslims came forward with generous contributions according to their means, they began to deride them. If a well-to-do Muslim made a handsome contribution, they would at once accuse him to be guilty of a showoff. On the other hand, if a poor Muslim contributed a paltry sum which he could hardly spare after sacrificing some of the barest necessities of his family, or contributing the small earnings obtained by hard work, they would at once ridicule, saying, "Lo! Here is the farthing that will help conquer the forts of the Roman Empire!"

اِسۡتَغۡفِرۡ لَهُمۡ اَوۡ لَا تَسۡتَغۡفِرۡ لَهُمۡ ؕ اِنۡ تَسۡتَغۡفِرۡ لَهُمۡ سَبۡعِيۡنَ مَرَّةً فَلَنۡ يَّغۡفِرَ اللّٰهُ لَهُمۡ ؕ ذٰلِكَ
بِاَنَّهُمۡ كَفَرُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوۡلِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهۡدِى الۡقَوۡمَ الۡفٰسِقِيۡنَ ع 80

[9:80] (O Prophet), it is all the same whether or not you ask for their forgiveness. Even if you were to ask forgiveness for them seventy times, Allah shall not forgive them. That is because they disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger; and Allah does not bestow His Guidance on such evil-doing folk.

فَرِحَ الۡمُخَلَّفُوۡنَ بِمَقۡعَدِهِمۡ خِلٰفَ رَسُوۡلِ اللّٰهِ وَكَرِهُوۡۤا اَنۡ يُّجَاهِدُوۡا بِاَمۡوَالِهِمۡ
وَاَنۡفُسِهِمۡ فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ وَقَالُوۡا لَا تَنۡفِرُوۡا فِى الۡحَرِّ ؕ قُلۡ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ اَشَدُّ حَرًّا ؕ لَوۡ كَانُوۡا
يَفۡقَهُوۡنَ 81

[9:81] Those who were allowed to stay behind rejoiced at remaining behind and not accompanying the Messenger of Allah. They were averse to striving in the Way of Allah with their belongings and their lives and told others: "Do not go forth in this fierce heat." Tell them: "The Hell is far fiercer in heat." Would that they understand!

فَلۡيَضۡحَكُوۡا قَلِيۡلًا وَّلۡيَبۡكُوۡا كَثِيۡرًا ۚ جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوۡا يَكۡسِبُوۡنَ 82

[9:82] Let them, then, laugh little, and weep much at the contemplation of the punishment for the evil they have committed.

فَاِنۡ رَّجَعَكَ اللّٰهُ اِلٰى طَآئِفَةٍ مِّنۡهُمۡ فَاسۡتَاۡذَنُوۡكَ لِلۡخُرُوۡجِ فَقُلۡ لَّنۡ تَخۡرُجُوۡا مَعِىَ اَبَدًا
وَّلَنۡ تُقَاتِلُوۡا مَعِىَ عَدُوًّا ؕ اِنَّكُمۡ رَضِيۡتُمۡ بِالۡقُعُوۡدِ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ فَاقۡعُدُوۡا مَعَ الۡخٰلِفِيۡنَ 83

[9:83] Then if Allah brings you face to face with a party of them, and they ask your leave to go forth (to fight in the Way of Allah), tell them: "You shall not go forth with me, and shall never fight against any enemy along with me. You were well-pleased to remain at home the first time, so now continue to remain with those who have stayed behind."

وَلَا تُصَلِّ عَلٰٓى اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَّاتَ اَبَدًا وَّلَا تَقُمْ عَلٰى قَبْرِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ
وَمَاتُوْا وَهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ 84

[9:84] Do not ever pray over any of them who dies, nor stand over his grave. They disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger and died in iniquity.[88]

88. This verse was sent down to prevent the Prophet (peace be upon him) from saying funeral prayers for Abdullah bin Ubayy, the ringleader of the hypocrites, who died a short while after the Tabuk expedition. His son Abdullah who was a sincere Muslim called on the Prophet (peace be upon him) and requested him to give his shirt for his father's shroud. The Prophet (peace be upon him) very generously granted his request. Then he begged the Prophet (peace be upon him) to lead his father's funeral prayer. The Prophet (peace be upon him) agreed to this also but Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) very respectfully requested him repeatedly not to do so, saying, "O Prophet of Allah! will you say funeral prayer for a person who was guilty of such and such crimes and sins." The Prophet (peace be upon him), who was a blessing both for friends and for foes, got ready to say funeral prayer even for that man who was a deadly enemy of Islam. At last when he stood up to lead the funeral prayer, this verse was sent down to prevent him from this by a direct command from God, in accordance with the changed policy declared in Ayat 73 which forbade to do anything that might encourage the hypocrites among the Muslims.

The above incident led to the formulation of the regulation that the leaders and prominent people from among the Muslims should neither lead, nor offer the funeral prayers of the sinners against Islam, or for those notorious for their disobedience to Islam. After this, whenever a request was made to the Prophet (peace be upon him) for a funeral prayer, he would first inquire about the conduct of the deceased person. If he came to know that he was a bad person, he would say to his people, "You may perform his burial just as you like".

وَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ اَمْوَالُهُمْ وَاَوْلَادُهُمْ ؕ اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يُّعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِى الدُّنْيَا وَتَزْهَقَ
اَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ 85

[9:85] Let not their riches or their children excite your admiration. Through these Allah seeks to chastise them in this world, and that their lives will depart them while they are unbelievers.

وَاِذَآ اُنْزِلَتْ سُوْرَةٌ اَنْ اٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَجَاهِدُوْا مَعَ رَسُوْلِهِ اسْتَاْذَنَكَ اُولُوا الطَّوْلِ مِنْهُمْ
وَقَالُوْا ذَرْنَا نَكُنْ مَّعَ الْقٰعِدِيْنَ 86

[9:86] And whenever any surah is revealed enjoining: "Believe in Allah and strive (in His Way) along with His Messenger," the affluent among them ask you to excuse them, saying: "Leave us with those who will sit back at home."

رَضُوا بِأَن يَكُونُوا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ وَطُبِعَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ 87

[9:87] They were content to stay behind with the womenfolk. Their hearts were sealed, leaving them bereft of understanding.[89]

89. "They do not understand" for they deliberately and intentionally chose the shameful way of staying at home with women, when they were required to go forth for Jihad, though they were healthy, physically fit and well-to-do, and professed Islam. Therefore, according to the divine law of nature, a seal was set upon their hearts and they were bereft of those noble feelings which make one feel ashamed of adopting such a disgraceful conduct.

لَٰكِنِ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ جَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمُ الْخَيْرَاتُ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ 88

[9:88] But the Messenger and those who shared his faith strove with their belongings and their lives. It is they who shall have all kinds of good. It is they who shall prosper.

أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ۚ 89

[9:89] Allah has prepared for them Gardens beneath which rivers flow. There shall they abide. That is the supreme triumph.

وَجَاءَ الْمُعَذِّرُونَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ لِيُؤْذَنَ لَهُمْ وَقَعَدَ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ

سَيُصِيبُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ 90

[9:90] Many of the bedouin Arabs[90] came with excuses, seeking leave to stay behind. Thus those who were false to Allah and His Messenger in their covenant remained behind. A painful chastisement shall befall those of them that disbelieved.[91]

90. Here the word Bedouins refers to those Arabs who lived in the desert near Al-Madinah.

91. The hypocritical profession of Islam has been called the way of unbelief, because that profession of faith which lacks practical proof, surrender, sincerity and obedience is in fact unbelief. As such persons prefer their own interests and worldly desires to Allah and His Way, they shall be dealt with by Allah as unbelievers and rebels, even if they could not be legally treated as such in this world but were considered Muslims due to their profession of

faith. This is because in the life of this world, the Islamic law treats as unbelievers only such hypocrites as are guilty of open unbelief, rebellion, treachery, or infidelity. That is why there are many cases of hypocrisy that do not come under kufr in the Islamic shariah. However, this does not mean that if one escaped the penalty according to the Islamic code, one will escape punishment according to the divine judgment also.

لَيْسَ عَلَى الضُّعَفَآءِ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرْضٰى وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ مَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ حَرَجٌ اِذَا
نَصَحُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ؕ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ مِنْ سَبِيْلٍ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۙ 91

[9:91] There is no blame on the weak nor on the sick nor on those who have nothing to enable them to join (the struggle in the Way of Allah) if they stay behind provided that they are sincere to Allah and to His Messenger.[92]There is no cause for reproach against those who do good. Allah is All-Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

92. This implies that even those people who are otherwise excusable because of disability, sickness or indigence will be pardoned only if they are sincerely and truly faithful to Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him). Without this fidelity, no one shall be pardoned merely because he was sick or indigent at the time when he was called upon to go forth for Jihad. For Allah does not judge merely by appearances, and treats alike, and forgives all those who present medical certificates of their disability because of sickness, old age or some other physical defect. On the Day of Judgment, He will examine minutely the heart of each and everyone, and take into account his whole conduct, open and hidden, and will consider whether his excuse was of a faithful servant or of a traitor and rebel. It is obvious that each and every case, in spite of apparent similarity, requires a separate and different judgment. For instance, let us take the case of two men who suddenly fell ill on the eve of Jihad. One of them thanked his lucky stars for the timely disease, as if to say, "How lucky it is that I have fallen ill on the opportune moment! Otherwise, this calamity of Jihad could not have been avoided and I would have had to suffer it anyhow." On the contrary, the other man was filled with sorrow at his illness, and he cried in anguish, "Ah, what a bad luck! I have been attacked by this sudden disease at the time when I ought to have been in the battlefield instead of lying down here in bed." One of them made his illness not only an excuse for exemption from Jihad but also tried to dissuade others from it. On the contrary, the other one, though lying in the bed, went on urging his own dear relatives, friends, and others to go forth to Jihad; nay, he entreated even those who were attending him, saying, "Leave me in the care of the real Master, and go forth to Jihad. I am sure that the arrangements for my nursing will be made somehow. Therefore, you should not waste your precious chance for my sake but go forth and serve the right way." But the other, who stayed at home, spent all this time in spreading discontent and bad news and in damaging war efforts and in disrupting the affairs of the families of the fighters. The other man in similar circumstances did his very best to make the home front as strong as he could. Though these two men had similar excuses for exemption, they cannot be considered as equal in the sight of Allah: the second one only may expect Allah's pardon, and not the first man who was a traitor and rebel against Allah, though he might have had a genuine excuse for exemption.

وَّلَا عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ اِذَا مَآ اَتَوْكَ لِتَحْمِلَهُمْ قُلْتَ لَآ اَجِدُ مَآ اَحْمِلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ ۖ تَوَلَّوْا وَّاَعْيُنُهُمْ
تَفِيْضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ حَزَنًا اَلَّا يَجِدُوْا مَا يُنْفِقُوْنَ ۭ 92

[9:92] Nor can there be any cause for reproach against those who, when they came to you asking for mounts to go to the battlefront, and when you said that you had no mounts for them, they went back, their eyes overflowing with tears, grieving that they had no resources to enable them to take part in fighting.[93]

93. Such people as felt a strong urge for Jihad but could not join it because of some really genuine excuse, will be counted by Allah among those who actually took part in it, even though they could not join it in person and do anything practically for it. This is because they were sincerely grieved at their absence from Jihad for no fault of theirs, just as a man of the world would be grieved if he were deprived of some lucrative business or of some high profit. Allah considers such a one as on duty, because his heart was serving in the Way of Allah, though he had been deprived of active service on account of some genuine excuse. The Prophet (peace be upon him), while returning from Tabuk, stated the same thing like this: "There are some people at Al-Madinah (at this time) who have been traveling and marching all along with you through every valley. Naturally the companions to whom he was speaking were wonder struck at this. So they asked, "While staying at Al-Madinah?" He replied, "Yes, while staying at Al- Madinah! This is because they were compelled by the circumstances to stay behind at Al-Madinah: otherwise they would certainly have accompanied you."

اِنَّمَا السَّبِيْلُ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ يَسْتَاْذِنُوْنَكَ وَهُمْ اَغْنِيَاۗءُ ۚ رَضُوْا بِاَنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ ۙ
وَطَبَعَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰي قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ 93

[9:93] But there are grounds for reproach against those who seek leave to stay behind even though they are affluent. They are the ones who were content to be with the womenfolk who stay behind. Allah has set a seal on their hearts, leaving them bereft of understanding.

يَعْتَذِرُوْنَ اِلَيْكُمْ اِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ اِلَيْهِمْ ۭ قُلْ لَّا تَعْتَذِرُوْا لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ لَكُمْ قَدْ نَبَّاَنَا اللّٰهُ
مِنْ اَخْبَارِكُمْ ۭ وَسَيَرَى اللّٰهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ ثُمَّ تُرَدُّوْنَ اِلٰى عٰلِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ
فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ 94

[9:94] They will put up excuses before you when you return to them. Tell them: "Make no excuses. We will not believe you. Allah has already informed us of the truth about you. Allah will observe your conduct, and so will His Messenger; then you will be brought back to Him Who knows alike what lies beyond perception and what lies in the range of perception and will let you know what you have done."

سَيَحْلِفُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ لَكُمْ اِذَا انْقَلَبْتُمْ اِلَيْهِمْ لِتُعْرِضُوْا عَنْهُمْ ؕ فَاَعْرِضُوْا عَنْهُمْ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ
رِجْسٌ ۙ وَّمَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۚ جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ 95

[9:95] When you return to them they will surely swear to you in the name of Allah that you may leave them alone. So do leave them alone;[94] they are unclean. Hell shall be their home, a recompense for what they did.

94. The Arabic words are of the same root but have different senses in the two sentences in which they occur. In the first sentence it means, "You may turn away from them" and forbear them and may not take them to task. In the second sentence it means, "So turn away from them" and break off all connections with them and have nothing to do with them, as if you had broken off completely with them, and they with you.

يَحْلِفُوْنَ لَكُمْ لِتَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ ۚ فَاِنْ تَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَرْضٰى عَنِ الْقَوْمِ
الْفٰسِقِيْنَ 96

[9:96] They will swear to you in order to please you. But even if you become pleased with them, Allah will not be pleased with such an evil-doing folk.

اَلْاَعْرَابُ اَشَدُّ كُفْرًا وَّنِفَاقًا وَّاَجْدَرُ اَلَّا يَعْلَمُوْا حُدُوْدَ مَاۤ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ
عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ 97

[9:97] The bedouin Arabs surpass all in unbelief and hypocrisy and are most likely to be unaware of the limits prescribed by Allah in what He has revealed to His Messenger. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.[95]

95. As has already been stated earlier the "Bedouins" here refers to those rustic Arabs of the desert who had settled in the suburbs of Al-Madinah.

The background which may help one to comprehend the meanings of the verse is this. Though these people had outwardly embraced Islam, they had not done so from conviction. When they saw the rising of the organized power of Islam in Al-Madinah, they were so overawed by it that they could not ignore it. So at first they adopted the attitude of the

opportunists towards the conflict between Islam and kufr. But when the power of the Islamic government spread over the major portions of Hijaz and Najd, and the power of its enemy clans began to decline, they thought it expedient to enter the fold of Islam. But there were very few among them who had sincerely accepted Islam from the conviction that it was the right way. That is why they did not make any sincere efforts to fulfill the implications of the true faith, and observe the obligatory duties imposed by Islam. On the contrary, the majority of them had accepted Islam just because it was the best policy for them. They merely desired to take advantages of being Muslims in order to gain those benefits to which they were entitled as members of the ruling party, without performing those duties which became obligatory on them by the very acceptance of Islam. Therefore they were utterly averse to saying the prescribed prayers, observing the fasting, paying the Zakat dues from their date palm gardens and their herds of cattle. Moreover, they smarted under the discipline of the Islamic state and resented being subdued by any power for the first time in history. Above all, it was against their very nature to make sacrifices of their lives and wealth in the Way of Allah, as was being demanded by Islam, for they were accustomed to fight only for plunder and spoils. That is why they always invented one excuse or the other for exemption from the restrictions and obligations that were being imposed on them. For, they had no interest in the truth or the welfare of humanity; their only concern was their camels and their goats, that is, the narrow world around their tents. As regards anything higher than these, the only thing which they could believe in was irrational reverence for those who would guarantee their worldly welfare and protect them from calamities and give them amulets to safeguard them against haram and evil, and say prayers for them as a recompense for their offerings to them. But they were not prepared to accept any faith or belief that would bring under its moral and legal discipline every aspect of their cultural, social and economic life, and demand from them the sacrifices of lives and wealth for the cause of a universal reform.

In this verse, the above mentioned mental and moral condition of the Bedouins has been described like this: "These Bedouins are more hypocritical than the urban Arabs and are more stubborn and obdurate in their denial of the truth. This is because the urban people make use of the opportunities of meeting the learned and pious people and thus learn the laws and regulations of the true way. On the other hand, in all probability, the Bedouins will learn little about the divine way, because they get few opportunities for this. Moreover, they lead lives of economic animals rather than of human beings having moral and spiritual values; therefore they do not think of higher things than their animal urges.

It should also be noted that the main cause of the subsequent storm of rebellion and apostasy during the caliphate of Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) two years after the revelation of these verses (97-99) was the same that has been mentioned therein.

وَمِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ مَنْ يَّتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ مَغْرَمًا وَّيَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمُ الدَّوَآئِرَ ؕ عَلَيْهِمْ دَآئِرَةُ
السَّوْءِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ 98

[9:98] And among the bedouin Arabs there are such as regard whatever they spend (in the Way of Allah) as a fine[96] and wait for some misfortune to befall you. May ill fortune befall them! Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

96. This means that they regarded the payment of Zakat dues as a fine and the expenditure on hospitality, an Islamic duty, a penalty. Likewise, if they had to make any contributions towards Jihad, they did so to show that they were loyal to the Islamic state and not because they wanted to please Allah by giving sincere monetary help for His cause.

وَمِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ مَنْ يُّؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَيَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ قُرُبٰتٍ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ
وَصَلَوٰتِ الرَّسُوْلِ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّهَا قُرْبَةٌ لَّهُمْ ؕ سَيُدْخِلُهُمُ اللّٰهُ فِيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ
رَّحِيْمٌ ۧ 99

[9:99] And among the bedouin Arabs are those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and regard their spending (in the Way of Allah) as a means of drawing near to Allah and of deserving the prayers of the Messenger. Indeed, this shall be a means of drawing near to Allah. Allah will surely admit them to His mercy. Allah is All-Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

وَالسّٰبِقُوْنَ الْاَوَّلُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ وَالْاَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُمْ بِاِحْسَانٍ ۙ رَّضِيَ اللّٰهُ
عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوْا عَنْهُ وَاَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ تَحْتَهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَاۤ اَبَدًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ
الْعَظِيْمُ 100

[9:100] And of those who led the way - the first of the Emigrants (Muhajirun) and the Helpers (Ansar), and those who followed them in the best possible manner - Allah is well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Allah. He has prepared for them Gardens beneath which rivers flow; therein they will abide forever. That is the supreme triumph.

وَمِمَّنْ حَوْلَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَعْرَابِ مُنٰفِقُوْنَ ۛؕ وَمِنْ اَهْلِ الْمَدِيْنَةِ ۛؔ مَرَدُوْا عَلَى النِّفَاقِ ۟ لَا
تَعْلَمُهُمْ ؕ نَحْنُ نَعْلَمُهُمْ ؕ سَنُعَذِّبُهُمْ مَّرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّوْنَ اِلٰى عَذَابٍ عَظِيْمٍ ۚ 101

[9:101] As for the bedouin Arabs around you, some are hypocrites; and so are some of the people of Madinah who have become inured to hypocrisy. You do not know them,

but We know them.[97] We will inflict double chastisement on them,[98] and then they shall be returned to an awesome suffering.

97. They had become so expert in the art of hiding their hypocrisy that even the Prophet (peace be upon him) could not recognize them, though he possessed immense sagacity and insight into human nature; so Allah informed him about them.

98. This double chastisement will be the loss of their worldly advantages and the victory of the Islamic mission in the teeth of their opposition. Thus one chastisement shall be the loss of their worldly benefits for which they practiced deceptions and adopted hypocritical attitudes, and instead of gaining wealth, honor and prestige they shall meet with disgrace and utter failure. The second chastisement will be in the shape of the victory of the Islamic mission to defeat which they exerted their utmost by their machinations and plots. But the Islamic mission will come out successful in the teeth of their evil wishes, desires, intentions and vicious efforts and they themselves shall witness its victory to their utter despair, regret, grief and sorrow.

وَاٰخَرُوْنَ اعْتَرَفُوْا بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ خَلَطُوْا عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَّاٰخَرَ سَيِّئًا ؕ عَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّتُوْبَ
عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ 102

[9:102] There are others who have confessed their faults. They intermixed their good deeds with evil. It is likely that Allah will turn to them in mercy, for Allah is All-Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

خُذْ مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيْهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ صَلٰوتَكَ سَكَنٌ
لَّهُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ 103

[9:103] (O Prophet)! "Take alms out of their riches and thereby cleanse them and bring about their growth (in righteousness), and pray for them. Indeed your prayer is a source of tranquillity for them." Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

اَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهٖ وَيَاْخُذُ الصَّدَقٰتِ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ
الرَّحِيْمُ 104

[9:104] Are they not aware that it is Allah Who accepts the repentance of His servants and accepts their alms, and that it is Allah Who is Oft-Relenting, Ever Merciful?

وَقُلِ اعْمَلُوْا فَسَيَرَى اللّٰهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ؕ وَسَتُرَدُّوْنَ اِلٰى عٰلِمِ الْغَيْبِ
وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ۚ 105

[9:105] And tell them, (O Prophet): "Keep working: Allah will behold your works and so will His Messenger and the believers;[99] and you shall be brought back to Him Who knows that which is beyond the reach of perception and that which is within the reach of perception. He will then declare to you all that you have been doing."[100]

99. In this passage a clear line of demarcation has been drawn between the hypocritical Muslims and the true Muslims, and instructions have been given regarding the treatment that should be meted out to the hypocrites. Therefore, the one who claims to be a Muslim but does not sincerely devote himself to Allah, His Way, and the Islamic community, should be severely dealt with. If there is a clear proof, from his conduct, that he lacks sincerity or if he offers anything in the Way of Allah, it should be rejected forthwith. And when he dies, the Muslims should neither join his funeral prayer nor beg God's pardon for him, even though he be one's father or brother. In contrast to this, if a believer is guilty of some sin and confesses it, he should be pardoned, and his offerings should be accepted and prayers should be said for his forgiveness.

As regards the criterion by which it will be judged whether one is or is not a hypocrite, though one might have been guilty of an act of insincerity, three things have been implied in this passage:

(1) A sincere follower will openly and clearly confess his sin without offering any lame excuses and giving false explanations and interpretations of his offense.

(2) It will be judged from his previous conduct whether he was a habitual offender or he committed the sin on the spur of the moment because of some weakness. If he had been behaving like a righteous Muslim and if his record showed sincere services, sacrifices and good deeds to his credit, it will be reasonably concluded that he was not a hypocrite.

(3) His future conduct will be watched to see whether his confession was verbal or there had really been a change of heart. If he sincerely feels sorry for his sins and is anxious to compensate for them and his whole conduct shows that he intends to eradicate the root cause of the weakness in his faith that misled him into the sins, it will be concluded that he sincerely feels sorry for his sins and that he was not a hypocrite but a sinful believer.

The event that is connected with the occasion on which this passage was sent down, makes this subject quite clear. It is related by the scholars of traditions that these verses were revealed in regard to Abu Lubabah bin Abdul Manzar and his companions. Abu Lubabah (may Allah be pleased with him) was one of those people who had embraced Islam on the occasion of the oath of allegiance at Aqabah before the migration of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to Al- Madinah. He had taken part in the battles of Badr, Uhd and other campaigns. But on the occasion of the Tabuk expedition, he succumbed to some inner weakness and stayed at home without any genuine and lawful excuse. The same was the

case of the other six companions, who were sincere Muslims. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) returned from Tabuk and they came to know that Allah and His Messenger had a very bad opinion of those who had stayed behind, they were filled with shame and regret. Therefore they tied themselves to a pillar even before they were called upon to explain their conduct. Then they declared, "We will neither eat anything nor sleep unless we are pardoned or die in the same condition." After some days they fell down in an unconscious condition because of hunger and sleeplessness. When at last they were informed that Allah and His Messenger had pardoned them, they went to see the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said: "We request that you accept from us as propitiatory offerings our houses and the whole of our possessions. As these were responsible for our sin of omission, we desire to give them away in the Way of Allah." But the Prophet (peace be upon him) replied, "There is no need to give the whole of your property for only one third of it will suffice."

A deep consideration of this event clearly brings out the kind of weaknesses that are pardonable. All of these people were not habitual offenders and defaulters. Their whole past conduct showed that they were sincere Muslims. None of them invented false explanations to excuse themselves but confessed their sins. By offering the whole of their properties as a propitiatory offerings, they proved that they were really sorry for their conduct and wanted to atone for their sins.

In this connection, another important lesson should also be learned from these verses. In order to atone for one's sins, one should give a practical proof along with the verbal confession and heartfelt regret. One way of this is to give charity in the Way of Allah for this helps to cleanse the filth which was being nourished in the heart and which was responsible for the sins. This not only eradicates the hidden evil but also increases the capacity for good works. For the confession of one's sin is like the feeling of one who has fallen into a pit. He at once realizes that he is in a critical situation in a pit, where he does not like to abide, and is troubled over it. Therefore he thinks out plans for getting out of it and makes practical efforts for this. Likewise the one who confesses his sins and feels ashamed of them and takes practical steps to atone for it by making offerings and doing other good works, intends to come out of the pit of sins.

100. "And you will be returned to the Knower," Who is the ultimate judge of everything and from Whom nothing can be concealed. Therefore even if one succeeds in hiding one's hypocrisy in this world or is judged to be up to the standard in one's faith and sincerity, it does not mean in any way that such a one will succeed in escaping chastisement for hypocrisy in the Hereafter also.

وَاٰخَرُوْنَ مُرْجَوْنَ لِاَمْرِ اللّٰهِ اِمَّا يُعَذِّبُهُمْ وَاِمَّا يَتُوْبُ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ

حَكِيْمٌ 106

[9:106] There are others in whose regard Allah's decree is awaited: whether He will chastise them or relent towards them. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.[101]

101. The case of these people had been deferred because it could not yet be legally decided whether they were sinners or hypocrites, and not because their case was doubtful in the sight of Allah. This was because the symptoms of their diseases had not as yet come to the surface to indicate clearly which of the two they were. For Islam teaches the Muslims not to pass judgment on a person or a party unless they possess definite knowledge based on conscious reasoning and not on intuition and the like to support it.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا مَسْجِدًا ضِرَارًا وَّ كُفْرًا وَّتَفْرِيْقًۢا بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَاِرْصَادًا لِّمَنْ حَارَبَ
اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ وَلَيَحْلِفُنَّ اِنْ اَرَدْنَاۤ اِلَّا الْحُسْنٰى ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ اِنَّهُمْ
لَكٰذِبُوْنَ 107

[9:107] Then there are others who have set up a mosque to hurt the True Faith, to promote unbelief, and cause division among believers, and as an ambush for one who had earlier made war on Allah and His Messenger. They will surely swear: "We intended nothing but good," whereas Allah bears witness that they are liars.

لَا تَقُمْ فِيْهِ اَبَدًا ؕ لَمَسْجِدٌ اُسِّسَ عَلَى التَّقْوٰى مِنْ اَوَّلِ يَوْمٍ اَحَقُّ اَنْ تَقُوْمَ فِيْهِ ؕ فِيْهِ
رِجَالٌ يُّحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ يَّتَطَهَّرُوْا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُطَّهِّرِيْنَ 108

[9:108] Never stand therein. Surely a mosque founded from the first day on piety is more worthy that you should stand in it for Prayer. In it are people who love to purify themselves, and Allah loves those that purify themselves.[102]

102. "Who warred against Allah and His Messenger" was Abu Amir who belonged to the clan of Aus of Al-Madinah. He had become Christian monk during the period of ignorance before the migration of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and was well known as a scholar of the Scriptures and was held in great reverence as a pious monk. But his scholarship and asceticism, instead of leading him to the truth, became hindrance in the way. That was why he not only rejected Islam but also became a bitter enemy of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his mission, for he took the Prophet (peace be upon him) for a rival in the holy business of priesthood. At first he ignored the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his mission in the hope that the power of the Quraish would suffice to crush him and his mission. But when the Quraish suffered an utter defeat in the battle of Badr, he could no longer ignore it, so he started a vigorous vicious campaign against the Islamic movement. Accordingly, he left Al-Madinah and visited different clans, in order to incite them against Islam, and was one of those who brought about the battle of Uhd. It is said that he had gotten some pits dug in the battle field of Uhd, and that the Prophet (peace be upon him) fell into one of these and received injuries. Then he played an important role in organizing the armies which came to invade Al-Madinah in the battle of Al-Ahzab. Likewise this Christian monk took a very

active part in giving support to the mushriks against Islam in all the subsequent battles up to the battle of Hunain. At last, when he realized that no power in Arabia could withstand the onslaught of Islam, he left Arabia and went to the Roman Caesar in order to warn him of the rising danger from AIMadinah. It was because of his efforts that the Caesar began to make preparations for invading Arabia, to counteract which the Prophet (peace be upon him) went forth on the expedition to Tabuk.

Now let us consider the background of the building of the mosque that was built to harm the righteous mission.

A section of the hypocrites of Al-Madinah collaborated wholeheartedly with Abu Amir in all the above mentioned hostile activities against Islam. They also fully agreed with him that he should use his spiritual influence to obtain military help from the Roman Caesar and the Christian states of northern Arabia. Accordingly, when he was preparing to go to the Roman Caesar to urge him to invade Arabia, they devised a plan of making a mosque of their own to serve as a safe meeting place for organizing themselves into a separate party because none would suspect that they were carrying on evil activities under the garb of religion. Moreover, this mosque would serve as an ambush for the agents of Abu Amir who could stay in it as travelers and mendicants without raising any suspicion that they were spies of the enemy.

As there were already two mosques in Al-Madinah, one at Quba and the other Masjid-i-Nabavi in the city. Obviously there was no need for a third one. The hypocrites themselves understood this: therefore they began to invent reasons to show that there was really a need for a third mosque. Accordingly, they went to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said, "We need another mosque because it is very difficult for the people of this area, especially the old, the sick and the disabled, to offer the five prescribed prayers in either of the two mosques, during the winter season and the rainfall. Therefore we intend to build a new mosque only for the convenience of those who live at a distance from the two mosques but are desirous of saying their prayers in congregation.

With such professedly pure motives, these mischief makers built the mosque and then went to the Prophet (peace be upon him) with the request to stand in this new mosque and lead the congregation in one of the prescribed prayers so as to perform its opening ceremony. But the Prophet (peace be upon him) postponed the matter, saying, "At this time I am wholly engaged in making preparations for the expedition to Tabuk. I shall consider the matter on my return home." After this he went forth to Tabuk, and they started their nefarious activities. They went on organizing themselves and conspiring against Islam in the mosque and decided to crown Abdullah bin Ubayy as their king, as soon as the Muslims would meet with reverses and be utterly crushed down by the Romans, as they had expected. But their expectations were all frustrated by what happened at Tabuk. Then on the revelation of these verses during the return journey at a place, Zi-Avan, near Al-Madinah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) dispatched some men to demolish the mosque before his entry into the city.

أَفَمَنْ أَسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهُ عَلَىٰ تَقْوَىٰ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٍ خَيْرٌ أَم مَّنْ أَسَّسَ بُنْيَانَهُ عَلَىٰ شَفَا
جُرُفٍ هَارٍ فَانْهَارَ بِهِ فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ 109

[9:109] Is he, then, who has erected his structure on the fear of Allah and His good pleasure better, or he who erects his structure on the brink of a crumbling bank,[103] so that it crumbles down with him into the Hell-Fire? Allah does not bestow His Guidance on the wrong-doing folk.[104]

103. In order to comprehend fully the implications of this simile, let us first consider the significance of the Arabic word Juruf. This applies to the brink of that piece of land which has been undermined by a river or a stream, leaving its surface without any support. In this meaningful simile the construction of the structure of life on the Godless foundations has been compared to that building which is built on the river brink, which has been undermined by its water. It is obvious that the ignorant man who builds a structure on the surface of such a piece of land, merely because it is a piece of land, will not only lose the building but will also lose his own life, for it will inevitably fall down into the river along with him because it has nothing to support it. Likewise, the one who lays the foundation of the structure of the system of his life on the surface of worldly things, without any regard to God's fear or His favor which are the only permanent supports of human life, is like the man who builds his structure on the surface undermined by the river. For such a man, he himself undermines the structure of his life by his wrong deeds which inevitably follow if there is no bedrock of God's fear and His favor. Therefore the surface on which he had built his life would one day inevitably tumble down into the abyss of Hell along with the earnings of his whole life.

104. "Guide", that leads to man's real success.

لَا يَزَالُ بُنْيَانُهُمُ الَّذِي بَنَوْا رِيبَةً فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ إِلَّا أَن تَقَطَّعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ
حَكِيمٌ 110

[9:110] And the structure which they have erected will ever inspire their hearts with doubts unless it be that their very hearts are cut into pieces.[105] Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

105. That is, these hypocrites have deprived their hearts of the capability of receiving and accepting faith by the commission of the most heinous sin of building a mosque to do harm to that very Islam for the propagation of which mosques are built. This crime has set the desire of disbelief so deep in their hearts that it will remain there as long as they are alive and will leave them only at the time of death when their hearts will cease to beat in their breasts. Obviously, the case of such people is quite different from that of those unbelievers, who openly build idol-temples or openly make preparations for war against God. For it is

possible that such a one may get guidance just because he is honest, sincere and bold. Moreover, his open antagonism shows that he has the courage of his convictions and may, therefore, accept Islam, when he would be convinced of its truth. But there is no hope for that cowardly lying and cunning man who builds a mosque for the service of kufr and puts on the garb of God's worship for fighting against Allah's Way. This is because a conduct like this kills all the noble sentiments within him and renders him utterly incapable of understanding and accepting Islam.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُم بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ ۚ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ
اللَّهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ ۖ وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِي التَّوْرَاةِ وَالْإِنجِيلِ وَالْقُرْآنِ ۚ وَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ
بِعَهْدِهِ مِنَ اللَّهِ فَاسْتَبْشِرُوا بِبَيْعِكُمُ الَّذِي بَايَعْتُم بِهِ ۚ وَذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ 111

[9:111] Surely Allah has purchased of the believers their lives and their belongings and in return has promised that they shall have Paradise.[106] They fight in the Way of Allah, and slay and are slain. Such is the promise He has made incumbent upon Himself in the Torah, and the Gospel, and the Qur'an.[107] Who is more faithful to his promise than Allah? Rejoice, then, in the bargain you have made with Him. That indeed is the mighty triumph.

106. In this verse that aspect of the Islamic faith which determines the nature of the relationship between Allah and His servants has been called a transaction. This means that faith is not merely a metaphysical conception but is, in fact, a contract by which the servant sells his life and possessions to Allah and in return for this accepts His promise that He would give him the Garden in the life after death. In order to comprehend the full implications of this transaction, let us first understand its nature.

We should note it well at the outset that, in reality, this transaction is not in regard to the actual selling of the life and possessions of the servant to Allah in the literal sense, for Allah is in fact the real Owner of man's life and possessions. Allah alone has the right of ownership because He is the Creator of man and of everything he possesses and uses. Therefore there is no question at all of selling and buying in the worldly sense; for man possesses nothing of his own to sell, and Allah has no need to buy anything because everything already belongs to Him. However, there is one thing which has entirely been entrusted to man by Allah, that is, the freedom of will and the freedom of choice, and the transaction concerns that thing.

Of course, it is true that this freedom does not make any change in the real position of man with regard to the right of ownership to his own life and his possessions. They belong to Allah Who has delegated to him only the authority to use or abuse these things as he wills, without any coercion or compulsion from Him. This means that man has been given the freedom to acknowledge or not to acknowledge that Allah is the owner of his life and property. The transaction mentioned in Ayat 111 is concerning the voluntary surrender of

this freedom to Allah's will. In other words, Allah wills to test man whether he acknowledges the ownership of Allah over his life and property, in spite of that freedom, and considers himself to be their trustee only, or behaves as if he were their owner and so could do whatever he liked with them.

Thus, the terms of this transaction from Allah's side are these: "If you voluntarily, and not by compulsion or coercion, agree to acknowledge that your life, your property and everything in this world, which in fact belong to me, are mine: And if you consider yourself only as their trustees; And if you voluntarily surrender the freedom I have given you to behave; And if you, in a dishonest way do not intend to become their master and owner; Then, I will give you in return, Gardens in the eternal life of the next world". The one who makes this bargain with Allah is a believer, for faith is in fact the other name for making this bargain. On the other hand, the one who refuses to make this bargain, or after making it adopts the attitude of the one who has not made the bargain, is a kafir. For, technically, kufr is the term applied to the refusal to make this bargain.

The following are the implications of making this transaction:

(1) Allah has put man to two very hard tests in this matter. The first is whether he acknowledges the real Owner as owner, in spite of the freedom of choice given to him. Or he refuses this and becomes ungrateful, treacherous and rebellious. The second test is whether he puts his trust in his God or not. And he surrenders his freedom and sacrifices his desires and wishes in this present world in return for His promise of the Gardens and eternal bliss in the next world. Even though the world were to proclaim, "A bird in hand is worth two in the bush".

(2) This matter helps to draw a clear line of demarcation between the legal conception of the Islamic faith and the higher and spiritual one according to which Allah will judge one in the Hereafter.

According to its legal conception, the mere verbal profession of the articles of the faith is a sufficient proof that one is legally a Muslim and after this no jurist is authorized to declare such a one to be a disbeliever or to expel one from the fold of the Islamic community, unless there is a definite and clear proof that the one made a false profession of the faith. But this is not so with Allah. Allah considers the faith of only that person to be true, who makes this bargain with Him and sells his freedom of thought and action to Him and gives up his entire claim to ownership in His favor. That is why a man might profess the articles of the faith and observe the prescribed obligatory duties, but if he considered himself alone to be the master and owner of his body and soul, his heart and brain and his other faculties, his property and his resources and other things in his possession, and reserved to himself the right of expending them as he willed, he shall be regarded a disbeliever in the sight of Allah, even though he should be regarded a believer in the sight of the world. This is because such a man has not made that bargain with God which is the essence of the faith according to the Quran. The very fact that a man does not expend his life and property in the way Allah approves of, or expends these in the way He disapproves, shows that the one who claimed to profess the faith either did not sell these to Allah, or after having made the transaction still regarded himself to be their master and owner.

(3) The above conception of the Islamic faith draws a clear line of demarcation between the attitude of a Muslim and that of a disbeliever towards life. The Muslim, who sincerely believes in Allah, surrenders himself completely to Allah's will, and does nothing whatsoever which may show that he is independent in his attitude, except when he temporarily forgets the terms of the bargain he has made with Him. Likewise no community of the Muslims can collectively adopt an independent attitude in political, cultural, economic, social and international matters and still remain Muslim. And if sometimes it temporarily forgets its subordinate position and its voluntary surrender of its freedom, it will give up the attitude of independence and readopt the attitude of surrender, as soon as it becomes aware of its error. In contrast to this, if one adopts the attitude of independence towards Allah and makes decisions about all the affairs of life in accordance with ones own wishes, whims and caprices, one shall be regarded to have adopted the attitude of disbelief, even though one was a Muslim or a non-Muslim.

(4) It should also be noted well that the will of God to which a man is required to surrender himself is that which is specified by Allah himself and not the one which the man himself declares to be the will of God. For in the latter case one does not follow God's will but one's own will, which is utterly against the terms of the transaction. Only that person (or community) who adopts the attitude that conforms to the teachings of His Book and His Messenger, shall be deemed to have fulfilled the terms of the transaction.

From the above implications of this transaction, it also becomes clear why the fulfillment of the terms by Allah has been deferred to the next world after the termination of the life of this world. It is obvious that the Garden is not the return for the mere profession that the buyer has sold his life and property to Allah but it is the actual surrender of these things in the worldly life and their disposal by him as a trustee of Allah according to His will. Thus, this transaction will be completed only when the life of the buyer comes to an end in this world and it is proved that after making the bargain, he went on fulfilling the terms of the agreement up to his last breath. For then and there alone, he will be entitled to the recompense in accordance with the terms of the transaction.

It will also be worthwhile to understand the context in which this matter has been placed here. In the preceding passage, there was the mention of those people who failed in the test of their faith and did not make the sacrifice of their time, money, life and interests for the sake of Allah and His Way, in spite of their professions, because of their negligence or lack of sincerity or absolute hypocrisy. Therefore after criticizing the attitudes of different persons and sections, they have been told in clear words the implications of the faith they had accepted: "This is not the mere verbal profession that there is God and He is One, but the acceptance of the fact that He is the Owner and the Master of your lives and possessions. Therefore, if you are not ready and willing to sacrifice these in obedience to the command of Allah, but expend these and your energies and resources against the will of Allah, it is a clear proof that you were false in your profession of the faith. For, the true believers are those who have truly sold their persons and possessions to Allah, and consider Him to be their Owner and Master, and expend their energies and possessions without any reservations, where He commands them to expend, and do not expend the least of these where He forbids them to expend.

107. Some critics say that the statement of promise in the Torah and the Gospel is not confirmed by these Books. Their objection in regard to the Gospel is obviously wrong for even in the existing Gospels there are sayings of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) that confirm this verse. For instance:

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (MAT. 5: 10).

"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." (MAT. 10: 39).

"And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life." (MAT. 19: 29).

It is, however, true that the matter of this transaction is not confirmed in its entirety by the existing Torah. For instance, there is a mention of the first part of the bargain at several places in one forth or the other: "Is not He thy father that hath bought thee? hath He not made thee, and established thee?" (DEUT. 32: 6).

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." (DEUT. 6: 4-5).

But as regards the other part of the bargain, that is, the promise of the Gardens, they applied it to the land of Palestine:

"Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey." (DEUT. 6: 3).

This is because the Torah does not give any conception of the life-after-death, the Day of Judgment, rewards and punishments in the Hereafter, though this creed has always been an inseparable part of the right way. This does not, however, mean that the Torah did not originally contain this creed. The fact is that the Jews had become so materialistic during the period of their degeneration that they had no other idea of a reward from God than the wellbeing and prosperity in this world. Therefore they perverted all the promises made by God in return for man's service and obedience to Him and applied those to the land of Palestine.

In this connection, it should also be noted that the abovementioned changes became possible because the original Torah had been tampered with in several ways. Some portions were taken away from it and others were added to it. Thus, the Torah in the existing form is not purely the word of God but also contains the comments, etc. of the Jewish scholars mixed up with it. So much so that at some places it becomes difficult to distinguish the word of God from the Jewish traditions, their racial prejudices, their superstitions, their ambitions and, wishes, their legal interpretations, etc. all of which have gotten mixed with the word of God. (See E.N. 2 of Aal-Imran).

اَلتَّآئِبُوْنَ الْعٰبِدُوْنَ الْحٰمِدُوْنَ السَّآئِحُوْنَ الرّٰكِعُوْنَ السّٰجِدُوْنَ الْاٰمِرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ
وَالنَّاهُوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَالْحٰفِظُوْنَ لِحُدُوْدِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ 112

[9:112] Those who constantly turn to Allah in repentance,[108] who constantly worship Him, who celebrate His praise, who go about the world to serve His cause,[109] who bow down to Him, who prostrate themselves before Him, who enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, and who keep the limits set by Allah.[110] Announce glad tidings to such believers.

108. The Arabic word atta-i-bun literally means "those who repent". But in the context it occurs it implies "those who possess repentance as their permanent characteristic", that is, they repent over and over again. Moreover, the literal meaning of taubah is "to turn to" or "to turn back". Therefore its explanatory translation will be "those who turn back to Allah over and over again". This is the first and foremost characteristic of a true believer because even a true believer is liable to forget the bargain he makes with Allah by which he sells his life and property to Him. As this matter does not concern his sense organs but pertains to his mind and heart, he is liable to forget that these things are not really his property but they belong to Allah. Therefore, even the true believer occasionally forgets the bargain, and behaves in a way as if he were their owner. But as soon as he becomes conscious of this transitory lapse and realizes that he had violated the terms of his agreement, he feels sorry and ashamed of his conduct and turns to his God, begs His pardon and renews the terms of the bargain with Him, and pledges his allegiance to Him after every slip of its violation. This kind of repentance alone is the guarantee that one will always come back to one's faith: otherwise it is not possible for man because of the inherent human weaknesses, to observe strictly and deliberately the terms of the bargain without ever falling a prey to negligence and error. That is why Allah says in praise of the true believer that "he turns back to Allah over and over again" and not that "he never slips into error after making the bargain of obedience and service to Him". And this is the greatest excellence that man can accomplish. Let us now consider the wisdom of placing this characteristics first in the list of the characteristics of the true believers. It is to admonish those who had been guilty of crimes after the profession of their faith. They have been told in Ayat 3 that the true believers are those who sell their lives and property to Allah. After this they are being told that if they sincerely intend to become true believers they should first of all create in themselves this characteristic and at once turn to Allah without showing any obduracy so that they should not deviate further into error.

109. Some commentators are of the opinion that here Assa-i-hun means "those who observe fast". As this is not the lexical meaning of the word but only its figurative sense, which has been based on an unauthentic tradition attributed to the Prophet (peace be upon him). We are of the opinion that there is no need to depart from its lexical meanings, that is, "move about in the land (for His sake)". For here the Arabic word does not mean merely to "move about in the land" but "move about in the land for the sake of noble and high aims, e.g. to propagate Islam, to do Jihad, to emigrate from those places where the unbelievers are in power, and to reform the people, to seek true knowledge, to earn a lawful livelihood and the

like". This characteristic of the believers has been especially mentioned here to reprove those who had not gone forth to Jihad, in spite of their claim that they were believers. They have been admonished that a true believer is the one who goes forth into the land to raise high His word, and exerts his utmost to fulfill the implications of his faith, and not the one who stays behind when he is called upon to move about in the land.

110. That is those who "strictly observe the limits prescribed by Allah" in regard to the articles of the faith, worship-morality, social behavior, culture, economics, politics, judiciary, peace and war, and in all the aspects of their individual and collective lives. They neither transgress these limits in order to follow their lusts nor invent laws, nor replace the divine law by other laws. They establish these limits and prevent their violations. Hence, the true believers are those who not only strictly observe the limits prescribed by Allah, but also do their very best to establish them and safeguard them so as to prevent their violation to the best of their powers and capabilities.

مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنْ يَّسْتَغْفِرُوْا لِلْمُشْرِكِيْنَ وَلَوْ كَانُوْٓا اُولِيْ قُرْبٰى مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ اَنَّهُمْ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَحِيْمِ 113

[9:113] After it has become clear that they are condemned to the Flaming Fire,[111] it is not for the Prophet and those who believe to ask for the forgiveness of those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity even if they be near of kin.

111. "That they ask for the forgiveness for the idolaters." implies two things. First, we love them and sympathize with them. Secondly, we consider their crime to be pardonable. There is no harm to cherish these things for the one who is loyal, though a sinner, but it is absolutely wrong in principle to love and sympathize with a person who is an open rebel and to consider his case as pardonable as it renders our own loyalty doubtful. Besides, it adds to the intensity of the crime, if we pray for the forgiveness of a mushrik, who is our near relative. For it means that we consider our relationships to be more valuable than the fulfillment of the implications of our loyalty to Allah and that our love with Allah. And His Way is not wholly unalloyed and that we desire that Allah should also be influenced by the love we have with His rebels and pardon our criminal kinsmen, even though He should throw the other criminals into the fire of Hell. Obviously, all such things are wrong and are against loyalty and sincerity and the faith demands that our love with Allah and His Way should be absolutely unalloyed and that His friend should be our friend and His enemy our enemy. That is why Allah has not said, "Do not pray for the forgiveness of the mushriks." But has instead warned, "It is not for the Prophet (peace be upon him), and those who believe, that they ask for the forgiveness for the idolaters", which implies this: "The right thing for you is that you yourselves should regard it as improper to show sympathy with our rebels and consider their crime as pardonable: nay, you should not wait for any command from Us about this."

In this connection, it should also be noted well that it is forbidden to show sympathy with the mushriks only in matters of faith. As regards the human relationships that demand the observance of the rights of one's own relatives, of showing love, sympathy and kindness,

and cherishing fellow-feelings with them is not forbidden at all but it is considered to be a virtue. We must fulfill the worldly rights of a relative whether he be a believer or a disbeliever: we should help him in affliction and give support to the needy ones and the orphans and show all possible sympathy with a sick or wounded person, irrespective of whether he is a Muslim or a non-Muslim.

وَمَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرٰهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ إِلَّا عَنْ مَّوْعِدَةٍ وَّعَدَهَآ إِيَّاهُ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهٗٓ أَنَّهٗ عَدُوٌّ
لِّلّٰهِ تَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُ ۚ إِنَّ إِبْرٰهِيمَ لَأَوَّاهٌ حَلِيمٌ 114

[9:114] And Abraham's prayer for the forgiveness of his father was only because of a promise which he had made to him.[112] Then, when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of Allah, he dissociated himself from him. Surely Abraham was most tender-hearted, God-fearing, forbearing.[113]

112. The reference is to what Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) said when he broke off all connections with his father:

(1) “Peace be upon you. I will pray to my Lord to forgive you: for He is very kind to me”. (Surah Maryam, Ayat 47).

(2) “And forgive my father: indeed he is of those who have gone astray. And disgrace me not on the Day, when mankind shall be brought back to life; when neither riches nor children shall avail anyone, and none shall obtain salvation except the one who comes before his Lord with a sound and pure heart”. (Ash-Shuara Ayats 86-89).

(3) “I will pray for your forgiveness, but I have no power to rescue you from Allah”. (Al-Mumtahina Ayat 4).

In the first place it should be noted that even the wording and the tone of the prayer for his father were very guarded, but when Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) realized that the person for whom he was praying was an open rebel against Allah and a bitter enemy of His Way, he refrained himself from saying even such a guarded prayer for him and declared in clear words that he would have nothing to do with him in future, even though the rebel was his father who had brought him up with love and care.

113. The words awwah and haleem which the Quran uses for Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) are very comprehensive in meaning. Awwah is the one who is lamenting, humble, weeping, grief-stricken and God fearing. And haleem is the one who can keep control over himself under all circumstances, and is neither beside himself in anger and enmity nor transgresses the proper limits in his affections, friendships, and relationships. Here both the words have been used in their comprehensive senses. Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) prayed for his father because he was tender-hearted and lamented for him that he would become the fuel for the fire of Hell. As he had full control over himself, and was very forbearing, he prayed even for that father who had persecuted him cruelly in order to hinder him from the way of Islam. Lastly, he was God fearing and did not want to

go beyond the limits in his love for his father; so he broke off all his relations with his father when he realized that he was an enemy of Allah.

وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُضِلَّ قَوْمًۢا بَعْدَ اِذْ هَدٰىهُمْ حَتّٰى يُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ مَّا يَتَّقُوْنَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ 115

[9:115] It is not Allah's way to cause people to stray in error after He has guided them until He has made clear to them what they should guard against.[114] Surely Allah knows everything.

114. "He has made clear to them" beforehand that they should avoid such and such thoughts, deeds, and ways. But if they take no heed, and persist in wrong thinking and wrongdoing, Allah withholds His guidance from them and lets them follow the wrong way they themselves choose to follow.

This is the general formula that helps understand those passages of the Quran in which Allah ascribes to Himself the guidance and the deviation of the people. Allah's guidance is that He makes plain to them the right way through His Prophets and Books. Then He enables those who have the intention, to follow the right way. On the other hand, He does not force and compel them to follow the right way, if they themselves intend to persist in the wrong ways in spite of the fact that the right way has been made quite clear to them; He rather enables them to follow the way they themselves intend to follow. As regards the context in which this occurs here, it is plain that it is meant to warn those people who have been mentioned in the preceding passage, and to introduce those who are going to be mentioned in the succeeding passage.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ يُحْىٖ وَيُمِيْتُ ؕ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ وَّلِىٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيْرٍ 116

[9:116] Indeed Allah's is the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He it is Who confers life and causes death. You have no protector or helper apart from Allah.

لَقَدْ تَّابَ اللّٰهُ عَلَى النَّبِىِّ وَالْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ وَالْاَنْصَارِ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُ فِىْ سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيْغُ قُلُوْبُ فَرِيْقٍ مِّنْهُمْ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ بِهِمْ رَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۙ 117

[9:117] Surely Allah has relented towards the Prophet, and towards the Muhajirun (Emigrants) and the Ansar (Helpers) who stood by him in the hour of hardship,[115] although the hearts of a party of them had well-nigh swerved.[116] (But

when they gave up swerving from the Right Course and followed the Prophet), Allah relented towards them.[117] Surely to them He is the Most Tender, the Most Merciful.

115. Allah forgave the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions for those inadvertent lapses that had been made in connection with the Tabuk expedition, in view of their excellent services. The inadvertent lapse made by the Prophet (peace be upon him) was that he had given leave to stay behind to those people who were able to take part in the Jihad. (Ayat 43).

116. This refers to those sincere companions who were at first somewhat unwilling to go to war on that critical occasion, but at last overcame their weakness, for they had true faith in their hearts and loved the right way.

117. That is, Allah will not take them to account for their wrong inclinations for He does not punish a man for that weakness which he himself has overcome and corrected.

وَّعَلَى الثَّلٰثَةِ الَّذِيْنَ خُلِّفُوْا ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْاَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ وَضَاقَتْ
عَلَيْهِمْ اَنْفُسُهُمْ وَظَنُّوْٓا اَنْ لَّا مَلْجَاَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ اِلَّآ اِلَيْهِ ؕ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوْبُوْا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيْمُ ع 118

[9:118] And He also relented towards the three whose cases had been deferred.[118] When the earth, for all its spaciousness, became constrained to them, and their own beings became a burden to them, and they realized that there was no refuge for them from Allah except in Him; He relented towards them that they may turn back to Him. Surely, it is Allah Who is Much Forgiving, Ever Merciful.[119]

118. These three were among those who came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) to present their excuses for staying behind. More than eighty of them were hypocrites, who put forward lame excuses and the Prophet (peace be upon him) accepted these and let them go. Then came the turn of these three, who were true believers, and they confessed their fault plainly. Therefore the Prophet (peace be upon him) postponed the decision of their case and ordered the Muslims not to have any social relations with them till the decision of their case came from Allah. This verse was sent down to decide their case.

In this connection it should be kept in mind that the case of these three was different from the case of the seven mentioned in E.N. 99. They had inflicted the punishment on themselves before they were called to account for their fault.

119. The three whose condition has been described in this verse, were Kaab bin Malik, Hilal bin Umayyah and Murarah bin Rubai. They were sincere believers, as has been stated above, and had made many sacrifices and given proofs of their sincerity before this. The last two had taken part in the battle of Badr also, and therefore their faith was above every kind of suspicion. Though Kaab had not taken part in the battle of Badr, he had accompanied the

Prophet (peace be upon him) in every other expedition. But in spite of all these services, they were severely punished for the negligence they had shown on the critical occasion of the Tabuk expedition, when all the able-bodied Muslims were commanded to go forth to Jihad.

When the Prophet (peace be upon him) came back from Tabuk, he ordered the Muslims to break away completely from them; so much so that they should not even respond to their greetings. After forty days of this boycott their wives also were ordered to have nothing to do with them. In short, they were reduced at Al-Madinah to the same sad plight which has been described in this verse. At last, after a boycott of fifty days, this verse was sent down to announce their forgiveness.

The story of the above-mentioned boycott has been described in detail by Kaab bin Malik, who was one of the three. When he became old and blind, he himself told his story to his son, Abdullah, who used to accompany him everywhere. As this story is an excellent lesson for all, it is given below in Kaab's own words:

"When the Prophet (peace be upon him) urged upon the people to get ready for Jihad, I made up my mind to make preparations for this. But when I went home, I became negligent, saying to myself, "There is no hurry. When the time comes I will readily make preparations and start forthwith". In this way I went on putting off my preparations till the time came when the army was going to start on the expedition. As I had made no preparations for the journey, I said to myself, "It does not matter. I will be able to join the army in a couple of days during the journey". But again the same negligence prevented me from putting my intention into practice. At last no occasion was left for me to join the army. To add to my misery my conscience pricked me over and over again that the people with whom I had stayed behind in Al-Madinah were either the hypocrites or those Muslims who were old or otherwise unfit for Jihad.

When the Prophet (peace be upon him) came back from Tabuk, he, as usual, said two rakats of prayer in the mosque. Then he sat there to meet the people. At first, the hypocrites, whose number was a little more than eighty, came to him and offered lame excuses on solemn oaths. The Prophet (peace be upon him) listened to the false story of each of them and accepted their apparent excuses and left the decision about their hearts to Allah, saying, "May Allah forgive you". Then it was my turn to put forward my excuse. I went forward and uttered my salutations. He smiled and said, "Well, what kept you behind?" I hesitated for a moment. By God, I would have invented one excuse or the other to satisfy any man of the world, for I am well versed in the art of conversation. But here was the Prophet (peace be upon him) who was demanding an explanation from me. I believed that even if I succeeded in satisfying him by making a false excuse, Allah will inform him of the truth of the case and I shall again incur his displeasure. On the other hand, if I told the truth, I expected that Allah would forgive me, even though I were to incur his displeasure for the time being. So I replied, "I have no excuse for staying behind. I was in every way able to go forth (to Tabuk)". At this the Prophet (peace be upon him) remarked, "This is the man who has told the truth". Then turning to me, he said, "Go and wait till Allah decides your case".

I rose from there and took my seat among the people of my own clan. They at once began to tease and reprove me because I had made no excuse. At this, I was tempted to go and make

some false excuse. But when I came to know that there were also two good people (Murarah bin Rubai and Hilal bin Umayyah), who had told the same thing that I had, I felt satisfied and stuck to the truth.

After this the Prophet (peace be upon him) issued a general order that no one should have any kind of talk with us. The other two confined themselves to their houses but I used to go out of my house and say my prayers in congregation and walk through the bazaars. As nobody spoke to me, it appeared to me that I was a foreigner in some strange city where I had no acquaintances. When I attended the mosque, I would utter the usual salutations and wait in vain for a response from the Prophet (peace be upon him). I would turn stealthy looks at him to read his thoughts in regard to me, but he would turn his eyes away from me, though he had been looking at me while I was engaged in prayer. As this condition became intolerable for me, one day I went to see Abu Qatadah who was a cousin of mine and a friend from childhood. I climbed over the wall of his garden and uttered my salutations, but even he did not make any response to it. Then I said, "O Abu Qatadah! I ask you to tell me on oath whether I love or do not love Allah and His Messenger". But he remained silent. Again I repeated the question but he kept silent. I asked him on oath to answer my question. Then he merely replied, "Allah and His Messenger know best". At this my eyes were filled with tears, and I came back.

Another incident happened during those days. Once I was passing through the bazaar, when a Syrian came to me and gave me a letter wrapped in silk. This was from the king of Ghassan and read like this: We have come to know that your leader is persecuting you these days. As you are not an ignoble person, we will not leave you to rot there. Therefore come to us and we will honor you (as you deserve). I said to myself, "Here is another hard trial for me". Then I threw the letter into the burning oven.

The boycott continued for forty days, when a man brought this message from the Prophet (peace be upon him) that I should separate from my wife. I asked whether I should divorce her but was told that I should only separate from her. Accordingly I said to my wife, "Go to your parental home and wait till a decision comes from Allah."

On the fiftieth day, when after the morning prayers, I was sitting in a state of utter despair on the top of my house, all of a sudden someone cried aloud, "O Kaab bin Malik! please accept my congratulations." Hearing this, I fell prostrate to the ground before Allah, for I understood that the command of my forgiveness had come. After this, people began to pour in, each trying to forestall the other in congratulating me on the acceptance of my repentance. I rose and went directly to the Mosque. I noticed that the face of the Prophet (peace be upon him) was glowing with happiness and in response to my salutations, he said, "I congratulate you on this: it is the best day of your life." I said, "Is this forgiveness from you or from Allah?" He replied, "It is from Allah." Then he recited these verses (117-118). I asked, "O Messenger of Allah! Does my repentance require that I should give the whole of my property in charity?" He replied, "Keep a part of it, for it will be better for you." Accordingly, I kept my property at Khaibar for myself and gave all the rest in charity. Then I solemnly pledged that I would stick to the truth throughout rest of my life, for Allah had forgiven me in return for the truth I had told. That is why I have never uttered a word against reality intentionally up to this time and hope and expect that Allah will protect me from lies in future as well.

This story contains many lessons, and every believer should impress these on his mind and heart.

The first and foremost lesson we learn from this story is that the matter of the conflict between Islam and kufr is so important and delicate that we should take the greatest possible care to be on our guard in regard to this. Not to mention the case of one who takes active part on the side of kufr, if a Muslim shows the least negligence even inadvertently in taking part on the side of Islam once in his life; and that, too, not with any evil intention, he is liable to lose all the lifelong services and devotions rendered by him in the cause of Islam. That was why such a severe action was taken even against those worthy people who had done great deeds of valor in the battles of Badr, Uhd, Ahzab and Hunain, and whose sincerity and faith were absolutely above suspicion.

The second thing, which is as important as the first, is that one should never consider lightly any negligence in the performance of a duty, for this often misleads one to commit an offense that is counted among heinous sins. The fact that one did not commit the offense with any evil intention cannot save one from punishment.

Lastly, this story presents the true spirit of the society that had been evolved out under the leadership of the Prophet (peace be upon him). On the one side, there were the hypocrites whose treacherous deeds were quite well known to all. They offered lame excuses which were accepted without demur for nothing better could be expected from them. On the other side, let us take the case of Kaab bin Malik, who was a tried believer, and whose sacrifices were above every kind of suspicion. He did not invent any false story to justify himself but confessed his fault quite plainly and clearly. But in contrast to the hypocrites, a severe chastisement was inflicted on him, not because there was any suspicion about his faith but because a sincere believer like him had behaved in a way in which only a hypocrite could behave. Thus the chastisement was meant to remind them: “You are the salt of the earth. But if you, too, become tasteless, from where will then salt be obtained?”

There is another noteworthy side of the matter. The part played by the leader and the follower and the Muslim society in this incident is unique. The leader inflicts the most severe punishment but with the feelings of affection and without any tinge of anger or hatred in it. It is like the punishment which a father gives to his son. It is always understood that the punishment is given for the good of the son, who knows that as soon as he mends his ways, he will regain the fatherly love. And the follower sets an excellent example of obedience under very trying circumstances. He suffers hard from the severity of the chastisement but never thinks of rebelling against the leader because of any false personal or clannish pride; nay, he does not cherish in his heart any complaint against his beloved leader, but begins to love him even more than before. During this saddest period of his life the only thing he yearns for is a look of affection from his leader. For he is like a famine-stricken farmer whose only hope is the piece of cloud which he sees floating in the sky.

Now let us have a glimpse of the Muslim society, which displayed the greatest discipline and the highest moral spirit that had ever been shown by any society. No sooner does the leader order the boycott than the whole community becomes a stranger to the follower not only in public but also in private. So much so that his nearest relatives and closest friends do not even speak to him; nay, his own wife leaves him alone. He implores them on oath to tell

him if they suspected his sincerity, but even his lifelong companions make a point-blank refusal, saying that he should ask Allah and His Messenger for that testimony. But in spite of the show of this strict discipline, the moral spirit of the community is so high and so pure that not a single person tries to take advantage of the position of the fallen brother by adding insult to his injury; nay, everyone feels sorry for his brother in disgrace, and is important to embrace him as soon as he is forgiven. That is why the people run in haste to tell him the good news.

The above is the model of the righteous community that the Quran aims.

This background makes it plain why Allah not only forgave them but also manifested His kindness; gentleness and compassion in His forgiveness to these people. It was because of their sincerity which they proved during the fifty days of their chastisement. Had they shown arrogance after the commission of their offense and retaliated by taking angry and hostile actions as does every selfworshiper whose pride is wounded: had they behaved during their boycott in a manner as if they would break away from the community but never bow down before it: had they passed this period in spreading dissatisfaction in the community and gathering around them all the disgruntled people in order to organize a strong opposition against the leader, then they would have most certainly been expelled from the community, as if to say, "Go you now and worship the idol of yourself, for henceforth you will never be given any opportunity for exerting to raise the word of Allah". But these three did not adopt this way though it was open to them. On the contrary, they took a different way, as has been seen, and proved that Godworship had destroyed every idol that might have remained hidden in their hearts: that they had dedicated themselves entirely to the exertion in the Way of Allah: that while joining the Islamic community they had burnt their boats to make it impossible for themselves to go back anywhere: that they would put up with every kind of treatment but would remain in the community and die as a member of it and would scornfully reject any offer of an honorable place outside it; and would rather bear disgrace in it. That was why they were again taken in the community with the same honor as before. This is the explanation of the kind words of forgiveness: "Then He turned to them, that they might repent." In these concise words, the Quran has depicted the true picture of the matter. The Master had at first turned away His attention from His three servants but when He saw that they had not left His door but had remained there with broken hearts, He again turned to them in appreciation of their fidelity so as to bring them back into the fold.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَكُوْنُوْا مَعَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ 119

[9:119] Believers! Have fear of Allah and stand with those that are truthful.

مَا كَانَ لِاَهْلِ الْمَدِيْنَةِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُمْ مِّنَ الْاَعْرَابِ اَنْ يَّتَخَلَّفُوْا عَنْ رَّسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا
يَرْغَبُوْا بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ لَا يُصِيْبُهُمْ ظَمَاٌ وَّلَا نَصَبٌ وَّلَا مَخْمَصَةٌ فِيْ

سَبِيلِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا يَطَـُٔونَ مَوطِئًا يَّغِيظُ الكُفَّارَ وَلَا يَنَالُونَ مِن عَدُوٍّ نَّيلًا اِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُم
بِهٖ عَمَلٌ صَالِحٌ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُضِيعُ اَجرَ المُحسِنِينَ ۙ 120

[9:120] It did not behove the people of Madinah and the bedouin Arabs around them that they should refrain from accompanying the Messenger of Allah and stay behind and prefer their own security to his. For whenever they suffer from thirst or weariness or hunger in the Way of Allah, and whenever they tread a place which enrages the unbelievers (whenever anything of this comes to pass), a good deed is recorded in their favour. Allah does not cause the work of the doers of good to go to waste.

وَلَا يُنفِقُونَ نَفَقَةً صَغِيرَةً وَّلَا كَبِيرَةً وَّلَا يَقطَعُونَ وَادِيًا اِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُم لِيَجزِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ
اَحسَنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعمَلُونَ 121

[9:121] Likewise, each amount they spend, be it small or large, and each journey they undertake, shall be recorded in their favour so that Allah may bestow upon them reward for their good deeds.

وَمَا كَانَ المُؤمِنُونَ لِيَنفِرُوا كَآفَّةً ؕ فَلَولَا نَفَرَ مِن كُلِّ فِرقَةٍ مِّنهُم طَآئِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي
الدِّينِ وَلِيُنذِرُوا قَومَهُم اِذَا رَجَعُوا اِلَيهِم لَعَلَّهُم يَحذَرُونَ ع 122

[9:122] It was not necessary for the believers to go forth all together (to receive religious instruction), but why did not a party of them go forth that they may grow in religious understanding, and that they may warn their people when they return to them, so that they may avoid (erroneous attitudes)?[120]

120. In order to comprehend the meaning of this verse, Ayat 97 with which it is connected, should be kept in view:

These bedouins are most stubborn in unbelief and hypocrisy, and, in all probability, will remain ignorant of the laws of the way which Allah has sent down to His Messenger.

In Ayat 97, the Quran merely diagnosed the disease and pointed out its symptoms. The bedouins were suffering from the disease of hypocrisy because of their ignorance of the laws of the Way of Allah. This was so because they had not had any connections with the center of that knowledge. Here in this concluding portion of the Surah, the remedy of that disease has been prescribed so that they should have an understanding of Islam and its implications. It is not necessary that for this purpose all of them should leave their homes and come to Al-Madinah to learn that knowledge, but some of them should come from each habitation, clan

and region to the centers of the knowledge (Al-Madinah, Makkah and the like) and understand Islam. Then they should go back to their own habitations and create its understanding among the common people.

This was a very important instruction that was given at the opportune moment to strengthen the Islamic movement. For, at that time, the people were entering into the fold of Islam in large numbers without its proper understanding. Obviously, this instruction was not needed in the initial stages of the movement, for at that time everyone who embraced Islam did so with its full understanding. No one would think of becoming a Muslim without this as this was an invitation to persecution. When the movement became successful and won power in the land, the clans and the habitations began to enter en bloc into the fold of Islam. Naturally very few of them understood the full implications of the faith before accepting it, but the majority of them were being carried into the fold, as it were, by the strong current that had been generated by the movement. Outwardly this immense increase in numbers appeared to be a source of strength to Islam, but in reality such people as had no true understanding of Islam and were, therefore, not prepared to fulfill its moral obligations, were not only useless for the Islamic system but were actually harmful to it. This side of the matter became quite apparent during the preparations for the Tabuk expedition. That is why Allah sent down the instruction that necessary steps should be taken for the integration of the Islamic community so that it may keep pace with the immense increase in its number. Therefore some people should be brought out from every habitation and taught and trained in the requirements of Islam and these in their turn should teach and train their own people so that the whole Muslim population should understand Islam and obtain the knowledge of the limits prescribed by Allah. In this connection, it should also be clearly understood that the command about mass education given in this verse is not merely about literacy but it had the definite aim of imparting the understanding of the way of Islam among the masses and enabling them to refrain from un-Islamic ways. This is the real and permanent aim of education that has been set before the Muslims by Allah himself. Therefore every system of their education shall be judged by this criterion and shall be regarded Islamic only to the extent it fulfills this aim. It does not, however, mean that Islam is against the spreading of literacy and teaching of the purely mundane subjects to the masses, but it simply means that the primary aim of the Islamic education should be the achievement of the objective which has been mentioned above in italics. Without this, it does not consider any education to be education at all, even if it were to produce Einsteins and Freuds of the age.

It will be worthwhile to consider the true significance of the words used in the context, for they created a strange misunderstanding among the people of the later period, and produced lasting poisonous effects on the religious education of the Muslims, nay, on their whole religious life in general. It is obvious that Allah used these words in order to lay down the objective of education before the Muslims, which was this: to understand the Islamic way of life and have an insight into its system: to be familiar with its true nature and spirit so as to be able to judge and differentiate between the Islamic and the un-Islamic ways of thought and conduct in every aspect of life. But later on when the knowledge of the Muslim law was given the technical name of fiqh, it gradually developed into the science of the details of external form (as opposed to the spiritual aspect of the Islamic law). As the word fiqh is of the same root as used in this verse, a misunderstanding was created that this command of the Quran was about acquiring the knowledge of fiqh in the above-mentioned

sense. It is true that this knowledge is of great importance in the Islamic system of life, but it is not all that is required by the Quran but only a part of the objective. It is not possible to recount here all the damages that the Muslim community has suffered because of this misunderstanding, but suffice it to say that this is the thing, which is responsible for reducing the religious education of the Muslims to the knowledge and interpretation of the external form of Islam without paying any attention to the spirit of Islam. This inevitably resulted in making lifeless formalism the ultimate goal of the life of the Muslims.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ يَلُونَكُم مِّنَ الْكُفَّارِ وَلْيَجِدُوا فِيكُمْ غِلْظَةً ۚ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ 123

[9:123] Believers! Fight against the unbelievers who live around you;[121] and let them find in you sternness.[122] Know that Allah is with the God-fearing.[123]

121. From the apparent wording of this verse, it may be inferred that only those Muslims have at first been held responsible to fight with those enemies of Islam who live near their territory. But if we read this verse along with the succeeding passage, it becomes clear that here disbelievers who are near you refers to those hypocrites who were doing great harm to the Islamic society by mixing up with the sincere Muslims. This very thing was stated in Ayat 73 at the beginning of this discourse. The command has been repeated at its end in order to impress on the Muslims the importance of the matter and to urge them to do Jihad and crush these internal enemies, without paying the least regard to the racial, family and social relations that had been proving a binding force with them. The only difference between the two commands is that in Ayat 73, the Muslims were asked to do Jihad with them, while in this verse stronger words "fight those" have been used, which were meant to impress on them that they should crush the hypocrites thoroughly and completely. Another difference in the wordings is that in Ayat 73, two different words, "disbelievers and hypocrites" have been used, while in this verse only one word, "disbelievers" has been used so that the hypocrites should forfeit all their claims as Muslims. For there was room for this concession in the word hypocrite.

122. This is meant to impress that they should not, in future, show the lenient treatment they had been meting out to them up to that time. This has already been commanded in Ayat 73 as be firm and stern with them.

123. This warning has two-fold meanings and both are implied here. First, If you show any kind of leniency towards them because of your personal or family or economic connections with them, you should know that such a thing shall be against the fear of God. For the fear of God and friendly relations with the enemies of Allah are contradictory things. Therefore, you should give these up if you desire to obtain Allah's help. Secondly, You should scrupulously observe the moral and humane limits in doing Jihad, and in fighting against them. For you should always keep yourselves within the prescribed limits in everything. If you transgress these in any way, you should know that Allah will forsake you for He helps only those who are Godfearing.

وَاِذَا مَآ اُنۡزِلَتۡ سُوۡرَةٌ فَمِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ يَّقُوۡلُ اَيُّكُمۡ زَادَتۡهُ هٰذِهٖۤ اِيۡمَانًا ۚ فَاَمَّا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا فَزَادَتۡهُمۡ اِيۡمَانًا وَّهُمۡ يَسۡتَبۡشِرُوۡنَ 124

[9:124] And whenever a new surah is revealed some of the hypocrites ask the believers (in jest): "Whose faith has increased because of this?" As for those who believe, it will certainly increase their faith, and they are joyful over that.

وَاَمَّا الَّذِيۡنَ فِىۡ قُلُوۡبِهِمۡ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَتۡهُمۡ رِجۡسًا اِلٰى رِجۡسِهِمۡ وَمَاتُوۡا وَهُمۡ كٰفِرُوۡنَ 125

[9:125] But those whose hearts are affected with the disease (of hypocrisy), every new surah added a fresh abomination to their abomination.[124] They remained unbelievers till their death.

124. As regards the increase and decrease in faith, disbelief and hypocrisy, please refer to E.N.2 of Surah Al-Anfal.

اَوَلَا يَرَوۡنَ اَنَّهُمۡ يُفۡتَنُوۡنَ فِىۡ كُلِّ عَامٍ مَّرَّةً اَوۡ مَرَّتَيۡنِ ثُمَّ لَا يَتُوۡبُوۡنَ وَلَا هُمۡ يَذَّكَّرُوۡنَ 126

[9:126] Do they not see that they are tried every year once or twice?[125] Yet they neither repent nor take heed.

125. That is, during the course of every year such circumstances are created as put to test once or twice their claim to the faith, and these disclose that their profession of Islam was like a counterfeit coin. For instance, some time their faith is tested by: (a) A commandment of the Quran which lays some new restriction on their lust or by; (b) A demand of the faith that hits hard at their self interests or by; (c) an internal dispute which discloses their preference for worldly interests and for their personal, family and clannish relations to Allah, His Messenger and the faith or by; (d) A war that requires the sacrifice of their lives, wealth, time and energies. All these tests help bring to the open that filth of hypocrisy that lay hidden in their hearts under the garb of the profession of Islam. Besides, these things increase that filth which had already gathered in their hearts because of their deviations from the implications of the faith.

وَإِذَا مَآ أُنزِلَتۡ سُورَةٌ نَّظَرَ بَعۡضُهُمۡ إِلَىٰ بَعۡضٍ هَلۡ يَرَىٰكُم مِّنۡ أَحَدٍ ثُمَّ ٱنصَرَفُواْ

صَرَفَ ٱللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُم بِأَنَّهُمۡ قَوۡمٞ لَّا يَفۡقَهُونَ 127

[9:127] And whenever a surah is revealed, they glance at each other as though saying: "Is anyone watching?" Then they slip away.[126] Allah has turned away their hearts for they are a people who are bereft of understanding.[127]

126. This happened when the hypocrites had to attend a meeting that was specially held for the recital of some new Surah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to recite as an address every new Surah before the assembly. The true believers would listen to it very attentively and respectfully. But the hypocrites, who had to attend the meeting to show that they were Muslims, would sit listlessly in the meeting for they had no interest in the recital. But when they would be assured that their attendance had been marked, they would look for an opportune moment to slip away without being seen and noticed.

127. Allah has turned away their hearts from the Quran, because they do not understand that it is in their own interest to listen to the Quran and to act upon its teachings. These foolish people do not realize that by ignoring the Quran and the Prophet (peace be upon him), they in fact deprive themselves of a great blessing. As they are deeply engaged in their own narrow interests, they do not see that the great knowledge of the Quran and the right guidance of the Prophet (peace be upon him) has the potentiality of making them the leaders of this world, and of bringing salvation to them in the next world. As a result of their folly and neglect of the great blessing, Allah has, in accordance with His law, deprived them of the capacity of making use of this blessing and turned away their hearts from it. That is why these unfortunate, people do not even feel the great loss they are suffering, while the blessed people are taking full advantage of this great fountainhead of power and strength and are preparing themselves for achieving the greatest success that human beings could ever achieve.

لَقَدۡ جَآءَكُمۡ رَسُولٞ مِّنۡ أَنفُسِكُمۡ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيۡهِ مَا عَنِتُّمۡ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيۡكُم بِٱلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ

رَءُوفٞ رَّحِيمٞ 128

[9:128] There has come to you a Messenger of Allah from among yourselves, who is distressed by the losses you sustain, who is ardently desirous of your welfare and is tender and merciful to those that believe.

فَاِنۡ تَوَلَّوۡا فَقُلۡ حَسۡبِىَ اللّٰهُ ۖ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ عَلَيۡهِ تَوَكَّلۡتُ ؕ وَهُوَ رَبُّ الۡعَرۡشِ الۡعَظِيۡمِ ع 129

[9:129] Yet, if they should turn away, then tell them: "Allah is sufficient for me; there is no god but He. In Him I have put my trust. He is the Lord of the Mighty Throne."

10. Surah Yunus (Jonah)

Name

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

Period of Revelation

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

Time of Revelation

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

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

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

Subject

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

"The people consider it a strange thing that this Message is being conveyed by a human being and charge him with sorcery, whereas there is nothing strange in it nor has it any connection with sorcery or sooth saying. It simply informs you of two realities. First, Allah, Who has created the universe and manages it, is, in fact, your Master and Lord, and He

alone is entitled to your worship. The second reality is that after the life in this world, there will be another life in the Next World, where you shall have to render full account of the life of this world and be rewarded or punished according to whether you adopted the righteous attitude as required by Him after acknowledging Him as your Masters or acted against His will. Both of these realities, which the Messenger is presenting before you, are "realities" in themselves whether you acknowledge them as such or not. He is inviting you to accept these and regulate your lives in accordance with them; if you accept these, you will have a very blessed end; otherwise join shall meet with evil consequences."

Topics

After the introduction, the following topics have been dealt with in an appropriate order:-

1. Proofs of the doctrines of Tauhid, Providence and Life-after-death have been given by such arguments as may satisfy the minds and hearts of those who listen to the Message without prejudice and bigotry with the sole intention of safeguarding themselves against deviation and its evil results and not for the sake of seeking opportunities for useless discussions.
2. Those misunderstandings which were (and always are) hindering people from accepting the doctrines of Tauhid and the Hereafter, have been removed and they have been warned to guard against those negligences that stand in their way.
3. Those doubts have been removed and answers to those objections given which were being raised about the Prophethood of Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) and the Message brought by him.
4. Graphic descriptions of the life in the Hereafter have been presented in order to warn the people beforehand so that they should mend their ways here and be not sorry afterwards for their conduct in this world.
5. They have been admonished and warned that the life in this world is really a test and a trial, and that the time allowed for it is only up to the last moment of the earthly life, and that this is the only opportunity that shall be given to them for accepting the Message and achieving success in the test. Therefore, they should make the best use of the opportunity that has been provided for them by the appointment of Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) for their guidance and obtain the true knowledge of the Reality from the Quran that is being sent down to him. Otherwise, they shall be remorseful for ever and ever.
6. Their attention has been drawn to some of their acts of manifest ignorance and deviation which were the direct result of discarding Divine Guidance from their lives.

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

   First, "As your behavior towards Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) is like that of the peoples of Prophet Noah and Prophet Moses towards them, you should know it for certain that you also shall meet with the same consequences which they met with." Secondly, "You should not be deluded into believing by the helpless and weak condition of the Prophet and his followers, you are witnessing today, that it will always remain like this. You should know that the same All-Powerful Allah Who supported Prophets Moses and Aaron, is supporting them and that He changes the

circumstances in such a sudden and thorough manner that none can foresee it." Thirdly, "If you do not make use of the term that has been granted to you by Allah and mend your ways now, and postpone this to the last moment like followers of the Holy Prophet have been reassured that they should not lose heart because of the severity of the circumstances created by their opponents, especially at the time when they themselves were in an utterly helpless condition. They have also been given instructions as to how they should carry on their Mission under those harsh conditions. Moreover, they have been warned to be on their guard against the kind of behavior which was adopted by the Israelites, when they were rescued by Allah from the tyranny of the People of Pharaoh.

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

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

الٓرٰ ۚ تِلۡکَ اٰیٰتُ الۡکِتٰبِ الۡحَکِیۡمِ 1

(10:1) Alif. Lam. Ra. These are the verses of the Book overflowing with wisdom.[1]

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

اَکَانَ لِلنَّاسِ عَجَبًا اَنۡ اَوۡحَیۡنَاۤ اِلٰی رَجُلٍ مِّنۡہُمۡ اَنۡ اَنۡذِرِ النَّاسَ وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اَنَّ لَہُمۡ قَدَمَ صِدۡقٍ عِنۡدَ رَبِّہِمۡ ؕ قَالَ الۡکٰفِرُوۡنَ اِنَّ ہٰذَا لَسٰحِرٌ مُّبِیۡنٌ 2

(10:2) Does it seem strange to people that We should have revealed to a man from among themselves, directing him to warn the people (who lie engrossed in heedlessness); and to give good news to the believers that they shall enjoy true honour and an exalted status with their Lord?[2] (Is this so strange that) the deniers of the truth should say: 'This man is indeed an evident sorcerer'?[3]

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

(a) There is nothing strange in appointing a man to warn his fellow men of the consequences of neglecting the Message. For it is obvious that a man, and not a jinn nor an angel nor any other being, was the proper messenger for human beings.

(b) There is nothing strange in it that the Creator and Lord of mankind should make arrangements for the guidance of erring human beings; nay, it would have been strange if He had made no such arrangements, and

(c) There is nothing strange in this that real honor and success should come to those who accept the guidance and not to those who reject it.

3. They dubbed him "evident sorcerer" but did not consider whether the epithet appropriately applied to him or not. It is obvious that the mere fact that he was moving the hearts and influencing the minds of the believers with his eloquence was not a sufficient proof that he was using magic to achieve this object. And it is not difficult at all to distinguish rhetoric of a Messenger from that of an sorcerer for these are quite distinct from each other in their nature, in the objectives for which they are used and in the effect they produce on the lives of the believers. The irresponsible sorcerer does not care at all whether what he utters is correct, just and righteous because his only object is to influence the hearts of the hearers in order to achieve his own unlawful ends. That is why he does not hesitate at all to utter any false, exaggerated or unjust thing, if it serves his purpose. For his only aim is to produce an emotional effect in order to deceive the people by using an artificially ornamented and exaggerated language rather than to state things of wisdom. As a result of this, his talk is contradictory, imbalanced and unsystematic. As his sole object is self-interest, he abuses his rhetoric for exploitation, or for sowing seeds of discord or for setting one party against the other. Therefore, the sorcerer fails to produce any high moral effects on the lives of the people or to imbue them with any righteous thoughts or to urge them to noble deeds or to bring about any healthy change in their lives; nay, as a result of his magic the people begin to exhibit even worse qualities than they did before.

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

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ فِيْ سِتَّةِ اَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۭ يُدَبِّرُ الْاَمْرَ ۭ مَا مِنْ شَفِيْعٍ اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اِذْنِهٖ ۭ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوْهُ ۭ اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ 3

(10:3) Surely your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then established Himself on the Throne (of His Dominion), governing all affairs of the universe.[4] None may intercede with Him except after obtaining His leave.[5] Such is Allah, your Lord; do therefore serve Him.[6] Will you not take heed?[7]

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

5. This is to emphasize the other side of the matter. He is All-Powerful and there is none who dare make even a recommendation to Him about anything, not to speak of interfering with His management of affairs so as to cause any change in His decrees or in the making or marring of anyone's fate. The most one can do is to make a supplication to Him but it all depends on His will to grant or reject it. There is none so powerful in His Kingdom as to have his own way in anything or to get his recommendations through anyhow.

6. After stating the bare fact that Allah alone is the Lord, people are being told the kind of conduct that fact demands from them. That is, when Allah alone is your Lord, you should worship Him alone. In this connection, it should also be noted that just as the Arabic word Rabb implies three things namely Providence, Supremacy and Sovereignty, likewise the Arabic word ibadat also contains three corresponding implications.

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

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

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

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

إِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا ۖ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقًّا ۚ إِنَّهُ يَبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ وَعَذَابٌ
أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ 4

(10:4) To Him is your return.[8] This is Allah's promise that will certainly come true. Surely it is He Who brings about the creation of all and He will repeat it[9] so that He may justly reward those who believe and do righteous deeds; and that those who disbelieve may have a draught of boiling water and suffer a painful chastisement for their denying the truth.[10]

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

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

10. The reason why Allah will again bring the whole mankind to life is to reward the believers and to punish the disbelievers. After showing that this is possible to raise the dead, it is stated that it is absolutely necessary to fulfill the demands of common sense and justice, for full justice cannot be done without this. Common sense and justice demand that those who believe and do righteous deeds should be given their full rewards, and those who disbelieve and reject the truth and do evil deeds, should be duly punished. As every sensible and just person knows that this demand of justice is not fulfilled in its entirety, and cannot be fulfilled, in this world. It is absolutely essential that the entire mankind should again be brought to life for this purpose. See also (E.N. 30, Surah Al-Aaraf)and (E.N. 105, Surah Hud).

هُوَ الَّذِیۡ جَعَلَ الشَّمۡسَ ضِیَآءً وَّالۡقَمَرَ نُوۡرًا وَّقَدَّرَهٗ مَنَازِلَ لِتَعۡلَمُوۡا عَدَدَ السِّنِیۡنَ
وَالۡحِسَابَ ؕ مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ ذٰلِكَ اِلَّا بِالۡحَقِّ ۚ یُفَصِّلُ الۡاٰیٰتِ لِقَوۡمٍ یَّعۡلَمُوۡنَ 5

(10:5) He it is Who gave the sun radiance and the moon light, and determined the stages (for the waxing and waning of the moon) that you may learn the calculation of years and the reckoning of time. Allah has created all this with a rightful purpose (rather than out of play). He expounds His signs for the people who know.

اِنَّ فِی اخۡتِلَافِ الَّیۡلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَمَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّقَوۡمٍ
یَّتَّقُوۡنَ 6

(10:6) Surely in the alternation of the night and the day and in all that Allah has created in the heavens and the earth there are signs for the people who seek to avoid (error of outlook and conduct).[11]

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

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

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

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

(3) When common sense and justice demand that there must be life in the Hereafter, this need will surely be satisfied, for the Creator of man and the universe is All- Wise, and it

cannot be conceived that the All-Wise will not satisfy the demands of common sense and justice.

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

Besides this, the words, "He explains in detail the signs for a people who have knowledge" and "Are indeed signs for a people who fear Allah" are worthy of serious consideration. These words imply this: Allah has in His wisdom spread such signs in each and every manifestation of His as clearly point to the realities that are hidden behind them; but only those people can reach to those realities, who (a) free themselves from the prejudices of ignorance and acquire knowledge from the sources with which Allah has provided man for this purpose, and (b) have the intention of avoiding wrong ways and following the right way.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَآءَنَا وَرَضُوا بِالْحَيَوٰةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاطْمَأَنُّوا بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ
ءَايَٰتِنَا غَٰفِلُونَ ۙ 7

(10:7) Surely those who do not expect to meet Us, who are gratified with the life of the world and content with it, and are heedless of Our signs,

أُولَٰٓئِكَ مَأْوَىٰهُمُ النَّارُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ 8

(10:8) their abode shall be the Fire in return for their misdeeds,[12]

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

The above argument for the doctrine of the Hereafter is in its nature different from the previous three arguments. This is based on the knowledge gained by human experience while the former were based on rational reasoning. Though here only a hint has been given about it, the same has been stated in detail in other places in the Quran. This is the argument in brief: Human beings cannot adopt individually or collectively the right attitude towards life unless the doctrine of accountability to God is deeply embedded in their hearts. The fact that human beings begin to behave erroneously, if and when their belief in this doctrine disappears or becomes weak, is borne out by a long experience. Had not the creed of the Hereafter been real, its acceptance or rejection would not have produced the results inevitably and continuously for centuries. The fact that the acceptance of a doctrine should have continuously produced right sort of results, and its denial wrong results, is a clear proof that it is real. Though the premises of the above argument and the conclusion drawn from these are clear and closely connected, there are some people who do not agree with this proposition. They argue their point like this. There are many instances of people who deny the Hereafter and base their moral philosophy and their rule of conduct on atheism and materialism, still they possess high moral characters and abstain from every sort of evil. In short, they are virtuous in their affairs and render great services to the people. But a little thinking will show that this is a weak argument. If we probe into the materialistic philosophies and systems, we shall find that all these lack solid foundations for the moral excellence and practical virtuous deeds; therefore they cannot produce those qualities with which the atheists and the materialists are credited. Indeed no such motivating factors exist in those philosophies as may produce the qualities of righteousness, honesty, trust worthiness, justice, compassion, generosity, sacrifice, sympathy, self control, purity, the fulfillment of duties, obligations and pledges and the like. The only alternative to the doctrines of Tauhid and the Hereafter is utilitarianism which might become the basis for a practical moral system, for all the other philosophies are merely hypothetical and impracticable. It is quite obvious that the motivating power of utilitarianism is very limited because it is incapable of carrying a person farther than utility itself. Therefore the one who believes in this doctrine will consider a virtue a "virtue" only as long as it is useful to his own person, family, society etc. and will direct all his efforts towards promoting their welfare and happiness and will adhere to moral qualities only as long as they are conducive to his own good or to that of his own people. But he will discard these virtues when he is convinced that these will be harmful. That is why a utilitarian does not believe in absolute morality but adopts truth or falsehood, honesty or dishonesty, faithfulness or treachery, justice or injustice, in short, any virtue or vice that may suit the occasion and be useful for his own interests.

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

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ يَهْدِيهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِإِيمَانِهِمْ ۚ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهِمُ

الْأَنْهَارُ فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ 9

(10:9) Surely those who believe (in the truths revealed in the Book) and do righteous deeds their Lord will guide them aright because of their faith. Rivers shall flow beneath them in the Gardens of Bliss.[13]

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

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

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

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

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

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

دَعْوٰىهُمْ فِيْهَا سُبْحٰنَكَ اللّٰهُمَّ وَتَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيْهَا سَلٰمٌ ۚ وَاٰخِرُ دَعْوٰىهُمْ اَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ

رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۧ 10

(10:10) Their cry in it will be: 'Glory be to You, Our Lord!', and their greeting: 'Peace!'; and their cry will always end with: 'All praise be to Allah, the Lord of the universe.[14]

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

وَلَوْ يُعَجِّلُ اللّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ الشَّرَّ اسْتِعْجَالَهُمْ بِالْخَيْرِ لَقُضِيَ اِلَيْهِمْ اَجَلُهُمْ ؕ فَنَذَرُ الَّذِيْنَ لَا

يَرْجُوْنَ لِقَآءَنَا فِيْ طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُوْنَ 11

(10:11) Were Allah[15] to hasten to bring upon men (the consequence of) evil in the way men hasten in seeking the wealth of this world, their term would have long since expired. (But that is not Our way.) So We leave alone those who do not expect to meet Us that they may blindly stumble in their transgression.

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

First, a little before its revelation, the continuous horrible famine, which had afflicted Makkah for seven long years and humbled the haughty Quraish, had come to an end. Naturally this had given a blow to idol worship and acted as a stimulus to God worship. For, in their utter helplessness, they had to supplicate to Allah and cry meekly for help. So much so that Abu Sufyan had to approach the Prophet (peace be upon him) with this request: Please pray to Allah to remove this affliction from us. But when the famine was over, and rains began to fall, and prosperity returned, they began to show rebellion and do evil deeds and started their hostile activities against the believers. Thus the hearts that had turned to

Allah, again became neglectful of Him. See (Surah An-Nahal, Ayat 113), (Surah Al-Mominoon, Ayats 75-77), (Surah Ad-Dukhan, Ayats 10- 16).

Secondly, the Quran answered the question with which they confronted the Prophet (peace be upon him) whenever he warned them of the consequences of rejecting the truth. They would say" You are always threatening us with Allah's wrath; why doesn't the divine torment visit us and why is it being delayed?

Keeping the above background in view, (Ayats 11-12)may be expanded like this: Allah does not hasten in punishing and seizing the people for their sins as He hastens in showing kindness and compassion to them. Do they, then, want Him to hasten His torment for their rebellions, as He hastened to remove famine in answer to their supplications? As this is not Our Way, We give them time to mend their evil ways in spite of their transgressions and rebellions. We send warning after warning and give them respite until their term comes to an end. Then the law of requital comes into force. In contrast to this, their way is the way of mean and narrow minded people. When affliction comes, they remember Allah, begin to cry and call Him meekly, but forget it all during the time of prosperity. Such bad ways as these are leading them to divine torment.

وَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنسَانَ الضُّرُّ دَعَانَا لِجَنۢبِهٖٓ أَوْ قَاعِدًا أَوْ قَآئِمًا ۚ فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُ ضُرَّهٗ مَرَّ
كَأَن لَّمْ يَدْعُنَآ إِلَىٰ ضُرٍّ مَّسَّهٗ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْمُسْرِفِينَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ 12

(10:12) And (such is man that) when an affliction befalls him, he cries out to Us, reclining and sitting and standing. But no sooner than We have removed his affliction, he passes on as though he had never cried out to Us to remove his affliction. Thus it is that the misdeeds of the transgressors are made fair-seeming to them.

وَلَقَدْ أَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُونَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوا۟ ۙ وَجَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَٰتِ وَمَا كَانُوا۟
لِيُؤْمِنُوا۟ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ 13

(10:13) Surely We destroyed the nations (which had risen to heights of glory in their times) before you[16] when they indulged in wrong-doing[17] and refused to believe even when their Messengers brought clear signs to them. Thus do We recompense the people who are guilty.

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

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

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنٰكُمْ خَلٰٓئِفَ فِي الْاَرْضِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ لِنَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُوْنَ 14

(10:14) Now We have appointed you as their successors in the earth to see how you act.18

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

وَاِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيَاتُنَا بَيِّنٰتٍ ۙ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَرْجُوْنَ لِقَآءَنَا ائْتِ بِقُرْاٰنٍ غَيْرِ هٰذَآ اَوْ
بَدِّلْهُ ؕ قُلْ مَا يَكُوْنُ لِيْٓ اَنْ اُبَدِّلَهٗ مِنْ تِلْقَآئِ نَفْسِيْ ۚ اِنْ اَتَّبِعُ اِلَّا مَا يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيَّ ۚ اِنِّيْٓ
اَخَافُ اِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّيْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ 15

(10:15) And whenever Our clear revelations are recited to them, those who do not expect to meet Us say: 'Bring us a Qur'an other than this one, or at least make changes in it.19 Tell them (O Muhammad): 'It is not for me to change it of my accord. I only follow what is revealed to me. Were I to disobey my Lord, I fear the chastisement of an Awesome Day.20

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

absolute morality: therefore you should make an allowance for our prejudices, our rites and customs, our personal and national interests and our desires. We propose that with mutual agreement we should make a list of those religious demands which should be obligatory on us for the fulfillment of Allah's rights, and beyond that we should be free to conduct our worldly affairs in any way we like. This compromise is necessary because we cannot accept your demand that human life in all its aspects should entirely be led in accordance with the implications of the doctrines of Tauhid and the Hereafter and the regulations of the Islamic code of life.

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

قُلْ لَّوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَا تَلَوْتُهٗ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَآ اَدْرٰىكُمْ بِهٖ ۖ فَقَدْ لَبِثْتُ فِيْكُمْ عُمُرًا مِّنْ قَبْلِهٖ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ 16

(10:16) Tell them: 'Had Allah so willed, I would not have recited the Qur'an to you, nor would Allah have informed you of it. I have spent a lifetime among you before this. Do you, then, not use your reason?21

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

The question posed in the Quran implied two things which were well known to everyone in Makkah about the Prophet (peace be upon him):

First, during the forty years of his life before Prophethood, he had neither received any education nor training nor sat in any company that should have enabled him to become the author of such a Book as was full of unique things that were unknown to the people around him. No one had ever heard from him anything about the problems that had been dealt with in different Surahs of the Quran. So much so that not even a relative or close friend of his had ever noticed anything in his talk or in anything about him that might have shown any signs of gradual development towards it before he made his great claim to Prophethood when he reached the age of forty. This was a clear proof of the fact that the Quran was not the invention of his own mind and that it must have been sent down to him from outside. For it is impossible for a human being to produce anything like this, all of a sudden and without ever manifesting any signs of its evolution and development in his earlier life. That

is why when some intelligent people of Makkah felt the absurdity of this accusation, they began to say that it was some other person who taught these things to him. But this was even more absurd than the first thing because they could not point out specifically a single person in the whole of Arabia, not to say of Makkah, who had the ability of producing such unique things as were contained in the Quran. They also knew that a person of such high caliber could not have remained obscure in some unknown corner for forty years.

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

That is why Allah has asked His Messenger (peace be upon him) to refute their absurd charge by saying, as it were, only this: O my people, use your common sense before making this absurd accusation, for I am not a stranger or a foreigner among you. I have lived a life time of forty years among you before making a claim that I have received revelation from Allah. How can you expect from my past that I would present the Quran to you as Allah's Book, without gaining knowledge from Him and without His command?" See (Surah Al-Qasas, E.N. 109).

فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اَوْ كَذَّبَ بِاٰيٰتِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ 17

(10:17) Who, then, is a greater wrong-doer than he who forges a lie against Allah or rejects His signs as false?[22] Surely the guilty shall not prosper.[23]

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

23. Some foolish people draw wrong and misleading conclusions from this verse, by a fallacious reasoning. They confine the meanings of falah to long life or worldly prosperity or

worldly success and argue like this: This verse declares categorically that criminals can never attain success. The converse of this proposition, that is, anyone who is successful cannot be a criminal must also be true. Hence, if a claimant should live a long life after his claim to Prophethood or prosper in the world or his claim receives a good response in the world from the people, he should be acknowledged as a true prophet. For they argue, if he had been a false prophet he could not have prospered, but would have been killed or starved to death or rendered unsuccessful in his mission, as soon as he had claimed to be a prophet. But even a little thinking will show that this argument is fallacious on the face of it. Firstly, the converse of every proposition is not always true. Secondly, the Quran does not use the word falah in this limited sense. Thirdly, Allah deals with the criminals according to His divine law of respite.

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

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

The other thing that refutes the fallacy of these foolish people is that they do not take into consideration the divine law of respite, according to which the mere fact that a false prophet enjoyed a long prosperous life is not a proof that he was a true prophet. The Quran has made it clear at many places that Allah does not expedite the matter of the punishment of the criminals, but gives them respite to mend their ways; nay, He also lets them loose in their deviation if they abuse that respite and become more corrupt. Sometimes He makes them even more prosperous so that they should fully manifest all the evils they had hidden in their hearts and incur full punishment which they really deserve for their evil deeds. The divine law of respite takes its due course in the case of false prophets as it does in the case of other criminals. And there is no reason why they should be an exception to this. Satan, the greatest of all criminals, has been allowed to practice every kind of deception up to the Day of Judgment, and there is no mention of any exception to this effect that he will not be allowed to set up a false prophet.

As a last resort, such perverse interpreters of the Quran turn to (Ayats 44-47 of Surah Al-Haqqah): If Muhammad had fabricated something himself and ascribed that to Us, We

would have seized his hand and cut off his heart's vein. But these cannot serve their purpose, for what they imply is only this: If the true Prophet appointed by Allah were to ascribe any false thing to Allah, he would be seized forthwith. Therefore it is no more than a fallacy to argue from this to the erroneous conclusion that the impostor who is not seized is a true prophet, for this divine principle applies only to a true Prophet and not to an impostor. In order to grasp this point, let us take the instance of the government servants. It is obvious that the rules and regulations which are prescribed for government servants apply only to those who are actually government servants and not to impostors. Those who pretend to be government servants are dealt with according to the criminal code like other criminals and villains and not according to the code of employment. Besides this, the context in which these verses occur clearly shows that these are not laying down any criterion of judging whether a claimant is a true Prophet or an impostor. Moreover, a true Prophet can easily be distinguished from an impostor by his high character, his noble mission and the unique Message he presents. Hence there was no need of setting up such an irrational and unnatural standard of distinguishing a true Prophet from an impostor.

وَيَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ شُفَعَآؤُنَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ قُلْ اَتُنَبِّئُوْنَ اللّٰهَ بِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَلَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ سُبْحٰنَهٗ وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ 18

(10:18) They worship, beside Allah, those who can neither harm nor profit them, saying; 'These are our intercessors with Allah.' Tell them (O Muhammad): 'Do you inform Allah of something regarding whose existence in the heavens or on the earth He has no knowledge?[24] Holy is He and He is exalted far above what they associate with Him in His divinity'.

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

وَمَا كَانَ النَّاسُ اِلَّآ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً فَاخْتَلَفُوْا ؕ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ فِيْمَا فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ 19

(10:19) Once all men were but a single community; then they disagreed (and formulated different beliefs and rites).[25]Had it not been that your Lord had already so ordained, a decisive judgement would have been made regarding their disagreements.[26]

25. See (E.N. 230 of Surah Al-Baqarah) and (E.N. 24 of Surah Al-Anaam).

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

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

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

وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ لَوْلَآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ اٰيَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ ۚ فَقُلْ اِنَّمَا الْغَيْبُ لِلّٰهِ فَانْتَظِرُوْا ۚ اِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ مِّنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِيْنَ ۚ 20

(10:20) They say: 'Why was a sign not sent down upon the prophet from His Lord?[27] Tell (such people): 'The realm of the Unseen belongs to Allah. Wait, then; I shall wait along with you.[28]

27. That is, though they demanded a sign as a proof of the fact that he was a true Prophet (peace be upon him) and was presenting true revelations, this was not based on a genuine desire for recognizing and accepting the truth but was merely a pretext for rejecting it. For they had no intention of molding their habits, their morality, their social system, in short, reforming every aspect of their life in accordance with the implications of the acceptance of the Message of the Prophet (peace be upon him). As they did not intend to believe in it, they would say even after seeing a sign: No sign had been shown to them. Obviously, they would not give up that freedom which they were enjoying in following their desires and lusts, by accepting the unseen (the creeds of Tauhid and the Hereafter), which would bind them to the absolute moral principles.

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

وَإِذَآ أَذَقْنَا النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً مِّنۢ بَعْدِ ضَرَّآءَ مَسَّتْهُمْ إِذَا لَهُم مَّكْرٌ فِىٓ ءَايَاتِنَا ۚ قُلِ ٱللَّهُ أَسْرَعُ
مَكْرًا ۚ إِنَّ رُسُلَنَا يَكْتُبُونَ مَا تَمْكُرُونَ 21

(10:21) No sooner than We bestow mercy on a people after hardship has hit them than they begin to scheme against Our signs.[29] Tell them: 'Allah is swifter in scheming. Our angels are recording all your intriguing.[30]

29. They practiced deceptions regarding the sign of the famine that had been inflicted on them (Ayats 11, 12). This verse alludes to the same, as if to say, "How dare you demand a sign again, whereas recently the sign of the famine has been shown to you? At that time you invoked the help of your deities but in vain, though you had set them up as intercessors with Allah and believed that offerings to their shrines would prove very effective in removing the famine. But you yourselves learned by the first hand experience that those so called gods possessed no power at all. Therefore when you were convinced that all power belongs to Allah alone, you turned to Him and began to invoke His help. This experience ought to have convinced you of the truth of the Message of Muhammad (peace be upon him) for this was the very fundamental thing which he was teaching. Instead of learning a lesson from this sign, you began to practice deceptions to explain it away, as soon as the famine was over and there had come the blessed rainfall. You invented many explanations (deceptions) concerning the causes of the famine and its subsequent end in order to escape from the doctrine of Tauhid and stick to your shirk. The verse is meant to declare that no sign would convince such people as those who had not benefited from the great sign of the famine. Therefore there was no use of showing any sign to them.

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

هُوَ ٱلَّذِى يُسَيِّرُكُمْ فِى ٱلْبَرِّ وَٱلْبَحْرِ ۖ حَتَّىٰٓ إِذَا كُنتُمْ فِى ٱلْفُلْكِ ۖ وَجَرَيْنَ بِهِم بِرِيحٍ
طَيِّبَةٍ وَفَرِحُوا۟ بِهَا جَآءَتْهَا رِيحٌ عَاصِفٌ وَجَآءَهُمُ ٱلْمَوْجُ مِن كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَظَنُّوٓا۟ أَنَّهُمْ

أُحِيطَ بِهِمْ ۙ دَعَوُا اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ ۚ لَئِنْ اَنْجَيْتَنَا مِنْ هٰذِهٖ لَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ

الشّٰكِرِيْنَ 22

(10:22) He it is Who enables you to journey through the land and the sea. And so it happens that when you have boarded the ships and they set sail with a favourable wind, and the passengers rejoice at the pleasant voyage, then suddenly a fierce gale appears, and wave upon wave surges upon them from every side, and people believe that they are surrounded from all directions, and all of them cry out to Allah in full sincerity of faith: 'If You deliver us from this we shall surely be thankful.[31]

31. The fact that even the most obdurate mushriks and the most hardened atheists who forget Allah when things go well with them, begin to invoke Allah's help when they are pressed hard from all sides and despair of help from any other quarter, is a clear evidence that there is the All Powerful Allah Who is controlling each and every thing in the universe. Refer to (E.N. 29, Surah Al-Anaam).

فَلَمَّآ اَنْجٰىهُمْ اِذَا هُمْ يَبْغُوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ۗ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنَّمَا بَغْيُكُمْ عَلٰٓى

اَنْفُسِكُمْ ۙ مَّتَاعَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۡ ثُمَّ اِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَنُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ 23

(10:23) But no sooner than He delivers them than they go about committing excesses on the earth, acting unjustly. Men ! The excesses you commit will be of harm only to yourselves, (Enjoy, if you will) the fleeting pleasure of this world; in me end you shall all return to Us, and then We shall tell you what you did.

اِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَآءٍ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهٖ نَبَاتُ الْاَرْضِ مِمَّا يَاْكُلُ

النَّاسُ وَالْاَنْعَامُ ۗ حَتّٰٓى اِذَآ اَخَذَتِ الْاَرْضُ زُخْرُفَهَا وَازَّيَّنَتْ وَظَنَّ اَهْلُهَآ اَنَّهُمْ قٰدِرُوْنَ

عَلَيْهَآ ۙ اَتٰىهَآ اَمْرُنَا لَيْلًا اَوْ نَهَارًا فَجَعَلْنٰهَا حَصِيْدًا كَاَنْ لَّمْ تَغْنَ بِالْاَمْسِ ۗ كَذٰلِكَ

نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ 24

(10:24) The example of the life of this world (which has enamoured you into becoming heedless to Our signs) is that of water that We sent down from the heaven which causes the vegetation of the earth, which sustains men and cattle, to grow luxuriantly. But when the earth took on its golden raiment and became well adorned and the

owners believed that they had full control over their lands Our command came upon them by night or by day, and We convened it into a stubble, as though it had not blossomed yesterday.[31a] Thus do We expound the signs for a people who reflect.

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

وَاللّٰهُ يَدْعُوْٓا اِلٰى دَارِ السَّلٰمِ ۭ وَيَهْدِيْ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ 25

(10:25) (You are being lured by this ephemeral world) although Allah calls you to the abode of peace[32] and guides whomsoever He wills to a straightway.

32. That is, Allah invites to the way that leads to the abode of peace in the Hereafter.

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

لِلَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوا الْحُسْنٰى وَزِيَادَةٌ ۭ وَلَا يَرْهَقُ وُجُوْهَهُمْ قَتَرٌ وَّلَا ذِلَّةٌ ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ 26

(10:26) For those who do good there is good reward and more besides;[33] neither gloom nor humiliation shall cover their faces. They are the people of the Garden and in it they shall abide.

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

وَالَّذِيْنَ كَسَبُوا السَّيِّاٰتِ جَزَاۗءُ سَيِّئَةٍۢ بِمِثْلِهَا ۙ وَتَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ ۭ مَا لَهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ عَاصِمٍ ۚ كَاَنَّمَآ اُغْشِيَتْ وُجُوْهُهُمْ قِطَعًا مِّنَ الَّيْلِ مُظْلِمًا ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ 27

(10:27) Those who do evil deeds, the recompense of an evil deed is its like,[34] and humiliation shall spread over them and there will be none to protect them from Allah. Darkness will cover their faces as though they were veiled with the dark blackness of night.[35] These are the people of the Fire and in it they shall abide.

34. That is, in contrast to the additional rewards to the good people, those who earned evil deeds, shall be punished only in proportion to their crimes. See (E.N. 110 of An- Namal).

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

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ نَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا مَكَانَكُمْ أَنْتُمْ وَشُرَكَاؤُكُمْ ۚ فَزَيَّلْنَا

بَيْنَهُمْ وَقَالَ شُرَكَاؤُهُمْ مَا كُنْتُمْ إِيَّانَا تَعْبُدُونَ 28

(10:28) And the Day when We shall muster them all together, We shall say to those who associated others with Allah in His divinity: 'Keep to your places - you and those whom you associated with Allah.' Then We shall remove the veil of foreignness separating them.[36] Those whom they had associated with Allah will say. 'It was not us that you worshipped.

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

فَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ إِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ عِبَادَتِكُمْ لَغَافِلِينَ 29

(10:29) Allah's witness suffices between you and us that (even if you worshipped us) we were totally unaware of your worshipping us.[37]

37. That is, their deities, the angels, the jinns, the spirits, the forefathers, the prophets, the saints, the martyrs and all others, whom they had set up as partners with God and rendered those rights to them which belonged to God alone, will dissociate themselves from their worshipers and declare: We did not know at all that you worshiped us, for no reverence, no respect, no honor, no admiration, no regard, no adoration, no homage that you paid to us; no prayer, no supplication, no request, no offering, no gift you presented to us; and no praise, no prostration, no bowing down, no remembrance, no religious service, or ceremony or ritual you made in our name ever reached us.

هُنَالِكَ تَبْلُوْا كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّآ اَسْلَفَتْ وَرُدُّوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ مَوْلٰىهُمُ الْحَقِّ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ع 30

(10:30) Thereupon everyone shall taste the recompense of his past deeds. All shall be sent back to Allah, their true Lord, and then all the falsehoods they had fabricated will have forsaken them.

قُلْ مَنْ يَّرْزُقُكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ اَمَّنْ يَّمْلِكُ السَّمْعَ وَالْاَبْصَارَ وَمَنْ يُّخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَمَنْ يُّدَبِّرُ الْاَمْرَ ط فَسَيَقُوْلُوْنَ اللّٰهُ ج فَقُلْ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ 31

(10:31) Ask them: 'Who provides you with sustenance out of the heavens and the earth? Who holds mastery over your hearing and sight? Who brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living? Who governs all affairs of the universe?' They will surely say: 'Allah.' Tell them: 'Will you, then, not shun (going against reality)?"

فَذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمُ الْحَقُّ ج فَمَاذَا بَعْدَ الْحَقِّ اِلَّا الضَّلٰلُ ج فَاَنّٰى تُصْرَفُوْنَ 32

(10:32) Such, then, is Allah, your true Lord.[38] And what is there after truth but error? How, then, are you being turned away?[39]

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

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

This question has been posed at many places in the Quran to bring home the truth to the common people, but at every place the passive voice has been employed in order to keep back the names of the misguiding ones so that their followers should consider the matter

coolly and objectively. This also contains a valuable piece of advice for those engaged in propagation work. By avoiding the names of the misguiding ones, the Quran has taken away a very strong weapon from the hands of those, who could otherwise incite the followers that their revered leaders were being made the target of ridicule and criticism.

كَذٰلِكَ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ فَسَقُوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ 33

(10:33) Thus the word of your Lord is fulfilled concerning the transgressors that they shall not believe.[40]

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

قُلْ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَآئِكُمْ مَّنْ يَّبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يَبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ ؕ فَاَنّٰى تُؤْفَكُوْنَ 34

(10:34) Ask them: 'Is there any among those whom you associate with Allah in His divinity who brings about the creation of all beings in the first instance and will then repeat it?' Tell them: 'It is Allah Who brings about the creation of all beings and will then repeat it.[41] How are you, then, being misled?[42]

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

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

قُلۡ هَلۡ مِنۡ شُرَكَآئِكُمۡ مَّنۡ يَّهۡدِىۡۤ اِلَى الۡحَـقِّ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يَهۡدِىۡ لِلۡحَـقِّ ؕ اَفَمَنۡ يَّهۡدِىۡۤ اِلَى
الۡحَـقِّ اَحَقُّ اَنۡ يُّتَّبَعَ اَمَّنۡ لَّا يَهِدِّىۡۤ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ يُّهۡدٰى ۚ فَمَا لَـكُمۡ ۫ كَيۡفَ تَحۡكُمُوۡنَ 35

(10:35) Ask them: 'Are there among ones whom you associate with Allah in His divinity those who can guide to the truth?[43] Say: 'It is Allah alone Who guides to the truth.' Then, who is more worthy to be followed - He Who guides to the truth, or he who cannot find the right way unless others guide him to it? What is wrong with you? How ill do you judge!

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

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

Then there is the case of those who make rules, regulations and laws which others accept and follow. It is true that such persons are accepted and followed as leaders, but the pertinent question is this: Are they the real guides to the truth, or are they capable of becoming guides to it? Does any one of them possess the kind of knowledge that comprehends all those truths that are a prerequisite for formulating right principles for the guidance of human life? Can anyone of them have full vision of the vast field of activities over which the human problems spread? Is there anyone of them who is absolutely free from the weaknesses, prejudices, personal or communal interests, which become hindrances

to the formulation of just laws? If the answers to these questions are in the negative (and obviously no one in his senses can answer otherwise), how can then people with such limitations be expected to be the source of guidance to the truth?

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

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

وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ اَكْثَرُهُمْ اِلَّا ظَنًّا ؕ اِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِىْ مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْـًٔا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِمَا يَفْعَلُوْنَ 36

(10:36) Most of them only follow conjectures;[44] and surely conjecture can be no substitute for truth. Allah is well aware of whatever they do.

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

وَمَا كَانَ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنُ اَنْ يُّفْتَرٰى مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلٰكِنْ تَصْدِيْقَ الَّذِىْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ مِنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۖ قف 37

(10:37) And this Qur'an is such that it could not be composed by any unless it be revealed from Allah. It is a confirmation of the revelation made before it and a detailed exposition of the Book.[45] Beyond doubt it is from the Lord of the universe.

45. The arguments contained in (Ayat 37) may be elaborated like this:

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

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

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرٰىهُ ۖ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ صٰدِقِينَ 38

(10:38) Do they say that the Messenger has himself composed the Qur'an? Say: 'In that case bring forth just one surah like it and call on all whom you can, except Allah, to help you if you are truthful.[46]

46. There is a general misunderstanding that the challenge of the Quran to produce a book, nay, a Surah like this, is in regard to its eloquent, pure and unique literary excellence. This has been the natural result of the way in which discussions have been carried on to prove the miracle of the Quran. But the Quran is far above this that it should claim to be a unique and matchless book because of its excellent diction. There is no doubt at all that it is unique and matchless in this respect also, but the real basis of its claim and challenge, that no human brain is capable of producing a book like this, is its subject matter and teachings. The Quran itself has stated at different places those aspects which are a sure proof of its revelation from Allah and the refutation of the false aspersions that it was a human invention. This has already been explained at appropriate places and will be explained in the succeeding pages. See (E.N. 26, 27 of Surah At-Toor).

بَلْ كَذَّبُوا بِمَا لَمْ يُحِيطُوا بِعِلْمِهِ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِهِمْ تَأْوِيلُهُ ۚ كَذٰلِكَ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظّٰلِمِينَ 39

(10:39) In fact they arbitrarily rejected as false whatever they failed to comprehend and whose final sequel was not apparent to them.[47] Likewise had their predecessors rejected the truth, declaring it falsehood. Do observe, then, what was the end of the wrong-doers.

47. They could declare the Quran as forged on two grounds only, but neither of these existed: First, if they had had a proof that the Book had not been revealed by Allah, but had been forged by someone; secondly, that the truths enunciated in it and the information given in it were false. But no one could say on the basis of true knowledge that the Book had been really forged and then ascribed to God: nor could anyone say that he had peeped

behind the curtains of the unseen and discovered that there was not One God (as taught in this Book) but many gods in the heavens: nor could anyone assert on the basis of true knowledge that there were no angels, no revelations and no God, but these were mere fictions that had been invented by some fertile imagination: nor had anyone witnessed by actually visiting the Hereafter that the information about rewards and punishments was utterly wrong. But in spite of the lack of any proof to the contrary; they were challenging the genuineness of the Quran with the boldness and impudence of one who had made a thorough research into the matter and proved it to be false.

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يُّؤْمِنُ بِهٖ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ لَّا يُؤْمِنُ بِهٖ ؕ وَرَبُّكَ اَعْلَمُ بِالْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ع 40

(10:40) Of those some will believe and others will not. Your Lord knows best the mischief-makers.[48]

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

وَاِنْ كَذَّبُوْكَ فَقُلْ لِّيْ عَمَلِيْ وَلَكُمْ عَمَلُكُمْ ۚ اَنْتُمْ بَرِيْٓـُٔوْنَ مِمَّآ اَعْمَلُ وَاَنَا بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ 41

(10:41) And if they reject you as false, tell them: 'My deeds are for myself and your deeds for yourselves. You will not be held responsible for my deeds, nor I for your deeds.[49]

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

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّسْتَمِعُوْنَ اِلَيْكَ ؕ اَفَاَنْتَ تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ وَلَوْ كَانُوْا لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ 42

(10:42) Of them some seem to give heed to you; will you, then, make the deaf hear even though they understand nothing?[50]

50. Though this and the succeeding verse have been addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), these are meant to reprove those people who were not paying attention to the

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

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّنْظُرُ اِلَيْكَ ؕ اَفَاَنْتَ تَهْدِى الْعُمْىَ وَلَوْ كَانُوْا لَا يُبْصِرُوْنَ 43

(10:43) And of them some look towards you; will you, then, guide the blind, even though they can see nothing?[51]

51. Here again they may be likened to animals which see with their eyes but cannot perceive anything beyond what appears on the surface. Likewise those people saw the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions, but did not perceive their pure life for they did not have the true vision to see the wonderful change that was coming in the lives of those who had listened to and accepted the Message.

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

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ النَّاسَ شَيْـًٔا وَّلٰكِنَّ النَّاسَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ 44

(10:44) Surely Allah does not wrong men; they rather wrong themselves.[52]

52. "Allah does not wrong mankind" because He gives them ears to hear, eyes to see and hearts to feel and ponder, and everything that is required to enable them to discriminate

between right and wrong, truth and falsehood. But it is "But mankind wrong themselves" by refusing to make the right and proper use of their faculties and by following their lusts and enjoying the things of this world. Naturally this has made their eyes so blind and their ears so deaf and their hearts so dead that they are incapable of distinguishing between right and wrong, good and bad, for their conscience has also become dead.

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ كَاَنْ لَّمْ يَلْبَثُوْٓا اِلَّا سَاعَةً مِّنَ النَّهَارِ يَتَعَارَفُوْنَ بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ قَدْ خَسِرَ
الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِلِقَآءِ اللّٰهِ وَمَا كَانُوْا مُهْتَدِيْنَ 45

(10:45) (But today they are oblivious of everything except enjoyment of worldly life.) And on the Day when He will muster all men together, they will feel as though they had been in the world no more than an hour of the day to get acquainted with one another.[53] (It will then become evident that) those who called the lie to meeting with Allah[54]were utter losers and were not rightly-directed.

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

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

وَاِمَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِىْ نَعِدُهُمْ اَوْ نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ فَاِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ ثُمَّ اللّٰهُ شَهِيْدٌ عَلٰى مَا
يَفْعَلُوْنَ 46

(10:46) Whether We let you see (during your lifetime) some of the chastisement with which We threaten them, or We call you unto Us (before the chastisement strikes them), in any case they are bound to return to Us. Allah is witness to all what they do.

وَلِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ رَّسُوْلٌ ۚ فَاِذَا جَآءَ رَسُوْلُهُمْ قُضِىَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ 47

(10:47) A Messenger is sent to every people;[55] and when their Messenger comes, the fate of that people is decided with full justice; they are subjected to no wrong.[56]

55. Here the word ummat does not merely mean a nation or a community but includes all those people whom the message of a Messenger reaches after his appointment, even though he may not be alive among them. More than this: as long as his teachings remain intact and within the reach of everyone to ascertain what they really are, all such people will be treated and judged as his ummat and their cases decided with justice in accordance with (Ayat 47). According to this standard, all the people of the world are the ummat of Prophet

Muhammad (peace be upon him), and will remain so, as long as the Quran continues to be published in its original and complete form as today. That is why it has not been said, "There is a Messenger in every ummat" but "There is a Messenger for every ummat."

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

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْوَعْدُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ 48

(10:48) They say:'If what you promise is true, when will this threat be fulfilled?'

قُلْ لَّآ اَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِيْ ضَرًّا وَّلَا نَفْعًا اِلَّا مَا شَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ لِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ اَجَلٌ ؕ اِذَا جَآءَ اَجَلُهُمْ فَلَا يَسْتَاْخِرُوْنَ سَاعَةً وَّلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُوْنَ 49

(10:49) Tell them: 'I have no power to harm or benefit even myself, except what Allah may will.[57] There is an appointed term for every people; and when the end of their term comes, neither can they put it off for an hour, nor can they bring it an hour before.[58]

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

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

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

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ اَتٰىكُمْ عَذَابُهٗ بَيَاتًا اَوْ نَهَارًا مَّاذَا يَسْتَعْجِلُ مِنْهُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ 50

(10:50) Tell them: 'Did you consider (what you would do) were His chastisement to fall upon you suddenly by night or by day? So why are the culprits seeking to hasten its coming?

أَثُمَّ إِذَا مَا وَقَعَ آمَنْتُمْ بِهِ ۖ آلْآنَ وَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ 51

(10:51) Is it only when this chastisement has actually overtaken you that you will believe in it? (And when the chastisement will surprise you), you will try to get away from it, although it is you who had sought to hasten its coming.'

ثُمَّ قِيلَ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْخُلْدِ ۚ هَلْ تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ 52

(10:52) The wrong-doers will then be told: 'Suffer now the abiding chastisement. How else can you be rewarded except according to your deeds?'

وَيَسْتَنْبِئُونَكَ أَحَقٌّ هُوَ ۖ قُلْ إِي وَرَبِّي إِنَّهُ لَحَقٌّ ۖ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ ۝ 53

(10:53) They ask you if what you say is true? Tell them: 'Yes, by my Lord, this is altogether true, and you have no power to prevent the chastisement from befalling.'

وَلَوْ أَنَّ لِكُلِّ نَفْسٍ ظَلَمَتْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ لَافْتَدَتْ بِهِ ۗ وَأَسَرُّوا النَّدَامَةَ لَمَّا رَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ ۚ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ 54

(10:54) If a wrong-doer had all that is in the earth he would surely offer it to ransom himself. When the wrong-doers perceive the chastisement, they will feel intense remorse in their hearts.[59] But a judgement shall be made with full justice about them. They shall not be wronged.

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

اَلَآ اِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ اَلَآ اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ وَّلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا

يَعْلَمُوْنَ 55

(10:55) Indeed all that is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah. And most certainly Allah's promise will be fulfilled, though most men are not aware.

هُوَ يُحْيٖ وَيُمِيْتُ وَاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ 56

(10:56) He it is Who gives life and causes death, and to Him shall you all be returned.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَآءَتْكُمْ مَّوْعِظَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَشِفَآءٌ لِّمَا فِي الصُّدُوْرِ ۙ وَهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةٌ

لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ 57

(10:57) Men! Now there has come to you an exhortation from your Lord, a healing for the ailments of the hearts, and a guidance and mercy for those who believe.

قُلْ بِفَضْلِ اللّٰهِ وَبِرَحْمَتِهٖ فَبِذٰلِكَ فَلْيَفْرَحُوْا ؕ هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُوْنَ 58

(10:58) Tell them (O Prophet!): 'Let them rejoice in Allah's grace and mercy through which this (Book) has come to you. It is better than all the riches that they accumulate.

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ مَّآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ مِّنْ رِّزْقٍ فَجَعَلْتُمْ مِّنْهُ حَرَامًا وَّحَلٰلًا ؕ قُلْ آٰللّٰهُ اَذِنَ

لَكُمْ اَمْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ تَفْتَرُوْنَ 59

(10:59) Did you consider that the sustenance which Allah had sent down for you[60] of your own accord you have declared some of it as unlawful and some as lawful?[61] Ask them: 'Did Allah bestow upon you any authority for this or do you forge lies against Allah?[62]

60. It has been purposely avoided to translate the Arabic word rizq into provisions, for it is liable to create a very serious misunderstanding regarding the implications of this verse. For in this sense rizq will be confined to food and eatables only, whereas it is very comprehensive in its meaning and it covers everything that Allah has given to man, food, children, knowledge, law etc. Instances can be cited from the Quran and the traditions in support thereof. Thus it has become, obvious that according to this verse, in Allah's sight it

is wrong and sinful to adopt the attitude of independence towards every kind of rizq, including articles of food.

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

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

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

وَمَا ظَنُّ الَّذِيْنَ يَفْتَرُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَذُوْ فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَشْكُرُوْنَ ع 60

(10:60) Think how those who invent lies against Him will be treated on, the Day of Judgement? Allah is bountiful to men yet most of them do not give thanks.[63]

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

وَمَا تَكُوْنُ فِيْ شَاْنٍ وَّمَا تَتْلُوْا مِنْهُ مِنْ قُرْاٰنٍ وَّلَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ مِنْ عَمَلٍ اِلَّا كُنَّا عَلَيْكُمْ
شُهُوْدًا اِذْ تُفِيْضُوْنَ فِيْهِ ؕ وَمَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْ رَّبِّكَ مِنْ مِّثْقَالِ ذَرَّةٍ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فِي
السَّمَآءِ وَلَآ اَصْغَرَ مِنْ ذٰلِكَ وَلَآ اَكْبَرَ اِلَّا فِيْ كِتٰبٍ مُّبِيْنٍ 61

(10:61) (O Prophet!) Whatever you may be engaged in, whether you recite any portion of the Qur'an, or whatever else all of you are doing, We are witnesses to whatever you may be occupied with. Not even an atom's weight escapes your Lord on the earth or in the heaven, nor is there anything smaller or bigger than that, except that it is on record in a Clear Book.[64]

64. These things have been mentioned here in order to comfort the Prophet (peace be upon him) and give a warning to his enemies. These are meant to lessen his worry and to strengthen him, as if to say: We see all that you are doing in propagating the Message of the truth with great patience and fortitude, and exerting your utmost to reform mankind. Rest assured that We have not left you alone after entrusting you with this arduous duty. We are not unaware of whatever you are doing for the performance of your mission, and also whatever your enemies are doing to oppose you. On the other hand, a warning has also been administered to his opponents: Don't remain under the delusion that no one is seeing what you are doing in opposing the Messenger of the truth and the reformer of mankind? We are seeing whatever mischief you are doing and whatever obstacles you are placing in the way of the mission. We are keeping a detailed and accurate record of all these things. Therefore beware that you shall be called upon to render an account of all your doings.

اَلَآ اِنَّ اَوْلِيَآءَ اللّٰهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ۚ صلے 62

(10:62) Oh, surely the friends of Allah have nothing to fear, nor shall they grieve -

الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَكَانُوْا يَتَّقُوْنَ ؕ 63

(10:63) the ones who believe and are God-fearing.

لَهُمُ الْبُشْرٰى فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْاٰخِرَةِ ؕ لَا تَبْدِيْلَ لِكَلِمٰتِ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ؕ 64

(10:64) For them are glad tidings in this world and in the Hereafter. The words of Allah shall not change. That is the supreme triumph.

وَلَا يَحْزُنْكَ قَوْلُهُمْ ۘ اِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا ؕ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ 65

(10:65) (O Prophet!) Let not the utterances of the opponents distress you. Indeed all honour is Allah's. He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

اَلَآ اِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ شُرَكَآءَ ؕ اِنْ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَاِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا يَخْرُصُوْنَ 66

(10:66) Verily whoever dwells in the heavens or the earth belongs to Allah. Those who invoke others beside Allah, associating them with Him in His divinity, only follow conjectures and are merely guessing.

هُوَ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ لِتَسْكُنُوْا فِيْهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّسْمَعُوْنَ 67

(10:67) It is Allah alone Who has made the night that you may rest in it, and has made the day light-giving. Surely in that there are signs for those who give heed (to the call of the Messenger).[65]

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

a. The mushriks base their search entirely and solely on superstition.

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

c. The philosophers claim to base their research on rationalism but it is really only surmise and guesswork, even though they may give logical arguments and sound reasons in its support.

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

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

In this passage (Ayats 66-67), the Quran declares that this way of search after knowledge is basically wrong, as if to say: The real cause of your deviation is that you base your search of reality on mere surmise and guesswork, and then, because of your prejudices, refuse to listen even to reasonable things. The result is that you have not only failed to arrive at the truth but also to judge rightly the revealed religion, presented by the Messengers.

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

The Quran has inculcated this method at many places and has over and again presented many a phenomenon as a proof of the reality, and taught the people how to arrive at the right conclusion so as to perceive the reality. Accordingly, in(verse 67), the sign of the night and the day has been presented for the deep consideration of the people. The change of day and night is a wonderful sign and clearly points to the Universal Designer and the All-Powerful Ruler; for it takes place by the turning of the earth on its axis and in relation to the sun with mathematical precision. This change is due to the great wisdom of the Designer and has a great purpose behind it because of its innumerable benefits for all that exists on the earth. This points out also to the Providence of the Creator for it demonstrates conclusively that He has made perfect arrangements for the existence of His creation. Moreover, this also shows that the Universal Designer is One and also that He is not playful

but Wise and purposeful. This change also points towards the great reality that He, being the Benefactor and Lord, is worthy of worship and none else. This is because every other being is provided with its requirements by this change of day and night and none provides others; therefore none of them can be the Lord and the Master. In the light of these signs, how can, any other religion, based on mere surmise and guesswork, be considered to be true when it is compared with the revealed religion which is based on such clear signs as these?

قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحٰنَهٗ ؕ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ ؕ لَهٗ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ اِنْ
عِنْدَكُمْ مِّنْ سُلْطٰنٍ بِهٰذَا ؕ اَتَقُوْلُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ 68

(10:68) They say: 'Allah has taken a son.[66] Glory be to Him.[67] He is self-sufficient! His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth.[68] Have you any authority to support (that Allah has taken a son)? Do you ascribe to Allah something of which you have no knowledge?

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

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

68. Three things have been put forward to refute their blasphemy:

(1) Allah is pure and without any defect.

(2) Allah is Self-sufficient in every way, and

(3) Allah is the Owner of everything in the heavens and the earth.

Let us now briefly explain how these three things refute that blasphemy.

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

Whatever be the case, it is obvious that the blasphemy shall have to be based on such a creed which presumes that Allah suffers from many defects, many weaknesses, many

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

قُلْ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَفْتَرُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُوْنَ ۭ 69

(10:69) Tell them (O Muhammad!): 'Indeed those who invent lies against Allah will never prosper.

مَتَاعٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ اِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ ثُمَّ نُذِيْقُهُمُ الْعَذَابَ الشَّدِيْدَ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْفُرُوْنَ ع 70

(10:70) They may enjoy the life of this world, but in the end they must return to Us, and then We shall cause them to taste severe chastisement for their disbelieving.'

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَاَ نُوْحٍ ۘ اِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهٖ يٰقَوْمِ اِنْ كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَّقَامِيْ وَتَذْكِيْرِيْ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَعَلَى اللّٰهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ فَاَجْمِعُوْٓا اَمْرَكُمْ وَشُرَكَاۗءَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُنْ اَمْرُكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ غُمَّةً ثُمَّ اقْضُوْٓا اِلَيَّ وَلَا تُنْظِرُوْنِ 71

(10:71) And narrate to them the story of Noah[69] when he said to his people: 'My people! If my living in your midst and my effort to shake you out of heedlessness by reciting to you the revelations of Allah offend you, then remember that I have put all my trust in Allah. So draw up your plan in concert with those whom you associate with Allah in His divinity, leaving no part of it obscure, and then put it into effect against me, and give me no respite.[70]

69. The story of Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) has been related here to serve as a warning to those who were rejecting the Message of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Up to this place, arguments had been presented before them to show the errors of their creeds, thoughts and ways, and impressive appeals had been made to them to adopt

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

70. This was a challenge that amounted to this: I am not going to give up my mission at all, whatever you may do against me, for I have my full trust in Allah. See (Ayat 55 of Surah Hud).

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَمَا سَأَلْتُكُمْ مِّنْ أَجْرٍ ۖ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ ۖ وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ
الْمُسْلِمِينَ 72

(10:72) When you turned your back on my admonition (what harm did you cause me?) I had asked of you no reward, for my reward lies only with Allah, and I am commanded to be of those who totally submit (to Allah)1.

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَمَن مَّعَهُ فِي الْفُلْكِ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ خَلَائِفَ وَأَغْرَقْنَا الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا ۚ
فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُنذَرِينَ 73

(10:73) But they rejected Noah, calling him a liar. So We saved him and those who were with him in the Ark, and made them successors (to the authority in the land), and drowned all those who had rejected Our signs as false. Consider, then, the fate of those who had been warned (and still did not believe).

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِن بَعْدِهِ رُسُلًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِمْ فَجَاءُوهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا بِمَا كَذَّبُوا
بِهِ مِن قَبْلُ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ نَطْبَعُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِ الْمُعْتَدِينَ 74

(10:74) Then We sent forth after him other Messengers, each one to his people. They brought to them clear signs, but they were not such as to believe in what they had rejected earlier as false. Thus do We seal the hearts of those who transgress.[71]

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

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنۢ بَعْدِهِم مُّوسَىٰ وَهَٰرُونَ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَإِْۦهِ بِـَٔايَٰتِنَا فَٱسْتَكْبَرُوا۟ وَكَانُوا۟ قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِينَ 75

(10:75) Then, after them,[72] We sent forth Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh and his chiefs with Our signs, but they waxed proud.[73] They were a wickd people.

72.(E. Ns 84-111) about the story of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and Pharaoh, already added to Surah Al- Aaraf, should be kept in view, as the things explained therein will not be repeated here.

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

فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمُ ٱلْحَقُّ مِنْ عِندِنَا قَالُوٓا۟ إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَسِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ 76

(10:76) And when truth came to them from Us, they said: 'Indeed this is plain sorcery.[74]

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

In this connection, it will also be worthwhile to note that the mission of Prophets Moses and Aaron (peace be upon them) was not merely to liberate the Israelites from the slavery of Pharaoh, as some people have opined. If we keep in view the context in which the story occurs here, it will be quite clear that they, too, were appointed to pursue the same mission that was entrusted to all the Prophets from Noah to Muhammad (peace be upon them all). The theme of this Surah from its very beginning has been this: Acknowledge Allah alone as your Lord and Deity for He is the Lord of the whole universe. Believe in the life-afterdeath in which you shall have to present yourselves before Allah and render the account of all you did in this world. Then the Surah makes it clear to those who rejected the message that

history bears witness to this that the true success of humanity has always followed the acceptance of this message. Therefore it admonished them: You should also accept the message which has always been put forward by all the Messengers, and establish your life in its entirety on these articles of faith. For, those who rejected the message were destroyed in the end.

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

The part played by the two Prophets in liberating the Israelites from Pharaoh's slavery became prominent in history because he and his nobles rejected the message and the Prophets had to rescue their people from their slavery. Accordingly, the Quran gave it the same prominence as in history. But if one does not commit the error of isolating the details of the Quran from its fundamental principles but studies them in the light of these principles, one cannot fall a prey to the misunderstanding that the mere liberation of a community could be the main object of the mission of a Prophet and the propagation of the message its secondary object only. See (Surah Taha, Ayats 44-52), (Surah Az- Zukhruf, Ayats 46-56), (Surah Al-Muzammil, Ayats 15-16).

قَالَ مُوسَىٰ أَتَقُولُونَ لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَكُمْ ۖ أَسِحْرٌ هَٰذَا ۖ وَلَا يُفْلِحُ السَّاحِرُونَ 77

(10:77) Moses said: 'Do you say this about the truth after it has come to you? Is this sorcery? You call this sorcery although sorcerers never come to a happy end.[75]

75. "And the sorcerers will not succeed" is meaningful for this is the answer to their charge: "Is this a sorcery." It means this: You have called the signs presented by Moses (peace be upon him) a sorcery on account of its apparent likeness to it. You have not considered the clear and marked distinctions between the characteristics of the Prophets and sorcerers. Otherwise you would never have dared to make such an absurd charge. Have you ever seen a sorcerer go before a tyrant and talk boldly and fearlessly to him as Moses (peace be upon him) did, and admonish him for his deviation and invite him to adopt the way of purity and God-worship? You know that a sorcerer behaves quite differently. He starts with the flattery of the courtiers so that they may obtain for him the permission to show his tricks. After this he goes to the presence of His Majesty and makes obsequious bows and very humbly requests him to see his tricks. Then he prays for his long life and prosperity and begs for his reward. Now, you can judge for yourselves whether the Prophet is a sorcerer or a far greater and far higher personality than even kings and the like.

قَالُوٓا۟ أَجِئْتَنَا لِتَلْفِتَنَا عَمَّا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ ءَابَآءَنَا وَتَكُونَ لَكُمَا ٱلْكِبْرِيَآءُ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ ۖ وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكُمَا بِمُؤْمِنِينَ 78

(10:78) They replied: 'Have you come to turn us away from the way of our forefathers that the two of you might become supreme in the land?[76] We shall never accept what the two of you say.'

76. It is obvious that if this demand had been merely for the liberation of the Israelites, there could have been no question of any threat to Pharaoh's kingdom. The threat was because of the message which demanded subordination to the truth, for it threatened the system which was based on shirk and on which depended the domination of Pharaoh and his chiefs and priests. See (E.N. 66 of Surah Al-Aaraf) and (E.N. 43 of Surah Al-Momin).

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ ٱئْتُونِى بِكُلِّ سَٰحِرٍ عَلِيمٍ 79

(10:79) And Pharaoh said (to his) men: 'Bring every skilled sorcerer to me.'

فَلَمَّا جَآءَ ٱلسَّحَرَةُ قَالَ لَهُم مُّوسَىٰٓ أَلْقُوا۟ مَآ أَنتُم مُّلْقُونَ 80

(10:80) And when the sorcerers came Moses said to them: 'Cast whatever you wish to cast.'

فَلَمَّآ أَلْقَوْا۟ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ مَا جِئْتُم بِهِ ٱلسِّحْرُ ۖ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ سَيُبْطِلُهُۥٓ ۖ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُصْلِحُ عَمَلَ ٱلْمُفْسِدِينَ 81

(10:81) Then when they had cast (their staffs), Moses said: 'What you have produced is sheer sorcery.[77] Allah will certainly reduce it to naught. Surely Allah does not set right the work of the mischief-makers.

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

وَيُحِقُّ ٱللَّهُ ٱلْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَٰتِهِۦ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ ٱلْمُجْرِمُونَ ۝ 82

(10:82) Allah vindicates the truth by His commands, howsoever much the guilty might detest that.'

فَمَآ اٰمَنَ لِمُوْسٰٓى اِلَّا ذُرِّيَّةٌ مِّنْ قَوْمِهٖ عَلٰى خَوْفٍ مِّنْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَا۟ئِهِمْ اَنْ يَّفْتِنَهُمْ ؕ وَاِنَّ
فِرْعَوْنَ لَعَالٍ فِى الْاَرْضِ ۚ وَاِنَّهٗ لَمِنَ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ 83

(10:83) None but a few youths[78] of Moses' people accepted him,[79] fearing that Pharaoh and their own chiefs would persecute them. Indeed Pharaoh was mighty in the land, he was among those who exceed all limits.[80]

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

The Quran has mentioned this particular aspect of the matter because the same was the case of the response to the mission of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). In its initial stage, those who came forward were not the elders and the old people but some courageous youth. These first Muslims who were boldly facing persecution and enduring hardships for the sake of Islam were the young people. For instance, Ali-ibn-Abi Talib, Jaafar Tayyar, Zubair, Talhah, Saad bin Abi Waqqas, Musab bin Umair, Abdullah bin Masud, etc. were under twenty years when they embraced Islam. Abdur-Rahman bin Auf, Bilal, Suhail were under thirty years, and Abu Ubaidah-bin-al-Jarrah, Zaid bin Harithah, Uthman bin Affan and Umar Faruq were under thirty-five years. Abu Bakr was no more than 38 when he embraced Islam. Among the early Muslims, there is only one instance of a companion, Ammar bin Yasir, who was of the same age as the Prophet (peace be upon him) and another of Ubaidah bin Harith Muttalabi, who was older than the Prophet (peace be upon him).

79. Some people have misinterpreted the Arabic words say that all the people of Israel were unbelievers and at first only a few of them believed in the message. But when amama is followed by the letter lam, it generally means obeying and following. Thus the original words of the text will mean "a few youth from his own people obeyed and followed Moses," that is, only a few young people from the whole tribe of the Israelites had the courage to accept and acknowledge Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) as their leader and guide and stand by him in his struggle with Pharaoh and his chiefs. The words that follow make it quite clear that the Israelites refrained from this not because they did not believe in Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) or his message but because they (specially their elders) were afraid of exposing themselves to the persecution of Pharaoh. This state of fear was the result of their moral degeneration. Though all of them racially and religiously belonged to the community of Prophets Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph (peace be upon them all) and, therefore, were Muslims, yet slavery of centuries had so much degraded them that they had lost that spirit of Islam which impels one to become the standard bearer of Islam against the

domination of unbelief and deviation, or imbues one with the courage to stand by the one who had raised that banner.

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

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

The Quran also refers to this in (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 129):

His people answered, we were oppressed before you came and now again we are being oppressed after you have come.

80. The Arabic word musrifin literally means transgressors, or those who are not bound by any limits. They are the people who do not hesitate to employ even the most wicked methods to achieve their object: who practice without any pangs of conscience, cruelty, immorality, barbarism etc. if these serve their purpose, and who cross all limits in pursuit of their desires. In short, they are such people as know no limits to stop at.

وَقَالَ مُوسٰى يٰقَوْمِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اٰمَنْتُمْ بِاللّٰهِ فَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلُوْٓا اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمِيْنَ 84

(10:84) Moses said: 'My people! If you believe in Allah and are truly Muslims[81] then place your reliance on Him alone.'

81. The fact that Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) in his address called his people "Muslims" shows that all the people of the community of Israel were Muslims; otherwise he could not say to them, "if you are Muslims". He meant to urge them to be brave, saying: If you are true Muslims, as you profess to be, do not fear the might of Pharaoh but put your trust in the might of Allah.

فَقَالُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا ۚ رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا فِتْنَةً لِّلْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۙ 85

(10:85) They replied:[82] 'We place our reliance on Allah. Our Lord! Do not make us a trial for the oppressors,[83]

82. Those, who responded to the appeal of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) were those youth who obeyed and followed him, and not the Israelites, as a community, as is obvious from the context.

83. The prayer, "Our Lord, do not make us a trial for the wrongdoing people" is very comprehensive in meaning. Whenever the standard bearers of the truth rise up to establish

virtue and eradicate the prevalent evil, they come into conflict with unjust people, who, for one reason or the other, are always on the lookout to find fault with them. First, there are the champions of falsehood, who try their level best to crush down with full force the champions of the truth. Then there are the so called champions of the truth who profess to believe in it but are not prepared to enter into conflict with the powerful government of the time. Therefore they declare it to be a useless and foolish effort, and begin to invent excuses to justify the wrong stand they take in regard to the struggle with falsehood in order to silence the prick of conscience they feel for their criminal attitude of cowardice. Accordingly, they try to prove that it is these standard bearers of the truth who are in the wrong and not them. Lastly, there are the common people, who watch the conflict as bystanders and join forces with those who prove to be more powerful of the two, whether they are the supporters of the truth or of falsehood.

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

Thus it has become quite clear that this prayer of the companions of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was well timed and meaningful: Our Lord, have mercy upon us so that we might not become a cause of trial for the unjust people: protect us from errors, defects and, weaknesses and make our efforts successful in this world so that we may become a source of goodness to Thy creatures and not a source of evil for the unjust people.

وَنَجِّنَا بِرَحْمَتِكَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ 86

(10:86) and deliver us, through Your mercy, from the unbelievers.'

وَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰى مُوْسٰى وَاَخِيْهِ اَنْ تَبَوَّاٰ لِقَوْمِكُمَا بِمِصْرَ بُيُوْتًا وَّاجْعَلُوْا بُيُوْتَكُمْ قِبْلَةً وَّاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ ؕ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ 87

(10:87) And We directed Moses and his brother: 'Prepare a few houses for your people in Egypt, and make your houses a direction for men to pray, and establish Prayer,[84] and give glad tidings to the men of faith.[85]

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

As regards to appointing your houses as qiblah, I am of the opinion that it means: Set apart these houses as common places of worship for offering Salat in congregation and the central places for holding their meetings. That is why it is followed by establishing Salat, which means that they should offer their Salat collectively in congregation instead of individually.

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

وَقَالَ مُوسٰى رَبَّنَآ اِنَّكَ اٰتَيْتَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَاَهٗ زِيْنَةً وَّاَمْوَالًا فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۙ رَبَّنَا
لِيُضِلُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِكَ ۚ رَبَّنَا اطْمِسْ عَلٰٓى اَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاشْدُدْ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْا حَتّٰى
يَرَوُا الْعَذَابَ الْاَلِيْمَ 88

(10:88) Moses prayed:[86] 'Our Lord! You bestowed upon Pharaoh and his nobles splendour[87] and riches[88] in the world. Our Lord! Have You done this that they may lead people astray from Your path? Our Lord! Obliterate their riches and harden their hearts that they may not believe until they observe the painful chastisement.[89]

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

87. The Arabic word zeenat includes the magnificence, grandeur, glory and the apparent brilliance of their culture and civilization which attracted other people towards them with the desire of imitating them.

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

89. As it has already been stated, Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) made this prayer during the last period of his stay in Egypt. When he had shown many signs, one after the other, to Pharaoh and his chiefs and pointed out the way clearly to them, but they had persisted obdurately in their antagonism to the truth. The Prophet begged his Lord to destroy their possessions and harden their hearts. And this was in accordance with the decree of Allah. As they had merited this punishment according to the divine law of retribution, Allah decreed that they should not get the light of faith, which they themselves had extinguished with their persistent disbelief.

قَالَ قَدْ أُجِيبَت دَّعْوَتُكُمَا فَاسْتَقِيمَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعَآنِّ سَبِيلَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ 89

(10:89) Allah responded: 'The prayer of the two of you is accepted. So keep steadfast, and do not follow the path of the ignorant.[90]

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

وَجَٰوَزْنَا بِبَنِيٓ إِسْرَٰٓءِيلَ الْبَحْرَ فَأَتْبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ وَجُنُودُهُۥ بَغْيًا وَعَدْوًا ۖ حَتَّىٰٓ إِذَآ أَدْرَكَهُ الْغَرَقُ قَالَ ءَامَنتُ أَنَّهُۥ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا الَّذِىٓ ءَامَنَتْ بِهِۦ بَنُوٓا۟ إِسْرَٰٓءِيلَ وَأَنَا۠ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ 90

(10:90) And We led the Children of Israel across the sea. Then Pharaoh and his hosts pursued them in iniquity and transgression until Pharaoh cried out while he was drowning: 'I believe that there is no god but Allah in Whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am also one of those who submit to Allah.[91]

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

آلْآنَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ 91

(10:91) (Thereupon came the response): 'Now you believe, although you disobeyed earlier and were one of the mischief-makers.

فَالْيَوْمَ نُنَجِّيْكَ بِبَدَنِكَ لِتَكُوْنَ لِمَنْ خَلْفَكَ اٰيَةً ؕ وَاِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ عَنْ اٰيٰتِنَا لَغٰفِلُوْنَ ع 92

(10:92) We shall now save your corpse that you may serve as a sign of warning for all posterity,[92] although many men are heedless of Our signs.[93]

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

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

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

وَلَقَدْ بَوَّاْنَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ مُبَوَّاَ صِدْقٍ وَّرَزَقْنٰهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ ۚ فَمَا اخْتَلَفُوْا حَتّٰى جَآءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِيْ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فِيْمَا كَانُوْا فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ 93

(10:93)We settled the Children of Israel in a blessed land,[94] and provided them with all manner of good things. They only disagreed among themselves after knowledge (of the truth had) come to them.[95] Surely your Lord will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning their disagreements.

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

95. This refers to the dissensions the Israelites had caused in the divine way and the new religions they had invented. This verse accuses them of falling into variances, even though

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

فَإِنْ كُنْتَ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّمَّآ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ فَسْـَٔلِ الَّذِيْنَ يَقْرَءُوْنَ الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ۚ لَقَدْ جَآءَكَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِيْنَ ۙ 94

(10:94) Now, if you are in doubt concerning what We have revealed to you, then ask those who have been reading the Book before you. It is the truth that has come to you from your Lord, so do never become one of those who doubt,

وَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَتَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ 95

(10:95) or reject the signs of Allah as false, for then you shall be among those who will be in utter loss.[96]

96. Though these words were addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), they were meant for those who expressed doubts about his message. As regards to the reference to the people of the Book, it is because they possessed the knowledge of the scriptures, whereas the common people of Arabia lacked this, and were, therefore, strangers to the voice of the Quran. It was also expected that their just and pious scholars would testify that its message was the same as that of the scriptures of the former Prophets.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِمْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ۙ 96

(10:96) Surely those against whom the word of your Lord has been fulfilled[97] will not believed

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

وَلَوْ جَآءَتْهُمْ كُلُّ اٰيَةٍ حَتّٰى يَرَوُا الْعَذَابَ الْاَلِيْمَ 97

(10:97) even if they witness every single sign that might come to them until they are face to face with the painful chastisement,

فَلَوْلَا كَانَتْ قَرْيَةٌ اٰمَنَتْ فَنَفَعَهَآ اِيْمَانُهَآ اِلَّا قَوْمَ يُوْنُسَ ؕ لَمَّآ اٰمَنُوْا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ عَذَابَ

الْخِزْيِ فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَمَتَّعْنٰهُمْ اِلٰى حِيْنٍ 98

(10:98) Did it ever happen that the people of a town believed on seeing God's chastisement and its believing profited them? (There is no such instance) except of the people of Yunus.[98] When they believed We granted them reprieve from humiliating chastisement in this world,[99] and We let them enjoy themselves for a while.[100]

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

99. As regards to the question why the threatened torment was warded off from the people of Jonah as an exception to the divine principle, "Why was there not a (single) township (among those We warned) that believed so its belief benefited it," the Quran does not give any details of this, but merely refers to the story at three places. See (Surah Al-Anbia, Ayats 87, 88); (Surah As-Sajadah, Ayats 139-148); (Surah Al-Qalam, Ayats 48-50). Though the story contained in the Book of Jonah gives some details, these cannot be depended upon because it was neither composed by Prophet Jonah nor it is a revealed Book but was written by some unknown person and then inserted in the Bible. Besides this, it contains some apparently absurd things which cannot be accepted as true. Nevertheless if we consider this deeply in the light of the allusions made in the Quran and details in the Book of Jonah, the explanation given by various commentators of the Quran seems to be correct. Prophet Jonah left the place of his mission without divine permission after warning the people of the torment. Therefore Allah forgave the Assyrians when they repented after seeing some signs of the coming torment. This was in accordance with the divine principles as stated in the Quran. For, according to one of these, Allah does not inflict any torment on any people, till He has the message fully demonstrated to them. As the Prophet did not continue his admonition in accordance with the appointed term and left the place of his mission of his own accord, Allah's justice did not inflict the chastisement because the legal argument against his people had not been fulfilled. For further explanation see ((((E.N. 85 of Surah Yaseen))).

100. When the Assyrians believed in the message, they were given a new lease of life. But after some time, they adopted the wrong ways of thought and deed. Prophet Nahum (720-698 B.C.) warned and admonished them but without any effect. Then Prophet Zephaniah

(640-609 B.C.) gave them the last warning that "He .... will destroy Assyria and will make Nineveh a desolation", but it also proved in vain. At last in about 612 B.C. Allah made the Medes dominant over them.

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

وَلَوْ شَآءَ رَبُّكَ لَاٰمَنَ مَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ كُلُّهُمْ جَمِيْعًا ؕ اَفَاَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ حَتّٰى يَكُوْنُوْا مُؤْمِنِيْنَ 99

(10:99) Had your Lord so willed, all those who are on the earth would have believed.[101] Will you, then, force people into believing?[102]

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

102. This does not at all mean that the Prophet (peace be upon him) desired to force people to become believers, and that Allah was forbidding him to do this. In fact, the Quran has here adopted the same method of admonishing the people that it has adopted at many other places, that is, though the words have apparently been addressed to the person of the Prophet (peace be upon him), in fact, these have been addressed to the people. The implication is this: "O people! Our Messenger has made the distinction between the guidance and deviation quite clear and plain by argument and pleading. Now, therefore, it is for you to believe or not to believe in the guidance. If you accept that someone should force you to adopt the right way, you should know that this duty has not been assigned to Our Prophet. Had Allah willed this, He could have done it Himself: then there would have been no need of sending any Prophet to you.

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ اَنْ تُؤْمِنَ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَيَجْعَلُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ 100

(10:100) No one can believe except by Allah's leave,[103] and Allah lays abomination on those who do not use their understanding.[104] and conduct.

103. This is to emphasize the principle that the bestowal of all these blessings is in the power of Allah alone: therefore none can acquire or bestow on anyone any blessing without the permission of Allah. As faith and guidance are also blessings, they, too, can be acquired only

with Allah's permission; and no one can acquire these without His permission nor bestow these on anyone else even though one should desire to do so. That is why, even if the Prophet had sincerely desired to make people believers forcibly, he could not have done this, for this could be done only with Allah's permission and help.

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

قُلِ انْظُرُوْا مَاذَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَمَا تُغْنِي الْاٰيٰتُ وَالنُّذُرُ عَنْ قَوْمٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ 101

(10:101) Tell them: 'Observe carefully all that is in the heavens and the earth.' But no signs and warnings can avail those who are bent on not believing.[105]

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

فَهَلْ يَنْتَظِرُوْنَ اِلَّا مِثْلَ اَيَّامِ الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ؕ قُلْ فَانْتَظِرُوْا اِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ مِّنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِيْنَ 102

(10:102) What are they waiting for except to witness the repetition of the days of calamity that their predecessors witnessed? Tell them: 'Wait; I too am waiting with you.

ثُمَّ نُنَجِّيْ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كَذٰلِكَ ۚ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نُنْجِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ع 103

(10:103) Then, (when Allah's wrath falls upon the wicked) We save our Messengers and also those who believe. It is incumbent on Us to deliver the believers.

قُلْ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْ دِيْنِيْ فَلَآ اَعْبُدُ الَّذِيْنَ تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ
وَلٰكِنْ اَعْبُدُ اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْ يَتَوَفّٰىكُمْ ۖ صلے ج وَاُمِرْتُ اَنْ اَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ لا 104

(10:104) (O Prophet!) Tell them:[106] 'Men! If you are still in doubt concerning my religion, know that I do not serve those whom you serve beside Allah. I only serve Allah Who will cause (all of) you to die.[107] I have been commanded to be one of those who believe,

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

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

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

وَاَنۡ اَقِمۡ وَجۡهَكَ لِلدِّيۡنِ حَنِيۡفًا ۚ وَلَا تَكُوۡنَنَّ مِنَ الۡمُشۡرِكِيۡنَ 105

(10:105) and to adhere exclusively and sincerely to the true faith,[108] and not to be one of those who associate others with Allah in His divinity.[109]

108. The force of the Arabic words "direct your face toward the religion" of the text means "dedicate yourself sincerely, exclusively and steadfastly to this faith", is worth deep consideration. The purpose might have been served by the use of such words as "Adopt this faith" or "Follow this faith". But Allah considered such expressions as weak and incapable of serving the real purpose, which is implied in the wording of the text. For the literal meaning is "Set your face steadfastly", which implies: You should steadfastly turn your face in one direction only, without turning it even slightly to right or left, or backward, and go on marching in the same direction. Though these words were in themselves quite sufficient, the addition of the word made it all the more forceful. For hanif is one who turns away from all others and exclusively turns to one direction. Thus what Allah demands is this: Adopt this faith, this way of the worship of Allah and this way of life in such a manner that your worship, subjection, submission, servitude and obedience should be dedicated exclusively to Allah, the Lord of the universe, so that you do not deviate in the least after adopting this way. You should have nothing to do with those ways that you have discarded and that you should not even have a look at the crooked paths that erroneous people follow.

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

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

وَلَا تَدۡعُ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَنۡفَعُكَ وَلَا يَضُرُّكَ ۚ فَاِنۡ فَعَلۡتَ فَاِنَّكَ اِذًا مِّنَ

الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ 106

(10:106) Do not call upon any apart from Allah on those who have no power to benefit or hurt you. For if you call upon others than Allah you will be reckoned among the wrong-doers.

وَاِنۡ يَّمۡسَسۡكَ اللّٰهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهٗۤ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ وَاِنۡ يُّرِدۡكَ بِخَيۡرٍ فَلَا رَآدَّ لِفَضۡلِهٖ ؕ يُصِيۡبُ

بِهٖ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهٖ ؕ وَهُوَ الۡغَفُوۡرُ الرَّحِيۡمُ 107

(10:107) If Allah afflicts you with any hardship, none other than He can remove it; and if He wills any good for you, none can avert His bounty. He bestows good upon whomsoever of His servants He wills. He is AllForgiving, All-Merciful.'

قُلۡ يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدۡ جَآءَكُمُ الۡحَقُّ مِنۡ رَّبِّكُمۡ ۚ فَمَنِ اهۡتَدٰى فَاِنَّمَا يَهۡتَدِىۡ لِنَفۡسِهٖ ۚ

وَمَنۡ ضَلَّ فَاِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيۡهَا ۚ وَمَاۤ اَنَا عَلَيۡكُمۡ بِوَكِيۡلٍ ؕ 108

(10:108) Tell them (O Muhammad): 'Men! Truth has come to you from your Lord. Whosoever, then, follows the true guidance does so for his own good; and whosoever strays, his straying will be to his own hurt. I am no custodian over you.

وَاتَّبِعۡ مَا يُوۡحٰۤى اِلَيۡكَ وَاصۡبِرۡ حَتّٰى يَحۡكُمَ اللّٰهُ ۚ ۖ وَهُوَ خَيۡرُ الۡحٰكِمِيۡنَ ۚ 109

(10:109) And follow, (O Prophet!), whatever is revealed to you, and remain patient until Allah brings forth His judgement. He is the best of those who judge.'

11. Surah Hud

Name

This Surah has been named after Prophet Hud whose story has been related in vv. 50-60.

Period of Revelation

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

Subject

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

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

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

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

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

Instead of addressing the people directly, the Quran has used the stories of the people of Noah, Hud, Salih, Lot, Shu'aib and Moses to achieve the above mentioned objects. What is most prominent in their stories is that when Allah passes His judgment on the people, He does not spare anyone whatsoever, even if he be the nearest relative of the Prophet of the time. Only that one is rescued who had believed in the Prophet, and none else, not even his own son or wife. More than that: the Faith demands from each and every Believer that he should totally forget his relationships when that judgment comes and remember only the relationship of the Faith. For it is against the spirit of Islam to show any regard whatsoever

for the relationships of blood and race. And the Muslims demonstrated these teachings practically in the Battle of Badr, four years after the revelation of this Surah.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

الٓرٰ ۟ کِتٰبٌ اُحۡکِمَتۡ اٰیٰتُہٗ ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتۡ مِنۡ لَّدُنۡ حَکِیۡمٍ خَبِیۡرٍ ۙ 1

(11:1) Alif. Lam. Ra. This is a Divine Command[1] whose contents have been made firm and set forth in detail[2] from One Who is All-Wise, All-Aware

1. The Arabic word kitab has been translated into Book because of the context. For its meaning is not confined to book or something written but it includes command and sovereign decree as well and has been used in several places in the Quran in the same sense.

2. The contents of this Book are firm, strong, and unchangeable: they are well balanced and measured. There is no tinge of verbosity, pedantry, volubility, poetic fancy and rhetorical exaggeration. The truth has been stated accurately, and there is nothing more and nothing less than the truth. Moreover, the contents have been given in detail and everything has been made so clear and plain that there is neither confusion nor complication nor ambiguity in it.

اَلَّا تَعۡبُدُوۡۤا اِلَّا اللّٰہَ ؕ اِنَّنِیۡ لَکُمۡ مِّنۡہُ نَذِیۡرٌ وَّ بَشِیۡرٌ ۙ 2

(11:2) that you may worship none but Allah. Verily, I have come to you as a warner and a bearer of good news from Him

وَّ اَنِ اسۡتَغۡفِرُوۡا رَبَّکُمۡ ثُمَّ تُوۡبُوۡۤا اِلَیۡہِ یُمَتِّعۡکُمۡ مَّتَاعًا حَسَنًا اِلٰۤی اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّی وَّ یُؤۡتِ کُلَّ ذِیۡ فَضۡلٍ فَضۡلَہٗ ؕ وَ اِنۡ تَوَلَّوۡا فَاِنِّیۡۤ اَخَافُ عَلَیۡکُمۡ عَذَابَ یَوۡمٍ کَبِیۡرٍ 3

(11:3) that you may seek forgiveness of your Lord and turn to Him in repentance whereupon He will grant you a fair enjoyment of life until an appointed term,[3] and will bestow favour on everyone who merits favour.[4] But should you turn away (from the truth), I fear for you the chastisement of an Awesome Day.

3. The assurance that "He will let you enjoy a fair provision for a term appointed" has been given to remove the misunderstanding which Satan has imbued in the heart of every foolish worshiper of the world that piety ruins one's worldly life, though it might lead to one's success in the Hereafter. Allah has reassured the true believers that He will shower His blessings on God fearing people and they will live happy and peaceful lives and will be honored and respected everywhere. The same thing has been stated in a different manner in (Surah An-Nahal, Ayat 97): "Whoso will do good deeds, whether a man or a woman, provided the one is a believer, We will surely make such a one lead a pure and clean life in

this world." Allah has refuted this theory of Satan and his disciples that piety inevitably brings poverty, distress and affliction and ignominy to the person who adopts truth, righteousness and virtue. He has assured that He will make the life of the one who will believe in Him and adopt a righteous life truly successful both in this world and in the Hereafter. And it is common experience that only those people enjoy real peace of mind and are honored and respected who are God fearing and possess a pure character, who are fair and generous in all their affairs and dealings and who are free from evil. For they are trusted by all and none fears any wrong or wickedness from them.

According to the Quran, the provisions of life are either mataul-hasana meaning good provisions or mataul-ghuroor meaning deceptive provisions. Here those, who return to Allah, have been assured that they will be given good provisions of life and not deceptive ones. The provisions are good if their recipient becomes even more grateful to Allah than before and uses these for fulfilling His rights and the rights of mankind and of his own self. Such good provisions make his life truly successful in this world and also in the next world. On the contrary, the provisions are deceptive, if they become a temptation for the recipient, and get him involved in the worship of the things of this world more than before. Though the deceptive provisions might appear to be a blessing and a favor, these are, in fact, a curse and means of some future torment.

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

إِلَى اللّٰهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ 4

(11:4) Unto Allah is your return, and He has power to do everything.

اَلَآ اِنَّهُمْ يَثْنُوْنَ صُدُوْرَهُمْ لِيَسْتَخْفُوْا مِنْهُ ۭ اَلَا حِيْنَ يَسْتَغْشُوْنَ ثِيَابَهُمْ ۙ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّوْنَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُوْنَ ۚ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ 5

(11:5) Lo! They fold up their breasts that they may conceal themselves from Him.[5] Surely when they cover themselves up with their garments Allah knows well what they cover and what they reveal. Indeed He even knows the secrets hidden in the breasts.

5. They were those people of Makkah, who though not very active in their antagonism against the message of the Prophet (peace be upon him), nevertheless were very averse to it. Therefore they did not like to hear it nor come face to face with him, and did their very best to avoid him. If, by chance, they found him sitting somewhere and talking to the people, they would at once turn back on their heels. Or if they saw him coming towards them, they would slink away or hide their faces with cloth for fear that he might address them and

convey his message to them. As they did not have the courage to face the truth, they would bury their heads ostrich-like and make believe that the reality from which they were hiding had disappeared, whereas it was all along there and watching their ridiculous attempts to hide from it.

وَمَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ فِي الْاَرْضِ اِلَّا عَلَى اللّٰهِ رِزْقُهَا وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا ؕ كُلٌّ فِيْ كِتٰبٍ مُّبِيْنٍ 6

(11:6) There is not a single moving creature on the earth but Allah is responsible for providing its sustenance. He knows where it dwells and where it will permanently rest.[6] All this is recorded in a clear Book.

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

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ فِيْ سِتَّةِ اَيَّامٍ وَّكَانَ عَرْشُهٗ عَلَى الْمَآءِ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ اَيُّكُمْ اَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ؕ وَلَئِنْ قُلْتَ اِنَّكُمْ مَّبْعُوْثُوْنَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ الْمَوْتِ لَيَقُوْلَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ 7

(11:7) And He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six days - and [before that] His Throne was upon the water[7] that He may test you, who of you is better in conduct[8] If you were to say (O Muhammad): 'All of you will surely be raised after death', then those who disbelieve will certainly say: 'This is nothing but plain sorcery.[9]

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

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

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

وَلَئِنۡ اَخَّرۡنَا عَنۡهُمُ الۡعَذَابَ اِلٰٓى اُمَّةٍ مَّعۡدُوۡدَةٍ لَّيَقُوۡلُنَّ مَا يَحۡبِسُهٗ ؕ اَلَا يَوۡمَ يَاۡتِيۡهِمۡ لَيۡسَ
مَصۡرُوۡفًا عَنۡهُمۡ وَحَاقَ بِهِمۡ مَّا كَانُوۡا بِهٖ يَسۡتَهۡزِءُوۡنَ ع 8

(11:8) And were We to put off the chastisement from them for a determined period, they will cry out: 'What withholds Him from chastising?' Surely when the day of the chastisement will come, nothing will avert it and the chastisement which they had ridiculed shall encompass them.

وَلَئِنۡ اَذَقۡنَا الۡاِنۡسَانَ مِنَّا رَحۡمَةً ثُمَّ نَزَعۡنٰهَا مِنۡهُ اِنَّهٗ لَيَـُٔوۡسٌ كَفُوۡرٌ ج 9

(11:9) If We ever favour man with Our Mercy, and then take it away from him, he becomes utterly desperate, totally ungrateful.

وَلَئِنۡ اَذَقۡنٰهُ نَعۡمَآءَ بَعۡدَ ضَرَّآءَ مَسَّتۡهُ لَيَقُوۡلَنَّ ذَهَبَ السَّيِّاٰتُ عَنِّىۡ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَفَرِحٌ
فَخُوۡرٌ لا 10

(11:10) And if We let him taste favour after harm has touched him, he says: 'All my ills are gone', and he suddenly becomes exultant and boastful,[10]

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

The above mentioned arrogant behavior was due to the disgraceful human characteristic which has been mentioned in this verse. It is this: Man is, by nature, shallow and superficial and lacks the depth of thought. Therefore, when he enjoys prosperity and power he becomes joyous, arrogant and boastful; so much so that he never even dreams of any possibility that his happy condition would ever come to an end. And if and when adversity befalls him, he becomes an embodiment of despair and begins to complain of his misfortune here, there, and everywhere; so much so that he does not hesitate even to abuse God and taunt at His Godhead. But whenever there is a change for the better in his fortune, he again begins to brag of his foresight, wisdom and success. That is why the disbelievers were exhibiting such a shallow and superficial characteristic in answer to the warning of the Prophet (peace be upon him). They forgot that Allah was deferring their punishment because of His mercy to give them sufficient time to consider well their absurd attitude and mend their ways during the respite given to them, and not to delude themselves by imagining that their prosperity had very deep foundations and would last for ever.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ۙ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ 11

(11:11) except those who are patient[11] and act righteously. Such shall have Allah's forgiveness and a great reward.[12]

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

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

فَلَعَلَّكَ تَارِكٌ بَعْضَ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَضَائِقٌ بِهِ صَدْرُكَ أَن يَقُولُوا لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ كَنزٌ أَوْ جَاءَ مَعَهُ مَلَكٌ ۚ إِنَّمَا أَنتَ نَذِيرٌ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ۚ 12

(11:12) (O Messenger!) Let it not happen that you omit (to expound) a portion of what was revealed to you. And do not be distressed that they will say: 'Why was a treasure not bestowed upon him?' or 'Why did no angel accompany him?' For you are merely a warner, whereas Allah has control over everything.[13]

13. In this verse, Allah has comforted and urged His Messenger (peace be upon him) to propagate the message without the least hesitation and not to waver in his determination for fear of ridicule or for lack of response from his people. He should convey the message in its

entirety and leave the result to Allah for He has full power over everything. In order to grasp its full significance, we should keep in view the circumstances that necessitated it.

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

The second reason why they did not accept it was that the Messenger (peace be upon him) possessed nothing extraordinary to convince the people of his Prophethood except his pure character and his rational, and understandable message. Then for the Quraish, there was nothing to warrant a torment from Allah except the rotten condition of their religion, morality and culture. On the contrary, there was prosperity to delude them that that was a sure sign of the favors of Allah and of their gods and goddesses, which was a clear proof that the ways they were following were the right ways. The inevitable result was that only a small minority of those people, who had sound minds and hearts, accepted the message and the remaining large majority became hostile to it. Then some of them tried to suppress the message by persecutions and some did their worst to defame it by false accusations and frivolous objections and others resorted to calculated indifference to discourage it. There were still others who adopted an attitude of ridicule, derision, taunt and mockery in order to make light of it.

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

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ ۖ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُوَرٍ مِّثْلِهِ مُفْتَرَيَاتٍ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ 13

(11:13) Do they say: 'He has invented this Book himself?' Say: 'If that is so, bring ten surahs the like of it of your composition, and call upon all (the deities) you can other than Allah to your help. Do so if you are truthful.'

فَاِلَّمۡ يَسۡتَجِيۡبُوۡا لَـكُمۡ فَاعۡلَمُوۡۤا اَنَّمَاۤ اُنۡزِلَ بِعِلۡمِ اللّٰهِ وَاَنۡ لَّاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ‌ ۚ فَهَلۡ اَنۡتُمۡ

مُّسۡلِمُوۡنَ 14

(11:14) Then if (your deities) do not respond to your call for help then feel assured that this Book was revealed with the knowledge of Allah, and that there is no true god but Him. Will you, then, surrender (to this truth)?[14]

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

(1) You say that the Quran has not been revealed by Allah but has been devised and invented by myself and ascribed to Him. If your claim had been genuine you would have been able to invent a book like this in answer to the challenge I have given you over and over again. As you have failed to do so even with your combined resources and forces, my claim that it has been revealed with Allah's knowledge has been proved absolutely and completely true.

(2) Then there was a twofold challenge from the Quran to your deities but they utterly failed to meet it. They were challenged to come to your aid and help produce a book like the Quran. As they have not helped you, it is a clear proof that they are absolutely powerless and have no share at all in Godhead. You have seen that they have not only failed in this decisive test, but have also proved to be impotent to defend themselves against the open attacks made on them in this Book, which asks the people not to worship them for they have no share in the powers of Godhead. These things have proved that there is nothing divine in them and you have made them your deities without rhyme or reason.

Incidentally, this verse shows that chronologically this Surah was revealed earlier than Surah Yunus. For at first they were challenged in this Surah to bring ten Surahs like the Surahs of the Quran, but they failed to do so. Then in Surah Yunus they were challenged (Ayat 38 and E.N. 46) to bring even one Surah like this.

مَنۡ كَانَ يُرِيۡدُ الۡحَيٰوةَ الدُّنۡيَا وَزِيۡنَتَهَا نُوَفِّ اِلَيۡهِمۡ اَعۡمَالَهُمۡ فِيۡهَا وَهُمۡ فِيۡهَا لَا

يُبۡخَسُوۡنَ 15

(11:15) Those who seek merely the present world and its adornment.[15] We fully recompense them for their work in this world, and they are made to suffer no diminution in it concerning what is their due.

15. This general statement has been made in continuation of the theme of the preceding verses, to refute the false excuses of the disbelievers mentioned therein for rejecting the message of the Quran. This verse says that in general those people who rejected the Quran

then (and are rejecting it now) were the worshipers of this world and its pleasures. As the root cause of their rejection was (and is) this false creed that there is nothing more valuable than the pleasures of this world and its material gains. And there should be no restrictions, like the ones imposed in the Quran, on their acquisition. They first made this choice, and afterwards invented arguments, like the ones mentioned in the Quran, to deceive their own minds and those of others.

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا النَّارُ ۖ وَحَبِطَ مَا صَنَعُوا فِيهَا وَبَاطِلٌ مَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ 16

(11:16) They are the ones who shall have nothing in the Hereafter except Fire.[16] (There they shall come to know) that their deeds in the world have come to naught; and that whatever they have done is absolutely useless.

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

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

أَفَمَنْ كَانَ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ وَيَتْلُوهُ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْهُ وَمِن قَبْلِهِ كِتَابُ مُوسَىٰ إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً ۚ
أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۖ وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِهِ مِنَ الْأَحْزَابِ فَالنَّارُ مَوْعِدُهُ ۚ فَلَا تَكُ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْهُ
إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكَ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ 17

(11:17) Can it happen that he who takes his stand on a clear evidence from his Lord,[17] subsequently followed by a witness from Him (in his support),[18] and prior to that the Book of Moses was revealed as a guide and a mercy, (would even he deny the truth in the manner of those who adore the life of this world)? Rather, such men are bound to believe in it.[19] The Fire shall be the promised resort of the groups that disbelieve. So be in no doubt about it for this indeed is the truth from your Lord although most people do not believe.

17. This shows that even apart from revelation, there is ample evidence in man's own self, in the structure of the heavens and the earth, and in the order that prevails in the universe to prove that God is the only creator, master, lord and sovereign of the universe. The evidence referred to above also inclines man to believe that the present life will be followed by another one in which man will be required to render an account of his deeds and wherein he might be requited.

18. The "witness from Him" is the Quran. The testimony of the natural phenomena combined with that provided by man's own self had already created in man the disposition to affirm the truths mentioned earlier. All that was further reinforced by the Quran which came as reassurance that what he was predisposed to believe in was indeed true.

19. In the present context the verse means that those who are overly infatuated with the allurements of a worldly life will be inclined to reject the message of the Quran. Distinguishable from these are those who take full note of the testimony furnished by their own beings and by the structure and order prevailing in the universe in support of God's unity. This testimony was further reinforced by the heavenly books revealed before the Quran. How could such persons close their eyes to such overwhelming testimony as this and join their voice with those of the unbelievers?

This verse clearly indicates that even before the Quran was revealed, the Prophet (peace be on him) had reached the stage of belief in the Unseen. We have seen, in (Surah Al- Anam Ayat 75), the case of Abraham. Before being appointed as a Prophet, Abraham (peace be on him) was led by a careful observation of the natural phenomena to knowledge of God's unity. Likewise, the present verse makes it clear that by his reflection, the Prophet (peace be on him), had been led to believe in the Unseen even before the Quran was revealed. Subsequently, when the Quran was revealed it not only confirmed what he had already become inclined to accept, but also provided definite knowledge about it.

وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ يُعْرَضُوْنَ عَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ وَيَقُوْلُ الْاَشْهَادُ
هٰٓؤُلَآءِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَبُوْا عَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ ۚ اَلَا لَعْنَةُ اللّٰهِ عَلَى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۙ 18

(11:18) And who is a greater wrong-doer than he who invents a lie against Allah?[20] Such men will be set forth before their Lord and witnesses will say: 'These are the ones who lied against their Lord. Lo! Allah's curse be upon the wrong-doers;[21]

20. To invent a lie against God consists of stating that beings other than God also have a share with God in His godhead, that like God they are also entitled to be served and worshiped by God's creatures. Inventing a lie against God also consists of stating that God is not concerned with providing guidance to His creatures, that He did not raise Prophets for that purpose, and that He rather left men free to behave as they pleased. Inventing a lie against God also consists of stating that God created human beings by way of jest and sport and that He will not have them render an account to Him, and that He will not requite them for their deeds.

21. Such a proclamation would be made on the Day of Judgment.

الَّذِيْنَ يَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَيَبْغُوْنَهَا عِوَجًا ؕ وَهُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ 19

(11:19) upon those[22] who bar people from the way of Allah, and seek in it crookedness,[23] and disbelieve in the Hereafter.

22. This is a parenthetical statement. That is, that God's curse will be proclaimed in the Hereafter against those who are guilty of the crimes mentioned.

23. Such persons do not like the straight way being expounded to them. They would rather have the straight way rendered crooked by altering it under the influence of lust, prejudice, fancy, and superstition. It is only after the way that was once straight has been rendered crooked that they will be willing to accept it.

اُولٰٓئِكَ لَمْ يَكُوْنُوْا مُعْجِزِيْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ اَوْلِيَآءَ ۘ يُضٰعَفُ
لَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ ؕ مَا كَانُوْا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ السَّمْعَ وَمَا كَانُوْا يُبْصِرُوْنَ 20

(11:20) They had no power to frustrate Allah's design in the earth,[24] nor did they have any protectors against Allah. Their chastisement will be doubled.[25] They were unable to hear, nor could they see.

24. This, again, refers to what will happen in the next life.

25. They will suffer punishment for being in error and for misleading others and leaving behind a legacy of error and misguidance for coming generations. (Surah Al-Araf, E.N. 30).

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ 21

(11:21) They caused utter loss to themselves, and all that they had invented failed them.[26]

26. All their conjectures regarding God, the universe and their own selves will prove to be absolutely baseless in the next life. Similarly, the notions they entertained about the help and support they would receive from those they considered to be either their deities, or their intercessors with God, or their patrons will prove to be false. Likewise, it will become obvious that all their notions about the Afterlife were utterly untrue.

لَا جَرَمَ أَنَّهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمُ الْأَخْسَرُونَ 22

(11:22) Doubtlessly, they shall be the greatest losers in the Hereafter.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَخْبَتُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ ۙ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ 23

(11:23) As for those who believed and acted righteously and dedicated themselves totally to their Lord -they are the people of Paradise, and there they shall abide forever.[27]

27. This concludes the account about the Hereafter.

مَثَلُ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ كَالْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْأَصَمِّ وَالْبَصِيرِ وَالسَّمِيعِ ۚ هَلْ يَسْتَوِيَانِ مَثَلًا ۚ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ۚ 24

(11:24) The example of the two parties is that one is blind and deaf, and the other capable of seeing and hearing. Can the two be equals?[28] Will you, then, not heed?'

28. Can the attitude and ultimate end of both these types of people be the same? Obviously, he who fails to see the right way and ignores the instruction of the guide who directs him to the right way will necessarily stumble and meet with some terrible mishap. However, he who perceives the right way and follows the instructions of his guide will reach his destination, and reach it safely.

The same difference is found between the two parties mentioned here. One of these carefully observes the realities of the universe and pays heed to the teachings of God's Messengers. The other party, however, neither uses their eyes properly to perceive God's signs nor pays heed to His Messengers. The behavior of the two parties is, therefore, bound to be different. And when their behavior is different, there is no reason to believe that their ultimate end will be identical.

وَلَقَدۡ اَرۡسَلۡنَا نُوۡحًا اِلٰى قَوۡمِهٖۤ ۫ اِنِّىۡ لَـكُمۡ نَذِيۡرٌ مُّبِيۡنٌ ۙ 25

(11:25) (Such were the circumstances) when We sent forth Noah to his people.[29] (He said): 'I have been sent to you to warn you plainly

29.(E.Ns 47-50 of Surah Al-Aaraf)should be kept in view.

اَنۡ لَّا تَعۡبُدُوۡۤا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنِّىۡۤ اَخَافُ عَلَيۡكُمۡ عَذَابَ يَوۡمٍ اَلِيۡمٍ 26

(11:26) that you may worship none but Allah or else I fear for you the chastisement of a Grievous Day.[30]

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

فَقَالَ الۡمَلَاُ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا مِنۡ قَوۡمِهٖ مَا نَرٰٮكَ اِلَّا بَشَرًا مِّثۡلَنَا وَمَا نَرٰٮكَ اتَّبَعَكَ اِلَّا الَّذِيۡنَ هُمۡ اَرَاذِلُنَا بَادِىَ الرَّاۡىِ ۚ وَمَا نَرٰى لَـكُمۡ عَلَيۡنَا مِنۡ فَضۡلٍ بَلۡ نَظُنُّكُمۡ كٰذِبِيۡنَ 27

(11:27) The notables among Noah's own people, who had refused to follow him, responded: 'We merely consider you a human being like ourselves.[31] Nor do we find among those who follow you except the lowliest of our folk, the men who follow you without any proper reason.[32] We see nothing in you to suggest that you are any better than us.[33]Rather, we believe you to be liars.'

31. The same foolish objection was being raised by the people against the Prophet (peace be upon him). They argued like this: You are a man like us: you eat and drink, you walk and sleep and have a family, and there is nothing in you that might show that you have been sent by God. (See E. N. Surah Yaseen).

32. The big people of Makkah passed the same remarks about those who followed the Prophet (peace be upon him). They taunted him with things like these: Your followers consist of mere inexperienced boys or slaves or the lowest strata of society, in short, of such

people as are credulous and lack commonsense and wisdom. Refer to (E.Ns 34-37 of Surah Al-Anaam) and (E.N. 75 of Surah Yunus).

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

قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُ عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّيْ وَاٰتٰنِيْ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِهٖ فَعُمِّيَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ ؕ
اَنُلْزِمُكُمُوْهَا وَاَنْتُمْ لَهَا كٰرِهُوْنَ 28

(11:28) Noah said: 'My people! If I base myself on a clear evidence from my Lord, and I have also been blessed by His mercy[34] to which you have been blind, how can we force it upon you despite your aversion to it?

34. This is the same thing that has been put into the mouth of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in(Ayat 17). That is, At first I recognized the reality of Tauhid by observing keenly the signs of God in the universe and in my own self. Then the same was confirmed by revelation to me. This shows that all the Prophets acquired the knowledge of the Unseen by observation and contemplation. Then Allah blessed them with the actual knowledge of the same at the time of their appointment as Prophets.

وَيٰقَوْمِ لَاۤ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مَالًا ؕ اِنْ اَجْرِيَ اِلَّا عَلَى اللّٰهِ وَمَاۤ اَنَا بِطَارِدِ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ؕ اِنَّهُمْ
مُّلٰقُوْا رَبِّهِمْ وَلٰكِنِّيْۤ اَرٰىكُمْ قَوْمًا تَجْهَلُوْنَ 29

(11:29) My people! I seek no recompense from you.[35] My recompense is only with Allah. Nor will I drive away those who believe. They are destined to meet their Lord.[36] But I find you to be an ignorant people.

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

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

وَيٰقَوْمِ مَنْ يَّنْصُرُنِيْ مِنَ اللّٰهِ اِنْ طَرَدْتُّهُمْ ؕ اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ 30

(11:30) My people! Were I to drive the men of faith away, who will protect me from (the chastisement of) Allah? Do you not understand even this much?

وَلَآ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِيْ خَزَآئِنُ اللّٰهِ وَلَآ اَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَآ اَقُوْلُ اِنِّيْ مَلَكٌ وَّلَآ اَقُوْلُ لِلَّذِيْنَ تَزْدَرِيْٓ اَعْيُنُكُمْ لَنْ يُّؤْتِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ خَيْرًا ؕ اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ ۖ اِنِّيْٓ اِذًا لَّمِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ 31

(11:31) I do not say to you that I possess Allah's treasures, nor that I have access to the realm beyond the ken of sense-perception, nor do I claim to be an angel.[37] Nor do I say regarding those whom you look upon with disdain that Allah will not bestow any good upon them. Allah knows best what is in their hearts. Were I to say so I would be one of the wrongdoers.'

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

قَالُوْا يٰنُوْحُ قَدْ جٰدَلْتَنَا فَاَكْثَرْتَ جِدَالَنَا فَاْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَآ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ 32

(11:32) They said: 'O Noah! Surely you have disputed with us and have prolonged your dispute. Now bring upon us the chastisement that you threaten us with; do so, if you are truthful.'

قَالَ اِنَّمَا يَاْتِيْكُمْ بِهِ اللّٰهُ اِنْ شَآءَ وَمَآ اَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِيْنَ 33

(11:33) Noah said: 'Only Allah will bring it upon you if He so wills, and you will be utterly unable to frustrate that.

وَلَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ نُصْحِيٓ اِنْ اَرَدْتُّ اَنْ اَنْصَحَ لَكُمْ اِنْ كَانَ اللّٰهُ يُرِيْدُ اَنْ يُّغْوِيَكُمْ ؕ هُوَ
رَبُّكُمْ ۟ وَاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ؕ 34

(11:34) If I want to give you good advice that will not profit you if Allah Himself has decided to let you go astray.[38]He is your Lord, and to Him will you be returned.'

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

اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ افْتَرٰىهُ ؕ قُلْ اِنِ افْتَرَيْتُهٗ فَعَلَيَّ اِجْرَامِيْ وَاَنَا بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تُجْرِمُوْنَ ع 35

(11:35) (O Muhammad!) Do they say that he himself has forged this message? Tell them: 'If I have forged this, the guilt of it will fall upon me, but I am not responsible for the crimes you are committing.[39]

39. The wording of the verse shows that during the recital of the story of Prophet Noah (peace be upon him), the opponents of the Prophet (peace be upon him) might have felt that he himself had invented that story in order to hit them hard indirectly. So they might have interrupted him, saying: You are inventing such stories as these in order to apply these to us and hit us hard indirectly. That is why the narration of the story has been broken to answer their false accusation.

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

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

صلے
وَاُوۡحِىَ اِلٰى نُوۡحٍ اَنَّهٗ لَنۡ يُّؤۡمِنَ مِنۡ قَوۡمِكَ اِلَّا مَنۡ قَدۡ اٰمَنَ فَلَا تَبۡتَـئِسۡ بِمَا كَانُوۡا يَفۡعَلُوۡنَ
ج
36

(11:36) It was revealed to Noah that no more of your people, other than those who already believe, will ever come to believe. So do not grieve over their deeds,

ج
وَاصۡنَعِ الۡفُلۡكَ بِاَعۡيُنِنَا وَوَحۡيِنَا وَلَا تُخَاطِبۡنِىۡ فِى الَّذِيۡنَ ظَلَمُوۡا ۚ اِنَّهُمۡ مُّغۡرَقُوۡنَ 37

(11:37) and build the Ark under Our eyes and Our direction. And do not supplicate Me concerning those who have engaged in wrong-doing. They are doomed to be drowned.[40]

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

ط
وَيَصۡنَعُ الۡفُلۡكَ ۖ قف وَكُلَّمَا مَرَّ عَلَيۡهِ مَلَاٌ مِّنۡ قَوۡمِهٖ سَخِرُوۡا مِنۡهُ ؕ قَالَ اِنۡ تَسۡخَرُوۡا مِنَّا فَاِنَّا
ط
نَسۡخَرُ مِنۡكُمۡ كَمَا تَسۡخَرُوۡنَ 38

(11:38) As Noah was building the Ark, whenever the leading men of his nation passed by him, they would scoff at him. He said: 'If you scoff at us, we too scoff at you in like manner.

لا
فَسَوۡفَ تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ مَنۡ يَّاۡتِيۡهِ عَذَابٌ يُّخۡزِيۡهِ وَيَحِلُّ عَلَيۡهِ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيۡمٌ 39

(11:39) You will come to know who will be struck by a humiliating chastisement, and who will be subjected to an unceasing torment.[41]

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

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

حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَآءَ اَمۡرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّوۡرُ ۙ قُلۡنَا احۡمِلۡ فِيۡهَا مِنۡ كُلٍّ زَوۡجَيۡنِ اثۡنَيۡنِ وَاَهۡلَكَ اِلَّا مَنۡ
سَبَقَ عَلَيۡهِ الۡقَوۡلُ وَمَنۡ اٰمَنَ ؕ وَمَاۤ اٰمَنَ مَعَهٗۤ اِلَّا قَلِيۡلٌ 40

(11:40) Thus it was until Our command came to pass and the oven boiled over.[42] We said: 'Take into the Ark a pair of every species; and take your own family except those who have already been declared (as unworthy);[43] and also take everyone who believes.[44] But those who, along with him, had believed were indeed just a few.

42. Different interpretations have been given of this, but we are of the opinion that the correct one is the one that is based on the plain words of the text. The deluge started from at-tannur, a particular oven from under which water began to boil up. At the same time heavy rain began to fall and springs began to gush up water from many places in the earth. This is given in detail in(Ayats 11-12 of Surah Al- Qamar): We opened the gates of the sky from which it began to rain heavily and constantly, and We tore open the earth and springs began to gush forth water from every side. Thus the two kinds of water gathered together to fulfill the destined doom.

In this connection, it should also be noted that the prefix al (the) before tannur (oven) shows that a particular oven had been specifically marked by God for the purpose of starting the deluge. This began to boil up water as soon as it was commanded to do so, and afterwards it began to be called the oven. It has been explicitly stated in (Ayat 7 of Surah Al- Mominoon) that the said tannur was specified before hand.

43. That is, don't embark in the Ark those who had specifically been marked as unbelievers from your household, for they do not deserve to be shown Our compassion. Most probably they were two persons. One was his son who was drowned (Ayat 43), and the other was his wife. (Surah At-Tahrim, Ayat 10). And if there were any others, they have not been mentioned in the Quran.

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

وَقَالَ ارۡكَبُوۡا فِيۡهَا بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ مَجۡرٖىهَا وَمُرۡسٰهَا ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّىۡ لَغَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِيۡمٌ 41

(11:41) Noah said: ' Embark in it. In the name of Allah is its sailing and its anchorage. My Lord is Ever Forgiving, Most Merciful.45

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

وَهِىَ تَجۡرِىۡ بِهِمۡ فِىۡ مَوۡجٍ كَالۡجِبَالِ ۫ وَنَادٰى نُوۡحُ ِۨابۡنَهٗ وَكَانَ فِىۡ مَعۡزِلٍ يّٰبُنَىَّ ارۡكَبۡ مَّعَنَا

وَلَا تَكُنۡ مَّعَ الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ 42

(11:42) The Ark sailed along with them amid mountain-like waves. Noah, spotting his son at a distance, called out to him: 'My son. embark with us. and do not be with the unbelievers.'

قَالَ سَاٰوِىۡۤ اِلٰى جَبَلٍ يَّعۡصِمُنِىۡ مِنَ الۡمَآءِ ؕ قَالَ لَا عَاصِمَ الۡيَوۡمَ مِنۡ اَمۡرِ اللّٰهِ اِلَّا مَنۡ

رَّحِمَ ۚ وَحَالَ بَيۡنَهُمَا الۡمَوۡجُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الۡمُغۡرَقِيۡنَ 43

(11:43) The son replied: 'I will go to a mountain for refuge and it will save me from the water.' Noah said: 'None can save anyone today from the command of Allah except

those on whom He may have mercy.' Thereupon a wave swept in between the two and he was drowned.

وَقِيلَ يَٰٓأَرۡضُ ٱبۡلَعِي مَآءَكِ وَيَٰسَمَآءُ أَقۡلِعِي وَغِيضَ ٱلۡمَآءُ وَقُضِيَ ٱلۡأَمۡرُ وَٱسۡتَوَتۡ عَلَى ٱلۡجُودِيِّۖ وَقِيلَ بُعۡدٗا لِّلۡقَوۡمِ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ 44

(11:44) And the command was given: 'Earth! Swallow up your water'; and: 'Heaven! Abate!' So the water subsided, the command was fulfilled, and the Ark settled on Mount Judi,[46] and it was said: 'Away with the wrong-doing folk!'

46. According to the Quran, the Ark rested upon Mount Judi, which is situated to the north-east of Jazirah Ibn Umar in Kurdistan. But according to the Bible its resting place was Mount Ararat in Armenia, which is one of the ranges of mountains of the same name that extends from Armenia to southern Kurdistan. Mount Judi is one of the mountains of the Ararat range, and is known by the same name even today. The ancient histories confirm that the resting place of the Ark was Mount Judi. For instance, Berasus, a religious leader of Babylonia, who lived about 250 years before Christ, says in his history of the Chaldeans that Noah's Ark rested upon Mount Judi. Abydenus, a pupil of Aristotle, not only confirms the same but also says that many people of Iraq of his time possessed pieces of the Ark, which they ground in water and gave to the sick as a medicine.

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

وَنَادٰى نُوْحٌ رَّبَّهٗ فَقَالَ رَبِّ اِنَّ ابْنِيْ مِنْ اَهْلِيْ وَاِنَّ وَعْدَكَ الْحَقُّ وَاَنْتَ اَحْكَمُ

الْحٰكِمِيْنَ 45

(11:45) And Noah called out to his Lord, saying: 'My Lord! My son is of my family. Surely Your promise is true,[47] and You are the greatest of those who judge.[48]

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

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

قَالَ يٰنُوْحُ اِنَّهٗ لَيْسَ مِنْ اَهْلِكَ ۚ اِنَّهٗ عَمَلٌ غَيْرُ صَالِحٍ ۖ فَلَا تَسْـَٔلْنِ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهٖ

عِلْمٌ ۭ اِنِّيْٓ اَعِظُكَ اَنْ تَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ 46

(11:46) In response Noah was told: 'Most certainly he is not of your family; verily he is of unrighteous conduct.[49] So do not ask of Me for that concerning which you have no knowledge. I admonish you never to act like the ignorant ones.[50]

49. Allah has called the wicked son of Prophet Noah (peace be upon him), as “His conduct was other than righteous”, for children are entrusted by the Creator to the care of parents so that they may bring them up and train them to become good persons, and fulfill the purpose for which He created man. If a father does his very best to process and turn the child into a righteous person, but fails in his efforts, the child, who was a sort of raw material in his hands, would be likened to a worthless act. It is obvious that the wicked son was a worthless act, for he was not the sort of good work which his father had desired him to be. So in this sense he did not belong to the family of Prophet Noah (peace be upon him), whom the Creator had sent to mold all his people into good acts, especially those who were of his own flesh and blood. Thus that unrighteous son had forfeited all the rights of blood he had with the Prophet as far as the torment of the deluge was concerned.

Now let us consider the other question: Why was not the request of the Prophet regarding his own flesh and blood granted? The answer is this: If any part of the body of a man becomes so rotten that the surgeon is of the definite opinion that that part must be cut off for the sake of the safety of the rest of the body, the surgeon will not comply with the request of the man not to cut that part of his body, but will say: It is not a part of your body because it is rotten. This will not, however, mean that it was never actually a part of the body but will imply only this: As it has ceased to function rightly as a part of the body, it is no more a part of the body in the sense and for the purpose the healthy parts of the body are its parts. Likewise, when it was said to Prophet Noah (peace be upon him): He is not of your family, it did not negate the fact that he was from his loins but implied: He does not deserve to be

treated as a member of your righteous family because of his spoiled morals and conduct. As the torment of the deluge has been brought about to punish those who had sided with the unbelievers in the conflict of kufr and faith, your son does not deserve to be rescued from it along with the believers. Had it been a conflict between your descendants and those of the unbelievers, the result would have been different, but this being a conflict between the righteous and the unrighteous, the former alone will be delivered from it.

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

As a corollary to the above, the same rule will apply to the other relationships of a believer. As a believer is one who believes in certain creeds and behaviors, all his relationships with the other people will be determined by those creeds and behaviors. If his blood relations have the qualities of a believer, their relationship with him becomes doubly stronger. But if they are void of the qualities of a believer; the believer will confine his relationship with them only to the extent of blood relationships and will have no spiritual relationship with them. Consequently, if such a relative comes face to face with the believer in the conflict between kufr and the faith, the believer should fight with him just as he would with any other unbeliever.

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

قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّیۡۤ اَعُوۡذُ بِکَ اَنۡ اَسۡـَٔلَکَ مَا لَیۡسَ لِیۡ بِہٖ عِلۡمٌ ؕ وَ اِلَّا تَغۡفِرۡ لِیۡ وَ تَرۡحَمۡنِیۡۤ اَکُنۡ مِّنَ الۡخٰسِرِیۡنَ 47

(11:47) Noah said: 'My Lord! I take refuge with You that I should ask you for that concerning which I have no knowledge. And if You do not forgive me and do not show mercy to me, I shall be among the losers.[51]

51. The Quran has cited the story of the drowning of the son of Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) to bring home to the people that Allah's decrees are absolutely just and final.

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

قِیۡلَ یٰنُوۡحُ اہۡبِطۡ بِسَلٰمٍ مِّنَّا وَ بَرَکٰتٍ عَلَیۡکَ وَ عَلٰۤی اُمَمٍ مِّمَّنۡ مَّعَکَ ؕ وَ اُمَمٌ سَنُمَتِّعُہُمۡ ثُمَّ یَمَسُّہُمۡ مِّنَّا عَذَابٌ اَلِیۡمٌ 48

(11:48) It was said: 'Noah! Disembark,[52] with Our peace, and with blessings upon you and upon those who are with you. There are also people whom We shall allow to enjoy themselves for a while, and then a painful chastisement from Us shall afflict them.'

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

تِلۡکَ مِنۡ اَنۡۢبَآءِ الۡغَیۡبِ نُوۡحِیۡہَاۤ اِلَیۡکَ ۚ مَا کُنۡتَ تَعۡلَمُہَاۤ اَنۡتَ وَ لَا قَوۡمُکَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِ ہٰذَا ۛؕ فَاصۡبِرۡ ؕ اِنَّ الۡعَاقِبَۃَ لِلۡمُتَّقِیۡنَ ع 49

(11:49) We reveal to you these accounts of matters that are beyond the reach of human perception. Neither you nor your people knew about them before this. Be, then, patient. Surely, the good end is for the God-fearing.[53]

53. That is, you and your companions will come out successful at the end of the conflict just as Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) and his companions did. For this is the divine law that those who exert for the right cause, avoiding erroneous ways for fear of Allah, should come out successful in the end, even though they should meet with failures in the beginning of the conflict at the hands of the enemies of the truth. Therefore you should patiently bear the afflictions which you are suffering and stand steadfast against the obstacles you are encountering in the way, and you should not be in the least disheartened by the painful and superficial successes of your enemies. If you practice fortitude, you will come out successful in the end like Noah and his companions.

وَإِلَىٰ عَادٍ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا ۚ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۖ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا
مُفْتَرُونَ 50

(11:50) And to 'Ad We sent their brother Hud.[54] He said: 'My people! Serve Allah: you have no god save Him. (In attributing partners to Allah) you have merely been fabricating lies.[55]

54. Please keep in view (E.Ns 51-56 of Surah Al-Aaraf).

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

يَا قَوْمِ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا ۖ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي ۖ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ 51

(11:51) My people! I seek no reward from you for my work. My reward lies only with Him Who created me. Do you not understand anything?[56]

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

وَيٰقَوْمِ اسْتَغْفِرُوْا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوْبُوْٓا اِلَيْهِ يُرْسِلِ السَّمَآءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّدْرَارًا وَّيَزِدْكُمْ قُوَّةً
اِلٰى قُوَّتِكُمْ وَلَا تَتَوَلَّوْا مُجْرِمِيْنَ 52

(11:52) My people! Ask your Lord for forgiveness and turn to Him in repentance. He will shower abundant rains upon you from the heaven, and will add strength to your strength.[57] Do not turn away as those given to guilt.'

57. This is the same thing that has been stated by the tounge of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in (Ayat 3). This is a clear proof that moral values count not only in the life of the Hereafter but also determine the rise and fall of nations in this world. This is because Allah rules over the world in accordance with moral principles and not on the basis of His physical laws alone. That is why Allah has declared in many places in the Quran that the fate of a community hangs on the message which He sends to it through His Prophet. If it accepts the message, He opens the gates of His favors and blessings for it, but if it rejects the message, then it is destroyed.

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

قَالُوْا يٰهُوْدُ مَا جِئْتَنَا بِبَيِّنَةٍ وَّمَا نَحْنُ بِتٰرِكِيْٓ اٰلِهَتِنَا عَنْ قَوْلِكَ وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ
بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ 53

(11:53) They said: 'O Hud! You have not brought to us any clear evidence,[58] and we are not going to forsake our gods merely because you say so. We are not going to believe you.

58. That is, you have not brought a clear sign as evidence to prove conclusively to us that you have been sent by Allah and that the message you are presenting before us is the truth.

اِنْ نَّقُوْلُ اِلَّا اعْتَرٰىكَ بَعْضُ اٰلِهَتِنَا بِسُوْٓءٍ ؕ قَالَ اِنِّيْٓ اُشْهِدُ اللّٰهَ وَاشْهَدُوْٓا اَنِّيْ بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّمَّا
تُشْرِكُوْنَ ۙ 54

(11:54) All we can say is that some god of ours has afflicted you with evil.[59] .Hud said: 'Indeed I take Allah as my witness,[60] and you too to be my witnesses that I have nothing to do[61] with your associating with Allah

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

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

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

مِنۡ دُوۡنِهٖ فَكِيۡدُوۡنِىۡ جَمِيۡعًا ثُمَّ لَا تُنۡظِرُوۡنِ 55

(11:55) others than Him in His divinity. So conspire against me, all of you, and give me no respite.[62]

62. This is his answer to their threat: “Some of our gods have smitten you with some evil” Compare this with (Surah Younus, Ayat 71).

اِنِّىۡ تَوَكَّلۡتُ عَلَى اللّٰهِ رَبِّىۡ وَرَبِّكُمۡ ؕ مَا مِنۡ دَآبَّةٍ اِلَّا هُوَ اٰخِذٌ ۢ بِنَاصِيَتِهَا ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّىۡ عَلٰى

صِرَاطٍ مُّسۡتَقِيۡمٍ 56

(11:56) I have put my trust in Allah, Who is my Lord and your Lord. There is no moving creature which He does not hold by its forelock. Surely, My Lord is on the straight path.[63]

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

فَاِنۡ تَوَلَّوۡا فَقَدۡ اَبۡلَغۡتُكُمۡ مَّاۤ اُرۡسِلۡتُ بِهٖۤ اِلَيۡكُمۡ ؕ وَيَسۡتَخۡلِفُ رَبِّىۡ قَوۡمًا غَيۡرَكُمۡ ۚ وَلَا
تَضُرُّوۡنَهٗ شَيۡـئًا ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّىۡ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ حَفِيۡظٌ 57

(11:57) If you, then, turn away (from the truth), know that I have delivered the message with which I was sent to you. Now my Lord will set up another people in place of you and you shall in no way be able to harm Him.[64] Surely my Lord keeps a watch over everything.'

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

وَلَمَّا جَآءَ اَمۡرُنَا نَجَّيۡنَا هُوۡدًا وَّالَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا مَعَهٗ بِرَحۡمَةٍ مِّنَّا ۚ وَنَجَّيۡنٰهُمۡ مِّنۡ عَذَابٍ
غَلِيۡظٍ 58

(11:58) And when Our com-mand came to pass, We delivered Hud, together with those who shared his faith, out of special mercy from Us. We delivered them from a woeful chastisement.

وَتِلۡكَ عَادٌ ۛؕ جَحَدُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمۡ وَعَصَوۡا رُسُلَهٗ وَاتَّبَعُوۡۤا اَمۡرَ كُلِّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيۡدٍ 59

(11:59) Such were 'Ad. They repudiated the signs of their Lord, disobeyed His Messengers,[65] and followed the bidding of every tyrannical enemy of the truth.

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

وَاُتۡبِعُوۡا فِىۡ هٰذِهِ الدُّنۡيَا لَعۡنَةً وَّيَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّ عَادًا كَفَرُوۡا رَبَّهُمۡ ؕ اَلَا بُعۡدًا لِّعَادٍ قَوۡمِ
هُوۡدٍ ع 60

(11:60) They were pursued by a curse in this world, and so will they be on the Day of Judgement .Lo! 'Ad disbelieved in the Lord. Lo! ruined are 'Ad, the people of Hud.

وَإِلَىٰ ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَٰلِحًا ۚ قَالَ يَٰقَوْمِ ٱعْبُدُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُۥ ۖ هُوَ أَنشَأَكُم
مِّنَ ٱلْأَرْضِ وَٱسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا فَٱسْتَغْفِرُوهُ ثُمَّ تُوبُوٓا۟ إِلَيْهِ ۚ إِنَّ رَبِّى قَرِيبٌ مُّجِيبٌ 61

(11:61) And to Thamud We sent their brother Sali'h.[66] He said: 'My people! Serve Allah; you have no god other than Him. He brought you into being out of the earth, and has made you dwell in it.[67] So ask Him to forgive you, and do turn towards Him in repentance.[68] Indeed My Lord is near, responsive to prayers .[69]

66. Please keep in view (E.Ns 57-62 of Surah Al-Aaraf).

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

68. That is, so ask His forgiveness for the sin you have been committing by worshiping others.

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

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

address your prayers to Him Who is near at hand and answers prayers. (Refer also to (E.N. 188 of Surah Al-Baqarah).

قَالُوْا يٰصٰلِحُ قَدْ كُنْتَ فِيْنَا مَرْجُوًّا قَبْلَ هٰذَآ اَتَنْهٰنَآ اَنْ نَّعْبُدَ مَا يَعْبُدُ اٰبَآؤُنَا وَاِنَّنَا لَفِيْ شَكٍّ مِّمَّا تَدْعُوْنَآ اِلَيْهِ مُرِيْبٍ 62

(11:62) They said: 'O Salih! Until now you were one of those among us on whom we placed great hopes.[70] Now, would you forbid us to worship what our forefathers were wont to worship?[71] Indeed we are in disquieting doubt about what you are calling us to.[72]

70. That is, we had expected that by your wisdom, intelligence, foresight, serious behavior and dignified personality, you would become a great and prosperous man. So we had looked forward to the great success you would achieve and to the manifold advantages we would gain over other clans and tribes because of you. But you have brought to naught all of our hopes by adopting the way based on Tauhid and the Hereafter which is bound to lead us to utter ruin.

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

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

72. The Quran has not specified the nature of the doubts and feelings of distraction. This is because, though all of them had these feelings, these were different in different persons. For it is one of the characteristics of the message that it takes away the peace of mind of all these people to whom it is addressed. Though the feelings of distraction are of various kinds, everyone gets a portion of them. This is because it becomes simply impossible for anyone to continue treading the paths of deviation with that peace of mind which one had before the coming of the message. For it impels everyone to think whether one is following the right way or any of the wrong ways of ignorance. No one can shut one’s ears and eyes against the

penetrating and merciless criticism of the weaknesses of the ways of ignorance, and the strong and rational arguments for the right way. Then the high moral character of the Messenger, his perseverance, his nobility, his gentle conduct, his frank and righteous attitude and his dignity cannot fail to shake their impressions even on the most obdurate, and prejudiced opponents. The message by itself attracts the best elements from that society and brings about the most revolutionary changes in the characters of its followers so as to make them models of excellence. Naturally all these things combine to produce the feelings of distraction in the minds of those who desire to uphold the ways of ignorance even after the coming of the truth.

قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُ عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّيْ وَاٰتٰنِيْ مِنْهُ رَحْمَةً فَمَنْ يَّنْصُرُنِيْ مِنَ اللّٰهِ
اِنْ عَصَيْتُهٗ ۫ قف فَمَا تَزِيْدُوْنَنِيْ غَيْرَ تَخْسِيْرٍ 63

(11:63) Salih said: 'My people! What do you think? If I had a clear evidence from my Lord, and then He also bestowed His mercy upon me, who will rescue me from the punishment of Allah if I still disobey Him? You can only make me lose even more.[73]

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

وَيٰقَوْمِ هٰذِهٖ نَاقَةُ اللّٰهِ لَكُمْ اٰيَةً فَذَرُوْهَا تَاْكُلْ فِيْٓ اَرْضِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا تَمَسُّوْهَا بِسُوْٓءٍ
فَيَاْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابٌ قَرِيْبٌ 64

(11:64) My people! This she-camel of Allah is a sign for you. So let her pasture on Allah's earth, and do not hurt her or else some chastisement - which is near at hand - should overtake you.'

فَعَقَرُوْهَا فَقَالَ تَمَتَّعُوْا فِيْ دَارِكُمْ ثَلٰثَةَ اَيَّامٍ ۭ ط ذٰلِكَ وَعْدٌ غَيْرُ مَكْذُوْبٍ 65

(11:65) But they slaughtered her. Thereupon Salih warned them: 'Enjoy yourselves in your homes for a maximum of three days. This is a promise which shall not be belied.'

فَلَمَّا جَآءَ اَمۡرُنَا نَجَّيۡنَا صٰلِحًا وَّالَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا مَعَهٗ بِرَحۡمَةٍ مِّنَّا وَمِنۡ خِزۡىِ يَوۡمِئِذٍ ؕ اِنَّ
رَبَّكَ هُوَ الۡقَوِىُّ الۡعَزِيۡزُ 66

(11:66) Then, when Our command came to pass, We saved Salih and those who shared his faith through Our special mercy, from the disgrace of that day.[74] Truly Your Lord is All-Strong, All-Mighty.

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

وَاَخَذَ الَّذِيۡنَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّيۡحَةُ فَاَصۡبَحُوۡا فِىۡ دِيَارِهِمۡ جٰثِمِيۡنَ ۙ 67

(11:67) And the Blast overtook those who were wont to do wrong, and then they lay lifeless in their homes

كَاَنۡ لَّمۡ يَغۡنَوۡا فِيۡهَا ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّ ثَمُوۡدَا۟ كَفَرُوۡا رَبَّهُمۡ ؕ اَلَا بُعۡدًا لِّثَمُوۡدَ ع 68

(11:68) as though they had never lived there before. Oh, verily the Thamud denied their Lord! Oh, the Thamud were destroyed.

وَلَقَدۡ جَآءَتۡ رُسُلُنَاۤ اِبۡرٰهِيۡمَ بِالۡبُشۡرٰى قَالُوۡا سَلٰمًا ؕ قَالَ سَلٰمٌ فَمَا لَبِثَ اَنۡ جَآءَ
بِعِجۡلٍ حَنِيۡذٍ 69

(11:69) Indeed Our messengers came to Abraham, bearing glad tidings. They greeted him with 'peace', and Abraham answered back to them 'peace', and hurriedly brought to them a roasted calf.[75]

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

فَلَمَّا رَاۤ اَيۡدِيَهُمۡ لَا تَصِلُ اِلَيۡهِ نَكِرَهُمۡ وَاَوۡجَسَ مِنۡهُمۡ خِيۡفَةً ؕ قَالُوۡا لَا تَخَفۡ اِنَّاۤ
اُرۡسِلۡنَاۤ اِلٰى قَوۡمِ لُوۡطٍ ؕ 70

(11:70) When he perceived that their hands could not reach it, he mistrusted them, and felt afraid of them.[76] They said: 'Do not be afraid. We have been sent to the people of Lot.[77]

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

77. The wording of their answer shows that Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) had understood from their refusal to eat that they were angels. But he was afraid of their visit because he knew that the coming of the angels in the human shape did not bode well: So he was fearful that they might have come to take them to task for some offense committed by the people of his household or of his habitation or by himself. Had it been the same thing that the commentators presumed, then their answer should have been, "Don't fear us for we are angels from your Lord." But the answer they gave to remove his fear, "Don't have any fear for we have been sent to the people of Lot (and not to you)," shows that Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) knew that they were angels but was troubled in his mind as to the reason of their visit in the human form. This was because the angels came in human form when some one was either to be put to a hard trial or punished severely for some offense.

وَامْرَأَتُهُ قَآئِمَةٌ فَضَحِكَتْ فَبَشَّرْنٰهَا بِإِسْحٰقَ ۙ وَمِنْ وَّرَآءِ إِسْحٰقَ يَعْقُوبَ 71

(11:71) And Abraham's wife was standing by and on hearing this she laughed.[78] And We gave her the good news of (the birth of) Isaac, and after Isaac, of Jacob.[79]

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

79. The angels told the good news of a son to Sarah instead of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) because he already had a son, Ismail from Hajirah but had no child from her. Therefore to remove her sorrow they told her the good news that a son, Isaac, will be born to her, who will have a son, Jacob, both of whom will be great Messengers of Allah.

قَالَتْ يٰوَيْلَتٰى ءَأَلِدُ وَأَنَا عَجُوزٌ وَّهٰذَا بَعْلِى شَيْخًا ۭ إِنَّ هٰذَا لَشَىْءٌ عَجِيبٌ 72

(11:72) She said: 'Woe is me![80] Shall I bear a child now that I am an old woman and my husband is well advanced in years.[81] This is indeed strange!'

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

81. According to the Bible Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) was 100 years old at the time and Sarah was 90 years.

قَالُوْٓا اَتَعْجَبِيْنَ مِنْ اَمْرِ اللّٰهِ ۗ رَحْمَتُ اللّٰهِ وَبَرَكٰتُهٗ عَلَيْكُمْ اَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ ۗ اِنَّهٗ حَمِيْدٌ مَّجِيْدٌ 73

(11:73) They said: 'Do you wonder at Allah's decree?[82] Allah's mercy and His blessings be upon you, O people of the house. Surely, He is Praiseworthy, Glorious.'

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

فَلَمَّا ذَهَبَ عَنْ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ الرَّوْعُ وَجَآءَتْهُ الْبُشْرٰى يُجَادِلُنَا فِيْ قَوْمِ لُوْطٍ ۗ 74

(11:74) Thus when fear had left Abraham and the good news had been conveyed to him, he began to dispute with Us concerning the people of Lot.[83]

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

اِنَّ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ لَحَلِيْمٌ اَوَّاهٌ مُّنِيْبٌ 75

(11:75) Surely Abraham was forbearing, tenderhearted and oft-turning to Allah.

يٰٓاِبْرٰهِيْمُ اَعْرِضْ عَنْ هٰذَا ۚ اِنَّهٗ قَدْ جَآءَ اَمْرُ رَبِّكَ ۚ وَاِنَّهُمْ اٰتِيْهِمْ عَذَابٌ غَيْرُ مَرْدُوْدٍ 76

(11:76) Thereupon (Our angels) said to him: 'O Abraham! Desist from this, for indeed your Lord's command has come; and a chastisement which cannot be averted[84] is about to befall them.'

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

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

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

وَلَمَّا جَآءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوطًا سِيٓءَ بِهِمْ وَضَاقَ بِهِمْ ذَرْعًا وَّقَالَ هٰذَا يَوْمٌ عَصِيبٌ 77

(11:77) And when Our messengers came to Lot,[85] he was perturbed by their coming and felt troubled on their account, and said: 'This is a distressing day.[86]

85. Please keep in view (E.Ns 63-68 of Surah Al-Aaraf).

86. From the tenor of the details of the story as given in the different parts of the Quran, it becomes quite clear that the angels came to Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) in the form of handsome boys and that he was unaware that they were angels. He was troubled and distressed in his mind, for he knew how wicked and shameless his people were.

وَجَآءَهٗ قَوۡمُهٗ يُهۡرَعُوۡنَ اِلَيۡهِ ؕ وَمِنۡ قَبۡلُ كَانُوۡا يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ السَّيِّاٰتِ ؕ قَالَ يٰقَوۡمِ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ بَنٰتِىۡ
هُنَّ اَطۡهَرُ لَـكُمۡ ۟ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَلَا تُخۡزُوۡنِ فِىۡ ضَيۡفِىۡ ؕ اَلَيۡسَ مِنۡكُمۡ رَجُلٌ رَّشِيۡدٌ 78

(11:78) And his people came to him rushing. Before this they were wont to commit evil deeds. Lot said: 'My people! Here are my daughters; they are purer for you.[87] Have fear of Allah and do not disgrace me concerning my guests. Is there not even one right-minded person in your midst?'

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

۟ قَالُوۡا لَقَدۡ عَلِمۡتَ مَا لَنَا فِىۡ بَنٰتِكَ مِنۡ حَقٍّ ۚ وَاِنَّكَ لَتَعۡلَمُ مَا نُرِيۡدُ 79

(11:79) They said: 'Surely you already know that we have nothing to do with your daughters.[88] You also know well what we want.'

88. This answer of the people of Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) shows that they had gone to the lowest depth of depravity and openly and brazen facedly declared that they did not want females but males. This was the proof that they had not only left the natural way of purity and strayed into the unnatural way of impurity but had also lost all interest in the natural way of gratification. Such a depraved condition is the worst form of moral degradation, for it shows that no good has been left at all. Supposing a person has fallen as a victim to an unlawful and sinful behavior, but at the same time considers it to be a wrong behavior which should be avoided, there is hope for the reform of such a person, and even if he does not mend his way the utmost that can be said about him is that he is a depraved person. On the other hand, if a person gives himself wholly to the unlawful because he has no interest in the lawful, such a filthy person is not worthy of being considered a man at all, and therefore should be wiped out of the earth. That is why Allah decreed that the people of Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) should be completely annihilated from the face of the earth.

قَالَ لَوۡ اَنَّ لِىۡ بِكُمۡ قُوَّةً اَوۡ اٰوِىۡۤ اِلٰى رُكۡنٍ شَدِيۡدٍ 80

(11:80) He said: 'Would that I had the strength to set you straight, or could seek refuge in some powerful support.'

قَالُوْا يٰلُوْطُ اِنَّا رُسُلُ رَبِّكَ لَنْ يَّصِلُوْٓا اِلَيْكَ فَاَسْرِ بِاَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِّنَ الَّيْلِ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتْ
مِنْكُمْ اَحَدٌ اِلَّا امْرَاَتَكَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ مُصِيْبُهَا مَآ اَصَابَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ مَوْعِدَهُمُ الصُّبْحُ ؕ اَلَيْسَ الصُّبْحُ
بِقَرِيْبٍ 81

(11:81) Thereupon the angels said: 'O Lot! We indeed are messengers of your Lord. And your people will in no way be able to hurt you. So depart with your family in a part of the night and let no one of you turn around[89] excepting your wife (who shall not go); for what will befall them shall also befall her.[90] In the morning their promised hour will come. Is not the morning near?'

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

90. The doom of the wife of Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) is the third incident related in this Surah to serve as a lesson that no relationship can deliver a people from the horrible consequences of their sin.

فَلَمَّا جَآءَ اَمْرُنَا جَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَاَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا حِجَارَةً مِّنْ سِجِّيْلٍ ۙ
مَّنْضُوْدٍ ۙ 82

(11:82) And when Our command came to pass, We turned the town upside down, and rained on it stones of baked clay, one on another,[91]

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

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

مُّسَوَّمَةً عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ؕ وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بِبَعِيْدٍ ع 83

(11:83) marked from your Lord.[92] Nor is the punishment far off from the wrong-doers.[93]

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

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

وَإِلَىٰ مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا ۚ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۖ وَلَا تَنقُصُوا
الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيزَانَ إِنِّي أَرَاكُم بِخَيْرٍ وَإِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ مُّحِيطٍ 84

(11:84) And to (the people of) Midian We sent their brother Shu'ayb.[94] He said: 'My people! Serve Allah; you have no god other than Him. And do not diminish the measure and weight. Indeed I see that you are prospering now, but I fear for you the chastisement of an encompassing day in the future.

94. Please keep in view(E.Ns 69-76 of Surah Al-Aaraf).

وَيَا قَوْمِ أَوْفُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِي
الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ 85

(11:85) My people! Give full measure and weight with justice, do not diminish the goods of others, and do not go about creating corruption in the land.

بَقِيَّتُ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ ۚ وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُم بِحَفِيظٍ 86

(11:86) The gains that Allah lets you retain are better for you, if you indeed believe. In any case, I have not been appointed a keeper over you.[95]

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

قَالُوا يٰشُعَيْبُ اَصَلٰوتُكَ تَاْمُرُكَ اَنْ نَّتْرُكَ مَا يَعْبُدُ اٰبَآؤُنَآ اَوْ اَنْ نَّفْعَلَ فِيْٓ اَمْوَالِنَا مَا نَشٰٓؤُا ؕ اِنَّكَ لَاَنْتَ الْحَلِيْمُ الرَّشِيْدُ 87

(11:87) They replied: 'O Shu'ayb! Does your Prayer enjoin upon you[96] that we should forsake the deities whom our forefathers worshipped, or that we should give up using our wealth as we please?[97] Do you fancy that you, and only you, are forbearing and right-directed?'

96. This taunting question was an expression of the feelings of hatred those ungodly people cherished against the religious observances of Prophet Shuaib (peace be upon him) and other God fearing pious people. They selected Salat as a target of their taunt because it is the first and foremost outwardly observance of true religion which naturally has always been strongly hated by all ungodly wicked people. This hatred may also be noticed today among those who deliberately intend to follow the wicked ways, for they consider religious observances to be the greatest threat to their evil ways. As they regard Salat to be a symbol of the coming trouble, they begin to taunt the one who observes it. For they know that the victim of the disease of religiosity will not rest content with his own reformation but will exert his utmost to reform others as well. They fear that he will preach piety and righteous ways to them and criticize their ungodly and immoral ways. That is why Salat becomes the target of the taunts of wicked people. And if the person who observes Salat actually begins to preach the observance of virtues and criticize their evil ways just as they had feared, then they condemn it even more vehemently as though it were the cause of the whole trouble.

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

Incidentally, this demand of the people of Prophet Shuaib (peace be upon him) that they had every right to do as they pleased with their goods and possessions shows that there is nothing new about the theory of the division of life into separate compartments, religious and mundane. Some three thousand years or so ago they insisted on this division just as western and westernized people insist on it today. And they are absolutely wrong to presume that their division is the result of the light that had dawned upon humanity because of the intellectual progress that man has made as a result of the evolutionary process. Thus it is clear that it is not light but darkness which prevailed with the same

intensity thousands of years ago as it is today and that the conflict of Islam against it is also as old as that.

قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُ عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّيْ وَرَزَقَنِيْ مِنْهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا ؕ وَمَآ اُرِيْدُ اَنْ
اُخَالِفَكُمْ اِلٰى مَآ اَنْهٰىكُمْ عَنْهُ ؕ اِنْ اُرِيْدُ اِلَّا الْاِصْلَاحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ ؕ وَمَا تَوْفِيْقِيْٓ اِلَّا
بِاللّٰهِ ؕ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَاِلَيْهِ اُنِيْبُ 88

(11:88) Shu'ayb said: 'My people! What do you think? If I stand on clear evidence from my Lord, and He has also provided me a handsome provision from Himself[98] - (should I be ungrateful to Him and share your error and iniquity?) Nor do I desire to act contrary to what I admonish you.[99] I desire nothing but to set things right as far as I can. My succour is only with Allah. In Him have I put my trust, and to Him do I always turn.

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

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

وَيٰقَوْمِ لَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شِقَاقِيْٓ اَنْ يُّصِيْبَكُمْ مِّثْلُ مَآ اَصَابَ قَوْمَ نُوْحٍ اَوْ قَوْمَ هُوْدٍ اَوْ قَوْمَ صٰلِحٍ ؕ وَمَا قَوْمُ لُوْطٍ مِّنْكُمْ بِبَعِيْدٍ 89

(11:89) My people! Let not your opposition to me lead you to guilt that would bring upon you the chastisement that struck earlier the people of Noah, and the people of Hud, and the people of Salih. And the land of the people of Lot is not far from you![100]

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

وَاسْتَغْفِرُوْا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوْبُوْٓا اِلَيْهِ ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ رَحِيْمٌ وَّدُوْدٌ 90

(11:90) Seek the forgiveness of your Lord and turn to Him in repentance. Surely my Lord is Ever Merciful, Most Loving.[101]

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

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

Let us consider the same thing from another point of view. It is Allah Who has created love in the hearts of the mother and the father for their child, and without this parental love, they would never have shown the care and the sacrifice they shower on their child; nay, they would have even become its enemies because of the trouble and inconvenience they have to

bear for it. From this, it is quite evident that the love of the Creator of this parental affection for His own Creation must be far greater than this parental love.

قَالُوْا يٰشُعَيْبُ مَا نَفْقَهُ كَثِيْرًا مِّمَّا تَقُوْلُ وَاِنَّا لَنَرٰىكَ فِيْنَا ضَعِيْفًا ۚ وَلَوْلَا رَهْطُكَ
لَرَجَمْنٰكَ ۖ وَمَآ اَنْتَ عَلَيْنَا بِعَزِيْزٍ 91

(11:91) They said: 'O Shu'ayb! We do not understand much of what you say.[102] Indeed we see you weak in our midst. Were it not for your kinsmen, we would surely have stoned you for you have no strength to overpower us.[103]

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

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

قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اَرَهْطِيْٓ اَعَزُّ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَاتَّخَذْتُمُوْهُ وَرَاۗءَكُمْ ظِهْرِيًّا ۭ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ بِمَا
تَعْمَلُوْنَ مُحِيْطٌ 92

(11:92) Shu'ayb said: 'My people! Are my kinsmen mightier with you than Allah that you (hold the kinsmen in awe while) you cast Allah behind your back? Surely my Lord encompasses all what you do.

وَيٰقَوْمِ اعْمَلُوْا عَلٰى مَكَانَتِكُمْ اِنِّيْ عَامِلٌ ؕ سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ مَنْ يَّاْتِيْهِ عَذَابٌ يُّخْزِيْهِ وَمَنْ
هُوَ كَاذِبٌ ؕ وَارْتَقِبُوْٓا اِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ رَقِيْبٌ 93

(11:93) My people! Go on working according to your way and I will keep working (according to mine). Soon you will come to know who will be afflicted by a humiliating chastisement, and who is proved a liar. And watch, I shall also watch with you.'

وَلَمَّا جَآءَ اَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا شُعَيْبًا وَّالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا وَاَخَذَتِ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوا ۙ
الصَّيْحَةُ فَاَصْبَحُوْا فِيْ دِيَارِهِمْ جٰثِمِيْنَ ۙ 94

(11:94) And when Our command came to pass, We delivered Shu'ayb and those who shared his faith, through Our mercy, and the Blast seized those who were engaged in wrong-doing, so they lay lifeless in their homes

كَاَنْ لَّمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيْهَا ؕ اَلَا بُعْدًا لِّمَدْيَنَ كَمَا بَعِدَتْ ثَمُوْدُ ۚ 95

(11:95) as though they had never dwelt in them before. Lo! Away with (the people of) Midian, even as the Thamud were done away with!

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مُوْسٰى بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ۙ 96

(11:96) And indeed We sent Moses with Our signs and with a clear authority

اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَا۟ئِهٖ فَاتَّبَعُوْٓا اَمْرَ فِرْعَوْنَ ۚ وَمَآ اَمْرُ فِرْعَوْنَ بِرَشِيْدٍ 97

(11:97) to Pharaoh and his nobles. But they obeyed the command of Pharaoh even though Pharaoh's command was not rightly-directed.

يَقْدُمُ قَوْمَهٗ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فَاَوْرَدَهُمُ النَّارَ ؕ وَبِئْسَ الْوِرْدُ الْمَوْرُوْدُ 98

(11:98) He shall stand at the head of his people on the Day of Resurrection, and will bring them down to the Fire.[104]What a wretched destination to be led to!

104. From this verse and some other narrations of the Quran it appears that the leaders of a community in this world will be its leaders also on the Day of Resurrection. If they guided and led the people towards virtue, righteousness and truth in this world, their followers will gather together under their banner on the Day of Resurrection and march to the Gardens

under their leadership. On the other hand, if they called people to some deviation, immorality or unrighteous ways, their followers will follow them there also, and march to the fire of Hell under their leadership. The Prophet (peace be upon him) explained this thing in a tradition: On the Day of Resurrection, the banner of the poets of ignorance will be in the hands of Imra-ul-Quais, and all of them will march towards Hell under his leadership.

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

وَاُتۡبِعُوۡا فِىۡ هٰذِهٖ لَعۡنَةً وَّيَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ ؕ بِئۡسَ الرِّفۡدُ الۡمَرۡفُوۡدُ 99

(11:99) They were pursued by a curse in this world and so will they be on the Day of Resurrection. What an evil reward will they receive!

ذٰلِكَ مِنۡ اَنۡۢبَآءِ الۡقُرٰى نَقُصُّهٗ عَلَيۡكَ مِنۡهَا قَآئِمٌ وَّحَصِيۡدٌ 100

(11:100) That is an account of some towns which We recount to you. Of them some are still standing and some have been mown down.

وَمَا ظَلَمۡنٰهُمۡ وَلٰكِنۡ ظَلَمُوۡۤا اَنۡفُسَهُمۡ فَمَاۤ اَغۡنَتۡ عَنۡهُمۡ اٰلِهَتُهُمُ الَّتِىۡ يَدۡعُوۡنَ مِنۡ
دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ مِنۡ شَىۡءٍ لَّمَّا جَآءَ اَمۡرُ رَبِّكَ ؕ وَمَا زَادُوۡهُمۡ غَيۡرَ تَتۡبِيۡبٍ 101

(11:101) We did not wrong them; it is rather they who wronged themselves. And when the command of your Lord came to pass, the gods besides Allah whom they had called upon, did not avail them in the least. They added nothing to them except ruin.

وَكَذٰلِكَ اَخۡذُ رَبِّكَ اِذَاۤ اَخَذَ الۡقُرٰى وَهِىَ ظَالِمَةٌ ؕ اِنَّ اَخۡذَهٗۤ اَلِيۡمٌ شَدِيۡدٌ 102

(11:102) Such is the seizing of your Lord that when He does seize the towns immersed in wrong-doing, His seizing is painful, terrible.

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّمَنْ خَافَ عَذَابَ الْآخِرَةِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ يَوْمٌ مَّجْمُوعٌ ۙ لَّهُ النَّاسُ وَذَٰلِكَ

يَوْمٌ مَّشْهُودٌ 103

(11:103) Surely in that is a sign for him who fears the chastisement of the Hereafter.[105] That will be a Day when all men shall be mustered together; that will be a Day when whatever happens shall be witnessed by all.

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

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

A further consideration of the chastisements that were inflicted on different communities shows that, though these punishments fulfilled the demands of justice to some extent, there was still need of more to fulfill all the demands of justice, for these criminals were punished only for those sins which they themselves committed but not for those committed by the succeeding communities, which followed the bad example left by them as their predecessors. It is obvious from the study of history that the law of retribution must take its course and justice demands that they should be punished for the evil legacy they left for others to follow after them. Common sense and justice demand that life in this world should be reproduced in its entirety in order to fulfill all the demands of the law of retribution. The just Sovereign will, therefore, bring into existence all those people for this purpose and award them due punishments. (Please see also (E.N. 10 of Surah Yunus).

وَمَا نُؤَخِّرُهُ إِلَّا لِأَجَلٍ مَّعْدُودٍ ۚ 104

(11:104) Nor shall We withhold it except till an appointed term.

يَوْمَ يَأْتِ لَا تَكَلَّمُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ ۚ فَمِنْهُمْ شَقِيٌّ وَسَعِيدٌ 105

(11:105) And when the appointed Day comes, no one shall even dare to speak except by the leave of Allah.[106] Then some will be declared wretched, others blessed.

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

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ شَقُوا فَفِي النَّارِ لَهُمْ فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ وَشَهِيقٌ 106

(11:106) As for the wretched, they shall be in the Fire, and in it they shall sigh and groan.

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ رَبُّكَ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ 107

(11:107) They shall abide in it as long as the heavens and the earth endure,[107] unless your Lord may will otherwise. Surely your Lord does whatsoever He wills.[108]

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

108. In (Ayats 107-108), the words "the heavens and the earth" might have been used idiomatically to denote the everlasting state or they might refer to the new earth and the heavens that will be made in the next world. Anyhow these cannot be the earth and the heavens in their existing state for two reasons. First, according to the Quran, they shall be changed on the Day of Resurrection. Secondly, the events that are being related in these verses will happen in the Hereafter.

وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ سُعِدُوْا فَفِى الْجَنَّةِ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمٰوٰتُ وَالْاَرْضُ اِلَّا مَا شَآءَ رَبُّكَ ؕ عَطَآءً غَيْرَ مَجْذُوْذٍ 108

(11:108) And as for those who are blessed, they shall abide in the Garden as long as the heavens and the earth endure, unless your Lord may will otherwise.[109] They shall enjoy an unceasing gift.

109. That is, they will not be sent to the Garden nor will dwell there in accordance with any extraneous law which might have forced Allah to let them dwell therein anyhow. They shall dwell there simply because of His favor. He has full powers to make any changes, if He will, about them.

فَلَا تَكُ فِىْ مِرْيَةٍ مِّمَّا يَعْبُدُ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ ؕ مَا يَعْبُدُوْنَ اِلَّا كَمَا يَعْبُدُ اٰبَآؤُهُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ ؕ وَاِنَّا لَمُوَفُّوْهُمْ نَصِيْبَهُمْ غَيْرَ مَنْقُوْصٍ ع 109

(11:109) [O Prophet!] Have no doubt about what they worship. For they worship what their fathers worshipped before.[110] And (yet) We shall grant them their due portion in full, diminishing of it nothing.

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

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ فَاخْتُلِفَ فِيْهِ ؕ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِىَ بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَفِىْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيْبٍ 110

(11:110) And We certainly gave Moses the Book before, and there arose disagreements about it (even as there are disagreements now about the Book revealed to you).[111] Had it not been for a decree that had already gone forth from your Lord, the matter would have long been decided between them.[112] Indeed they are in a disquieting doubt about it.

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

112. This is to reassure the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the believers that they should patiently wait for the consequences of the misbehavior of the unbelievers towards the Quran. But this will happen in due course as previously ordained by Allah, for Allah does not make haste in passing judgment, though the people demand haste.

وَإِنَّ كُلًّا لَّمَّا لَيُوَفِّيَنَّهُمْ رَبُّكَ أَعْمَالَهُمْ ۖ إِنَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ 111

(11:111) Surely your Lord will recompense all to the full for their deeds. For indeed He is well aware of all what they do.

فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ وَمَن تَابَ مَعَكَ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا ۚ إِنَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ 112

(11:112) So remain, (O Muhammad), you and those who have returned with you (to the fold of faith and obedience from unbelief and rebellion) steadfast (in adhering to the straight way) as you were commanded. And do not exceed the limits of (service to Allah). For certainly He is aware of all what you do.

وَلَا تَرْكَنُوا إِلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا فَتَمَسَّكُمُ النَّارُ ۖ وَمَا لَكُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ 113

(11:113) And do not incline towards the wrong-doers lest the Fire might seize you and you will have none as your protector against Allah; and then you will not be helped from anywhere.

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ وَزُلَفًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ ۚ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ ذِكْرَىٰ لِلذَّاكِرِينَ ۚ 114

(11:114) And establish the Prayer at the two ends of the day and in the first hours of the night.[113] Indeed the good deeds drive away the evil deeds. This is a Reminder to those who are mindful of Allah.[114]

113. This was to urge Salat at three times, that is, morning, evening and Isha. This shows that this was revealed before Salat had been made obligatory five times a day during the

Miraj. (For explanation, see (E.N. 95 of Surah Al-Isra), (E.N. 111 of Surah Taha), and (E.N. 124 of Surah Ar-Room)).

114. This is the remedy for eradicating evil from the world: Do good deeds and defeat evil with them. The best way of making you virtuous is to establish salat, which will remind you of Allah over and over again: which will produce those good characteristics in you that shall help you fight successfully against the systematic and united front of evil that has been formed against the mission of the truth. This will also enable you to establish practically the system of virtue and reform. (For explanation see (E.Ns 77-79 of Surah Al-Ankaboot)).

وَاصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ 115

(11:115) And be patient; for indeed Allah never lets the reward of those who do good go to waste.

فَلَوْلَا كَانَ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ أُولُوا بَقِيَّةٍ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْفَسَادِ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا
مِمَّنْ أَنْجَيْنَا مِنْهُمْ ۚ وَاتَّبَعَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مَا أُتْرِفُوا فِيهِ وَكَانُوا مُجْرِمِينَ 116

(11:116) Why were there not, out of the generations that passed away before you, righteous men who would forbid others from causing corruption on the earth? And if such were there, they were only a few whom We had saved from those generations, or else the wrong-doers kept pursuing the ease and comfort which had been conferred upon them, thus losing themselves in sinfulness.

وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ لِيُهْلِكَ الْقُرَىٰ بِظُلْمٍ وَأَهْلُهَا مُصْلِحُونَ 117

(11:117) And your Lord is not such as would wrongfully destroy human habitations while their inhabitants are righteous.[115]

115. In this passage, the real cause of the fall of the communities mentioned in(Ayats 25-99)has been pointed out in a very instructive manner. In reviewing their history Allah declares that the cause of the downfall of not only these but of all the former communities was this: When Allah bestowed His favors on them, they abused these favors and were so intoxicated with their own prosperity that they began to make mischief in the land. By and by, their collective conscience became so corrupt that no righteous persons were left among them to forbid evil and, if a few were left, their voice was so weak that they could not prevent them from causing mischief. As a result of this, evil became so strong and prevalent among them as to warrant the scourge of Allah. Otherwise Allah bears no enmity against His servants that He should destroy them without any just cause, while they were performing righteous works. This has been mentioned here for impressing the following three things.

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

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

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

وَلَوْ شَآءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً وَّلَا يَزَالُوْنَ مُخْتَلِفِيْنَ ۙ 118

(11:118) Had your Lord so willed, He would surely have made mankind one community. But as things stand, now they will not cease to differ among themselves and to follow erroneous ways

اِلَّا مَنْ رَّحِمَ رَبُّكَ ؕ وَلِذٰلِكَ خَلَقَهُمْ ؕ وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ لَاَمْلَئَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ اَجْمَعِيْنَ 119

(11:119) except for those on whom your Lord has mercy. And it is for this (exercise of freedom of choice) that He has created them.[116] And the word of your Lord was fulfilled: 'Indeed I will fill the Hell, with men and jinn, altogether.'

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

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

وَكُلًّا نَّقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآءِ الرُّسُلِ مَا نُثَبِّتُ بِهٖ فُؤَادَكَ ۚ وَجَآءَكَ فِيْ هٰذِهِ الْحَقُّ
وَمَوْعِظَةٌ وَّذِكْرٰى لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ 120

(11:120) (O Muhammad!) We narrate these anecdotes of Messengers to you that We may strengthen through them your heart. In these anecdotes come to you the truth, and an exhortation, and a reminder for the believers.

وَقُلْ لِّلَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ اعْمَلُوْا عَلٰى مَكَانَتِكُمْ ۗ اِنَّا عٰمِلُوْنَ ۙ 121

(11:121) As for those who are bent on not believing, tell them: 'Work according to your way and we are working according to our way.

وَانْتَظِرُوْا ۚ اِنَّا مُنْتَظِرُوْنَ 122

(11:122) And do wait for the end of things; we too are waiting.

وَلِلّٰهِ غَيْبُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَاِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُ الْاَمْرُ كُلُّهٗ فَاعْبُدْهُ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَيْهِ ۗ وَمَا رَبُّكَ
بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ع 123

(11:123) All that is hidden in the heavens and the earth lies within the power of Allah. To Him are all matters referred for judgement. So do serve Him, and place in Him all your trust. Your Lord is not heedless of what you do.[117]

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

12. Surah Yusuf (Joseph)

When and Why Revealed?

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

Objects of Revelation

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

The first object was to give the proof of the Prophethood of Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him), and that too, the one demanded by the opponents themselves so as to prove conclusively that his knowledge was not based on mere hearsay, but was gained through Revelation. This aspect has been stated explicitly in its introductory verses and explained plainly in its concluding portion.

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

The fact is that by applying this story to the conflict, the Quran had made a bold and clear prophecy, which was fulfilled literally by the events that happened in the succeeding ten years. Hardly two years had passed after its revelation, when the Quraish conspired to kill the Holy Prophet like the brothers of Prophet Joseph, and he had to emigrate from Makkah to Al-Madinah, where he gained the same kind of power as Prophet Joseph had gained in Egypt. Again, in the end the Quraish had to humble themselves before him just like the brothers of Prophet Joseph, when they humbly requested, "Show mercy to us for Allah

rewards richly those who show mercy" (V. 88), and Prophet Joseph generously forgave them, (though he had complete power to wreak vengeance on them,) saying, " today no penalty shall be inflicted on you. May Allah forgive you: He is the greatest of all those who forgive" (V. 92). The same story of mercy was repeated, when after the conquest of Makkah, the crest fallen Quraish stood meekly before the Holy Prophet, who had full power to wreak his vengeance on them for each and every cruelty committed by them. But instead, he merely asked them, "What treatment do you expect from me now?" They replied, "You are a generous brother and the son of a generous brother." At this, he very generously forgave them, saying, "I will give the same answer to your request that Joseph gave to his brothers: "...today, no penalty shall be inflicted on you: you are forgiven."

Topics of Discussion

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

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

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

The Quran has used this story to bring forth another truth: whatever Allah wills, He fulfills it anyhow, and man can never defeat His plan with his counterplans nor prevent it from happening nor change it in any way whatever. Nay, it often so happens that man adopts some measure to fulfill his own design and believes that he has done that very thing which would fulfill his design, but in the end he finds to his dismay that he had done something which was against his own and conducive to the Divine purpose. When the brothers of Prophet Joseph cast him into the well, they believed that they had once for all got rid of the obstacle in their way but in fact, they had paved the way for the Divine purpose of making him the ruler of Egypt, before whom they would have to humble themselves in the end. Likewise, the wife of Aziz had sent Prophet Joseph to the prison, floating over the thought that she had wreaked her vengeance on him, but, in fact, she had provided for him the opportunity for becoming the ruler of Egypt and for putting herself to the shame of confessing her own sin publicly.

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

howsoever effective, could raise him high : nay, it helped to bring about his fall and the disgrace of those who adopted them.

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

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

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

Historical and Geographical Background

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

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

According to the research scholars of the Bible, Prophet Joseph was born in or about 906 B. C. and the incident with which this story begins happened in or about 890 B. C. He was seventeen when he saw the dream and was thrown into the well. This well was near Dothan to the north of Shechem according to Biblical and Talmudic traditions, and the caravan, which took him out of the well, was coming from Gilead (Trans-Jordan), and was on its way to Egypt.

At that time Fifteenth Dynasty ruled over Egypt, whose rulers are known in history as the Hyksos kings. They belonged to the Arab race, but had migrated from Palestine and Syria to Egypt in or about 2000 B. C. and taken possession of the country. The Arab historians and the commentators of the Quran have given them the name of Amaliq (the Amalekites), and this has been corroborated by the recent researches made by the Egyptologists. They were foreign invaders who had got the opportunity of establishing their kingdom because of the internal feuds in the country. That is why there was no prejudice in the way of Prophet Joseph's ascendancy to power and in the subsequent settlement of the Children of Israel in the most fertile region of Egypt. They could gain that power and influence which they did, because they belonged to the same race as the foreign rulers of Egypt.

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

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

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

At that time Memphis was the capital of Egypt, whose ruins are still found on the Nile at a distance of 4 miles south of Cairo. When Prophet Joseph was taken there, he was 17 or 18 years old. He remained in the house of Aziz for three years and spent nine years in prison, and then became the ruler of the land at the age of thirty and ruled over Egypt independently for eighty years. In the ninth or tenth year of his rule he sent for his father, Prophet Jacob, to come from Palestine to Egypt with all the members of his family and, according to the Bible, settled them in the land of Goshen, where they lived up to the time of Prophet Moses. The Bible says that before his death, Prophet Joseph bound his kindred by an oath: "when you return from this country to the house of your forefathers you must take my bones out of this country with you. So he died a hundred and ten years old, and they embalmed him..."

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

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

الٓرٰ ۚ تِلۡکَ اٰیٰتُ الۡکِتٰبِ الۡمُبِیۡنِ ۚ 1

(12:1) Alif. Lam. Ra'. These are the verses of a Book that clearly expounds the truth.

اِنَّاۤ اَنۡزَلۡنٰہُ قُرۡءٰنًا عَرَبِیًّا لَّعَلَّکُمۡ تَعۡقِلُوۡنَ 2

(12:2) We have revealed it as a Recitation[1] in Arabic that you may fully understand[2].

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

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

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

نَحۡنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَیۡکَ اَحۡسَنَ الۡقَصَصِ بِمَاۤ اَوۡحَیۡنَاۤ اِلَیۡکَ ھٰذَا الۡقُرۡاٰنَ ۖ وَ اِنۡ کُنۡتَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِہٖ لَمِنَ الۡغٰفِلِیۡنَ 3

(12:3) (O Muhammad), by revealing the Qur'an to you We narrate to you in the best manner the stories of the past although before this narration you were utterly unaware of them[3].

3. This was to impress indirectly on the unbelievers of Makkah the fact that the Messenger (peace be upon him) did not know anything about the story of the settlement of the Israelites in Egypt, but was being informed of this by revelation from Allah. This introduction was necessary because, as has been stated in the preface to this Surah, the disbelievers had put an abrupt question concerning this matter in order to expose the

Prophet (peace be upon him) by this test. The answer is to this effect: Tell them, O Muhammad (peace be upon him), that, though you did not know anything about the settlement of the Israelites in Egypt before this, you have now received a revelation about this from Us.

إِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَأَيْتُهُمْ لِي سَاجِدِينَ 4

(12:4) Call to mind when Joseph said to his father: "My father! I saw (in a dream) eleven stars and the sun and the moon: I saw them prostrating themselves before me."

قَالَ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تَقْصُصْ رُؤْيَاكَ عَلَىٰ إِخْوَتِكَ فَيَكِيدُوا لَكَ كَيْدًا ۖ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لِلْإِنسَانِ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ 5

(12:5) His father said: "My son! Do not relate your dream to your brothers lest they hatch a plot to harm you[4]. Indeed Satan is man's open enemy.

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

وَكَذَٰلِكَ يَجْتَبِيكَ رَبُّكَ وَيُعَلِّمُكَ مِن تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ وَيُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ آلِ يَعْقُوبَ كَمَا أَتَمَّهَا عَلَىٰ أَبَوَيْكَ مِن قَبْلُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ع 6

(12:6) (As you have seen in the dream), so will your Lord choose you[5] (for His task) and will impart to you the comprehension of the deeper meaning of things[6] and will bestow the full measure of His favour upon you and upon the house of Jacob even as He earlier bestowed it in full measure upon your forefathers, Abraham and Isaac. Surely your Lord is All- Knowing, All-Wise."[7]

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

6. The Arabic words of the text do not mean merely "the interpretation of dreams", as has been generally understood. They are comprehensive and imply also this: Allah will bless

you with the full understanding of the problems of life and their solutions and will give you the insight to reach at the reality of every matter.

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

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِيْ يُوْسُفَ وَاِخْوَتِهٖٓ اٰيٰتٌ لِّلسَّآئِلِيْنَ 7

(12:7) Verily in the story of Joseph and his brothers there are many signs for those who inquire (about the truth).

اِذْ قَالُوْا لَيُوْسُفُ وَاَخُوْهُ اَحَبُّ اِلٰٓى اَبِيْنَا مِنَّا وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ ؕ اِنَّ اَبَانَا لَفِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنِ ۚ 8

(12:8) And call to mind when the brothers of Joseph conferred together and said: "Surely Joseph and his brother[8] are dearer to our father than we are, although we are a group of so many. Our father is clearly mistaken.[9]

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

9. In order to grasp the full significance of the grievance the ten sons had against their father for neglecting them, we should keep in view the conditions of the clannish life. As there was no established state, each clan led its own independent life side by side with other clans. It is obvious that the power of the head of the clan depended entirely on the number of sons and

grandsons, and brothers and nephews he had to defend the life, honor and property of the family. Therefore, the one leading the clannish life naturally paid more attention to his own grown up sons, etc., than to children and women of the family. As Prophet Jacob was leading clannish life, these sons of his expected a preferential treatment from him, but the Prophet thought otherwise. So they remarked: Truly our father seems to have lost his balance of mind; otherwise he could not have neglected us, and loved our two younger brothers more than us, for we are strong young men and can stand him in good stead at the time of need while these youngsters are useless as they themselves stand in need of protection.

ٱقْتُلُوا۟ يُوسُفَ أَوِ ٱطْرَحُوهُ أَرْضًا يَخْلُ لَكُمْ وَجْهُ أَبِيكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا۟ مِنۢ بَعْدِهِۦ قَوْمًا صَٰلِحِينَ 9

(12:9) So either kill Joseph or cast him into some distant land so that your father's attention may become exclusively yours. And after so doing become righteous."[10]

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

قَالَ قَآئِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ لَا تَقْتُلُوا۟ يُوسُفَ وَأَلْقُوهُ فِى غَيَٰبَتِ ٱلْجُبِّ يَلْتَقِطْهُ بَعْضُ ٱلسَّيَّارَةِ إِن كُنتُمْ فَٰعِلِينَ 10

(12:10) Thereupon one of them said: "Do not kill Joseph, but if you are bent upon doing something, cast him down to the bottom of some dark pit, perhaps some caravan passing by will take him out of it."

قَالُوا۟ يَٰٓأَبَانَا مَا لَكَ لَا تَأْمَنَّا عَلَىٰ يُوسُفَ وَإِنَّا لَهُۥ لَنَٰصِحُونَ 11

(12:11) After so deciding they said to their father: "Why is it that you do not trust us regarding Joseph although we are his true well-wishers?"

أَرْسِلْهُ مَعَنَا غَدًا يَرْتَعْ وَيَلْعَبْ وَإِنَّا لَهُۥ لَحَٰفِظُونَ 12

(12:12) Send him out with us tomorrow that he may enjoy himself and play while we will be there, standing guard over him."[11]

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

قَالَ إِنِّي لَيَحْزُنُنِي أَن تَذْهَبُوا بِهِ وَأَخَافُ أَن يَأْكُلَهُ الذِّئْبُ وَأَنتُمْ عَنْهُ غَافِلُونَ 13

(12:13) Their father answered: "It grieves me indeed that you should take him with you for I fear that some wolf might eat him up while you are negligent of him."

قَالُوا لَئِنْ أَكَلَهُ الذِّئْبُ وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ إِنَّا إِذًا لَّخَاسِرُونَ 14

(12:14) They said: "Should a wolf eat him, despite the presence of our strong group, we would indeed be a worthless lot!"

فَلَمَّا ذَهَبُوا بِهِ وَأَجْمَعُوا أَن يَجْعَلُوهُ فِي غَيَابَتِ الْجُبِّ ۚ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ لَتُنَبِّئَنَّهُم بِأَمْرِهِمْ هَٰذَا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ 15

(12:15) So when they went away with Joseph and decided to cast him in the bottom of the dark pit, We revealed to Joseph: "Surely a time will come when you will remind them of their deed. They know nothing about the consequence of what they are doing."[12]

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

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

وَجَآءُوٓ اَبَاهُمۡ عِشَآءً يَّبۡكُوۡنَ ؕ 16

(12:16) At nightfall they came to their father weeping

قَالُوۡا يٰۤاَبَانَاۤ اِنَّا ذَهَبۡنَا نَسۡتَبِقُ وَتَرَكۡنَا يُوۡسُفَ عِنۡدَ مَتَاعِنَا فَاَكَلَهُ الذِّئۡبُ ۚ وَمَاۤ اَنۡتَ

بِمُؤۡمِنٍ لَّنَا وَلَوۡ كُنَّا صٰدِقِيۡنَ 17

(12:17) and said: "Father! We went racing with one another and left Joseph behind with our things, and then a wolf came and ate him up. We know that you will not believe us howsoever truthful we might be."

وَجَآءُوۡ عَلٰى قَمِيۡصِهٖ بِدَمٍ كَذِبٍ ؕ قَالَ بَلۡ سَوَّلَتۡ لَـكُمۡ اَنۡفُسُكُمۡ اَمۡرًا ؕ فَصَبۡرٌ جَمِيۡلٌ ؕ

وَاللّٰهُ الۡمُسۡتَعَانُ عَلٰى مَا تَصِفُوۡنَ 18

(12:18) And they brought Joseph's shirt, stained with false blood. Seeing this their father exclaimed: "Nay (this is not true); rather your evil souls have made it easy for you to commit a heinous act. So I will bear this patiently, and in good grace.[13] It is Allah's help alone that I seek against your fabrication."[14]

13. The literal meaning of “patience in grace” which implies a patience that enables one to endure all kinds of troubles and afflictions in a calm, self possessed and unemotional manner, without complaining or crying or weeping, as is worthy of great minds.

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

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

وَجَآءَتْ سَيَّارَةٌ فَأَرْسَلُوْا وَارِدَهُمْ فَأَدْلٰى دَلْوَهٗ ؕ قَالَ يٰبُشْرٰى هٰذَا غُلٰمٌ ؕ وَأَسَرُّوْهُ بِضَاعَةً ؕ
وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ 19

(12:19) And a caravan came, and they sent their water drawer to draw water. As he let down his bucket in the well he (observed Joseph) and cried out: "This is good news. There is a boy." They concealed him, considering him as part of their merchandise, while Allah was well aware of what they did.

وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍۢ بَخْسٍ دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُوْدَةٍ ۚ وَكَانُوْا فِيْهِ مِنَ الزّٰهِدِيْنَ ع 20

(12:20) Later they sold him for a paltry sum[15] - just a few dirhams; they did not care to obtain a higher price.

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

وَقَالَ الَّذِي اشْتَرٰىهُ مِنْ مِّصْرَ لِامْرَأَتِهٖٓ أَكْرِمِيْ مَثْوٰىهُ عَسٰٓى أَنْ يَّنْفَعَنَآ أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهٗ وَلَدًا ؕ
وَكَذٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوْسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۖ وَلِنُعَلِّمَهٗ مِنْ تَأْوِيْلِ الْأَحَادِيْثِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَالِبٌ عَلٰٓى
أَمْرِهٖ وَلٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ 21

(12:21) The man[16] from Egypt who bought him said to his wife[17]: "Take good care of him, possibly he might be of benefit to us or we might adopt him as a son."[18] Thus We

found a way for Joseph to become established in that land and in order that We might teach him to comprehend the deeper meaning of things.[19] Allah has full power to implement His design although most people do not know that.

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

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

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

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

and he gained the experience that was required for the efficient conduct of the affairs of the kingdom of Egypt in the years to come.

وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ اَشُدَّهٗۤ اٰتَيۡنٰهُ حُكۡمًا وَّعِلۡمًا ؕ وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجۡزِى الۡمُحۡسِنِيۡنَ 22

(12:22) And when Joseph reached the age of maturity, We granted him judgement and knowledge.[20] Thus do We reward those who do good.

20. By the use of such words as the Quran usually means, We bestowed on him Prophethood, for the Arabic word hukmun stands for both judgment and authority and ilmun stands for that knowledge which is directly revealed to the Prophets by Allah. Thus, the Arabic words of the text will mean: We gave him the power and the authority and the knowledge needed for judging rightly the affairs of the people.

وَرَاوَدَتۡهُ الَّتِىۡ هُوَ فِىۡ بَيۡتِهَا عَنۡ نَّفۡسِهٖ وَغَلَّقَتِ الۡاَبۡوَابَ وَقَالَتۡ هَيۡتَ لَكَ ؕ قَالَ مَعَاذَ
اللّٰهِ اِنَّهٗ رَبِّىۡۤ اَحۡسَنَ مَثۡوَاىَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفۡلِحُ الظّٰلِمُوۡنَ 23

(12:23) And it so happened that the lady in whose house Joseph was living, sought to tempt him to herself, and one day bolting the doors she said: "Come on now!" Joseph answered: "May Allah grant me refuge! My Lord has provided an honourable abode for me (so how can I do something so evil)? Such wrong-doers never prosper."[21]

21. Generally the commentators and translators are of the opinion that Prophet Joseph used Rabbi “My Lord” for the master of the house, and what he meant to imply by way of argument was this: My Lord has treated me very kindly and kept me well in the house. How can I, then, be so disloyal and ungrateful as to commit adultery with his wife? I, however, strongly differ with such a translation and commentary. Though the Arabic usage of rabb admits of such a meaning, I have two strong reasons against this here. First, it is far below the dignity of a Prophet to refrain from a sin because of the regard he had for some person other than Allah. Second, there is not a single instance in the Quran that a Prophet ever called anyone other than Allah his rabb. Prophet Joseph himself differentiates between his creed and that of the Egyptians making it plain that his rabb “Lord” was Allah, while they had made other human beings their rabb. Then this verse should be considered from another point of view: when rabbi may also mean My Lord, Prophet Joseph might have invoked Allah. Why should then one take the other meaning, my master, which most surely implies something that is against the right creed?

وَلَقَدۡ هَمَّتۡ بِهٖ ۚ وَهَمَّ بِهَا لَوۡلَاۤ اَنۡ رَّاٰ بُرۡهَانَ رَبِّهٖ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ لِنَصۡرِفَ عَنۡهُ السُّوۡٓءَ
وَالۡفَحۡشَآءَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ مِنۡ عِبَادِنَا الۡمُخۡلَصِيۡنَ 24

(12:24) And she advanced towards him, and had Joseph not perceived a sign[22] from his Lord he too would have advanced towards her. Thus was Joseph shown a sign from his Lord that We might avert from him all evil and indecency,[23] for indeed he was one of Our chosen servants.

22. "Evidence of his Lord" means inspiration from Allah to rouse his conscience to the fact that it was not worthy of him to yield to the temptation by the woman. As regards to the question, "What was that evidence", it has been stated in the preceding verse, that is: My Lord has shown much kindness towards me. Should I, then, misbehave like this? Such workers of iniquity never fare well. This was the divine evidence that saved Prophet Joseph in the prime of youth from that great temptation. The significance of "And he would have desired her, if it had not been that he saw the evidence (sign) of his Lord" is this: "Even a Prophet like Joseph could not have been able to save himself from sin, had not Allah guided him rightly with His evidence. Incidentally, this verse makes plain the nature of the immunity of Prophets from sin. It does not mean that a Prophet is infallible and incapable of committing any error, offense or sin or doing wrong or making a mistake. What it means is this: though a Prophet possesses passions, emotions, and carnal desires like other human beings, and is capable of committing a sin, he is so virtuous and God fearing that he never deliberately cherishes any evil intentions, for he is endowed with such great arguments from his Lord as do not allow the lusts of the flesh overpower the voice of his conscience. And if ever he succumbs inadvertently to any of the human weaknesses, Allah at once sends a revelation to him to set him on the right path. For the consequences of his error do not remain confined to his own person but react on the whole mankind, for even his slightest error might mislead the world to the most horrible sins.

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

وَاسْتَبَقَا الْبَابَ وَقَدَّتْ قَمِيصَهُ مِن دُبُرٍ وَأَلْفَيَا سَيِّدَهَا لَدَى الْبَابِ ۚ قَالَتْ مَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ
أَرَادَ بِأَهْلِكَ سُوءًا إِلَّا أَن يُسْجَنَ أَوْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ 25

(12:25) Then both of them rushed to the door, each seeking to get ahead of the other, and she tore Joseph's shirt from behind. Then both of them found the husband of the lady at the door. Seeing him she said: "What should be the punishment of him who has foul designs on your wife except that he should be imprisoned or subjected to painful chastisement?"

قَالَ هِيَ رَاوَدَتْنِي عَن نَّفْسِي ۚ وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا إِن كَانَ قَمِيصُهُ قُدَّ مِن قُبُلٍ
فَصَدَقَتْ وَهُوَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ 26

(12:26) Joseph said: "It is she who was trying to tempt me to herself." And a witness belonging to her own household testified[24] (on grounds of circumstantial evidence): "If his shirt is torn from the front, then she is telling the truth and he is a liar.

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

وَإِن كَانَ قَمِيصُهُ قُدَّ مِن دُبُرٍ فَكَذَبَتْ وَهُوَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ 27

(12:27) But if his shirt is torn from behind, then she has lied, and he is truthful."[25]

25. This is what was implied in the evidence: If Joseph's shirt is torn from the front, it means that Joseph is the aggressor and she has struggled to defend her honor. But if the shirt is rent from the back, it is obvious that he must have been running away from her and she must have been tugging from behind. The circumstantial evidence implied another thing. As the witness invited the master's attention to Prophet Joseph's shirt only, it meant that there was no sign at all of violence on the garments of the woman, for had he been the aggressor, there must have been some signs of violence on her garments.

فَلَمَّا رَاٰ قَمِيْصَهٗ قُدَّ مِنْ دُبُرٍ قَالَ اِنَّهٗ مِنْ كَيْدِكُنَّ ؕ اِنَّ كَيْدَكُنَّ عَظِيْمٌ 28

(12:28) So when the husband saw Joseph's shirt torn from behind he exclaimed: "Surely, this is one of the tricks of you women; your tricks are indeed great.

يُوْسُفُ اَعْرِضْ عَنْ هٰذَا ۚ وَاسْتَغْفِرِيْ لِذَنْۢبِكِ ۖ اِنَّكِ كُنْتِ مِنَ الْخٰطِـِٕيْنَ ع 29

(12:29) Joseph, disregard this. And you - woman - ask forgiveness for your sin, for indeed it is you who has been at fault.[25a]

25a. A comparative study of the story as given in the Quran and in the Bible and the Talmud will be worthwhile. The Bible says: And she caught him by his garment, saying: Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand and fled, and got himself out. And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, that she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying: See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got himself out. And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home...And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying: After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled. And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound. (Gen. 39: 12-16, 19-20).

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

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

وَقَالَ نِسْوَةٌ فِى الْمَدِيْنَةِ امْرَاَتُ الْعَزِيْزِ تُرَاوِدُ فَتٰىهَا عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ ۚ قَدْ شَغَفَهَا حُبًّا ؕ اِنَّا

لَنَرٰىهَا فِىْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ 30

(12:30) And some ladies in the city began to say: "The chief's wife, violently in love with her houseboy, is out to tempt him. We think she is clearly mistaken."

فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ اَرْسَلَتْ اِلَيْهِنَّ وَاَعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مُتَّكَـًٔا وَّاٰتَتْ كُلَّ وَاحِدَةٍ مِّنْهُنَّ
سِكِّيْنًا وَّقَالَتِ اخْرُجْ عَلَيْهِنَّ ۚ فَلَمَّا رَاَيْنَهٗۤ اَكْبَرْنَهٗ وَقَطَّعْنَ اَيْدِيَهُنَّ ۖ وَقُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلّٰهِ مَا
هٰذَا بَشَرًا ؕ اِنْ هٰذَاۤ اِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيْمٌ 31

(12:31) Hearing of their sly talk the chief's wife sent for those ladies, and arranged for them a banquet, and got ready couches,[26] and gave each guest a knife. Then, while they were cutting and eating the fruit, she signalled Joseph: "Come out to them." When the ladies saw him they were so struck with admiration that they cut their hands, exclaiming: "Allah preserve us. This is no mortal human. This is nothing but a noble angel!"

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

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

قَالَتْ فَذٰلِكُنَّ الَّذِىْ لُمْتُنَّنِىْ فِيْهِ ؕ وَلَقَدْ رَاوَدْتُّهٗ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ فَاسْتَعْصَمَ ؕ وَلَئِنْ لَّمْ
يَفْعَلْ مَاۤ اٰمُرُهٗ لَيُسْجَنَنَّ وَلَيَكُوْنًا مِّنَ الصّٰغِرِيْنَ 32

(12:32) She said: "So now you see! This is the one regarding whom you reproached me. Indeed I tried to tempt him to myself but he held back, although if he were not to follow my order, he would certainly be imprisoned and humiliated."[27]

27. This open demonstration of her love and declaration of her immoral designs show that the moral condition of the higher class of the Egyptian society had declined to the lowest ebb. It is quite obvious that the women whom she had invited must have been ladies belonging to the upper most stratum of the society. The very fact that she presented her beloved before them without any hesitation, in order to convince them of his beauty and youth that had urged her to fall in love with him, shows that there was nothing uncommon in this demonstration. Then these ladies did not reproach her but themselves practically demonstrated that, in those circumstances, they themselves would have done the same that she did. Above all, the hostess did not feel that it was immodest to declare openly: No doubt, I sought to seduce him and he succeeded in escaping from me. Yet I am not going to give

him up. If he will not do as I bid him, he shall be cast into prison and humbled and disgraced.

قَالَ رَبِّ السِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِي إِلَيْهِ ۖ وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّي كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَكُن مِّنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ 33

(12:33) Joseph said: "My Lord! I prefer imprisonment to what they ask me to do. And if You do not avert from me the guile of these women, I will succumb to their attraction and lapse into ignorance."[28]

28. In order to grasp the full significance of this prayer of Prophet Joseph, we should try to form a mental picture of the circumstances in which he was placed at that time. In the light of this passage the picture will be something like this. There is the handsome young man of twenty in the prime of his life, who has brought health and vigor of youth from the desert into Egypt, after passing through the ordeal of forced slavery and exile. Fortune has placed him in the house of one of the highest dignitaries in the capital of the most civilized country of the world at the time. There this handsome young man meets in the prime of life with a strange experience. The lady of the house in which he has to live day and night falls passionately in love with him and begins to tempt and seduce him. Then the fame of his beauty spreads all over the capital and the other ladies of the town also become enamored of him. Now this is the critical position. He is surrounded on all sides by hundreds of beautiful snares that have been spread to entrap and catch him unaware. All sorts of devices are employed to excite his passions and entice him: wherever he goes he encounters sin lying in ambush with all its charms and allurements and waiting for an opportune moment to make a surprise attack upon him. Such are the circumstances that are tempting him with sin, but the pious young man successfully passes through the ordeal, set for him by Satan, with the self control that is praiseworthy indeed. But it is all the more praiseworthy that he does not feel any pride for showing such extraordinary piety in such trying and tempting circumstances. On the other hand, he very humbly invokes his Lord to protect him from those traps of sin, for he is afraid of the common human weaknesses and cries out: My Lord, I am weak. I fear lest these temptations should overpower me, I would rather prefer imprisonment to doing such an evil thing into which they are tempting to ensnare me.

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

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ فَصَرَفَ عَنْهُ كَيْدَهُنَّ ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ 34

(12:34) Thereupon his Lord granted his prayer, and averted their guile from him.[29] Surely He alone is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

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

ثُمَّ بَدَا لَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا رَاَوُا الْاٰيٰتِ لَيَسْجُنُنَّهٗ حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ ع 35

(12:35) Then it occurred to them to cast Joseph into prison for a while even though they had seen clear signs[30] (of Joseph's innocence and of the evil ways of their ladies).

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

Incidentally, this shows that imprisonment of innocent people without trial and due procedure of law is as old as civilization itself. The dishonest rulers of today are not much different from the wicked rulers who governed Egypt some four thousand years ago. The only difference between the two is that they did not imprison people in the name and for the cause of democracy but they committed unlawful acts without any pretext of law. On the contrary, their modern descendants make use of the specious pretenses of honesty when they are acting unjustly. They first enact the necessary unlawful laws to justify their unlawful practices and then lawfully imprison their victims. That is to say, the Egyptian rulers were honest in their dishonesty and did not hide the fact that they were imprisoning people to safeguard their own interests, and not those of the community. But these modern disciples of Satan cast innocent people into prison to ward off the danger they feel from them, but proclaim to the world that their victims are a menace to the country and the community. In short, they were mere tyrants but these are shameless liars as well.

وَدَخَلَ مَعَهُ السِّجْنَ فَتَيٰنِ ؕ قَالَ اَحَدُهُمَآ اِنِّيْٓ اَرٰىنِيْٓ اَعْصِرُ خَمْرًا ۚ وَقَالَ الْاٰخَرُ اِنِّيْٓ
اَرٰىنِيْٓ اَحْمِلُ فَوْقَ رَاْسِيْ خُبْزًا تَاْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْهُ ؕ نَبِّئْنَا بِتَاْوِيْلِهٖ ۚ اِنَّا نَرٰىكَ مِنَ
الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ 36

(12:36) And with Joseph two[31] other slaves entered the prison.[32] One of them said: "I saw myself pressing wine in a dream"; and the other said: "I saw myself carrying bread on my head of which the birds were eating." Both said: "Tell us what is its interpretation; for we consider you to be one of those who do good."[33]

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

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

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

قَالَ لَا يَأْتِيكُمَا طَعَامٌ تُرْزَقَانِهِۦٓ إِلَّا نَبَّأْتُكُمَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِۦ قَبْلَ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمَا ۚ ذَٰلِكُمَا مِمَّا
عَلَّمَنِى رَبِّىٓ ۚ إِنِّى تَرَكْتُ مِلَّةَ قَوْمٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِٱللَّهِ وَهُم بِٱلْءَاخِرَةِ هُمْ كَٰفِرُونَ 37

(12:37) Joseph said: "I will inform you about the interpretation of the dreams before the arrival of the food that is sent to you. This knowledge is part of what I have been taught by my Lord. I have renounced the way of those who do not believe in Allah, and who deny the Hereafter,

وَٱتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ ءَابَآءِىٓ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ وَإِسْحَٰقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ۚ مَا كَانَ لَنَآ أَن نُّشْرِكَ بِٱللَّهِ مِن شَىْءٍ ۚ
ذَٰلِكَ مِن فَضْلِ ٱللَّهِ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَى ٱلنَّاسِ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ ٱلنَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ 38

(12:38) and I have adopted the way of my forefathers - Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. It is not for us to associate any with Allah in His Divinity. It is out of Allah's grace upon us and upon mankind (that He did not require of us to serve any other than Allah), and yet most people do not give thanks.

يٰصَاحِبَيِ السِّجْنِ ءَاَرْبَابٌ مُّتَفَرِّقُوْنَ خَيْرٌ اَمِ اللّٰهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ؕ 39

(12:39) Fellow-prisoners! Is it better that there be diverse lords, or just Allah, the One, the Irresistible?

مَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖۤ اِلَّاۤ اَسْمَآءً سَمَّيْتُمُوْهَاۤ اَنْتُمْ وَ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ مَّاۤ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطٰنٍ ؕ اِنِ الْحُكْمُ اِلَّا لِلّٰهِ ؕ اَمَرَ اَلَّا تَعْبُدُوْۤا اِلَّاۤ اِيَّاهُ ؕ ذٰلِكَ الدِّيْنُ الْقَيِّمُ وَ لٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ 40

(12:40) Those whom you serve beside Him are merely idle names that you and your fathers have fabricated, without Allah sending down any sanction for them. All authority to govern rests only with Allah. He has commanded that you serve none but Him. This is the Right Way of life, though most people are altogether unaware.

يٰصَاحِبَيِ السِّجْنِ اَمَّاۤ اَحَدُكُمَا فَيَسْقِيْ رَبَّهٗ خَمْرًا ۚ وَ اَمَّا الْاٰخَرُ فَيُصْلَبُ فَتَاْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْ رَّاْسِهٖ ؕ قُضِيَ الْاَمْرُ الَّذِيْ فِيْهِ تَسْتَفْتِيٰنِ ؕ 41

(12:41) Fellow-prisoners! (This is the interpretation of your dreams): one of you will serve wine to his lord (the king of Egypt).As for the other, he will be crucified and birds will eat of his head. The question concerning what you asked has thus been decided."[34]

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

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

(1) This is the first occasion on which Prophet Joseph appears to have begun the preaching of the true faith. For before this, the Quran reveals him in the different stages of his life as a man of high morality but does not say anything to show that he conveyed the message also. From this it is clear that those stages were of a preparatory nature and the mission of Prophethood was entrusted to him at the stage of his imprisonment and this was his first discourse as a Prophet.

(2) Moreover, this was the first occasion when he revealed his identity to others. Before this, we find him bearing patiently everything that happened to him without revealing anything about his relationships with Prophet Abraham and others. He kept silent when the caravan made him a slave and carried him to Egypt, when Al-Aziz bought him and when he was sent to prison. As Prophet Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (peace be upon them all) were quite well known, he might have used their names to his advantage. The members of the caravan, both the Ishmaelites and the Midianites, were closely related to his family, and the Egyptians were, at least, familiar with the name of Prophet Abraham. Nay, the way in which Prophet Joseph mentioned their names in this discourse, shows that the fame of his father, grandfather and great grandfather had reached Egypt. But in spite of this, Prophet Joseph did not use their names on any of the critical occasions to save himself from the plight in which he was placed. This shows that probably he himself knew that these things were inevitable for his training for the mission for which Allah had chosen him. Now it was absolutely necessary for him, for the sake of his mission, to reveal this fact in order to show that he was not presenting any new faith but the same faith that was preached by Prophets Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (peace be upon them all). This was necessary because the message demanded that it should not be presented with the claim that it was a new and novel thing but that it was the same universal and eternal truth that has always been presented by its bearers.

(3) This teaches us that one can, like Prophet Joseph, carve out a way for the propagation of the message, if one has the intention and the required wisdom. The two men pay their homage to him and request him to interpret their dreams. In answer to this he says: I will tell their interpretations but let me first inform you about the source of my knowledge that enables me to understand dreams. Thus he takes advantage of their request and preaches his own faith to them. We learn from this that if a person is imbued with the true and strong desire for propagating the truth, he can very gracefully turn the direction of the conversation towards the message he desires to convey. On the contrary, if a person has no strong desire for the propagation of the message, he never finds any opportunity for it, even though hundred and one such opportunities might have come his way which could have been utilized for this purpose. But one must be on his guard to discriminate between the right use of an opportunity by a wise man from the crude propagation of a foolish and uncultured person, who tries to thrust the message into the ears of unwilling hearers and succeeds only in creating aversion for it in their minds because of his crude way of presentation.

(4) This also teaches the right procedure that should be followed in presenting the message. Prophet Joseph does not present, at the very start, the details of the creed and regulations of the faith but the most fundamental thing that distinguishes a believer from a non-believer, that is, the distinction between Tauhid and shirk. Then he presents it in such a rational manner as cannot fail to convince any man of common sense. And his argument must have

impressed deeply on the minds of the two slaves. Which is better, various gods or One Omnipotent Allah? They knew it from their personal experience that it was much better to serve one master than a number of them. Therefore it was far better to serve the Lord of the universe than His servants. Moreover, he does not invite them directly to accept his faith and discard their own faith, but he very wisely draws their attention to this fact; This is Allah's bounty upon us and upon all mankind that He has not made us the servants of any other than Himself, yet most of the people are not grateful to Him. Instead of serving Him alone, they invent gods for themselves and worship them. Then it is also noteworthy that his criterion of the faith of his addressees is based on wisdom and has no tinge of bitterness in it. He says: The gods whom you call, the god of wealth or the god of health or the god of prosperity or the god of rain etc. are mere names you have given them without any reality behind them. The real Owner of everything is the Supreme Allah Whom you also acknowledge as the Creator and the Lord of the whole universe. He has sent no authority and given no sanction to anyone for Godhead and worship, but has reserved all the powers, all the rights and all the authorities for Himself, and commanded, "Serve and worship none but Me."

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

وَقَالَ لِلَّذِىْ ظَنَّ اَنَّهٗ نَاجٍ مِّنْهُمَا اذْكُرْنِىْ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ۖ فَاَنْسٰىهُ الشَّيْطٰنُ ذِكْرَ رَبِّهٖ فَلَبِثَ فِى السِّجْنِ بِضْعَ سِنِيْنَ ع 42

(12:42) And Joseph said to the one of the two prisoners who he knew would be set free: "Mention me in your lord's presence." But Satan caused him to forget mentioning this to his lord (the ruler of Egypt) and so Joseph languished in prison for several years.[35]

35. Some commentators have interpreted it like this: Satan made Prophet Joseph neglectful of his Lord, Allah, so he placed his confidence in a man rather than Allah and desired him to mention him to his lord, the king, for his release. So Allah punished him by letting him languish several years in the dungeon. In fact, such an interpretation is absolutely erroneous for as Allamah Ibn Kathir and some early commentators like Mujahid, Muhammad-bin-Ishaq and some others say, the pronoun him refers to that person who he thought would be released. Therefore it will mean: Satan made him (the would be free man) so neglectful that he forgot to mention him (Prophet Joseph) to his lord (the king). They also cite a tradition in support of their interpretation to this effect. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: If Prophet Joseph had not said that what he said, he would not have remained in

imprisonment for several years. But Allamah Ibn Kathir says: This Hadith cannot be accepted because all the ways in which it has been reported are weak. Moreover, two of the reporters, Sufyan-bin-Wakii and Ibrahim-bin-Yazid, are not trustworthy. Besides being weak on technical grounds, it is also against the dictates of common sense: if a wronged person adopted some measures for his release, he cannot be considered to be neglectful of God and guilty of the lack of trust in Allah. 4

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ إِنِّي أَرَىٰ سَبْعَ بَقَرَاتٍ سِمَانٍ يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعٌ عِجَافٌ وَسَبْعَ سُنْبُلَاتٍ خُضْرٍ
وَأُخَرَ يَابِسَاتٍ ۖ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ أَفْتُونِي فِي رُؤْيَايَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لِلرُّؤْيَا تَعْبُرُونَ 43

(12:43) And once[36] the king said: "I have dreamt that there are seven fat cows and seven lean cows are devouring them, and there are seven fresh green ears of corn and seven others dry and withered. My nobles! Tell me what is the interpretation of this dream, if you are well-versed in interpretation of dreams."[37]

36. Leaving the account of the events of the intervening years of imprisonment, the story has been resumed from the time when Prophet Joseph began to rise in worldly rank.

37. According to the Bible and the Talmud, the king was greatly disturbed, troubled and confused because of these dreams. So he proclaimed throughout the entire land of Egypt, and called upon all the wise men, and the soothsayers, and magicians of the land to interpret his dreams.

قَالُوا أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ ۖ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَأْوِيلِ الْأَحْلَامِ بِعَالِمِينَ 44

(12:44) They said: "These are confused dreams, and we do not know the interpretation of such dreams."

وَقَالَ الَّذِي نَجَا مِنْهُمَا وَادَّكَرَ بَعْدَ أُمَّةٍ أَنَا أُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِتَأْوِيلِهِ فَأَرْسِلُونِ 45

(12:45) Then of the two prisoners, the one who had been set free, now remembered, after the lapse of a long period, what Joseph had said. He said: "I will tell you the interpretation of this dream; just send me (to Joseph in prison)."[38]

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

يُوسُفُ أَيُّهَا الصِّدِّيقُ أَفْتِنَا فِي سَبْعِ بَقَرَاتٍ سِمَانٍ يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعٌ عِجَافٌ وَسَبْعِ سُنْبُلَاتٍ
خُضْرٍ وَأُخَرَ يَابِسَاتٍ لَعَلِّي أَرْجِعُ إِلَى النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ 46

(12:46) Then he went to Joseph and said to him: "Joseph, O truthfulness incarnate,[39] tell the true meaning of the dream in which seven fat cows are devoured by seven lean ones; and there are seven green ears of corn and seven others dry and withered so that I may return to the people and they may learn."[40]

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

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

قَالَ تَزْرَعُونَ سَبْعَ سِنِينَ دَأَبًا فَمَا حَصَدْتُمْ فَذَرُوهُ فِي سُنْبُلِهِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِمَّا
تَأْكُلُونَ 47

(12:47) Joseph said: "You will cultivate consecutively for seven years. Leave in the ears all that you have harvested except the little out of which you may eat.

ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ سَبْعٌ شِدَادٌ يَأْكُلْنَ مَا قَدَّمْتُمْ لَهُنَّ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِمَّا تُحْصِنُونَ 48

(12:48) Then there will follow seven years of great hardship in which you will eat up all you have stored earlier, except the little that you may set aside.

ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ عَامٌ فِيهِ يُغَاثُ النَّاسُ وَفِيهِ يَعْصِرُونَ ع 49

(12:49) Then there will come a year when people will be helped by plenty of rain and they will press (grapes)."[41]

41. The literal meaning of yasiroon is: “they will press.” Here it has been used to denote that state of verdure which was going to prevail after the famine years because of rainfall and flood in the Nile. For, when the land will be watered, there will be abundance of seed to press oil, and abundance of fruit to press juice and abundance of fodder for cattle to press milk out of them. It should be noted that Prophet Joseph not only interpreted the king’s dream but also told them how to preserve and reserve grain during the first seven years of prosperity for the subsequent seven years of famine. Moreover he foretold the good news of

prosperity after the seven years of famine, though there was no hint of this in the dream of the king.

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُونِي بِهِ ۖ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ الرَّسُولُ قَالَ ارْجِعْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَاسْأَلْهُ مَا بَالُ
النِّسْوَةِ اللَّاتِي قَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ ۚ إِنَّ رَبِّي بِكَيْدِهِنَّ عَلِيمٌ 50

(12:50) The king said: "Bring this man to me." But when the royal messenger came to Joseph he said:[42] "Go back to your master and ask him about the case of the women who had cut their hands. Surely my Lord has full knowledge of their guile."[43]

42. There is no mention in the Bible and the Talmud of this most important part of the story that Prophet Joseph declined to quit the prison till his character was cleared. On the other hand, according to the Bible: Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon; and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh. And the Talmud depicts even a more degrading picture of the event. It says: The king ordered that Joseph should be brought before him. But he commanded his officers to be careful not to frighten the lad, lest through fear he should be unable to interpret correctly. And the servant of the king brought Joseph forth from his dungeon, and shaved him and clothed him in new garments, and carried him before the king. The king was seated upon his throne, and the glare and glitter of the jewels which ornamented the throne dazzled and astonished the eyes of Joseph. Now the throne of the king was reached by seven steps, and it was the custom of Egypt for a prince or noble who held audience with the king, to ascend to the sixth step; but when an inferior or a private citizen of the land was called into his presence, the king descended to the third step and from there spoke with him. (The Talmud, H. Polano, pp. 87-88).

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

43. He demanded an inquiry into the matter not because he himself had any doubt of his innocence, but because he was perfectly confident of this: My Lord has full knowledge of my innocence and of their cunning. But your lord should also make a thorough inquiry as to why I had been sent to prison, for I do not want to go before the public with any blemish or blot on my reputation. Therefore a public inquiry should be held to prove that I was an

innocent victim of the injustice of the chiefs and nobles of the country, who had cast me into prison in order to cover up the guilt of their own ladies.

The words in which the demand was made clearly show that the king was already fully acquainted with the details of the incident that had happened at the banquet of the wife of Al-Aziz. That is why a mere reference to it was enough. Another noteworthy thing in this demand was that Prophet Joseph did not in any way hint at the part the wife of Al- Aziz had played in the event. This is another proof of his noble character that he did not like to involve and entangle the wife of his benefactor in the matter, even though she had done him her worst.

قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُنَّ إِذْ رَاوَدتُّنَّ يُوسُفَ عَن نَّفْسِهِ ۖ قُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا عَلِمْنَا عَلَيْهِ مِن سُوءٍ ۖ
قَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ الْعَزِيزِ الْآنَ حَصْحَصَ الْحَقُّ أَنَا رَاوَدتُّهُ عَن نَّفْسِهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَمِنَ
الصَّادِقِينَ 51

(12:51) Thereupon the king asked the women:[44] "What happened when you sought to tempt Joseph?" They said: "Allah forbid! We found no evil in him." The chief's wife said: "Now the truth has come to light. It was I who sought to tempt him. He is indeed truthful."[45]

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

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

ذٰلِكَ لِيَعْلَمَ اَنِّيْ لَمْ اَخُنْهُ بِالْغَيْبِ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِيْ كَيْدَ الْخَآئِنِيْنَ 52

(12:52) Joseph said:[46] "I did this so that he [i.e. the chief) may know that I did not betray him in his absence, and that Allah does not allow the design of the treacherous to succeed.

46. Prophet Joseph might have said these words in the prison when he came to know the result of the inquiry. But some commentators, including great scholars like Ibn Taimiyyah and Ibn Kathir, regard this sentence to be a continuation of the preceding speech of the wife of Al-Aziz. They argue that this sentence has been placed contiguous to her preceding speech without any dividing word between them to indicate that her speech had ended at "indeed, he is surely of the truthful", and that the succeeding words were spoken by Prophet Joseph. They construe that if two speeches made by two different persons are placed in contiguity, they must be separated by means of some definite word, or there must be some definite clue to it. As neither of these two things exists in this case, it may rightly be construed that the words contained in (Ayat 52) are the continuation of her preceding speech in (Ayat 51). I, however, am surprised how a great scholar of Ibn Taimiyyah's insight has missed this point that the characteristic of a speech is in itself a clear and selfsufficient clue. Her confession in (Ayat 51) fits in with her low character, but obviously the succeeding dignified and grand speech in (Ayat 52) is too high for her. That fits in only with the noble character of Prophet Joseph. It is obvious that this must have been uttered by one, who was righteous, generous, humble and God fearing. It is by itself a clear evidence that it could not have come out of the mouth of the one, who said: Come here, and what punishment does the one deserve, who shows evil intentions towards your wife? And if he will not yield to my bidding, he shall be cast into prison. On the other hand, such a pure speech fitted in with the one who said: May Allah protect me. My Lord has shown so much kindness towards me. Should I, then, misbehave like this? And my Lord, I prefer imprisonment to that to which they invite me. If Thou dost not ward off their cunning devices from me, I might be caught in their snares. Therefore one cannot ascribe such a pure speech to the wife of Al-Aziz unless there is a clear clue showing that by that time she had repented and believed and mended her ways, but there is no such clue. Thus it is clear that this speech must have been made by Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him).

وَمَآ اُبَرِّئُ نَفْسِيْ ۚ اِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَاَمَّارَةٌۢ بِالسُّوْٓءِ اِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّيْ ۭ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ 53

(12:53) I do not seek to acquit myself; for surely one's self prompts one to evil except him to whom my Lord may show mercy. Verily my Lord is Ever Forgiving, Most Merciful."

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُونِي بِهِ أَسْتَخْلِصْهُ لِنَفْسِي ۚ فَلَمَّا كَلَّمَهُ قَالَ إِنَّكَ الْيَوْمَ لَدَيْنَا مَكِينٌ

أَمِينٌ 54

(12:54) The king said: "Bring him to me. I will select him exclusively for my own service." So when Joseph spoke to him the king said: "You are now one of established position, fully-trusted by us."[47]

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

قَالَ اجْعَلْنِي عَلَىٰ خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ ۖ إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلِيمٌ 55

(12:55) Joseph said: "Place me in charge of the treasures of the land. I am a good keeper and know my task well."[47a]

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

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

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

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

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

In fact, the above question leads to a very important and basic issues. These are: Was Joseph a Prophet of Allah or not? If he was, does the Quran put forward such a conception of a Prophet that he himself should (as they allege Prophet Joseph did) offer his services to a system of unbelief to carry on its work on un-Godly principles? Nay, it leads to a more delicate and important question: Was he a righteous person or not? And, if he was, could it ever be expected that he would (according to their interpretation,) practically accept the theory that Sovereignty belongs to the king and not to Allah, whereas in the prison he preached, "Sovereignty belongs to none but Allah (Ayat 40)? For if, as they interpret, he submitted an application for service to the king, it meant that he did so against his own principles which he inculcated while in prison: "Which is better: various gods or the One Omnipotent Allah?" As the king of Egypt was one of the gods they had set up, so to offer services to carry on the work of the un-Islamic system under the existing un-Islamic law would have been tantamount to acknowledging the king as his Lord. Are they prepared to place Prophet Joseph in that position?

It is an irony that such Muslims as interpret this verse in this way, lower the character of Prophet Joseph. They have evinced the same mentality that the Jews had developed during the period of their degeneration. When they became morally and mentally depraved, they deliberately began to represent their Prophets and saints as people of low character like themselves in order to justify their own degraded characters and to make room for excuses for going still lower. Likewise, when the Muslims came under the sway of non-Muslim

governments, they wanted to serve under them, but the teachings of Islam and the patterns of their worthy forefathers stood in their way and they felt ashamed of this. So, in order to pacify their consciences, they sought refuge in this verse and by its misinterpretation thought that that great Prophet had made an application for a post to serve under a non-Muslim under un-Islamic laws. Whereas the Prophet's own life taught the lesson that even a single Muslim could all by himself bring about the Islamic revolution in a whole country by his pure Islamic character, his faith, intelligence and wisdom and that a true believer is able to conquer, by the proper use of his moral character, a whole country without any army, ammunition or material provisions.

وَكَذٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوْسُفَ فِي الْاَرْضِ ۚ يَتَبَوَّاُ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَآءُ ؕ نُصِيْبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَنْ نَّشَآءُ ۚ وَلَا نُضِيْعُ اَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ 56

(12:56) Thus did We establish Joseph in the land so that he could settle wherever he pleased.[48] We bestow favour, out of Our Mercy, on whomsoever We please, and We do not cause the reward of those who do good to go to waste.

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

وَلَاَجْرُ الْاٰخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَكَانُوْا يَتَّقُوْنَ ۧ 57

(12:57) Surely the reward of the Hereafter is better for those who believe and act in a God-fearing way.[49]

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

وَجَآءَ اِخْوَةُ يُوْسُفَ فَدَخَلُوْا عَلَيْهِ فَعَرَفَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهٗ مُنْكِرُوْنَ 58

(12:58) And Joseph's brothers came to Egypt and presented themselves before him.[50] He recognized them, but they did not know him.[51]

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

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

وَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُمْ بِجَهَازِهِمْ قَالَ ائْتُونِي بِأَخٍ لَّكُم مِّنْ أَبِيكُمْ ۚ أَلَا تَرَوْنَ أَنِّي أُوفِي الْكَيْلَ وَأَنَا خَيْرُ الْمُنزِلِينَ 59

(12:59) And when he had prepared for them their provisions, Joseph said: "Bring to me your other brother from your father. Do you not see that I give full measure and am most hospitable?

فَإِن لَّمْ تَأْتُونِي بِهِ فَلَا كَيْلَ لَكُمْ عِندِي وَلَا تَقْرَبُونِ 60

(12:60) If you do not bring him to me, you shall have no corn from me; and do not even attempt to come close to me."[52]

52. As the Quran has omitted the details, someone might be at a loss to know as to how he brought Benjamin into the conversation with his brothers, and why he insisted on them to bring him with them, when he intended to keep his own identity secret from them. For, obviously these things might have led to the revelation of that secret. But a little thinking will show that he could have very easily and naturally led the conversation up to Benjamin without arousing their curiosity. As there were strict restrictions on the purchase of food, everyone was permitted to buy only a fixed quantity of it. Most probably the ten brothers had applied for food for their father and the eleventh brother as well. At this Prophet Joseph might have asked the reason why their father and brother had not personally come for it.

Then he might have accepted the excuse for their father that he was old and blind but he would have expressed his doubts about their excuse for their brother that he was their step brother and the father would not send him with them and so forth. Then he might have declared: Well, this time we give you as much food as you have asked for, but the next time you come here you should bring your step brother with you; otherwise you will not get any food at all because of this false statement of yours. Along with this threat, he tried to win them over by reminding them of his liberal and generous treatment with them, because he yearned for the sight of his younger brother, and was anxious to know how his family had fared during his absence.

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

قَالُوْا سَنُرَاوِدُ عَنْهُ اَبَاهُ وَاِنَّا لَفٰعِلُوْنَ 61

(12:61) They said: "We will surely try to prevail over our father to send him. Be sure we shall do so."

وَقَالَ لِفِتْيٰنِهِ اجْعَلُوْا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ فِيْ رِحَالِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْرِفُوْنَهَآ اِذَا انْقَلَبُوْٓا اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ 62

(12:62) And Joseph said to his servants: "Put surreptitiously in their packs the goods they had given in exchange for corn." Joseph did so expecting that they would find it when they returned home. Feeling grateful for this generosity, they might be inclined to return to him.

فَلَمَّا رَجَعُوْٓا اِلٰٓى اَبِيْهِمْ قَالُوْا يٰٓاَبَانَا مُنِعَ مِنَّا الْكَيْلُ فَاَرْسِلْ مَعَنَآ اَخَانَا نَكْتَلْ وَاِنَّا لَهٗ لَحٰفِظُوْنَ 63

(12:63) When they returned to their father they said: "Father! We have been denied further supply of corn. So send with us our brother that we may bring the supplies. We shall be responsible for his protection."

قَالَ هَلْ اٰمَنُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ اِلَّا كَمَآ اَمِنْتُكُمْ عَلٰٓى اَخِيْهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ فَاللّٰهُ خَيْرٌ حٰفِظًا ۪ وَّهُوَ اَرْحَمُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ 64

(12:64) The father said: "Shall I trust you with regard to him as I had trusted you earlier with regard to his brother? Allah is the Best Protector and is the Most Merciful."

وَلَمَّا فَتَحُوْا مَتَاعَهُمْ وَجَدُوْا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ رُدَّتْ اِلَيْهِمْ ؕ قَالُوْا يٰۤاَبَانَا مَا نَبْغِىْ ؕ هٰذِهٖ بِضَاعَتُنَا
رُدَّتْ اِلَيْنَا ۚ وَنَمِيْرُ اَهْلَنَا وَنَحْفَظُ اَخَانَا وَنَزْدَادُ كَيْلَ بَعِيْرٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ كَيْلٌ يَّسِيْرٌ 65

(12:65) And when they opened their things they found that their goods had been given back to them. Thereupon they cried: "Father! What else would we desire? Look, even our goods have been given back to us, so we shall go now and bring supplies for our family, we shall protect our brother, and bring another camel-load of corn. That additional supply will be easily secured."

قَالَ لَنْ اُرْسِلَهٗ مَعَكُمْ حَتّٰى تُؤْتُوْنِ مَوْثِقًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ لَتَاْتُنَّنِىْ بِهٖۤ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ يُّحَاطَ بِكُمْ ۚ فَلَمَّاۤ
اٰتَوْهُ مَوْثِقَهُمْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى مَا نَقُوْلُ وَكِيْلٌ 66

(12:66) Their father said: "I shall never send him with you until you give me a solemn promise in the name of Allah that you will bring him back to me, unless you yourselves are surrounded." Then after they had given him their solemn promise, he said. "Allah watches over what we have said."

وَقَالَ يٰبَنِىَّ لَا تَدْخُلُوْا مِنْۢ بَابٍ وَّاحِدٍ وَّادْخُلُوْا مِنْ اَبْوَابٍ مُّتَفَرِّقَةٍ ؕ وَمَاۤ اُغْنِىْ عَنْكُمْ
مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَىْءٍ ؕ اِنِ الْحُكْمُ اِلَّا لِلّٰهِ ؕ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ ۚ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُوْنَ 67

(12:67) And he enjoined them: "My sons! Do not enter the city by one gate; rather enter it by different gates. I can be of no help to you against Allah. Allah's command alone prevails. In Him have I put my trust and in Him should all those who have faith put their trust."[53]

53. Prophet Jacob's great concern over this journey of his sons was due to the fact that his youngest son, Benjamin, was to accompany them. He was anxious about his safety because he had already had a bad experience of his son Joseph. Naturally his heart must have been full of such misgivings that it might be his last meeting with his other beloved son. Though he had full trust in Allah and was patiently resigned to His will, but, as a human being, advised his sons to take certain precautionary measures. In order to understand the significance of this precautionary measure of entering the capital by different gates, we should have a glimpse of the political conditions of that period. As the Israelites lived on the Eastern frontier of Egypt as independent clans, they were looked at with suspicion like all

frontier people. Therefore Prophet Jacob feared that if they entered the city in a group, they might be taken for a gang of suspects, especially during that time of famine. Thus there was an apprehension of some severe action being taken against them as if they had come there for organized robbery. That was why he gave them this allowance that if under such adverse circumstances there was any trouble, he would not accuse them of breach of the pledge for the safety of Benjamin.

وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوْا مِنْ حَيْثُ اَمَرَهُمْ اَبُوْهُمْ ؕ مَا كَانَ يُغْنِيْ عَنْهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا حَاجَةً فِيْ
نَفْسِ يَعْقُوْبَ قَضٰىهَا ؕ وَاِنَّهٗ لَذُوْ عِلْمٍ لِّمَا عَلَّمْنٰهُ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۚ 68

(12:68) And it so happened that when they entered the city (by many gates) as their father had directed them, this precautionary measure proved ineffective against Allah's will. There was an uneasiness in Jacob's soul which he so tried to remove. Surely he was possessed of knowledge owing to the knowledge that We bestowed upon him. But most people do not know the truth of the matter.[54]

54. "Most of mankind do not know" how Prophet Jacob was able to hold the balance between trust in Allah and adoption of precautionary measures. This was because Allah had favored him with the real knowledge. That was why he took all those measures which were dictated by common sense, deep thinking and experience. He admonished them for their ill treatment with their brother Joseph so that they should not dare repeat it in the case of Benjamin. He took a solemn pledge from them in the name of Allah that they would take good care of the safety of their step brother. Then he advised them to be on their guard against the dangerous political situation and to enter the capital by different gates so as not to give cause for alarm and suspicion. In short, as far as it was humanly possible, he took all the precautionary measures to avoid every possible risk. On the other hand, he always kept this thing in view and expressed it that no human precautionary measure could avert the enforcement of Allah's will. And that the real protection was Allah's protection, and that one should not rely on the precautionary measures but on the favor of Allah. Obviously only that person who has the real knowledge can keep such a balance in his words and deeds, who knows what kind of efforts are demanded of his human faculties bestowed by Allah for the solution of worldly problems, who also realizes that it is Allah alone Who has the power to make them a success or a failure. This is what most people do not understand. Some of them rely merely on their efforts and measures and discard trust in Allah, while there are others who rely merely on trust in Allah and do not adopt any practical measure to solve their problem.

وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوْا عَلٰى يُوْسُفَ اٰوٰۤى اِلَيْهِ اَخَاهُ قَالَ اِنِّيْۤ اَنَا اَخُوْكَ فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُوْا
يَعْمَلُوْنَ 69

(12:69) When they presented themselves before Joseph, he took his brother aside to himself and said: "Verily I am your own brother Joseph; so do not grieve over the manner they have treated you."[55]

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

فَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُمْ بِجَهَازِهِمْ جَعَلَ السِّقَايَةَ فِي رَحْلِ أَخِيهِ ثُمَّ أَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ أَيَّتُهَا الْعِيرُ إِنَّكُمْ لَسَارِقُونَ 70

(12:70) Then, while Joseph was having their provisions loaded, he put his drinking-cup in his brother's saddlebag.[56]And then a herald cried: "Travellers, you are thieves."[57]

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

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

قَالُوا وَأَقْبَلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ مَاذَا تَفْقِدُونَ 71

(12:71) Turning back they asked: "What have you lost?"

قَالُوا نَفْقِدُ صُوَاعَ الْمَلِكِ وَلِمَنْ جَاءَ بِهِ حِمْلُ بَعِيرٍ وَأَنَا بِهِ زَعِيمٌ 72

(12:72) The officials said: "We have lost the king's cup." (And their chief added): "He who brings it shall have a camel-load of provisions, I guarantee that."

قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُم مَّا جِئْنَا لِنُفْسِدَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا كُنَّا سَارِقِينَ 73

(12:73) They said: "By Allah, you certainly know that we did not come to act corruptly in this land, nor are we those who steal."

قَالُوا فَمَا جَزَاؤُهُ إِن كُنتُمْ كَاذِبِينَ 74

(12:74) The officials said: "If you are lying, what will be the penalty for him who has stolen?"

قَالُوا جَزَاؤُهُ مَن وُجِدَ فِي رَحْلِهِ فَهُوَ جَزَاؤُهُ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ 75

(12:75) They replied: "He in whose saddlebag the cup is found, he himself shall be its recompense." Thus do we punish the wrong-doers.[58]

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

فَبَدَأَ بِأَوْعِيَتِهِمْ قَبْلَ وِعَاءِ أَخِيهِ ثُمَّ اسْتَخْرَجَهَا مِن وِعَاءِ أَخِيهِ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ كِدْنَا لِيُوسُفَ ۖ مَا كَانَ لِيَأْخُذَ أَخَاهُ فِي دِينِ الْمَلِكِ إِلَّا أَن يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ ۚ نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مَّن نَّشَاءُ ۗ وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِي عِلْمٍ عَلِيمٌ 76

(12:76) Then Joseph began searching their bags before searching his own brother's bag. Then he brought forth the drinking-cup from his brother's bag. Thus did We contrive to support Joseph.[59] He had no right, according to the religion of the king (i.e. the law of Egypt), to take his brother, unless Allah so willed.[60] We exalt whomsoever We will over others by several degrees. And above all those who know is the One Who truly knows.

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

and they answered that he should be made a bondsman. The sentence that follows also confirms this interpretation.

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

The favor of Allah was that He saved Prophet Joseph from applying the un-Islamic law of the king of Egypt to his personal case, for he was liable to do so under the stress of human weakness. And there can be no greater favor for one than this that Allah Himself should arrange to guard his high moral position. It should, however, be noted that such a high rank is awarded only to those who prove themselves to be righteous in very hard trials.

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

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

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

Indeed, Islam alone is the right way in the sight of Allah. (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 18). Whosoever will adopt any other way than the way of Islam, it shall not be accepted. (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 85).

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

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

(3) Besides this, by using the word for the law of the land, Allah has denoted the vast comprehension of the word deen and this cuts at the root of the conception of deen of those people who confine the scope of the message of the Prophets to mere worship of One Allah and believe that it has nothing to do with the cultural, political, social, judicial, legal and other mundane affairs of life. Or, they opine that, if at all it has any concern with those matters, it is merely to give some instructions of an optional nature in regard to these, and leave it to the believers to adopt these or their own man made laws, because, they think, there is no harm even in adopting the latter course. This erroneous conception of deen, which has been in vogue among the Muslims for a long time, has been responsible for rendering them neglectful of making exertions for the establishment of the Islamic way of life. As a result of this misconception of deen, they became reconciled to un-Islamic ways of unbelief and ignorance. Nay, they considered this misconception of theirs to be the pattern set by Prophet Joseph and became willing helpers and servants of these un-Islamic systems. Whereas this verse categorically refutes this misconception by declaring that the law of the land is as much a part of the deen of Allah as Salat, Hajj, Fast, and Zakat are. Therefore, the demand of the acceptance of ad-deen made in (Ayat 19 and Ayat 85 of Surah Aal-Imran), that is, "Indeed, Islam alone is the right way, in the sight of Allah" and "Whosoever will adopt any other way than the way of Islam, it shall not be accepted", includes laws as well as Salat and other obligatory duties prescribed by Allah. Therefore the exclusion of this part of deen from any system would incur the displeasure of Allah.

(4) The above interpretation, however, is open to one objection. It does, at least, imply that an un-Islamic way was in vogue in Egypt at the time, when Prophet Joseph was, even according to the present commentator, the supreme head of the country. It is, therefore, a proof that that Prophet himself was enforcing the un-Islamic law of the king. What difference, then, could it have made, if Prophet Joseph had followed, in his personal case too, the system of law of the king which he himself was enforcing instead of the system of law of Prophet Abraham? Most certainly this would have made a vast difference because it would have compromised his position as a Prophet, because he was trying to establish the Islamic Way of life, which naturally could have been accomplished gradually in course of time, during which the king's law would have inevitably remained in vogue. The same thing happened in Arabia during the mission of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in Al-Madinah, which took nine years to establish the Islamic system in its entirety. During that period, several un-Islamic laws remained in vogue. For instance, drinking, interest, the un-Islamic laws of inheritance and marriage and some wrong ways of trade, etc. had to continue for some time. Likewise the civil and penal codes of Islam took some time for their complete

introduction. So there is nothing strange in this that the king's law continued to be in vogue during the first nine years or so of Prophet Joseph's reign. But the continuance of the un-Islamic law of the king during the period of transition is no argument to prove that Allah's Prophet was sent to follow the way of the king and not to establish the way of Allah.

قَالُوْٓا اِنْ يَّسْرِقْ فَقَدْ سَرَقَ اَخٌ لَّهٗ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ فَاَسَرَّهَا يُوْسُفُ فِيْ نَفْسِهٖ وَلَمْ يُبْدِهَا لَهُمْ ۚ قَالَ اَنْتُمْ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا ۚ وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَصِفُوْنَ 77

(12:77) They said: "No wonder that he steals for a brother of his stole before."[61] But Joseph kept his reaction to himself without disclosing the truth to them. He merely said to himself: "You are an evil lot. Allah knows well the truth of the accusation that you are making against me (to my face)."

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

Their position and dissociated themselves from Benjamin, declaring that he was a thief like his brother Joseph. It is obvious that this was a false accusation the clever brothers had invented on the spot. But it is an instance of the malice these brothers bore to their two step brothers, and is also the answer to the question why Prophet Joseph desired to keep his brother with him.

قَالُوْا يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْعَزِيْزُ اِنَّ لَهٗٓ اَبًا شَيْخًا كَبِيْرًا فَخُذْ اَحَدَنَا مَكَانَهٗ ۚ اِنَّا نَرٰىكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ 78

(12:78) They said: "O powerful chief (al-aziz)![62] His father is an age-stricken man, (and in order that he may not suffer) seize one of us in his stead. We indeed consider you an excellent person."

62. The use of the title Al-Aziz, ruler of the land, with which they addressed Prophet Joseph has given rise to the confusion that he held the same office as the husband of Zuleikha held before him. Then this misunderstanding let the commentators to the invention of further comments, such as. Al-Aziz had died and Prophet Joseph was appointed in his place, and Zuleikha was rejuvenated by a miracle and was married to him by the king. They have not stopped at this. They have, somehow or other, discovered even the conversation that took place between Prophet Joseph and Zuleikha in the first night of their marriage. In fact, all this is mere fiction, for, as has already been pointed out, the word Al-Aziz was the Arabic translation or equivalent of some Egyptian title, and was not the designation of any particular office. It was merely a title used for the high ones in Egypt like "His Excellency" or "Your Excellency", etc. As regards to the said marriage, this fiction has been built on the story of Prophet Joseph's marriage in the Bible and the Talmud. According to these, he was married with Asenath, the daughter of Poti-pherah. As the name of the husband of Zuleikha was Potiphar, the two names got confused together. Accordingly, when the story was handed down from the traditions of the Israelites from one commentator to the other, the name Potiphar got interchanged with Poti-pherah because the two were so like each other in sound. Consequently, the daughter in the story was replaced by wife. Then Potiphar was killed in order to facilitate the marriage. Then the only remaining difficulty, that is, the disparity of their ages, was gotten over with the help of a miracle. She was rejuvenated so completely as to enable her to become the worthy wife of the ruler of the land.

قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللّٰهِ اَنۡ نَّاۡخُذَ اِلَّا مَنۡ وَّجَدۡنَا مَتَاعَنَا عِنۡدَهٗۤ ۙ اِنَّاۤ اِذًا لَّظٰلِمُوۡنَ ۧ 79

(12:79) Joseph said: "Allah forbid that we should seize any except him with whom we found our good.[63] Were we to do so, we would surely be one of the wrong-doers."

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

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

فَلَمَّا اسْتَايْـَٔسُوْا مِنْهُ خَلَصُوْا نَجِيًّا ؕ قَالَ كَبِيْرُهُمْ اَلَمْ تَعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ اَبَاكُمْ قَدْ اَخَذَ
عَلَيْكُمْ مَّوْثِقًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَمِنْ قَبْلُ مَا فَرَّطْتُّمْ فِيْ يُوْسُفَ ۚ فَلَنْ اَبْرَحَ الْاَرْضَ حَتّٰى يَاْذَنَ
لِيْۤ اَبِيْۤ اَوْ يَحْكُمَ اللّٰهُ لِيْ ۚ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحٰكِمِيْنَ 80

(12:80) Then, when they had despaired of Joseph they went to a corner and counselled together. The eldest of them said: "Do you not know that your father has taken a solemn promise from you in the name of Allah, and you failed in your duty towards Joseph? So I will not depart from this land until my father permits me, or Allah pronounces His judgement in my favour. He is the best of those who judge."

اِرْجِعُوْۤا اِلٰۤى اَبِيْكُمْ فَقُوْلُوْا يٰۤاَبَانَاۤ اِنَّ ابْنَكَ سَرَقَ ۚ وَمَا شَهِدْنَاۤ اِلَّا بِمَا عَلِمْنَا وَمَا كُنَّا
لِلْغَيْبِ حٰفِظِيْنَ 81

(12:81) So go back to your father and tell him: "Father! Your son has certainly been guilty of stealing. We did not see him stealing but testify according to what we know, and obviously we had no power to keep watch over that what is altogether hidden from us.

وَسْـَٔلِ الْقَرْيَةَ الَّتِيْ كُنَّا فِيْهَا وَالْعِيْرَ الَّتِيْۤ اَقْبَلْنَا فِيْهَا ؕ وَاِنَّا لَصٰدِقُوْنَ 82

(12:82) You may inquire of the dwellers of the city where we were, and of the people of the caravan with whom we travelled. We are altogether truthful in what we say."

قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ اَنْفُسُكُمْ اَمْرًا ؕ فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيْلٌ ؕ عَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَنِيْ بِهِمْ جَمِيْعًا ؕ
اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْعَلِيْمُ الْحَكِيْمُ 83

(12:83) The father heard the narration and said: "(All that is untrue). But your souls have made it easy for you to engage in a heinous act.[64] So, I will be graciously patient even at this. Allah may well bring them all back to me. He is All-Knowing, All-Wise."

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

وَتَوَلّٰى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يٰٓاَسَفٰى عَلٰى يُوْسُفَ وَابْيَضَّتْ عَيْنٰهُ مِنَ الْحُزْنِ فَهُوَ كَظِيْمٌ 84

(12:84) Then he turned his back to them, and said: "O my grief for Joseph!" His eyes whitened with grief and he was choked up with sorrow trying to suppress his grief.

قَالُوْا تَاللّٰهِ تَفْتَؤُا تَذْكُرُ يُوْسُفَ حَتّٰى تَكُوْنَ حَرَضًا اَوْ تَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْهٰلِكِيْنَ 85

(12:85) The sons said: "By Allah! You will continue to remember Joseph until you will either consume yourself with grief, or will die."

قَالَ اِنَّمَآ اَشْكُوْا بَثِّيْ وَحُزْنِيْٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَاَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ 86

(12:86) He said: "I will address my sorrow and grief only to Allah, and I know from Allah what you do not know.

يٰبَنِيَّ اذْهَبُوْا فَتَحَسَّسُوْا مِنْ يُّوْسُفَ وَاَخِيْهِ وَلَا تَايْـَٔسُوْا مِنْ رَّوْحِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يَايْـَٔسُ مِنْ رَّوْحِ اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ 87

(12:87) My sons! Go and try to find out about Joseph and his brother and do not despair of Allah's mercy. Verily only the unbelievers despair of Allah's mercy."

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوْا عَلَيْهِ قَالُوْا يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْعَزِيْزُ مَسَّنَا وَاَهْلَنَا الضُّرُّ وَجِئْنَا بِبِضَاعَةٍ مُّزْجٰىةٍ فَاَوْفِ لَنَا الْكَيْلَ وَتَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَجْزِي الْمُتَصَدِّقِيْنَ 88

(12:88) On going to Egypt they presented themselves to Joseph and said to him: "O chief! We and our family are struck with distress and have brought only a paltry sum. So give us corn in full measure, and give it to us in charity.[65] Allah rewards those who are charitable."

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

قَالَ هَلۡ عَلِمۡتُمۡ مَّا فَعَلۡتُمۡ بِيُوۡسُفَ وَاَخِيۡهِ اِذۡ اَنۡتُمۡ جٰهِلُوۡنَ 89

(12:89) When Joseph heard this (he could not hold himself and said): "Do you remember what you did to Joseph and his brother when you were ignorant?"

قَالُوۡۤا ءَاِنَّكَ لَاَنۡتَ يُوۡسُفُ ؕ قَالَ اَنَا يُوۡسُفُ وَهٰذَاۤ اَخِىۡ ۖ قَدۡ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيۡنَا ؕ اِنَّهٗ مَنۡ يَّتَّقِ

وَيَصۡبِرۡ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُضِيۡعُ اَجۡرَ الۡمُحۡسِنِيۡنَ 90

(12:90) They exclaimed: "Are you indeed Joseph?" He said: "Yes, I am Joseph and this is my brother. Allah has surely been gracious to us. Indeed whoever fears Allah and remains patient, Allah does not allow the reward of such people to go to waste."

قَالُوۡا تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدۡ اٰثَرَكَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيۡنَا وَاِنۡ كُنَّا لَخٰطِـئِيۡنَ 91

(12:91) They said: "We swear by Allah! Indeed Allah has chosen you in preference to us and we were truly guilty."

قَالَ لَا تَثۡرِيۡبَ عَلَيۡكُمُ الۡيَوۡمَ ؕ يَغۡفِرُ اللّٰهُ لَـكُمۡ ۫ وَهُوَ اَرۡحَمُ الرّٰحِمِيۡنَ 92

(12:92) He replied: "No blame lies with you today. May Allah forgive you. He is the Most Merciful of all those that are merciful.

اِذۡهَبُوۡا بِقَمِيۡصِىۡ هٰذَا فَاَلۡقُوۡهُ عَلٰى وَجۡهِ اَبِىۡ يَاۡتِ بَصِيۡرًا ۚ وَاۡتُوۡنِىۡ بِاَهۡلِكُمۡ اَجۡمَعِيۡنَ ع 93

(12:93) Take this shirt of mine and throw it over my father's face. He will regain his sight. And bring to me all your family."

وَلَمَّا فَصَلَتِ الۡعِيۡرُ قَالَ اَبُوۡهُمۡ اِنِّىۡ لَاَجِدُ رِيۡحَ يُوۡسُفَ لَوۡلَاۤ اَنۡ تُفَنِّدُوۡنِ 94

(12:94) And as the caravan set out (from Egypt), their father said (in Canaan): "Indeed I smell the fragrance of Joseph.[66] I say so although you may think that I am doting."

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

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

قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ إِنَّكَ لَفِي ضَلَالِكَ الْقَدِيمِ 95

(12:95) They said: "Surely you are still in your same old craze."[67]

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

فَلَمَّا أَنْ جَاءَ الْبَشِيرُ أَلْقَاهُ عَلَىٰ وَجْهِهِ فَارْتَدَّ بَصِيرًا ۖ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُل لَّكُمْ ۚ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ

مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ 96

(12:96) And when the bearer of good news came he threw Joseph's shirt over Jacob's face, whereupon he regained his sight, and said: "Did I not tell you that I know from Allah what you do not know?"

قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا اسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا خَاطِئِينَ 97

(12:97) They said: "Father! Pray for the forgiveness of our sins; we were truly guilty."

قَالَ سَوْفَ أَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ رَبِّي ۖ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ 98

(12:98) He said: "I shall pray to my Lord for your forgiveness, for He, and indeed He alone, is Ever Forgiving, Most Merciful."

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَىٰ يُوسُفَ آوَىٰ إِلَيْهِ أَبَوَيْهِ وَقَالَ ادْخُلُوا مِصْرَ إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ آمِنِينَ ۖ 99

(12:99) And when they went to Joseph,[68] he took his parents aside and said (to the members of his family): "Enter the city now, and if Allah wills, you shall be secure."

68. It is worthwhile to take notice of the total number of Prophet Jacob's family members that migrated to Egypt with him, for it is closely connected with the problem that is raised concerning the total number of the Israelites who emigrated from there some five hundred years after this. According to the Bible, the total number of the family members was 70,

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

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

The above mentioned explanation is confirmed by the Bible also. For instance, it says "that when they left Egypt, the children of Israel journeyed from Remases to Suceoth....and a mixed multitude went up also with them...." (Exodus 12: 37-38) and "the mix multitude that was among them fell a lusting". (Numbers 11: 4). Then by and by these non-Israelite converts to Islam began to be called the stranger. "One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with you, an ordinance forever in your generations: as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord. One law and the one manner shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourneth with you." (Numbers 15: 15-16). "And I charged your judges at that time, saying: Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him." (Deut. 1: 16). Now it is not an easy thing to find out the exact term which was applied in the original Scriptures to the Egyptian converts to Islam, and which was afterwards changed into the stranger by the translators.

وَرَفَعَ اَبَوَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَخَرُّوْا لَهٗ سُجَّدًا ۚ وَقَالَ يٰٓاَبَتِ هٰذَا تَاْوِيْلُ رُءْيَايَ مِنْ
قَبْلُ ۖ قَدْ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّيْ حَقًّا ۭ وَقَدْ اَحْسَنَ بِيْٓ اِذْ اَخْرَجَنِيْ مِنَ السِّجْنِ وَجَاۗءَ بِكُمْ مِّنَ

الْبَدْوِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اَنْ نَّزَغَ الشَّيْطٰنُ بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنَ اِخْوَتِيْ ؕ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ لَطِيْفٌ لِّمَا يَشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ

الْعَلِيْمُ الْحَكِيْمُ 100

(12:100) And after they had entered the city, Joseph raised his parents to the throne[69] beside himself, and they (involuntarily) bowed in prostration before him.[70] Joseph said: "Father! This is the fulfilment of the vision I had before - one that My Lord has caused to come true. He was kind to me when He rescued me from the prison, and brought you from the desert after Satan had stirred discord between me and my brothers. Certainly my Lord is Subtle in the fulfilment of His will; He is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

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

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

Such misunderstandings as these have resulted from taking the words in this verse to mean "to perform sajadah" in the technical sense in which it is now used in the Islamic code, that is, "lying flat in such a way that the hands, the knees and the forehead touch the ground," whereas the word sujjadan has been used here in its literal meaning of sajud "to bow down". The parents and brothers of Prophet Joseph bowed down before him in accordance with the ancient custom among the people of the age, (and the custom is still in vogue among some people), who used to bow down before others to show their gratitude, or welcome them, or merely to salute them by placing their hand on the breast. There are many instances of this in the Bible. "....and when he (Abraham) saw them (the three men) corning towards him, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself towards the ground." (Please refer to Arabic translation: Gen. 18: 32). Further on it says that when the children of Heth gave a field and a cave as a burying place for Sarah, Prophet Abraham was so grateful to them that "he stood up and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth," (Gen. 23: 7) and "Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land." (Gen. 23: 12). In both cases the words `bowed down' have been translated into (Sajada).

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

Besides, those commentators are absolutely wrong who suppose that in the former laws, sajadah in the present Islamic sense was allowed as a mark of respect laws. For instance, during the Babylonian captivity of the Children of Israel, king Ahasuerus promoted Haman above all the princes and commanded all his servants to bow and reverence him, but Mordecai, who was a holy and righteous man among the Jews, bowed not, nor did him reverence. (Esther3: 1-2). The Talmud has elaborated this point in a way that is worth reading:

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

This speech which was made by a believer from among the Israelites a thousand years before the revelation of the Quran, is conclusive on the point. Thus there is absolutely no room for the performance of sajadah before any other than Allah.

رَبِّ قَدْ اٰتَيْتَنِيْ مِنَ الْمُلْكِ وَعَلَّمْتَنِيْ مِنْ تَاْوِيْلِ الْاَحَادِيْثِ ۚ فَاطِرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضِ ۫ اَنْتَ وَلِيّٖ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ تَوَفَّنِيْ مُسْلِمًا وَّاَلْحِقْنِيْ بِالصّٰلِحِيْنَ 101

(12:101) My Lord! You have bestowed dominion upon me and have taught me to comprehend the depths of things. O Creator of heavens and earth! You are my Guardian in this world and in the Hereafter. Cause me to die in submission to You, and join me, in the end, with the righteous."[71]

71. The few sentences that were uttered by Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him) at the happiest occasion of his life help depict the most graceful pattern of the virtues of a true believer. There is the man from the desert, whom his own brothers had, out of jealousy, attempted to kill, now sitting on the throne after passing through many vicissitudes of life. All the members of his family have been forced by famine to come before him for help. The same jealous brothers, who had made an attempt on his life, are now standing before him with downcast heads. Had there been a "successful man of the world" in his place, he would have used this opportunity for boasting of his greatness and bragging of his successes, and giving vent to his grievances and hurling malicious taunts at his defeated enemies. In utter contrast to this, the true man of God behaves in a quite different way. Instead of boasting and bragging of his own greatness, he is grateful to his God Who had

shown grace to him by raising him to such a high position of power, and for arranging his meeting with his people after such a long period of separation. Instead of giving vent to his grievances against his brothers, making taunts at them for their ill treatment, he does not make even a mention of such things but puts up a defense for them, saying that it was all due to Satan, who had stirred up strife between them: nay, he even puts it forward as a blessing in disguise, being one of the mysterious ways of Allah by which He had fulfilled His design of raising him to the throne. After saying these things in a few concise sentences, he at once turns to his Lord in gratitude for bestowing on him kingdom and wisdom, instead of letting him rot in the prison, and prays to Him to keep him as His faithful and obedient servant as long as he was alive, and to join him with the righteous people after his death. What a pure and high pattern of character.

It is strange that this speech of Prophet Joseph has neither found a place in the Bible nor in the Talmud, though these books are full of irrelevant and unimportant details of this story and others. It is an irony that these Books are void of those things that teach moral values and throw light on the real characters and the mission of the Prophets. Now that this story has come to an end, the readers are again reminded that this story of Prophet Joseph as given in the Quran is not a copy of the story given in the Bible and the Talmud for there are striking differences between them. A comparative study of these Books will show that the story in the Quran differs from that given in the other two Books in several very important parts. The Quran contains additional facts in some cases and omits certain facts in other cases or even refutes some parts as contained in the Bible and the Talmud. Therefore there is absolutely no room for anyone to allege that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) related this story merely in the form he heard it from the Israelites.

ذٰلِكَ مِنۡ اَنۡۢبَآءِ الۡغَيۡبِ نُوۡحِيۡهِ اِلَيۡكَ ۚ وَمَا كُنۡتَ لَدَيۡهِمۡ اِذۡ اَجۡمَعُوۡۤا اَمۡرَهُمۡ وَهُمۡ يَمۡكُرُوۡنَ 102

(12:102) (O Muhammad), this is part of news from the Unseen that We reveal to you for you were not present with them when Joseph's brothers jointly resolved on a plot.

وَمَاۤ اَكۡثَرُ النَّاسِ وَلَوۡ حَرَصۡتَ بِمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ 103

(12:103) And most of the people, howsoever you might so desire, are not going to believe.

وَمَا تَسۡـَٔـلُهُمۡ عَلَيۡهِ مِنۡ اَجۡرٍ ؕ اِنۡ هُوَ اِلَّا ذِكۡرٌ لِّلۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ۚ 104

(12:104) You do not seek from them any recompense for your service.[72] This is merely an admonition to all mankind.[73]

72. In order to grasp the full significance of the underlying admonition implied in it, we must keep in view the background of the revelation of this story given in the introduction to

this Surah. The Quraish themselves had invited the Prophet (peace be upon him) to a meeting that had been arranged for putting him to a test which was to show whether he was a true Prophet or not. When he arrived there, they put this question to him without any previous notice or intimation: why did the Israelites go to Egypt? In answer to this, the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited this Surah then and there. As they themselves knew that this was an abrupt question and there had been no preparation for its answer beforehand, it was expected that they would believe in his Prophethood. But they were so obdurate that they did not believe in him even then. As Allah was aware of their intentions, he informed His Messenger beforehand, as if to say: Though you have come out successful in the test, to which they themselves put to you, yet most of them are not going to believe it because they are not sincere in their quest for the truth. That is why they will not believe even now when the revelation of this Surah has proved conclusively that the Quran is not being forged by you but is being sent down by Allah Himself. As their real aim and intention is to reject your message anyhow, they will now invent another excuse for their denial.

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

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

وَكَأَيِّنْ مِّنْ اٰيَةٍ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ يَمُرُّوْنَ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ عَنْهَا مُعْرِضُوْنَ 105

(12:105) How many[74] are the signs in the heavens and the earth which people pass by without giving any heed![75]

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

75. This is to arouse people from their apathy towards the signs of Allah that lie scattered all over the earth and the heavens and to urge them to make a search for the reality by making

right observations. As each and everything is not merely a thing but also a sign which points to the reality, a seeker after it should look at these with a look different from that of animals. This is because even an animal sees a tree, a mountain and water and takes it as a mere tree, a mountain or water, and with the help of his senses makes use of these according to his needs. But Allah has endowed man with a mind that is able to consider things in other than their physical and material aspects so that he may think deeply and make a search for the reality by means of these signs of Allah. The reason why people fail to discover the reality and go astray is that they do not consider things as signs and pay no heed to this aspect. Had they not deliberately shut their minds against the message of the Prophets, it would not have been difficult for them at all to understand it and get guidance from it.

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ اَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللّٰهِ اِلَّا وَهُمْ مُّشْرِكُوْنَ 106

(12:106) And most of them believe in Allah only when they associate others with Him in His Divinity.[76]

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

اَفَاَمِنُوْٓا اَنْ تَاْتِيَهُمْ غَاشِيَةٌ مِّنْ عَذَابِ اللّٰهِ اَوْ تَاْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً وَّهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ 107

(12:107) Do they, then, feel secure that an overwhelming chastisement shall not visit them, and the Hour shall not suddenly come upon them without their even perceiving it?[77]

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

following such a path, which are appearing in your own time and culture, confirm that you are treading the right path?

قُلْ هٰذِهٖ سَبِيْلِيْٓ اَدْعُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ ۣ عَلٰي بَصِيْرَةٍ اَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِيْ ۭ وَسُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ وَمَآ اَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ 108

(12:108) Tell them plainly: "This is my way: I call you to Allah, on the basis of clear perception - both I and those who follow me. Allah - Glory be to Him - is free of every imperfection.[78] I have nothing to do with those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity."

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

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ اِلَّا رِجَالًا نُّوْحِيْٓ اِلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْقُرٰى ۭ اَفَلَمْ يَسِيْرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۭ وَلَدَارُ الْاٰخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا ۭ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ 109

(12:109) The Messengers whom We raised before you, (O Muhammad), and to whom We sent down revelations, were only human beings, and were from among those living in earthly habitations. Have these people not travelled in the earth that they may observe the end of their predecessors? Certainly the abode of the Hereafter is much better for those (who accepted the call of the Messengers and) acted in a God-fearing manner. Will you still not act with good sense?[79]

79. A very comprehensive subject has been condensed here into a couple of sentences, which may be expanded like this: “O Muhammad! these people do not listen to you because it is not an easy thing for them to believe you to be a Messenger of Allah just because you are a mere human being who was born in their own city among them and brought up like other people. But there is nothing strange in this. For this is not the first instance of its kind. All the Prophets, whom We sent before you, were also human beings and lived in the same habitations to which they were sent. It never happened that a stranger came to a town and declared, “I have been sent as a Messenger to you. On the other hand, all the Prophets, Jesus, Moses, Abraham and Noah (peace be upon them all), who were raised for the reform of the people, were human beings who were born and brought up in their own habitations. Then it addresses the disbelievers directly, as if to say: Now it is for you to judge and decide whether you should accept the Messenger or reject him on such flimsy grounds as these.

You have traveled abroad and seen the end of those people who rejected the message of their Prophets and followed their own desires. You have seen, on your journeys, the ruined habitations of the people of Aad, Thamud, Midian, Lot, and others. Have you not observed these as object lessons, for these warn you that they would meet with far worse consequences in the Hereafter, and that conversely, those who are pious and God fearing will have a very happy life?

حَتّٰٓى اِذَا اسْتَيْـَٔسَ الرُّسُلُ وَظَنُّوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كُذِبُوْا جَآءَهُمْ نَصْرُنَا ۙ فَنُجِّيَ مَنْ نَّشَآءُ ۭ وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَاْسُنَا عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ 110

(12:110) (It also happened with the earlier Messengers that for long they preached and people paid no heed) until the Messengers despaired of their people, and the people also fancied that they had been told lies (by the Messengers), then suddenly Our help came to the Messengers. And when such an occasion comes We rescue whom We will; as for the guilty, Our chastisement cannot be averted from them.

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِيْ قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِّاُولِي الْاَلْبَابِ ۭ مَا كَانَ حَدِيْثًا يُّفْتَرٰى وَلٰكِنْ تَصْدِيْقَ الَّذِيْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيْلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ع 111

(12:111) Certainly in the stories of the bygone people there is a lesson for people of understanding. What is being narrated in the Qur'an is no fabrication; it is rather confirmation of the Books that preceded it, and a detailed[80] exposition of everything, and a guidance and mercy for people of faith.

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

13. Surah Ar Ra'ad (The Thunder)

Name

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

Period of Revelation

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

Central Theme

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

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

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

الٓمّٓرٰ ۚ تِلۡكَ اٰيٰتُ الۡكِتٰبِ ؕ وَالَّذِىۡۤ اُنۡزِلَ اِلَيۡكَ مِنۡ رَّبِّكَ الۡحَـقُّ وَلٰـكِنَّ اَكۡثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ 1

(13:1) Alif. Lam. Mim. Ra'. These are the verses of the Divine Book. Whatever has been revealed to you from your Lord is the truth, and yet most (of your) people do not believe.[1]

1. This is the introduction to this Surah, in which its aim and object has been enunciated in a few words. Allah has addressed the Prophet (peace be upon him) to this effect: O Prophet, most of your people are rejecting the teachings of the Quran for one reason or the other, but the fact is that what We are sending down to you is the truth whether people believe it or not.

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

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِىۡ رَفَعَ السَّمٰوٰتِ بِغَيۡرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوۡنَهَا ثُمَّ اسۡتَوٰى عَلَى الۡعَرۡشِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمۡسَ وَالۡقَمَرَ ؕ كُلٌّ يَّجۡرِىۡ لِاَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ؕ يُدَبِّرُ الۡاَمۡرَ يُفَصِّلُ الۡاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمۡ بِلِقَآءِ رَبِّكُمۡ تُوۡقِنُوۡنَ 2

(13:2) It is Allah Who has raised the heavens without any supports that you could see,[2] and then He established Himself on the Throne[3] (of Dominion). And He it is Who has made the sun and the moon subservient[4] (to a law), each running its course till an appointed term.[5] He governs the entire order of the universe and clearly explains[6] the signs that you may be firmly convinced about meeting your Lord.[7]

2. In other words, "Allah is He who raised the heavens without (any) pillars that you can see." Though there is nothing apparent and visible that is supporting these heavens, yet there is an invariable and imperceptible Power which is not only holding but keeping in its place each and every one of these huge heavens and whatever is in between them.

3. For further details of "Then He established upon the Throne," please refer to (E.N. 41 of Surah Al-Aaraf). Here the purpose will be served if it is understood that this thing has been mentioned in the Quran at many places in order to bring out clearly the fact that Allah has

not only created the earth, but also rules over His Kingdom, and that His universe is a factory that is not working automatically as some ignorant people seem to think nor is it being ruled by many gods as other ignorant people seem to believe. But it is a regular system that is being run and ruled over by its Creator.

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

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

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

6. Allah makes plain those signs which help prove the truth of what the Prophet (peace be upon him) was informing them. These signs are spread all over the universe and everyone who observes these with open eyes can perceive that the realities towards which the Quran invites the people are testified by these signs.

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

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

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

(2) The terrestrial system also proves that its Creator is All- Wise. Therefore it can never be imagined that the All-Wise Creator could have created man and endowed him with wisdom and intelligence and invested him with power and authority, and then left him free to do what he liked with these, without being responsible and accountable for their use or abuse. For His Wisdom demands that He should take full account of all the acts and deeds of man in this world. It requires that He should take to task those who committed aggressions and compensate their victims and He should give rewards to those who practiced virtue and punishments to those who did wicked deeds. In short, His Wisdom requires that He should call to account every human being and demand: How did you carry out the trust that was placed in your hands in the shape of your wonderful body with its wonderful faculties and the numerous resources of the earth? It may be that a foolish and unjust ruler of this world might entrust the affairs of his kingdom in the hands of his agents and then forget to call them to account, but such a thing can never be expected from the All-Wise and All-Knowing Allah. It is this way of observing and considering the heavenly bodies that can convince us that life in the Hereafter is both possible and inevitable.

وَهُوَ الَّذِیْ مَدَّ الْاَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِیْهَا رَوَاسِیَ وَاَنْهٰرًا ؕ وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ جَعَلَ فِیْهَا
زَوْجَیْنِ اثْنَیْنِ یُغْشِی الَّیْلَ النَّهَارَ ؕ اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ یَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ 3

(13:3) He it is Who has stretched out the earth and has placed in it firm mountains and has caused the rivers to flow. He has made every fruit in pairs, two and two, and He it is Who causes the night to cover the day.[8] Surely there are signs in these for those who reflect.

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

(1) Tauhid: The fact that the earth is closely connected with the heavenly bodies (which help create life on it), and the fact that the mountains and the rivers are so interrelated with that life are clear proofs that all these things have not been created by separate and different gods nor are being governed, by gods with independent powers and authorities. Had it been so, there could not have been so much harmony, congruity, accord and unity of purpose among them; nor could these relationships have continued for such a long time. For it is quite obvious that if there had not been One All-Powerful and All-Wise Allah, it could not have been possible and practicable for different gods to sit together and evolve out such

a harmonious system of the universe without any discord or conflict between its myriads of bodies.

(2) Resurrection: This wonderful planet, the earth, is itself a great proof that its Creator is All-Powerful and can, therefore, raise the dead whenever He will. For it is floating in space round the sun and it has high mountains fixed in it and has large rivers flowing on its surface: it produces countless fruit-bearing trees and it brings about the cycles of the day and the night with precise regularity. All these things bear witness to the boundless power of its Creator. It would, therefore, be sheer folly to doubt that such All-Powerful Creator is incapable of raising mankind to life after death.

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

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ قِطَعٌ مُّتَجٰوِرٰتٌ وَّجَنّٰتٌ مِّنْ اَعْنَابٍ وَّزَرْعٌ وَّنَخِيْلٌ صِنْوَانٌ وَّغَيْرُ صِنْوَانٍ
يُّسْقٰى بِمَآءٍ وَّاحِدٍ ۚ وَنُفَضِّلُ بَعْضَهَا عَلٰى بَعْضٍ فِي الْاُكُلِ ۭ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ
يَّعْقِلُوْنَ 4

(13:4) And on the earth there are many tracts of land neighbouring each other.[9] There are on it vineyards, and sown fields, and date palms: some growing in clusters from one root, some standing alone.[10] They are irrigated by the same water, and yet We make some excel others in taste. Surely there are signs in these for a people who use their reason.[11]

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

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

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

وَإِنْ تَعْجَبْ فَعَجَبٌ قَوْلُهُمْ ءَإِذَا كُنَّا تُرٰبًا ءَإِنَّا لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ۗ أُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ ۚ وَأُولٰٓئِكَ الْأَغْلٰلُ فِي أَعْنَاقِهِمْ ۚ وَأُولٰٓئِكَ أَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا
خٰلِدُونَ 5

(13:5) And were you to wonder, then wondrous indeed is the saying of those who say: "What! After we have been reduced to dust, shall we be created afresh?" They are the ones who disbelieved in their Lord;[12] they are the ones who shall have shackles around their necks.[13] They shall be the inmates of the Fire, wherein they will abide for ever.

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

13. As a shackle around the neck is a symbol of imprisonment, the words "shackles upon their necks" have been used here idiomatically to show that they are slaves of ignorance, obduracy, lust and are blind followers of their forefathers. As their thinking is influenced by their prejudices, they cannot believe in the Hereafter and would deny this, though there is every reason to believe that it is inevitable.

وَيَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَكَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمُ الْمَثُلٰتُ ؕ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُوْ
مَغْفِرَةٍ لِّلنَّاسِ عَلٰى ظُلْمِهِمْ ۚ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَشَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ 6

(13:6) They challenge you to hasten the coming of evil upon them before the coming of any good,[14] although people who followed a like course before had met with exemplary punishment (from Allah). Verily your Lord is forgiving to mankind despite all their wrong-doing. Verily your Lord is also severe in retribution.

14. This refers to the demand of the Quraish from the Prophet (peace be upon him): If you are a true Prophet (peace be upon him) of God, why don't you hasten to bring that scourge of God upon us of which you have been threatening us, when we are flouting and denying you? They did this in different ways. Sometimes they would invoke God mockingly and say: O Lord, settle our accounts now and do not postpone these to the Day of Resurrection. At another time, they would say: Our Lord, if what Muhammad (peace be upon him) says be true, and be from Thee, then stone us from the sky or send down some other scourge upon us from the sky or send down some other painful torment upon us. In this verse an answer has been given to such impudent demands of the disbelievers. They have been admonished to refrain from such foolish demands and avail of the respite that was being given to them and mend their ways, for they were incurring the wrath of God by adopting the attitude of rebellion.

وَيَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوْلَآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ اٰيَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ ؕ اِنَّمَآ اَنْتَ مُنْذِرٌ وَّ لِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ ع 7

(13:7) Those who refused to believe in you say: "Why has no (miraculous) sign been sent down upon him from his Lord?"[15] You are only a warner, and every people has its guide.[16]

15. This showed their mentality. The only criterion of judging whether Muhammad (peace be upon him) was a true Prophet or not according to these disbelievers, was whether he would perform a miracle to them. This was because they would not judge his message by rational arguments: they would not learn a lesson from his high character nor from the moral revolution that was being brought about among his companions by his message and noble example: nor would they carefully consider the rational arguments given in the Quran to prove the errors of their religion of shirk and superstitions of ignorance. They would ignore these rational things and demand a miracle to decide the issue.

16. This is the concise answer to their demand, though it has not been directly addressed to the disbelievers but to the Messenger (peace be upon him). It is this: O Prophet, you should not worry at all about some miracle which you might show to these people in order to convince them, for it is not a part of your mission. Your duty is only to warn the people of their negligence and of the evil consequences of their wrong ways. And for this purpose, We have always sent a guide to every people. Now you, too, are performing this duty, and it is for them to open their eyes and judge the truth of your Message. After giving this concise

answer, Allah overlooks their demand but warns them, in the succeeding verses, that they have to deal with the All- Knowing Allah Who has full knowledge about everyone of them from the time they were in the wombs of their mothers, and Who keeps a keen watch over everything they do. Therefore their fates shall be decided strictly with justice in accordance with their merits and that there is no power on the earth and in the heavens that can influence in the least His decisions and judgments.

اَللّٰهُ يَعۡلَمُ مَا تَحۡمِلُ كُلُّ اُنۡثٰى وَمَا تَغِيۡضُ الۡاَرۡحَامُ وَمَا تَزۡدَادُ ؕ وَكُلُّ شَىۡءٍ عِنۡدَهٗ

بِمِقۡدَارٍ 8

(13:8) Allah knows what every female bears; and what the wombs fall short of (in gestation), and what they may add.[17] With Him everything is in a fixed measure.

17. When amplified the verse will mean: Allah remains fully aware of all the developments that take place in the child while in its mother's womb, and He watches over the decrease or increase in each of its limbs, and its potentialities, capabilities and powers.

عٰلِمُ الۡغَيۡبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الۡكَبِيۡرُ الۡمُتَعَالِ 9

(13:9) He knows both what is hidden and what is manifest. He is the Supreme One, the Most High.

سَوَآءٌ مِّنۡكُمۡ مَّنۡ اَسَرَّ الۡقَوۡلَ وَمَنۡ جَهَرَ بِهٖ وَمَنۡ هُوَ مُسۡتَخۡفٍۢ بِالَّيۡلِ وَسَارِبٌۢ

بِالنَّهَارِ 10

(13:10) It is all the same for Him whether any of you says a thing secretly, or says it loudly, and whether one hides oneself in the darkness of night, or struts about in broad daylight.

لَهٗ مُعَقِّبٰتٌ مِّنۡۢ بَيۡنِ يَدَيۡهِ وَمِنۡ خَلۡفِهٖ يَحۡفَظُوۡنَهٗ مِنۡ اَمۡرِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوۡمٍ

حَتّٰى يُغَيِّرُوۡا مَا بِاَنۡفُسِهِمۡ ؕ وَاِذَآ اَرَادَ اللّٰهُ بِقَوۡمٍ سُوۡٓءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهٗ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمۡ مِّنۡ دُوۡنِهٖ مِنۡ

وَّالٍ 11

(13:11) There are guardians over everyone, both before him and behind him, who guard him by Allah's command.[18]Verily Allah does not change a people's condition

unless they change their inner selves. And when Allah decides to make a people suffer punishment, no one can avert it. Nor can any be of help to such a people against Allah.[19]

18. That is, Allah not only directly watches over whatever each person does, and is fully aware of everything he does, but He has also appointed such guardians as accompany him everywhere and keep a full record of all his deeds. This has been stated here to warn those people who live their lives under the delusion that they have been left absolutely free to do whatever they like and shall not be required to render an account of what they did in this worldly life. The warning is that such people invite their own retribution.

19. This is to warn them further that they should not remain under any delusion that some holy person or saint or angel has the power to rescue them from divine retribution, for there is none who could defend them against Allah, even though they might have been paying homage and making offerings to their so called patrons and protectors in the hope that they would rescue them from punishment from Allah on the Day of Judgment.

هُوَ الَّذِیۡ یُرِیۡکُمُ الۡبَرۡقَ خَوۡفًا وَّ طَمَعًا وَّ یُنۡشِئُ السَّحَابَ الثِّقَالَ ۚ 12

(13:12) He it is Who causes you to see lightning that inspires you with both fear and hope, and He it is Who whips up heavy clouds.

وَ یُسَبِّحُ الرَّعۡدُ بِحَمۡدِہٖ وَ الۡمَلٰٓئِکَۃُ مِنۡ خِیۡفَتِہٖ ۚ وَ یُرۡسِلُ الصَّوَاعِقَ فَیُصِیۡبُ بِہَا مَنۡ یَّشَآءُ وَ ہُمۡ یُجَادِلُوۡنَ فِی اللّٰہِ ۚ وَ ہُوَ شَدِیۡدُ الۡمِحَالِ ؕ 13

(13:13) The thunder celebrates His praise and holiness,[20] and the angels, too, celebrate His praise for awe of Him.[21] He hurls thunderbolts, striking with them whom He wills while they are engaged in disputation concerning Allah. He is Mighty in His contriving.[22]

20. The thunder is a proclamation of Tauhid for those who have ears to hear the real meaning of its loud noise which follows the flash of lightning, though it is merely a kind of noise for those who hear it like animals. For it proclaims that Allah Who raises clouds from the oceans and carries them wherever He wills, and makes the lightning flash from the clouds and then turns them into rain so as to supply water to the dwellers of the earth, is perfect and worthy of all praise, is All-Wise and All-Powerful and is flawless in every respect and has do partner whatsoever.

21. The mention of the fact that the angels are filled with awe of their Lord, and they proclaim His praise has a special significance here. This is to refute the shirk of the ignorant people who have always worshiped the angels as gods and deities and believed them to be partners with God in His Godhead. It has been stated that they are not partners with Allah but His most obedient servants; so much so that they praise Him and are filled with awe of Him.

22. He has countless plans and measures which are so effective and sudden that He can smite anyone with any one of them from any side He wills. So much so that the intended victim is absolutely unaware of it. This is a proof that those people, who say absurd things about such All- Powerful Being, are absolutely void of sense.

لَهٗ دَعۡوَةُ الۡحَقِّ ؕ وَالَّذِيۡنَ يَدۡعُوۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِهٖ لَا يَسۡتَجِيۡبُوۡنَ لَهُمۡ بِشَىۡءٍ اِلَّا كَبَاسِطِ كَفَّيۡهِ
اِلَى الۡمَآءِ لِيَبۡلُغَ فَاهُ وَمَا هُوَ بِبَالِغِهٖ ؕ وَمَا دُعَآءُ الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ اِلَّا فِىۡ ضَلٰلٍ 14

(13:14) To Him alone should all prayer be addressed,[23] for those to whom they do address their prayers beside Him are altogether powerless to respond to them. The example of praying to any other than Allah is that of a man who stretches out his hands to water, asking it to reach his mouth, although water has no power to reach his mouth. The prayers of the unbelievers are a sheer waste.

23. "For Him is the supplication of truth," for Allah alone has the power and the authority to give help and remove difficulties.

وَلِلّٰهِ يَسۡجُدُ مَنۡ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ طَوۡعًا وَّكَرۡهًا وَّظِلٰلُهُمۡ بِالۡغُدُوِّ وَالۡاٰصَالِ
15 ۩

(13:15) All that is in the heavens and the earth prostrates itself, whether willingly or by force,[24] before Allah; and so do their shadows in the morning and in the evening.[25]

24. "And to Allah falls in prostration whoever is in the heavens and the earth" in the same sense that every creation of His has to obey and submit to His Physical law in every detail. The only difference between the submission of a believer and an unbeliever is that the former submits to it with a willing heart while the latter is forced to do so against his will, for it is absolutely beyond his power to oppose it.

25. "Their shadows" in the sense that they fall to the west in the morning and to the cast in the evening and so on. This shows that they, too, have to submit to some law.

قُلۡ مَنۡ رَّبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ ؕ قُلۡ اَفَاتَّخَذۡتُمۡ مِّنۡ دُوۡنِهٖۤ اَوۡلِيَآءَ لَا يَمۡلِكُوۡنَ
لِاَنۡفُسِهِمۡ نَفۡعًا وَّلَا ضَرًّا ؕ قُلۡ هَلۡ يَسۡتَوِى الۡاَعۡمٰى وَالۡبَصِيۡرُ ۙ اَمۡ هَلۡ تَسۡتَوِى

الظُّلُمٰتُ وَالنُّوْرُ ۚ أَمْ جَعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ شُرَكَآءَ خَلَقُوْا كَخَلْقِهٖ فَتَشَابَهَ الْخَلْقُ عَلَيْهِمْ ۭ قُلِ اللّٰهُ

خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّهُوَ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ 16

(13:16) Ask them: "Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth?" Say: "Allah."[26] Tell them: "Have you taken beside Him as your patrons those who do not have the power to benefit or to hurt even themselves?" Say: "Can the blind and the seeing be deemed equals?[27] Or can light and darkness be deemed equals?"[28] If that is not so, then have those whom they associate with Allah in His Divinity ever created anything like what Allah did so that the question of creation has become dubious to them?[29] Say: "Allah is the creator of everything. He is the One, the Irresistible."[30]

26. It will be worthwhile to note that though the question, "Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth?" was put to the disbelievers, Allah told the Prophet (peace be upon him) to answer it himself and say, "Allah". This was because the disbelievers hesitated to answer it one way or the other. They could not say that it was not Allah for they themselves believed that Allah was the Creator of everything. On the other hand, they could not acknowledge this fact in so many words in answer to such question. For, they would then have to acknowledge the doctrine of Tauhid. Then no basis could have been left in favor of shirk. As they realized their weak position, they would not give any answer to such questions. That is why Allah asks His Messenger (peace be upon him) to put such questions to the disbelievers: "Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth? Who is the Lord of the Universe? Who sustains you with provisions of life?" When they do not give any answer to such questions, Allah asks His Messenger (peace be upon him) to say "Allah" in answer. He then proceeds on with this argument: When Allah does all these things, how do the deities you worship come in?

27. The blind man is the person who cannot see any of the countless signs of the Oneness of Allah, though these lie spread over before him in the universe. On the other hand, the seeing man is the person who can see in every particle of the universe and in every leaf of grass and tree signs pointing to their Creator. Thus the question that has been posed means: O disbelievers, if you are blind to the signs, why should the one who can see the signs should behave like a blind man and stumble along like you?

28. Here "light" means the light of the knowledge of the truth which the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his followers possessed. In contrast to this, there was the "darkness" of ignorance in which the disbelievers were wandering about. The question that has been posed means to ask this: Why should those, who have received the light, extinguish it and wander about in the darkness like you? Well, if you do not know the worth of the light, you may choose to wander in the darkness. But how can you expect the one who has received the light and who appreciates the difference between the light and the darkness, and who is seeing the right way as if in broad daylight, to leave the light and wander about in the darkness?

29. The question is intended to impress on the disbelievers that there is absolutely no reason why they should practice shirk. When they themselves admit that their gods did not create even an iota in the universe and that they do not have even the smallest and most insignificant share in the creation, there remains no ground for them to cherish any doubts about it. Why should, then, their false gods and deities share the rights and powers of the Real Creator?

30. The Arabic word Qahhar literally means "The one who rules over all by virtue of His own power, and keeps all under His complete control."

This fact that He is "the One, the Prevailing" follows naturally from the preceding fact that "Allah is the Creator of all things" for this fact was also acknowledged by the mushriks and was never denied by them. This is so because the Creator of everything should logically be Unique, and every other thing or being must necessarily be His creation. Therefore nothing could be the equal of the Creator or partner in His Being, attributes, powers and rights. Likewise, the Creator must have complete power and control over His Creation.

For, it can never be imagined that the Creator would create anything over which He has not full control. Therefore, the one who acknowledges Allah to be the Creator must also acknowledge Him to be the Unique and the All-Powerful. After this, there remains no reason why one should worship anyone other than the Creator or invoke someone else for help in resolving his difficulties and fulfilling his needs.

أَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌۢ بِقَدَرِهَا فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَّابِيًا ۚ وَمِمَّا
يُوقِدُونَ عَلَيْهِ فِي النَّارِ ابْتِغَآءَ حِلْيَةٍ أَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِّثْلُهُۥ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ
وَالْبَاطِلَ ۚ فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَآءً ۖ وَأَمَّا مَا يَنفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ
كَذَٰلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ ۚ 17

(13:17) Allah sends down water from the heavens and the river-beds flow, each according to its measure, and the torrent carries along a swelling scum.[31] In like manner, from that metal which they smelt in the fire to make ornaments and utensils,[32] there arises scum like it. Thus does Allah depict truth and falsehood. As for the scum, it passes away as dross; but that which benefits mankind abides on the earth. Thus does Allah explain (the truth) through examples.

31. In this simile the knowledge which had been sent down by Allah to the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been likened to the rain from the sky, and the believers to the streams, rivulets and rivers. Just as the streams etc. fill themselves with rain water, each according to its capacity, so his followers gained knowledge from him, each according to his ability. On the other hand, the hue and cry that was raised by the opponents of the Islamic movement

has been likened to the swelling foam etc. that begins to dance about on the surface of flood water, but soon vanishes away.

32. As it is but natural that scum should appear on the surface when ornaments are heated in the furnace for purification, likewise bad people would come to the surface and take prominent part in persecuting the good people who are passed through the furnace of persecution for their purification.

لِلَّذِيْنَ اسْتَجَابُوْا لِرَبِّهِمُ الْحُسْنٰى ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يَسْتَجِيْبُوْا لَهٗ لَوْ اَنَّ لَهُمْ مَّا فِي الْاَرْضِ
جَمِيْعًا وَّمِثْلَهٗ مَعَهٗ لَافْتَدَوْا بِهٖ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ سُوْٓءُ الْحِسَابِ ۙ وَمَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ؕ وَبِئْسَ
الْمِهَادُ ع 18

(13:18) There is good reward for those who respond to the call of their Lord. And those who do not respond to their Lord, (a time will come when) they shall offer all they have - even if they have all the riches of the world and the like of it besides to redeem themselves (from the chastisement of Allah).[33] They will be subjected to a severe reckoning[34]and Hell shall be their refuge. What a wretched resting place it is!

33. This shows that the disbelievers would be in such a sad plight that they would not hesitate to give their all for their redemption.

34. "Those will have the worst reckoning": they shall have to bear the full consequences of their evil deeds. No sin, no shortcoming, in short, nothing will be forgiven and no evil shall go unpunished.

We learn from the Quran that the rebels of Allah shall have to render a reckoning, whereas there shall be a light reckoning from those who have been faithful and obedient to their Lord. In consideration of their loyal services, their cases will be dealt with leniently, and taking their general goodness into account many of their shortcomings will be forgiven.

This is further amplified by a tradition of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Aishah relates: I said, O Messenger of Allah, the most dreadful verse of the Quran is this: "Whoso shall commit an evil, he shall be punished for it. (Surah An- Nisa, Ayat 123)." The Prophet answered: O Aishah, don't you know how Allah clears the accounts of His faithful and obedient servant. Whatever harm or trouble he receives in this world, even so much as the pricking of a thorn, is taken by Allah as atonement for one or the other of his sins. As regards to the Hereafter, everyone who shall be called upon to render an account of any sin, shall be punished for it. At this Aishah asked: Then what is meant by light reckoning in this verse: Whoso shall be given his "Book of Deeds" in his right hand, he will render a light reckoning? (Surah Al- Inshiqaq, Ayats 7-8). The Prophet (peace be upon him) answered: This means merely the presentation of his whole conduct, that is, all his deeds, good and bad, shall be presented before Allah but he shall not be called upon to clear the account of

all his deeds; for the one who shall be called upon to clear the whole of his account, shall be totally ruined.

The same thing is happening even in this world. A master deals very leniently with his faithful and obedient servant and connives at his minor faults and even forgives his major faults in consideration of his meritorious services. On the other hand, if a servant is proved to be treacherous and dishonest, no consideration is given even to his services, and he is punished both for his minor and for major faults.

أَفَمَن يَعْلَمُ أَنَّمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ الْحَقُّ كَمَنْ هُوَ أَعْمَىٰ ۚ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ۙ 19

(13:19) He who knows that the Book which has been sent to you from your Lord is the Truth, is he like him who is blind to that truth?[35] It is only people of understanding who take heed:[36]

35. That is, as the attitude of the two in this world will be different from each other, so shall be their ultimate end in the Hereafter.

36. That is, those who listen to the message that has been sent down by Allah, and accept His Messenger, are really very wise people. This is why their conduct in this world is quite different from those foolish people who are blind to its merits: and so is their ultimate end in the Hereafter, as stated in the subsequent verses.

الَّذِينَ يُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَنقُضُونَ الْمِيثَاقَ ۙ 20

(13:20) those who fulfil their covenant with Allah and do not break their compact after firmly confirming it;[37]

37. This covenant is the same that was made by Allah with the entire mankind at the beginning of the creation that they would worship Him alone. (Refer to (E.Ns 134 and 135 of Surah Al-Aaraf). As this covenant has been made with every human being, it has been imbued firmly in human nature. When a human being is born in this world, he, so to say, confirms the same covenant because he owes his creation to the same Allah with Whom he had made that covenant. Then he is brought up by His Provider and fed and nourished with His provisions, and uses the powers and faculties endowed by Him. All these things bind him by themselves into a covenant of bondage with his Lord. It is obvious that wise, loyal and faithful people fulfill their covenant and dare not break it except that they might break it unconsciously and unwillingly.

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَصِلُوْنَ مَآ اَمَرَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖٓ اَنْ يُّوْصَلَ وَيَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ وَيَخَافُوْنَ سُوْۗءَ الْحِسَابِ ۭ 21

(13:21) who join together the ties which Allah has bidden to be joined;[38] who fear their Lord and dread lest they are subjected to severe reckoning;

38. That is, all those social and civil relations that are conducive to the correct and right conduct of collective human life.

وَالَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوا ابْتِغَاۗءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاَنْفَقُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ سِرًّا وَّعَلَانِيَةً وَّيَدْرَءُوْنَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ لَهُمْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ۙ 22

(13:22) who are steadfast in seeking the good pleasure of their Lord;[39] who establish Prayer and spend both secretly and openly out of the wealth We have provided them, and who ward off evil with good. Theirs shall be the ultimate abode[40]

39. "Those who are patient": They remain self possessed and keep under control all their desires and lusts and do not transgress the bounds, and they do not yield to temptations to disobey their Lord in order to gain advantages and gratify their desires. Nay, they bear with calm courage and endurance losses and afflictions that are inevitable in the obedience of Allah. If we consider the life of a believer from this point of view, we shall find that his entire life is the life of endurance and fortitude, for he keeps himself under control in very trying circumstances in this world in the hope of winning the approval of his Lord and in the expectation of gaining permanent benefits in the Hereafter: so he fights with fortitude every temptation to sin.

40. That is, if others do evil to them, they do not do evil in return but do good instead. They do not fight mischief with mischief but with virtue. Howsoever unjust one may be to them, they do justice in every case. Likewise, they remain truthful and honest even in the case of those who tell lies against them and show dishonesty towards them.

There is a tradition of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to the same effect: You should not imitate others in your conduct towards other people, for it is wrong to say: We will do goodness to others, if they do goodness to us and we will do injustice to them if they are unjust to us. On the other hand, you should follow this principle: If others do goodness to you, you should do goodness to them, but if they do evil to you, you should not be unjust to them.

There is another tradition, which begins with the words: My Lord has bidden me to do nine things. Four of these things are, I should behave justly towards everyone whether I am pleased or offended with him. I should render the right even of the one who violates my rights. I should pay the dues even of the one who depraves me of my due. I should forgive

the one who has been unjust to me. There is yet another tradition to the same effect: Don't be faithless even to the one who has been faithless to you. There is also a saying of Umar that amounts to the same thing: The best way of punishing the one, who does not fear God in his dealings with you, is that you should fear God in your dealings with him.

جَنّٰتُ عَدۡنٍ يَّدۡخُلُوۡنَهَا وَمَنۡ صَلَحَ مِنۡ اٰبَآئِهِمۡ وَاَزۡوَاجِهِمۡ وَذُرِّيّٰتِهِمۡ وَالۡمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يَدۡخُلُوۡنَ عَلَيۡهِمۡ مِّنۡ كُلِّ بَابٍ ۚ 23

(13:23) - the Ever-lasting Gardens which they shall enter and so shall the righteous from among their fathers, and their spouses, and their offspring. And angels shall enter unto them from every gate, and say:

سَلٰمٌ عَلَيۡكُمۡ بِمَا صَبَرۡتُمۡ ؕ فَنِعۡمَ عُقۡبَى الدَّارِ 24

(13:24) "Peace be upon you.[41] You merit this reward for your steadfastness." How excellent is the ultimate abode!

41. This implies two things. The angels will come in large numbers from every side and give them this good news: Now you have come to a place where there is peace for you. Here you are immune from every affliction, every trouble, every hardship, and every danger and worry. (For details see (E.N. 29 of Surah Al-Hijr).

وَالَّذِيۡنَ يَنۡقُضُوۡنَ عَهۡدَ اللّٰهِ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مِيۡثَاقِهٖ وَيَقۡطَعُوۡنَ مَاۤ اَمَرَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖۤ اَنۡ يُّوۡصَلَ وَيُفۡسِدُوۡنَ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ ۙ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعۡنَةُ وَلَهُمۡ سُوۡٓءُ الدَّارِ 25

(13:25) As for those who break the covenant of Allah after firmly confirming it, who cut asunder the ties that Allah has commanded to be joined, and who create corruption in the land: Allah's curse shall be upon them and theirs shall be a wretched abode (in the Hereafter).

اَللّٰهُ يَبۡسُطُ الرِّزۡقَ لِمَنۡ يَّشَآءُ وَيَقۡدِرُ ۚ وَفَرِحُوۡا بِالۡحَيٰوةِ الدُّنۡيَا ؕ وَمَا الۡحَيٰوةُ الدُّنۡيَا فِى الۡاٰخِرَةِ اِلَّا مَتَاعٌ ۚ 26

(13:26) Allah grants the provision to whomsoever He wills abundantly and grants others in strict measure.[42] They exult in the life of the world, although compared with the Hereafter, the life of the world is no more than temporary enjoyment.

42. This verse refutes the wrong criterion by which the disbelievers of Makkah (and all other disobedient people of the world) judged whether one was or was not a favorite of God. They judged a man's worth by his wealth and worldly prosperity and not by his faith and righteous conduct. They thought that the one who was enjoying all the good things of life was a favorite of God, even if he had erroneous beliefs and did wicked deeds. On the other hand, they considered the one who was poor and indigent to be under the wrath of God, even though he was righteous. That is why in their judgment the chiefs of the Quraish were far superior to the followers of the Prophet (peace be upon him). They would say, "You can see for yourselves that God is with the chiefs of the Quraish.

In this verse, Allah has warned them that they are absolutely wrong in drawing such a conclusion from the worldly conditions of the people. Allah gives His provision to the people abundantly or sparingly for reasons different from those which they presumed and richness or poverty is no criterion by which to judge the worth of people. The real criterion of judging the worth of people is their beliefs and deeds. The one, who has righteous beliefs and does good deeds, shall be higher in rank than the one who has wrong beliefs and does evil deeds. Thus the real criterion is the quality of his deeds and not the possession or the lack of wealth.

وَيَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوْلَآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ اٰيَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ
وَيَهْدِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ مَنْ اَنَابَ ۖ صلج 27

(13:27) Those who have rejected (the message of Muhammad) say: "Why has no sign been sent down upon him from his Lord?"[43] Tell them: "Allah lets go astray those whom He wills, and guides to Himself those who turn to Him."[44]

43. Please also keep in view the answer that has been given to this question in (Ayat 7).

44. This is the answer to their question. It is not due to the lack of signs that they were going astray, but it is the lack of any desire in them to seek right guidance. For Allah does not force one to follow the right way, if he deliberately turns away from it. He lets such persons wander on the wrong ways they choose to wander. Nay, even all those things that should serve as a means to guidance for a seeker of truth become the means of deviation for the one who seeks deviation. So much so that the light which helps show the way to the former, dazzles the eyes of the latter. This is how Allah leads astray a person.

This answer to the demand of a sign is matchless in its eloquence. It says to them: O misguided people, it is not due to the lack of signs that you are not finding the right path, but it is due to the lack of any desire in you for it. You do not see any of the countless signs that are scattered all around you because you have no desire to go to the right way. How can then any sign be helpful to you? For you would not see any of those signs. However those, who seek the right way to Allah, see these signs and find the right way with their help.

اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوْبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوْبُ ؕ 28

(13:28) Such are the ones who believe (in the message of the Prophet) and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah. Surely in Allah's remembrance do hearts find rest.

اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ طُوْبٰى لَهُمْ وَحُسْنُ مَاٰبٍ 29

(13:29) So those who believe (in the message of the Truth) and do good are destined for happiness and a blissful end.

كَذٰلِكَ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ فِيْٓ اُمَّةٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهَآ اُمَمٌ لِّتَتْلُوَا۟ عَلَيْهِمُ الَّذِيْٓ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ وَ
هُمْ يَكْفُرُوْنَ بِالرَّحْمٰنِ ؕ قُلْ هُوَ رَبِّيْ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَاِلَيْهِ مَتَابِ 30

(13:30) Thus have We sent you as a Messenger[45] to a community before which many other communities have passed away that you may recite to them whatever We have revealed to you. And yet they deny the Lord of Mercy.[46] Say to them: "He is my Lord, there is no god but Him. In Him I have placed all my trust and to Him I shall return."

45. That is, in this way that We have not given you a sign they demanded.

46. That is, instead of serving that most Compassionate Lord, they are discarding His service and setting up other partners in His attributes, powers, rights and giving thanks to others for His blessings.

وَلَوْ اَنَّ قُرْاٰنًا سُيِّرَتْ بِهِ الْجِبَالُ اَوْ قُطِّعَتْ بِهِ الْاَرْضُ اَوْ كُلِّمَ بِهِ الْمَوْتٰى ؕ بَلْ لِّلّٰهِ الْاَمْرُ
جَمِيْعًا ؕ اَفَلَمْ يَايْـَٔسِ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنْ لَّوْ يَشَآءُ اللّٰهُ لَهَدَى النَّاسَ جَمِيْعًا ؕ وَلَا يَزَالُ
الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا تُصِيْبُهُمْ بِمَا صَنَعُوْا قَارِعَةٌ اَوْ تَحُلُّ قَرِيْبًا مِّنْ دَارِهِمْ حَتّٰى يَاْتِيَ وَعْدُ اللّٰهِ
ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيْعَادَ ؏ 31

(13:31) And what would have happened were a Qur'an to be revealed wherewith mountains could be set in motion, or the earth cleft, or the dead made to speak?[47] (To show such signs is not at all difficult for) everything rests entirely with Allah.[48] So, do not the people of faith (still look forward to such a sign in response to the demand of

the unbelievers and) despair as a result of knowing that had Allah so willed, He could have guided all to the Truth.[49]Misfortune continues to afflict the unbelievers on account of their misdeeds, or to befall on locations close to their habitation. This will continue until Allah's promise (of chastisement) is fulfilled. Indeed Allah does not go back upon His promise.

47. This verse has been addressed to the believers who were feeling uneasy that no such sign was being sent as was demanded by the disbelievers. They thought that such a sign would convince the disbelievers and they would accept Islam. Therefore when no such sign was sent, they became all the more uneasy for the lack of the fulfillment of the demand that gave rise to doubts about the Prophethood of the Messenger (peace be upon him). The question posed in this verse is meant to remove that uneasiness of the Muslims. It is like this: Do you think that they would have embraced Islam if such and such signs had been shown to them all of a sudden along with a Surah of the Quran? Are you under the delusion that they are quite ready to accept Islam and are waiting only for such a sign? Do you think that those people who have failed to see the light of the truth in the teachings of the Quran, in the phenomena of the universe, in the pure and spotless life of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and in the wonderful change in the lives of his companions, would see the light of the truth in the moving of the mountains, in the cleavage of the earth and in the coming out of the dead from the graves?

48. "But to Allah belongs the command entirely" and He can show any sign if He so desires. He is not showing any sign for it does not fit in the scheme laid down for the guidance of man. As the real object is to show guidance to mankind through the Prophet and not to compel them to believe in the Prophethood of a Prophet, He desires that the people should gain guidance by thinking and observing wisely and not by seeing signs.

49. That is, if the object had been to make human beings believers even without consciously understanding it, Allah could have created them believers by birth.

وَلَقَدِ اسْتُهْزِئَ بِرُسُلٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَأَمْلَيْتُ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُهُمْ ۖ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ

عِقَابِ 32

(13:32) Surely the Messengers before you were ridiculed, but I always initially granted respite to those who disbelieved, and then I seized them (with chastisement). Then, how awesome was My chastisement!

أَفَمَنْ هُوَ قَآئِمٌ عَلٰى كُلِّ نَفْسٍۢ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ ۗ وَجَعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ شُرَكَآءَ ۭ قُلْ سَمُّوْهُمْ ۭ اَمْ
تُنَبِّـــُٔوْنَهٗ بِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُ فِي الْاَرْضِ اَمْ بِظَاهِرٍ مِّنَ الْقَوْلِ ۭ بَلْ زُيِّنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا
مَكْرُهُمْ وَصُدُّوْا عَنِ السَّبِيْلِ ۭ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ هَادٍ 33

(13:33) Is it, then, in regard to Him Who watches over the deeds of every person[50] that they are acting blasphemously by setting up His associates?[51] Tell them: "Name those associates (if Allah Himself has made them His associates)! Or are you informing Allah of something the existence of which He does not even know?" Or do people arbitrarily utter empty words?[52] Indeed, their foul contriving[53] has been made to seem fair to the unbelievers and they have been barred from finding the Right Way.[54] Whomsoever Allah lets go astray will have none to guide him.

50. That is, they are so audacious that they set up partners with Allah Whose knowledge is All-Comprehensive and Who is aware of even the minutest details of the good and bad actions of each individual.

51. These are the audacious things they do. They ascribe partners and equals to Him. They believe that some of His creatures are a part and parcel of His Being, and have attributes and rights like Him. They presume that they shall not be called to account for whatever they do, even though they live in His kingdom.

52. That is, you give empty names to the partners you ascribe to Him for you have no real knowledge about them. For you could get this knowledge only in one of the three following ways.

First, you might have received some authentic information that Allah had made such and such people as His partners in His attributes, powers and rights. If it is so, let us also know their names and the source of your information.

Second, the possibility that Allah might have remained ignorant that some beings have become His partners. Therefore you are going to inform Him about this. If it is so, say it clearly in so many words so that it may be decided whether there are some foolish people who can believe in such a nonsensical claim.

Third, obviously the above two suppositions are absurd. Therefore the only alternative is that, you are ascribing partners to Him without any rhyme or reason, and you, without any knowledge, make one the relative of God, another the hearer of supplications, and still another the helper and fulfiller of certain needs and the ruler of a certain region etc.

53. Shirk has been called fraud because none of the angels, spirits, saints, heavenly bodies, to whom they ascribe divine attributes and powers or render divine rights, ever claimed to possess these attributes or powers. Neither did they ever demand these rights from the people nor told the people that they would fulfill their desires and wants if they would

perform some rituals of worship before them. As a matter of fact, some clever people invented these gods in order to practice willful deception and dishonesty so that they might wield powerful influence over the common people and exploit them and deprive them of a part of their hard earned possessions. Accordingly, they made the common people credulous followers of the gods of their inventions and set themselves up as their representatives to get money, etc. from them by this fraud.

The second reason why shirk has been called fraud is that a worldly man pretends to believe in it not because he wants to believe in it but in order to free himself from all moral restraints to enable him to lead an irresponsible life of greed and lust.

The third reason is given below in(E. N. 54).

54. Shirk is also `fraud' in the sense that it has been made to appear fair for them and so leads them into deviation and prevents them from coming back to the Right Way. It is like this: When mushriks adopt wrong ways of deviation that suit the kind of lives they wish to lead, they have to invent arguments to pacify their consciences and convince other people that they are on the right way. Naturally this fraud confirms them on the way of deviation and they are debarred from the Right Way.

لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَعَذَابُ الْاٰخِرَةِ اَشَقُّ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ وَّاقٍ 34

(13:34) They shall suffer chastisement in the life of the world, and surely the chastisement of the Hereafter is even more grievous. None has the power to shield them from (the chastisement of) Allah.

مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِيْ وُعِدَ الْمُتَّقُوْنَ ۭ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۭ اُكُلُهَا دَاۗىِٕمٌ وَّظِلُّهَا ۭ تِلْكَ عُقْبَى الَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا ڰ وَّعُقْبَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ النَّارُ 35

(13:35) And such will be the Paradise promised to the God-fearing: rivers will flow beneath it, its fruits will be eternal, and so will be its blissful shade. That is the ultimate destiny of the God-fearing while Fire is the destiny of the unbelievers.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يَفْرَحُوْنَ بِمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ وَمِنَ الْاَحْزَابِ مَنْ يُّنْكِرُ بَعْضَهٗ ۭ قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اُمِرْتُ اَنْ اَعْبُدَ اللّٰهَ وَلَآ اُشْرِكَ بِهٖ ۭ اِلَيْهِ اَدْعُوْا وَاِلَيْهِ مَاٰبِ 36

(13:36) Those upon whom We bestowed the Scriptures earlier rejoice at the Book revealed to you, while there are also some among different groups that reject part of it. Tell them: "I have only been commanded to serve Allah and not to associate anyone with Him. To Him do I call, and to Him is my return."55

55. This is in reply to a specific objection which was then raised by the disbelievers. They would say: If he has brought the same message that was brought by the Messengers before him (as he claims), why don't the Jews and the Christians who are the followers of the former Prophets come forward and welcome it? The verse answers the objection and says that the true followers of the former Prophets really rejoice in the message of the Quran, but the false ones have been offended by it. Then it asks the Prophet (peace be upon him) not to worry at all about this, saying: O Prophet, you should not mind at all whether they are pleased or offended by it. Tell them plainly that this is the guidance I have received from my Lord and I will follow it at all costs.

وَكَذٰلِكَ اَنۡزَلۡنٰهُ حُكۡمًا عَرَبِيًّا ؕ وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعۡتَ اَهۡوَآءَهُمۡ بَعۡدَمَا جَآءَكَ مِنَ الۡعِلۡمِ ۙ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مِنۡ وَّلِىٍّ وَّلَا وَاقٍ ۚ 37

(13:37) And it is with the same directive that We revealed to you this Arabic Writ. Were you indeed to follow the vain desires of people after the true knowledge has come to you, none will be your supporter against Allah, and none will have the power to shield you from His punishment.

وَلَقَدۡ اَرۡسَلۡنَا رُسُلًا مِّنۡ قَبۡلِكَ وَجَعَلۡنَا لَهُمۡ اَزۡوَاجًا وَّذُرِّيَّةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُوۡلٍ اَنۡ يَّاۡتِىَ بِاٰيَةٍ اِلَّا بِاِذۡنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ لِكُلِّ اَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ 38

(13:38) We indeed sent many Messengers before you and We gave them wives and children;[56] and no Messenger had the power to produce a miraculous sign except by the command of Allah.[57] Every age has its own (revealed) Book.

56. This is the answer to another objection. The disbelievers said that he could not be a Prophet of Allah because he has wives and children, for they argued that Prophets had nothing to do with carnal desires.

57. This is the answer to yet another objection: Had he been a true Prophet, he would have shown a sign like the shining hand and the miraculous staff of Prophet Moses or he would have restored sight to the blind or cured lepers like Prophet Jesus, or brought a sign like the she camel of Prophet Salih. (peace be upon them all). The answer is this: None of the former Messengers had any power to show any sign nor has this Prophet (peace be upon him). Allah showed a sign whenever and through whomsoever He considered it to be necessary and will show any sign whenever He will consider it necessary and that I have not claimed to possess any such power that such a demand might be made from me.

يَمۡحُوا اللّٰهُ مَا يَشَآءُ وَيُثۡبِتُ ۚ (صلج) وَعِنۡدَهٗۤ اُمُّ الۡكِتٰبِ 39

(13:39) Allah effaces whatever He wills and retains whatever He wills. With Him is the Mother of the Book.[58]

58. This is the answer to another objection raised against the revelation of the Quran. The disbelievers said: What was the need of this new Book, when there already had existed the former revealed Books? You say that this need has arisen because the former Books have been tampered with; therefore Allah has abrogated them and commanded that this new Book should be followed. This position you have taken is wrong for how can anyone tamper with the Book of Allah and how is it possible that any Book of Allah might be tampered with? Why did not Allah protect these Books from such things as these? You say that this Book has been revealed by the same Allah Who revealed the Torah and the Gospel. How is it then that your way is different from that of the Torah? You consider certain things lawful while they are unlawful according to the Torah, etc. etc. Detailed answers to these objections have been given in other Surahs but here only a brief and comprehensive answer has been given to them.

The Arabic word Umm-ul-Kitab literally means the Mother Book, that is, the Original Book which is the source and origin of all the revealed Books.

وَإِنْ مَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِي نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاغُ وَعَلَيْنَا

الْحِسَابُ 40

(13:40) (O Prophet), whether We make you see a part of the punishment that We have threatened them with come to pass during your life-time, or We take you away before that happens, your duty is no more than to convey the Message, and it is for Us to make a reckoning.[59]

59. This is to console the Prophet (peace be upon him), as if to say: O Prophet, you need not concern yourself as to the end of these disbelievers who have rejected the truth. You should go on performing with peace of mind the mission that has been entrusted to you and leave it to Us to give them suitable punishment. Though this has been addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), it is obvious that it is really meant to warn the opponents of the truth, who were demanding definitely from the Prophet (peace be upon him) by way of a challenge to bring about the scourge about which threats were being held out to them.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا نَأْتِي الْأَرْضَ نَنقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ لَا مُعَقِّبَ لِحُكْمِهِ ۚ وَهُوَ

سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ 41

(13:41) Do they not see that We are advancing in the land, diminishing it by its borders on all sides?[60] Allah judges, and no one has the power to reverse His judgement. He is swift in reckoning.

60. “We are advancing in the land.” This is a very subtle way of warning the opponents of the truth. The fact that Our message is spreading fast in Arabia. It does, in fact, mean that We Ourselves are advancing very fast in the country against you for We are with those who are carrying Our message. “Diminishing it from its outlying borders.” We are causing the influence of Islam to spread fast in the land and are thus reducing the boundaries of the influence of its opponents. Are not these things the portents of their coming disaster?

وَقَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلِلّٰهِ الْمَكْرُ جَمِيْعًا ؕ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ؕ وَسَيَعْلَمُ
الْكُفّٰرُ لِمَنْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ 42

(13:42) Those who lived before them also devised many a plot,[61] but the master plot rests with Allah. He knows what everyone does. The deniers of the truth will soon come to know whose end is good.

61. That is, these people, who are now devising schemes to defeat the message of the truth, do not take a lesson from the sad end of the people who devised similar schemes before them to suppress the voice of the truth by falsehood, fraud and persecution.

وَيَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَسْتَ مُرْسَلًا ؕ قُلْ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ شَهِيْدًۢا بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۙ وَمَنْ عِنْدَهٗ
عِلْمُ الْكِتٰبِ ع 43

(13:43) The unbelievers claim that you have not been sent by Allah. Tell them: "Allah is sufficient as a witness between me and you; and so also do those who know the Scriptures."[62]

62. That is, everyone who has the knowledge of the divinely revealed Books will bear witness to the fact that my teachings are the same that were imparted by the former prophets.

14. Surah Ibrahim (Abraham)

Name

The Surah takes its name from v. 35 in which mention has been made of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham). But it does not mean that it contains the life story of Prophet Abraham. The name is merely a symbol lid the names of many other surahs, i.e., the Surah in which Abraham's mention has been made.

Period of Revelation

It appears from the tone of the Surah that it belongs to that group of the Surahs which were revealed during the last stage of the Makkan period. For instance, v. 13 ("The disbelievers warned their Messengers, 'you shall have to return to our community or we will assuredly expel you from our land'") clearly indicates that the persecution of the Muslims was at its worst at the time of the revelation of this Surah, and the people of Makkah were bent on expelling the Believers from there like the disbelievers of the former Prophets. That is why in v. 14 they have been warned, "We will destroy these evil doers," and the Believers have been comforted as were the believers before them, "and after them settle you in the land" Likewise the stern warning contained in the concluding portion (vv. 43-52 also confirms that the Surah relates to the last stage of the Makkan Period.)

Central Theme and Purpose

This Surah is an admonition and a warning to the disbelievers who were rejecting the Message of the Holy Prophet and devising cunning schemes to defeat his Mission. But warning, reproof, censure and reproach dominate admonition. This is because a good deal of admonition had already been made in the preceding Surahs, but in spite of this their obduracy, enmity, antagonism, mischief, persecution etc. had rather increased.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

الٓرٰ ۟ قف كِتٰبٌ اَنۡزَلۡنٰهُ اِلَيۡكَ لِتُخۡرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوۡرِ ۙ بِاِذۡنِ رَبِّهِمۡ اِلٰى
صِرَاطِ الۡعَزِيۡزِ الۡحَمِيۡدِ ۙ 1

(14:1) Alif. Lam. Ra'. This is a Book which We have revealed to you that you may bring forth mankind from every kind of darkness into light, and direct them, with the leave of their Lord, to the Way[1] of the Mighty, the Innately Praiseworthy,[2]

1. This is the purpose for which the Prophet (peace be upon him) had been sent. He was entrusted with the mission that he should bring mankind back from the ways of darkness and ways of wickedness into the way of God by the help of the light of the Quran. For everyone who is not on the way of God is, in fact, wandering about in the ways of the darkness and ignorance, even though he might consider himself to be very enlightened and

full of knowledge. On the other hand, the one who finds the Way of Allah, comes into the light of knowledge, even though he might be an illiterate person.

As regards to "by the permission of their Lord", this implies that the most a missionary of Islam, even though he be a Messenger of Allah, can do is to present the right way. It is not in his power to bring anyone forcibly to the way, for this can only happen by the help and permission of Allah. That is why only that person whom Allah helps and permits gets guidance. Otherwise, even a perfect missionary like a Messenger fails to bring a person to the right way. As regards to the divine law, according to which Allah helps and permits a person to gain guidance, we learn from different passages of the Quran that Allah gives help only to that person who himself has a desire to get guidance: who frees himself from obduracy, obstinacy and prejudice: who is not a follower of his lust, nor a slave of his desires: who is inclined to see with open eyes and hear with open ears and think with a clear mind, and is ready to accede to any reasonable thing.

2. The word Hameed is more comprehensive than Mahmud. A person will be entitled to be Mahmud only when he is praised. But the Being Who is Hamed, is naturally and permanently worthy of praise, whether anyone praises Him or not, because the element of praise is inherent in Him and is inseparable from Him.

اللّٰهِ الَّذِیۡ لَهٗ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ وَوَیۡلٌ لِّلۡکٰفِرِیۡنَ مِنۡ عَذَابٍ شَدِیۡدِ ۙ 2

(14:2) (to the Way of) Allah to Whom belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. Woe be to those who reject the Truth for a severe chastisement,

الَّذِیۡنَ یَسۡتَحِبُّوۡنَ الۡحَیٰوةَ الدُّنۡیَا عَلَی الۡاٰخِرَةِ وَیَصُدُّوۡنَ عَنۡ سَبِیۡلِ اللّٰهِ وَیَبۡغُوۡنَهَا عِوَجًا ؕ

اُولٰٓئِکَ فِیۡ ضَلٰلٍۢ بَعِیۡدٍ 3

(14:3) to those who have chosen the life of the world in preference to the Hereafter,[3] who hinder people from the Way of Allah, and seek to make it crooked.[4] They have gone far astray.

3. Those who reject the truth are the people whose interests are entirely bound with the life of this world, and who do not care at all for the interests of the life of the Hereafter: who are prepared to undergo any punishment in the next world for the sake of the interests, pleasures and comforts of this world: who, on the other hand, cannot bear the sacrifice of even the smallest pleasure in this world, nor are ready to bear any loss or encounter danger or trouble in this world for the sake of the joys of the next world. In short, such are the people who have coolly considered and weighed the pleasures of this world against the joys of the next world, and decided in favor of this world: therefore, they readily sacrifice the interest of the next world whenever there is a clash between the two.

4. That is, "They do not want to follow the Way of Allah, but endeavor that Allah's Way should follow their desires: it should adjust itself in such a way as to include all their

conjectures, theories and whims as its part and parcel, and exclude every creed that does not suit their way of life: it should provide sanction for all their habits, customs and manners: it should not demand from them anything which they do not like: in short, the way of Allah should be their obedient slave and turn in the direction their devilish lusts want it to turn: nay, it should neither criticize them nor ask them to follow Allah's injunctions. This is their condition for accepting the guidance of Allah.

وَمَآ اَرۡسَلۡنَا مِنۡ رَّسُوۡلٍ اِلَّا بِلِسَانِ قَوۡمِهٖ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمۡ ؕ فَيُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ وَيَهۡدِىۡ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَهُوَ الۡعَزِيۡزُ الۡحَكِيۡمُ 4

(14:4) Never have We sent a Messenger but he has addressed his people in their language that he may fully expound his Message to them.[5] (And after the Message is expounded), Allah lets go astray whomsoever He wills, and guides to the Right Way whomsoever He wills.[6] He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.[7]

5. This implies two things: First, Allah sent down His message in the language of the people from among whom a Prophet was raised so that they might not have any excuse left that they could not understand the language of the message. Secondly, this ruled out the presumption that a Messenger was ever given the message in a different language merely for the sake of a miracle. For Allah considered it more important to make the people understand the message and guide them rightly than to satisfy their curiosity. Obviously the purpose could best be served only if the message was sent down to them in their own language by their Prophet and not in any other.

6. That is, although the Messenger conveys the message in the mother tongue of the people, which is understood by everyone of them, yet all of them are not guided aright. This happens because of the fact that all of those who understand a message do not necessarily accept it. For it is entirely with Allah to show guidance by means of His message to anyone He wills and to let go astray anyone in spite of it.

7. As Allah is All-Powerful, no one is able by oneself to get guidance or to go astray, for none is completely independent but is under the power of Allah. But as He is All-Wise, He does not use His power blindly so as to show guidance to anyone He wills and to let go astray anyone He desires without rhyme or reason. In fact, the one who gets guidance from Him gets it on merit and the one who is let go astray is deprived of guidance because he himself deliberately chooses deviation.

وَلَقَدۡ اَرۡسَلۡنَا مُوۡسٰى بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اَنۡ اَخۡرِجۡ قَوۡمَكَ مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوۡرِ ۙ وَذَكِّرۡهُمۡ بِاَيّٰىمِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُوۡرٍ 5

(14:5) We indeed sent Moses with Our Signs, saying: "Lead your people out of all kinds of darkness into light, and admonish them by narrating to them anecdotes from the Days of Allah."[8] Verily in it there are great Signs[9] for everyone who is patient and gives thanks (to Allah).[10]

8. The Arabic word ayyam technically means memorable historical events. Therefore Ayyam-u-Allah (divine history) implies all those eventful chapters of human history which mention the rewards and punishments that were meted out to the great personalities and nations according to their deeds in the past ages.

9. Those historical events are signs in this sense that their proper and intelligent study provides proofs of the fact that there is only one God: and that the law of retribution is universal and is based absolutely on the differentiation between the knowledge and moral practice of the truth and falsehood: that this law also requires another world (the Hereafter) for its due fulfillment. Moreover, these events contain signs that serve as warnings against the evil consequences of building up systems of life on false creeds and theories, and help one to learn lessons from them.

10. Though these signs are always there, only those persons learn lessons from them who remain steadfast in trials and appreciate the blessings of Allah rightly and are grateful to Him. Obviously, frivolous and ungrateful persons cannot learn any lesson from these signs, even though they might grasp their significance.

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ أَنجَاكُم مِّنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ
يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ وَيُذَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ ۚ وَفِي ذَٰلِكُم بَلَاءٌ
مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ ۚ 6

(14:6) And call to mind when Moses said to his people: "Remember Allah's favour upon you when He delivered you from Pharaoh's people who afflicted you with a grievous chastisement, slaughtering your sons, while letting your women live. In it there was a terrible trial from your Lord."

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ 7

(14:7) Also call to mind when your Lord proclaimed: "If you give thanks,[11] I will certainly grant you more; but if you are ungrateful for My favours, My chastisement is terrible.[12]

11. That is, if you are grateful, you will appreciate Our favors and make right use of them, and will not rebel against Our commandments, but will surrender and submit to Us to show your gratitude to Us.

12. Deuteronomy (Bible) contains a long and detailed discourse to this effect. According to it, Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), on the eve of his death, reminded the Israelites of all important events from their history, and reiterated all the divine commandments of the Torah which Allah had sent to them through him. Then he told them in a long speech that if they obeyed their Lord, they would be given great rewards. But if they adopted the attitude of disobedience, they would get a terrible punishment. This discourse spreads over chapters 4, 6, 8, 10, 11 and 28, 30. Some of these passages are so impressive and instructive that it will be worthwhile to quote a few of them: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. (Deut. 6: 47).

And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways; and to love him, and to serve the Lord Thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is thy Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. (Deut. 10: 12-14).

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face. The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto. The Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto himself. And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee. And thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath. (28: 1-13).

But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all those curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. The Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do. The Lord shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee. And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them. Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build an house and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof. Thine ox shall be slain before thine eyes. Therefore, shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: And he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee. And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other. (Deut: 28: 15-64).

وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰٓ إِن تَكۡفُرُوٓاْ أَنتُمۡ وَمَن فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِ جَمِيعٗا فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ 8

(14:8) Moses said: "Were you to disbelieve - you and all those who live on earth - Allah is still Self-Sufficient, Innately Praiseworthy."[13]

13. It should be noted that a reference to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and his people has been made here to warn the people of Makkah of the consequences of their ingratitude towards this favor of Allah that He has raised Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) from among them. This was a timely warning, for at that time they were showing ingratitude by rejecting that message. They were, therefore, warned to learn a lesson from the miserable condition of the Israelites, which was the result of their ingratitude to and rebellion against Allah's favors.

As the Quraish themselves could see the consequences of that rebellious attitude of the Israelites, they were, so to say, asked this question: Do you also desire to meet with the same consequences by showing ingratitude towards the message which is a great favor to you?

Obviously, the great favor which was shown to the Quraish was that Muhammad (peace be upon him) was raised from among them with that message about which he assured them over and over again: Accept this Message of mine: all the Arabs and the non-Arabs will surrender and submit to you?

أَلَمۡ يَأۡتِكُمۡ نَبَؤُاْ ٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبۡلِكُمۡ قَوۡمِ نُوحٖ وَعَادٖ وَثَمُودَ وَٱلَّذِينَ مِنۢ بَعۡدِهِمۡ لَا يَعۡلَمُهُمۡ إِلَّا ٱللَّهُ جَآءَتۡهُمۡ رُسُلُهُم بِٱلۡبَيِّنَٰتِ فَرَدُّوٓاْ أَيۡدِيَهُمۡ فِيٓ أَفۡوَٰهِهِمۡ وَقَالُوٓاْ إِنَّا كَفَرۡنَا بِمَآ أُرۡسِلۡتُم بِهِۦ وَإِنَّا لَفِي شَكّٖ مِّمَّا تَدۡعُونَنَآ إِلَيۡهِ مُرِيبٖ 9

(14:9) Have[14] the accounts of your predecessors not reached you: the people of Noah, the Ad, the Thamud, and those who came after them - they whose number is not known to any except Allah? Their Messengers came to them with Clear Signs, but they thrust their hands in their mouths,[15] and said: "We do surely reject the Message you have brought, and we are in disquieting doubt about what[16] you are summoning us to."

14. The speech of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) ended with(Ayat 8). From here begins a direct address to the disbelievers of Makkah.

15. There has been a great deal of difference of opinion in regard to the meaning of the Arabic words of the text and different commentators have assigned different meanings to them. But we arc of the opinion that these express merely the intolerance and perplexity and a bit of anger that was being shown by the disbelievers towards the message and this is confirmed by the subsequent sentence.

16. They had a "grave doubt" about the message because it had taken away their peace of mind. This was because invitation to the message always makes the minds uneasy, for it becomes hard even for its opponents to reject it outright or oppose it with peace of mind. Howsoever they might give vent to their doubts about it and oppose it tooth and nail the force of its truth and its sound arguments, its frankness and candor and its winning manners of exposition produce a great agitation in the minds of its bitterest opponents. Then the pure and spotless character of the Messenger and the marked change for the better brought about in his followers produce such an accumulative effect on their minds that even their most bitter antagonists begin to feel uneasy about their own stand. Thus, those who try to disturb the peace of mind of the upholders of the truth are themselves deprived of their own peace of mind.

قَالَتْ رُسُلُهُمْ اَفِي اللّٰهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ يَدْعُوْكُمْ لِيَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ
ذُنُوْبِكُمْ وَيُؤَخِّرَكُمْ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ؕ قَالُوْٓا اِنْ اَنْتُمْ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا ؕ تُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ
تَصُدُّوْنَا عَمَّا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ اٰبَآؤُنَا فَاْتُوْنَا بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ 10

(14:10) Their Messengers said: "Can there be any doubt about Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth?[17] He invites you that He may forgive you your sins and grant you respite till an appointed term."[18] They replied: "You are only a human being like ourselves.[19] You seek to prevent us from serving those whom our forefathers have been serving all along. If that is so, produce a clear authority for it."[20]

17. The Messengers posed this question to those who rejected the message in order to bring home to them the absurdity of their stand with regard to God. For though, the mushriks of every age believed in the existence of God and acknowledged that He was the Creator of the heavens and the earth, they did not accept the message, its logical result, that He alone was entitled to their worship. That is why the Messengers asked them: Do you have any doubt about the existence of Allah?

18. In the case of individuals, the appointed term may be either the time of one's death or the doomsday. As regards the appointed term for the rise and fall of communities, it is determined by their collective behavior. For instance, if a capable community degenerates before the expiry of its term, the assigned period is shortened and it is deposed. On the other hand, if a degenerate community changes its ways for the better, its term is extended, so much so that it may extend even to the doomsday. This same thing is implied in (Ayat 11 of Surah Ar-Raad): The fact is that Allah does not change a people's lot unless they themselves change their own characteristics.

19. The disbelievers meant to imply: You are a human being like us in every respect: you eat, drink and sleep like us and have wife and children like us. You feel hungry and thirsty, and suffer from heat and cold, disease and calamities like us. In short, you have every human limitation like us, and we see nothing unusual and extraordinary in you to induct us to

accept you as a Prophet and believe that God communicates with you and sends His angels to you.

20. That is, if you still insist that you are a Prophet, bring a tangible proof of your appointment so as to convince us that you have really been sent by God and your message is from Him.

قَالَتْ لَهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ إِنْ نَّحْنُ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَمُنُّ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ ؕ وَمَا كَانَ لَنَآ اَنْ نَّاْتِيَكُمْ بِسُلْطٰنٍ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ 11

(14:11) Their Messengers told them: "Indeed we are only human beings like yourselves, but Allah bestows His favour on those of His servants whom He wills.[21] It does not lie in our power to produce any authority except by the leave of Allah. It is in Allah that the believers should put their trust.

21. That is, "No doubt we are human beings like you but it is Allah's will that He has chosen us from among you and blessed us with the knowledge of the Truth and keen discernment. And this is Allah's will and He has full powers to bestow anything on anyone He wills. We are not in a position to ask Him to send that blessing to you or to anyone else: nor can we deny the realities which have been shown to us."

وَمَا لَنَآ اَلَّا نَتَوَكَّلَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ وَقَدْ هَدٰىنَا سُبُلَنَا ؕ وَلَنَصْبِرَنَّ عَلٰى مَآ اٰذَيْتُمُوْنَا ؕ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُوْنَ ع 12

(14:12) And why should we not put our trust in Allah when it is indeed He Who has guided us to the ways of our life? We shall surely continue to remain steadfast in face of your persecution. All those who have to put trust, should put their trust only in Allah."

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لِرُسُلِهِمْ لَنُخْرِجَنَّكُمْ مِّنْ اَرْضِنَآ اَوْ لَتَعُوْدُنَّ فِيْ مِلَّتِنَا ؕ فَاَوْحٰٓى اِلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ لَنُهْلِكَنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۙ 13

(14:13) Then the unbelievers told their Messengers: "You will have to return to the fold of our faith[22] or else we shall banish you from our land." Thereupon their Lord revealed to them: "We will most certainly destroy these wrong-doers,

22. It will be wrong to conclude from this demand of theirs that the Prophets professed the religion of their people before their appointment to the divine office. This only meant that

their people thought so because before their appointment they led a quiet life and did not propagate a new religion nor refuted the religion in vogue at that time. That is why their people were under the wrong impression that the Prophets also professed the religion of their forefathers, and, therefore, accused them of apostasy. The fact, however, is that they had never followed the religion of their mushrik forefathers and were not guilty of apostasy.

وَلَنُسْكِنَنَّكُمُ الْأَرْضَ مِنۢ بَعْدِهِمْ ۚ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامِيْ وَخَافَ وَعِيْدِ 14

(14:14) and will then cause you to settle in the land[23] as their successors. That is the reward for him who fears to stand for reckoning and holds My threat in awe."

23. This was to reassure the Prophets that they should not worry at all about the threat that the disbelievers would banish them from their country, as if to say: We will uproot them from their land, and establish you and your followers firmly in their place.

وَاسْتَفْتَحُوْا وَخَابَ كُلُّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيْدٍ ۙ 15

(14:15) They sought Our judgement. And (thanks to that judgement) every obstinate tyrant opposed to the Truth was brought to naught.[24]

24. In order to grasp the real significance of these historical events, it should be kept in view that these are being related here as answers to those objections which the disbelievers of Makkah raised before the Prophet (peace be upon him). As the conditions there at the time of the revelation of this Surah were exactly like those of the peoples of the former Prophets, they have been cited here to warn the Quraish along with the other mushriks of Arabia of the consequences, as if to say: The former disbelievers challenged their Messengers and were destroyed and the believers were established in the land. Likewise your future also entirely depends on the attitude you adopt towards the message of your Prophet. If you accept this, you will be allowed to remain in the land of Arabia, and if you reject it you shall be utterly uprooted from here. The subsequent events proved that this prophecy was literally fulfilled within fifteen years after this, for there remained not a single mushrik in the whole of Arabia.

مِّنْ وَّرَآئِهٖ جَهَنَّمُ وَيُسْقٰى مِنْ مَّآءٍ صَدِيْدٍ ۙ 16

(14:16) Hell is before him and he shall be made to drink of the oozing pus,

يَّتَجَرَّعُهٗ وَلَا يَكَادُ يُسِيْغُهٗ وَيَاْتِيْهِ الْمَوْتُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَّمَا هُوَ بِمَيِّتٍ ۭ وَمِنْ وَّرَآئِهٖ عَذَابٌ غَلِيْظٌ 17

(14:17) which he will gulp but will scarcely swallow, and death will come upon him from every quarter, and yet he will not be able to die. A terrible chastisement lies ahead in pursuit of him.

مَثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِرَبِّهِمْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ كَرَمَادِ ِۨاشْتَدَّتْ بِهِ الرِّيْحُ فِيْ يَوْمٍ عَاصِفٍ ؕ لَا
يَقْدِرُوْنَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوْا عَلٰى شَيْءٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الضَّلٰلُ الْبَعِيْدُ 18

(14:18) This is the example of those who disbelieve in their Lord: their works are like ashes upon which the wind blows fiercely on a tempestuous day. They shall find no reward for their deeds.[25] That indeed is the farthest point in straying.

25. That is, those who were perfidious, faithless, and disobedient to the divine message, and refused to adopt that way to which the Messengers invited, will find in the end that all the deeds and earnings of their lives were as worthless as a heap of ashes. Just as each and every particle of a high mound of ashes formed during a long course of years is scattered by the wind on a stormy day, likewise all their grand works will prove on the stormy doomsday to be no more than a mound of ashes. Their dazzling culture, their grand civilization, their wonderful kingdoms and states, their magnificent universities, their sciences and their literatures, nay, even their hypocritical worship, and so called virtuous deeds, their charitable and reformative works of which they were very proud in the worldly life, shall prove to be as worthless as a heap of ashes, and will be scattered by the storm of the Day of Resurrection. So much so that there shall not remain a single particle of their works worthy of being placed in the divine scale on that Day in their favor.

اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ اِنْ يَّشَاْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَاْتِ بِخَلْقٍ
جَدِيْدٍ ۙ 19

(14:19) Do you not see that Allah created the heavens and the earth in Truth?[26] Were He to will, He could take you away and bring a new creation.

26. This is the proof of the preceding statement that the works of the disbelievers are worthless like ashes. The question implies: Why are you skeptical of this? Do you not see that the grand system of the earth and the heavens is based on the survival of truth and not on the survival of falsehood. Everything bears witness to the fact that anything which is not based on truth and reality but rests on unreal speculation and guess work cannot continue to live long. Therefore anyone who builds his works on the latter will most surely fail in his designs. For it is obvious that such a person builds his works on sand and should not, therefore, expect that they can last long. Likewise those who discard the truth and reality and build their works on false theories and presumptions should not expect at all that they can have any lasting value for they are bound to be scattered like worthless ashes. If this is obvious as it is, why should you cherish any doubts about the fact that anyone who builds the system of his life on the basis that he is independent of Allah or on the godhead of

someone else (whereas there is no other God) shall inevitably find all his works to be worthless. When the fact is that man is not absolutely independent in this world nor is he the servant of anyone else than Allah, why should you not expect that anyone who builds his works on this falsehood, shall find that all his works were worthless like the heap of ashes that was scattered all over by the wind?

وَّمَا ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ بِعَزِيْزٍ 20

(14:20) That is not at all difficult for Allah.[27]

27. This is by way of admonition that follows immediately the proof of the statement in the preceding verse. This removes also any doubt that might arise concerning that decisive statement. One might question it like this: If the creation is really based on the survival of truth, why is it that every follower of falsehood and every wrongdoer is not destroyed forthwith? This is the answer: O foolish man, do you think that it is difficult for Allah to destroy such a person? Or, do you think that Allah does not destroy him because he has some close relationship with Him? If this is not so, and you yourself know that it is not so, you should understand it well that any community that follows falsehood and commits wicked deeds is always in danger of being removed to make room for a better community to work in its stead. If respite is given and the threat does not take a practical shape, it does not mean that there is no danger at all. Instead of being neglectful, you should make use of every moment of this respite and realize that the false system which you are following is not stable and durable. You should, therefore, build it on stable and durable foundations.

وَبَرَزُوْا لِلّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا فَقَالَ الضُّعَفٰٓؤُا لِلَّذِيْنَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْٓا اِنَّا كُنَّا لَكُمْ تَبَعًا فَهَلْ اَنْتُمْ
مُّغْنُوْنَ عَنَّا مِنْ عَذَابِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ؕ قَالُوْا لَوْ هَدٰىنَا اللّٰهُ لَهَدَيْنٰكُمْ ؕ سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْنَآ اَجَزِعْنَآ
اَمْ صَبَرْنَا مَا لَنَا مِنْ مَّحِيْصٍ ع 21

(14:21) Then all of them will appear exposed before Allah,[28] and the weak ones will say to the haughty ones: "We merely followed you. Will you, then, protect us from Allah's chastisement?" They will say: "Had Allah shown us the Way to our salvation, we would surely have also guided you. Now it is all the same whether we cry or suffer patiently, we have no escape."[29]

28. The word baruz means to emerge and also implies to become known. That is why it has been translated into “shall appear before Allah”, for it implies both these meanings. As a matter of fact, all the people are fully exposed all the time before Allah but they do not realize it. They will, however, realize it on the Day of Judgment when they shall be presented before the Greatest of all Judges that they were fully exposed before Him all along. So much so that every deed they did and each and everything they thought and desired is known to Him.

29. This is to serve as a warning to all those people who follow others blindly or obey and submit to tyrants because they say: We are weak. They are warned, as if to say: You should note it well that those leaders, saints, officers and rulers whom you arc following blindly today, will not be able to protect you at all from the chastisement of Allah. Therefore, you should consider it well today where such people, whom you are following or obeying, are themselves going and where they are leading you.

وَقَالَ الشَّيْطٰنُ لَمَّا قُضِيَ الْاَمْرُ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعْدَ الْحَقِّ وَوَعَدْتُّكُمْ فَاَخْلَفْتُكُمْ ؕ وَمَا كَانَ لِيَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ سُلْطٰنٍ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاسْتَجَبْتُمْ لِيْ ۚ فَلَا تَلُوْمُوْنِيْ وَلُوْمُوْۤا اَنْفُسَكُمْ ؕ مَاۤ اَنَا بِمُصْرِخِكُمْ وَمَاۤ اَنْتُمْ بِمُصْرِخِيَّ ؕ اِنِّيْ كَفَرْتُ بِمَاۤ اَشْرَكْتُمُوْنِ مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ اِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ 22

(14:22) After the matter has been finally decided Satan will say: "Surely whatever Allah promised you was true; as for me, I went back on the promise I made to you.[30] I had no power over you except that I called you to my way and you responded to me.[31] So, do not blame me but blame yourselves. Here, neither I can come to your rescue, nor can you come to mine. I disavow your former act of associating me in the past with Allah.[32] A grievous chastisement inevitably lies ahead for such wrong-doers."

30. When the criminals will charge Satan with leading them astray, he will plead guilty, as if to say: You yourselves see now that all the promises and warnings made by Allah have come out true and all the promises which I made have proved to be false. I also confess that it was all deception that I gave you false assurances of prosperity, beguiled you by greed and enticed you in the snare of great expectations. I assured you that in the first instance there will be no life in the Hereafter, and that, if there be any, you will be freed by the intercession of such and such a saint. The only thing you have to do is to make offerings before him: then you may do whatever you please, for he will deliver you from all the consequences. I repeat that I said all these things and asked my agents to say the same.

31. That is, you cannot say and prove that it was I who forced you to follow the wrong way, whereas you wanted to follow the right way. You will yourselves admit that it is not so. I did no more than this that I invited you to falsehood in opposition to the invitation to the truth and tempted you to vice instead of virtue. But I had no power to force you to the wrong way, if you desired to follow the right way, when you had the power and the option to follow either of the ways. Now I am ready to bear the burden of the wicked invitation I extended to you, but you are not justified in any way to throw on me the burden of accepting my invitation for you did it on your own responsibility. You should, therefore, yourselves bear all its consequences.

32. This is a clear proof of shirk in practice, as apart from shirk in creed. As Satan will charge his followers with making him a partner with God, it is obvious that as far as creed is concerned there is no one who makes Satan a partner with God in His Godhead or His worship: nay, every one curses him for his evil ways. Nevertheless, people obey and submit to him and follow him blindly, as if he were their god and that is what has been termed shirk.

Let us now consider this thesis from the opposite point of view. Someone might say that this does not hold good, for this is based on a mere saying of Satan which has been cited here. First, this objection is not sound because Allah Himself would have refuted it, had it been baseless.

Secondly, this is not the only instance of shirk in practice in the Quran. Here are a few more instances of this.

(a) It charges the Jews and Christians with shirk because they set up their priests and monks as their Lords besides Allah. (Surah At-Tauba, Ayat 31).

(b) Those who follow the superstitious customs have been called mushriks. (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayats 136-139).

(c) Those who follow their lusts have been charged with making their selves as their god. (Al-Furqan, Ayat 43).

(d) Those who are disobedient to Allah have been accused of worshiping Satan. (Suranh Saba, Ayat 60).

(e) Those who follow man made laws without Allah's sanction have been reproved for setting up the makers of the laws without Allah's sanction as partners with God. (Surah Ham-Sajdah, Ayat 21).

All the above instances are clear proofs of the fact that shirk is not confined to this creed alone that one might set up a partner with Allah in His Godhead as an article of faith. But it is also shirk that one should follow and surrender to someone other than Allah without any divine sanction or in spite of a divine prohibition. Such a one shall be guilty of shirk even though the follower might be at the same time cursing him whom he follows and obeys. The only difference between the two kinds of shirk may be the extent of the crime and not its nature.

وَأُدْخِلَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا
بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ ۖ تَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيهَا سَلَامٌ 23

(14:23) As for those who had believed and did good in the world, they shall be admitted to the Gardens beneath which rivers flow. There, with the leave of Allah, they shall abide forever, and will be greeted with: "Peace".[33]

33. The Arabic word tahiyyah is literally a prayer for long life, but in usage it is a greeting at meeting. Therefore, the expression may mean: They will welcome one another with peace be upon you, or will be welcomed with these words. It may also be noted that the word salam implies both a prayer for peace and a congratulation on it.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ كَيۡفَ ضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ اَصۡلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَّفَرۡعُهَا فِى
السَّمَآءِ ۙ 24

(14:24) Do you not see how Allah has given the example of a good word?[34] It is like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and whose branches reach the sky,[35]

34. Though the expression literally means pure word, here it stands for truthful saying and righteous creed. According to the Quran, this saying and creed are the acceptance of the doctrine of Tauhid, belief in Prophethood and revelation, and in the life of the Hereafter, for it declares these things to be the fundamental truths.

35. This is to show the strength and extent of the pure word. As the entire system of the universe hangs upon the reality contained in this pure word which the believer professes, the earth and its entire system cooperates with him and the heaven with its entire system welcomes him. There is, therefore, no conflict between him and the law of nature, and everything in its very nature extends its help to him.

تُؤۡتِىۡۤ اُكُلَهَا كُلَّ حِيۡنٍۢ بِاِذۡنِ رَبِّهَا ؕ وَيَضۡرِبُ اللّٰهُ الۡاَمۡثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمۡ يَتَذَكَّرُوۡنَ 25

(14:25) ever yielding its fruit in every season with the leave of its Lord.[36] Allah gives examples for mankind that they may take heed.

36. That is, the pure word is so fruitful that every person (or community) who bases his system of life on it, gets benefit from it every moment for it helps to produce clearness in thought, balance in temperament, strength in character, purity in morals, firmness in conduct, righteousness in talk, straightforwardness in conversation, good temperament in social behavior, nobility in culture, justice and equity in economy, honesty in politics, nobility in war, sincerity in peace; confidence in promises and pledges. In short, it is the elixir that changes everything into gold if one makes the proper use of it. 2

وَمَثَلُ كَلِمَةٍ خَبِيۡثَةٍ كَشَجَرَةٍ خَبِيۡثَةِ ِۨ اجۡتُثَّتۡ مِنۡ فَوۡقِ الۡاَرۡضِ مَا لَهَا مِنۡ قَرَارٍ 26

(14:26) And the example of an evil word[37] is that of an evil tree, uprooted from the surface of the earth, wholly unable to endure.[38]

37. Evil word is the opposite of pure word. It may be applied to everything that is unreal and wrong but here it stands for any false creed that one might adopt as a basis of his

system of life, irrespective of whether it be atheism or heresy or disbelief or shirk or idol worship or any other ism that has not been brought by a Messenger.

38. And evil word (false creed) has no stability because it is against the law of nature. Therefore, everything in the universe opposes it and refutes it, as if the earth hates it and is ready to spit out its seeds every time they are sown in it, and if some seed succeeds in growing an evil tree, heaven suppresses down its branches. In fact, false creed could never have been allowed to develop, if man had not been given the freedom of choice and respite for work for the sake of his trial. That is why when same foolish people exert to establish a system of life on it, it is allowed to grow to a certain extent, but it produces nothing but harmful results as long as it lasts. And no sooner does it encounter with adverse circumstances than it is thoroughly uprooted from the earth.

The distinction between the pure word and the evil word is so apparent that anyone who makes a critical study of the religious, moral, intellectual and cultural history of the world can perceive it easily. For the pure word has always been the one and same during the whole history of mankind and has never been uprooted. On the contrary, there have been innumerable evil words but each and every one has been so uprooted that there has remained hardly anything of it except its name in the pages of history. Nay, some of these had proved to be so absurd that if these are mentioned today one wonders how one could have followed such nonsensical things.

There has been another noteworthy difference between the two words. Whenever and wherever the pure word has been adopted by an individual or a community, its blessings had not been confined to that individual and community but had benefited all around them. On the contrary, whenever and wherever an evil word has been adopted by an individual or a community, its evils had spread chaos and disorder all around them.

In this connection, it should also be noted that the parable of the pure word and the evil word explains the same theme that had been explained by the similitude of the mound of ashes that is blown away by the wind of the stormy day (Ayat 18) and of the foam of flood, and the scum of the melted metals. (Surah Ar-Raad, Ayat 17).

يُثَبِّتُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ وَيُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۙ وَيَفْعَلُ اللّٰهُ مَا يَشَآءُ ۧ 27

(14:27) Thus, through a firm word,[39] Allah grants firmness to the believers both in this world and in the Hereafter. As for the wrong-doers, Allah lets them go astray.[40] Allah does whatever He wills.

39. That is, the believers remain steadfast during the life of this world because of their stable system of life based on this pure word. For this gives than a straight point of view, a sound system of thought and a comprehensive theory of life, and it serves as a master key to the unraveling of all knots and the solving of all problems. With its help, they acquire that strength of character and that firmness of conduct which keep them steady in the face of

every vicissitude of life. This provides them also with such solid principles of life which give them peace of mind and heart, and prevent them from deviation and caprice. Above all, when, after the life of this world, they will enter into the life of the Hereafter, they will remain perfectly calm without any tinge of fear or anxiety, for they will find everything therein to be in accordance with their expectations, as if they were fully acquainted with every aspect of it before they entered into it. For they had been fully informed of, and therefore fully prepared for every stage and phase of this life. That is why they will pass through every stage with perfect calmness and firmness in contrast to the disbelievers who built their worldly lives on an evil word and will, therefore, be taken aback to find everything against their expectations.

40. That is, Allah lets the transgressors, who discard the pure word and follow an evil word, go astray by creating confusion in their minds and misdirecting their efforts because of this deviation. That is why they cannot find the right way of thought and action and so fail miserably.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيۡنَ بَدَّلُوۡا نِعۡمَتَ اللّٰهِ كُفۡرًا وَّاَحَلُّوۡا قَوۡمَهُمۡ دَارَ الۡبَوَارِ ۙ 28

(14:28) Did you not see those who have exchanged Allah's favour with ingratitude to Him, causing their people to be cast in the abode of utter perdition

جَهَنَّمَ ۚ يَصۡلَوۡنَهَا ؕ وَبِئۡسَ الۡقَرَارُ 29

(14:29) Hell, wherein they shall roast? How wretched a place to settle in!

وَجَعَلُوۡا لِلّٰهِ اَنۡدَادًا لِّيُضِلُّوۡا عَنۡ سَبِيۡلِهٖ ؕ قُلۡ تَمَتَّعُوۡا فَاِنَّ مَصِيۡرَكُمۡ اِلَى النَّارِ 30

(14:30) They have set up rivals to Allah that they may lead people astray from His way. Tell them: "Enjoy for a while. You are doomed to end up in the Fire!"

قُلۡ لِّعِبَادِىَ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا يُقِيۡمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُنۡفِقُوۡا مِمَّا رَزَقۡنٰهُمۡ سِرًّا وَّعَلَانِيَةً مِّنۡ قَبۡلِ

اَنۡ يَّاۡتِىَ يَوۡمٌ لَّا بَيۡعٌ فِيۡهِ وَلَا خِلٰلٌ 31

(14:31) (O Prophet), tell those of My servants who believe that they should establish Prayer and spend out of what We have provided them with,41 both secretly and openly, before there arrives the Day when there will be no bargaining, nor any mutual befriending.42

41. That is, the believers should adopt an attitude of gratitude in contrast to the disbelievers (Ayat 29). The practical form their gratitude should take is that they should establish Salat and spend their wealth in the way of Allah.

42. That is, on that Day none shall be able to rescue himself either by ransom or by intercession.

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَاَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَخْرَجَ بِهٖ مِنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ
رِزْقًا لَّكُمْ ۚ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْفُلْكَ لِتَجْرِیَ فِی الْبَحْرِ بِاَمْرِهٖ ۚ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْاَنْهٰرَ ۚ 32

(14:32) It is Allah[43] Who created the heavens and the earth, Who sent down water from the heaven and thereby brought forth a variety of fruits as your sustenance, Who subjected for you the ships that they may sail in the sea by His command, Who subjected for you the rivers,

43. That is, it is the same Allah Whose bounties they are repaying with ingratitude and disobedience and with Whom they are setting up equals even though He has been so bountiful to them.

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ دَآئِبَیْنِ ۚ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الَّیْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ۚ 33

(14:33) Who subjected for you the sun and the moon and both of them are constant on their courses, Who subjected for you the night and the day,[44]

44. The words sakh-khara-lakum of the text in (Ayats 32-33) have misled those people who have translated these into "subjected to you". So much so that some of them interpret these verses to mean that the main aim of the life of man is to bring the earth and heavens under his subjection, whereas their real meaning is "the earth and heavens are subjected to certain laws and they serve you under these laws." As a matter of fact Allah has subjected all these things to such laws as are beneficial for man. Had not a ship been subjected to certain physical laws, there could have been no navigation at all. Had not a river been subjected to certain laws, it could not have been possible to take out canals from them. Likewise if the heavenly bodies (the sun and the moon, etc.) and the earth and day and night had not been subjected to certain fixed laws, life could not have been possible, not to speak of civilized life

وَاٰتٰىكُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ مَا سَاَلْتُمُوْهُ ؕ وَاِنْ تَعُدُّوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ لَا تُحْصُوْهَا ؕ اِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ
لَظَلُوْمٌ كَفَّارٌ ۧ 34

(14:34) and Who gave you all that you asked Him for.[45] Were you to count the favours of Allah you shall never be able to encompass them. Verily man is highly unjust, exceedingly ungrateful.

45. "And He gave you from all that you asked of Him": He has provided for everything that is required for your life, its development and evolution.

وَاِذۡ قَالَ اِبۡرٰهِيۡمُ رَبِّ اجۡعَلۡ هٰذَا الۡبَلَدَ اٰمِنًا وَّاجۡنُبۡنِىۡ وَبَنِىَّ اَنۡ نَّعۡبُدَ الۡاَصۡنَامَ ؕ 35

(14:35) And call to mind when Abraham prayed:[46] "My Lord! Make this city[47] secure, and keep me and my sons away from worshipping the idols.

46. In the preceding (verses 32-35), an appeal was made to the Quraish to be grateful to that Allah Who has bestowed so many bounties on mankind in general. But in this passage the same appeal is being made on the plea that Allah had bestowed His special bounties on the Quraish in particular. They have been asked to remember that Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) had settled forefathers of the Quraish near the Kabah and made their city, Makkah, a city of peace and Allah showered His blessings on the Quraish in answer to the prayer of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him). They have been admonished to remember those bounties and mend their ways.

47. Makkah.

رَبِّ اِنَّهُنَّ اَضۡلَلۡنَ كَثِيۡرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ ۚ فَمَنۡ تَبِعَنِىۡ فَاِنَّهٗ مِنِّىۡ ۚ وَمَنۡ عَصَانِىۡ فَاِنَّكَ غَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِيۡمٌ 36

(14:36) My Lord! They have caused[48] many people to go astray. Now, if anyone follows my way, he is from me; and if anyone follows a way opposed to mine, then surely You are Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful."[49]

48. This is a figurative way of saying that idols have been the means of turning many people away from Allah's way into the ways of deviation.

49. This forbearance shown towards those who followed a different way from the right way is an instance of Prophet Abraham's (peace be upon him) leniency to mankind. He left their case to the Forgiveness and Mercy of Allah for he could not bear to see them under divine scourge. Another instance of this has been cited in Surah Houd. When the angels were on their way to destroy the wicked people of Lot, Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) began to plead for them: Abraham began to dispute with Us concerning the people of Lot for he was tender hearted and merciful. (Surah Houd, Ayats 74-75). Likewise Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) was so tender hearted that even when Allah will show to him that his followers had deviated from the right way, he will plead their case: Now if you punish them, they are your own servants, and if you forgive them, you are All-Mighty and All-Wise. (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 118).

رَبَّنَآ اِنِّيْٓ اَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِيْ بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِيْ زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ ۙ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيْمُوا
الصَّلٰوةَ فَاجْعَلْ اَفْـِٕدَةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِيْٓ اِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِّنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَشْكُرُوْنَ 37

(14:37) "Our Lord! I have made some of my offspring settle in a barren valley near Your Sacred House! Our Lord! I did so that they may establish Prayer. So make the hearts of people affectionately inclined to them, and provide them with fruits for their sustenance[50] that they may give thanks.

50. Allah granted this prayer of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him). That was why people from the whole of Arabia used to come there for Hajj and Umrah at the time of the revelation of this Surah, and now people gather there from all over the world.

Besides this, there is plenty of food and fruit in all seasons of the year, though the valley is absolutely barren and no vegetation grows in it even for animals.

رَبَّنَآ اِنَّكَ تَعْلَمُ مَا نُخْفِيْ وَمَا نُعْلِنُ ۭ وَمَا يَخْفٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فِي
السَّمَاۗءِ 38

(14:38) Our Lord! Surely You know all that we conceal and all that we reveal,[51] and nothing in the earth or in the heaven is hidden from Allah.[52]

51. That is, Lord: You hears what I utter with my tongue and also has full knowledge of my thoughts and feelings.

52. This parenthetical clause has been inserted to confirm the statement of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him).

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْ وَهَبَ لِيْ عَلَى الْكِبَرِ اِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَاِسْحٰقَ ۭ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ لَسَمِيْعُ الدُّعَاۗءِ 39

(14:39) All praise be to Allah Who, despite my old age, has given me Ishmael and Isaac. Surely my Lord hears all prayers.

رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِيْ مُقِيْمَ الصَّلٰوةِ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِيْ ڰ رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَاۗءِ 40

(14:40) My Lord! Enable me and my offspring to establish Prayer, and do accept, our Lord, this prayer of mine.

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لِيْ وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ يَوْمَ يَقُوْمُ الْحِسَابُ ع 41

(14:41) Our Lord! Forgive me and my parents and the believers on the Day when the reckoning will take place."[53]

53. Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) included his mushrik father in his prayer because he had made promise that he would pray to his Lord for his forgiveness (Surah Maryam, Ayat 48). But afterwards, when he realized that he should not pray for his forgiveness because he was an enemy of Allah, he absolved himself of that promise. (Surah At-Tauba, Ayat 114).

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَافِلًا عَمَّا يَعْمَلُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ۬ ط اِنَّمَا يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ تَشْخَصُ فِيْهِ
الْاَبْصَارُ لا 42

(14:42) Do not think Allah is heedless of the evil deeds in which the evil-doers are engaged. He is merely granting them respite until a Day when their eyes shall continue to stare in horror,

مُهْطِعِيْنَ مُقْنِعِيْ رُءُوْسِهِمْ لَا يَرْتَدُّ اِلَيْهِمْ طَرْفُهُمْ ج وَاَفْئِدَتُهُمْ هَوَآءٌ ط 43

(14:43) when they shall keep pressing ahead in haste, their heads lifted up, their gaze directed forward,[54] unable to look away from what they behold, their hearts utterly void.

54. This graphic picture depicts the horrible plight of the wrongdoers on the Day of Reckoning. When they will realize the situation, they will be so taken aback that they will have their looks fixed straight in front of them without seeing anything.

وَاَنْذِرِ النَّاسَ يَوْمَ يَاْتِيْهِمُ الْعَذَابُ فَيَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا رَبَّنَآ اَخِّرْنَآ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ
قَرِيْبٍ لا نُّجِبْ دَعْوَتَكَ وَنَتَّبِعِ الرُّسُلَ ط اَوَلَمْ تَكُوْنُوْٓا اَقْسَمْتُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ
زَوَالٍ لا 44

(14:44) (O Muhammad), warn mankind of the Day when a severe chastisement shall overtake them, and the wrong-doers will say: "Our Lord, grant us respite for a short while; we shall respond to Your call and will follow Your Messengers." (But they will be clearly told): "Are you not the same who swore earlier that they shall never suffer decline?"

وَّسَكَنْتُمْ فِيْ مَسٰكِنِ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ كَيْفَ فَعَلْنَا بِهِمْ وَضَرَبْنَا

لَكُمُ الْاَمْثَالَ 45

(14:45) You said so even though you had lived in the dwellings of those who had wronged themselves (by sinning), and you were aware how We dealt with them, and We had even explained to you all this by giving examples.

وَقَدْ مَكَرُوْا مَكْرَهُمْ وَعِنْدَ اللّٰهِ مَكْرُهُمْ ؕ وَاِنْ كَانَ مَكْرُهُمْ لِتَزُوْلَ مِنْهُ الْجِبَالُ 46

(14:46) Indeed the unbelievers contrived their plan, but it is in Allah's power to nullify their plan, even though their plans were such that would move even mountains.[55]

55. That is, you have seen that the former people who violated the divine law, and who opposed the message, devised very effective and cunning schemes to avert the consequences of their iniquity, but Allah defeated them with His single counter device. You did not give up your crafty schemes against the message of truth in the vain hope that your strong measures would succeed where the schemes of your predecessors had failed.

فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللّٰهَ مُخْلِفَ وَعْدِهٖ رُسُلَهٗ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ ؕ 47

(14:47) So, do not think, (O Prophet), that Allah will go back upon His promise to His Messengers.[56] Surely Allah is Mighty, Lord of retribution.

56. Though this has been addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), it is really meant for his opponents. They are being warned that they should not delude themselves because of the delay in their punishment. They should note it well that Allah fulfilled the promises He made to the former Messengers and defeated their opponents. Likewise He will surely fulfill the promises He had made to Muhammad (peace be upon him).

يَوْمَ تُبَدَّلُ الْاَرْضُ غَيْرَ الْاَرْضِ وَالسَّمٰوٰتُ وَبَرَزُوْا لِلّٰهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ 48

(14:48) (Do warn them of the) Day when the heavens and the earth shall be altogether changed;[57] when all will appear fully exposed before Allah, the One, the Irresistible!

57. It is obvious from this verse and some hints in the Quran that on the occasion of Resurrection, the Earth and the Heavens will not be totally destroyed but at the blowing of the First Trumpet, the existing physical system shall be disarranged. After this, between the blowing of the First and the Last Trumpet (Allah alone knows how long this interval will last), the present form and aspect of the earth and the heavens shall be transformed and a new physical system with new physical laws will come into existence. That will be the world of the Hereafter. When the Last Trumpet will be blown, all human beings from Adam to those born before the First Trumpet, shall be brought to life and appear before Allah. The

Quran calls this Hashr which literally means “to muster and gather together”. It appears from the wording of the Quran and some clear statements in the traditions that this will take place on this Earth. The Seat of Judgment and the Scales will be established on the Earth and the decisions will be passed here. This is also clear from the Quran and the traditions that the life in the Hereafter will not merely be a spiritual life but the very physical and spiritual life which we are living now on this earth; and every individual shall receive his reward or punishment exactly in that personality in which he or she is living in the life of this world. 4

وَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُّقَرَّنِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ ۚ 49

(14:49) On that Day you shall see the guilty ones secured in chains;

سَرَابِيلُهُم مِّن قَطِرَانٍ وَتَغْشَىٰ وُجُوهَهُمُ النَّارُ ۙ 50

(14:50) their garments shall be black[58] as if made out of pitch, and flames of the Fire shall cover their faces

58. Some commentators and translators are of the opinion that Qatiran stands for sulphur or molten copper but actually it stands for tar and the like.

لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ 51

(14:51) so that Allah may requite each person for his deeds. Allah is swift in reckoning.

هَٰذَا بَلَاغٌ لِّلنَّاسِ وَلِيُنذَرُوا بِهِ وَلِيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَلِيَذَّكَّرَ أُولُو

الْأَلْبَابِ ۝ 52

(14:52) This is a proclamation for all mankind that they may be warned by it, and that they may know that their God is none but the One True God, and that men of understanding may take heed.

15. Surah Al Hijr (The Rocky Tract)

Name

This Surah takes its name from v. 80.

Period of Revelation

It is clear from its topics and style that the period of its revelation is about the same as that of Surah Ibrahim, for two things are quite prominent in its background. First, it appears from the repeated warnings in this Surah that in spite of the fact that the Holy Prophet had been propagating the Message for many years, his people in general had not shown any inclination towards its acceptance nay, they had become more and more obdurate and stubborn in their antagonism, enmity and ridicule with the passage of time. Secondly, by that time the Holy Prophet had begun to feel a little tired of making strenuous efforts to eradicate disbelief and opposition of his people. That is why Allah has consoled and comforted him over and over again by way of encouragement.

Topics and the Central Theme

Though the main topics of the surah are:

1. warning to those who rejected his Message, opposed it tooth and nail, and ridiculed him, and
2. comfort and encouragement to the Holy Prophet,

It does not mean that this Surah does not contain admonition and instructions. As a matter of fact, the Quran never confines itself to mere warning; rebuke and censure, but resorts to precept in every suitable place. Accordingly, this Surah contains brief arguments for Tauhid on the one hand, and admonition in the story of Adam and Satan on the other.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

الٓرٰ ۟ تِلۡکَ اٰیٰتُ الۡکِتٰبِ وَقُرۡاٰنٍ مُّبِیۡنٍ ۱

(15:1) Alif. Lam. Ra'. These are the verses of the Book, and a Clear Qur'an.[1]

1. This verse is the brief introduction to the Surah, and immediately after this begins its theme. “These are the verses of the Book and a clear Quran”: These are the verses of that Quran which makes its meaning lucid and understandable.

رُبَمَا یَوَدُّ الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا لَوۡ کَانُوۡا مُسۡلِمِیۡنَ ۲

(15:2) Soon will the time come when the unbelievers will wish they were Muslims.

ذَرْهُمْ يَأْكُلُوا وَيَتَمَتَّعُوا وَيُلْهِهِمُ الْأَمَلُ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ 3

(15:3) Leave them to eat and enjoy life and let false hopes amuse them. They will soon come to know.

وَمَا أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا وَلَهَا كِتَابٌ مَّعْلُومٌ 4

(15:4) Whenever We destroyed a town, a definite term had previously been decreed for it.[2]

2. This is to refute the fallacious argument of the disbelievers that Muhammad (peace be upon him) was not a true Prophet because they had received no prompt punishment for their disbelief. It is like this: We have never seized a community at the first committal of kufr.

We prescribe a limit for every community to hear and understand the message and reform its ways. Then We tolerate its mischief and evil deeds up to that limit and allow it full freedom to do as it likes, and give it respite till the term expires. That is why We are tolerating their attitude of ridicule and denial. (For the full meaning of respite, please refer to (E.N. 18 of Surah Ibrahim).

مَا تَسْبِقُ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلَهَا وَمَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ 5

(15:5) No people can outstrip the term for its destruction nor can it delay it.

وَقَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِي نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ إِنَّكَ لَمَجْنُونٌ 6

(15:6) They say: "O you to whom the Admonition[3] has been revealed, you are surely crazed.

3. The word zikr literally means “to cause to remember”, “to caution” and “to give advice”. But the Quran has used it as a technical term for “admonition”, which comes as a precept. Thus all the Books that had been sent down to the Messengers were zikr, and the Quran is also zikr.

لَوْ مَا تَأْتِينَا بِالْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ 7

(15:7) Why do you not bring down angels upon us if you are indeed truthful?"

مَا نُنَزِّلُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَمَا كَانُوا إِذًا مُّنظَرِينَ 8

(15:8) We do not send down the angels (in frivolity); and when We do send them down,[4] We do so with Truth; then people are granted no respite.[5]

4. This was a sarcastic remark that was made by the opponents, for they did not acknowledge that the admonition had been sent down to the Prophet (peace be upon him): otherwise they could not say that he was insane. What they really meant by this remark was: You, who claim that the admonition has been sent down to you, are insane. A similar remark was also made by Pharaoh concerning Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). Addressing his courtiers, he said: The Messenger who has been sent to you is insane. (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayat 27).

5. "We do not send down the angels." We do not send down the angels for the mere fun of it in response to the request of the people, nor are they sent to unveil the reality before them in order to show to them all the unseen things to which the Messengers invite them to believe. As a matter of fact, angels are sent down on that occasion when it is decreed to pass judgment on sane wicked people. At that time the judgment comes into operation without extending any invitation to the condemned people to accept the message, for their period of respite ends as soon as the reality is unveiled before them. "Except with truth."

They bring down truth with them. That is, they come down to eradicate falsehood and to establish truth in its stead. Or, in other words, it means, they come down to put into force the judgment of Allah.

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ 9

(15:9) As for the Admonition, indeed it is We Who have revealed it and it is indeed We Who are its guardians.[6]

6. That is, you should note it well that it is We Who have sent down this zikr. Thus it is not Our Messenger whom you are calling insane but in fact this abusive remark applies to Us. Moreover, you should know that it is Our Word and We are preserving it. Therefore, you can do no harm to it, nor can you discredit it by your ridicules, taunts and objections, nor can you hamper its progress. Whatever you may do against it, no one will ever be able to change or tamper with it.

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ فِي شِيَعِ الْأَوَّلِينَ 10

(15:10) (O Muhammad), certainly We did send Messengers before you among the nations which have gone by.

وَمَا يَأْتِيهِم مِّن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ 11

(15:11) And whenever a Messenger came to them, they never failed to mock him.

كَذَٰلِكَ نَسْلُكُهُ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ 12

(15:12) Even so We make a way for it (that is, the Admonition) in the hearts of the culprits (like a hot rod);

لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِۦ ۚ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ سُنَّةُ ٱلْأَوَّلِينَ 13

(15:13) they do not believe in it.[7] This has been the wont of people of this kind from ancient times.

7. The majority of the translators and commentators are of the opinion that the pronoun "it"(Ayat 12), refers to their mockery, occurring in (Ayat 11), and in "they would not believe in it" in (Ayat 13), refers to the admonition occurring in (Ayat 9). Then (Ayats 12-13) will be rendered like this: "Thus we cause mockery enter into the hearts of the criminals and they do not believe in the admonition". Though grammatically there is nothing wrong with this version, yet our version of "it" will be better even grammatically. According to this (Ayat 12) will mean, when the admonition enters into the hearts of the believers it gives them peace of mind and comfort of heart. But when the same enters into the hearts of the criminals it becomes a hot rod, and burns their minds and hearts.

وَلَوْ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَابًا مِّنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ فَظَلُّوا۟ فِيهِ يَعْرُجُونَ 14

(15:14) If We were even to open for them a way to the heavens, and they could continually climb up to it in broad daylight,

لَقَالُوٓا۟ إِنَّمَا سُكِّرَتْ أَبْصَٰرُنَا بَلْ نَحْنُ قَوْمٌ مَّسْحُورُونَ 15

(15:15) they would still have said: "Surely our eyes have been dazzled; rather, we have been enchanted."

وَلَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا فِى ٱلسَّمَآءِ بُرُوجًا وَزَيَّنَّٰهَا لِلنَّٰظِرِينَ 16

(15:16) We have indeed set constellations in the heavens[8] and have beautified them for the beholders,[9]

8. In the preceding(Ayats 14-15) it was stated that the disbelievers had become so hardened against the Quran that they would not have believed in it even if they had ascended the Heaven and seen with their own eyes the signs mentioned in it. Now in (Ayats 16-22), some of the signs are being cited in order to convince there of its truth.

Buruj (mansions of stars) are signs of Allah. For it is not possible to pass through one sphere of the Heaven into another, as each sphere of the space has been fortified by invisible boundaries. In this connection, it may be noted that literally the Arabic word burj means a fortified place, but as a technical term of ancient astronomy this stood for each of the twelve signs of the Zodiac, which marked the sun's path through the heavens. This has led some of the commentators to form the opinion that in this verse the word buruj refers to the same. But there are some others who think that it means stars or planets. However, if we consider

this word in the context of (Ayat 19), we are led to the conclusion that probably it stands for spheres.

9. "We have beautified it": We have placed a shining star or planet in each of these spheres and made them look beautiful. In other words, it means; We have not made the boundless universe dismal, desolate and frightful, but so beautiful that one finds marvelous order and harmony in it everywhere, and sights therein are so attractive that each one of these charms hearts and minds. This wonderful structure of the universe is a clear proof of the fact that its Creator is not only Great and All-Wise but is also a perfect Artist. The Quran has also stated this aspect of the Creator in (Surah As-Sajadah, Ayat 7): (Allah is) that God Who has created in perfect beauty everything He has created.

وَحَفِظْنٰهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْطٰنٍ رَّجِيْمٍ ۙ 17

(15:17) and have protected them against every accursed satan[10]

10. That is, these spheres are so fortified that they are beyond the reach of every Satan, for all Satans including those of jinns, have been confined to that sphere in which the Earth has been placed and they enjoy no more access to visit other spheres than the other dwellers of this sphere. This has been mentioned in order to remove a common misunderstanding. The common people believed, and still believe, that Satan and his descendants have a free access to every place in the universe. On the contrary, the Quran says that Satans cannot go beyond a certain limit and they have no unlimited power of ascension.

اِلَّا مَنِ اسْتَرَقَ السَّمْعَ فَاَتْبَعَهٗ شِهَابٌ مُّبِيْنٌ 18

(15:18) save him who may eavesdrop,[11] and then a bright flame pursues him.[12]

11. This is the answer to the false claim of the soothsayers, diviners, hermits, conjurers and the like who pretended to receive communications from the Heaven. The Quran says that in fact they do not possess any means of obtaining information about unseen things. Satans, however, try to eaves-drop because they are by nature more like angels than human beings, but in reality, they succeed in obtaining very little information about it.

12. In Arabic the word shihab-i-mubin literally means a fiery flame. In Surah (As-Saffaat, Ayat 10), the same thing has been called shihab-i-thaqib (flame that pierces through darkness). This may or may not necessarily be a meteor for it is just possible that it may be some type of rays such as cosmic rays or even a stronger type which we have not been able to discover as yet. Anyhow, if the fiery flame that pursues Satans may be taken to be a meteor, a countless number of these can form a fortification around our sphere of the universe. Scientific observations made with the help of the telescope have shown that billions of these meteors are rushing from space in a mass of rainfall. towards the earth's atmosphere. Such a scene was witnessed in an eastern pan of North America on November 13, 1833.

This is so strong a fortification that it can prevent Satans from passing through any fortified sphere. With the help of the above, one can form a mental picture of the "fortified spheres" . Though there is no visible "wall" to keep distinct and separate one sphere from the others, Allah has securely guarded each of these spheres by invisible "walls" against each other. That is why our "planet" has remained safe in spite of the occasional "rainfall" of countless meteors. For as soon as they cross the protective wall of our sphere, they are burnt to ashes. But sometimes a meteorite reaches the earth from outer space as if to warn the dwellers of this planet of the existence of the "power" of the Creator. For instance, the biggest of these weighs 645 pounds and it is obvious from this that if the earth had not been made safe and secure by means of "fortified spheres" the rain of the shooting stars would have utterly annihilated it long long ago. It is these "fortified spheres" which the Qur'an calls "buruj."

وَالْاَرْضَ مَدَدْنٰهَا وَاَلْقَيْنَا فِيْهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَاَنْۢبَتْنَا فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَّوْزُوْنٍ 19

(15:19) As for the earth, We have stretched it out and have cast on it firm mountains, and have caused to grow in it everything well-measured.[13]

13. The growth of every kind of plant in a limited extent is another sign of the wisdom and power of Allah. For the generative power of every vegetable plant is so great that if free growth had been allowed to even one kind of plant, it would have covered the whole surface of the earth. But it is by the design of the All-Wise and All-Powerful Creator that every kind of vegetable is produced in a balanced measure. There is another aspect of the vegetable life. Each and every kind of it is allowed to grow only to a fixed size, height, and thickness, which is a proof of the fact that the Creator himself prescribed the structure, the shape, the size, the height, the leaves and branches, and the number of each and every plant, and no plant is allowed to go beyond any of these fixed limits.

وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَعَايِشَ وَمَنْ لَّسْتُمْ لَهٗ بِرٰزِقِيْنَ 20

(15:20) And We have provided sustenance for you on it and also for those of whom you are not the providers.

وَاِنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَآئِنُهٗ ۫ وَمَا نُنَزِّلُهٗٓ اِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَّعْلُوْمٍ 21

(15:21) There is nothing except that its treasuries are with Us and We do not send it down except in a known measure.[14]

14. This is to bring home the fact that it is not vegetable life alone that has a fixed limit to its growth, etc. The same is true of everything that exists, whether it be air, water, light, heat, cold, mineral, vegetable, animal or power or energy, in short, each and every thing exists in the prescribed quantity, number, etc. which neither decreases nor increases. It is this determined course in each and every thing which has produced appropriate balance and proportion in the entire system of the universe to such a perfection that one is led to the inevitable conclusion that the whole thing has been designed by its All-Wise Creator. For, had the universe come into existence by mere accident or had it been created by many gods,

it was impossible to have such a perfect balance and appropriate proportion with perpetual consistence in so many different things and powers.

وَأَرْسَلْنَا الرِّيٰحَ لَوَاقِحَ فَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَأَسْقَيْنٰكُمُوْهُ ۚ وَمَآ أَنْتُمْ لَهٗ بِخٰزِنِيْنَ 22

(15:22) We send fertilizing winds, and then cause rain to descend from the sky, providing you abundant water to drink even though you could not have stored it up for yourselves.

وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ نُحْيٖ وَنُمِيْتُ وَنَحْنُ الْوٰرِثُوْنَ 23

(15:23) It is indeed We Who grant life and cause death and it is We who shall be the sole Inheritors of all.[15]

15. It is to impress this: Your worldly life and all you possess are transitory and temporary, and Allah alone is Eternal. Your end shall come sooner or later, and you shall leave everything behind in this world, which will again become a part of Our treasure.

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَقْدِمِيْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَأْخِرِيْنَ 24

(15:24) Surely We know those of you who have passed before and those who will come later.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ ۭ إِنَّهٗ حَكِيْمٌ عَلِيْمٌ ع 25

(15:25) Indeed your Lord will gather them all together. Surely He is All-Wise, All-Knowing.[16]

16. "He is All-Wise", therefore His Wisdom demands that He should gather the entire mankind and reward or punish each individual in accordance with his deeds. And "He is All-Knowing", therefore no individual, whosoever he may be, can escape from Him. As each and every particle of each and every individual is in His knowledge, He is able to bring entire mankind to life in the Hereafter. Thus anyone who denies life in the Hereafter is really ignorant of the Wisdom of Allah; and anyone who considers it impossible that those particles of the human body, which were all scattered about, could again be brought together in the form of the body that was alive, is ignorant of the All Comprehensive knowledge and power of Allah.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَإٍ مَّسْنُوْنٍ 26

(15:26) Surely We brought man into being out of dry ringing clay which was wrought from black mud,[17]

17. The Arabic word salsal means the dried clay which produces a sound like pottery.

Hams is the black mud which has become so rotten as to be in a fermented state.

Masnun has a double meaning: (a) rotten clay which has become greasy, (b) clay which has been molded into a shape. It is clear from the wording of the text that at first the image of man was made of clay from rotten earth and when it dried up, soul was breathed into it. Thus the Quran positively refutes the Darwinian theory of evolution that man came into existence after passing through continuous genetic adaptations. It will, therefore, be a futile attempt, as some modernized commentators have done, to prove that theory from the Quran.

وَالْجَآنَّ خَلَقْنٰهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ مِنْ نَّارِ السَّمُوْمِ 27

(15:27) while We had brought the jinn into being before out of blazing fire.[18]

18. As samum is not wind, nar-i-samum will mean flame of intense heat and not of fire. This is the explanation of those passages in which it has been stated that jinns have been created from fire.

وَاِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّيْ خَالِقٌۢ بَشَرًا مِّنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَاٍ مَّسْنُوْنٍ 28

(15:28) Recall when your Lord said to the angels: "I will indeed bring into being a human being out of dry ringing clay wrought from black mud.

فَاِذَا سَوَّيْتُهٗ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِيْ فَقَعُوْا لَهٗ سٰجِدِيْنَ 29

(15:29) When I have completed shaping him and have breathed into him of My Spirit,[19] then fall you down before him in prostration."

19. "And have breathed into him of My Spirit" means when I have cast a reflection of My divine characteristics on him. This shows that the soul of man implies life, knowledge, power, will, discretion and other human characteristics in the aggregate. These are in reality a slight reflection of divine characteristics that has been cast on the human body, which was originally created from dried clay. And it is this divine reflection on the human body which has raised him to the position of the vicegerent of Allah and made him that worthy being before whom angels and every earthly thing should bow down.

As a matter of fact, the source of each characteristic of everything is one divine characteristic or the other, as is borne by a tradition: Allah divided mercy into one hundred parts: then He reserved ninety-nine parts for Himself and sent down the remaining one part to the earth. It is because of that one part that the creatures show mercy to one another. So much so that it is due to this that an animal refrains from placing the hoof on its young ones.

In this connection one has to be on strict guard against the notion that the possession of a part of any divine characteristic amounts to the possession of a part of Godhead. This is because Godhead is absolutely beyond the reach of each and every creation.

فَسَجَدَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ اَجْمَعُوْنَ ۙ 30

(15:30) So, the angels - all of them - fell down in prostration,[20]

20. Please compare this passage (Ayats 30-43) with (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 30-39); (Surah An-Nisa, Ayats 117-120); and (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 11-25) and also refer to E.Ns appended to these Ayats.

اِلَّآ اِبْلِيْسَ ؕ اَبٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ مَعَ السّٰجِدِيْنَ 31

(15:31) except Iblis; he refused to join those who prostrated.

قَالَ يٰٓاِبْلِيْسُ مَا لَكَ اَلَّا تَكُوْنَ مَعَ السّٰجِدِيْنَ 32

(15:32) The Lord inquired: "Iblis! What is the matter with you that you did not join those who prostrated?"

قَالَ لَمْ اَكُنْ لِّاَسْجُدَ لِبَشَرٍ خَلَقْتَهٗ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَاٍ مَّسْنُوْنٍ 33

(15:33) He said: "It does not behove of me to prostrate myself before a human being whom You have created out of dry ringing clay wrought from black mud."

قَالَ فَاخْرُجْ مِنْهَا فَاِنَّكَ رَجِيْمٌ ۙ 34

(15:34) The Lord said: "Then get out of here; you are rejected,

وَّاِنَّ عَلَيْكَ اللَّعْنَةَ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ 35

(15:35) and there shall be a curse upon you till the Day of Recompense."[21]

21. That is, you shall remain accursed up to the Resurrection. Then you shall be punished for your disobedience on the Day of Judgment.

قَالَ رَبِّ فَاَنْظِرْنِيْٓ اِلٰى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُوْنَ 36

(15:36) Iblis said: "My Lord! Grant me respite till the Day when they will be resurrected."

قَالَ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنظَرِينَ ۙ 37

(15:37) Allah said: "For sure you are granted respite

إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ 38

(15:38) until the day of a known time."

قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأُزَيِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ۙ 39

(15:39) Iblis said: "My Lord! In the manner You led me to error, I will make things on earth seem attractive to them[22]and lead all of them to error,

22. That is, thou hast beguiled me by commanding me to bow down before a creature who is inferior to me: for it is obvious that I could not obey such an order. Therefore, I will now beguile them and disobey Thee. In other words, Iblis meant to say: I will make the worldly life, its enjoyments and its transitory benefits so alluring for man that he will forget the responsibilities of the vicegerent of Allah, and that he shall have to render his account in the Hereafter. They will also forget Thee and will disobey Thee, even though they would profess to remember Thee.

إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ 40

(15:40) except those of Your servants whom You have singled out for Yourself."

قَالَ هَٰذَا صِرَاطٌ عَلَيَّ مُسْتَقِيمٌ 41

(15:41) Allah said: "Here is the path that leads straight to Me.[23]

23. This (verse 41) may have another meaning: This is the right thing: I also will stick to this.

إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ 42

(15:42) Over My true servants you will be able to exercise no power, your power will be confined to the erring ones, those who choose to follow you.[24]

24. This (verse 42) also may have another meaning: You will have no power over My servants (common people) to force them to disobey Me. However, We will give freedom of action to those who will willingly or deliberately follow you, and we will not forcibly prevent them from your way, if they intended to follow you.

According to the first rendering, these verses will mean this: The way followed by My sincere servants is the only straight way to reach Me. Satan will have no power over those

people who follow it, for I will choose them to be My own servants. Satan himself admitted that he will not be able to entice them. On the contrary, he will succeed in beguiling those people who themselves will deviate from the way of obedience. They will then wander farther and farther away following his temptations and allurements.

According to the second meaning, the passage will mean this: When Satan challenged that he would beguile people from the way of Allah by making this worldly life very tempting to them, Allah accepted his challenge but made it clear to him that he was being allowed only to beguile people with temptation, but was not being given any power to force them to deviate from the right way. At this, Satan clarified that his challenge did not apply to those people whom Allah will choose for Himself. As this exception might have led to a misunderstanding that Allah may choose any people for Himself to keep them safe and secure from the reach of Satan, Allah clarified it, saying: Only that person will follow you, who himself will deviate from the right way. As a corollary to this, that person, who will not deviate from the right way will not follow you, and will, thus become Our servant, whom We will choose for Ourself.

وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمَوْعِدُهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ۙ لَا قف 43

(15:43) Surely Hell is the promised place for all of them."[25]

25. In order to comprehend the purpose for which the story of Prophet Adam and Satan has been related here, we should keep in mind the context in which this has occurred. In the preceding (verses 1-25), it has been stated that the disbelievers were following the ways of deviation that would lead them to perdition. This story has been related to warn them that the ways they were following were the ways of Satan, their eternal enemy, so as to say: You should realize the consequences of following Satan, who has enticed you in this snare, and is leading you to the lowest depths of degradation because of this enmity and envy. In contrast to this, Our Prophet is doing his utmost to free you from his snare and lead you to the height of success, which as a man you should desire to achieve. But it is a pity that you are regarding your enemy (Satan) as your friend, and your friend (Our Prophet) as your enemy.

Secondly, the story also makes quite clear to them this thing:

There is only one way of salvation and that is the way of obedience to Allah. If you discard this way, every other way will be a way of Satan which will take you directly to Hell. Then this story is meant to bring home to them this fact: You yourselves are responsible for your wrong deeds and not Satan; for, the most he can do is to beguile you from the obedience of Allah and hold temptations before you. It is, therefore, your own concern and responsibility to be beguiled or not to be beguiled by Satan.

لَهَا سَبْعَةُ أَبْوَابٍ ۖ لِّكُلِّ بَابٍ مِّنْهُمْ جُزْءٌ مَّقْسُومٌ ۚ ع 44

(15:44) There are seven gates in it, and to each gate a portion of them has been allotted.[26]

26. Sinners will be divided into different groups in accordance with their different sins for their entry into Hell from seven different gates specified for each different sin. For instance, the group of atheists shall enter into Hell by one of the seven gates specified for their group. Likewise, mushriks, hypocrites, self-seekers, sensualists, tyrants, propagandists and leaders of disbelief etc. shall each enter into Hell through the gates specified for their group.

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ۖ 45

(15:45) As for the God-fearing,[27] they shall be amid gardens and springs.

27. The righteous people are those who did not follow Satan but feared Allah and lived lives of obedience to Him.

ادْخُلُوهَا بِسَلَامٍ آمِنِينَ 46

(15:46) They will be told: "Enter it in peace and security."

وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِم مِّنْ غِلٍّ إِخْوَانًا عَلَىٰ سُرُرٍ مُّتَقَابِلِينَ 47

(15:47) And We shall purge their breasts of all traces of rancour;[28] and they shall be seated on couches facing one another as brothers.

28. That is, if any spite might have been caused in their hearts in this world because of misunderstandings between the pious people, it shall be removed at the time of their entry into Paradise and they will bear no ill feelings there against each other. Refer to (((E.N. 320 of Surah Al-Aaraf))).

لَا يَمَسُّهُمْ فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَمَا هُم مِّنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِينَ 48

(15:48) They shall face no fatigue in it, nor shall they ever be driven out of it.[29]

29. This verse is explained by the following tradition: It will be announced to the dwellers of the Gardens: Now you will remain hale and hearty forever and shall never fall ill, now you will enjoy eternal life and shall never die, now you will remain young forever and never grow old, and now you will remain forever in Paradise and shall never have to move away from it. There are other traditions that further elucidate life in Paradise to this effect: The dwellers shall have no toil to perform for their livelihood and necessities of life. They will get everything without any labor whatsoever.

نَبِّئْ عِبَادِي أَنِّي أَنَا الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ۙ 49

(15:49) (O Prophet), declare to My servants that I am indeed Ever Forgiving, Most Merciful.

وَاَنَّ عَذَابِيْ هُوَ الْعَذَابُ الْاَلِيْمُ 50

(15:50) At the same time, My chastisement is highly painful.

وَنَبِّئْهُمْ عَنْ ضَيْفِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ ۘ 51

(15:51) And tell them about Abraham's guests.[30]

30. The story of Prophets Abraham and Lot (peace be upon them) has been related to tell the disbelievers of Makkah how angels come down with truth. This was in response to their demand: Why do you not bring angels before us, if what you say is true? (Ayat 7). Then, only this brief answer was given: We do not send down angels in this way. When they come down, they come down with truth (Ayat 8). Now these two events are cited as two concrete forms of truth with which the angels came, as if to ask the disbelievers: Now decide for yourselves which of these two forms of truth would you want angels to bring to you. It is obvious that you do not deserve that truth which was sent to Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him). Do you then desire that truth which the angels brought to the people of Prophet Lot (peace be upon him)?

اِذْ دَخَلُوْا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوْا سَلٰمًا ۭ قَالَ اِنَّا مِنْكُمْ وَجِلُوْنَ 52

(15:52) When they came to Abraham they said: "Peace be upon you!" He replied: "Indeed we feel afraid of you."[31]

31. Please compare this story of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) with that contained in (Surah Houd, Ayats 69- 76).

قَالُوْا لَا تَوْجَلْ اِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلٰمٍ عَلِيْمٍ 53

(15:53) They said: "Do not feel afraid, for we give you the good news of a wise boy."[32]

32. “A boy possessing knowledge”, Prophet Isaac (peace be upon him). His name has been mentioned in connection with this good news in Surah Houd, Ayat 71.

قَالَ اَبَشَّرْتُمُوْنِيْ عَلٰٓى اَنْ مَّسَّنِيَ الْكِبَرُ فَبِمَ تُبَشِّرُوْنَ 54

(15:54) Abraham said: "What, do you give me this tiding though old age has smitten me? Just consider what tiding do you give me!"

قَالُوْا بَشَّرْنٰكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُنْ مِّنَ الْقٰنِطِيْنَ 55

(15:55) They said: "The good tiding we give you is of truth. Do not, therefore, be of those who despair."

قَالَ وَمَنْ يَّقْنَطُ مِنْ رَّحْمَةِ رَبِّهٖٓ اِلَّا الضَّآلُّوْنَ 56

(15:56) Abraham said: "Who despairs of the Mercy of his Lord except the misguided?"

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ اَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ 57

(15:57) He added: "What is your errand O sent ones?"[33]

33. It appears from the question of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) that angels are sent down in human shape only on extraordinary occasions and on some important expedition.

قَالُوْٓا اِنَّآ اُرْسِلْنَآ اِلٰى قَوْمٍ مُّجْرِمِيْنَ ۙ 58

(15:58) They said: "Verily we have been sent to a guilty people[34]

34. The fact that the angels did not name the people of Lot (peace be upon him) but merely referred to them as the wicked people, shows that these people had become so notorious for their wicked deeds that there was no need to mention them by name before Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), who was well acquainted with the moral condition of all the people around him.

اِلَّآ اٰلَ لُوْطٍ ؕ اِنَّا لَمُنَجُّوْهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ۙ 59

(15:59) excepting the household of Lot. We shall deliver all of them,

اِلَّا امْرَاَتَهٗ قَدَّرْنَآ ۙ اِنَّهَا لَمِنَ الْغٰبِرِيْنَ ۧ 60

(15:60) except his wife (about whom Allah says that) We have decreed that she shall be among those who stay behind."

فَلَمَّا جَآءَ اٰلَ لُوْطِ ۨ الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ ۙ 61

(15:61) So when the envoys came to the household of Lot,[35]

35. Please compare this with (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 80-84) and (Surah Houd, Ayats 77-83).

قَالَ اِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّنْكَرُوْنَ 62

(15:62) he said: "Surely you are an unknown folk."[36]

36. Here the story has been related in brief. But we learn from (Surah Houd, Ayats 77-83) that Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) was greatly perturbed and distressed at the visit of the angels. He said to himself, “This is a day of woe.” The reason why he was distressed, as implied in the Quran and explicitly expressed in the traditions, was that the angels had come to Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) in the form of beautiful boys, and he knew how perverse and wicked his people were. He was distressed for he could not send them away because they were his guests, and because he did not know how to protect them from those villains.

قَالُوْا بَلْ جِئْنٰكَ بِمَا كَانُوْا فِيْهِ يَمْتَرُوْنَ 63

(15:63) They said: "Nay, we have brought to you that concerning which they have been in doubt.

وَاَتَيْنٰكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَاِنَّا لَصٰدِقُوْنَ 64

(15:64) We truly tell you that we have brought to you the Truth.

فَاَسْرِ بِاَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِّنَ الَّيْلِ وَاتَّبِعْ اَدْبَارَهُمْ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتْ مِنْكُمْ اَحَدٌ وَّامْضُوْا حَيْثُ تُؤْمَرُوْنَ 65

(15:65) So set out with your family in a watch of the night, and keep yourself behind them,[37] and no one of you may turn around,[38] and keep going ahead as you have been commanded."

37. That is, you should walk behind your people lest anyone of them should stay behind.

38. It did not mean: “look not behind thee, lest thou be consumed,” as stated in the Bible. But it merely meant to warn them: None of you should turn round to see what was happening behind them lest you should stop to see when you heard the cries of the smitten people. For it is neither the time nor the place viewing the destruction nor shedding tears of regret. If you stop even for a minute in the territory of the smitten people you also might get hurt from the rain of stones.

وَقَضَيْنَآ اِلَيْهِ ذٰلِكَ الْاَمْرَ اَنَّ دَابِرَ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ مَقْطُوْعٌ مُّصْبِحِيْنَ 66

(15:66) And We communicated to him the decree that by the morning those people will be totally destroyed.

وَجَآءَ أَهۡلُ ٱلۡمَدِينَةِ يَسۡتَبۡشِرُونَ 67

(15:67) In the meantime the people of the city came to Lot rejoicing.[39]

39. This shows that those People had gone to the lowest depths of immorality. No sooner did they hear the news of the arrival of handsome strangers in their town than they rushed rejoicing to the house of Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) and impudently demanded that he should hand over his guests to them for the gratification of their lust. The pity is that there had remained not a single person among them to make a protest against such a heinous sin. Moreover, this shows that all of them, as a community, had totally lost every sense of decency, and they felt no shame at all to make such a wicked demand on him openly. The very fact, that they felt no hesitation in making such a wicked demand brazen facedly from a pious and holy man like Prophet Lot (peace be upon him), shows that the heinous crime was so common among them that they would not spare anyone.

The Talmud records many instances of the all round moral degradation of the people of Lot. Once a stranger was passing through their territory. As the darkness approached, he was forced to pass the night near Sodom. As he had his own provisions with him, he did not stand in any need of help from the town's folks, so he lay under a tree to pass the night. But a Sodomite entreated him to accompany him to his house. During the night he did away with the donkey and merchandise of the stranger. When he began to cry for help in the morning, the town's folk came there not to help him but to rob him of what had been left with him.

On one occasion Sarah sent her slave to Sodom to inquire after Prophet Lot's household. When the slave entered the town, he saw that a Sodomite was beating a stranger. Naturally the slave of Sarah tried to rouse his sense of decency, saying, why do you ill treat helpless strangers like this? In answer to this appeal, his head was broken in public.

On another occasion a poor man happened to come to Sodom but no one gave him anything to eat. When he was half dead with starvation, he fell to the ground in a helpless plight. A daughter of Prophet Lot saw him and sent some food for him. At this the Sodomites reproached Prophet Lot and his daughter and threatened to expel them from there if they would not refrain from such deeds.

After citing several similar incidents, the Talmud says that those people had become so cruel, so deceitful and so dishonest in their dealings that no traveler could pass safe through their territory nor could a poor person expect any food or help from them. Many a time it so happened that a poor stranger came there, and died from hunger. Then they would strip the clothes from his body and bury him naked. If a foreigner committed the blunder of visiting their territory, they would publicly rob him of everything, and make fool of him if he appealed to them to redress the wrong. Then they would openly commit shameless deeds in the gardens which they had grown in their valley because there was none to rebuke them except Prophet Lot (peace be upon him). The Quran has summed up the whole of their wicked story in two concise sentences: (1) They had already been committing very wicked deeds, (Surah Houd, Ayat 78), and (2) You gratify your lust with males: you rob travelers, and you commit wicked deeds publicly in your assemblies.

قَالَ إِنَّ هَٰؤُلَاءِ ضَيْفِي فَلَا تَفْضَحُونِ ۖ 68

(15:68) He said: "These are my guests, so do not disgrace me.

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُخْزُونِ 69

(15:69) Have fear of Allah, and do not humiliate me."

قَالُوا أَوَلَمْ نَنْهَكَ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ 70

(15:70) They replied: "Did we not forbid you again and again to extend hospitality to all and sundry?"

قَالَ هَٰؤُلَاءِ بَنَاتِي إِن كُنتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ ۖ 71

(15:71) Lot exclaimed in exasperation: "If you are bent on doing something, then here are my daughters."[40]

40. In (E.N. 87 of Surah Houd), it has been explained what Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) meant by this. It may also be added that such words as these were uttered by an honorable man like him in the last resort, when all his entreaties and earnest requests had failed to prevent those people from their evil designs towards his guests.

Here it will be worthwhile to clear the significance of the words which were uttered by Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) as they occur in Surah Houd (Ayat 78). When he entreated those wicked people not to molest his guests, saying, “Here are my daughters”, he was unaware that his guests were angels in the disguise of handsome boys. The angels revealed their identity only when the wicked crowd gathered at the residence of his guests and began to threaten them with their wicked designs, and Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) began to lament, “I wish I had the power to set you right or I could find some strong support for refuge.” It was then that the angels revealed themselves, saying, “We are envoys sent by your Lord.” This sequence of events shows that Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) had made that offer only when he had felt to be utterly helpless. It is very important to keep this in view because the sequence of events in this Surah is different from that in Surah Houd. One is liable to have a misunderstanding as to why Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) wailed and lamented when he knew all the while that his guests were angels and could defend themselves against those wicked people. As regards the apparent difference between the two sequences, it may be pointed out that here the important thing to be stated is that the angels come with the truth. Therefore that part of the story (Ayats 61-66) has been related first in order to make the point more prominent.

لَعَمْرُكَ إِنَّهُمْ لَفِي سَكْرَتِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ 72

(15:72) By your life, (O Prophet), they went about blindly stumbling in their intoxication.

فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ مُشْرِقِيْنَ ۙ 73

(15:73) Then the mighty Blast caught them at sunrise,

فَجَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَاَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِّنْ سِجِّيْلٍ ؕ 74

(15:74) and turned the land upside down, and rained down stones of baked clay.[41]

41. These "stones of baked clay" might have been meteoric showers or volcanic eruptions that flew and rained upon them, or these might have been blown by a strong wind.

اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّلْمُتَوَسِّمِيْنَ 75

(15:75) There are great Signs in this for those endowed with intelligence.

وَاِنَّهَا لَبِسَبِيْلٍ مُّقِيْمٍ 76

(15:76) The place (where this occurred) lies along a known route.[42]

42. That is, that smitten territory lies on the high road from Hijaz (Arabia) to Syria and Egypt. Travelers come across these signs of destruction which are very prominent in the territory that lies to the southeast of the Dead Sea. The geographers are of the opinion that there is no other land on the surface of the Earth which looks desolate as this territory, especially its southern part.

اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ؕ 77

(15:77) Verily there is a Sign in this for the believers.

وَاِنْ كَانَ اَصْحٰبُ الْاَيْكَةِ لَظٰلِمِيْنَ ۙ 78

(15:78) And the people of Aykah were also wrong-doers.[43]

43. The people of Al-Aikah were the community of Prophet Shuaib (peace be upon him) and were called Midianites after the name of their capital city and their territory. As regards Al-Aikah, it was the ancient name of Tabuk and literally means a thick forest.

فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ ۘ وَاِنَّهُمَا لَبِاِمَامٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ؕ ع 79

(15:79) So We chastised them. The desolate locations of both communities lie on a well-known highway.[44]

44. Midian lay on the route from Hijaz to Palestine and Syria.

وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ أَصْحٰبُ الْحِجْرِ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ۙ 80

(15:80) Surely the people of al-Hijr[45] also rejected the Messengers, calling them liars.

45. Al-Hijr was the capital city of the people of Thamud, and its ruins are found near the modern city of Al-Ula which is to the north west of Al-Madinah, and lies on the route from AI-Madinah to Tabuk. Though the caravans had to pass through the valley of Al-Hijr, the Prophet (peace be upon him) had forbidden the Muslims to stay in the valley on their journey.

When Ibn Batutah reached there in the eighth century of Hijrah on his way to Makkah, he wrote: I have seen the buildings of Thamud hewed into red mountains; the paintings look so bright as if they have been put on only recently, and rotten bones of human beings are found in them even today." See (E.N. 57 of Surah Al-Aaraf).

وَاٰتَيْنٰهُمْ اٰيٰتِنَا فَكَانُوْا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِيْنَ ۙ 81

(15:81) We also gave them Our Signs, yet they turned away from them.

وَكَانُوْا يَنْحِتُوْنَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوْتًا اٰمِنِيْنَ 82

(15:82) They used to hew out houses from the mountains[46] and lived in security.

46. That is, their strong and secure buildings, which they had hewed into the mountains, could not protect them from the blast.

فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ مُصْبِحِيْنَ ۙ 83

(15:83) Then the Blast caught them in the morning

فَمَآ اَغْنٰى عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ؕ 84

(15:84) and whatever they had been earning proved of no avail.

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَآ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ؕ وَاِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَاٰتِيَةٌ فَاصْفَحِ

الصَّفْحَ الْجَمِيْلَ 85

(15:85) We have not created the heavens and the earth and all that is in between them except with Truth.[47] Surely the Hour will come. So, (O Muhammad), do graciously overlook them (despite their misdeeds).

47. This was to reassure the Prophet (peace be upon him) that ultimately he would come out successful because he was propagating the truth, and the entire universe was based on truth. Such an assurance was urgently needed because at that time falsehood appeared to be triumphant over the truth. This implies: O Prophet, do not worry at all at the apparent success of falsehood for this is temporary. Likewise the difficulties, the obstacles and the troubles in the way of truth are not permanent. Take courage, and have confidence in the cause of the truth and you will triumph over falsehood because the whole system of the universe is akin to truth and averse to falsehood. Therefore, truth is permanent and falsehood is perishable. Refer to (E.Ns 25-26, 35-39 of Surah Ibrahim).

اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْخَلّٰقُ الْعَلِيْمُ 86

(15:86) Your Lord is indeed the Creator of all, the All-Knowing.[48]

48. These attributes of Allah have been mentioned to reassure the Prophet (peace be upon him) as if to say: As Allah is the Creator, He has complete power over all his creatures, and no one is able to escape His punishment. Moreover, He is All-Knowing. He is fully aware that you are exerting your utmost for their reform, and He knows also their evil machinations against your efforts for reform. Therefore, you need not worry on this account, but you should wait patiently and with confidence that at the appropriate time they will be dealt with justly.

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنٰكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِيْ وَالْقُرْاٰنَ الْعَظِيْمَ 87

(15:87) We have indeed bestowed on you the seven oft-repeated verses[49] and the Great Qur'an.[50]

49. These seven verses which are recited over and over again in every prescribed salat are the verses of Surah Al- Fatihah. Though some of the commentators are of the view that this Al-Mathani, refers to the seven Surahs which contain two hundred or more verses, that is, Surahs 2-7 and (8-9) or 10. But the majority of the early commentators opine that it refers to Al-Fatihah. Imam Bukhari has cited two authentic traditions in support of the view that it refers to Al-Fatihah.

50. The mention of the precious gift of the glorious Quran has been made also to console the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his followers that they should not even look at the worldly

wealth of their opponents because that was nothing as compared with this precious wealth. In order to grasp the full significance of this, one should keep in view the fact that at that time the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions were suffering badly from poverty. The trading activities of the Prophet (peace be upon him) had almost come to an end during the period in which he had been engaged in his mission. Besides this, he had almost used up the entire wealth of Khaijah (may Allah be pleased with her). As regards to his companions, some of the young men had been turned out of their homes and reduced to poverty. The economic boycott had mined the business of those who were engaged in trade. There were others who were mere slaves or proteges of the Quraish and had no economic position whatsoever. In addition to their sad economic plight, all the Muslims, along with the Prophet (peace be upon him), were suffering persecution from the people of Makkah and its surroundings. In short, they were so much persecuted, ridiculed and insulted that no one of them was safe from physical and mental torture. On the other side, the Quraish, their opponents and persecutors, enjoyed all the good things of this world, and lived lives of happiness and luxury. This is the background of the reassurance given to the believers, as if to say: Why should you feel disheartened at this? We have given you wealth which surpasses all kinds of worldly riches. Therefore, your opponents should envy your knowledge and high morals; you need not envy their ill canned wealth and their wicked enjoyments, for when they will go before their Lord, they themselves will find that they had not brought such wealth as carries any value there.

لَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ 88

(15:88) Do not even cast your eyes towards the worldly goods We have granted to different kinds of people, nor grieve over the state they are in,[51] but turn your loving attention to the believers instead,

51. That is, do not grieve that they consider you as their enemy, though you are their sincere well wisher; that they regard their vices as their virtues; that they are not only themselves following but leading their followers on that way which inevitably leads to destruction. Nay, they are doing their best to oppose the reformative efforts of the one who is showing them the way of peace.

وَقُلْ إِنِّي أَنَا النَّذِيرُ الْمُبِينُ ۚ 89

(15:89) and clearly tell the unbelievers: "I am most certainly a plain warner,"

كَمَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَى الْمُقْتَسِمِينَ ۙ 90

(15:90) even as We had sent warning to those who had divided their religion into fragments;

الَّذِيْنَ جَعَلُوا الْقُرْاٰنَ عِضِيْنَ 91

(15:91) those who had split up their Qur'an into pieces.[52]

52. The schismatic were the Jews for they had split their religion into many parts and caused division in it. They believed in certain parts and rejected the other parts, and detracted some things from it and added others to it. Thus they had been divided into many sectarian groups, which were opposed to one another.

"They have made the Quran (Torah) into pieces" means that they believe in certain parts of it and reject other parts. The same thing has been stated in (Surah Al- Baqarah, Ayat 85) like this: Do you then believe in one part of the Scriptures and disbelieve in the other parts.

This warning is like the warning We sent to the schismatic Jews. This is meant to warn the disbelievers that they should learn a lesson from the plight of the Jews who neglected the warning that was given to than by God, and persisted in their wrong ways, as if to say: You are beholding the degradation of the Jews. Do you like to meet with the same end by neglecting this warning?

فَوَرَبِّكَ لَنَسْـَٔلَنَّهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ۙ 92

(15:92) By your Lord, We will question them all

عَمَّا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ 93

(15:93) concerning what they have been doing.

فَاصْدَعْ بِمَا تُؤْمَرُ وَاَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ 94

(15:94) (O Prophet), proclaim what you are commanded, and pay no heed to those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity.

اِنَّا كَفَيْنٰكَ الْمُسْتَهْزِءِيْنَ ۙ 95

(15:95) Surely We suffice to deal with those who scoff at you,

الَّذِيْنَ يَجْعَلُوْنَ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ ۚ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ 96

(15:96) those who set up another deity alongside Allah. They shall soon come to know.

وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ اَنَّكَ يَضِيْقُ صَدْرُكَ بِمَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ ۙ 97

(15:97) We certainly know that their statements sorely grieve you.

فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَكُنْ مِّنَ السّٰجِدِيْنَ ۙ 98

(15:98) When (you feel so) glorify your Lord with His praise and prostrate yourself before Him,

وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتّٰى يَاْتِيَكَ الْيَقِيْنُ ع 99

(15:99) and worship your Lord until the last moment (of your life) that will most certainly come.[53]

53. That is Salat and worship of your Lord are the only means which can generate in you that power of sustenance which is required to stand resolutely against the troubles and afflictions you will inevitably encounter in the propagation of the message of the truth and reform of humanity. This will comfort you, fill you with courage and enable you to perform that divine mission for which you have been sent in the face of abuse, derision and obstacles.

16. An Nahl (The Honey Bee)

Name

The name, An-Nahl, of this Surah has been taken from v. 68. This is merely to distinguish it from other Surahs.

Period of Revelation

The following internal evidence shows that this Surah was revealed during the last Makkan stage of Prophethood:

1. v. 41 clearly shows that persecution had forced some Muslims to emigrate to Habash before the revelation of this Surah.
2. It is evident from v. 106 that at that time the persecution of the Muslims was at its height. Therefore a problem had arisen in regard to the utterance of a blasphemous word, without actual disbelief, under unbearable conditions. The problem was that if one did so how he should be treated.
3. vv. 112-114 clearly refer to the end of seven year famine that had struck Makkah some years after the appointment of the Holy Prophet as Allah's Messenger.
4. There is a reference to v. 116 of this Surah in VI: 145, and v. 118 of this Surah contains a reference to VI: 146. This is a proof that both these Surahs (VI and XVI) were sent down in the same period.

The general style of the Surah also supports the view that this was revealed during the last stage at Makkah.

Central Theme

All the topics of the Surah revolve round different aspects of the Message, i.e., refutation of shirk, proof of Tauhid, and warning of the consequences of the rejection of and opposition and antagonism to the Message.

Topics of Discussion

The very first verse gives direct and strict warning to those who were rejecting the Message outright, as if to say, "Allah's decision has already been made concerning your rejection of the Message. Why are you then clamoring for hastening it? Why don't you make use of the respite that is being given to you!" And this was exactly what the disbelievers of Makkah needed at the time of the revelation of this Surah. For they challenged the Holy Prophet over and over again: "Why don't you bring that scourge with which you have been threatening us! For we have not only rejected your Message but have been openly opposing it for a long time." Such a challenge had become a by-word with them, which they frequently repeated as a clear proof that Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) was not a true Prophet.

Immediately after this warning they have been admonished to give up shirk, for this false creed was the main obstacle in the way of the Message. Then the following topics come over and over again, one after the other:

1. Very convincing proofs of Tauhid and refutation of shirk have been based on the plain signs in the universe and in man's own self.
2. The objections of the disbelievers have been answered, their arguments refuted, their doubts removed and their false pretexts exposed.
3. Warnings have given of the consequences of persistence in false ways and antagonism to the Message.
4. The moral changes which the Message of the Holy Prophet aims to bring practically in human life have been presented briefly in an appealing manner. The mushriks have been told that belief in Allah, which they also professed, demanded that it should not be confined merely to lip service, but this creed should take a definite shape in moral and practical life.
5. The Holy Prophet and his companions have been comforted and told about the attitude they should adopt in the face of antagonism and persecution by the disbelievers.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اَتٰۤی اَمۡرُ اللّٰہِ فَلَا تَسۡتَعۡجِلُوۡہُ ؕ سُبۡحٰنَہٗ وَ تَعٰلٰی عَمَّا یُشۡرِکُوۡنَ ۱

(16:1) Allah's judgement has (all but) come;[1] do not, then, call for its speedy advent. Holy is He, and far above their associating others with Him in His Divinity.[2]

1. That is, the time for final judgment has come near. As regards to the use of the past tense in the original, this may be to show certainty of its occurrence in the near future or to emphasize the fact that the rebellion and the wrong deeds of the Quraish had become so unbearable that they warranted that the time for decisive action had come.

Here question arises as to what that judgment was and how it came. We are of the opinion (and true knowledge is with Allah alone) that that judgment was hijra (the migration) of the Prophet (peace be upon him) from Makkah. For a short time after this revelation, he was bidden to emigrate from there. And according to the Quran, a Prophet (peace be upon him) is bidden to leave his place only at that time when the rebellion and antagonism of his people reaches the extreme limit. Then their doom is sealed, for after this Allah's punishment comes on them either as a direct scourge from Him, or they are destroyed by the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his followers. And this did actually take place. At the occasion of the migration, the people of Makkah regarded it as a victory for themselves, but in fact it turned out to be a defeat for shirk and disbelief which were totally uprooted within a decade or so after the migration, not only from Makkah but from the rest of Arabia as well.

2. In order to understand the interconnection between the first and the second sentences, one should keep in view the background. The challenge of the disbelievers to the Prophet (peace be upon him), to hasten divine judgment, was really based on their assumption that their own religion of shirk was true and the religion of Tauhid presented by Muhammad (peace be upon him) was false. Otherwise, they argued, the divine scourge with which he threatened them would have come upon them long before because of their disbelief and rebellion, if there had been the authority of Allah behind it. That is why after the declaration

of the judgment, their misunderstanding about the cause of delay in the punishment was removed, as if to say: You are absolutely wrong to assume that punishment has not been inflicted on you because your creed of shirk is true, for Allah is free from and far above shirk and has no partner.

يُنَزِّلُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ بِالرُّوْحِ مِنْ اَمْرِهٖ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖٓ اَنْ اَنْذِرُوْٓا اَنَّهٗ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنَا فَاتَّقُوْنِ 2

(16:2) He sends down this spirit(of prophecy) by His command through His angels[3] on any of His servants whom He wills,[4] (directing them): "Warn people that there is no deity but Me; so hold Me alone in fear."[5]

3. This means the Spirit of Prophethood with which a Prophet is imbued in order to fulfill his mission by word and deed. The Quran has called this the Spirit in several places, for this has the same relation to the mission of a Prophet and his moral life, which the soul has to the physical human life.

4. As one of the things, which prompted the disbelievers to challenge the Prophet (peace be upon him) for scourge, was their presumption that he was not a true Prophet. Allah told them categorically that he was a true Prophet who had been imbued with the Spirit which We had sent down on him.

“Spirit of His command, upon whom He wills.” This is the answer to the objections which the chiefs of the Quraish used to raise against the Prophet (peace be upon him): Had Allah wanted to send a Messenger to them, was there no one better than Muhammad (peace be upon him), son of Abdullah, for this mission. Why did He not choose one of the big chiefs of Makkah or Taif for the purpose? Such absurd objections needed no other answer than this that is why such an answer has been given in several places of the Quran as if to say: Allah knows best how to do His work, and does not stand in need of any advice from you. He chooses for His mission anyone whom He considers fit for it.

5. This verse declares the essence of the Spirit of Prophethood, which is this: Godhead belongs to one Allah alone, so only He is worthy of fear. Therefore, there is no other anchor that might make fast and hold together human moral system than His fear. For it is the fear of His displeasure and His punishment, and the fear of the consequences of His disobedience which alone can act as a strong deterrent to restrain one from deviation. That is why mankind has been admonished: Fear Me.

خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ تَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ 3

(16:3) He created the heavens and the earth with Truth. Exalted is He above whatever they associate with Allah in His Divinity.[6]

6. That is to say, the entire system of the earth and the heavens is a witness to the truth of the doctrine of Tauhid and to the negation of shirk. You may look at anything in the universe and consider the system from any point of view you like, you will find proof of this fact that it is being run by one God and not by many gods. Then how is it that you believe in shirk when there is no proof whatsoever of this in the universe As a fitting sequence of this, proofs of Tauhid and refutation of shirk have been given from man himself and from other signs in the universe, and it has also been shown that Prophethood is based on truth.

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُّبِينٌ 4

(16:4) He created man out of a mere drop of fluid, and lo! he turned into an open wrangler.7

7. This has two meanings and both are meant here.

(1) Though Allah created man from an insignificant spermdrop, he is capable of arguing and giving reasons in support of his claim.

(2) Man who has such an insignificant origin, has become so vain that he does not hesitate to dispute even with his Creator.

If considered in its first sense, it is a chain in the series of arguments given in many succeeding verses to prove the truth of the message of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Please refer to (E.N. 15). If taken in the second sense, it is meant to warn man that he should not forget the insignificant origin of his existence while engaged in his rebellious arguments against his Creator. If he remembered the different stages of his humiliating birth and growth, he would consider many times before he assumed a haughty and rebellious attitude towards his Creator.

وَالْأَنْعَامَ خَلَقَهَا ۚ لَكُمْ فِيهَا دِفْءٌ وَمَنَافِعُ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ 5

(16:5) He created the cattle. They are a source of clothing and food and also a variety of other benefits for you.

وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا جَمَالٌ حِينَ تُرِيحُونَ وَحِينَ تَسْرَحُونَ ۖ 6

(16:6) And you find beauty in them as you drive them to pasture in the morning and as you drive them back home in the evening;

وَتَحْمِلُ أَثْقَالَكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَلَدٍ لَّمْ تَكُونُوا بَالِغِيهِ إِلَّا بِشِقِّ الْأَنفُسِ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ 7

(16:7) and they carry your loads to many a place which you would be unable to reach without much hardship. Surely your Lord is Intensely Loving, Most Merciful.

وَّالْخَيْلَ وَالْبِغَالَ وَالْحَمِيْرَ لِتَرْكَبُوْهَا وَزِيْنَةً ؕ وَيَخْلُقُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ 8

(16:8) And He created horses and mules and asses for you to ride, and also for your adornment. And He creates many things (for you) that you do not even know about.[8]

8. That is, there are many agencies which are working for the good of man but he is quite unaware of such servants and the services rendered by them.

وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ قَصْدُ السَّبِيْلِ وَمِنْهَا جَآئِرٌ ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ لَهَدٰىكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ع 9

(16:9) It rests with Allah alone to show you the Right Way, even when there are many crooked ways.[9] Had He so willed, He would have (perforce) guided you all aright.[10]

9. This contains an argument for Prophethood along with a proof of Tauhid and of Allah's compassion and providence. The argument is this:

There are many divergent ways of thought and action open for man to choose from. Obviously all these divergent ways cannot be straight ways, because there can be only one straight way; therefore, there can be only one right theory of life which is based on that way, and only one right way of life which is based on that right theory. Thus it is clear that the choice of the right way of life is man's most important and basic need, for its wrong choice would inevitably lead to his ruin. This is because all other things fulfill his animal needs only, but this is the greatest necessity of his life as a human being and without its fulfillment his life would be an utter failure.

Now, it cannot be expected that Allah Who made so many provisions, and on such a large scale, for the fulfillment of the animal life of man, did not make any arrangement for the fulfillment of this real and greatest necessity of man. Just as He has provided for all the necessities of his life, so He has also provided for this greatest need of his through Prophethood. If Prophethood is denied then it should be pointed out in what way Allah has fulfilled this basic need of man. Experience of centuries has shown that mankind has always blundered whenever it has chosen a way of life by itself. This is because man's wisdom and intelligence are limited, and he cannot depend on these for the choice of the right way of life. Above all, one cannot say that Allah has made no arrangement for this basic need of man, for this will be the greatest misconception of Allah that He may make most elaborate arrangements for man's animal life but should leave him in the lurch to search out a way for himself for the fulfillment of this most important and basic need.

10. Here a question arises: Why didn't Allah will to guide all the people aright inherently when He had taken upon Himself to show the right way? It is true that Allah could have imbued man, like other creatures, with the inborn instinct and enabled him to choose the right way without conscious thought, experience or teaching. But this would have been against His will which was to create a being, having will and power and freedom to follow the right way or the wrong way, whichever he chose for himself. This is why he has been

endowed with different means of knowledge and power of conscious thought, deliberation and will, and has been empowered with the authority to make use of all powers in him and all things around him. Moreover, He has placed in him and all around him such factors as might lead him to guidance or deviation. All these things would have become meaningless, had he been created righteous by birth, and he could never have attained the heights of progress, which can be achieved only by the right use of freedom. That is why Allah has chosen Prophethood for man's guidance, and left him free to follow or reject a Prophet. This is a test by means of which Allah judges whether man accepts the guidance that is presented to him in a rational way.

هُوَ الَّذِیۡۤ اَنۡزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً لَّکُمۡ مِّنۡهُ شَرَابٌ وَّمِنۡهُ شَجَرٌ فِیۡهِ تُسِیۡمُوۡنَ 10

(16:10) He it is Who sends down water for you from the sky out of which you drink and out of which grow the plants on which you pasture your cattle,

یُنۢبِتُ لَکُمۡ بِهِ الزَّرۡعَ وَالزَّیۡتُوۡنَ وَالنَّخِیۡلَ وَالۡاَعۡنَابَ وَمِنۡ کُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ ؕ اِنَّ فِیۡ ذٰلِکَ لَاٰیَةً لِّقَوۡمٍ یَّتَفَکَّرُوۡنَ 11

(16:11) and by virtue of which He causes crops and olives and date-palms and grapes and all kinds of fruit to grow for you. Surely in this there is a great Sign for those who reflect.

وَسَخَّرَ لَکُمُ الَّیۡلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ۙ وَالشَّمۡسَ وَالۡقَمَرَ ؕ وَالنُّجُوۡمُ مُسَخَّرٰتٌۢ بِاَمۡرِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ فِیۡ ذٰلِکَ لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّقَوۡمٍ یَّعۡقِلُوۡنَ ۙ 12

(16:12) He has subjected for you the night and the day and the sun and the moon and the stars have also been made subservient by His command. Surely there are Signs in this for those who use their reason.

وَمَا ذَرَاَ لَکُمۡ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ مُخۡتَلِفًا اَلۡوَانُهٗ ؕ اِنَّ فِیۡ ذٰلِکَ لَاٰیَةً لِّقَوۡمٍ یَّذَّکَّرُوۡنَ 13

(16:13) And there are also Signs for those who take heed in the numerous things of various colours that He has created for you on earth.

وَهُوَ الَّذِیْ سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لِتَاْكُلُوْا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِیًّا وَّتَسْتَخْرِجُوْا مِنْهُ حِلْیَةً تَلْبَسُوْنَهَا ۚ

وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَاخِرَ فِیْهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوْا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ 14

(16:14) And He it is Who has subjected the sea that you may eat fresh fish from it and bring forth ornaments from it that you can wear. And you see ships ploughing their course through it so that you may go forth seeking His Bounty[11] and be grateful to Him.

11. That is, try to get your sustenance in lawful ways.

وَاَلْقٰى فِی الْاَرْضِ رَوَاسِیَ اَنْ تَمِیْدَ بِكُمْ وَاَنْهٰرًا وَّسُبُلًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ ۙ 15

(16:15) And He has placed firm mountains on the earth lest it should move away from you,[12] and has made rivers and tracks[13] that you may find your way,

12. This shows that the real function of mountains is to regulate the motion and speed of the earth. We have come to this conclusion, for the Quran has made this benefit of mountains very prominent in many places. Therefore, their other benefits should be regarded as incidental.

13. Natural ways are those routes which are formed along the banks of streams, ravines and rivers. Though the importance of these ways is great even in the plains, one feels their sore need, especially in the mountainous regions.

وَعَلٰمٰتٍ ؕ وَبِالنَّجْمِ هُمْ یَهْتَدُوْنَ 16

(16:16) and He has set other landmarks[14] in the earth. And by the stars too do people find their way.[15]

14. This is a sign of Allah that He has broken the monotony of land by placing conspicuous landmarks on it to distinguish different regions from one another. These have many benefits and one of these is to help guide travelers and navigators to their destinations. One also realizes the importance and value of these landmarks, when one is traveling through a sandy desert where there are hardly any objects to guide on the way, and one is liable to lose the way any time. One feels the lack of landmarks much more in the sea voyage. It is in the deserts and the seas that people realize the true significance of stars by which they are directed aright to their destinations.

This verse contains arguments for Tauhid. Providence, and Compassion of Allah, and also a proof of Prophethood. For the mind is instinctively turned towards this question: Can it be possible that Allah who has made so elaborate arrangements for man's guidance to fulfill his physical needs has neglected to provide for his moral and spiritual needs? It cannot be so, for it is obvious that even the greatest loss of some physical necessity due to the adoption of

a wrong way is nothing as compared with the loss of spiritual and moral values due to deviation from the right way. It would be nothing less than having doubt in Allah's Compassion and Providence to think that He, Who had made so elaborate provision for man's guidance on land and sea by creating mountains, rivers, stars and other objects, would have neglected to make provision for his moral and spiritual guidance. And it stands to reason that He must have provided prominent beacons of light to guide man to that right way of life which is indispensable to his true success.

15. In(Ayats 4-16), some signs have been mentioned in succession in order to focus people's attention on the creation of man himself and of the earth and the heavens. They will thus find that everything supports the truth of the doctrines taught by the Prophet (peace be upon him). A critical study of all these signs shows that these must have been designed and created by an All-Wise Being, and One Being alone, and there could not have been any partner or associate to help Him. Let us consider this theme from the point of view of man, the central figure in the creation. This wonderful being, who is able to speak with his tongue and is capable of arguing his case with it, has been created from an insignificant sperm drop. Then many animals have been created to satisfy the necessities of his life. They provide food, clothing and conveyance for him and help satisfy his aesthetic taste as well. Then there is a remarkable system of rain water from the sky to produce crops, fruits and verdure, etc. on the earth to fulfill man's needs. Then there is the creation of regular days and nights and seasons, which are closely connected with all kinds of production of the earth, and also with man's general well being. Then there are oceans, which help fulfill many of his physical and aesthetic demands and provide water ways for traffic. Likewise, mountains have been created to provide man with many benefits. Then there are landmarks on the earth and stars in the heavens to guide travelers and navigators to the destinations. In short, there are innumerable signs in the earth and the heavens which are closely interconnected and are also indispensable to man's welfare, nay, to his very existence. All these are clear proofs that only One Being has designed the entire universe and created it in accordance with that design. It is He Who is all the time creating new things to fit in that scheme, and working this wonderful universe that spreads from the earth to boundless heavens. Who can then claim, except a foolish or obdurate person, that all this has come into existence by a mere accident? Or, who can say that these different aspects, which are working under a perfect system and are intimately connected with one another and are well balanced, have been created by different gods and are under the control of different guardians?

أَفَمَن يَخْلُقُ كَمَن لَّا يَخْلُقُ ۗ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ 17

(16:17) Is then the One Who creates like the one who does not create?16 Will you not, then, take heed?

16. That is, if you, people of Makkah, acknowledge (and they acknowledged this just as other mushriks did) that Allah alone is the Creator of all of you and everything, and no one of the partners, you have set up with Him, has created anything in the universe. How is it, then, that you ascribe from among the creation, a status equal to or like that of the Creator in the system of universe created by Him? How can it be possible that the power and the rights of the creation should be equal to the power and the rights of the Creator in the universe

created by Himself? How can it be believed that the Creator and the creation possess the same qualities and characteristics, or can have such relationship as of father and son?

وَاِنۡ تَعُدُّوۡا نِعۡمَةَ اللّٰهِ لَا تُحۡصُوۡهَا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَغَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِيۡمٌ 18

(16:18) For, were you to count the favours of Allah, you will not be able to count them. Surely Allah is Ever Forgiving, Most Merciful.[17]

17. Here the connection of Allah's attributes, "Forgiving and Compassionate", with the preceding verse is so obvious that it has been left unmentioned. It is this: Though Allah goes on showering countless blessings upon people, they behave in an ungrateful, faithless and rebellious manner towards Him. He does not punish them immediately, but gives them respite, for He is Forgiving and Compassionate. This is true of both individuals and communities. There are people, who deny even the existence of God, yet He goes on bestowing His favors on them for years. There are others who set up partners with Him in his attributes, power and rights, and show their gratitude to others than Him for His blessings, yet He does not withhold His favors from them. There are still others who profess to acknowledge Him as their Creator and Benefactor, yet rebel against Him and are disobedient to Him and consider freedom from Him to be their birth right, but in spite of all this He continues to shower His countless blessings on them as long as they live.

وَاللّٰهُ يَعۡلَمُ مَا تُسِرُّوۡنَ وَمَا تُعۡلِنُوۡنَ 19

(16:19) Allah knows all that you conceal and all that you disclose.[18]

18. A grave misunderstanding might arise as to why Allah's blessings should continue to be showered even on those who deny Him and set up partners with Him and are disobedient to Him. The foolish people are liable to conclude from this that He does not withhold His favors from such people because He has no knowledge of their wicked deeds, The Quran declares: Even though He has full knowledge of all the deeds of the people, whether these are done secretly or openly, He does not discontinue His blessings on the sinners, for He is Forgiving, Compassionate and Merciful. Therefore: O people, get rid of this misunderstanding and reform yourselves.

وَالَّذِيۡنَ يَدۡعُوۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ لَا يَخۡلُقُوۡنَ شَيۡـًٔا وَّهُمۡ يُخۡلَقُوۡنَ ؕ 20

(16:20) Those whom they call upon beside Allah have created nothing; rather, they themselves were created;

اَمۡوَاتٌ غَيۡرُ اَحۡيَآءٍ ۚ وَمَا يَشۡعُرُوۡنَ اَيَّانَ يُبۡعَثُوۡنَ ۖ 21

(16:21) they are dead, not living. They do not even know when they will be resurrected.[19]

19. The words employed here to refute man made deities clearly indicate that these deities were deceased prophets, saints, martyrs and pious and other extraordinary beings buried in their graves and not angels, jinns, devils or idols. For the angels and devils are alive: therefore, the words, "They are dead, not living" cannot apply to them, and it is out of the question to say about idols of stone or wood that "They do not know at all when they shall again be raised to life" in the Hereafter. As regards the objection to this version that there were no such deities in Arabia, this is based on the lack of knowledge of the history of the pre- Islamic period. It is well known that there was a large number of Jews and Christians living among many clans of Arabia, who used to invoke and worship their Prophets, saints, etc. It is also a fact that many gods of the mushriks of Arabia were human beings, whose idols they had set up for worship after their death. According to a tradition cited in Bukhari on the authority of Ibn Abbas: "Wadd, Sua, Yaghuth, Yauq, and Nasr were pious human beings, whom the succeeding generations had made gods." In another tradition, related by Aishah: "Asaf and Nailah were human beings." There are also traditions to the same effect about Lat, Munat and Uzza. So much so that according to some traditions of the mushriks, Lat and Uzza were the beloved ones of Allah who used to pass His winter with Lat and summer with Uzza. But Allah is absolutely free from such absurd things they attribute to Him.

اِلٰهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ۚ فَالَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ قُلُوْبُهُمْ مُّنْكِرَةٌ وَّهُمْ مُّسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ 22

(16:22) Your God is the One God. But the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter are steeped in rejection of the Truth, and they are given to arrogance.[20]

20. That is, those who do not believe in the life in the Hereafter, have become so irresponsible, carefree and intoxicated with the life of this world, that they feel no hesitation or pang in denying any reality, and they put no value on or attach no worth to truth. That is why, they are not prepared to impose any moral restraint on themselves and feel no need to investigate as to whether the way, they are following is right or wrong.

لَا جَرَمَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّوْنَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُوْنَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْتَكْبِرِيْنَ 23

(16:23) Surely Allah knows all that they conceal and all that they disclose. He certainly does not love those who are steeped in arrogance.

وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمْ مَّاذَاۙ اَنْزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ ۙ قَالُوْۤا اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ۙ 24

(16:24) When[21] they are asked: "What is it that your Lord has revealed?" They answer: "They are merely tales of olden times!"[22]

21. In the preceding (Ayat 23) those arrogant people who were rejecting the message were warned that Allah has full knowledge of all their deeds. Now from (Ayat 24) the Quran

takes up those deeds one by one and deals with the arguments they presented against the Messenger (peace be upon him), the objections they raised and the lame excuses they invented for their rejection, and reproaches and admonishes them.

22. One of their cunning devices was to create doubts about the Quran. Whenever outsiders came to visit Makkah, they would naturally make inquiries about the Quran, which the Prophet (peace be upon him) declared, was being sent down to him by Allah. The disbelievers would answer that it contained merely fairy tales of the ancients. They would say such things in order to create doubts in the minds of the inquirers so that they should not take any interest in the message of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

لِيَحْمِلُوْٓا اَوْزَارَهُمْ كَامِلَةً يَّوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۙ وَمِنْ اَوْزَارِ الَّذِيْنَ يُضِلُّوْنَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۭ اَلَا سَاۗءَ مَا يَزِرُوْنَ ۝ 25

(16:25) (They say so) that they may bear the full weight of their burdens on the Day of Resurrection and also of the burdens of those whom they misled on account of their ignorance. What a heavy burden are they undertaking to bear!

قَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَاَتَى اللّٰهُ بُنْيَانَهُمْ مِّنَ الْقَوَاعِدِ فَخَرَّ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّقْفُ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَاَتٰىهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ۝ 26

(16:26) Surely many people before them had plotted in a similar manner to (vanquish the Truth), but Allah uprooted the whole structure of their plot from its foundations so that the roof fell in upon them, and the chastisement (of Allah) visited them from unknown directions.

ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ يُخْزِيْهِمْ وَيَقُوْلُ اَيْنَ شُرَكَاۗءِيَ الَّذِيْنَ كُنْتُمْ تُشَاۗقُّوْنَ فِيْهِمْ ۭ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ اِنَّ الْخِزْيَ الْيَوْمَ وَالسُّوْۗءَ عَلَي الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ۙ ۝ 27

(16:27) And again, on the Day of Resurrection, He will bring them to disgrace, and say: "Tell Me, now, where are those to whom you ascribed a share in My Divinity, and for whose sake you disputed (with the upholders of the Truth)?" Those[23] who were endowed with knowledge (in the world) will say: "Surely today humiliation and misery shall be the lot of the unbelievers";

23. There is a gap between this answer and the preceding question which has been left for the reader to fill. When Allah will ask: Now where are My partners, there will be dead silence in the plain where the entire mankind shall have to gather on the occasion of

Resurrection. The disbelievers and the mushriks will be dumb founded for they will be at a loss to find an answer to this. Then those who had been given knowledge will make the assertion, “Indeed, disgrace, this day, and evil are upon the disbelievers.”

الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفّٰىهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ ظَالِمِيٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ ۠ فَاَلْقَوُا السَّلَمَ مَا كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ مِنْ سُوٓءٍ ۭ بَلٰٓى

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ 28

(16:28) the same[24] unbelievers who, when the angels seize them and cause them to die while they are engaged in wrong-doing, they will proffer their submission[25] saying: "We were engaged in no evil." (The angels will answer them): "Surely Allah knows well all that you did.

24. This is Allah’s addition to the previous assertion, and not its continuation. Those commentators, who have wrongly considered this as continuation of the preceding sentence, are unable to offer any satisfactory explanation for their opinion.

25. That is, when the angels take possession of their souls at the time of death.

فَادْخُلُوْٓا اَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۭ فَلَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِيْنَ 29

(16:29) Go now, and enter the gate of Hell, and abide in it for ever.[26]" Evil indeed is the abode of the arrogant.

26. The (Ayats 28 and 32), and several other verses in the Quran, clearly and definitely assert that immediately after death, souls suffer torment or enjoy peace in the world of Barzakh. The traditions use the word qabar (grave) metaphorically for this existence of the souls. This is the world in which souls enter immediately after death and will remain therein up to the Day of Resurrection. Yet the disbelievers of the traditions declare that after death souls will remain in a dormant state up to the time of Resurrection, and will neither feel any pain nor joy, nor will be conscious of anything at all. Obviously, this is a wrong opinion. For, according to (Ayat 28), just after death when the disbelievers will be conscious of the fact that they had been leading an evil life, they will try to make the angels believe that they had not done any evil deed. The angels will rebuke them at this boldness and will tell them that they shall have to go into Hell. On the other hand, according to(verse 32), just after their death, the pious believers are welcomed by the angels and given the good news that they will enter into Paradise. Besides these verses, there is the mention of a dialogue between the angels and those Muslims, who did not migrate to Al- Madinah, after their souls were seized by the angels in (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 97). Above all, according to (Surah Almomin, Ayats 45-46), the people of Pharaoh have been encircled by a torment and are exposed before the fire of Hell every morning and every evening. This will go on till the Day of Resurrection when they shall be sentenced to eternal torment.

In fact, both the Quran and the traditions present the same kind of picture of the condition of the soul after death till Resurrection. Death causes merely the separation of the soul from

the body but does not annihilate it. The soul lives with the same personality that was formed by the different experiences and the mental exercises and moral activities it had in its worldly life in cooperation with the body. This nature of the consciousness, feelings, observations and experiences of the soul, during the waiting period, is similar to that in a dream. Just as a criminal sentenced to death suffers from mental torture on the eve of his crucifixion, in the same way the angels take to task the guilty as in a dream, torture it and take it to the horrible Hell in order to make it foretaste the impending torture. In contrast to this, the pure soul is welcomed by the angels and is given the good news of entry into paradise and is made to enjoy its pleasant breeze and smell, and to feel happy like the faithful servant who is invited to the headquarters to receive his reward. But this life in the world of Barzakh will suddenly come to an end on the second blowing of the Trumpet of Resurrection. When the guilty souls will again enter into their former bodies and muster in the Plain, they will cry in horror: Oh! woe to us! Who has roused us from our sleeping places? But the true believers will say with perfect peace of mind: This is exactly what the Beneficent had promised, and the Messengers had told the truth. (Surah Yaseen, Ayat 52).

As the guilty ones will be under the delusion that they had been lying in their death bed for an hour or so and had been roused from sleep. Those who were given knowledge and faith will say: According to the Record of Allah, you have remained after death till this Day of Resurrection and this is the same Day of Resurrection, but you did not know this. (Surah Ar-Room, Ayats 55-56).

وَقِيلَ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا مَاذَا أَنزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ ۚ قَالُوا خَيْرًا ۗ لِّلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي هَٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا
حَسَنَةٌ ۚ وَلَدَارُ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ ۚ وَلَنِعْمَ دَارُ الْمُتَّقِينَ ۝ 30

(16:30) And when the God-fearing are asked: "What has your Lord revealed?" they answer: "Something excellent!"[27]Good fortune in this world awaits those who do good; and certainly the abode of the Hereafter is even better for them. How excellent is the abode of the God-fearing:

27. In contrast to the disbelievers (Ayat 24), the righteous people spoke highly of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and of the teachings of the Quran to the people coming from the suburbs of Makkah. Unlike the former they did not delude the people nor created misunderstandings in the minds. They were full of praise for them and told the truth about the Prophet (peace be upon him).

جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ لَهُمْ فِيهَا مَا يَشَاءُونَ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ يَجْزِي
اللَّهُ الْمُتَّقِينَ ۝ 31

(16:31) everlasting gardens that they shall enter; the gardens beneath which rivers shall flow, and where they shall have whatever they desire! Thus does Allah reward the God-fearing,[28]

28. This is the best blessing of Paradise. The dweller will get there whatever he will desire and wish and there will be nothing at all to offend him. This is the blessing that has never been attained even by the richest and the most powerful people in this world. On the contrary, every dweller of Paradise will enjoy this blessing to his fill because he will always have everything to his desire and liking, and will have each and every wish and desire fulfilled.

الَّذِيْنَ تَتَوَفّٰىهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ طَيِّبِيْنَ ۙ يَقُوْلُوْنَ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمُ ۙ ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ
تَعْمَلُوْنَ 32

(16:32) those whose souls the angels seize while they are in a state of purity, saying: "Peace be upon you. Enter Paradise as a reward for your deeds."

هَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَاْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ اَوْ يَاْتِيَ اَمْرُ رَبِّكَ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ
قَبْلِهِمْ ۭ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ 33

(16:33) (O Muhammad), are they waiting for anything else than that the angels should appear before them, or that your Lord's judgement should come?[29] Many before them acted with similar temerity. And then what happened with them was not Allah's wrong-doing; they rather wronged themselves.

29. This is to admonish the unbelievers to this effect: Why are they still hesitating to accept the message which is very simple and clear? We have tried every method to present each aspect of the truth clearly with arguments and brought witnesses thereof from the whole system of the universe, and have left no room for any man of understanding to stick to shirk. Now what are they waiting for is nothing more than this that the angel of death should come before them and then they will accept the message at the last moment of their lives. Or, do they wait for the scourge of God to overtake them and make them accept the Message?

فَاَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّاٰتُ مَا عَمِلُوْا وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ع 34

(16:34) The evil consequences of their misdeeds overtook them and what they mocked at overwhelmed them.

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْا لَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَا عَبَدْنَا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِنْ شَيْءٍ نَّحْنُ وَلَآ اٰبَآؤُنَا وَلَا حَرَّمْنَا
مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ فَهَلْ عَلَى الرُّسُلِ اِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ
الْمُبِيْنُ 35

(16:35) Those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity say: "Were Allah to will so, neither we nor our forefathers would have worshipped any other than Him, nor would we have prohibited anything without His command."[30] Their predecessors proffered similar excuses.[31] Do the Messengers have any other duty but to plainly convey the Message?

30. In order to understand the significance of this argument the reader should keep in view (Ayats 148-150 and E.N.s 124-126 of Surah Al-Anaam), for this has been cited and answered there.

31. That is, your argument is not a new one but the same old one which had always been offered by erroneous people who went before you. Today you are, like them, excusing yourselves for your deviation and evil conduct, saying that it is the will of God. You know that this is a lame excuse that has been invented to delude yourselves, and to escape from admonition.

This answer also contains a subtle retort to the objection of the disbelievers that the Quran consisted merely of old stories of the ancients (Ayat 24). They meant to imply that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had nothing new to offer. So he was repeating the same old stories that had been repeated over and over again since the time of Prophet Noah (peace be upon him). The retort is this: If the Prophet (peace be upon him) was not presenting anything new but was reciting the old stories of the ancients, you yourselves are not putting forward any new excuse in defense of your evil deeds, but the same old excuse that was put forward by the people who went before you.

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِيْ كُلِّ اُمَّةٍ رَّسُوْلًا اَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوْتَ ۚ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ هَدَى
اللّٰهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الضَّلٰلَةُ ؕ فَسِيْرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَانْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ
الْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ 36

(16:36) We raised a Messenger in every community (to tell them): "Serve Allah and shun the Evil One."[32] Thereafter Allah guided some of them while others were

overtaken by error.[33] Go about the earth, then, and observe what was the end of those who rejected the Messengers,[34] calling them liars.

32. That is, you are not justified in excusing yourselves for these sins, saying that it is the will of God for We sent Messengers to every ummat, who told the people in plain words that they should worship Us and none else, and should not follow and obey taghut. Besides this, We have already warned you that We do not approve of your deviations. Why should you then put forward this excuse for your deviations? Do you mean to say that We ought to have sent such Messengers as would have forced you to follow the right way instead of bringing you to it by preaching? Please refer to (E.N. 80 of Surah Al-Anaam) for the distinction between God's will and God's approval).

33. That is, Whenever a Messenger came to a people, they were divided into two groups.

(1) Those who accepted the message (and that, too, could not have been possible except with the will of Allah).

(2) Those who rejected it and stuck to their deviation (For explanation see (E.N. 28 of Surah Al-Anaam).

34. That is, you can see for yourselves the lesson of human history. It is this that the people, who rejected the message, incurred the scourge of Allah like Pharaoh and the people of Pharaoh, while Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) received the blessings of Allah.

إِنْ تَحْرِصْ عَلَىٰ هُدَىٰهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ يُضِلُّ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ 37

(16:37) (O Muhammad), howsoever eager you may be to show them the Right Way, Allah does not bestow His guidance on those whom He lets go astray; and in fact none will be able to help them.

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَا يَبْعَثُ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَمُوتُ ۚ بَلَىٰ وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ 38

(16:38) They swear most solemnly in the name of Allah and say: "Allah shall not raise to life any who dies." (Yes, He will do so); that is a promise by which He is bound, even though most people do not know that.

لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِي يَخْتَلِفُونَ فِيهِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا كَاذِبِينَ 39

(16:39) (That is bound to happen in order that) He may make clear to them the reality regarding the matters on which they differ and that the unbelievers may realize that they were liars.[35]

35. In (Ayat 39)those two things have been stated which rationally and morally require that there must be Resurrection and life after death, that is:

(1) To reveal what the reality was, and

(2) To reward or punish people in accordance with the right or wrong stand they took about it in this world. It is common knowledge that since the creation of man on the earth there have been many differences regarding the reality which have been sowing dissension between families, nations and races. These have also led to the formation of many different societies, cultures and creeds on different theories. In every age millions of the torch bearers of each of these theories have been putting at stake all their life, property and honor to propagate and defend their favorite theory. Nay, there has always been such a bitter conflict between them that each group tried to annihilate the other, who, in his turn, stuck to it to the last. This being the case, common sense demands that such far reaching and serious differences should be cleared some time or other, so as to decide with certainty what was right and what was wrong, who was in the right and who was in the wrong. Obviously, it is not possible to lift the curtain from the reality in this world so as to reveal things in their true perspective. This is because the system on which this world has been created does not allow this. Therefore, there should be another world to fulfill this demand of common sense.

This is not the demand of common sense alone but also of the moral sense, which requires that the partners in this conflict should be rewarded or punished according to right or wrong, just or unjust part they played in it. For, some of these committed cruelties on the others, who had to make sacrifices for their cause. Then each one should also bear the responsibility for formulating and practicing a moral or immoral philosophy which influenced millions and billions of others for better or worse. Moral sense demands that there should be a time for the moral consequences to take their due course. As this is not possible in this world there should be another world for the purpose.

إِنَّمَا قَوْلُنَا لِشَيْءٍ إِذَا أَرَدْنَاهُ أَن نَّقُولَ لَهُ كُن فَيَكُونُ ع 40

(16:40) (As for the possibility of resurrection, bear in mind that) whenever We do will something, We have to do no more than say: "Be", and it is.[36]

36. This is the answer to those who imagined that it was the most difficult thing to raise the dead, and that, too, to raise together at once all the people who had died at any time. They have been told that it is an easy thing for Allah, Who has the power to bring into existence anything He desires, merely by His command, “Be,” for He does not stand in need of any provisions, any means and any favorable environment for this. His mere command produces necessary provisions, means and environment. This world was brought into existence by His mere command, “Be,” and likewise the next world will at once come into existence by His single command.

وَالَّذِيْنَ هَاجَرُوْا فِي اللّٰهِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا ظُلِمُوْا لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً ؕ وَلَاَجْرُ
الْاٰخِرَةِ اَكْبَرُ ۘ لَوْ كَانُوْا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ 41

(16:41) As for those who have forsaken their homes for the sake of Allah after enduring persecution, We shall certainly grant them a good abode in this world; and surely the reward of the Hereafter is much greater.[37] If they could but know (what an excellent end awaits)

37. This is to comfort the Muslim emigrants from Makkah to Habash, who were forced to leave their homes because of the unbearable persecution they suffered at the hands of the disbelievers. The change of the scene from the disbelievers to the emigrants to Habash contains a subtle warning to the disbelievers that they should not remain under any delusion that they would get off free from punishment for their cruel behavior towards those Muslims, so as to say: O cruel people! There shall be Resurrection to reward the oppressed believers and to punish you for your persecution of them.

الَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوْا وَعَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُوْنَ 42

(16:42) those who remain steadfast and put their trust in their Lord.

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ اِلَّا رِجَالًا نُّوْحِيْٓ اِلَيْهِمْ فَسْـَٔلُوْٓا اَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا
تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ 43

(16:43) (O Muhammad), whenever We raised any Messengers before you, they were no other than human beings;[38](except that) to them We sent revelation. So ask those who possess knowledge[39] if you do not know.

38. This is the answer to the objection of the mushriks of Makkah (which has not been cited here) that they could not believe that Muhammad (peace be upon him) was a Prophet of God because he was a human being like them. They have been told that the same objection had been raised against all the Prophets who came before him.

39. "Those who possess knowledge" are the scholars of the people of the Books and others, who, though not scholars in the strict sense had sufficient knowledge of the teachings of the revealed Books and were acquainted with the stories of the former Prophets.

بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَالزُّبُرِ ؕ وَاَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ اِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ 44

(16:44) We raised the Messengers earlier with Clear Signs and Divine Books, and We have now sent down this Reminder upon you that you may elucidate to people the teaching that has been sent down for them,[40] and that the people may themselves reflect.

40. In this connection, it is worthwhile to note that this duty of making plain and explaining the teachings of the Book was to be performed by Prophet not only by word of mouth but also practically. It was required that he should organize, under his own guidance, a Muslim community and establish it in accordance with the principles of the Book. This duty of the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been stated here especially to show the wisdom of sending a man as a Messenger, for, otherwise the Book could have been sent through the angels or could have been printed and sent directly to each man. But in this way; that purpose for which Allah in His Wisdom and Bounty and Providence designed to send the Book could not have been served. For, that purpose demanded that the Book should be brought by a perfect man, who should present it piece by piece, explain its meaning, remove the difficulties and doubts, answer objections etc. and above all, he should show towards those who rejected and opposed it that kind of attitude which is worthy of the bearer of this Book. On the other hand, he should guide those who believed in it in every aspect of life and set before them his own excellent pattern of life. Then he should train them individually and collectively on the principles of the Book; so as to make them a model society for the rest of mankind.

Let us now consider this (verse 43) from another point of view. Just as it cuts at the root of the argumentation of those who rejected the creed that a human Prophet could bring the Book, in the same way, it repudiates the view of those who plead that the Book should be accepted without any exposition of it from the Prophet. This latter view is contradictory to this verse, whatever be the position taken by its exponents. They might either be of the opinion that (a) the Prophet did not give any explanation of the Book he presented or that (b) the only acceptable thing is the Book and not any exposition thereof by the Prophet, or that (c) now the Book alone suffices us, for its exposition by the Prophet has lost its utility or that (d) now the Book alone is authentic for the exposition by the Prophet has ceased to exist, or if it does exists, it cannot be relied upon.

If they take the position (a), it will mean that the Prophet did not fulfill the purpose for which he was chosen to be the bearer of the Book: otherwise Allah could send it through an angel or directly to each person.

If they take the position (b) or (c), (God forbid) they will be accusing Allah of doing a useless thing by sending His Book through a Prophet, when He could have printed copies of the Quran and sent those directly to the people.

In case, they take the position (d), they, in fact, repudiate both the Quran and its exposition by the Prophet (peace be upon him). Then the only rational course left for them would be to accept the view of those who believe in the necessity of a new Prophet and a new revelation; whereas Allah Himself considers the exposition of the Book by the Prophet as an essential thing, and puts it forward as an argument for the necessity of a Prophet. Now if the view of those who reject tradition that the explanation of the Prophet (peace be upon him) has disappeared from the world is to be accepted, then two conclusions are inevitable; First, the Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a pattern for us has ceased to exist, and the only relation we have with him is the same that we have with the other former Prophets, e.g. Houd, Salih, Shuaib, etc. (peace be upon them). That is, we have only to testify that they were Prophets but we have no obligation to follow their patterns, for we have none with us. This position obviously leads to the need of a new Prophet, for it automatically refutes the doctrine of the finality of Prophethood. The second inevitable conclusion will be that a new Book is needed because in that case the Quran alone could not, according to its author, suffice. Thus in the face of this verse, there is no argument left to prove that the Quran is self sufficient to explain itself, for it itself says that there is no need of a Prophet to explain it. Thus it is absolutely necessary that a new Book must be sent down. May Allah destroy such people. In their enthusiasm to repudiate tradition, they are really cutting at the very root of Islam itself.

اَفَاَمِنَ الَّذِيۡنَ مَكَرُوا السَّيِّاٰتِ اَنۡ يَّخۡسِفَ اللّٰهُ بِهِمُ الۡاَرۡضَ اَوۡ يَاۡتِيَهُمُ الۡعَذَابُ مِنۡ حَيۡثُ لَا يَشۡعُرُوۡنَ ۙ 45

(16:45) Do those who have been devising evil plans (against the mission of the Messenger) feel secure that Allah will not cause the earth to swallow them up or that chastisement will not come upon them from a direction that they will not even be able to imagine;

اَوۡ يَاۡخُذَهُمۡ فِىۡ تَقَلُّبِهِمۡ فَمَا هُمۡ بِمُعۡجِزِيۡنَ ۙ 46

(16:46) or that He will not suddenly seize them while they are going about to and fro and they will be unable to frustrate His design,

اَوۡ يَاۡخُذَهُمۡ عَلٰى تَخَوُّفٍ ؕ فَاِنَّ رَبَّكُمۡ لَرَءُوۡفٌ رَّحِيۡمٌ 47

(16:47) or that He will not seize them when they are apprehensive of the impending calamity? Surely your Lord is Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَىٰ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ مِن شَيْءٍ يَتَفَيَّأُ ظِلَالُهُ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَالشَّمَائِلِ سُجَّدًا لِّلَّهِ

وَهُمْ دَاخِرُونَ 48

(16:48) Do the people not see how the objects Allah has created cast their shadows right and left, prostrating themselves in utter submission to Allah?[41]

41. The argument is this: The fact that everything a man, an animal, a tree or a mountain casts its shadow, is a clear proof of its material nature, and everything which is made of matter, is a creation of Allah and is subject to a universal law. In this case the law is that every material thing casts its shadow, which is symbolical of its servitude, and it cannot have any share whatsoever in Godhead.

وَلِلَّهِ يَسْجُدُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِن دَابَّةٍ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَهُمْ لَا

يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ 49

(16:49) All living creatures and all angels in the heavens and on the earth are in prostration before Allah;[42] and never do they behave in arrogant defiance.

42. That is, not only all things on the earth alone but also all things in the heavens, including all those whom people have been regarding as gods and goddesses, and considering to be closely related to Allah are subservient to God, and have no share whatsoever in His Godhead. Incidentally, it implies the existence of living creatures not only on the earth but in the planets, too.

يَخَافُونَ رَبَّهُم مِّن فَوْقِهِمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ ۩ 50

(16:50) They hold their Lord, Who is above them, in fear, and do as they are bidden.

وَقَالَ اللَّهُ لَا تَتَّخِذُوا إِلَٰهَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ ۚ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ ۚ فَإِيَّايَ فَارْهَبُونِ 51

(16:51) Allah has commanded: "Do not take two gods;[43] for He is but One God. So fear Me alone."

43. Negation of two gods by itself negates the existence of more than two gods.

وَلَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَهُ الدِّينُ وَاصِبًا ۗ أَفَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ تَتَّقُونَ 52

(16:52) His is whatever is in the heavens and the earth, and obedience to Him inevitably pervades the whole universe.[44] Will you, then, hold in awe any other than Allah?[45]

44. In other words it means that the entire system of the universe exists on its obedience to Him.

45. That is, when it is so, will you then make the fear of any other than God the basis of the system of your life?

وَمَا بِكُم مِّن نِّعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فَإِلَيْهِ تَجْأَرُونَ ۚ 53

(16:53) Every bounty that you enjoy is from Allah; and whenever any misfortune strikes you, it is to Him that you cry for the removal of your distress.[46]

46. That is, the fact, that you run to Allah for help in your distress and not to anyone else, is a clear proof of the Oneness of Allah, which has been embedded in your own hearts. At the time of your affliction, your true nature, which had been suppressed by the gods you had forged, involuntarily comes to the surface and invokes Allah, for it knows no other god or lord or master, having any real power. (For further details please refer to (E.Ns 29 and 41 of Surah Al-Anaam).

ثُمَّ إِذَا كَشَفَ الضُّرَّ عَنكُمْ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِّنكُم بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُونَ ۙ 54

(16:54) But as soon as He removes the distress from you, some of you associate others with their Lord[47] in giving thanks,

47. That is, at the time of showing gratitude to Allah for removing his affliction, he begins to make offerings also to some god, goddess or saint to show that Allah's kindness to him was due to the intercession of his patron, for he imagines that otherwise Allah would not have removed his distress.

لِيَكْفُرُوا بِمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ ۚ فَتَمَتَّعُوا ۖ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ 55

(16:55) that they may show ingratitude for the bounties We bestowed upon them. So enjoy yourselves for a while, soon you will come to know (the truth).

وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُونَ نَصِيبًا مِّمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ ۗ تَاللَّهِ لَتُسْأَلُنَّ عَمَّا كُنتُمْ تَفْتَرُونَ 56

(16:56) They set apart for those, whose reality they do not even know,[48] a portion of the sustenance We have provided them.[49] By Allah, you will surely be called to account for the lies that you have invented!

48. They assign shares to those patrons about whom they have no authentic knowledge that God has made them His partners and allotted some duties of Godhead to them and made them governors of some territories in His Kingdom.

49. That is, "They set apart a portion of their incomes and land products to make offerings of this to their patron."

وَيَجْعَلُوْنَ لِلّٰهِ الْبَنٰتِ سُبْحٰنَهٗ ۙ وَلَهُمْ مَّا يَشْتَهُوْنَ 57

(16:57) They assign daughters to Allah[50] - glory be to Him - whereas they assign to themselves what they truly desire![51]

50. This refers to a tradition of the ancient Arabs. They regarded their goddesses and angels as daughters of God.

51. That is, "sons."

وَاِذَا بُشِّرَ اَحَدُهُمْ بِالْاُنْثٰى ظَلَّ وَجْهُهٗ مُسْوَدًّا وَّهُوَ كَظِيْمٌ ۚ 58

(16:58) When any of them is told about the birth of a female his face turns dark, and he is filled with suppressed anger,

يَتَوَارٰى مِنَ الْقَوْمِ مِنْ سُوْٓءِ مَا بُشِّرَ بِهٖ ؕ اَيُمْسِكُهٗ عَلٰى هُوْنٍ اَمْ يَدُسُّهٗ فِى التُّرَابِ ؕ اَلَا سَآءَ مَا يَحْكُمُوْنَ 59

(16:59) and he hides himself from people because of the bad news, thinking: should he keep the child despite disgrace, or should he bury it in dust? How evil is their estimate of Allah![52]

52. This attitude of contempt towards daughters has been mentioned to bring home to them the height of their folly, ignorance and impudence in regard to God. This is why they did not hesitate to assign daughters to Allah, though they themselves felt that to have daughters was a matter of disgrace for them. Besides this, it shows that they had a very low estimation of Allah, which had resulted from their ways of shirk. So they felt nothing wrong in ascribing such foolish and absurd things to Allah Who is above such things.

لِلَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ مَثَلُ السَّوْءِ ۚ وَلِلّٰهِ الْمَثَلُ الْاَعْلٰى ؕ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ۧ 60

(16:60) Those who do not believe in the Hereafter deserve to be characterized with evil attributes whereas Allah's are the most excellent attributes. He is the Most Mighty, the Most Wise.

وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللّٰهُ النَّاسَ بِظُلْمِهِمْ مَّا تَرَكَ عَلَيْهَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ وَّلٰكِنْ يُّؤَخِّرُهُمْ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ
مُّسَمًّى ۚ فَاِذَا جَآءَ اَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَاْخِرُوْنَ سَاعَةً وَّلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُوْنَ 61

(16:61) Were Allah to take people to task for their wrong-doing, He would not have spared even a single living creature on the face of the earth. But He grants them respite until an appointed term. And when that term arrives, they have no power to delay it by a single moment, nor to hasten it.

وَيَجْعَلُوْنَ لِلّٰهِ مَا يَكْرَهُوْنَ وَتَصِفُ اَلْسِنَتُهُمُ الْكَذِبَ اَنَّ لَهُمُ الْحُسْنٰى ؕ لَا جَرَمَ اَنَّ
لَهُمُ النَّارَ وَاَنَّهُمْ مُّفْرَطُوْنَ 62

(16:62) They assign to Allah what they dislike for themselves and their tongues utter a sheer lie in stating that a happy state awaits them. Without doubt the Fire awaits them and it is to it that they shall be hastened.

تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَآ اِلٰٓى اُمَمٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ فَهُوَ وَلِيُّهُمُ الْيَوْمَ
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ 63

(16:63) By Allah, (O Muhammad), We sent Messengers to other communities before you but Satan made their evil deeds attractive to them (so they paid no heed to the call of the Messengers). The same Satan is their patron today and they are heading towards a painful chastisement.

وَمَآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ اِلَّا لِتُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِى اخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ ۙ وَهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ
يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ 64

(16:64) We have sent down the Book that you may explain to them the truth concerning what they are disputing and that the Book may serve as a guidance and mercy for those who believe in it.[53]

53. That is, this Book has afforded them an excellent opportunity to resolve their differences which have been caused by the superstitious creeds of their forefathers, and which have divided, them into warring factions. They can then unite on the permanent basis of the truth presented by the Quran, but those foolish people preferring their former condition even after the coming of this blessing, shall meet with disgrace and torment. On the other hand,

only those, who believe in this Book, will find the right way and blessed with mercy and favors from Allah. 65. And Allah sends down from the sky water, then He revives therewith the earth after its death. Indeed, in this is a sure sign for a people who listen.

وَاللّٰهُ اَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَحْيَا بِهِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّسْمَعُوْنَ ؕ 65

(16:65) Allah sends down water from the heaven, and thereby He instantly revives the earth after it lay dead. Verily there is a sign in it for those who have ears.[53a]

53a. That is, had you listened to the message of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and observed those signs carefully, you would have cried from the core of your heart. These signs support his message. Year after year you witness these signs. There is the land, all barren before you, without any sign of life, no blade of grass, no bud or flower, and no insect. Then comes rain. All of a sudden, the same land is covered with life. There crop upon numerous kinds of insects of which no vestige had been left. You witness this process of life and death, and death and life, repeated year after year. Yet you doubt this when the Prophet (peace be upon him) tells you that Allah will again bring to life all human beings after their death. This is because you see these signs as animals do, who do not see the wisdom of the Creator underlying this phenomenon; otherwise you would have discovered that these signs support the message of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

وَاِنَّ لَكُمْ فِي الْاَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً ؕ نُسْقِيْكُمْ مِّمَّا فِيْ بُطُوْنِهٖ مِنْۢ بَيْنِ فَرْثٍ وَّدَمٍ لَّبَنًا خَالِصًا سَآئِغًا لِّلشّٰرِبِيْنَ 66

(16:66) Surely there is a lesson for you in the cattle: We provide you to drink out of that which is in their bellies between the faeces and the blood - pure milk[54] - which is a palatable drink for those who take it.

54. "Between excretions and the blood". This refers to the most wonderful process of the formation of pure milk in the bellies of the cattle. For, the fodder they eat turns into blood, filth and pure milk, which is altogether different from the first two in its nature, color and usefulness. Some cattle produce milk in such abundance that after suckling their young ones a large quantity of it is left to make excellent human food.

وَمِنْ ثَمَرٰتِ النَّخِيْلِ وَالْاَعْنَابِ تَتَّخِذُوْنَ مِنْهُ سَكَرًا وَّرِزْقًا حَسَنًا ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ 67

(16:67) And out of the fruits of date-palms and grapes you derive intoxicants as well as wholesome sustenance.[55]Surely there is a sign for those who use reason.

55. Incidentally it implies that the juice of the fruits of date palms and vines contains two things. One is that which is pure and wholesome food for man and the other is that which turns into alcohol after it becomes rotten. But it has been left to the choice of man to obtain pure healthy food from this providence or to drink it as intoxicant wine to excite him and make him lose his self control. This also contains a hint as to the prohibition of wine.

وَاَوۡحٰى رَبُّكَ اِلَى النَّحۡلِ اَنِ اتَّخِذِىۡ مِنَ الۡجِبَالِ بُيُوۡتًا وَّمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعۡرِشُوۡنَ ۙ 68

(16:68) Your Lord inspired the bee,[56] saying: "Set up hives in the mountains and in the trees and in the trellises that people put up,

56. The lexical meaning of the Arabic word wahi is secret inspiration which is felt only by the one who inspires and the other who is inspired with. The Quran has used this word both for the instinctive inspiration by Allah to His creation in general and for the revelation towards His Prophets in particular. Allah sends His wahi to the heavens with His command and they begin functioning in accordance with it (Surah Al-Momin, Ayat 12). He will send this to the earth with His command and it will relate the story of all that had happened on and in it. He sends wahi to the bee and inspires it with faculties to perform the all of its wonderful work instinctively (Ayat 68). The same is true of the bird that learns to fly, the fish that learns to swim, the newly born child that learns to suck milk, etc. Then, it is also wahi with which Allah inspires a human being with a spontaneous idea (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 7). The same is the case with all the great discoveries, inventions, works of literature and art, etc. which would not have been possible without the benefit of wahi. As a matter of fact, every human being at one time or the other feels its mental or spiritual influence in the form of an idea or thought or plan or dream, which is confirmed by a subsequent experience to be the right guidance from the unseen wahi.

Then there is the wahi (revelation) which is the privilege of the Prophets. This form of wahi has its own special features and is quite distinct from all other forms. The Prophet, who is inspired with it, is fully conscious and has his firm conviction that it is being sent down from Allah. Such a revelation contains doctrines of creed, commandments, laws, regulations and instructions for the guidance of mankind.

ثُمَّ كُلِىۡ مِنۡ كُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ فَاسۡلُكِىۡ سُبُلَ رَبِّكِ ذُلُلًا ؕ يَخۡرُجُ مِنۡۢ بُطُوۡنِهَا شَرَابٌ مُّخۡتَلِفٌ اَلۡوَانُهٗ فِيۡهِ شِفَآءٌ لِّلنَّاسِ ؕ اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوۡمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوۡنَ 69

(16:69) then suck the juice of every kind of fruit and keep treading the ways of your Lord[57] which have been made easy." There comes forth from their bellies a drink varied in colours, wherein there is healing for men.[58] Verily there is a sign in this for those who reflect.[59]

57. "Follow the ways of your Lord" means work in accordance with the methods which have been taught to thee by Allah's wahi for the smooth running of hive life. It is Allah's wahi (instinctive inspiration) that has taught the bees how to build their wonderful factory with separate combs to rear brood, combs to turn nectar into honey, combs to store food, in short, separate combs to fulfill every aspect of hive life. It is wahi that has taught the bees how to organize themselves into a cooperative society for collective effort to run the factory with the queen and thousands of workers to perform a variety of specific tasks. All these things have been made so smooth for them by wahi that the bees never feel the necessity of ever thinking about it. They have been running smoothly their factory with their collective effort for thousands of years with perfect accuracy.

58. Though honey is a wholesome food with a sweet taste and has medicinal power as well, its latter quality has been mentioned only because the former is too obvious. It is used as a medicine to cure several diseases because it contains the juice and glucose of flowers and fruits in the best form. Besides this, it is also used in preparing and preserving other medicines because it does not rot. It also preserves other things from decay. That is why it has been used for centuries as a substitute for alcohol. And if the beehive is built at a place, which abounds in certain medicinal herbs, its honey does not remain mere honey, but becomes also the essence of that herb. It is expected that if bees are used methodically for extracting essence from herbs, that essence will prove to be much better than the one obtained in the laboratories.

59. This passage (Ayats 48-69) contains proofs of Tauhid and life after death. These were necessitated, for the disbelievers and the mushriks were bitterly opposed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) mainly because of these two doctrines. The acceptance of the first doctrine demolished the whole system of life based on shirk or atheism because to acknowledge Allah to be the sole Provider, the Helper and the Protector left no room for the worship of any god or goddess. The proof of Tauhid is based on the observance of the structure of the cattle, the bees, the date palms and vineyards and their usefulness to mankind. Naturally the question arises: Who has designed these in the manner and for the purpose they have been created? The only obvious answer is that it is the All-Wise and All-Beneficent Allah Who has designed all these things for the benefit of mankind to produce such varieties of food that are so wholesome and so tasty. The Prophet, therefore, rightly demanded: When you yourselves admit, and you cannot but admit, that it is Allah alone Who has provided milk, honey, dates, grapes and the like, He and none but He is worthy of your worship, praise, gratitude and allegiance. Why do you then insist on making offerings to your self made gods and goddesses?

The second doctrine to which the disbelievers took strong objection was that there is surely the life after death. They were against this doctrine for its acceptance changed the whole moral system and they were not prepared to change their immoral ways. Their objection was based on the presumption that it was impossible to bring to life anyone after death.

They have been asked to observe that the barren land, which once had been covered with vegetable life, was again covered with it after rainfall and they have been watching such repetition of life year after year. That Allah, Who could so easily bring to life the dead vegetable, could do the same and bring to life all the dead without any difficulty at all.

وَاللّٰهُ خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يَتَوَفّٰىكُمْ ۙ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُّرَدُّ اِلٰٓى اَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْ لَا يَعْلَمَ بَعْدَ عِلْمٍ
شَيْـًٔا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ قَدِيْرٌ ۧ 70

(16:70) Allah has created you, and then He causes you to die.[60] Some of you have your lives prolonged to an abject old age, when one loses all knowledge after having acquired it.[61] Allah is All-Knowing, All-Powerful.

60. It is to emphasize this: Allah not only provides you with the necessities and good things of life (as stated in the preceding verses), but also has full power over your life and death. None else has any power to give lift or cause death.

61. This fact has been mentioned to bring home to the disbelievers and the mushriks that knowledge, which gives superiority to man over all creatures on this earth, has been given by Allah, as if to say: You yourselves have seen that when a man, who once possessed much knowledge, becomes very old, he is reduced to a mere lump of flesh. Then that man who once taught knowledge to others loses all his senses and cannot look even after his own self.

وَاللّٰهُ فَضَّلَ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلٰي بَعْضٍ فِي الرِّزْقِ ۚ فَمَا الَّذِيْنَ فُضِّلُوْا بِرَاۗدِّيْ رِزْقِهِمْ عَلٰي مَا
مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِيْهِ سَوَاۗءٌ ۭ اَفَبِنِعْمَةِ اللّٰهِ يَجْحَدُوْنَ 71

(16:71) Allah has favoured some of you with more worldly provisions than others. Then those who are more favoured do not give away their provisions to their slaves lest they become equal sharers in it. Do they, then, deny the favour of Allah?[62]

62. It will be worthwhile to give deep thought to the meanings of this verse, for some modern commentators of the Quran have founded strange economic theories and systems on it. Their interpretation is an instance of perverting the meaning of the Quran by isolating verses from their context and treating it as a separate whole in order to formulate a new philosophy and law of Islamic Economics. In their opinion the verse implies this: Those people to whom Allah has given more provisions than others, should share these equally with their servants and slaves: otherwise they shall be guilty of ingratitude to Allah in regard to the wealth with which He had blessed them. This commentary on the verse is obviously wrong and farfetched because in the context it occurs there is no mention at all of any law of economics. The whole passage in which this verse occurs deals with the refutation of shirk and proof of Tauhid. The same themes are continued in the subsequent verses. There seems to be no reason why an economic law should have been inserted here, which would have been absolutely irrelevant, to say the least. On the contrary, when the verse is considered in its context, it becomes quite obvious that it is no more than the statement of a fact to prove the same theme that is contained in this passage. It argues like this: When you yourselves do not make your servants and slaves equal partners in your wealth, which in fact is given to you by Allah, how is it that you join other gods with God in

your gratitude to Him for the favors with which He has blessed you. You know that these gods have no powers to bestow anything on anyone, and, therefore, have no right in your worship of Allah, for they are after all His slaves and servants.

This interpretation of the verse under discussion is corroborated by (Surah Ar-Room, Ayat 28): "Allah sets forth to you an instance from your own selves. Do your slaves share with you the wealth We have bestowed on you so that you and they become equals in this? And do you fear them as you fear one another? Thus We make clear Our signs to those who use their common sense." A comparison of the two verses makes it quite clear that these have been cited to bring home to the mushriks that they themselves do not associate their slaves with themselves in their wealth and status, but they have the impudence and folly to set up His own creature as partner with God. It appears that the erroneous interpretation has been strengthened by the succeeding sentence: What! do they then deny to acknowledge Allah's favor? As this sentence immediately follows the similitude of the rich people and their slaves, they conclude that it will be ingratitude on the part of those, who possess more wealth not to share it equally with those who have less. As a matter of fact, everyone who has studied the Quran critically knows that ingratitude to Allah is to show gratitude to others than Allah for His blessings. This interpretation is so patently wrong that those who are well versed in the teachings of the Quran can have no misconception about it. And such verses as these can mislead only those who have a cursory knowledge of the Quran.

Now that the significance of the ingratitude towards Allah's blessing has become plain, the meaning of the verse will be quite clear, and it is this: When the Mushriks understand the implication of the difference between the master and his slave and observe this distinction in their own lives, why do they then persist in ignoring the immense difference between the Creator and His creatures and set up the latter as His partners and pay homage of gratitude to them for the blessings bestowed on them by Allah.

وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمۡ مِّنۡ اَنۡفُسِكُمۡ اَزۡوَاجًا وَّجَعَلَ لَكُمۡ مِّنۡ اَزۡوَاجِكُمۡ بَنِيۡنَ وَحَفَدَةً
وَّرَزَقَكُمۡ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ ؕ اَفَبِالۡبَاطِلِ يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ وَبِنِعۡمَتِ اللّٰهِ هُمۡ يَكۡفُرُوۡنَ ۙ 72

(16:72) And Allah has given you spouses from your kind, and has granted you through your spouses, sons and grandsons, and has provided you wholesome things as sustenance. (After knowing all this), do they still believe in falsehood[63] and deny Allah's bounty,[64]

63. "Is then in falsehood that they believe": they have this false and baseless belief that there are certain gods and goddesses, jinns and saints, dead and alive, who possess the power to make or mar their fates, fulfill their desires and answer their prayers, give them children, cure their diseases and help them win law suits.

64. "In the bounty of Allah that they disbelieve": by associating others with Allah in offering gratitude to Him for His favors, though they did not have any proof or authority that their false gods had played any part in regard to those favors. The Quran considers such an association to be the denial of Allah's favors. It puts forward the fundamental principle: It is

the denial of the favor of the real benefactor to offer gratitude for his favor to anyone who has not done that favor, or to presume without any proof or reason that the real benefactor has nor granted that favor of his own accord but because of the mediation or regard or recommendation or intercession of this or that person.

وَيَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ رِزْقًا مِّنَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا
يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ ۚ 73

(16:73) and worship instead of Allah, those helpless beings who have no control over providing them any sustenance from the heavens and the earth; do you worship those who have no power to do anything of this sort?

فَلَا تَضْرِبُوْا لِلّٰهِ الْاَمْثَالَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ وَاَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ 74

(16:74) So do not strike any similitudes to Allah.[65] Allah knows whereas you do not know.

65. "So do not make up any similitude for Allah": You should not compare Allah with others nor consider Him to be unapproachable like worldly kings and rulers, to whom none can have access without the mediation and intercession of their courtiers and servants. As Allah is not surrounded by angels, saints, favorites, etc. everyone can have direct access to Him without mediation by anyone. 7

ضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا عَبْدًا مَّمْلُوْكًا لَّا يَقْدِرُ عَلٰى شَيْءٍ وَّمَنْ رَّزَقْنٰهُ مِنَّا رِزْقًا حَسَنًا فَهُوَ يُنْفِقُ
مِنْهُ سِرًّا وَّجَهْرًا ؕ هَلْ يَسْتَوٗنَ ؕ اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ ؕ بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ 75

(16:75) Allah sets forth a parable:[66] There is one who is a slave and is owned by another and has no power over anything; and there is one whom We have granted good provision Ourselves, of which he spends both secretly and openly. Can they be equal? All praise be to Allah.[67] But most of them do not even know (this simple fact).[68]

66. In the preceding verse, the mushriks were told not to make comparisons between Allah and His creatures, for there is nothing like Him. As the bases of their comparison were wrong, their conclusions were also misleading. In this verse appropriate similitude have been cited and right comparisons have been made to lead them to reality.

67. Between the last question and "Praise be to Allah" there is a gap which is to be filled with the help of the latter. When the question was posed, obviously the mushriks could not say that the two men were equal. So some of them would have admitted that they were not equal, while the others would have kept quiet for fear that in case of admission, they would have to abide by its logical conclusion, that is, the admission of refutation of the doctrine of

shirk. Therefore, the words, "Praise be to Allah" have been put in the mouth of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in answer to both kinds of the response to the question. In the first case, it would mean: "Praise be to Allah" you have admitted at least so much. In the second case, it would mean: "Praise be to Allah" you have kept quiet in spite of all your obduracy and have not had the audacity to say that both were equal.

68. "But most of them do not know" this simple thing that while they feel and carefully observe the distinction between those who have powers and those who are powerless, they neither feel nor observe the clear distinction between the Creator and His creation. That is why they associate the creatures with the Creator in His Attributes and Powers and show the kind of allegiance to them as is the exclusive right of the Creator. The pity is that in their everyday life, they would beg for some thing from the master of the house and not from the servants but in contrast to this, they would beg for their needs from the servants of Allah and not from Him.

وَضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا رَّجُلَيْنِ اَحَدُهُمَآ اَبْكَمُ لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلٰى شَيْءٍ وَّهُوَ كَلٌّ عَلٰى مَوْلٰىهُ ۙ اَيْنَمَا
يُوَجِّهْهُّ لَا يَاْتِ بِخَيْرٍ ۭ هَلْ يَسْتَوِيْ هُوَ ۙ وَمَنْ يَّاْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ ۙ وَهُوَ عَلٰي صِرَاطٍ
مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ع 76

(16:76) Allah sets forth another parable: There are two men, one of whom is dumb and has no power over anything; he is a burden to his master, and wheresoever his master directs him, he fails to bring forth any good. Can such a person be the equal[69] of one who enjoins justice and himself follows the Right Way?

69. In the first similitude, distinction between Allah and false gods has been made clear in regard to the possession of powers and the lack of these. In the second one, the emphasis is on the use of those powers. Allah is not only All Powerful, but also hears all the prayers and fulfills all the needs, while the slave is utterly powerless. He does not and cannot hear prayers, nor can make a response to them nor has the power to do anything at all. He is totally dependent on the Master and quite incapable of doing anything by himself. On the other hand, the Master is All-Powerful and All-Wise. He enjoins justice on the world: whatever He does is right and accurate. Ask them: Is it then a point of wisdom to regard such Master and such a slave as equal?

وَلِلّٰهِ غَيْبُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ وَمَآ اَمْرُ السَّاعَةِ اِلَّا كَلَمْحِ الْبَصَرِ اَوْ هُوَ اَقْرَبُ ۭ اِنَّ
اللّٰهَ عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ 77

(16:77) Allah has full knowledge of the truths beyond the reach of perception both in the heavens and the earth;[70] and the coming of the Hour will take no more than the twinkling of an eye; it may take even less.[71] Indeed Allah has power over everything.

70. The subsequent sentence shows that this is the answer to a question which was frequently put to the Prophet (peace be upon him) by the disbelievers of Makkah. The question which has not been cited was this: If the Resurrection so often you talk of is really coming, let us know the date of its coming.

71. That is, don't be under the delusion that the Resurrection will come gradually and take a long time: you will neither be able to see it coming at a distance nor guard against it and make preparations to meet it. For it will come suddenly without any previous notice, in the twinkling of an eye or even will take less time than this. Therefore, now is the time to consider this matter seriously and to decide about your attitude towards it. You should not depend upon this false hope that there is still a long time in the coming of the Resurrection and you will set matters right with Allah when you will see it coming.

It may be pointed out that the Resurrection has been mentioned here during the discussion on Tauhid in order to warn the people that the choice between the doctrines of Tauhid and shirk is not merely a theoretical question. For that choice determines different courses of life for which they will be called to account on the Day of Resurrection. They have also been warned that it will come all of a sudden at some unknown time. Therefore, they should be very careful to make that choice which will determine their success or failure on that Day.

وَاللّٰهُ اَخۡرَجَكُمۡ مِّنۡۢ بُطُوۡنِ اُمَّهٰتِكُمۡ لَا تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ شَيۡـئًا ۙ وَّجَعَلَ لَـكُمُ السَّمۡعَ وَالۡاَبۡصَارَ وَالۡاَفۡـِٕدَةَ ۙ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَشۡكُرُوۡنَ 78

(16:78) Allah has brought you forth from your mothers' wombs when you knew nothing, and then gave you hearing, and sight and thinking hearts[72] so that you may give thanks.[73]

72. This is to remind them that when they were born they were more helpless and ignorant than the young one of an animal, but Allah gave them ears to hear, eyes to see and minds to think and reflect. These have enabled them to acquire every kind of information and knowledge to carry on their worldly affairs efficiently. So much so that these sensory faculties are the only means which help man attain so much progress as to rule over everything on the earth.

73. That is, you should be grateful to that Allah Who has bestowed upon you such blessings as these. It will be ingratitude on your part if you hear everything with your ears except the word of God, and see everything with your eyes except the signs of Allah and consider seriously about all the matters except your Benefactor Who has blessed you with these favors.

اَلَمۡ يَرَوۡا اِلَى الطَّيۡرِ مُسَخَّرٰتٍ فِىۡ جَوِّ السَّمَآءِ ؕ مَا يُمۡسِكُهُنَّ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ

لِّقَوۡمٍ يُّؤۡمِنُوۡنَ 79

(16:79) Have they never noticed the birds how they are held under control in the middle of the sky, where none holds them (from falling) except Allah? Surely there are signs in this for those who believe.

وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَـكُمۡ مِّنۡۢ بُيُوۡتِكُمۡ سَكَنًا وَّجَعَلَ لَـكُمۡ مِّنۡ جُلُوۡدِ الۡاَنۡعَامِ بُيُوۡتًا تَسۡتَخِفُّوۡنَهَا

يَوۡمَ ظَعۡنِكُمۡ وَيَوۡمَ اِقَامَتِكُمۡ ۙ وَمِنۡ اَصۡوَافِهَا وَاَوۡبَارِهَا وَاَشۡعَارِهَاۤ اَثَاثًا وَّمَتَاعًا اِلٰى

حِيۡنٍ 80

(16:80) Allah has made your houses a repose, and has provided you with the skins of the cattle for your habitation[74] which are light to handle both when you travel and when you camp;[75] and out of their wool and their fur and their hair He has given you furnishings and goods for use over a period of time.

74. Tents of skin which are in common use in Arabia.

75. That is, when you want to start on a journey, you can easily fold your tents and carry them, and when you want to make a short halt, you can easily unfold them and pitch them for shelter and rest.

وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَـكُمۡ مِّمَّا خَلَقَ ظِلٰلًا وَّجَعَلَ لَـكُمۡ مِّنَ الۡجِبَالِ اَكۡنَانًا وَّجَعَلَ لَـكُمۡ سَرَابِيۡلَ

تَقِيۡكُمُ الۡحَرَّ وَسَرَابِيۡلَ تَقِيۡكُمۡ بَاۡسَكُمۡ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُتِمُّ نِعۡمَتَهٗ عَلَيۡكُمۡ لَعَلَّكُمۡ

تُسۡلِمُوۡنَ 81

(16:81) And Allah has provided shade for you out of some of the things He has created; and He has provided you with shelters in the mountains, and has given you coats that protect you from heat[76] as well as coats that protect you in battle.[77] Thus does He complete His favour upon you[78] that you may submit to Him.

76. The Quran has not mentioned protection from cold for either of the two reasons:

(1) Because the use of garments in the summer season is a symbol of cultural perfection and obviously there is no need to mention the lower stages of culture. Or

(2) the use of garments in hot countries has specially been mentioned because the main use of garments there is for protection from the hot pestilential furious wind. Therefore, one has to cover one's head, neck, ears, and the whole of his body to protect it from the hot wind which would otherwise scorch him to death.

77. That is, Armors.

78. "Thus does He perfect His favor upon you": Allah makes provision for the minutest needs and necessities of every aspect of human life. For example, let us take the instance of the protection of the human body from external influences. We find that Allah has made such elaborate arrangements as require a complete book to relate them. These arrangements reach their perfection in the case of clothing and housing arrangement. Or, if we consider the food requirements, we realize that it is of many varieties which fulfill every need. More than this: the means Allah has provided for food requirements of man are so numerous that the list of the varieties and the names of different kinds of food require a big volume. This is the perfection of the blessing of food. Likewise, one would see perfection of the blessings of Allah in the fulfillment of each and every human need and necessity.

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ 82

(16:82) But if they turn away, your only duty is to clearly deliver the message of the truth.

يَعْرِفُوْنَ نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ يُنْكِرُوْنَهَا وَاَكْثَرُهُمُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ع 83

(16:83) They are aware of the favours of Allah, and yet refuse to acknowledge them.[79] Most of them are determined not to accept the Truth.

79. Here the denial of the blessings of Allah refers to practical denial by the disbelievers of Makkah. For they did not deny that all these blessings were from Allah but along with this they believed that their saints and gods also had contributed towards them. This is why they associated their intercessors in their gratitude to Allah for these blessings. Nay, they were even more grateful to them than to Allah. Allah regards this association as denial of His blessings, ingratitude and forgetfulness of His favors.

وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ مِنْ كُلِّ اُمَّةٍ شَهِيْدًا ثُمَّ لَا يُؤْذَنُ لِلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَلَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُوْنَ 84

(16:84) (They are heedless of) the Day when We shall raise a witness[80] from each community and then the unbelievers will neither be allowed to plead nor will they be asked to repent and seek pardon.[81]

80. The witness will be the Prophet of that community or his follower who invited that community to Tauhid and God worship and warned it of the consequences of shirk and superstitious rites and customs and cautioned it against the accountability on the Day of Resurrection. He will bear witness of the fact that he had conveyed the true message to those people, and that they committed evils deliberately and not in ignorance.

81. This does not mean that the criminals will not be given any opportunity to clear themselves but it means that their crimes will be proved to the hilt by means of irrefutable evidence which will leave no room for excuses.

وَإِذَا رَأَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الْعَذَابَ فَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُونَ 85

(16:85) Once the wrong-doers have beheld the chastisement,[82] neither will it be lightened for them nor will they be granted any respite.

82. That is, they will not be given the opportunity to beg pardon of their Lord for their crimes. For that will be the time of judgment as the time of begging pardon would have ended long before this. The Quran and the traditions are explicit on this point that the place for penitence is this world and not the next world. Even in this world the opportunity is lost as soon as signs of death begin to appear, for the penitence at that time will be of no avail when a person knows that the time of his death has come. Respite for deeds expires as soon as one enters into the boundary of death, and the only thing that remains after that is the award of reward and punishment.

وَإِذَا رَأَى الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا شُرَكَاءَهُمْ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا هَٰؤُلَاءِ شُرَكَاؤُنَا الَّذِينَ كُنَّا نَدْعُو مِن
دُونِكَ ۖ فَأَلْقَوْا إِلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلَ إِنَّكُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ۚ 86

(16:86) And when those who associated others with Allah in His Divinity will see those to whom they ascribed this share, they will say: "Our Lord! These are the beings to whom we ascribed a share in Your Divinity and whom we called upon instead of You," whereupon those beings will fling at them the words: "You are liars."[83]

83. It does not mean that they would deny the fact that the mushriks used to invoke their help. They will call them liars in the sense that they had made them deities without their knowledge, information and permission, as if to say: We never told you to leave Allah aside and pray to us for help. As a matter of fact, we never approved of this. Nay, we were utterly unaware of this that you were invoking us. It was an utter lie that you considered us to be able to hear your prayers, answer them and help you out of your difficulties. As you yourselves were responsible for this shirk, why are you involving us in its consequences?

وَأَلْقَوْا إِلَى اللَّهِ يَوْمَئِذٍ السَّلَمَ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ 87

(16:87) On that Day they will offer their submission and all that they had fabricated will have vanished.[84]

84. That is, all those things on which they had relied will prove to be false, for they will not find anyone to hear their supplication nor anyone to remove their hardships. Nay, there will be none who will come forward and say: These are my dependents, so no action should be taken against them.

اَلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ زِدْنٰهُمْ عَذَابًا فَوْقَ الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُوْا يُفْسِدُوْنَ 88

(16:88) As for those who disbelieved and barred others from the way of Allah, We shall add further chastisement[85] to their chastisement for all the mischief they did.

85. "We will increase punishment over punishment": one for their own disbelief and the other for hindering others from the Way of Allah.

وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ فِيْ كُلِّ اُمَّةٍ شَهِيْدًا عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ شَهِيْدًا عَلٰى هٰٓؤُلَآءِ ؕ وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ تِبْيَانًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّ هُدًى وَّ رَحْمَةً وَّبُشْرٰى لِلْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ع 89

(16:89) (O Muhammad), warn them of the coming of a Day when We shall bring forth a witness against them from each community and We shall bring you forth as a witness against them all; (and it is for that purpose that) We sent down the Book to you which makes everything clear,[86] and serves as a guidance and mercy and glad tidings to those who have submitted to Allah.[87]

86. The Quran makes manifest everything on which depends guidance or deviation, success or failure. Whose knowledge is essential for following the right way. What clearly distinguishes truth from falsehood.

In this connection one should guard against that meaning of this sentence and the like in the Quran according to which some people interpret "everything" to mean the knowledge of all sciences, arts, etc. and in order to prove the correctness of their interpretation, they have to pervert the real meaning of the Quran.

87. This Book is a guidance for those who surrender to it as a divine Book and follow it in every aspect of life. Then it will bring Allah's blessings upon them, and will give them the good news that they will come out successful in the court of Allah on the Day of Judgment. Or, the contrary, those people who reject it shall not only be deprived of guidance and blessing but will also find it as a testimony against themselves on the Day of Resurrection when Allah's Messenger will stand up to testify against them. This Book will prove to be a

strong argument against them. For Allah's Messenger will say that he had conveyed its message which made manifest the distinction between truth and falsehood.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَآئِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ ۚ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ 90

(16:90) Surely Allah enjoins justice, kindness and the doing of good to kith and kin,[88] and forbids all that is shameful, evil and oppressive.[89] He exhorts you so that you may be mindful.

88. In this brief sentence Allah has enjoined three most important things on which alone depends the establishment of a sound and healthy society:

The first of these is justice which has two aspects.

To make such arrangements as may enable everyone to get one's due rights without stint. Justice does not, however, mean equal distribution of rights, for that would be absolutely unnatural. In fact, justice means equitable dispensation of rights which in certain cases may mean equality. For example, all citizens should have equal rights of citizenship but in other cases equality in rights would be injustice. For instance, equality in social status and rights between parents and their children will obviously be wrong. Likewise those who render services of superior and inferior types cannot be equal in regard to wages and salaries. What Allah enjoins is that the full rights of everyone should be honestly rendered whether those be moral, social, economic legal or political in accordance with what one justly deserves.

The second thing enjoined is ihsan which has no equivalent in English. This means to be good, generous, sympathetic, tolerant, forgiving, polite, cooperative, selfless, etc. In collective life this is even more important than justice; for justice is the foundation of a sound society but ihsan is its perfection. On the one hand, justice protects society from bitterness and violation of rights. On the other hand, ihsan makes it sweet and joyful and worth living. It is obvious that no society can flourish if every individual insists on exacting his pound of flesh. At best such a society might be free from conflict but there cannot be love, gratitude, generosity, sacrifice, sincerity, sympathy and such humane qualities as produce sweetness in life and develop high values.

The third thing which has been enjoined is good treatment towards one's relatives which in fact is a specific form of ihsan. It means that one should not only treat his relatives well, share their sorrows and pleasures and help them within lawful limits but should also share his wealth with them according to his means and the need of each relative. This enjoins on everyone who possesses ample means to acknowledge the share of his deserving relatives along with the rights of his own person and family. The divine law holds every well to do person in a family to be responsible for fulfilling the needs of all his needy kith and kin. The law considers it a great evil that one person should enjoy the pleasures of life while his own kith and kin are starving. As it considers the family to be an important part of society, it lays down that the first right of needy individuals is on its well t -do members and then on the

others. Likewise it is the first duty of the well to do members of the family to fulfill the needs of their own near relatives and then those of others. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has emphasized this fact in many traditions, according to which a person owes rights to his parents, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, other relatives, etc. in accordance with the nearness of their relationships. On the basis of this fundamental principle, Umar made it obligatory on the first cousins of an orphan to support him. In the case of another orphan he declared that if he had no first cousins he would have made it obligatory on distant cousins to support him. Just imagine the happy condition of the society every unit of which supports its every needy individual in this way. Most surely that society will become high and pure economically, socially and morally.

89. In contrast to the above mentioned three virtues, Allah prohibits three vices which ruin individuals and the society as a whole:

(1) The Arabic word fahsha applies to all those things that are immodest, immoral or obscene or nasty or dirty or vulgar, not fit to be seen or heard, because they offend against recognized standards of propriety or good taste, e.g. adultery, fornication, homosexuality, nakedness, nudity, theft, robbery, drinking, gambling, begging, abusive language and the like. Likewise it is indecent to indulge in giving publicity to any of these evils and to spread them, e.g. false propaganda, calumny, publicity of crimes, indecent stories, dramas, films, naked pictures, public appearance of womenfolk with indecent makeup, free mixing of sexes, dancing and the like.

(2) Munkar applies to all those evils which have always been universally regarded as evils and have been forbidden by all divine systems of law.

(3) Baghy applies to those vices that transgress the proper limits of decency and violate the rights of others, whether those of the Creator or His creation.

وَاَوۡفُوۡا بِعَهۡدِ اللّٰهِ اِذَا عٰهَدۡتُّمۡ وَلَا تَنۡقُضُوا الۡاَيۡمَانَ بَعۡدَ تَوۡكِيۡدِهَا وَقَدۡ جَعَلۡتُمُ اللّٰهَ
عَلَيۡكُمۡ كَفِيۡلًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعۡلَمُ مَا تَفۡعَلُوۡنَ 91

(16:91) And fulfil the covenant which you have made with Allah and do not break your oaths after having firmly made them, and after having made Allah your witness. Surely Allah knows all that you do.

وَلَا تَكُوۡنُوۡا كَالَّتِىۡ نَقَضَتۡ غَزۡلَهَا مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ قُوَّةٍ اَنۡكَاثًا ؕ تَتَّخِذُوۡنَ اَيۡمَانَكُمۡ دَخَلًا ۢ بَيۡنَكُمۡ
اَنۡ تَكُوۡنَ اُمَّةٌ هِىَ اَرۡبٰى مِنۡ اُمَّةٍ ؕ اِنَّمَا يَبۡلُوۡكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِهٖ ؕ وَلَيُبَيِّنَنَّ لَـكُمۡ يَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ مَا
كُنۡتُمۡ فِيۡهِ تَخۡتَلِفُوۡنَ 92

(16:92) And do not become like the woman who, after having painstakingly spun her yarn, caused it to disintegrate into pieces.[90] You resort to oaths as instruments of mutual deceit so that one people might take greater advantage than another although Allah puts you to the test through this.[91] Surely on the Day of Resurrection[92] He will make clear the Truth concerning the matters over which you differed.

90. In this verse, Allah has enjoined three kinds of covenants which have been mentioned in the order of their importance. The first of these covenants is the one between man and his Allah which is the most important of all. The second in importance is the covenant between one man or one group of men and another man or another group of men, which is taken with Allah as a witness or in which the name of God has been used. The third covenant is that which has been made without using Allah's name. Though this is third in importance, its fulfillment is as important as that of the first two and the violation of any of these has been prohibited.

91. In this connection it should be noted that Allah has rebuked the people for the worst form of violation of treaties which has been creating the greatest disorder in the world. It is a pity that even big people consider it to be a virtue to violate treaties in order to gain advantages for their people in political, economic and religious conflicts. At one time the leader of one nation enters into a treaty with another nation for the interest of his own people but at another time the same leader publicly breaks the very same treaty for the interest of his people, or secretly violates it. It is an irony that such violations are made even by those people who are honest in their private lives. Moreover, it is regrettable that their own people do not protest against them; nay, they eulogize them for such shameful feats of diplomacy. Therefore, Allah warns that every such treaty is a test of the character of those who enter into it, and of their nations. They might gain some apparent advantage for their people in this way, but they will not escape their consequences on the Day of Judgment.

92. This is to warn that decision about differences and disputes that lead to conflict will be made on the Day of Judgment. Therefore, these should not be made an excuse to break agreements and treaties. Even if one is wholly in the right and the opponent is wholly in the wrong. It is not right for the former to break treaties or make false propaganda or employ other deceitful methods to defeat the other. If one does so, it will go against him on that Day because righteousness demands that one should not only be right in his theories and aims but should also use right methods and employ right means. This warning has especially been given to those religious groups and sects who always suffer from this misunderstanding that they have a right to defeat their opponents because they are on the side of God and their opponents are rebels against Allah. Therefore, there is no obligation on them to stick to their treaties with their opponents. This was what the Arab Jews practiced, declaring: There is no moral obligation on us in regard to the pagan Arabs, and we are rightly entitled to practice dishonesty and deceit that might be of advantage to us and harmful to the disbelievers.

وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً وَّلٰكِنْ يُّضِلُّ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَهْدِىْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ

وَلَتُسْـَٔلُنَّ عَمَّا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ 93

(16:93) Had Allah so willed, He would have made you all one single community.[93] However, He lets go astray whomsoever He wills and shows the Right Way to whomsoever He wills.[94] Surely you shall be called to account regarding what you did.

93. This further supports the previous warning. It means that it would be wrong for any champion of Allah's religion to arrogate to himself the use of every sort of method and means irrespective of whether they are right or wrong to propagate his own religion (considering it to be Allah's religion) and try to destroy opposite religions. For this would be utterly against the will of Allah. If Allah had willed that there should be no religious differences, He could have deprived mankind of the freedom of choice. In that case, there would have been no need for Allah to get help of any such upholder of His religion, who uses disgraceful means for this purpose. Allah could have created all mankind to be inherent believers and obedient servants by depriving them of the power and option of disbelief and sin. Then there would have been none who could have dared to deviate from belief and obedience.

94. This is to show that Allah Himself has given man the power and freedom to follow any out of the many ways. That is why Allah makes arrangements for the guidance of the one who intends to follow the right way, and let go astray the one who desires to deviate.

وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوْٓا اَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلًاۢ بَيْنَكُمْ فَتَزِلَّ قَدَمٌۢ بَعْدَ ثُبُوْتِهَا وَتَذُوْقُوا السُّوْٓءَ بِمَا

صَدَدْتُّمْ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَلَكُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ 94

(16:94) Do not make your oaths a means of deceiving one another or else your foot may slip after having been firm,[95] and you may suffer evil consequences because of hindering people from the way of Allah. A mighty chastisement awaits you.

95. That is, someone who might have been convinced of Islam, seeing your dishonest conduct should become disgusted and hold back from joining the believers. For he might argue like this: As these Muslims are not much different from the disbelievers in their morals and dealings, there is no reason why I should join them.

وَلَا تَشْتَرُوْا بِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا ؕ اِنَّمَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ

تَعْلَمُوْنَ 95

(16:95) Do not barter away the covenant[96] of Allah for a paltry gain.[97] Verily that which is with Allah is far better for you, if you only knew.

96. That is, the covenant that you may make in the name of Allah as a representative of His religion.

97. It does not mean that they should barter away Allah's covenant for some big gain. What it implies is that any worldly gain howsoever great is insignificant as compared with the worth of Allah's covenant. Therefore, it will be a losing bargain to barter that away for any worldly gain, which is after all paltry.

مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ ۚ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ بَاقٍ ؕ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوْٓا اَجْرَهُمْ بِاَحْسَنِ مَا

كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ 96

(16:96) Whatever you have is bound to pass away and whatever is with Allah will last. And We shall surely grant those who have been patient their reward[98] according to the best of what they did.

98. Those who practice fortitude are the people who will always stand firm in the struggle between right and truth on one side and greed and lust on the other. They bear every loss for the sake of righteousness and spurn away every gain that they might obtain by adopting unlawful means. They patiently wait for the rewards of their good deeds in the Hereafter.

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ اَوْ اُنْثٰى وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً ۚ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ

اَجْرَهُمْ بِاَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ 97

(16:97) Whosoever acts righteously - whether a man or a woman - and embraces belief, We will surely grant him a good life;[99] and will surely grant such persons their reward according to the best of their deeds.[100]

99. This verse removes the wrong notions of both the Muslims and the disbelievers who are of the opinion that those who adopt a just honest and pious attitude, are most surely losers in this world, though they might be gainers in the Hereafter. Allah removes this misunderstanding, as if to say: This presumption of yours is wrong. The righteous attitude not only leads to a happy life in the Hereafter, but it also guarantees, by Allah's grace, a pure and happy life even in this world. And this is a fact that those people who are sincerely

righteous, honest, pure and fair in their dealings enjoy a much better life in this world. For they enjoy that confidence and real honor and respect because of their spotless character, which is not enjoyed by those who lack these virtues. They obtain such pure and outstanding success as are denied to those who employ dirty and disgusting ways to win success. Above all, they enjoy, even though they might be living in poor houses, that peace of mind and satisfaction of conscience which is denied to the wicked dwellers of mansions and palaces.

100. That is, their rank in the Hereafter shall be determined according to their best deeds. In other words, if a person has done both small and great virtues, he will be awarded that high rank which he would merit according to his greatest virtues.

فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ 98

(16:98) Whenever you read the Qur'an seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the accursed.[101]

101. This does not mean that one should merely repeat the Arabic words: I seek Allah's refuge against the accursed Satan. It means that one should have a sincere desire and do his utmost to guard against Satan's evil suggestions when one is reciting the Holy Quran and should not allow wrong and irrelevant doubts and suspicions to enter his mind. One should try to see everything contained in the Quran in its true light, and refrain from mixing it up with his self invented theories or ideas foreign to the Quran so as to construe its meaning against the will of Allah. Moreover, one should feel that the most sinister and avowed design of Satan is that the reader should not obtain any guidance from the Quran. This is why Satan tries his utmost to delude the reader and pervert him from getting guidance from it, and mislead him into wrong ways of thinking. Therefore, the reader should be fully on his guard against Satan and seek Allah's refuge for help so that Satan should not be able to deprive him of the benefits froth this source of guidance, for one who fails to get guidance from this source, will never be able to get guidance from anywhere else. Above all, the one who seeks to obtain deviation from this Book is so entangled in deviation that he can never get out of this vicious circle.

The context in which this verse occurs here is to serve as an introduction to the answers to the questions which the mushriks of Makkah were raising against the Quran. They have been warned that they could appreciate the blessing of the Quran only if they would try to see it in its true light by seeking Allah's protection against Satan's misleading suggestions, and not by raising objections against it. Otherwise Satan does not let a man understand the Quran and its teachings.

إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ لَهُ سُلْطَانٌ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ 99

(16:99) Surely he has no power over those who have faith and who place their trust in their Lord.

اِنَّمَا سُلۡطٰنُهٗ عَلَى الَّذِيۡنَ يَتَوَلَّوۡنَهٗ وَالَّذِيۡنَ هُمۡ بِهٖ مُشۡرِكُوۡنَ ع 100

(16:100) He has power only over those who take him as their patron and who, under his influence, associate others with Allah in His Divinity.

وَاِذَا بَدَّلۡنَاۤ اٰيَةً مَّكَانَ اٰيَةٍ ۙ وَّاللّٰهُ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَا يُنَزِّلُ قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّمَاۤ اَنۡتَ مُفۡتَرٍ ؕ بَلۡ اَكۡثَرُهُمۡ لَا يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ 101

(16:101) Whenever We replace one verse by another verse - and Allah knows what He should reveal - they are wont to say: "You are nothing but a fabricator[102] (who has invented the Qur'an)." The fact is that most of them are ignorant of the Truth.

102. This may also mean: To send down one commandment to elaborate upon the other, for the commandments were sent down piecemeal in the Quran. For instance, the commandments about prohibition and fornication were sent down gradually one after the other during several years. But We hesitate to accept this interpretation because An-Nahl is a Makki Surah and to the best of our information there is no instance to show that commandments were sent down piecemeal at Makkah. Therefore, we prefer the other interpretation. The Quran has added details of one theme and explained the same with different kinds of illustrations at different places. Likewise it has related a story in different words at different places and presented its different aspects and details at other places. It has put forward one argument at one place to prove a theme and another at another place to prove the same theme. It has related one theme concisely at one place and in detail at the other. That is what the disbelievers of Makkah put forward as proof that Muhammad (peace be upon him) forged the Quran himself. They argued like this: Had the Quran been the Word of Allah, it would have related one thing in full at one place, for Allah's knowledge is not defective that He should have to think out gradually the details of a theme and to give different versions to explain the same thing. In contrast to this, the knowledge of a human being is defective. A man has to think out gradually as has been done in the case of the Quran which is a clear proof that you have forged it yourself.

قُلۡ نَزَّلَهٗ رُوۡحُ الۡقُدُسِ مِنۡ رَّبِّكَ بِالۡحَـقِّ لِيُثَبِّتَ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَهُدًى وَّبُشۡرٰى لِلۡمُسۡلِمِيۡنَ 102

(16:102) Tell them: "It is the spirit of holiness that has brought it down, by stages,[103] from your Lord so that it might bring firmness to those who believe,[104] and guidance to the Right Way,[105] and give glad tidings of felicity and success to those who submit to Allah."[106]

103. The Holy Spirit: Gibril. Instead of using the name of the angel who brought revelation, his title has been deliberately mentioned to warn the disbelievers that the Holy Spirit who brought revelation is free from human frailties. He is neither dishonest that he should add something to or take away something from the message he brought, nor is he a liar and forger that he should invent and state something in the name of Allah. Nor does he suffer from any human lust that he should practice a deceit. He is wholly pure and holy and conveys the Word of Allah intact.

104. That is, the fact that Allah sends down His message piecemeal does not mean that Allah's knowledge and wisdom are defective as you consider because of your folly. Allah sends His revelations gradually because human intelligence and capacity to grasp are limited and defective which do not let him understand the whole theme at one and the same time and make it firm in his mind. Therefore, Allah in His wisdom conveyed His revelation piecemeal through the Holy Spirit. He sends a theme gradually and gives its details by and by and uses different methods and ways to make it plain to human beings so that they might grasp it according to their abilities and capabilities and become firm in their faith and knowledge.

105. The second practical wisdom of sending down the Quran piecemeal was that those believers who obediently followed it, should get necessary instructions for the propagation of Islam and the solution of other problems of life at the time when they were actually needed. It is obvious that if those instructions had been sent down before time and at one and the same time they would not have been useful.

106. The third practical wisdom of not sending down the Quran as a whole at one and the same time was to give good tidings and encouragement to the obedient servants who were suffering from persecution and encountering great obstacles because they needed it over and over again. That is why they were assured of ultimate success time and again to fill them with hope to carry on their mission.

وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ اَنَّهُمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ اِنَّمَا يُعَلِّمُهٗ بَشَرٌ ؕ لِسَانُ الَّذِیْ یُلْحِدُوْنَ اِلَیْهِ اَعْجَمِیٌّ

وَّهٰذَا لِسَانٌ عَرَبِیٌّ مُّبِیْنٌ 103

(16:103) Surely We know well that they say about you: "It is only a human being who teaches him,"[107](notwithstanding) that he whom they maliciously hint at is of foreign tongue, while this (Qur'an) is plain Arabic speech.

107. In this connection, traditions mention the names of several persons, one of whom is Jabar. According to the disbelievers of Makkah he taught the Prophet (peace be upon him). However, one thing particularly noteworthy about all these persons is that they were non Arab slaves. Whosoever he might be, the fact that he used to recite the Torah and the Gospel and had an acquaintance with the Prophet (peace be upon him). This gave an opportunity to the disbelievers for spreading this false report that it was the particular slave who was the real author of the Holy Quran, but Muhammad (peace be upon him) presented it as the Word of God. This not only shows that his opponents were very impudent in spreading

false accusations against the Prophet (peace be upon him) but also that, in general, people are not just in judging the worth of their contemporaries. They were ill treating like this that great personality who has had no parallel in history. Nevertheless, these people who had become blind in their opposition, preferred to attribute the authorship of the matchless Arabic Quran to a non Arab slave who had a smattering of the Torah and the Gospel. Instead of accepting the claim of the Prophet (peace be upon him), who was an embodiment of truth, they attributed its authorship to an insignificant foreign slave.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ۙ لَا يَهْدِيهِمُ اللَّهُ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ 104

(16:104) Surely Allah will not enable those who do not believe in the signs of Allah to be directed to the Right Way, and a painful chastisement awaits them.

إِنَّمَا يَفْتَرِي الْكَذِبَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ 105

(16:105) (It is not the Prophet who invents lies), it is rather those who do not believe in the signs of Allah who invent lies.[108] They are liars.

108. This verse can also be rendered like this: A Prophet does not forge any false thing but those, who do not believe in the revelations of Allah, invent falsehoods.

مَنْ كَفَرَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِهِ إِلَّا مَنْ أُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَٰكِنْ مَنْ شَرَحَ بِالْكُفْرِ صَدْرًا فَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ 106

(16:106) Except for those who were forced to engage in infidelity to Allah after believing the while their hearts remained firmly convinced of their belief, the ones whose hearts willingly embraced disbelief shall incur Allah's wrath and a mighty chastisement lies in store for them.[109]

109. This verse deals with the case of those Muslims who were being persecuted with cruelty and were being subjected to unbearable torments to force them to give up their faith. They are being told that if at any time they are forced to utter words of disbelief to save their lives, when in fact in their hearts they are secure against disbelief, they will be pardoned. On the other hand, if they accepted unbelief from the core of their hearts, they shall not escape the torment of Allah even if they succeed in saving their lives.

It does not, however, mean that one should utter words of disbelief to save his life. This is merely a permission but not the ideal thing for a believer. According to this permission if one utters such a thing, he shall not be taken to account. In fact, the ideal for a believer is to utter words of truth in any case whether his body is cut into pieces. There are instances which show that during the period of the Prophet (peace be upon him) some acted upon the ideal while others took advantage of the permission. There was Khabbab bin Art (may Allah be pleased with him) who was made to lie on embers of fire until the fire was extinguished

by the melting of his fat, but he remained firm in his faith. Then there was Bilal Habashi who was made to put on an armor and stand in the scorching heat. Then he was dragged on the burning sand but he went on saying, Allah is one. There was another believer, Habib Gin Zaid bin Asim, whose limbs were cut one by one by the order of Musailimah, the Liar. Each time his limb was severed it was demanded of him that he should acknowledge the Liar as a prophet but each time he refused to bear witness to his claim of prophethood until he breathed his last. On the other hand, there was the instance of Ammar bin Yasir whose parents were mercilessly butchered before his eyes. After this he himself was put to such unbearable torture that, in order to save his life, he had to utter the same words of unbelief that were demanded of him. Afterwards when he came crying to the Prophet (peace be upon him), he said: O Messenger of Allah, they did not let me go until I spoke evil of you and praised their deities. The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked him: How do you feel about this, in your heart? He replied humbly: My heart is fully convinced of the faith. At this the Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: If they put you to the same torture again, you may utter the same words. May Allah be pleased with them all.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمُ اسۡتَحَبُّوا الۡحَيٰوةَ الدُّنۡيَا عَلَى الۡاٰخِرَةِ ۙ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهۡدِى الۡقَوۡمَ الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ 107

(16:107) That is because they love the life of this world more than the Hereafter; and Allah does not guide those who are ungrateful to Allah for His favours.

اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيۡنَ طَبَعَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى قُلُوۡبِهِمۡ وَسَمۡعِهِمۡ وَاَبۡصَارِهِمۡ ۚ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الۡغٰفِلُوۡنَ 108

(16:108) They are the ones upon whose hearts and hearing and eyes Allah has set a seal. They are utterly steeped in heedlessness.

لَا جَرَمَ اَنَّهُمۡ فِى الۡاٰخِرَةِ هُمُ الۡخٰسِرُوۡنَ 109

(16:109) No doubt they shall be losers in the Hereafter.[110]

110. These words apply to those people who gave up their faith, when they felt that they could not bear hardships of the right way and so they again joined their unbelieving, mushrik people.

ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا مِنۢ بَعۡدِ مَا فُتِنُوا ثُمَّ جَٰهَدُوا وَصَبَرُوٓاْ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنۢ

بَعۡدِهَا لَغَفُورٞ رَّحِيمٞ ١١٠

(16:110) And surely your Lord will be Most Forgiving and Most Merciful towards those who left their homes after they were persecuted, and who thereafter struggled hard and remained constant.[111]

111. They were those believers who migrated to Habashah.

يَوۡمَ تَأۡتِي كُلُّ نَفۡسٖ تُجَٰدِلُ عَن نَّفۡسِهَا وَتُوَفَّىٰ كُلُّ نَفۡسٖ مَّا عَمِلَتۡ وَهُمۡ لَا

يُظۡلَمُونَ ١١١

(16:111) Allah's judgement will come about them all on the Day when everyone shall come pleading in his defence, and everyone shall be fully requited for his deeds and none shall be wronged in the least.

وَضَرَبَ ٱللَّهُ مَثَلٗا قَرۡيَةٗ كَانَتۡ ءَامِنَةٗ مُّطۡمَئِنَّةٗ يَأۡتِيهَا رِزۡقُهَا رَغَدٗا مِّن كُلِّ مَكَانٖ

فَكَفَرَتۡ بِأَنۡعُمِ ٱللَّهِ فَأَذَٰقَهَا ٱللَّهُ لِبَاسَ ٱلۡجُوعِ وَٱلۡخَوۡفِ بِمَا كَانُواْ يَصۡنَعُونَ ١١٢

(16:112) Allah sets forth the parable of (the people of) a town who were secure and content and whose sustenance came in abundance from every quarter. But then the people of the town showed ingratitude towards Allah for His bounties, so Allah afflicted them with hunger and fear in punishment for their evil deeds.

وَلَقَدۡ جَآءَهُمۡ رَسُولٞ مِّنۡهُمۡ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَهُمُ ٱلۡعَذَابُ وَهُمۡ ظَٰلِمُونَ ١١٣

(16:113) Most certainly a Messenger came to them from among them; but they rejected him, calling him a liar. Therefore chastisement seized them while they engaged in wrong-doing.[112]

112. That habitation has not been specified here nor have the commentators definitely pointed out which that habitation was. However, there is a saying of Ibn Abbas (which seems to be correct) that the place referred to is Makkah itself. In that case, hunger and fear will mean the famine which prevailed over the people of Makkah for several years during the Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him).

فَكُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا ۖ وَّاشْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اِيَّاهُ

تَعْبُدُوْنَ 114

(16:114) So eat out of the lawful and good sustenance that Allah has bestowed upon you, and thank Allah for His bounty,[113] if it is Him that you serve.[114]

113. This shows that the above mentioned famine had come to an end at the time of the revelation of this Surah.

114. Here the observation of the lawful and the unlawful has been made the test of worship of Allah. Those who claim to be the servants of Allah will eat what is lawful and pure and show gratitude to Him and will scrupulously refrain from what is forbidden and impure.

اِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِنْزِيْرِ وَمَآ اُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ بِهٖ ۚ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ

بَاغٍ وَّلَا عَادٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ 115

(16:115) Allah has forbidden you only carrion, and blood, and the flesh of swine; also any animal over which the name of any other than Allah has been pronounced. But whoever eats of them under compelling necessity - neither desiring it nor exceeding the limit of absolute necessity - surely for such action Allah is Much Forgiving, Most Merciful.[115]

115. Please refer also to (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 173), (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 3) and (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 145).

وَلَا تَقُوْلُوْا لِمَا تَصِفُ اَلْسِنَتُكُمُ الْكَذِبَ هٰذَا حَلٰلٌ وَّهٰذَا حَرَامٌ لِّتَفْتَرُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ

الْكَذِبَ ۭ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَفْتَرُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُوْنَ ۭ 116

(16:116) And do not utter falsehoods by letting your tongues declare: "This is lawful"[116] and "That is unlawful," thus fabricating lies against Allah. Surely those who fabricate lies against Allah will never prosper.

116. This verse clearly shows that none but Allah has the right to declare a thing to be lawful or unlawful. Or, in other words, the right of making laws exclusively rests with Allah. Therefore, any person who will dare to decide about the lawful and the unlawful will transgress his powers. Of course, a person, who acknowledges the divine law as the final authority, may deduce from it whether a certain thing or action is lawful or unlawful.

The arrogation of the right of determining the lawful and the unlawful has been declared to be a falsehood on Allah for two reasons:

(1) Such a person, so to say, claims that what he declares to be lawful or unlawful, disregarding the authority of the divine Book, has been made lawful or unlawful by God.

(2) He means to claim that Allah has given up the authority of making lawful and unlawful and has thus left man free to make his own laws for the conduct of life. It is obvious that each of these claims will be a falsehood and a false imputation to Allah.

مَتَاعٌ قَلِيلٌ ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ 117

(16:117) Brief is their enjoyment of the world, and thereafter they shall suffer a painful chastisement.

وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَّمْنَا مَا قَصَصْنَا عَلَيْكَ مِن قَبْلُ ۚ وَمَا ظَلَمْنَاهُمْ وَلَٰكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ 118

(16:118) We have already recounted to you[117] what We prohibited[118] to the Jews. In so doing We did not wrong them; it is they who wronged themselves.

117. In this paragraph (vv. 118-124), answers to the objections raised by the disbelievers of Makkah concerning the Commandments contained in vv. 114-117 have been given. Their first objection was: "Besides the above-mentioned unlawful things, there are other unlawful things in the Jewish Law which have been made lawful by you. If that law was from Allah and yours is also from Allah why do they then contradict each other?" Their second objection was: "You have abrogated the sanctity of the Sabbath of the Israelites. Have you done this of your own accord or by Allah's Command? In the latter case then will be an obvious contradiction in the two laws. Or has Allah Himself given two contradictory Commandments?"

118. This refers to: “And We prohibited all animals with claws to those people who had adopted Judaism.” (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 146). In this (verse 118) Allah has stated that certain things were made unlawful because of the disobedience of the Jews.

Here a question arises. Which of the two Surahs, Al-Anaam or An-Nahl, was first revealed? This is because in (verse 118), a reference has been made to (verse 146 of Al-Anaam). Also in (verse 119 of Al-Anaam): “And why should you not eat that thing over which Allah’s name has been mentioned, when He has already given you a detail of those things that have been declared to be unlawful for you except in case of extremity?” a reference has been made to (verse 115 of An- Nahl).

This is because these are the only two Makki Surahs in which details of unlawful things have been given. As regards to the question, we are of the opinion that An-NahI was

revealed earlier than Al-Anaam, for (verse 119)of the latter contains a reference to(verse 115) of the former. It appears that after the revelation of Surah Al-Anaam, the disbelievers raised objections in regard to these verses of An-Nahl. So they were referred to (verse 146 of Al-Anaam) in which a few things were made unlawful, especially for the Jews. As this answer concerned An-Nahl, so (verse 118), though it was revealed after the revelation of Al-Anaam, was inserted as a parenthetical clause in An-Nahl.

119. "Abraham was a whole community by himself" for at that time he was the only Muslim in the whole world who was upholding the banner of Islam, while the rest of the world was upholding the banner of unbelief. As that servant of Allah performed the mission which is ordinarily carried out by a whole community, he was not one person but an institution in himself.

ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا السُّوءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابُوا مِن بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِن بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ع 119

(16:119) But to those who commit evil out of ignorance and then repent and amend their ways, thereafter your Lord will be Much Forgiving, Most Merciful.

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِّلَّهِ حَنِيفًا وَلَمْ يَكُ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ 120

(16:120) Indeed Abraham was a whole community by himself,[119] obedient to Allah, exclusively devoted to Him. And he was never one of those who associated others with Allah in His Divinity.

119. "Abraham was a whole community by himself" for at that time he was the only Muslim in the whole world who was upholding the banner of Islam, while the rest of the world was upholding the banner of unbelief. As that servant of Allah performed the mission which is ordinarily carried out by a whole community, he was not one person but an institution in himself.

شَاكِرًا لِّأَنْعُمِهِ اجْتَبَاهُ وَهَدَاهُ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ 121

(16:121) He rendered thanks to Allah for His bounties so that Allah chose him (for His favours) and directed him to the Right Way.

وَآتَيْنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ 122

(16:122) We bestowed good upon him in this world, and in the Hereafter he shall certainly be among the righteous.

ثُمَّ اَوۡحَيۡنَاۤ اِلَيۡكَ اَنِ اتَّبِعۡ مِلَّةَ اِبۡرٰهِيۡمَ حَنِيۡفًا ؕ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الۡمُشۡرِكِيۡنَ 123

(16:123) Then We revealed to you: "Follow the way of Abraham with exclusive devotion to Allah. He was not one of those who associated others[120] with Allah in His Divinity."

120. This is the complete answer to the first objection (E.N. 117) raised by the disbelievers. This has two parts.

(1) There is no contradiction in the divine law as you seem to presume on the apparent variance in the Jewish and the Islamic Law. As a matter of fact a few things had been made unlawful especially for the Jews as punishment to them because of their disobedience; therefore, there was no reason why others should be deprived of those good things.

(2) Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was commanded to follow the way of Abraham and not the way of the Jews, and they themselves knew that these things were not unlawful in the law of Abraham. For instance, the Jews did not eat the flesh of camel but this was lawful according to Abraham. Likewise, ostrich, hare, duck, etc. were unlawful in the Jewish law, but they were lawful according to Abraham. Incidentally the disbelievers of Makkah have been warned that neither they nor the Jews had any relationship with Prophet Abraham for he was not a mushrik while both of them were practicing shirk. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his followers were the only true followers of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) for there was no tinge of shirk in their creed or in their practice.

اِنَّمَا جُعِلَ السَّبۡتُ عَلَى الَّذِيۡنَ اخۡتَلَفُوۡا فِيۡهِ ؕ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَحۡكُمُ بَيۡنَهُمۡ يَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ فِيۡمَا كَانُوۡا فِيۡهِ يَخۡتَلِفُوۡنَ 124

(16:124) As for the Sabbath, it was made incumbent only on those who differed about its laws.[121] Certainly your Lord will judge on the Day of Resurrection between them regarding the matters they disputed.

121. This is the answer to their second objection. Obviously, there was no need to state that the restrictions about the Sabbath applied only to the Jews and had nothing to do with the law of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), because they themselves knew it. The restrictions were imposed upon the Jews because of their mischief and violations of the law. In order to understand fully the significance of this reference one is requested to read those passages of the Bible in which commandments about the Sabbath have been stated, e.g., Exodus 20: 8-11, 23: 12-13,31: 1-17, 35: 23, and Numbers 15: 32-36. Besides this, one should also be acquainted with the impudent violations of the Sabbath. See Jeremiah: 17: 21-27 and Ezekiel. 10: 18-24.

ادْعُ إِلَىٰ سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُم بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ 125

(16:125) (O Prophet), call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation,[122] and reason with them in the best manner possible.[123] Surely your Lord knows best who has strayed away from His path, and He also knows well those who are guided to the Right Way.

122. This instruction is very important for those who are engaged in the propagation of Islam. They should always keep in view two things, wisdom and excellent admonition. Wisdom implies that one should use discretion in the work of propagation and should not do this blindly like foolish people. Wisdom demands that one should keep in view the intelligence, capability and circumstances of the addressees and convey the message in accordance with the requirements of the occasion. Moreover, one should refrain from applying one and the same method to each and every person or group but should first diagnose the real disease of the addressee and then cure it by appealing to his mind and intellect.

Excellent admonition implies two things:

(1) One should not be content with convincing the addressee with arguments alone but should also appeal to his feelings. Likewise one should not confine himself merely to arguments in condemning evils and deviations but should try to convince the other of their repugnance that lies embedded in the human nature. One should also warn of the worst consequences of those evils. Besides, one should not only try to convince the addressee rationally of the soundness and excellence of guidance and righteous deeds but should also create in him interest and love for them.

(2) Admonition should be administered in such a manner as to show sincere concern for and the welfare of the addressee. Nothing should be said or done to create the impression that the admonisher is looking down upon him and taking pleasure in his own feeling of superiority. On the contrary, he should feel that the admonisher is filled with the strong desire for his reform and welfare.

123. "In a way that is better" implies that one should have a sweet tongue, show noble character and give reasonable and appealing arguments, and refrain from indulging in polemics, argumentation and controversies. The one who discusses things with people in the best manner, does not resort to accusations, crooked arguments, taunts, nor makes fun of the opponent in order to defeat him and to win applause for his own superiority in argument. For these things will produce obduracy and obstinacy. In contrast to this, he will try to convince the other in a simple and humble way, and when he feels that the other person has come down to crooked arguments, he will leave him alone lest the other should go further and further astray in his deviation.

ج

وَاِنۡ عَاقَبۡتُمۡ فَعَاقِبُوۡا بِمِثۡلِ مَا عُوۡقِبۡتُمۡ بِهٖ ؕ وَلَئِنۡ صَبَرۡتُمۡ لَهُوَ خَيۡرٌ لِّلصّٰبِرِيۡنَ 126

(16:126) If you take retribution, then do so in proportion to the wrong done to you. But if you can bear such conduct with patience, indeed that is best for the steadfast.

وَاصۡبِرۡ وَمَا صَبۡرُكَ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَلَا تَحۡزَنۡ عَلَيۡهِمۡ وَلَا تَكُ فِىۡ ضَيۡقٍ مِّمَّا يَمۡكُرُوۡنَ 127

(16:127) And bear with patience, (O Muhammad) - and your patience is only because of the help of Allah - and do not grieve over them, nor feel distressed by their evil plans.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الَّذِيۡنَ اتَّقَوۡا وَّالَّذِيۡنَ هُمۡ مُّحۡسِنُوۡنَ ع 128

(16:128) For surely Allah is with those who hold Him in fear and do good.[124]

124. “Allah is with those who fear Him” because they scrupulously refrain from evil ways and always adopt the righteous attitude, for they know that their actions and deeds are not determined by the evils others do to them but by their own sense of righteousness; so they return good for evil.

17. Surah Bani Israil (The Children of Israel)

Name

This Surah takes its name (Bani Israil) from v. 4. But this name is merely a distinctive appellation like the names of many other surahs and not a descriptive title, and does not mean that "Bani Isra'il" is the theme of this Sarah.

Period of Revelation

The very first verse indicates that this Surah was revealed on the occasion of Mi`raj (Ascension). According to the Traditions and books on the life of the Holy Prophet, this event happened one year before Hijrah. Thus, this Surah is one of those which were revealed in the last stage of Prophethood at Makkah.

Background

The Holy Prophet had been propagating Tauhid for the previous twelve years and his opponents had been doing all they could to make his Mission a failure, but in spite of all their opposition, Islam had spread to every corner of Arabia and there was hardly any clan which had not been influenced by his invitation. In Makkah itself the true Believers had formed themselves into a small community and were ready and willing to face every danger to make Islam a success. Besides them, a very large number of the people of Aus and Khazraj (two influential clans of Al-Madinah) had accepted Islam. Thus the time had come for the Holy Prophet to emigrate from Makkah to Al- Madinah and there gather together the scattered Muslims and establish a state based on the principles of Islam.

These were the conditions when Mi`raj took place and on his return the Holy Prophet brought down the Message contained in this Surah.

Theme and Topics

This Surah is a wonderful combination of warning, admonition and instruction, which have been blended together in a balanced proportion.

The disbelievers of Makkah had been admonished to take a lesson from the miserable end of the Israelites and other communities and mend their ways within the period of respite given by Allah, which was about to expire. They should, therefore, accept the invitation that was being extended by Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) and the Quran. Otherwise they shall be annihilated and replaced by other people. Incidentally, the Israelites, with whom Islam was going to come in direct contact in the near future at Al-Madinah have also been warned that they should learn a lesson from the chastisements that have already been inflicted on them. They were warned, "Take advantage of the Prophethood of Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) because that is the last opportunity which is being given to you. If even now you behave as you have been behaving, you shall meet with a painful torment."

As regards the education of mankind, it has been impressed that human success or failure, gain or loss, depends upon the right understanding of Tauhid, life-after- death and Prophethood. Accordingly, convincing arguments have been put forward to prove that the

Quran is the Book of Allah and its teachings are true and genuine the doubts of the disbelievers about these basic realities have been removed and on suitable occasions they have been admonished and rebuked in regard to their ways of ignorance.

In this connection, those fundamental principles of morality and civilization on which the Islamic System of life is meant to be established have been put forward. Thus this was a sort of the Manifesto of the intended Islamic state which had been proclaimed a year before its actual establishment. It has been explicitly stated that that was the sketch of the system on which Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) intended to build human life first in his own country and then in the outside world.

Besides these, the Holy Prophet has been instructed to stick firmly to his stand without minding the opposition and difficulties which he was encountering and should never think of making a compromise with unbelief. The Muslims who sometimes showed signs of impatience, when they met with persecution, calumny, and crooked arguments, have also been instructed to face adverse circumstances with patience and fortitude and keep full control over their feelings and passions. Moreover, salat was prescribed in order to reform and purify their souls, as if to say, "This is the thing which will produce in you those high qualities of character which are essential for everyone who intends to struggle in the righteous way Incidentally, we learn from Traditions that Mi'raj was the first occasion on which the five daily Prayers were prescribed to be offered at fixed times.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

سُبۡحٰنَ الَّذِیۡۤ اَسۡرٰی بِعَبۡدِہٖ لَیۡلًا مِّنَ الۡمَسۡجِدِ الۡحَرَامِ اِلَی الۡمَسۡجِدِ الۡاَقۡصَا الَّذِیۡ بٰرَکۡنَا حَوۡلَہٗ لِنُرِیَہٗ مِنۡ اٰیٰتِنَا ؕ اِنَّہٗ ہُوَ السَّمِیۡعُ الۡبَصِیۡرُ 1

(17:1) Holy is He Who carried His servant by night from the Holy Mosque (in Makkah) to the farther Mosque (in Jerusalem) whose surroundings We have blessed that We might show him some of Our Signs.[1] Indeed He alone is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.

1. The event referred to in this verse is known Miraj and Isra. According to authentic traditions, this took place a year before Hijrah. In the traditional and biographical literature, its details have been related by a large number (25) of the companions. Anas bin Malik, Malik bin Saasaah, Abuzar Ghifari, and Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with them all) have related details of the event. Besides them, Umar, Ali, Abdullah bin Masud (Allah be pleased with them) have also related some parts of this event.

In this verse, the Quran mentions only a part of the Journey, i.e. from Masjid-i-Haram to the Temple at Jerusalem. The object of this journey as stated here was that Allah willed to show His servant some of His signs. The Quran does not give any details other than this but we find further details in the traditions, which are to this effect:

One night the Angel Jibril took Prophet (peace be upon him) on al-Buraq from Masjid-i-Haram to Masjid-i-Aqsa (the Temple). There the Prophet (peace be upon him) offered his prayers along with the other Prophets. Then he took him towards the higher spheres, where he met some of the great Prophets in different spheres. At last he reached the Highest Place in the Heavens, and was received in audience by Allah. It was there that, besides other important instructions, five daily Prayers were prescribed. Then he returned to the Temple and from there came back to Masjid-i-Haram. During this Journey, according to many traditions, Paradise and Hell were shown to him. We also learn from authentic traditions that on the following day when he mentioned this event, the disbelievers of Makkah scoffed at him, and some of the Muslims also were skeptical about this.

The above additional details based on the traditions cannot be said to be against the Quran, for these are additions to the details given in the Quran; therefore, the details related in the traditions cannot be rejected on the plea that they are against the Quran. Nevertheless, if one rejects any part of those details which are given in the traditions, one cannot be declared a renegade. On the other hand, if one rejects the details given in the Quran, one does become a renegade.

There are different versions of this journey. Some say that this happened in a dream, while others are of the opinion that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was fully awake and went on the journey with his own physical body. Some others say that it was merely a mystic vision which was shown to him. The opening words of this verse: "Glorified be He who took for a journey His servant" however, clearly show that it was a supernatural event which was brought about by the unlimited power of Allah. It is quite obvious that if the event had been merely a mystic vision, it would not have been introduced by the words which imply that the Being Who brought about this event is free from each and every kind of weakness and defect. Again the words "took His servant by night" also show that this was not a dream or a vision but a physical journey in which Allah arranged that the Prophet (peace be upon him) should make observation of His signs with his physical eyes. Therefore, one is bound to admit that this was not a mere spiritual experience but a physical journey and visual observation which Allah arranged for His Prophet (peace be upon him).

It is strange that some people are of the opinion that this extraordinary journey could not be possible, but now when man with his very limited power has been able to reach the moon, it is absurd to deny that Allah with His limitless power could enable His Messenger (peace be upon him) to make this journey in the extraordinary short time it took.

Above all, the question whether a thing is possible or not, can arise only in the case of human beings whose powers are after all limited, but such questions cannot be raised where the All-Powerful Allah is concerned. Only such a person who does not believe that Allah is able to do everything can raise objections against this wonderful journey about which Allah Himself says that He took His servant one night from Masjid-i-Haram to Masjid-i-Aqsa. Likewise all the objections raised against the various details which are given in the traditions are frivolous, except two, which are plausible:

First, if we accept these details, then we shall have to admit that Allah is confined to a certain place: otherwise there was no need that His servant should be taken for this purpose to a certain place. Secondly, according to traditions, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was

enabled to observe Paradise and Hell where he saw some people suffering from torment. The objection is: why should some people be awarded punishments or rewards before the final judgment after Resurrection?

As regards to the first objection, it is true that Allah is Infinite by Himself, but in dealing with His creation, He employs those means which suit His creation not because of any limitation of His, but because of the limitations of His creation. For instance, when He speaks to any of His creature, He adopts the same limited mode of conversation as the addressee can understand, though He has limitless modes of speech. Likewise, when He desires to show some of the wonderful signs of His kingdom to a servant. He takes him to the place where the signs are to be shown. It is obvious that the servant cannot see at one and the same time the entire universe as Allah does, for Allah has no need to go to any place at all for this purpose but the servant has. The same applies to the appearance of the servant before the Creator. Though Allah is not confined to any locality, it is necessary for the servant to go to the place where His manifestations have been concentrated for his observation because it is not possible for the servant with his limited powers to go in His Presence in His Infinite capacity.

As regards to the second objection, it is based on the lack of understanding the thing: many of the signs which were shown to the Prophet (peace be upon him) were symbolic. For instance, a small hole from which a fat ox came out but could not go back into it, represented mischief personified. In the same way the adulterers were shown as if they had fresh meat before them but instead of that they were eating rotten flesh. Similarly punishments for evil deeds shown to him were only symbolic observations of the punishments in the Hereafter so that he might see in advance the things which would take place in the Hereafter.

In regard to the Miraj it should be kept in view that all the Prophets were enabled by Allah to see His signs in the heavens and the earth according to their ranks. And for this purpose all the material curtains were lifted so that they could see with their naked eyes the unseen realities, to which they were required to invite the people.

This was done so that the Prophets could say with full conviction what they had seen with their own eyes. For this experience would distinguish them from a philosopher who bases all his theories on guesswork and cannot say that he bears witness to what he claims. In contrast to philosophers, Prophets could say that they bore witness to the things which they presented because they had seen them with their own eyes.

وَاٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ وَجَعَلْنٰهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اَلَّا تَتَّخِذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِيْ وَكِيْلًا ؕ 2

(17:2) We gave Moses the Book, and made it a source of guidance for the Children of Israel,[2] commanding: "Take no other Guardian beside Me."[3]

2. As this verse has no apparent connection with the event of Miraj, it may appear to a cursory reader that either of the two verses has been misplaced here. But if we try to understand the matter in the context of the theme of the whole Surah, we can easily understand the connection between the two. The main object of this Surah is to give a

warning to the disbelievers of Makkah. That is why the mention of Miraj has been made in the very first verse, as if to say: The person whom you dub as an impostor and reject the Book sent down to him, has just now seen with his naked eyes great signs of Allah. So you should learn a lesson from the history of the Israelites who discarded the Book of Allah and therefore, were given painful punishment.

3. The Arabic word vakil (guardian) denotes a person who is trustworthy and can be depended upon in regard to his affairs and may be turned to for guidance and help.

ذُرِّيَّةَ مَنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا 3

(17:3) You are the descendants of those whom We carried (in the Ark) with Noah.[4] He was truly a thankful servant.

4. That is, you are the descendants of Noah (peace be upon him) and his companions; therefore, you should behave in a manner as behooves such people. You should make Allah alone as your Guardian, for your ancestors escaped death from the flood only because they had made Allah their Guardian.

وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ فِي الْكِتَابِ لَتُفْسِدُنَّ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَّتَيْنِ وَلَتَعْلُنَّ عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا 4

(17:4) Then We clearly declared to the Children of Israel in the Book:[5] "Twice you will make mischief in the land and will commit transgression."[6]

5. The original Arabic word Al-kitab does not stand here for the Torah but for all the divine Books.

6. Such warnings have been given in different Books of the Bible. As regards to their first mischief and its evil consequences, the Israelites were warned in the Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel and the warnings about their second mischief and its severe punishments are found in Matthew and Luke. Given below are some extracts to confirm this statement of the Quran.

Prophet David was the first to warn the Israelites in his Psalms of their first mischief:

They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the Lord commanded them. But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters. Therefore, was the wrath of the Lord kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance. And he gave them into the hand of the heathen; Psalms: Chapter 106, vv. 34-38, 40, 41. The above events have been described in the past tense as if they had already actually

happened. The Scriptures employ this mode of expression to emphasize the importance of the prophesies.

When this mischief actually came to pass, Prophet lsaiah warned them of its ruinous consequences: Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken anymore? Ye will revolt more and more: How is the faithful city become an harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: everyone loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them. Therefore, saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty One of Israel. Ah I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers. Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: Moreover the Lord saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: Therefore, the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will discover their secret parts. Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. And her gates shall lament and mourn: and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground. Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon: Therefore, this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall. And he shall break it as the breaking of the potters' vessel that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare: so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a shred to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit. (lsaiah, Chapter 1: verses 4-5, 21-24; Chapter 2: verses 6,8; Chapter 3: verses 16-17, 25-26; Chapter 8: verse 7; Chapter 30: verses 9-10, 12-14).

After this Prophet Jeremiah raised his voice when the flood of corruption swept away everything before it.

Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity and are become vain?

And I brought you into a plentiful country to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination. For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy hands: and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot. As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed: they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets, Saying to a stock, Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have turned their back unto me, and not their face but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us. But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? Let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy

trouble; for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah. The Lord said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? She is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with sticks. Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgments that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it. How shall I pardon thee for this? Thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbor's wife. Shall I not visit for these things? Saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the Lord: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understand what they say. Their quiver is an open sepulchre, they are all mighty men. And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds; they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword. And the carcases of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away. Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride: for the land shall be desolate.

And it shall come to pass, if they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell them, Thus saith the Lord; Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity. And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the Lord: the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy. (Jeremiah, Chapter 2: verses 5-7, 20, 26-28; Chapter 3: verses 6-9; Chapter 5: verses 1, 7-9 15-17; Chapter 7: verses 33, 34; Chapter 15: verses 2, 3).

Then Prophet Ezekiel was raised to warn them in time. Addressing Jerusalem he said:

The city sheddeth blood in the midst of it, that her time may come, and maketh idols against herself to defile herself. Behold, the princes of Israel, every one were in thee to their power to shed blood. In thee they have set light by father and mother: in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger: in thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow. Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my Sabbaths. In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood: and in thee they eat upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they commit lewdness. In thee have they discovered their fathers' nakedness: in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution. And one hath committed abomination with his neighbor's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter in law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter. In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbors by extortion and hast forgotten me, can thine hands be strong, in the days that I

shall deal with thee? And I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee in the countries, and will consume thy filthiness out of thee. And thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself in the sight of the heathen, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord." (Ezekiel, Chapter 22: verses 3, 6-12, 14-16).

Besides the above mentioned warnings which were given to Israelites at the time of their first mischief, Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) warned them of the consequences of their second great mischief. In a forceful address he criticized their morel degeneration like this:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gatherth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. (Matthew, Chapter 23: verses 37, 38; Chapter 24: verse 2).

Then, when the Roman officials were taking Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) out for crucifixion, and a great company of people including women were following him bewailing and lamenting, he addressed them and gave his final warnings:

But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say; Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, fall on us; and to the hills, cover us. (Luke, Chapter 23: verses 2830).

فَإِذَا جَآءَ وَعْدُ أُولَىٰهُمَا بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَّنَآ أُولِى بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ فَجَاسُوا۟ خِلَٰلَ ٱلدِّيَارِ ۚ وَكَانَ وَعْدًا مَّفْعُولًا 5

(17:5) So, when the occasion for the first of the transgressions arrived, We raised against you some of Our creatures who were full of might, and they ran over the whole of your land. This was a promise that was bound to be fulfilled.[7]

7. This refers to the terrible destruction that the Israelites suffered at the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians. One cannot fully appreciate the historical background of this merely from the extracts that have been reproduced above from the Books of the Prophets. A brief history of the Israelites is also needed so that a student may become acquainted with all the causes and circumstances on account of which Allah removed this nation, that professed to believe in a revealed Book, from the leadership of mankind and turned it into a humiliated, condemned and backward community.

After the death of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) when the Israelites entered Palestine, it was inhabited by the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzittes, Hivites, Jebusites, the Philistines, etc. These communities had adopted the worst kind of idolatry, their supreme deity being Ayl whom they regarded as the father of gods and who was usually represented by the bull images. His consort was called Asherah from whom had descended a whole line

of gods and goddesses, about 70 in number. The most powerful god among them was Baal who was regarded as the god of rain and growth and the lord of the earth and heavens. In the northern regions his consort was called Anathoth and in Palestine Ashtaroth. These two were the goddesses of love and procreation. Besides them, there was a god of death, a god of disease and famine, and a goddess of health, and thus all the worldly powers and agencies stood divided among a large number of deities. The people had ascribed such dirty and base qualities and acts to these deities that even a worst offender against morality would shun being known by them. Obviously the people who have adopted such mean deities for worship and devotion cannot remain secure from the worst kind of moral degeneration and the modern excavations have shown this conclusively.

Child sacrifice was a common thing among them. Their places of worship had turned into brothels, where women were kept as religious prostitutes and illicit relations with them were regarded as a part of worship and devotion.

The Israelites had clearly been told in the instructions given in the Torah that they should destroy those communities and wrest the land of Palestine from them, and that they should avoid mixing up with those people and ward off their moral and ideological weaknesses.

But when the Israelites entered Palestine they set this guidance aside. They not only did not establish a united kingdom of their own but fell a prey to tribal parochialism. Each of their tribes was content to take a part of the captured land and become a separate and independent state. This disunity among them did not leave any of the tribes strong enough to purge its territory completely of the idolaters, and therefore they had to allow them to live side by side with them in the same land. Not only this, but there had remained in the conquered territories a number of small cities of these idolatrous communities which the Israelites had not been able to subjugate. It is this very thing which has been complained against in the extract of the Psalms reproduced above in the beginning of(E.N. 6).

The first consequence of intermixing with those communities was that the Israelites also became idolatrous, and gradually began to adopt other moral evils also. This has been complained about in the Book of Judges as below: And the children of Israel did evil, in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim. And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth. (Judges, 2: 11-13).

The second consequence suffered by the Israelites was that the communities whose cities they had left unconquered and the Philistines whose land they had not at all touched set up a united front against them and drove them out of a major part of Palestine by incessant attacks, so much so that they deprived them of the Holy Ark of their Lord. At last, the Israelites felt the need of establishing a united kingdom of their own under one ruler, and on their request Prophet Samuel appointed Saul as their king in 1020 B.C. (For details see (Ayats 246-248 and E.Ns. 268-270 of Surah Al-Baqarah).

This united kingdom was ruled by three kings: Saul (1020 B.C. to 1004 B.C.), Prophet David (1004 to 965 B.C.) and Prophet Solomon (365 to 926 B.C.). These kings brought to completion the mission that had been left incomplete by the Israelites after the death of Prophet Moses

(Peace be upon the all). They annexed all the territories except the Phoenician state on the northern and the Philistine state on the southern coast, which of course became tributaries.

After the death of Prophet Solomon the Israelites again adopted the ways of the world and fought among themselves and split into two independent kingdoms, the kingdom of Israel in the northern Palestine and Jordan with Samaria as its capital, and the kingdom of Judah in the southern Palestine and Edom with Jerusalem as its capital. These kingdoms were strife ridden from the very beginning and this state of affairs persisted till the end.

The rulers and people of the kingdom of Israel were the first to be affected grievously by the ideological and moral weaknesses of the neighboring communities. Specially, after the marriage of its ruler Ahab with the idolatrous princess Jezebel of Zidon, idolatry and other evils began to spread unchecked among the Israelites under the official patronage. Prophets Elias and Elisha tried their very best to check this deluge but the Israelites, who were rapidly degenerating, did not heed their warning. At last the wrath of Allah overtook the kingdom of Israel in the shape of the Assyrians who started subjecting Palestine to incessant attacks from 900 B.C. downward. During this period, Prophet Amos (787-747 B.C.) and then Prophet Hosea (747- 735 B.C.) rose and warned the Israelites again and again, but the wretched depraved people did not heed their warnings at all and transgressed all limits. Prophet Amos was banished by the king of Israel from the realm of Samaria and warned not to preach his mission in the country Not very long after this the wrath of Allah burst upon the kingdom of Israel and its people. The Assyrian king Sargon took Samaria in 721 B.C. and put an end to this northern kingdom. Thousands of Israelites were put to the sword and twenty seven thousand of their leading men were driven out of their homeland and scattered in the eastern districts of the Assyrian empire and replaced by settlers from other parts of the empire. When the remaining Israelites intermixed with the settlers, they also lost gradually their national and cultural identity.

The other kingdom of the Israelites, called the kingdom of Judah, which was set up in southern Palestine also began to adopt godless ways soon after the death of Prophet Solomon, though its moral degeneration took place at a slower pace than that of Israel. Therefore, it was allowed to exist for a longer period. Then, like the kingdom of Israel, it also began to be subjected to continual attacks, its cities ruined and its capital besieged, but this kingdom could not be wholly destroyed by the Assyrians, it only became a tributary. Afterwards, when in spite of the best reformatory efforts of Prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah the people of Judah did not give up idol worship and other moral evils, king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon attacked and captured the whole of Judah in 598 B.C. including Jerusalem and took the king of Judah as prisoner. Even then the Israelites did not mend their ways and paid no heed to the warnings and guidance of Prophet Jeremiah. Instead of reforming their ways, they started making plans to change their fate by revolting against Babylon. At last in 587 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar punished them heavily by invading Judah and destroyed all its important cities. He razed Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple to the ground and did not leave a wall of it standing in place. He drove a large part of the Israelite population out of their land and scattered them into the adjoining countries. The people who were left behind were cursed and subjected to all kinds of humiliations by the neighboring communities.

This was the first calamity that came as a warning to the Israelites and the first chastisement that they suffered as a result therof.

ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَا لَكُمُ الْكَرَّةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَمْدَدْنَاكُمْ بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَنِينَ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ أَكْثَرَ نَفِيرًا 6

(17:6) Then We granted you an upper hand against them, and strengthened you with wealth and children, and multiplied your numbers.[8]

8. This refers to the lease of time that the Israelites (That is the people of Judah) got after their release from the captivity of Babylon. As for the people of Israel and Samaria, they did not rise again after their moral and spiritual degeneration. But among the people of Judah there still were some people who practiced the truth and invited others also to follow it. They carried on their work of invitation to the truth among the remaining Israelites in Judah and also exhorted those who had been driven out into Babylon and other lands to repent and follow the truth. At last the mercy of Allah came to their help. The downfall of Babylon started. The Persian king, Cyrus, took Babylon in 539 B.C. and in the following year issued a decree allowing the Israelites to return to and resettle in their homeland. The Israelites began to return home in caravan after caravan, and this continued for a long time. Cyrus also allowed the Israelites to rebuild the Temple of Solomon but the neighboring communities who had settled in this land resisted it. At last Darfius appointed Zerubbabel, a grandson of the last king of Judah as the governor of Judah in 522 B.C., who got the Temple rebuilt under the care of Prophet Haggai, Prophet Zechariah and Joshua. In 458 B.C. Ezra arrived in Judah along with an exiled group and the Persian king Artaxerxes made the following decree:

And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know them not.

And whosoever will not do the law of thy God and the law of the king let judgment be executed speedily upon him whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment. (Ezra, 7:25-26).

Taking advantage of this decree, Ezra carried out the revival of the religion of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). He gathered together all the righteous and good people from the Israelites and set up a strong organization. He compiled and spread the Pentateuch which contained the Torah, made arrangements for the religious education of the Israelites, enforced the law and started purging the people of moral and ideological weaknesses which they had adopted by intermixing with the other communities. He compelled the Jews to divorce the idolatrous wives they had married, and took a covenant from them that they would worship God alone and follow His law only.

In 455 B.C. an exiled group came back to Judah under Nehemiah whom the Persian king appointed as the ruler of Jerusalem and ordered him to build the wall round the city. Thus, after 150 years the Holy city was fully restored and became the center of Jewish religion and culture, But the Israelites of northern Palestine, and Samaria did not benefit from the work of revival done by Ezra. They built a rival sanctuary on Mount Gerizim and tried to make it

the religious center for the people of the Book. This caused a further, and perhaps the final, split between the Jews and the Samaritans.

The Jews suffered a setback for a while with the fall of the Persian Empire and the conquests of Alexander the Great and the rise of the Greeks. After the death of Alexander, his kingdom was subdivided into three empires. Syria fell to the lot of the Seleucide empire, with Antioch as its capital, whose ruler Antiochus III incorporated Palestine into his dominions in 198 B.C. These Greek conquerors who were idolatrous by precept and freelance morally felt greatly ill at ease with the Jewish religion and culture. So, they began to propagate the rival Greek way of life and culture by political and economic pressure, and were able to win over a strong section of the Israelites who became their helpers. This external interference caused a split in the Jewish nation. One group among them readily adopted the Greek dress, the Greek language, the Greek way of life and the Greek sports, while the other persistently stuck to their own culture and way of life.

In 175 B.C. when Antiochus IV (who was called Epiphanes, that is, the manifestation of God) came to the throne, he used all his power and authority to stamp out the Jewish religion and culture. He got idols installed in the Holy Temple at Jerusalem and forced the Jews to prostrate themselves before them. He strictly forbade the rite of offering the sacrifices at the altar, and commanded the Jews to offer sacrifices to idolatrous deities instead. He proposed death penalty for those who would keep the Torah in their houses, or observe the Sabbath or perform circumcision of their children. But the Jews did not yield to this coercion, and started a powerful resistance movement, known in history as the revolt of the Maccabees. Though in this struggle the sympathies of the Greeck oriented Jews were with the Greeks, and they fully cooperated with the despots of Antioch to crush the Maccabean revolt, the common Jews who still retained the religious fervor of the days of Ezra sided with the Maccabees, who were ultimately able to drive out the Greeks and establish a free religious state which remained in power till 67 B.C This state prospered and in time extended to all those territories which had once been under the control the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. It was able to annex a part of the land of the Philistines which had remained unconquered even in the days of Prophets David and Solomon (Peace be upon them).

This is the historical background of the verse of the Quran under commentary.

إِنْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ ۖ وَإِنْ أَسَأْتُمْ فَلَهَا ۚ فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ الْآخِرَةِ لِيَسُوءُوا

وُجُوهَكُمْ وَلِيَدْخُلُوا الْمَسْجِدَ كَمَا دَخَلُوهُ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَلِيُتَبِّرُوا مَا عَلَوْا تَتْبِيرًا 7

(17:7) Whenever you did good, it was to your own advantage; and whenever you committed evil, it was to your own disadvantage. So, when the time of the fulfilment of the second promise arrived, (We raised other enemies that would) disfigure your faces and enter the Temple (of Jerusalem) as they had entered the first time, and destroy whatever they could lay their hands on.[9]

9. The historical background of the second degeneration and its chastisement is as follows: The moral and religious fervor with which the Maccabees had started their movement

gradually cooled down and was replaced by love of the world and empty external form. A split appeared among them and they themselves invited the Roman General, Pompey, to come to Palestine. Pompey turned his attention to this land in 63 B.C. By taking Jerusalem he put an end to the political freedom of the Jews. But the Roman conquerors preferred to rule their dominions through the agency of the local chiefs rather than by direct control. Therefore, a local government was set up in Palestine which eventually passed into the hand of Herod, a clever Jew, in 40 B.C. This ruler is well known as Herod the Great. He ruled over the entire Palestine and Jordan from 40 to 4 B.C. On the one hand, Herod patronized the religious leaders to please the Jews, and on the other, he propagated the Roman culture and won the goodwill of Caesar by showing his loyalty and faithfulness to the Roman Empire. During, his reign, the Jews degenerated and fell to the lowest ebb of moral and religious life.

On the death of Herod his kingdom was subdivided into three parts. His son, Archelaus, became the ruler of Samaria, Judea and northern Edom. In A.D. 6, however, Caesar Augustus deprived him of his authority and put the state under his Roman governor, and this arrangement continued up till A.D. 41. This was precisely the time when Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) appeared to reform the Israelites whose religious leaders opposed him tooth and nail and even tried to get him the death sentence by the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate.

The second son of Herod, Herod Antipas, became the ruler of Galilee and Jordan in northern Palestine, and he was the person who got Prophet Yahya (John) (Peace be upon him) beheaded at the request and desire of a dancing girl. Herod's third son, Philip, succeeded to the territories bounded on one side by river Yermuk and on the other by Mount Hermon. Philip had been much more deeply influenced by the Roman and Greek cultures than his father and brothers. Therefore the preaching of the truth could not have even so much effect in his land as it had in the other parts of Palestine.

In A.D. 41, the Romans appointed Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great, ruler of the territories that had once been under Herod himself. Coming into power this man did whatever he could to persecute the followers of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) and used all the forces at his disposal to crush the movement that was functioning under the guidance of the disciples to inculcate fear of God in the people and reform their morals.

In order to have a correct estimate of the condition of the common Jews and their religious leaders, one should study the criticisms leveled by Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) on them in his sermons contained in the four Gospels. Even a religious man like Prophet John (peace be upon him) was beheaded before their eyes and not a voice was raised in protest against this barbarity. Then all the religious leaders of the community unanimously demanded death sentence for Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), and none but a few righteous men were there to mourn this depravity. Above all, when Pontius Pilate asked these depraved people, which condemned prisoner he should release, according to the custom, at Passover, Jesus or Barabbas the robber, they all cried with one voice Barabbas. This was indeed the last chance Allah gave to the Jews, and then their fate was sealed.

Not long after this, a serious conflict started between the Jews and the Romans, which developed into an open revolt by the former between A.D. 64 and 66. Both Herod Agrippa II and the Roman procurator Floris failed to put down the rebellion. At last, the Romans

crushed it by a strong military action and in A.D. 70 Titus took Jerusalem by force. About 133000 people were put to the sword. Sixty seven thousand made slaves, and thousands sent to work in the Egyptian mines and to other cities so that they could be used in amphitheaters for being torn by wild beasts or become the practice target for the sword fighters. All the tall and beautiful girls were picked out for the army of conquest and the Holy City of Jerusalem and the Temple were pulled down to the ground. After this the Jewish influence so disappeared from Palestine that the Jews could not regain power for two thousand years and the Holy Temple could never be rebuilt. Afterwards the Roman Emperor, Hadrian, restored Jerusalem but renamed it Aelia. The Jews, however, were not allowed to enter it for centuries. This was the calamity that the Jews suffered on account of their degeneration for the second time.

عَسٰى رَبُّكُمْ اَنْ يَّرْحَمَكُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ عُدْتُّمْ عُدْنَا ۘ وَجَعَلْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ حَصِيْرًا 8

(17:8) Your Lord may well show Mercy to you, but if you revert to your evil behaviour, We shall revert to chastising you. We have made Hell a prison for those who are thankless[10] of Allah's bounties.

10. Though this admonition has been given as a parenthesis at the end of the address to the children of Israel, it does not mean that this and the address itself are solely meant for them. As a matter of fact, the whole address is really directed towards the disbelievers of Makkah but, instead of addressing them directly, some important historical events from the history of the children of Israel have been cited in order to serve as admonition for them.

اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا ۙ 9

(17:9) Verily this Qur'an guides to the Way that is the Straight most. To those who believe in it, and do righteous works, it gives the good news that a great reward awaits them,

وَّاَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ اَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ۧ 10

(17:10) and warns those who do not believe in the Hereafter that We have prepared for them a grievous chastisement.[11]

11. This means to warn those persons or people or nations who do not take a lesson from the admonitions of the Quran to be ready to undergo that chastisement which Israelites had to suffer.

وَيَدْعُ الْاِنْسَانُ بِالشَّرِّ دُعَآءَهٗ بِالْخَيْرِ ۭ وَكَانَ الْاِنْسَانُ عَجُوْلًا 11

(17:11) Man prays for evil in the manner he ought to pray for good. Man is ever hasty.[12]

12. This is in answer to the foolish demands of the disbelievers of Makkah who repeatedly demanded from the Prophet (peace be upon him) to bring about that torment with which he threatened them. It is closely connected with the preceding verse, as if to say: O foolish people instead of asking goodness you demand the torment. Can't you realize the sufferings of the community which was visited by God's torment?

It also contains a subtle warning to those Muslims who prayed for punishment for those disbelievers who persecuted them and rejected the message obdurately; there were still among those disbelievers many such people who afterwards embraced Islam and became its standard bearers in the world. That is why Allah says: Man does so because he is very hasty and impatient. He prays to Allah for all such things as are the immediate need of the time, though often subsequent experience shows that if Allah had granted his prayer, it would have been very harmful to him.

وَجَعَلْنَا الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ اٰيَتَيْنِ فَمَحَوْنَآ اٰيَةَ الَّيْلِ وَجَعَلْنَآ اٰيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً لِّتَبْتَغُوْا
فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَلِتَعْلَمُوْا عَدَدَ السِّنِيْنَ وَالْحِسَابَ ؕ وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَصَّلْنٰهُ تَفْصِيْلًا 12

(17:12) We have made night and day as two signs. We made the sign of the night devoid of light, and made the sign of the day radiant that you may seek the bounty of your Lord and know the computation of years and numbers. Thus We have expounded everything in detail to keep everything distinct from the other.[13]

13. Allah invites man to study the wisdom that underlies variety in the world and not get confused and long for monotonous uniformity. In fact, the whole system is based on variety, distinctiveness and diversity in things. For the sake of illustration let us take the case of the signs of day and night: You see these opposite things daily in your life. If you just consider the underlying wisdom, you will find that without this variety there would have been hardly any activity in the world. Likewise great wisdom lies in the creation of the people with different temperaments, thoughts and inclinations. If Allah had made all men righteous by birth or annihilated disbelievers and wicked people and left only believers and submissive people in the world, the purpose of men's creation could not leave been realized. Therefore, it is wrong to desire that there should only be day and no night. The righteous thing is that these people, who have the light of guidance, should exert their utmost to remove the darkness of deviation. It is their duty that if they find darkness like that of night, they should pursue it like the sun so that the light of guidance should reappear.

وَكُلَّ اِنْسَانٍ اَلْزَمْنٰهُ طٰٓئِرَهٗ فِيْ عُنُقِهٖ ؕ وَنُخْرِجُ لَهٗ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ كِتٰبًا يَّلْقٰىهُ مَنْشُوْرًا 13

(17:13) We have fastened every man's omen to his neck.[14] On the Day of Resurrection We shall produce for him his scroll in the shape of a wide open book, (saying):

14. “We have fastened his fate to his neck”: therefore one does not need to take omens from a bird. This is to remove the superstition of the disbelievers who used to take omens from birds etc. as if to say: The causes and consequences of good fortune or bad fate exist in man’s own person. He merits good fortune because of his own good conduct and good judgment, and likewise, suffers the consequences of evil fate by the lack of these. This was necessitated because foolish people always try to attribute their misfortunes to external causes, when in fact our fate depends on our own deeds, good or bad. If they probe into the causes, they will find that their fate was decided by their own good or bad qualities and judgments.

اِقۡرَاۡ كِتٰبَكَ ؕ كَفٰى بِنَفۡسِكَ الۡيَوۡمَ عَلَيۡكَ حَسِيۡبًا ؕ 14

(17:14) "Read your scroll; this Day you suffice to take account of yourself."

مَنِ اهۡتَدٰى فَاِنَّمَا يَهۡتَدِىۡ لِنَفۡسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنۡ ضَلَّ فَاِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيۡهَا ؕ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزۡرَ اُخۡرٰى ؕ وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِيۡنَ حَتّٰى نَبۡعَثَ رَسُوۡلًا 15

(17:15) He who follows the Right Way shall do so to his own advantage; and he who strays shall incur his own loss.[15]No one shall bear another's burden.[16] And never do We punish any people until We send a Messenger[17] (to make the Truth distinct from falsehood).

15. This is to impress that if a person adopts the right way, he does not do any favor to God or His Messenger or a reformer but he himself gets its benefits. On the other hand, if a person deviates from the right way, he can do no harm to God or His Messenger or a reformer, for they desire only to protect men from wrong ways and guide him on to the right way, and not for any selfish ends. Therefore, the right course for a wise man is to adopt the righteous way when it becomes distinct to him what is truth and what is falsehood. On the other hand, if he rejects truth because of his prejudices and self interest, he will be his own enemy and not a well wisher.

16. The Quran has laid great stress on the doctrine of personal responsibility at several places, for one cannot follow the right way scrupulously without understanding fully its implication. It means that, everyone is solely responsible for his moral conduct and is accountable to God as an individual in his own person and no other person can share the burden of responsibility with him. As an instance, we take the case of a particular action or a particular way of conduct in which a generation or a community of a large number of people had collaborated. When the people will assemble before Allah on the Day of Judgment, their collective action will be analyzed so as to lay the burden of its responsibility on each and every person who had been conducive to it, and rewarded or punished in accordance with it. Neither will a person be punished for the part another had played in its performance nor shall the burden of the sin of one individual be laid on the shoulders of another. This doctrine has been emphasized over and over again so that a wise man should not act in imitation of another or justify his own conduct by similar deeds of others. If a

particular person feels the sense of his own responsibility, he will act in such a way as to come out successful on the Day of Judgment, regardless of what the others do.

17. This is another doctrine which has been impressed on the minds by the Quran in different ways. This is to emphasize the basic importance that a Messenger has in the dispensation of divine justice because this is determined in the light of the message brought by him. This will be employed as an argument in favor of or against the concerned people. Otherwise the infliction of punishment on the people would be unjust for in that case they could argue that they should not be punished as the knowledge of the righteous way had not been conveyed to them. But after the message had been conveyed to a particular people, and they had rejected it, there would be left no excuse for them.

It is an irony that instead of accepting the message some people are misled by reading verses like this and they ask such absurd questions: What will be the position of those, who might not have received the message of any Prophet? The wise course for such persons would have been to ask themselves what their own position will be on the Day of Judgment, because they themselves had received the message. As regards to other people, Allah knows best who has received the message, and when, how and to what extent and what attitude a certain person adopted towards it. In short, Allah alone is aware of whether a particular person received the message in such a way as to fulfill the required condition for punishment.

وَإِذَآ أَرَدْنَآ أَن نُّهْلِكَ قَرْيَةً أَمَرْنَا مُتْرَفِيهَا فَفَسَقُوا۟ فِيهَا فَحَقَّ عَلَيْهَا ٱلْقَوْلُ فَدَمَّرْنَٰهَا تَدْمِيرًا 16

(17:16) When We decide to destroy a town We command the affluent among them, whereupon they commit sins in it, then the decree (of chastisement) becomes due against them and thereafter We destroy that town utterly.[18]

18. Here a definite form of divine procedure for the destruction of a people has been stated. When the affluent people of a habitation become disobedient, it is a portent that it is doomed to destruction. After their persistent and continuous transgression, the affluent people become so obdurate in their disobedience that they begin to discard the instinctive dictates of their conscience. The same thing has been stated in this Ayat: And when We intend to destroy a town, We give commands to its affluent people and they show disobedience. This is because Allah has created conscience for the guidance of man. Therefore, the dictates of conscience are really the commands of Allah. Thus it has become quite obvious that by "And when We intend to destroy a town" is not meant that Allah intends to destroy it without any reason. It is destroyed because after their disobedience that habitation incurs Our just wrath and We totally exterminate it. The habitation deserves such a punishment because its common people follow the affluent people who are the factual leaders of a community and are mainly responsible for the corruption of the community. At first the affluent people commit acts of disobedience, wickedness, mischief, cruelty and tyranny and then the common people follow them and incur the torment of Allah. Incidentally, this is a warning for every community that it should be very discreet and

prudent in choosing and electing its leaders and rulers, for if the latter are mean and wicked, they will inevitably lead the community to destruction. 1

وَكَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا مِنَ الْقُرُوْنِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ نُوْحٍ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِرَبِّكَ بِذُنُوْبِ عِبَادِهٖ خَبِيْرًۢا بَصِيْرًا 17

(17:17) Many a generation has been destroyed by Our command since Noah's time. Your Lord is well aware and fully observant of the sins of His servants.

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَّلْنَا لَهٗ فِيْهَا مَا نَشَآءُ لِمَنْ نُّرِيْدُ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا لَهٗ جَهَنَّمَ ۚ يَصْلٰىهَا مَذْمُوْمًا مَّدْحُوْرًا 18

(17:18) If anyone desires immediate benefits,[19] We hasten to grant whatever benefits We will in the present life to whomsoever We please, but thereafter We decree for him Hell wherein he shall burn, condemned and rejected.[20]

19. The Arabic word ajilah literally means something which can be had immediately, but the Quran employs it as a term for "this world" which yields its advantages and results in this worldly life. Its antonym is Akhirat (Hereafter) which will yield its advantages and results after death in the life of the next world.

20. The person who does not believe in the life of the Hereafter deserves Hell, because he strives only for the successes and good things of this world and his endeavors are confined to material objects. Consequently, such a person becomes a mere worshiper of this world and adopts wrong conduct, for he has no sense of personal responsibility and accountability to God and ultimately deserves the torment of Hell.

وَمَنْ اَرَادَ الْاٰخِرَةَ وَسَعٰى لَهَا سَعْيَهَا وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ كَانَ سَعْيُهُمْ مَّشْكُوْرًا 19

(17:19) But he who desires the Hereafter and strives for it in the manner he should, and is a true believer, his striving will come to fruition.[21]

21. Whose effort shall be appreciated, he will be rewarded for the efforts he had made for success in the Hereafter.

كُلًّا نُّمِدُّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ وَهٰٓؤُلَآءِ مِنْ عَطَآءِ رَبِّكَ ؕ وَمَا كَانَ عَطَآءُ رَبِّكَ مَحْظُوْرًا 20

(17:20) To all of these as well as those We shall provide the wherewithal of this life in the present world by dint of your Lord's Bounty; and from none shall the Bounty of your Lord be withheld.[22]

22. Allah gives the provisions of this world both to those who strive for this world and to those who strive for the Hereafter, but it is the gift of Allah alone and not of anyone else. It does not lie in the power of the worshipers of the world to deprive the seekers after the Hereafter of these provisions, nor have the seekers after the Hereafter any power to withhold these provisions from the worshipers of the world.

اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ ؕ وَلَلْاٰخِرَةُ اَكْبَرُ دَرَجٰتٍ وَّاَكْبَرُ تَفْضِيْلًا 21

(17:21) See, how We have exalted some above others in this world, and in the Life to Come they will have higher ranks and greater degrees of excellence over others.[23]

23. This is to show that the seekers of the Hereafter have been exalted over the worshipers of the world even in this worldly life. However, this exaltation is not in regards to the good things of this world, rich food and dresses, palatial dwellings, luxurious means of travelling and other grand things. They enjoy that true honor, love and goodwill which is denied to the tyrants and the rich people in spite of the fact that they may be indigent. This is because whatever the seekers of the Hereafter get in this world, it is earned in righteous and honest ways, while the worshipers of the world amass wealth by employing dishonest and cruel ways. Then the former spend what they get with prudence and righteousness. They fulfill the obligations they owe to others. They spend their money in the way of Allah and to please Allah on the needy and the indigent. In contrast to them, the worshipers of this world spend their money in the enjoyment of luxuries, wicked works, corruption and spreading other evil things. This makes the former models of God worship and purity in every respect and distinguishes them so clearly from the worshipers of the world that they shine in exaltation over the latter. These things clearly indicate that in the next world the rewards of the seekers of the Hereafter will be far greater and their superiority far higher than those of the worshipers of the world.

لَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ فَتَقْعُدَ مَذْمُوْمًا مَّخْذُوْلًا ع 22

(17:22) Do not set up any other god with Allah[24] lest you are rendered humiliated and helpless.

24. Or it can be rendered like this: Do not invent another deity besides Allah, or do not set up another as a deity beside Allah.

وَقَضٰى رَبُّكَ اَلَّا تَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ اِحْسَانًا ؕ اِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ اَحَدُهُمَآ اَوْ كِلٰهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَّهُمَآ اُفٍّ وَّلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَّهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيْمًا 23

(17:23) Your Lord has decreed:[25] (i) Do not worship any but Him;[26] (ii) Be good to your parents; and should both or any one of them attain old age with you, do not say to them even "fie" neither chide them, but speak to them with respect,

25. In the succeeding verses, those main basic principles have been put forward on which Islam desires to build the entire structure of human life. These form the manifesto of the invitation of the Prophet (peace be upon him) declared by him at the end of the Makki stage of his mission, and the eve of the new stage at Al-Madinah so that it should be known to all that the new Islamic society and state were going to be built on such and such ideological, moral, cultural economic and legal principles. (Please also refer to (Ayats 151-153 and E.Ns thereof of Surah Al-Anaam).

26. This commandment is very comprehensive. It prohibits not only the worship of anyone except Allah but also implies that one should obey and serve and submit to Allah alone without question. One should accept His commandments and law alone to be worthy of obedience and His authority to be supreme above all. This was not merely an instruction confined to a religious creed and individual practice but it served as the foundation of the moral, cultural, and political system which was practically established in Al-Madinah by the Prophet (peace be upon him). Its first and foremost principle was that Allah alone is the Master, Sovereign and Law-giver.

وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَّبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيٰنِيْ صَغِيْرًا ۭ 24

(17:24) and be humble and tender to them and say: "Lord, show mercy to them as they nurtured me when I was small."

رَبُّكُمْ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِيْ نُفُوْسِكُمْ ۭ اِنْ تَكُوْنُوْا صٰلِحِيْنَ فَاِنَّهٗ كَانَ لِلْاَوَّابِيْنَ غَفُوْرًا 25

(17:25) Your Lord is best aware of what is in your hearts. If you are righteous, He will indeed forgive those who relent and revert[27] (to serving Allah).

27. This verse enjoins that after Allah's right, the greatest of all the human rights is the right of parents. Therefore, the children should obey and serve and respect their parents. The collective morality of society should make it incumbent on children to be grateful and respectful to their parents, they should serve them as they nursed and brought them up in their childhood. Above all, this verse is not merely a moral recommendation but is the basis of the rights and powers of parents the details of which we find in the Books of Hadith and Fiqh. Moreover, respectful behavior and obedience to and observance of the rights of parents comprise the most important element of the material education and moral training in the Islamic society and civilization. Incidentally, all these things have determined forever the principle that the Islamic state shall make the family life sound and secure by laws, administrative regulations and educational policy and prevent its disintegration.

وَاٰتِ ذَا الْقُرْبٰى حَقَّهٗ وَالْمِسْكِيْنَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيْلِ وَلَا تُبَذِّرْ تَبْذِيْرًا 26

(17:26) (iii) Give to the near of kin his due, and also to the needy and the wayfarer. (iv) Do not squander your wealth wastefully,

إِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيَاطِينِ ۖ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كَفُورًا 27

(17:27) for those who squander wastefully are Satan's brothers, and Satan is ever ungrateful to his Lord.

وَإِمَّا تُعْرِضَنَّ عَنْهُمُ ابْتِغَاءَ رَحْمَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكَ تَرْجُوهَا فَقُل لَّهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّيْسُورًا 28

(17:28) (v) And when you must turn away from them - (that is, from the destitute, the near of kin, the needy, and the wayfarer) - in pursuit of God's Mercy which you expect to receive, then speak to them kindly.[28]

28. These three articles are meant to impress that a man should not reserve his earnings and his wealth exclusively for his own person. He should do his utmost to fulfill his own necessities of life in a moderate way and render the rights of his relatives, neighbors and other needy persons as well. This attitude will help create the spirit of cooperation, sympathy and justice in the collective Islamic life. Thus every relative will cooperate with the other and every rich person will help the needy in his neighborhood and a wayfarer would find himself an honorable guest among generous hosts. The conception of rights should be so extensive that every person should consider that all other human beings have rights on his person and his property so that he should serve them with the idea that he is rendering their rights and is not doing any favor to them. In that case one would beg pardon of the other if he was unable to serve him and would pray to God to send his blessings upon him to enable him to serve His servants.

These articles of the Islamic manifesto were not merely confined to moral teachings but these formed the basis of the commandments of Zakat and voluntary charity. The laws of inheritance and of making will and endowments were based on these articles. The rights of the orphans were determined by these and it was made obligatory on every habitation to entertain a wayfarer gratis for at least three days. Subsequently the whole moral system was formed so as to create the feelings of generosity, sympathy and cooperation. So much so that the people began to realize the importance of and observe voluntarily the moral rights which could neither be demanded legally nor enforced by law.

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا 29

(17:29) (vi) Do not keep your hand fastened to your neck nor outspread it, altogether outspread, for you will be left sitting rebuked, destitute.[29]

29. "And do not keep your hand fastened to your neck", means: Do not be parsimonious. "Nor outspread it altogether widespread" means: Do not be extravagant. The Quran desires the people to follow the golden mean, i.e. they should neither be so parsimonious as to prevent the circulation of wealth nor so extravagant as to destroy their own economy. On the contrary, they should learn to behave in a balanced manner so that they should spend money wherever it should be spent and refrain from becoming spendthrifts so as to involve themselves into trouble. As a matter of fact, it is ingratitude towards Allah's favor to spend money for the sake of show, luxury and sinful acts and similar things which are neither man's real necessities nor useful. Therefore, those people who spend money lavishly on such things as these are the brethren of Satan.

These clauses too, are not merely meant to be moral instructions for individuals. They are intended to safeguard the Islamic society against extravagance by moral instruction, collective pressure and legal restrictions. Accordingly, in the Islamic state of Al-Madinah, practical steps were taken to safeguard the community against extravagance. First, many forms of extravagance and luxury were forbidden by law. Secondly, legal measures were taken against it. Thirdly, social reforms were introduced to put an end to those customs which involved extravagance. The government was empowered to prevent people from the obvious forms of extravagance. Above all, Zakat and voluntary charity helped to break parsimony and the lust of hoarding money. Besides these measures, a public opinion was created that enabled the people to discriminate between generosity and extravagance and thrift and parsimony: so much so that parsimonious people were looked down upon as ignominious and the thrifty people were regarded as honorable. This moral and mental attitude became a part and parcel of the Muslim society, and even today the parsimonious people and hoarders are looked down upon in the Muslim society, while the generous people are respected everywhere.

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَآءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِۦ خَبِيرًۢا بَصِيرًا ۝30

(17:30) Certainly Your Lord makes plentiful the provision of whomsoever He wills and straitens it for whomsoever He wills. He is well-aware and is fully observant of all that relates to His servants.[30]

30. That is, man cannot realize the wisdom of the disparity of wealth among the people. Therefore, man should not try to interfere by artificial means with the natural distribution of wealth. It is wrong to level down natural inequality or to aggravate it by artificial means so as to make it unjust. Both the extremes are wrong. The best economic system is that which is established on the divine Way of the division of wealth.

As a result of the realization of the wisdom of economic disparity, no such problems arose which might have made that disparity an evil in itself so as to demand the creation of a classless society. On the contrary, in the righteous society established at Al-Madinah on these divine principles which are akin to human nature, the economic differences were not artificially disturbed. But by means of moral and legal reforms these became the means of many moral, spiritual and cultural blessings and benefits instead of becoming the means of injustice. Thus, the wisdom of the disparity created by the Creator of the Universe was practically demonstrated at Al-Madinah.

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوٓا اَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ اِمْلَاقٍ ۭ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَاِيَّاكُمْ ۭ اِنَّ قَتْلَهُمْ كَانَ خِطْاً كَبِيْرًا 31

(17:31) (vii) Do not kill your children for fear of want. We will provide for them and for you. Surely killing them is a great sin.[31]

31. This verse cuts at the very root of the movement of birth control, which has been going on from ancient times to our present age. It was the fear of want that induced people to kill their children or resort to abortion. In our age another plan has been added to these, i.e. contraception. This article of the Islamic manifesto prohibits the people from reducing the number of mouths by artificial means but exhorts them to increase the means of production according to the natural methods enjoined by Allah. According to this article, it is one of the biggest mistakes of man to check birth rate as a solution to the want and scarcity of provisions. Therefore, it warns him, as if to say: O man, it is not you who make arrangement for food, but Allah, Who settled you in the land and has been providing for you and will provide for those who will come after you. History tells us that the food resources have always expanded in proportion to the number of inhabitants of a country. Nay, often they have exceeded far more than the needs of the inhabitants. Thus it is a folly on the part of man to interfere with the arrangements of Allah.

It is very significant that as a result of this teaching, no movement has ever been started to control birth nor has there been any inclination to infanticide among the Muslims ever since the revelation of the Quran.

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الزِّنٰٓى اِنَّهٗ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً ۭ وَسَاۗءَ سَبِيْلًا 32

(17:32) (viii) Do not even approach fornication for it is an outrageous act, and an evil way.[32]

32. "And do not come near to adultery". This commandment is meant both for individuals and society as a whole. It warns each individual not only to guard against adultery or fornication itself but against all those things that lead to or stimulate it. As regards to society as a whole the commandment enjoins it to make such arrangements as prevent adultery and eradicate the means and stimulants that lead to adultery. Therefore, the society should employ all those legal and educative means that help develop such an environment as prevents and eradicates indecency.

Finally, this article formed the basis of laws and regulations of the Islamic system of life. In order to fulfill its implications adultery and false accusation of adultery were made criminal offenses. Regulations about hijab were promulgated. The publication of indecent materials was banned and drinking of intoxicants was made unlawful. Restrictions on music, dancing and pictures which are conducive to adultery were imposed. Such laws were enacted and marriage was made easy to and cut at the root of adultery.

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِيْ حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ؕ وَمَنْ قُتِلَ مَظْلُوْمًا فَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا لِوَلِيِّهٖ
سُلْطٰنًا فَلَا يُسْرِفْ فِّي الْقَتْلِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ مَنْصُوْرًا 33

(17:33) (ix) Do not kill any person whom Allah has forbidden to kill,[33] except with right.[34] We have granted the heir of him who has been wrongfully killed the authority to[35] (claim retribution);so let him not exceed in slaying.[36] He shall be helped.[37]

33. "And do not kill a person" includes not only the prohibition of the killing of other souls but also his own soul as well for it is also included in the prohibition that immediately follows this command. Thus suicide is regarded as heinous a sin as murder. Some foolish people object to the prohibition of suicide saying that they themselves are the masters of their souls. Therefore, there is nothing wrong in killing one's own self or in destroying one's own property. They forget that every soul belongs to Allah, and none has any right to destroy it, nay, even to abuse it. For this world is a place of trial, where we should undergo the test up to the end of our lives in accordance with the will of Allah. It does not matter whether our circumstances are favorable or adverse for trial. Therefore, it would be wrong to run away from the place of test, not to speak of committing such a heinous crime as suicide (which Allah has prohibited) to escape it. For it means that the one who commits suicide tries to run away from small troubles and ignominies towards greater affliction and eternal torment and ignominy.

34. When the Islamic state was established, "killing by right" was confined to five cases only, namely to punish, (1) A willful murderer for retribution. (2) Opponents of the true religion during war. (3) Those who attempt to overthrow the Islamic system of government. (4) A man or woman guilty of adultery. (5) An apostate.

35. We have translated the Arabic word sultan as "the authority of retribution". Here it stands for "a ground for legal action". This also lays down the legal principle that in a case of murder, the real plaintiff is not the government but the guardian or the guardians of the murdered person who are authorized to pardon the murderer or receive blood money instead of taking his life.

36. Exceed limits in killing would be to kill more persons than the murderer or to kill the criminal by degrees with torment or to disfigure his dead body or to kill him after receiving blood money, etc. All these things have been forbidden.

37. It has not been defined how succor will be given because at the time of its revelation the Islamic state had not yet been established. After its establishment it was made clear that a guardian was not authorized to enforce retribution by murdering the criminal. The Islamic government alone is legally authorized to take retribution; therefore, succor for justice should be demanded only from it.

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوْا مَالَ الْيَتِيْمِ اِلَّا بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ اَحْسَنُ حَتّٰى يَبْلُغَ اَشُدَّهٗ ۪ وَاَوْفُوْا بِالْعَهْدِ ۚ اِنَّ الْعَهْدَ
كَانَ مَسْـُٔوْلًا 34

(17:34) (x) And do not even go near the property of the orphan - except that it be in the best manner - till he attains his maturity.[38] (xi) And fulfil the covenant, for you will be called to account regarding the covenant.[39]

38. This too, was not merely a moral instruction. When the Islamic state was established, legal and administrative methods were adopted to safeguard the rights of orphans, the details of which are found in the literature of Hadith and Fiqh. Then this principle was extended to cover the cases of all those citizens who were unable to safeguard their own rights. The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself declared: I am the guardian of the one who has no guardian. And this is the basis of many rules and regulations of the Islamic law.

39. Fulfillment of pledges was not meant to be merely a moral instruction for individuals but afterwards when the Islamic state was established, this became the guiding principle for the conduct of all internal; and external affairs by the Muslim community and the Islamic government.

وَاَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ اِذَا كِلْتُمْ وَزِنُوْا بِالْقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيْمِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَّاَحْسَنُ
تَاْوِيْلًا 35

(17:35) (xii) Give full measure when you measure, and weigh with even scales.[40] That is fair and better in consequence.[41]

40. This instruction was not confined to individuals only but it has been made a part of the duties of an Islamic government to supervise transactions in the markets and streets to see that exact measures and weights are being observed, and prevent their breach and violation by the force of law. Afterwards it was made one of the duties of the government to eradicate dishonesty in all commercial dealings and economic transactions.

41. That is, its end will be best in this world and it will be best in the Hereafter. It is best in this world because it produces mutual trust between sellers and buyers. As a result of this, commerce prospers and there is a general prosperity. As regards the Hereafter, there the end depends entirely on honesty, piety and fear of God.

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ ؕ اِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ اُولٰٓئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ
مَسْـُٔوْلًا 36

(17:36) (xiii) Do not follow that of which you have no knowledge. Surely the hearing, the sight, the heart - each of these shall be called to account.[42]

42. The meanings of "Do not follow that of which you have no knowledge" are very comprehensive. It demands that both in individual and collective life, one should not follow mere guess work and presumption instead of knowledge. This instruction covers all aspects of Islamic life, moral, legal, political, administrative and applies to science, arts and education. It has thus saved the society from numerous evils which are produced in human life by following guesswork instead of knowledge. The Islamic moral code demands: Guard against suspicion and do not accuse any individual or group without proper investigation. In law, it has been made a permanent principle that no action should be taken against anyone without proper investigation. It has been made unlawful to arrest, beat or imprison anyone on mere suspicion during investigation. In regards to foreign relations, the definite policy has been laid down that no action should be taken without investigation, nor should rumors be set afloat. Likewise in education the so called sciences based on mere guess work, presumptions and irrational theories have been disapproved. Above all, it cuts at the very root of superstitions, for this instruction teaches the believers to accept only that which is based on the knowledge imparted by Allah and His Messenger.

وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا ۚ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَخْرِقَ الْأَرْضَ وَلَنْ تَبْلُغَ الْجِبَالَ طُولًا 37

(17:37) (xiv) Do not strut about in the land arrogantly. Surely you cannot cleave the earth, nor reach the heights of the mountains in stature.[43]

43. This instruction warns against the ways of tyrants and vain people and is not merely meant for the individual but also for the collective conduct of the Muslim community. It was because of this guidance that the rulers, governors and commanders of the Islamic state which was established on the basis of this manifesto, were free from every tinge of tyranny, arrogance, haughtiness, pride and vanity, so much so that even in the battlefield they never uttered a word which had the slightest indication of any of these vain things. Their gait, dress, dwelling and conveyance showed humility. In short, their ways of conduct were not those of big ones but those of humble persons. That is why they never tried to overawe the people of a conquered city by show of pomp and pride.

كُلُّ ذَٰلِكَ كَانَ سَيِّئُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ مَكْرُوهًا 38

(17:38) The wickedness of each of that is hateful to your Lord.[44]

44. That is, Allah disapproves of the commission of anything that has been prohibited or, in other words, He disapproves of disobedience to any of these commandments.

ذٰلِكَ مِمَّآ اَوۡحٰۤى اِلَيۡكَ رَبُّكَ مِنَ الۡحِكۡمَةِ ؕ وَلَا تَجۡعَلۡ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ فَتُلۡقٰى فِىۡ جَهَنَّمَ مَلُوۡمًا مَّدۡحُوۡرًا 39

(17:39) That is part of the wisdom your Lord has revealed to you. So do not set up any deity beside Allah lest you are cast into Hell, rebuked and deprived of every good.[45]

45. Though this has been addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), the real addressee is every human being as in the case of many such verses.

اَفَاَصۡفٰٮكُمۡ رَبُّكُمۡ بِالۡبَنِيۡنَ وَاتَّخَذَ مِنَ الۡمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنَاثًا ؕ اِنَّكُمۡ لَتَقُوۡلُوۡنَ قَوۡلًا عَظِيۡمًا ع 40

(17:40) What, has your Lord favoured you with sons and has taken for Himself daughters from among the angels?[46]You are indeed uttering a monstrous lie.

46. Please refer to(Ayats 57-59 and their E.Ns).

وَلَقَدۡ صَرَّفۡنَا فِىۡ هٰذَا الۡقُرۡاٰنِ لِيَذَّكَّرُوۡا ؕ وَمَا يَزِيۡدُهُمۡ اِلَّا نُفُوۡرًا 41

(17:41) We have expounded (the Truth) in diverse ways in this Qur'an that they might take it to heart but all this only aggravates their aversion.

قُلۡ لَّوۡ كَانَ مَعَهٗۤ اٰلِهَةٌ كَمَا يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ اِذًا لَّابۡتَغَوۡا اِلٰى ذِى الۡعَرۡشِ سَبِيۡلًا 42

(17:42) Say, (O Muhammad): "Had there been other gods with Him, as they claim, they would surely have attempted to find a way to the Lord of the Throne.[47]

47. That is, they would have themselves tried their best to become masters of the Throne. This is because if there had been more than one partners in Godhead, it would produce one of the two results: (1) If they were all independent gods, it was not conceivable that they would agree and cooperate with one another in the management of the boundless universe and there could never have been unanimity, uniformity and balanced proportion in its functioning. There would have been conflict at every step and everyone would have tried to dominate others in order to become its sole master. or (2) if one of them had been the supreme god and the others his obedient servants whom he had delegated some of his powers, then, according to the maxim “power corrupts”, they would never have been content with remaining obedient servants of the supreme god and would have conspired to become the supreme god themselves.

Whereas the fact is that in this universe not even a grain of wheat or a blade of grass can grow unless and until everything in the earth and the heavens cooperate with one another for its production. Therefore, only an utterly ignorant and block headed person can conceive that there are more than one independent or semi independent rulers, who carry on the management of this universe. Anyone who has tried to understand the nature and functioning of the universe will most surely arrive at the conclusion that there is One and only One Sovereign ruling over this universe, and there is absolutely no likelihood of anyone else to be a partner in this at any stage.

سُبْحٰنَهٗ وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يَقُوْلُوْنَ عُلُوًّا كَبِيْرًا 43

(17:43) Holy is He and far above all that they say.

تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمٰوٰتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْاَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيْهِنَّ ؕ وَاِنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهٖ
وَلٰكِنْ لَّا تَفْقَهُوْنَ تَسْبِيْحَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ حَلِيْمًا غَفُوْرًا 44

(17:44) The seven heavens, the earth, and all that is within them[48] give glory to Him. There is nothing but gives glory to Him with His praise,[49] though you do not understand their hymns of praise. He is Most Forbearing, Exceedingly Forgiving."[50]

48. That is, the entire universe and everything in it bear witness to the fact that their Creator and Guardian is free from each and every fault, defect and weakness, and that He is far above this that there should be any partner or associate in His Godhead.

49. Everything is not only singing hymns of the glory of its Creator but is affording the proof that He is perfect in every respect and worthy of all praise. Everything is an embodiment of the proof that its Creator and Administrator is the one in whom there is perfection of every quality. Therefore, He alone is worthy of praise.

50. That is, it is due to His forbearance and forgiveness that though you are persistently insolent to Him and go on inventing one false thing or the other against Him, He forbears and forgives you. He neither withholds provisions from you nor deprives you of His favors nor strikes an insolent person instantly dead with a thunderbolt. Above all, He is so forbearing and forgiving that He gives long enough respite to the individuals and communities to mend their ways, sends His prophets and reformers for their admonition and guidance and forgives all the past mistakes and errors, if one sincerely repents and adopts the right way.

وَاِذَا قَرَاْتَ الْقُرْاٰنَ جَعَلْنَا بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ حِجَابًا
مَّسْتُوْرًا ۙ 45

(17:45) When you recite the Qur'an, We place a hidden barrier between you and those who do not believe in the Hereafter;

وَّجَعَلْنَا عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ اَكِنَّةً اَنْ يَّفْقَهُوْهُ وَفِيْٓ اٰذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا ؕ وَاِذَا ذَكَرْتَ رَبَّكَ فِى الْقُرْاٰنِ وَحْدَهٗ وَلَّوْا عَلٰٓى اَدْبَارِهِمْ نُفُوْرًا 46

(17:46) and We place a covering on their hearts so that they do not comprehend it, and We cause a heaviness in their ears;[51] and when you mention your Lord, the Only True Lord, in the Qur'an, they turn their backs in aversion.[52]

51. This refers to the divine law according to which those people, who do not believe in the Hereafter, cannot benefit from the Quran. Allah has attributed this law to Himself, as if to say: The natural result of disbelief in the Hereafter is that the heart of such a man becomes dull and his ears become deaf to the message of the Quran, for Quran bases its invitation on the belief in the Hereafter. So it warns the people that they should not be deluded by this apparent aspect of the worldly life if there appears to be none to call them to account here; for it does not mean they are not at all accountable and answerable to anyone. Likewise if Allah allows freedom of belief to practice shirk, atheism, disbelief or Tauhid with impunity in this world, and their practice does not appear to make any practical difference in this world, it does not mean that these things do not produce any results at all. For, in fact, everyone shall be accountable and answerable after death in the next world. Then everyone will realize that the doctrine of Tauhid alone is true and all other doctrines are false. For, if at present the consequences of deeds do not appear after death, they shall inevitably appear, but the reality has now been hidden behind an invisible curtain. There is an inevitable moral law according to which submission to it will bear its fruit and disobedience shall incur its losses. As decisions according to this moral law will be made in the Hereafter. You should not be enticed by the charms of this transitory life. You should, therefore, keep in view that ultimately you shall have to render an account of all your deeds in this world before your Lord, and adopt that true creed and moral attitude which may be conducive to your success in the Hereafter.

From this it must have become obvious that if a man does not believe in the Hereafter, he will never consider the message of the Quran worth his while but will hanker after this world and its joys which he can feel and experience. Naturally his ears will not listen to the message and it will never reach the depths of his heart. Allah has stated this psychological fact in this verse.

In this connection, it should be remembered that the words contained in this verse were uttered by the disbelievers of Makkah as quoted in (Ayat 5 of Surah HamimSajdah): “They say, O Muhammad, a covering has fallen over our hearts, and our ears are deaf for the message you give and there is a curtain between you and us. You may go on with your work and we will do whatever we desire.” Here the same words have been cited, as if to say: You consider this state of yours to be a virtue, whereas this is a curse which has fallen on you according to the divine law because of your disbelief of the Hereafter.

52. That is, they do not like it at all that you should consider Allah alone as your Lord and not mention the Lords they have set up. They seem to think it strange that one should go on praising Allah and never mention the miracles of their elders and saints nor praise them for their favors. For, according to them, Allah has delegated the powers of His Godhead to their great ones. Therefore, they say: What a strange fellow he is! He believes that the knowledge of the unknown, and all the power and authority belong to One Allah alone. Why does he not pay tribute to those who give us children, cure us of diseases, and help make our commerce flourish, in short, fulfill all our wishes and desires.

نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَسْتَمِعُونَ بِهِ إِذْ يَسْتَمِعُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِذْ هُمْ نَجْوَىٰ إِذْ يَقُولُ الظَّالِمُونَ إِنْ تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا رَجُلًا مَّسْحُورًا 47

(17:47) We are well aware of what they wish to hear when they listen to you and what they say when they confer in whispers, when the wrong-doers say: "You are only following one who is bewitched."[53]

53. This refers to those devices which they conspired against the message of the Prophet (peace be upon him). They would secretly listen to him, and then hold consultations in order to counteract this. Sometimes it so happened that they suspected that someone had been influenced by the Quran. Then they would sit together and try to dissuade him, saying: How is it that you have been influenced by a person who himself is bewitched by some enemy and talks like this?

انظُرْ كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوا لَكَ الْأَمْثَالَ فَضَلُّوا فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَبِيلًا 48

(17:48) Just see how strange are the things they invent about you. They have altogether strayed, and are unable to find the right way.[54]

54. This is to say that they expressed different opinions at different times which contradicted each other. Sometimes they said: You are a sorcerer. And at other times: You have been bewitched by someone, or you are a poet or you are possessed of some evil spirit. These contradictory things were a proof that they did not know the reality. Otherwise, they would not have invented a different name to suit each occasion. This also shows that they themselves were not sure of the charge they leveled against him. If they called him by one epithet one day, they themselves felt afterwards that it did not fit in. Then they would invent the second epithet and then the third and so on. Thus every new epithet contradicted the previous ones and showed that there was no truth in them, but in their enmity they were inventing one falsehood after the other.

وَقَالُوا أَإِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا وَرُفَاتًا أَإِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ خَلْقًا جَدِيدًا 49

(17:49) They say: "When we are turned to bones and particles (of dust), shall we truly be raised up as a new creation?"

قُلْ كُوْنُوْا حِجَارَةً اَوْ حَدِيْدًا 50

(17:50) Tell them: "(You will be raised afresh even if) you turn to stone or iron,

اَوْ خَلْقًا مِّمَّا يَكْبُرُ فِيْ صُدُوْرِكُمْ ۚ فَسَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَنْ يُّعِيْدُنَا ۭ قُلِ الَّذِيْ فَطَرَكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۚ فَسَيُنْغِضُوْنَ اِلَيْكَ رُءُوْسَهُمْ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هُوَ ۭ قُلْ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ قَرِيْبًا 51

(17:51) or any other form of creation you deem hardest of all (to recreate from)." They will certainly ask: "Who will bring us back (to life)?" Say: "He Who created you in the first instance." They will shake their heads at you and inquire: "When will that be?"[55] Say: "Perhaps that time might have drawn near;

55. "They will shake their heads at you" in astonishment or to express doubt or disapproval or to scoff at you.

يَوْمَ يَدْعُوْكُمْ فَتَسْتَجِيْبُوْنَ بِحَمْدِهٖ وَتَظُنُّوْنَ اِنْ لَّبِثْتُمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ع 52

(17:52) on the Day when He will call you and you will rise praising Him in response to His call, and you will believe that you had lain in this state only for a while."[56]

56. That is, you will feel as if the intervening period between death and coming again to life on the Day of Resurrection was only a few hours or so, for you will think that you had just woken up after a short sleep by the sudden noise produced on the Day. As regards to you will rise up praising Him, it is a subtle hint towards a great reality. At the time of rising up from death, both the believer and the unbeliever will be uttering the praise of Allah. The believer will do so because in the worldly life also he believed in this creed and practiced it. As regards the unbeliever, he will have the urge to do so because of the inherent and ingrained tendency in him which he had been suppressing by his folly. In the new life all those deliberate suppressions will vanish away and he will involuntarily utter the praise of Allah.

وَقُلْ لِّعِبَادِيْ يَقُوْلُوا الَّتِيْ هِيَ اَحْسَنُ ۭ اِنَّ الشَّيْطٰنَ يَنْزَغُ بَيْنَهُمْ ۭ اِنَّ الشَّيْطٰنَ كَانَ لِلْاِنْسَانِ عَدُوًّا مُّبِيْنًا 53

(17:53) Tell My servants,[57] (O Muhammad), to say always that which is best.[58] Verily it is Satan who sows discord among people. Satan indeed is an open enemy to mankind.[59]

57. The believers.

58. The believers have been enjoined to say only the best things even in their discussion with the disbelievers and other opponents of their faith. They should neither use harsh words nor make exaggerated statements. They should be cool in their conversation and say only what is true and dignified in spite of the provoking behavior of the opponents.

59. The believers have been forewarned to guard against the provocations of Satan, as if to say: While answering your opponents, if you feel that you are being aroused to anger, you should at once understand that it is Satan who is exciting you in order to do harm to your dispute, in which he wants to engage human beings for sowing discord between them.

رَبُّكُمْ اَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ ؕ اِنْ يَّشَاْ يَرْحَمْكُمْ اَوْ اِنْ يَّشَاْ يُعَذِّبْكُمْ ؕ وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ عَلَيْهِمْ

وَكِيْلًا 54

(17:54) Your Lord knows you best. He will have mercy on you if He wills and chastise you if He wills.[60] We have not sent you, (O Muhammad), as an overseer over them.[61]

60. This is to warn the believers to refrain from making claims of piety so as to assign Paradise to themselves and Hell to their opponents. It is Allah alone Who has the power to decide these things because He is fully aware of the known and secret and the present and future things about all human beings. It is He Who will decide whether to show mercy to anyone or give chastisement. However, a man may say in the light of the divine Book that a certain kind of human beings deserve mercy and another kind of people incur chastisement but none has any right to say specifically that a particular man will be given chastisement and another will get salvation.

61. This is to declare that a Prophet is sent to convey the message and not to decide whether a person will receive mercy or get chastisement. It does not, however, mean that, God forbid, the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself did such a thing and Allah had to warn him. In fact, this is to warn the Muslims that when the Prophet himself is not in a position as to decide the fates of the people, they should never think of such a thing as to assign Paradise and Hell to anyone.

وَرَبُّكَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَلَقَدْ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَ النَّبِيّٖنَ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ وَّاٰتَيْنَا

دَاوٗدَ زَبُوْرًا 55

(17:55) Your Lord knows all who dwell in the heavens and the earth. We have exalted some Prophets over others,[62] and We gave the Psalms to David.[63]

62. Though this has apparently been addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), in fact the real addressees are the disbelievers of Makkah. This is to rebuke them for the low

opinion they held in regard to the Prophet (peace be upon him). As it commonly happens, contemporaries in general and opponents in particular do not see anything great and noble in a person of their own time. The same was the case with the contemporaries of the Prophet (peace be upon him) who could not see anything extraordinary or great in him. He appeared to be merely a common man of their habitation. On the other hand, they were full of praise in regard to the famous personalities who had lived in the past few centuries and imagined them to be the perfection of greatness. That is why, they raised frivolous objections against his claim to Prophethood, as if to say: Look at this man who considers himself to be a Prophet whereas he cannot stand in comparison with the former great Prophets who are held in high esteem by all. Allah has answered their objection, as if to say: We are fully aware of all Our creatures in the heavens and the earth, and We know their ranks but you do not know. We know whom to favor with Prophethood, as We have been favoring the former Prophets and exalting some Prophets above others in rank.

63. It appears that Prophet David (peace be upon him) has been particularly mentioned to show that Prophethood does not mean that one should have nothing to do with the life of this world. This was the answer to the objection they were raising against the claim to Prophethood by Muhammad (peace be upon him), that he was a man of the world. It means to say: Though David was a king who had to engage himself in worldly affairs more than a common man, he was favored by Allah with Prophethood, and given the Book, the Psalms. Likewise Muhammad (peace be upon him) could be favored with Prophethood in spite of the fact that he had wives and children and passed his life like other common people and was engaged in buying and selling in the market. In short, in performing all those duties that a man of the world has to perform to meet his necessities of life. This was necessitated because according to the disbelievers of Makkah, such a man of the world could not be considered to be even a pious man, much less a Prophet. For pious people should have nothing to do with the worldly affairs but should sit in seclusion and remember God whereas the Prophet (peace be upon him) had to work to fulfill the necessities of life.

قُلِ ادْعُوا الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ مِّن دُونِهِ فَلَا يَمْلِكُونَ كَشْفَ الضُّرِّ عَنكُمْ وَلَا تَحْوِيلًا 56

(17:56) Tell them: "Call upon those whom you fancy to be (your helpers) instead of Him! They have no power to remove any affliction from you, nor can they shift it (to any other)."64

64. This warning helps to elaborate the doctrine of Tauhid and negate shirk. According to this, shirk is not confined merely to falling prostrate before any other than Allah but it is also shirk to pray to or invoke the help of any other than Allah. For praying to or calling for help any other than Allah is in reality a kind of worship. Therefore, the one who invokes for help any other than Allah is as much guilty of shirk as the worshiper of an idol. This verse also shows clearly that, none other than Allah, has any power to attend to prayers and relieve any one of trouble or alter any one's bad condition. Hence, if one believes that someone other than Allah has any power, he shall be guilty of shirk.

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ يَبْتَغُونَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمُ الْوَسِيلَةَ أَيُّهُمْ أَقْرَبُ وَيَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَهُ
وَيَخَافُونَ عَذَابَهُ ۚ إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ كَانَ مَحْذُورًا 57

(17:57) Those whom they call upon are themselves seeking the means of access to their Lord, each trying to be nearer to Him. They crave for His Mercy and dread His chastisement.[65] Surely your Lord's punishment is to be feared.

65. The words of the text are a clear proof that the deities and the helpers referred to in this verse were not idols of stone but were either angels or dead saints. It is clearly implied in this that no prophet, no saint and no angel, whom the people invoke for help, has the power to hear prayers and help anyone. They themselves hope for mercy from Allah and dread His punishment and vie with one another in seeking means for nearness to Him.

وَإِن مِّن قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا نَحْنُ مُهْلِكُوهَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ أَوْ مُعَذِّبُوهَا عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا ۚ كَانَ
ذَٰلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُورًا 58

(17:58) There is not a town but We shall destroy it or upon which We shall inflict severe chastisement[66] before the Day of Resurrection. This is written down in the Eternal Book (of Allah).

66. This is to remove the delusion of the disbelievers that their habitations were immune from danger or chastisement. This verse warns that every habitation will be destroyed as a matter of course or by Allah's chastisement.

وَمَا مَنَعَنَا أَن نُّرْسِلَ بِالْآيَاتِ إِلَّا أَن كَذَّبَ بِهَا الْأَوَّلُونَ ۚ وَآتَيْنَا ثَمُودَ النَّاقَةَ مُبْصِرَةً
فَظَلَمُوا بِهَا ۚ وَمَا نُرْسِلُ بِالْآيَاتِ إِلَّا تَخْوِيفًا 59

(17:59) Nothing hindered Us from sending Our Signs[67] except that the people of olden times rejected them as lies. We publicly sent the she-camel to the Thamud to open their eyes but they wronged her.[68] We never send Our Signs except to cause people to fear.[69]

67. Here signs mean those visible miracles which are presented as a proof of Prophethood. The disbelievers from among the Quraish were demanding such signs over and over again.

68. This is to warn the disbelievers, as if to say: It is the mercy of Allah that He is not showing such a sign so that you might mend your ways but in your folly you presume that such a sign cannot be presented. You should know that a sign is not being sent because its

denial inevitably brings chastisement and the community is annihilated. You can learn from the past history that those communities which disbelieved in the open signs were utterly destroyed, such as the people of Thamud.

69. That is, miracles are not shown for fun. These are meant to warn the people that the Prophet is being helped by the Almighty and that they should realize the terrible consequences of disobedience.

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لَكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ أَحَاطَ بِالنَّاسِ ۚ وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الرُّءْيَا الَّتِي أَرَيْنَاكَ إِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَ
الشَّجَرَةَ الْمَلْعُونَةَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ ۚ وَنُخَوِّفُهُمْ ۙ فَمَا يَزِيدُهُمْ إِلَّا طُغْيَانًا كَبِيرًا ۝ 60

(17:60) And recall when We said to you, (O Muhammad), that your Lord encompasses these people;70 and that We have made that vision that We have shown you,71 and the tree accursed in the Qur'an,72 but as a trial for people. We go about warning them, but each warning leads them to greater transgression.

70. That is, at the very beginning of your Prophethood, when the disbelievers of the Quraish had started opposition to your message, We declared that We are encircling them. They might try their best to obstruct your message, but they will inevitably fail in this and your mission will succeed regardless of opposition. Can't they see that this declaration has come out true as a miracle, for their opposition has failed to hinder your message, and they have not been able to do any harm to you at all. This was a clear sign of the fact that the mission of the Prophet (peace be upon him) was being supported by the Almighty God. As regards to the declaration that Allah is encircling the disbelievers and helping the mission of the Prophet, it occurs in several Surahs of the first stage of Prophethood at Makkah. For instance, in (Ayats 17-20 of Surah Al-Burooj), Allah says: These disbelievers do not learn a lesson from the stories of the people of the Pharaoh and Thamud but are rejecting the message here as Allah is encircling them on all sides.

71. This refers to Miraj (Ascension) for here word ruya does not mean "seeing things in a dream" but seeing things actually with physical eyes. It is quite obvious that if it had been a mere dream and the Prophet (peace be upon him) had presented it as a dream to the disbelievers, there was no reason why it should have become a trial for them. Everyday people see strange dreams and relate them to the people but these dreams never become such a curious thing as to make people scoff at the dreamer and accuse him of making a false claim or of being a mad person.

72. This cursed tree, Az-zaqqum which has been mentioned in (Ayat 43-44 of Surah Ad-Dukhan), grows at the bottom of Hell and its dwellers shall have to eat from it. This has been called a cursed tree because it is not given to people to eat as a mercy from Allah but as a symbol of His curse so that the accursed people should eat it and get more sore, for this will, so to speak, burn in their bellies like the boiling water.

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوٓا إِلَّآ إِبْلِيسَ قَالَ ءَأَسْجُدُ لِمَنْ خَلَقْتَ طِينًا ج

61

(17:61) And recall when We asked the angels[73] to prostrate themselves before Adam; all prostrated themselves except Iblis,[74] who said: "Shall I prostrate myself before him whom You created of clay?"

73. That is, We showed you such things during the Miraj so that they should have the first hand knowledge of the reality from a truthful and honest man like you and be warned by it to the right way. They, however, began to make fun of you, though We had already warned them through you that their evil ways would force them to eat of the Az-zaqqum. Instead of this they began to scoff at you, saying, just consider the logic of this man. On the one hand, he says that there is an awful fire burning in Hell and, on the other, he says that trees are growing in it.

74. Please also refer to (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 30-39); (Surah An-Nisa, Ayats 117-122); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 11- 25); (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 22); (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 26-43). This story has been cited here to impress upon the disbelievers that their attitude of arrogance and indifference towards Allah is exactly the same as was adopted by Satan. As a matter of fact, they were following Satan who is the avowed enemy of man, and were being entangled in the snare spread by him who had challenged the progeny of Adam at the very beginning of human history that he would allure and ruin them.

قَالَ أَرَءَيْتَكَ هَٰذَا الَّذِى كَرَّمْتَ عَلَىَّ لَئِنْ أَخَّرْتَنِ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَٰمَةِ لَأَحْتَنِكَنَّ ذُرِّيَّتَهُۥٓ

إِلَّا قَلِيلًا 62

(17:62) He then continued: "Look! This is he whom You have exalted above me! If you will grant me respite till the Day of Resurrection I shall uproot the whole of his progeny[75] except only a few."

75. That is, I will uproot them from the high position of divine vicegerency which demands steadfastness in obedience. Their removal from that high position is just like the tearing of a tree from its roots.

قَالَ اذْهَبْ فَمَن تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ فَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ جَزَآؤُكُمْ جَزَآءً مَّوْفُورًا 63

(17:63) Thereupon He retorted: "Be gone! Hell shall be the recompense - and a most ample one - of whosoever of them who follows you.

وَاسْتَفْزِزْ مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ مِنْهُمْ بِصَوْتِكَ وَأَجْلِبْ عَلَيْهِمْ بِخَيْلِكَ وَرَجِلِكَ وَشَارِكْهُمْ
فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ وَعِدْهُمْ ۚ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا 64

(17:64) Tempt with your call all whom you wish.[76] Muster against them all your forces - your cavalry and your foot soldiers;[77] share with them riches and offspring,[78] and seduce them with rosy promises - and Satan's promise is nothing but a deception[79] -

76. The literal meaning of the Arabic text is: You may sweep away those whom you find superficial and weak minded.

77. Here, Satan has been likened to that robber who assaults a habitation with cavalry and infantry and orders them to rob. The cavalry and the infantry of Satan are those jinns and human beings who are engaged in numerous forms and positions in carrying out his mission.

78. This is a very meaningful sentence which depicts a true and perfect picture of the relationship between Satan and his followers. On the one hand, Satan becomes a partner with the one who follows him in the earning and spending of his money without putting in any labor in it. On the other hand, he does not become a partner in bearing the consequences of his error, crime and sin. But his foolish dupe follows his instructions as if he were a partner, nay, a stronger party. Again in regard to the children of such a man, the father himself bears the whole burden of bringing them up, but under the misguidance of Satan he trains them in wrong and unmoral ways as if he alone was not their father but Satan as well was a partner in it.

79. Satan entices them with false promises of success and entangles them in the snare of false expectations.

إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ ۚ وَكَفَىٰ بِرَبِّكَ وَكِيلًا 65

(17:65) but know well that you will have no power against My servants.[80] Your Lord suffices for them to place their trust in."[81]

80. It has two meanings: (1) You will have no power over human beings to force them to follow your way. What you are allowed to do is that you may delude them by false counsel and entice them by false promises, but they will have the option to follow or not to follow your counsel. You will not have the power over them to force them to follow your way against their will. (2) You will not succeed in alluring My righteous people. Though the weak minded will be enticed by you. My righteous people who are steadfast in My obedience will not succumb to you.

81. That is, those who will trust in Allah and believe in His guidance and help, will not stand in need of any other support in their trial by Satan for Allah will guide them, protect them and help them to be safe from his allurements. On the other hand, those people, who

will place their trust in their own power or that of any other than Allah, will not come out successful in their trial by Satan.

رَبُّكُمُ الَّذِي يُزْجِي لَكُمُ الْفُلْكَ فِي الْبَحْرِ لِتَبْتَغُوا مِن فَضْلِهِ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا 66

(17:66) Your Lord is He Who steers your vessels across the seas[82] that you may seek of His Bounty.[83] He is ever Merciful towards you.

82. This passage (Ayats 66-72) is closely connected with the previous one. It tells man that if he wants to protect himself from the allurements, temptations and false promises of Satan who has been his avowed enemy from the day of his creation, he should recognize his real Lord and be steadfast in His obedience. Satan intends to prove that man is not worthy of the honor with which Allah has blessed him. Therefore if he follows any other way he cannot escape the snares of Satan.

In this passage, arguments of Tauhid have been put forward in order to make man steadfast in his faith and refrain from shirk.

83. That is, try to avail of the economic, social, educational and intellectual benefits which are provided by the sea voyages.

وَإِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فِي الْبَحْرِ ضَلَّ مَن تَدْعُونَ إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ ۖ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاكُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ أَعْرَضْتُمْ ۚ وَكَانَ الْإِنسَانُ كَفُورًا 67

(17:67) When a calamity befalls you on the sea, all those whom you invoke forsake you except Him.[84] But when He delivers you safely to the shore you turn away from Him, for man is indeed most thankless.

84. That is, this is a proof of the fact that your real nature knows no other Lord than Allah, and you feel in the depths of your hearts that He alone possesses the real power of every gain or loss. Had it not been so, man would never have invoked Allah at the time when he realized that no other helper could remove his misfortune.

أَفَأَمِنتُمْ أَن يَخْسِفَ بِكُمْ جَانِبَ الْبَرِّ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُوا لَكُمْ وَكِيلًا 68

(17:68) Do you, then, feel secure against His causing you to be swallowed up by a tract of the earth, or letting loose a deadly whirlwind charged with stones towards you, and there you will find none to protect you?

أَمْ أَمِنتُمْ أَن يُعِيدَكُمْ فِيهِ تَارَةً أُخْرَىٰ فَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ قَاصِفًا مِّنَ الرِّيحِ فَيُغْرِقَكُم
بِمَا كَفَرْتُمْ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُوا لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا بِهِ تَبِيعًا 69

(17:69) Or do you feel secure that He will not cause you to revert to the sea, and let a tempest loose upon you and then drown you for your ingratitude whereupon you will find none even to inquire of Us what happened to you?

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَىٰ
كَثِيرٍ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا ۚ 70

(17:70) Indeed, We honoured the progeny of Adam, and bore them across land and sea and provided them with good things for their sustenance, and exalted them above many of Our creatures.[85]

85. That is, it is an obvious fact that the superiority man enjoys over all other beings on the earth and all that is in it, has not been bestowed upon him by a jinn or an angel or a prophet. Most surely that is Allah's blessing and favor. Is it not then the height of folly and ignorance that after having achieved such a high rank, man should bow down before any creature of Allah instead of Him?

يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ ۚ فَمَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَقْرَءُونَ كِتَابَهُمْ
وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا 71

(17:71) Then think of the Day We shall summon every community with its leader. Those who are given their Record in their right hand shall read the Record of their deeds[86] and shall not be wronged a whit.

86. We learn from the Quran that on the Day of Resurrection, the righteous people will be given their records in their right hands and they will be overjoyed to have a look at it and will show it to others. As regards to the wicked people, they will get their records in their left hands and in their shame will try to hide it behind their backs. Please refer to (Surah Al-Haaqqa, Ayats 19-28), (Surah Al-Inshiqaq, Ayats 7-13).

وَمَنْ كَانَ فِي هٰذِهٖٓ اَعْمٰى فَهُوَ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ اَعْمٰى وَاَضَلُّ سَبِيْلًا 72

(17:72) Whoever lived in this world as blind shall live as blind in the Life to Come; rather, he will be even farther astray than if he were (just) blind.

وَاِنْ كَادُوْا لَيَفْتِنُوْنَكَ عَنِ الَّذِيْٓ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ لِتَفْتَرِيَ عَلَيْنَا غَيْرَهٗ ۖ صلے ق وَاِذًا لَّاتَّخَذُوْكَ

خَلِيْلًا 73

(17:73) (O Muhammad), they had all but tempted you away from what We have revealed to you that you may invent something else in Our Name.[87] Had you done so, they would have taken you as their trusted friend.

87. In order to understand the significance of this verse, we should keep in view the circumstances through which the Prophet (peace be upon him) had been passing at Makkah during the preceding decade or so. The disbelievers of Makkah were exerting their utmost to turn the Prophet (peace be upon him) away, somehow or other, from his message of Tauhid, which he was presenting, and to force him to make a compromise with shirk and the customs of ignorance. In order to achieve this end, they tempted him in several ways. They practiced deception upon him, and tempted him with greed, held out threats, and raised a storm of false propaganda against him, and persecuted him and applied economic pressure and social boycott against him. In short, they did all that could be done to defeat his resolve.

وَلَوْلَآ اَنْ ثَبَّتْنٰكَ لَقَدْ كِدْتَّ تَرْكَنُ اِلَيْهِمْ شَيْـًٔا قَلِيْلًا ۙ لا ق 74

(17:74) Indeed, had We not strengthened you, you might have inclined to them a little,

اِذًا لَّاَذَقْنٰكَ ضِعْفَ الْحَيٰوةِ وَضِعْفَ الْمَمَاتِ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُ لَكَ عَلَيْنَا نَصِيْرًا 75

(17:75) whereupon We would have made you taste double (the chastisement) in the world and double (the chastisement) after death, and then you would have found none to help you against Us.[88]

88. This review implies two things: (1) If you had compromised with falsehood after recognizing the truth, you might have pleased your degenerate people but would have incurred the wrath of Allah and would have received double chastisement both in this world and in the Hereafter. (2) No man, not even a Messenger of Allah, can fight singlehanded against the deceitful methods of falsehood, unless he receives the succor of Allah. It was the fortitude which Allah had bestowed upon the Prophet (peace be upon him), which helped him to retrain steadfast on the right position he had taken, so that no persecution, howsoever great, could turn him away in the least from that position.

وَاِنۡ كَادُوۡا لَيَسۡتَفِزُّوۡنَكَ مِنَ الۡاَرۡضِ لِيُخۡرِجُوۡكَ مِنۡهَا وَاِذًا لَّا يَلۡبَثُوۡنَ خِلٰفَكَ اِلَّا

قَلِيۡلًا 76

(17:76) They were bent upon uprooting you from this land and driving you away from it. But were they to succeed, they would not be able to remain after you more than a little while.[89]

89. This was a clear prophecy which was made at the time when it appeared to be no more than a mere threat, but it was fulfilled literally in a decade or so. A year after the revelation of this Surah, the disbelievers of Makkah compelled the Prophet (peace be upon him) to leave his home. Then within eight years he entered Makkah as a conqueror, and within two years after this, the entire Arabia was totally freed from mushriks. Then whosoever stayed in that country, he remained there as a Muslim and not as a mushrik.

سُنَّةَ مَنۡ قَدۡ اَرۡسَلۡنَا قَبۡلَكَ مِنۡ رُّسُلِنَا وَلَا تَجِدُ لِسُنَّتِنَا تَحۡوِيۡلًا ۧ 77

(17:77) This has been Our Way with the Messengers whom We sent before you.[90] You will find no change in Our Way.

90. That is, this is how Allah has always dealt with the people who killed or exiled His Messengers. They never survived in the land after this. They were either annihilated by the scourge of Allah or were brought under the sway of an enemy or were subdued by the followers of the Messenger.

اَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ لِدُلُوۡكِ الشَّمۡسِ اِلٰى غَسَقِ الَّيۡلِ وَقُرۡاٰنَ الۡفَجۡرِ ؕ اِنَّ قُرۡاٰنَ الۡفَجۡرِ كَانَ

مَشۡهُوۡدًا 78

(17:78) Establish Prayer[91] from the declining of the sun[92] to the darkness of the night;[93] and hold fast to the recitation of the Qur'an at dawn,[94] for the recitation of the Qur'an at dawn is witnessed.[95]

91. The Muslims have been commanded to establish Salat immediately after the mention of obstacles and adversities. This implies that the perseverance required to face adverse circumstances is obtained by the establishment of Salat.

92. We have translated the words of the Arabic text into “the declining of the sun.” Though some of the companions and their followers are of the opinion that it means “the sunset”, the majority of them are of the opinion that it means “the declining of the sun from its zenith.” Umar, Ibn Umar, Anas bin Malik, Abu Barza-tal-Aslami, Hasan Basri, Shaabi, Ata, Mujahid and, according to a tradition, Ibn Abbas (May Allah be pleased with them all) are of this opinion and Imam Muhammad Baqir and Imam Jaafar Sadiq also are of the same

opinion. Besides this, there are some traditions from the Prophet (peace be upon him) to the same effect, though they are not so authentic.

93. According to some, the original words of the Arabic text mean "darkness of the night", while others take it to mean "midnight". If the first opinion is accepted, it will imply "the beginning of the time of the salatul-isha, the isha prayer" and according to the other it will mean "the last limit of the time of salatul-isha."

94. The literal meaning of the word fajr is dawn, that is, "the beginning of the morning after the darkness of night."

Here the "recital of the Quran in the morning" stands for the salatul-fajr, the morning prayer. At some places the Quran has used the word salat for prayer and at other places a particular part of salat for prayer as a whole, e.g. tasbih, hamd, zikr, qayam, ruku, sajud etc. Likewise, here "recital of the Quran at dawn" does not mean the mere recital of the Quran but its recital during the salatul-fajr. Thus, the Quran has also incidentally referred to the different parts of which salat is composed and these guided the Prophet (peace be upon him) to prescribe the definite form of salat in which it is performed by the Muslims.

95. The recital of the Quran at dawn is witnessed by the angels of Allah to testify it as has been explained in the traditions. Though the angels witness each prayer and each good deed, the special mention of their being witnesses at the time of the recital of the Quran during the salatul-fajr gives it a particular importance. That is why the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to recite long passages from the Quran during the salatul-fajr. His example was followed by the companions, and the succeeding Muslim scholars held it to be a desirable thing. In this verse, it has been briefly stated how to establish salat which was made obligatory at the prescribed timings on the occasion of Miraj. It has been ordained that the first prayer is to be offered before the sunrise and the remaining four after the declining of the sun till the darkness of the night. Afterwards Angel Jibril was sent to the Prophet (peace be upon him) to define the limits of the timings of each prayer. According to a tradition of Abu Daud and Tirmizi related by Ibn Abbas, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Jibril led me in the five prayers twice near the Kaabah. On the first day, he offered the Duhr prayer just after the declining of the sun, when the shadow of everything was the shortest. Then he offered the Asr prayer when the shadow of each thing was equal to its own length, then the Maghrib prayer at the time when one breaks hiss fast, and the Isha prayer was offered just at the time when twilight had disappeared, and Fajr prayer at the time when it becomes unlawful to eat and drink anything for the one who intends to observe a fast. The next day he offered the Dhuhr prayer at the time when the shadow of each thing became equal to its own length and the Asr prayer when the shadow had doubled. The Maghrib prayer was offered as on the previous day and the Isha prayer when one third of the night had passed away, and the Fajr prayer when light had spread all over. After this Jibril turned towards me and said: O Muhammad, these are the timings of salat of the Prophets and the right tunings are between these two extreme limits.

The Quran has also pointed to these five times of Salat on different occasions:

(1) And listen; establish salat at the two ends of the day and in the early parts of the night (Surah At-Tauba, Ayat 114).

(2) And glorify your Lord with His praise before the sunrise (Fajr) and before sunset (Asr) and then glorify Him during the night (Isha) and then at the ends of the day (Fajr, Dhuhr and Maghrib). (Surah Taaha, Ayat 130).

(3) So glorify Allah when it is evening for you (Maghrib), and when it is morning (Fajr). Praise is only for Him in the heavens and the earth and glorify him in the later part of the afternoon (Asr) and in the afternoon (Dhuhr). (Surah Ar-Room, Ayats 17-18).

There is great wisdom in this system of the timings of salat. One of these is to avoid the timings of the worship of the sun worshipers. This is because the sun has always been in every age one of the greatest deities of the mushriks, who worshiped it especially at the time of sunrise and sunset. Therefore, these two times have totally been forbidden for salat. Besides this, they worshiped the sun at the time of its zenith. That is why Islam has ordained that the Muslims should offer their two prayers during the day time after the sun has declined and the Fajr prayer before the sunrise. The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself has stated this wisdom of the timings of prayer in several traditions. For instance, in the tradition related by Amar bin Abasah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) is reported to have replied to a question to this effect: Offer your morning prayer, but refrain from it when the sun is about to rise until it has risen high. For the sun rises between the horns of Satan and the unbelievers fall prostrate before it at that time.

Then after mentioning the Asr prayer, he said:

After Asr prayer, refrain from any prayer until the sunset, for during that time the sun sets between the horns of Satan and the unbelievers fall prostrate before it.

The rising and the setting of the sun between the horns of Satan is a symbolic expression that has been used in this tradition. This implies that both these times are used by Satan as temptations for the people. This is, as if to say: that Satan is so pleased with the worship of the unbelievers at the time of sunrise and sunset that he appears to carry the sun on his head as a mark of approval. This interpretation of the tradition is based on this remark of the Prophet (peace be upon him): The unbelievers fall prostrate before it.

وَمِنَ الَّيۡلِ فَتَهَجَّدۡ بِهٖ نَافِلَةً لَّكَ ۖ عَسٰٓى اَنۡ يَّبۡعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَّحۡمُوۡدًا 79

(17:79) And rise from sleep during the night[96] as well- this is an additional Prayer for you.[97] Possibly your Lord will raise you to an honoured position.[98]

96. The literal meaning of tahajjud is to rise up by breaking sleep. Therefore, it means: Rise up from sleep after the passing of a part of night and then offer your prayer.

97. Nafl literally means: Something done in addition to an obligatory duty. This shows that the tahajjud prayer is in addition to the five prescribed prayers.

98. "Will raise you to an honored position". You may attain such a high position in this world and in the next world that people from everywhere may be full of praise for you, and you may become a praiseworthy personality. This is, as if to say: Now your opponents are engaged in calling you names and are trying to defame you throughout the country, and

have raised a storm of false accusations against you but that time is not far when the world will ring with the echoes of your praise and in the Hereafter you will become worthy of praise by all creatures. The exaltation of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to the high position of intercession on the Day of Resurrection is also a part of that honored position.

وَقُلْ رَّبِّ اَدْخِلْنِيْ مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَّ اَخْرِجْنِيْ مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ وَّاجْعَلْ لِّيْ مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ سُلْطٰنًا نَّصِيْرًا 80

(17:80) And pray: "My Lord! Cause me to enter wherever it be, with Truth, and cause me to exit, wherever it be, with Truth,[99] and support me with authority from Yourself."[100]

99. This prayer clearly shows that the time of Hijrah (Migration) had come near. That is why Allah has instructed the Prophet (peace be upon him) to this effect: You should follow the truth wherever and in whatever condition you be. If you migrate from a place, you should migrate for the sake of the truth, and wherever you go, you should go for the sake of the truth.

100. That is, either grant me power and authority or make some government my helper so that I may use its power to reform the corrupt world. This is because power is required to check indecency and sin and to enforce the law of justice.

Hasan Basri and Qatadah have made the same interpretation of this verse, and the great commentators like Ibn Jarir and Ibn Kathir have adopted the same. This is supported by a tradition of the Prophet (peace be upon him): Allah eradicates by the power of government those evils, which are not eradicated by the teachings of the Quran. This is a clear proof that according to Islam, political power is also required to introduce reform, for admonition alone is not enough for this. Besides this, when Allah Himself has taught this prayer to His Prophet (peace be upon him) for the establishment of His way and enforcement of His law, it is not only lawful but desirable to acquire power and those, who consider this to be a worldly thing, are obviously in the wrong. What is really worldliness is that one should desire and acquire power for his own interest. On the contrary, the desire of power for the sake of Allah's way is not the worship of the world but the worship of God.

وَقُلْ جَآءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ ؕ اِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوْقًا 81

(17:81) And proclaim: "The Truth has come, and falsehood has vanished. Surely falsehood is ever bound to vanish."[101]

101. At the time of this declaration, the persecution of the Muslims was at its height. A large number of them had emigrated to Habash, and those who had remained behind were suffering from untold hardships at Makkah and its suburbs: so much so that the life of the Holy Prophet himself was always in danger. Therefore, to all appearances, falsehood was prevailing everywhere and there was no sign to show that the truth would ever overpower

falsehood. That is why the disbelievers took it for a boastful talk and scoffed at it when this declaration was trade. But this prophecy of victory did come out true in less than a decade when the Holy Prophet entered the same city of Makkah as a conqueror, and entered the Ka'abah where he made the same declaration while he was breaking the three hundred and sixty idols. According to a Tradition of Bukhari, related by Hadrat 'Abdullah bin Mas`ud, "On the day of the conquest of Makkah the Holy Prophet went on striking idols and uttering these words: "The Truth has come and falsehood has vanished; for falsehood is a thing that must by its nature vanish. The Truth has come and falsehood will never reappear nor return."

وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْاٰنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَآءٌ وَّرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۙ وَلَا يَزِيْدُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ اِلَّا خَسَارًا 82

(17:82) What We are sending down in the course of revealing the Qur'an is a healing and a grace for those who have faith; but it adds only to the ruin of the wrong-doers.[102]

102. That is, those people who make the Quran their guide and their book of law, are favored with the blessing of Allah and are cured of all their mental, psychological, moral and cultural diseases. On the other hand, those wicked people who reject this and turn their back on its guidance, in fact, are unjust to themselves. Therefore, the Quran does not allow them to remain even in that bad condition in which they were before its revelation or its knowledge but involves them in a greater loss than before. This is because before the revelation of the Quran or their acquaintance with it, they suffered from ignorance alone but when the Quran came before them and made distinct the difference between truth and falsehood, no excuse was left with them to remain in their previous condition of ignorance. After this, if they reject its guidance and persist in their deviation, it is a clear proof that they are not ignorant but workers of iniquity and worshipers of falsehood, which are averse to the truth. For then their position is of the one who, when presented both poison and elixir, makes a choice of poison. Therefore, they themselves are in that cast fully responsible for their deviation and whatever crimes they commit after that, shall incur their full punishment. It is obvious that the consequent loss of wickedness must be far greater than the loss of ignorance. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has summed this up in this concise and comprehensive sentence: The Quran is either an argument in your favor or against you.

وَاِذَآ اَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْاِنْسَانِ اَعْرَضَ وَنَاٰ بِجَانِبِهٖ ۚ وَاِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ كَانَ يَـُٔوْسًا 83

(17:83) Whenever We bestow favours upon man, he arrogantly turns away and draws aside; and whenever evil visits him, he is in utter despair.

قُلْ كُلٌّ يَّعْمَلُ عَلٰى شَاكِلَتِهٖ ؕ فَرَبُّكُمْ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ هُوَ اَهْدٰى سَبِيْلًا ع 84

(17:84) Say, (O Prophet): "Each one acts according to his own manner. Your Lord knows well who is best-guided to the Right Path."

وَيَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الرُّوْحِ ۭ قُلِ الرُّوْحُ مِنْ اَمْرِ رَبِّيْ وَمَآ اُوْتِيْتُمْ مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا 85

(17:85) They ask you about "the spirit".[103] Say: "The spirit descends by the command of my Lord, but you have been given only a little knowledge."

103. It is generally understood that the Arabic word Rooh stands here for soul as if the people asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) about the soul of man in regard to its nature, and the answer was that it came by the command of Allah. But we have great hesitation in accepting this meaning for it could be taken only if the verse be isolated from its context; otherwise these words would become quite incoherent for there is no reason why the question about soul should have intervened between the preceding three verses and following verses which deal with the theme of the Quran.

If we read the verse in its context, it becomes quite obvious that here the word Rooh (The Spirit) stands for the angel who brings revelation. This was in answer to the question of the mushriks: Where from do you bring the Quran? as if to say: O Muhammad, these people ask you about the Spirit, that is, the source of the Quran or the means of acquiring it, so tell them: This Spirit comes to me by the command of my Lord but your knowledge is so little that you cannot distinguish between the nature of human words and the divinely revealed words. That is why you suspect that this has been fabricated by some man.

The above interpretation is to be preferred, because it fits in excellently between the preceding and the succeeding verses. This is also supported by the Quran itself: He sends down by His command “The Spirit” to any of His servants He wills so that they should warn the people of the Day, when they shall be assembled together. (Surah Al-Momin, Ayat 15). And likewise, We have sent down “The Spirit” to you by Our command: You did not know what the Book was and what the faith. (Surah Ash-Shurah, Ayat 52).

Besides this, Ibn Abbas, Qatadah and Hasan Basri (may Allah bestow His mercy upon them all) have also adopted the same interpretation. Ibn Jarir has attributed the same thing to Ibn Abbas on the authority of Qatadah, but at the same time he tells a strange thing that Ibn Abbas stated this thing only in secret. Again the author of Ruh-ul-Maani cites these words of Hasan and Qatadah: By Rooh is meant Jibril: the question was about the nature of his coming down and inspiring the heart of the Prophet (peace be upon him) with Revelation.

وَلَىِٕنْ شِئْنَا لَنَذْهَبَنَّ بِالَّذِيْٓ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُ لَكَ بِهٖ عَلَيْنَا وَكِيْلًا ۙ 86

(17:86) Had We willed, We could take away what We have revealed to you, then you would find none to help you in recovering it from Us.

إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ ۚ إِنَّ فَضْلَهُ كَانَ عَلَيْكَ كَبِيرًا 87

(17:87) (Whatever you have received) is nothing but grace from your Lord. Indeed His favour to you is great.[104]

104. Though these words are apparently addressed by the Prophet (peace be upon him), they are in fact meant for the disbelievers who considered the Quran to be either the invention of the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself or of some other man, who secretly taught him the Quran. They are being told that this is the Word of Allah, as if to say: Our Prophet has not fabricated the Quran but We have bestowed this on him, and if We take it back from him, the Prophet has no power to invent such a thing nor has any other man the power to help the Prophet to present such a miraculous Book.

قُل لَّئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَن يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا 88

(17:88) Say: "Surely, if mankind and jinn were to get together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they will never be able to produce the like of it, howsoever they might help one another."[105]

105. This challenge occurs at several other places in the Quran: (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 23); (Surah Younus, Ayats 38-39); (Surah Al-Momin, Ayats 13-14); (Surah At-Toor, Ayats 33-34). At all these places, this has been cited as an answer to the charge of the disbelievers that Muhammad (peace be upon him) has himself invented the Quran but is presenting it as Allah's Word. Besides this, the same has also been refuted in (Surah Younus, Ayat 16): "Say also, had not Allah willed that I should recite the Quran to you, I could not have recited it to you, nor could I have been able to give you any information about it: already have I lived a lifetime among you before its revelation. Do you not use your common sense?"

Now let us turn to the three arguments contained in these verses as a proof that the Quran is the Word of Allah.

(1) The Quran is such a miracle in regard to its language, style, arguments, themes, topics, teachings and prophecies that it is beyond any human power to produce the like of it, as if to say, "You say that a man has invented this but We challenge that even the whole of mankind combined cannot produce a Book like this: nay, even if the jinns, whom the mushriks worship as deities and whom this Book openly attacks, should come to the help of the disbelievers, they cannot produce a Book like this to refute this challenge.

(2) As regards to the charge that Muhammad (peace be upon him) has himself invented this Book, the Quran refutes their claim, as if to say" Muhammad is one of you and not a foreigner. He has lived among you for forty years before the revelation of the Quran. Did you ever hear words like those of the Quran from him even a day before his claim of Prophethood, or did you ever hear him discussing themes and problems contained in the

Quran? If you consider the matter from this point of view, it will become obvious to you that the sudden change which has come about in the language, ideas, information, style and the way of thinking of Muhammad, could not take place without divine guidance.

(3) Can you not see that after the recital of the Quran, he does not disappear but lives among you? You hear other things than the Quran from him. Do you not notice that the distinction between the two different styles of expression is so obvious that no man can successfully adopt the two styles at one and the same time. The distinction can also be noticed, even today, between the language of the Quran and that of the traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Anyone well versed in the Arabic language and literature notices the difference which is so marked that one can categorically say that these modes of expression cannot belong to one and the same person. (For further reference please also see (E.N. 21 of Surah Younus, Ayat 16).

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ ۚ فَاَبٰٓى اَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ اِلَّا كُفُوْرًا 89

(17:89) We have explained things for people in this Qur'an in diverse ways to make them understand the Message, yet most people obstinately persist in unbelief.

وَقَالُوْا لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتّٰى تَفْجُرَ لَنَا مِنَ الْاَرْضِ يَنْۢبُوْعًا ۙ 90

(17:90) They said: "We shall not accept your Message until you cause a spring to gush forth for us from the earth;

اَوْ تَكُوْنَ لَكَ جَنَّةٌ مِّنْ نَّخِيْلٍ وَّعِنَبٍ فَتُفَجِّرَ الْاَنْهٰرَ خِلٰلَهَا تَفْجِيْرًا ۙ 91

(17:91) or that there be a garden of palms and vines for you and then you cause rivers to abundantly flow forth through them;

اَوْ تُسْقِطَ السَّمَآءَ كَمَا زَعَمْتَ عَلَيْنَا كِسَفًا اَوْ تَاْتِيَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ قَبِيْلًا ۙ 92

(17:92) or cause the sky to fall on us in pieces as you claimed, or bring Allah and the angels before us, face to face;

اَوْ يَكُوْنَ لَكَ بَيْتٌ مِّنْ زُخْرُفٍ اَوْ تَرْقٰى فِي السَّمَآءِ ۭ وَلَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ لِرُقِيِّكَ حَتّٰى تُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا كِتٰبًا نَّقْرَؤُهٗ ۭ قُلْ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيْ هَلْ كُنْتُ اِلَّا بَشَرًا رَّسُوْلًا ۧ 93

(17:93) or that there come to be for you a house of gold, or that you ascend to the sky - though we shall not believe in your ascension (to the sky) - until you bring down a

book for us that we can read." Say to them, (O Muhammad): "Holy is my Lord! Am I anything else than a human being, who bears a Message[106] (from Allah)?"

106. This is the second answer to the demand of the disbelievers for a miracle. The first answer is contained in (Ayat 59). The eloquence of this concise answer is above praise: You demand from me that I should cause a spring to gush forth, or in the twinkling of an eye should bring into being a garden in full bloom with canals flowing in it: or I should cause the heaven to fall into pieces on those of you who are rejecting the message: or I should cause to build a furnished palace of gold: or I should call Allah and the angels to stand before you and testify to this effect: We Ourselves have sent down Muhammad as Our Messenger: or I should go up to the sky in your presence and bring down, addressed to you, the letter of authority of my appointment duly signed by Allah so that you may touch it with your hands and read it with your own eyes. The concise answer to these big demands was this: My Lord be glorified! Have I ever claimed to be anything more than a human Messenger? It may be expanded like this: O people, have I claimed to be God that you are demanding such things from me? Did I ever say that I am all powerful and am ruling over the earth and the Heavens? From the very first day my claim has been that I am a human being who is bringing the Message from God. Therefore, if you want to judge the authenticity of my claim, you may judge it from my message. If you are convinced that it is based on the truth and is absolutely rational, then you should believe in it without making foolish demands. On the other hand, if you find any defect in it, you may reject it. If you want to test whether my claim is based on truth, you should judge it by the standard of my conduct and morals as a human being and my mission. Is it not a folly that, instead of this, you are demanding from me to cleave the earth and cause the sky to fall? Is there any connection whatsoever of Prophethood with things like that.

وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ اَنْ يُّؤْمِنُوْٓا اِذْ جَآءَهُمُ الْهُدٰٓى اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوْٓا اَبَعَثَ اللّٰهُ بَشَرًا رَّسُوْلًا 94

(17:94) Whenever Guidance came to people, nothing prevented them from believing except that they said: "Has Allah sent a human being as a Messenger?"[107]

107. It implies that this misunderstanding has always been common among the ignorant people of every age that a human being could not be a Messenger of Allah: They rejected a Messenger just because he was a human being and took his meals and had wife and children like themselves. In contrast to this, after the passage of the time the credulous followers of a Messenger began to claim that he was not a human being at all because he was a Messenger. That is why some people made their Messenger their God, others the son of God and still others the incarnation of God. In short, the ignorant people had never been able to understand that a human being could be a Messenger of Allah.

قُلْ لَّوْ كَانَ فِى الْاَرْضِ مَلٰٓئِكَةٌ يَّمْشُوْنَ مُطْمَئِنِّيْنَ لَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ مَلَكًا رَّسُوْلًا 95

(17:95) Say: "Had angels been walking about in peace on the earth, We would surely have sent to them an angel from the heavens as Messenger."[108]

108. This is to say that Messenger does not merely convey the message but is sent to reform human life in accordance with it. He has to apply the principles of the message to the circumstances of human beings and has himself to demonstrate practically those principles. Moreover, he has to remove the misunderstandings of those people who try to listen to and understand his message. Besides this, he has to organize and train the believers to create a society based on the teachings of his message. He has to struggle against those who reject and oppose his message in order to subdue those powers that are bent upon corruption, and bring about that reformation for which Allah has sent His Messenger. As all these things have to be done in a society of human beings only a human Messenger can perform the mission. If an angel had been sent as a Messenger, the most he could have done was to convey the message, for he could not live among human beings and share their life and problems in order to reform them. It is thus clear that a human Messenger only could be suitable for this purpose.

قُلْ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ شَهِيْدًاۢ بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنَكُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهٖ خَبِيْرًاۢ بَصِيْرًا 96

(17:96) Tell them, (O Prophet): "Allah suffices as a witness between me and you. Allah is well aware and fully observes everything pertaining to His servants."[109]

109. That is, Allah is fully aware of all my efforts which I am sending in order to reform you, and He is fully aware of the efforts you are making against my mission. His witness is sufficient because He will pass the final judgment.

وَمَنْ يَّهْدِ اللّٰهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلْ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ ؕ وَنَحْشُرُهُمْ
يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ عَلٰى وُجُوْهِهِمْ عُمْيًا وَّبُكْمًا وَّصُمًّا ؕ مَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ؕ كُلَّمَا خَبَتْ زِدْنٰهُمْ
سَعِيْرًا 97

(17:97) Whomsoever Allah guides is rightly guided; and whomsoever Allah lets go astray, you shall find none - apart from Him[110] - who could protect him. We shall muster them all on the Day of Resurrection, on their faces - blind and dumb and deaf.[111] Hell shall be their refuge. Every time its Fire subsides, We will intensify for them its flame.

110. In this verse, the Quran has enunciated a divine principle. Allah guides to the right way only that person who intends to follow His guidance, and lets go astray that person who intends to go astray. Thereafter none is able to bring back to the right way the one against whom Allah has closed the door of guidance because of his own persistent deviation and obduracy. It is obvious that if a man turns his back against the truth and rests content with

falsehoods, there is no power in the world to make him turn away from falsehood and come to the truth.

This is because after this depravity Allah provides for that wicked person such means as increase his aversion to truth and his love for falsehood.

111. On the Day of Resurrection, they will be raised up blind, dumb and deaf because they behaved like such people in this world and would not see the truth nor listen to the truth nor speak the truth.

ذٰلِكَ جَزَآؤُهُمْ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَقَالُوْٓا ءَاِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا وَّرُفَاتًا ءَاِنَّا لَمَبْعُوْثُوْنَ خَلْقًا جَدِيْدًا 98

(17:98) That will be their recompense because they disbelieved in Our Signs and said: "What, when we shall be reduced to bones and particles (of dust), shall we be raised again as a new creation?"

اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ قَادِرٌ عَلٰٓى اَنْ يَّخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَهُمْ اَجَلًا لَّا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ ؕ فَاَبَى الظّٰلِمُوْنَ اِلَّا كُفُوْرًا 99

(17:99) Have they not perceived that Allah, Who has created the heavens and the earth, has the power to create the like of them? He has fixed a term for them about which there is no doubt. And yet the wrong-doers obstinately persist in unbelief.

قُلْ لَّوْ اَنْتُمْ تَمْلِكُوْنَ خَزَآئِنَ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّيْٓ اِذًا لَّاَمْسَكْتُمْ خَشْيَةَ الْاِنْفَاقِ ؕ وَكَانَ الْاِنْسَانُ قَتُوْرًا ۧ 100

(17:100) Tell them, (O Prophet): "Even if you owned the treasures of my Lord's Mercy you would have held them back for fear of spending them." Man is indeed ever niggardly.[112]

112. This verse also suggests the same thing that has already been mentioned in Ayat 55. This hints at the real psychological reason why the disbelievers of Makkah were not inclined to accept Muhammad (peace be upon him), their contemporary, as a Prophet. For thus they would have to acknowledge his superiority and one does not easily acknowledge the superiority of his contemporary. This verse may be expanded like this: Those people who are so narrow minded that they are unwilling even to acknowledge the real superiority of another, cannot be expected to be generous in spending on others, if they possessed the keys of the treasures of Allah's blessings.

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسٰى تِسْعَ اٰيٰتٍۢ بَيِّنٰتٍ فَسْـَٔلْ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اِذْ جَآءَهُمْ فَقَالَ لَهٗ فِرْعَوْنُ

اِنِّيْ لَاَظُنُّكَ يٰمُوْسٰى مَسْحُوْرًا 101

(17:101) We granted Moses nine clear signs.[113] Ask the Children of Israel about that: when these signs came forth, Pharaoh said to him: "Moses, I think that you are bewitched."[114]

113. It should be noted that this is the third answer to the demand of the disbelievers of Makkah for signs. They said: We will not believe in you until you do this and do that before our eyes. In answer to this demand, they are being warned: Nine clear signs, like the ones you are demanding, were shown one after the other to Pharaoh before you and you also know well what he said, simply because he did not want to believe in Moses (peace be upon him); you also know that when he rejected the Prophet, even after seeing the signs, We drowned him.

The nine signs mentioned here have also been mentioned in (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 133). These were: (1) The staff which turned into a monster snake. (2) Moses' bright hand which shone like the sun. (3) The public defeat of the sorcery of the magicians. (4) Universal famine. (5) Storm. (6) Locusts. (7) Lice. (8) Frogs. (9) Rain of blood.

114. This has been particularly mentioned here because the mushriks of Makkah attributed the same epithet to the Prophet (peace be upon him) as contained in(Ayat 47). These wrong-doers say to each other: The man, you are following, is a bewitched person. Here they are being warned that they were following the attitude of Pharaoh, who gave the same epithet to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him).

In this connection, we want to make a brief reference to an objection which has been raised by the modernists against a tradition according to which the Prophet (peace be upon him) once came under the influence of sorcery. They say that this tradition confirms that the epithet "bewitched" applied to the Prophet by the Quraish was correct, whereas the Quran refutes this as false. They forget that the same argument could be applied to the case of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) whom Pharaoh accused of being bewitched. For the Quran says, in (Surah Taaha, Ayats 66- 67): When the magicians threw down their cords and rods (instruments of their sorcery), it seemed to Moses as if they were running, as a result of which Moses (peace be upon him) conceived in his mind a sort of fear. If the words of the tradition were to be considered against the Quran, do not these words of the Quran contradict its own words that the charge of Moses (peace be upon him) being bewitched was false? Do these modernists consider this verse to confirm Pharaoh's charge?

As a matter of fact, these objectors do not know the sense in which the disbelievers of Makkah and Pharaoh called the Prophet and Prophet Moses (peace be upon them) bewitched. What they meant was that some enemy had so bewitched them that they had lost their senses and so in their insanity claimed to be prophets and delivered a curious message. The Quran refutes this charge as false. As regards the temporary influence of magic on same person or a part of him has not been denied, for the influence of magic is like

the effect produced on a person who is hit with a stone. The fact that some prophet was temporarily influenced by magic, does not in any way affect his prophethood adversely. Just as poison produced its effect on a prophet, or a prophet was wounded, so a prophet could also temporarily come under the influence of magic. Such a temporary magic could not cause any defect in his prophethood. God forbid, had magic produced any adverse effect on his reasoning and thinking faculties, one might have been skeptical about the authenticity of the message. And when Pharaoh and the disbelievers of Makkah said that Prophet Moses and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon them) were bewitched, they meant that they had lost their senses under the influence of magic. The Quran refutes this charge brought against the Prophets.

قَالَ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَآ أَنزَلَ هَٰٓؤُلَآءِ إِلَّا رَبُّ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ بَصَآئِرَ ۚ وَإِنِّى لَأَظُنُّكَ يَٰفِرْعَوْنُ مَثْبُورًا 102

(17:102) Moses replied: "You know well that no one but the Lord of the heavens and the earth has sent these as eye-opening proofs.[115] I truly think, O Pharaoh, that you are indeed doomed."[116]

115. Moses could say these words categorically that the Signs were from the Lord of the Universe because the calamities which visited Egypt could not be brought about by magic or by any human device. For it is not possible for any human power to bring about frogs over vast areas or to cause all granaries in the land to be eaten up by weevils. Then it should also be kept in view that Prophet Moses warned beforehand of an impending Sign, warning Pharaoh to give up his obduracy, and the calamity did come exactly as he had predicted. In these circumstances only a mad or obdurate person could say that those calamities were sent by any other than the Lord of the Heavens and the Earth.

116. That is, I am not a bewitched man but you are indeed a doomed person. As you have been persistent in your disbelief even after seeing such obvious divine signs, you are surety doomed to destruction.

117. This part of the story of Pharaoh has been related here because it applied exactly to the mushriks of Makkah who were doing their best to uproot the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the believers from the land of Arabia. This story, so to say, tells them: Pharaoh resolved to uproot Moses (peace be upon him) and the Israelites but was himself completely annihilated along with his followers. But Moses (peace be upon him) and his followers settled down in the land. Likewise, if you persist on the same way, you will surely meet with the same end.

فَأَرَادَ أَن يَسْتَفِزَّهُم مِّنَ ٱلْأَرْضِ فَأَغْرَقْنَٰهُ وَمَن مَّعَهُۥ جَمِيعًا 103

(17:103) At last Pharaoh decided to uproot Moses and the Children of Israel from the land, but We drowned him together with all who were with him;

وَّقُلْنَا مِنۢ بَعْدِهٖ لِبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اسْكُنُوا الْاَرْضَ فَاِذَا جَآءَ وَعْدُ الْاٰخِرَةِ جِئْنَا بِكُمْ
لَفِيْفًا ۭ 104

(17:104) and thereafter We said to the Children of Israel: "Now dwell in the land,[117] but when the promised time of the Hereafter comes, We shall bring you all together."

117. This part of the story of Pharaoh has been related here because it applied exactly to the mushriks of Makkah who were doing their best to uproot the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the believers from the land of Arabia. This story, so to say, tells them: Pharaoh resolved to uproot Moses (peace be upon him) and the Israelites but was himself completely annihilated along with his followers. But Moses (peace be upon him) and his followers settled down in the land. Likewise, if you persist on the same way, you will surely meet with the same end.

وَبِالْحَقِّ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ وَبِالْحَقِّ نَزَلَ ۭ وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ اِلَّا مُبَشِّرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا ۙ 105

(17:105) We have sent down the Qur'an with the Truth, and it is with the Truth that it has descended. And We have not sent you but to proclaim good news and to warn.[118]

118. That is, it is not your responsibility to cause, in a supernatural manner, springs to gush forth or gardens to grow or pieces of the sky to fall down in order to convince those people who do not judge the Quran by its teachings nor decide between the truth and falsehood on merit. As the Quran has been sent down with truth, you should present it before the people and tell them plainly that the one, who believes, does so for his own good and the one who rejects it, does it at his own peril.

وَقُرْاٰنًا فَرَقْنٰهُ لِتَقْرَاَهٗ عَلَي النَّاسِ عَلٰي مُكْثٍ وَّنَزَّلْنٰهُ تَنْزِيْلًا 106

(17:106) We have revealed the Qur'an in parts that you may recite it to people slowly and with deliberation; and (for that reason) We have revealed it gradually[119] (to suit particular occasions).

119. This is an answer to this objection: Why has not Allah sent down His message as a whole? Why is He sending it piecemeal? Has Allah any need to think deliberately what to send down? As the answer to this objection has been given in (Surah An-Nahal, Ayats 101-102) and in the Explanatory Notes 104-106 added to them.

قُلْ اٰمِنُوْا بِهٖٓ اَوْ لَا تُؤْمِنُوْا ۭ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهٖٓ اِذَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ يَخِرُّوْنَ
لِلْاَذْقَانِ سُجَّدًا ۙ 107

(17:107) Tell them, (O Prophet): "Whether you believe in it, or do not believe," but when it is recited to those who were given the knowledge before its revelation,[120] they fall down upon their faces in prostration

120. This refers to those people of the Book who were well versed in the Scriptures and could judge them from their themes and wording.

وَّيَقُوْلُوْنَ سُبْحٰنَ رَبِّنَآ اِنْ كَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّنَا لَمَفْعُوْلًا 108

(17:108) and say: "Glory be to our Lord. Surely the promise of our Lord was bound to be fulfilled."

وَيَخِرُّوْنَ لِلْاَذْقَانِ يَبْكُوْنَ وَيَزِيْدُهُمْ خُشُوْعًا ۩ 109

(17:109) And they fall down upon their faces, weeping, and their humility[121] increases when (the Qur'an) is recited to them.[122]

121. That is, when they listen to the Quran, they at once recognize that its bearer is the promised Prophet mentioned in the Books of the former Prophets.

122. This attitude of the righteous people of the Book has been mentioned at several places in the Quran, e.g., (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayats 113-114, 199), (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayats: 83-84).

قُلِ ادْعُوا اللّٰهَ اَوِ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمٰنَ ؕ اَيًّا مَّا تَدْعُوْا فَلَهُ الْاَسْمَآءُ الْحُسْنٰى ۚ وَلَا تَجْهَرْ

بِصَلَاتِكَ وَلَا تُخَافِتْ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ سَبِيْلًا 110

(17:110) Say to them (O Prophet!): "Call upon Him as Allah or call upon Him as al-Rahman; call Him by whichever name you will, all His names are beautiful.[123] Neither offer your Prayer in too loud a voice, nor in a voice too low; but follow a middle course."[124]

123. This is the answer to another objection of the disbelievers. They said: We have heard the name Allah for the Creator but where from have you brought the name Rahman? This was because the name "Rahman" was not used for Allah and they did not like it.

124. This instruction was given at Makkah. Ibn Abbas relates that when the Prophet (peace be upon him) or his companions offered their prayers, they recited the Quran in a loud voice. At this the disbelievers would raise a hue and cry and often called them names. Therefore, they were enjoined that they should neither say their prayers in such a loud voice as might incite the disbelievers nor should they say it in such a low voice that their own companions might not hear it. This instruction was discontinued under the changed conditions at Al-Madinah. However, if the Muslims have to face the same conditions, at any place or at any time, they should observe the same instruction.

وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِیْ لَمْ یَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَّ لَمْ یَكُنْ لَّهٗ شَرِیْكٌ فِی الْمُلْكِ وَ لَمْ یَكُنْ لَّهٗ وَلِیٌّ
مِّنَ الذُّلِّ وَ كَبِّرْهُ تَكْبِیْرًا ۠ 111

(17:111) And say: "All praise be to Allah Who has neither taken to Himself a son, nor has He any partner in His kingdom, nor does He need anyone, out of weakness, to protect Him."[125] So glorify Him in a manner worthy of His glory.

125. A subtle sarcasm is implied in the sentence. The mushriks believed that Allah had appointed assistants and deputies for the administration of His kingdom. Obviously this meant that Allah was helpless and powerless to carry out the administration of His kingdom. Therefore, He needed supporters to help Him in the work of His Godhead. This sentence negates their false creeds, saying: He does not stand in need of any gods and saints in order to delegate to them the different departments of His Godhead or make them governors in different parts of His kingdom.

18. Surah Al Kahf (The Cave)

Name

This Surah takes its name from v. 9 in which the word (al-kahf) occurs.

Period of Revelation

This is the first of those Surahs which were sent down in the third stage of Prophethood at Makkah. We have already divided the life of the Holy Prophet at Makkah into four stages in the Introduction to Chapter VI. According to that division the third stage lasted from the fifth to the tenth year of Prophethood. What distinguishes this stage from the second and the fourth stages is this. During the second stage the Quraish mainly resorted to ridiculing, scoffing, threatening, tempting, raising objections and making false propaganda against the Holy Prophet and his followers in order to suppress the Islamic Movement. But during the third stage they employed the weapons of persecution, man handling and economic pressure for the same purpose. So much so that a large number of the Muslims had to emigrate from Arabia to Habash, and those who remained behind were besieged in Shi'ib Abi Talib along with the Holy Prophet and his family. To add to their misery, a complete social and economic boycott was applied against them. The only redeeming feature was that there were two personalities, Abu Talib and Hadrat Khadijah, whose personal influence had been conducive to the support of two great families of the Quraish. However, when in the tenth year of Prophethood these two persons died, the fourth stage began with such revere persecutions as forced the Holy Prophet and all his Companions to emigrate from Makkah.

It appears from the theme of the Surah that it was revealed at the beginning of the third stage when in spite of persecutions and opposition, migration to Habash had not yet taken place. That is why the story of "Ashab-i-Kahf" (the Sleepers of the Cave) has been related to comfort and encourage the persecuted Muslims and to show them how the righteous people have been saving their Faith in the past.

Subject and Topics

This Surah was sent down in answer to the three questions which the mushriks of Makkah, in consultation with the people of the Book, had put to the Holy Prophet in order to test him. These were: (1) Who were "the Sleepers of' the Cave"? (2) What is the real story of Khidr? and (3) What do you know about Zul-Qarnain? As these three questions and the stories involved concerned the history of the Christians and the Jews, and were unknown in Hijaz, a choice of these was made to test whether the Holy Prophet possessed any source of the knowledge of the hidden and unseen things. Allah, however, not only gave a complete answer to their questions but also employed the three stories to the disadvantage of the opponents of Islam in the conflict that was going on at that time at Makkah between Islam and un-belief:

1. The questioners were told that "the Sleepers of the Cave" believed in the same doctrine of Tauhid which was being put forward in the Quran and that their condition was similar to the condition of the persecuted Muslims of Makkah. On the other hand, the persecutors of the Sleepers of the Cave had behaved in the same way towards them as

the disbelievers of the Quraish were behaving towards the Muslims. Besides this, the Muslims have been taught that even if a Believer is persecuted by a cruel society, he should not bow down before falsehood but emigrate from the place all alone, if need be, with trust in God. Incidentally the disbelievers of Makkah were told that the story of the Sleepers of the Cave was a clear proof of the creed of the Hereafter, for this showed that Allah has the power to resurrect anyone He wills even after a long sleep of death as He did in case of the Sleepers of the Cave.

2. The story of the Sleepers of the Cave has also been used to warn the chiefs of Makkah who were persecuting the small newly formed Muslim Community. At the same time, the Holy Prophet has been instructed that he should in no case make a compromise with their persecutors nor should he consider them to be more important than his poor followers. On the other hand, those chiefs have been admonished that they should not be puffed up with the transitory life of pleasure they were then enjoying but should seek after those excellences which are permanent and eternal.
3. The story of Khidr and Moses has been related in such a way as to supply the answer to the question of the disbelievers and to give comfort to the Believers as well. The lesson contained in this story is this "You should have full faith in the wisdom of what is happening in the Divine Factory in accordance with the will of Allah. As the reality is hidden from you, you are at a loss to understand the wisdom of what is happening, and sometimes if it appears that things are going against you, you cry out, 'How and why has this happened'. The fact is that if the curtain be removed from the "unseen", you would yourselves come to know that what is happening here is for the best. Even if some times it appears that something is going against you, you will see that in the end it also produces some good results for you.
4. The same is true of the story of Zul-Qarnain for it also admonishes the questioners, as if to say, "0 you vain chiefs of Makkah you should learn a lesson from Zul-Qarnain. Though he was a great ruler, a great conqueror and the owner of great resources, yet he always surrendered to his Creator, whereas you are rebelling against Him even though you are insignificant chieftains in comparison with him. Besides this, though Zul-Qarnain built one of the strongest walls for protection, yet his real trust was in Allah and not in the "wall". He believed that the wall could protect him against his enemies as long as it was the will of Allah and that there would be crack and holes in it, when it would be His will : whereas you who possess only insignificant fortified abodes and dwellings in comparison with him, consider yourselves to be permanently safe and secure against all sorts of calamities."

While the Quran turned the tables on the questioners who had tried to "expose" the Holy Prophet, in the end of the Surah the same things have been reiterated that were stated at its beginning: "Tauhid and the Hereafter are absolutely true and real and for your own good you should accept these doctrines, mend your ways in accordance with them and live in this world with this conviction that you are accountable to Allah: otherwise you shall ruin your life and all your doings shall be set at naught."

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اَلۡحَمۡدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِیۡۤ اَنۡزَلَ عَلٰی عَبۡدِهِ الۡكِتٰبَ وَلَمۡ یَجۡعَلۡ لَّهٗ عِوَجًا ؕ 1

(18:1) Praise be to Allah Who has revealed to His servant the Book devoid of all crookedness;[1]

1. That is, there is nothing intricate or complicated in it that may be beyond anyone's understanding nor is there anything that deviates from the straight path of the truth and thus cause hesitation in the mind of a truth loving person.

قَیِّمًا لِّیُنۡذِرَ بَاۡسًا شَدِیۡدًا مِّنۡ لَّدُنۡهُ وَیُبَشِّرَ الۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ الَّذِیۡنَ یَعۡمَلُوۡنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمۡ اَجۡرًا حَسَنًا ۙ 2

(18:2) an unerringly Straight Book, meant to warn of a stern punishment from Allah, and to proclaim, to those who believe and work righteous deeds, the tiding that theirs shall be a good reward

مَّاكِثِیۡنَ فِیۡهِ اَبَدًا ۙ 3

(18:3) wherein they shall abide for ever;

وَّیُنۡذِرَ الَّذِیۡنَ قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ وَلَدًا ۚ 4

(18:4) and also to warn those who say: "Allah has taken to Himself a son,"[2]

2. "Those who say" includes the Christians, the Jews and the mushrik Arabs who assigned offspring to Allah.

مَا لَهُمۡ بِهٖ مِنۡ عِلۡمٍ وَّلَا لِاٰبَآئِهِمۡ ؕ كَبُرَتۡ كَلِمَةً تَخۡرُجُ مِنۡ اَفۡوَاهِهِمۡ ؕ اِنۡ یَّقُوۡلُوۡنَ اِلَّا كَذِبًا 5

(18:5) a thing about which they have no knowledge,[3] neither they nor their ancestors. Dreadful is the word that comes out of their mouths. What they utter is merely a lie.

3. "Dreadful is the word" That one is the son of God, or Allah has adopted that one as a son. This has been declared to be dreadful because it was not based o any knowledge that Allah has a son or has adopted a son. They had merely exaggerated their love for someone and invented such a relationship. And they do not realize that it is a dreadful blasphemy, impudence and fabrication that they are uttering in regards to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.

فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَّفْسَكَ عَلٰٓى اٰثَارِهِمْ اِنْ لَّمْ يُؤْمِنُوْا بِهٰذَا الْحَدِيْثِ اَسَفًا 6

(18:6) (O Muhammad), if they do not believe in this Message,[4] you will perhaps torment yourself to death with grief, sorrowing over them.

4. This refers to the real cause of the anxiety of the Prophet (peace be upon him) at the time of the revelation of this Surah. It clearly shows that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not grieve at the persecution from which he and his companions were suffering but at the deviation and moral degeneration of his people. What was consuming him was that, though he was trying to bring them out from their disgraceful state, they persisted in it. He was grieved because he was convinced that their deviation would inevitably lead them to destruction and scourge of Allah. Therefore he was working day and night to save them but it appeared that they were bent upon incurring the chastisement of Allah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself has described this state of his mind in a tradition to this effect: I may describe this thing in a parable. A person kindled a fire to spread light but the moths persist in falling over it to burn themselves alive. He tries to save them from the fire but the moths reduce his efforts to failure. The same is true of me and you. I hold you by your skirts to keep you away from the fire, but you are bent upon falling into it. (Bukhari, Muslim).

Though apparently it is merely stated that it may be that you will consume your life for their sake out of sorrow, it also contains a sort of consolation for the Prophet (peace be upon him), as if to say: As you are not responsible for forcing them to believe, why should you consume yourself for their sake. Your only duty is to give good news and warning and not to turn people into believers. Therefore, you may go on carrying out your mission of giving good news to the believers and warning of the bad consequences to the disbelievers.

اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْاَرْضِ زِيْنَةً لَّهَا لِنَبْلُوَهُمْ اَيُّهُمْ اَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا 7

(18:7) Surely We have made all that is on the earth an embellishment for it in order to test people as to who of them is better in conduct.

وَاِنَّا لَجٰعِلُوْنَ مَا عَلَيْهَا صَعِيْدًا جُرُزًا ؕ 8

(18:8) In the ultimate, We shall reduce all that is on the earth to a barren plain.[5]

5. (Ayat 6)was addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), but (Ayats 7-8) have been directed to the disbelievers indirectly, as if to say: You must understand it clearly that all the things that you see in the world and which allure you, are a transitory adornment which has been arranged merely to test you, but it is a pity that you have been involved in the misunderstanding that all these things have been created to cater for your pleasure and enjoyment. That is why the only aim and object of life you have set before you is: Eat, drink and be merry. As a result of this you do not pay any attention to your true and real well wisher. You must understand it well that these things have not been provided for pleasure but are actually a means of testing you. You have been placed among them to see which of you is allured by these from the real aim of life and which of you keeps steadfast in the

worship of Allah, for which you have been sent to the world. All these things and means of pleasure shall come to an end on the Day, your examination is over and nothing will remain on the earth because it will be turned into a bare plain.

أَمْ حَسِبْتَ أَنَّ أَصْحٰبَ الْكَهْفِ وَالرَّقِيْمِ كَانُوْا مِنْ اٰيٰتِنَا عَجَبًا ۟ 9

(18:9) Do you think that the people of the Cave[6] and the Inscription[7] were one of Our wondrous signs?[8]

6. The Arabic word Kahf literally means a vast cave.

7. There is a difference of opinion about the meaning of arraqim. Some companions and their followers opined that it was the name of that habitation where this event took place and that it was situated somewhere between Aylah and Palestine. There are other commentators who take it to mean the inscription that had been set up at the cave as a memorial to the sleepers of the cave. Abul Kalam Azad, in his commentary, Tarjmanul-Quran, has preferred the first meaning and opined that it is the same place which has been called Rekem in the Bible (Joshua, 18: 27). Then he identifies it with the ancient historical city of Petra. But he has not considered the fact that Rekem, as mentioned in the Bible, belonged to the children of Benjamin and according to the Book of Joshua, the territory of this clan was situated to the west of river Jordan and the Dead Sea and that the ruins of Petra are situated to the south of Jordan. That is why the modern archaeologists do not believe that Petra and Rekem are one and the same place. (Please refer to Encyclopedia Britannica, 1946, Vol XVII, page 658). We are also of the opinion that by Arraqim is meant the inscription.

8. This question has been posed to expose the skeptical attitude of the disbelievers towards the "Sleepers of the Cave," as if to say: Do you think that Allah, Who has created the heavens and the earth, does not have the power to keep a few persons in a state of sleep for a couple of hundred years and then to raise them up same as they were at the time of going to sleep. If you ever had pondered over the wonderful creation of the sun and the moon and the earth, you would never have expressed any doubt that such a thing was anything difficult for Allah.

إِذْ أَوَى الْفِتْيَةُ إِلَى الْكَهْفِ فَقَالُوْا رَبَّنَآ اٰتِنَا مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً وَّهَيِّئْ لَنَا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا رَشَدًا ۟ 10

(18:10) When those youths sought refuge in the Cave and said: "Our Lord! Grant us mercy from Yourself and provide for us rectitude in our affairs."

فَضَرَبْنَا عَلٰٓى اٰذَانِهِمْ فِي الْكَهْفِ سِنِيْنَ عَدَدًا ۟ 11

(18:11) We lulled them to sleep in that cave for a number of years

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنٰهُمْ لِنَعْلَمَ اَیُّ الْحِزْبَیْنِ اَحْصٰی لِمَا لَبِثُوْٓا اَمَدًا ع 12

(18:12) and then roused them so that We might see which of the two parties could best tell the length of their stay.

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَیْكَ نَبَاَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ فِتْیَةٌ اٰمَنُوْا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزِدْنٰهُمْ هُدًی ۖۗ ص ق 13

(18:13) We narrate to you their true story.[9] They were a party of young men who had faith in their Lord, and We increased them in guidance[10]

9. The oldest evidence of this story is found in a homily written in Syriac by Jacob of Sarug, a Christian priest of Syria, who was born in A.D. 452, a few years after the death of the companions of the cave. The homily which describes the legend in great detail was composed by him in or about A.D. 474. On the one hand, this same Syriac version came into the hands of our early commentators, and Ibn Jarir Tabari cited it in his commentary with various authorities. And on the other hand, it reached Europe where its translations and abridged versions were published in Greek and Latin. The abridged story as told by Gibbon in Chapter 33 of his The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire under the heading, "The Seven Sleepers", so closely resembles the story told by our commentators that both the versions seem to have been drawn from the same source. For instance, the name of the king, whose persecutions made the Seven Christian youths of Ephesus take refuge in the cave, was Emperor Decius according to Gibbon. He ruled the Roman Empire from A.D. 249 to 251 and whose reign is very notorious because of his persecution of the followers of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), while our commentators call him Decanus or Decaus, etc. The city, where this event happened was Aphesus or Aphesos according to our commentators, while according to Gibbon it was Ephesus, which was the biggest Roman city and seaport on the west coast of Asia Minor. The ruins of this city can still be seen 20 to 25 miles south of the modern Turkish city of Izmir. Again the name of the king, during whose reign the companions of the cave awoke, was Tezusius according to the Muslim commentators and Theodosius II according to Gibbon. He ruled over Rome from A.D. 408 to 450, after the Roman Empire had accepted Christianity.

The resemblance between the two versions is so close that even the name of the companion whom the sleepers sent to the city to buy food after waking up has been mentioned as Jamblicha by the Muslim scholars and Jamblichus by Gibbon. The details of the story in both the versions are also similar which are briefly as follows.

When during the reign of the Emperor Decius, the followers of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) were being mercilessly persecuted, the seven Christian youths hid themselves in a cave and fell into a sleep. Then in the 38th year of the reign of the Emperor Theodosius II (approximately in A.D. 445 or 446) they awoke when the entire Roman Empire had become Christian. Thus, they slept in the cave for nearly 196 years.

On this ground some orientalists have rejected that the above mentioned story is the same as that given in the Quran because the period of their stay in the cave according to the Quran (Ayat 25) was 309 years. We have, however, answered this objection in (E.N. 25).

There are a few minor differences between the Quranic and Syriac versions, on the basis of which Gibbon has charged the Prophet (peace be upon him) with ignorance. However, the Syriac version, on the basis of whose authenticity he has committed this gross insolence, was even according to him written thirty to forty years after the event by a Syrian. He has not taken the trouble to consider the fact that verbal versions of events do change a bit during such a long time while they are communicated from one country to the other. Therefore it is wrong to take such a version of the story for granted and literally true and to charge the Quran with discrepancy for any main difference with it. Such an attitude is worthy only of those people who are so blinded by religious prejudices that they discard even the most ordinary demands of reason.

The city of Ephesus where the event of the sleepers of the cave took place, was built about 11th century B.C. and became a great center of idol worship, its chief deity being the moon goddess, Diana, whose temple was regarded as a wonder of the ancient world. Most of her devotees belonged to Asia Minor and the Roman Empire also had accepted her as one of its deities. After Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) when his message started reaching different parts of the Roman Empire, a few youths of Ephesus also gave up idol worship and accepted God as their only Lord. Gregory of Tours has collected details about these Christian youths in his Meraculorum Liber, which are briefly as follows.

They were seven youths. When the Emperor Decius heard of their change of faith, he summoned them and questioned them about their new religion. In spite of knowing that the Emperor was deadly against the followers of Christ, they frankly admitted before him that their Lord is the Lord of the earth and heavens, and that they recognized none else as Deity for if they did so, they would be committing a grave sin. The Emperor became furious to hear this, and warned that he would have them killed, but then considering their tender age, he granted them three days in which they were counseled to revert to their old faith, otherwise they would be put to death.

The seven youths took advantage of the situation and fled the city to conceal themselves in a cave in the mountains. On the way a dog also followed them. They did their best to scare it away, but it would not leave them. At last they found a spacious cave as a suitable refuge and hid in it and the dog sat at the entrance. Being tired they soon fell into a deep slumber. This happened in about 250 A.D. After about 197 years, in 447 A.D., during the reign of Emperor Theodosius II, they awoke suddenly when the whole Roman Empire had embraced Christianity and the Ephesians had given up idolatry.

At this time a fierce controversy was going on among the Romans regarding the reality of the life after death and Resurrection, and the Emperor himself was anxious to eradicate somehow the disbelief in the life after death from the minds of his people. So much so that one day he prayed that God in His mercy may show a sign which may help restore and correct the people's belief. In precisely the same days the seven sleepers awoke in the cave.

After waking up, the youths started asking one another about how long they might have slept. Some said it might have been a day, others said it was a part of a day. When they reached no conclusion, they stopped arguing, leaving the knowledge of the exact period to God.

Then they sent Jean, a companion, to the city with a few silver coins to buy food, and warned him to be on his guard lest the people should recognize him, for they feared that if they were discovered the Ephesians would force them to bow before Diana. But when Jean came to the city he was astonished to see that the world had changed. The entire population had embraced Christianity, and there was nobody in the city to worship Diana. He came to a shop and wanted to buy a few loaves of bread. When he paid in a coin bearing the image of Emperor Decius, the shopkeeper could not believe his eyes and asked the stranger from where he had obtained that coin. When the young man said that it was his own, a dispute began between them and soon a crowd gathered around them, and the matter reached the chief officer of the city. The officer himself was puzzled and wanted to know the whereabouts of the treasure house from where the young man had taken the coin, but the latter insisted that it belonged to him. The officer did not believe him because he thought that a young man like him could not possibly possess a centuries old coin which had not even been seen by the elders in the city. When Jean came to know that the Emperor Decius had died, he was pleasantly surprised. He told the crowd that he and his six companions had fled the city only the other day and taken refuge in a cave to escape Decius' persecution. The officer was greatly surprised and followed the young man to see the cave where his companions lay in hiding. And a great crowd followed behind them. When they came to the cave, it was fully established that the youths really belonged to the Emperor Decius' period. Consequently, Emperor Theodosius was informed and he also visited the cave to receive grace. Then the seven youths went back into the cave and lay down and breathed their last. Seeing this clear sign the people's belief in the life after death was restored, and a monument was ordered to be built over the cave by the Emperor.

The story of the sleepers of the cave as narrated above, corresponds so closely with that mentioned in the Quran that the seven youths can easily be regarded as Ashab-i- Kahf (the companions of the cave). Some people, however, have raised the objection that this story concerns a city of Asia Minor, and the Quran does not discuss or refer to any event that might have taken place outside Arabia, therefore it would be against the Quranic style and spirit to label this Christian story as the story of Ashab-i-Kahf. In our opinion this objection is not correct. The Quran means to impress and warn the Arabs by relating stories concerning the various ancient tribes who had transgressed from the right path and with whom they were familiar, whether they lived and flourished inside Arabia or outside it. It is for this very reason that a mention has been made of the ancient history of Egypt in the Quran, whereas Egypt has never been a part of Arabia. The question is that when the history of Egypt can be mentioned in the Quran, why cannot Rome and the Roman history with which the Arabs were as familiar as with the Egyptian history? The Roman frontiers adjoined the northern Hijaz and the Arab caravans traded with the Romans almost throughout the year. Then there were a number of Arab tribes who were directly under Roman domination and the Roman Empire was in no way unknown to the Arabs, a fact which is fully borne out by Surah Ar-Room. Another thing which should be borne in mind is that the story of the sleepers of the cave has been related in the Quran in response to a query raised by the disbelievers of Makkah, who had been prompted by the Jews and Christians to question the Prophet (peace be upon him) on such matters as were wholly unknown to the Arabs in order to test his Prophethood.

10. That is, when they had believed sincerely, Allah increased their faith in the guidance and enabled them to become firm and steadfast on the way of the truth even at the risk of their lives rather than surrender before falsehood.

وَّرَبَطْنَا عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ اِذْ قَامُوْا فَقَالُوْا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ لَنْ نَّدْعُوَاْ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ

اِلٰهًا لَّقَدْ قُلْنَآ اِذًا شَطَطًا 14

(18:14) and strengthened their hearts when they stood up and proclaimed: "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. We shall call upon no other god beside Him; (for if we did so), we shall be uttering a blasphemy."

هٰٓؤُلَآءِ قَوْمُنَا اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اٰلِهَةً ؕ لَوْلَا يَاْتُوْنَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِسُلْطٰنٍۢ بَيِّنٍ ؕ فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ

افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا ؕ 15

(18:15) (Then they conferred among themselves and said): "These men, our own people, have taken others as gods beside Him: why do they not bring any clear evidence that they indeed are gods? Who can be more unjust than he who foists a lie on Allah?

وَاِذِ اعْتَزَلْتُمُوْهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُوْنَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ فَاْوٗٓا اِلَى الْكَهْفِ يَنْشُرْ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ مِّنْ

رَّحْمَتِهٖ وَيُهَيِّئْ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اَمْرِكُمْ مِّرْفَقًا 16

(18:16) And now that you have dissociated yourselves from them and from whatever they worship beside Allah, go and seek refuge in the Cave.[11] Your Lord will extend His mercy to you and will provide for you the means for the disposal of your affairs."

11. When these God worshiping youths fled the habitations to take refuge in the hills, the city of Ephesus was the principal center of idol worship and sorcery in Asia Minor. There was a great temple dedicated to the goddess Diana, which was well known in the whole world and attracted devotees from far places. The sorcerers, workers of magic and occult arts, soothsayers and amulet writers of Ephesus were well known and their black business had spread throughout Syria and Palestine, even as far as Egypt. The Jews also had a big share in it, who attributed this art to Prophet Solomon. (Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature under Ephesus). The predicament in which the righteous people living in an environment of idolatry and superstition were involved can well be imagined from the remark of the companions of the cave that occurs in(Ayat 20): If they succeed in over powering us, they will surely stone us to death or force us back into their faith.

وَتَرَى الشَّمْسَ اِذَا طَلَعَتْ تَّزٰوَرُ عَنْ كَهْفِهِمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِيْنِ وَاِذَا غَرَبَتْ تَّقْرِضُهُمْ
ذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ وَهُمْ فِيْ فَجْوَةٍ مِّنْهُ ؕ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ؕ مَنْ يَّهْدِ اللّٰهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ ۚ وَمَنْ
يُّضْلِلْ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهٗ وَلِيًّا مُّرْشِدًا ع 17

(18:17) Had you seen them in the Cave[12] it would have appeared to you that when the sun rose, it moved away from their Cave to the right; and when it set, it turned away from them to the left, while they remained in a spacious hollow in the Cave.[13] This is one of the Signs of Allah. Whomsoever Allah guides, he alone is led aright; and whomsoever Allah lets go astray, you will find for him no guardian to direct him.

12. It has not been mentioned that in accordance with this mutual resolve, they left the city and went to a secret cave in the mountains in order to escape from death or forced apostasy.

13. This is to show that the mouth of the cave faced the north. That is why the light of the sun could not enter inside the cave and the one who passed by it could not see who was inside it. 1

وَتَحْسَبُهُمْ اَيْقَاظًا وَّهُمْ رُقُوْدٌ ۚ وَّنُقَلِّبُهُمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِيْنِ وَذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ ۚ وَكَلْبُهُمْ
بَاسِطٌ ذِرَاعَيْهِ بِالْوَصِيْدِ ؕ لَوِ اطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَوَلَّيْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِرَارًا وَّلَمُلِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ
رُعْبًا 18

(18:18) On seeing them you would fancy them to be awake though they were asleep; and We caused them to turn their sides to their right and to their left,[14] and their dog sat stretching out its forelegs on the threshold of the Cave. Had you looked upon them you would have certainly fled away from them, their sight filling you with terror.[15]

14. That is, if someone could have looked at the seven persons from outside and seen them turning from one side to the other at intervals, he would have thought that they were not asleep but were relaxing themselves.

15. Allah had so arranged their refuge that none dared go inside the cave and know about them for it was pitch dark in the cave and the dog was keeping watch at the entrance. If someone ever looked into the cave and saw the sleepers, he took them for some robbers and at once turned on his heels. This was the reason why their refuge remained a secret to the outer world for such a long period.

وَكَذٰلِكَ بَعَثْنٰهُمْ لِيَتَسَآءَلُوْا بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ قَالَ قَآئِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ ؕ قَالُوْا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا اَوْ
بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ ؕ قَالُوْا رَبُّكُمْ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثْتُمْ ؕ فَابْعَثُوْٓا اَحَدَكُمْ بِوَرِقِكُمْ هٰذِهٖٓ اِلَى الْمَدِيْنَةِ
فَلْيَنْظُرْ اَيُّهَآ اَزْكٰى طَعَامًا فَلْيَاْتِكُمْ بِرِزْقٍ مِّنْهُ وَلْيَتَلَطَّفْ وَلَا يُشْعِرَنَّ بِكُمْ اَحَدًا 19

(18:19) Likewise, We roused them[16] in a miraculous way that they might question one another. One of them asked: "How long did you remain (in this state)?" The others said: "We remained so for a day or part of a day." Then they said: "Your Lord knows better how long we remained in this state. Now send one of you to the city with this coin of yours and let him see who has the best food, and let him buy some provisions from there. Let him be cautious and not inform anyone of our whereabouts.

16. They were awakened from their sleep in the same miraculous way that was employed in sending them to sleep and keeping them hidden from the outer world.

اِنَّهُمْ اِنْ يَّظْهَرُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ يَرْجُمُوْكُمْ اَوْ يُعِيْدُوْكُمْ فِيْ مِلَّتِهِمْ وَلَنْ تُفْلِحُوْٓا اِذًا
اَبَدًا 20

(18:20) For if they should come upon us, they will stone us to death or force us to revert to their faith whereafter we shall never prosper."

وَكَذٰلِكَ اَعْثَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ وَّاَنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهَا ۚ اِذْ
يَتَنَازَعُوْنَ بَيْنَهُمْ اَمْرَهُمْ فَقَالُوا ابْنُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ بُنْيَانًا ؕ رَبُّهُمْ اَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ ؕ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ
غَلَبُوْا عَلٰٓى اَمْرِهِمْ لَنَتَّخِذَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ مَّسْجِدًا 21

(18:21) Thus did We make their case known to the people of the city[17] so that they might know that Allah's promise is true, and that there is absolutely no doubt that the Hour will come to pass.[18] But instead of giving thought to this, they disputed with one another concerning the People of the Cave, some saying: "Build a wall over them.[19] Their Lord alone knows best about them." But those who prevailed over their affairs[20] said: "We shall build a place of worship over them."[21]

17. The secret of their sleep was revealed when one of them went to Ephesus to buy food for them and offered a coin of the period of Emperor Decius. As it was a changed world, he naturally attracted attention for he was wearing a costume of 300 year old fashion and spoke

a language different from that in vogue. This was because during those two centuries the language, culture, dress etc. had undergone a marked change. So the shopkeeper looked askance at him and, according to a Syriac tradition, he suspected that he had dug up some ancient treasure. Accordingly, he gathered some people of his neighborhood and they took him before the ruler. On questioning, it was discovered that he was one of those followers of Christ, who had fled the city 300 years ago to save their faith. As most of the population had embraced Christianity, the news immediately spread throughout the city and a big crowd of the people along with the Christian Roman Ruler, arrived at the cave. It was then that the sleepers of the cave came to know that they had slept for about three hundred years. So after making salutations to their Christian brothers they lay down and their souls left their bodies.

18. According to the Syriac tradition, at the time of this occurrence, hot discussions were going on in Ephesus about Resurrection and the Hereafter. Though the people had embraced Christianity under the influence of the Roman Empire, yet traces of shirk and idolatry of the Romans and the effects of the Greek philosophy were still very powerful. So in spite of the Christian creed of the Hereafter, many people denied this, or at least were skeptical about this. To add to this the Sadducee sect of the Jews, who formed a great part of the population of the city, openly denied the Hereafter and professed to base this on the Torah. The Christian scholars, however, could not put forward any strong arguments to refute them: so much so that the reports of the polemical discussion given in Matthew, Mark and Luke, attributed to Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), are admittedly very weak even according to the Christian scholars. (Please refer to Matthew 22: 23-33, Mark 12: 18- 27, Luke 20: 27-40). That is why the disbelievers in the Hereafter were having the upper hand and even the believers were being involved in doubts about it. It was at that time that the sleepers of the cave were raised up and furnished an absolute proof of the life after death and turned the scales in favor of the believers in this dispute.

19. It appears from the context that this was the saying of the righteous people from among the Christians. They were of the opinion that a wall should be raised at the entrance of the cave in order to let the sleepers remain in the same condition in which they were, for they argued that their Lord alone knew best about their rank and position and the reward they deserved.

20. The people "those who prevailed in their matter" were the Roman rulers and the priests of the Christian Church, who did not let the righteous Christians have their way. This was because by the middle of the fifth century, the common people, especially the orthodox among the Christians, had become fully involved in shirk and the worship of saints and tombs. They used to visit the tombs of the saints to worship them and kept the statues of Jesus, Mary and the apostles in their churches: so much so that a few years before the rising up of the sleepers of the cave, in 431 A.D., a great council of the representatives of the Christian world had been held in Ephesus itself, in which it was resolved that the creed of the divinity of Christ and of Mary as the mother of God, should be included in the articles of the Christian Church. If we keep in view the year 431, it becomes clear that by "those who prevailed in their matter" are meant the leaders of the Church and the officers of the government, who had the reins of the religious and political powers in their hands. In fact these were the people who were the upholders of shirk and who decided that a mausoleum should be built over the cave of the sleepers to make it a place of worship.

21. It is an irony that some people among the Muslims have misconstrued this verse of the Quran so as to make it lawful for themselves to build mausoleums, monuments and mosques over the tombs of the righteous persons and saints. The Quran has, in fact, pointed out the deviation of the workers of iniquity who prevailed upon others and built a place of worship over the cave of the sleepers, who were indeed a sign of Resurrection and of the life after death. But they abused this good opportunity and produced another means of practicing shirk.

One fails to understand how anyone can deduce from this verse an argument for the legality of building mosques over the tombs of the righteous people, when the Prophet (peace be upon him) has categorically prohibited this.

(1) Allah has cursed those women who visit tombs and those people who build mosques over them and burn lights over them (Ahmad, Tirmizi, Abu Dawud, Nasai, Ibn Majah).

(2) Beware that the people, who have passed before you, made the tombs of their Prophets the places of their worship. I forbid you to do that. (Muslim).

(3) Allah has cursed the Jews and the Christians, for they made the tombs of their Prophets the places of their worship. (Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, Nasai).

(4) The behavior of those people was strange: if a righteous person from among them, died they would build a mosque over his grave and draw his pictures. They will be treated as worst criminals on the Day on Resurrection. (Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, Nasai).

Thus, it is clear from the above sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that building of the places of worship over the tombs is utterly unlawful. The Quran has merely stated as a historical fact the sinful act of the Christian priests and the Roman rulers and has not sanctioned such a thing. Therefore no God fearing person can turn this into an argument for building mosques over the tombs.

Incidentally, it will be worthwhile to cite a statement of Rev. T. Arundell who published his discoveries in Asia Minor in 1834. He says that he had seen the remains of the Mausoleums of Mary and the seven sleepers on a hillock near the remains of the ancient city of Ephesus.

سَيَقُوْلُوْنَ ثَلٰثَةٌ رَّابِعُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ ۚ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ خَمْسَةٌ سَادِسُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ رَجْمًۢا بِالْغَيْبِ ۚ
وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ سَبْعَةٌ وَّثَامِنُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ ۭ قُلْ رَّبِّيْٓ اَعْلَمُ بِعِدَّتِهِمْ مَّا يَعْلَمُهُمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلٌ ۬ قف ۬ فَلَا
تُمَارِ فِيْهِمْ اِلَّا مِرَآءً ظَاهِرًا ۠ وَّلَا تَسْتَفْتِ فِيْهِمْ مِّنْهُمْ اَحَدًا ع 22

(18:22) Some will say concerning them: "They were three and their dog, the fourth"; and some will say: "They were five, and their dog, the sixth" all this being merely guesswork; and still others will say: "They were seven, and their dog, the eighth."[22] Say: "My Lord knows their number best. Only a few know their correct

number. So do not dispute concerning their number, but stick to what is evident, and do not question anyone about them."[23]

22. This shows that about three hundred years after this event, at the time of the revelation of the Quran, different stories had become current among the Christians about the sleepers of the cave, but generally these stories had no authentic source behind them. This was because that was not the age of the press in which authentic books might have been published. Therefore naturally the stories of events were carried from place to place by means of oral traditions, and with the passage of time many tales of fiction got mixed up with the real story.

23. This is meant to impress that the real thing in this story is not the number of the sleepers but the lessons it teaches. (1) A true believer should not on any account turn away from the truth and bow before falsehood. (2) A believer should not merely rely on the material means but on Allah. He should trust in God and follow the right way, even though the outward adverse circumstances might appear to be unfavorable. (3) It is wrong to suppose that Allah is bound by any so called law of nature, for He is able to do anything He wills even though that might seem to be against some common experience. He has the power to change any so called law of nature, whenever and wherever He wills and bring about any extraordinary supernatural thing. So much so that He can raise up anyone who might have been asleep for two hundred years, as if he had slept only for a few hours, without letting any change take place in his appearance, dress, health, indeed in anything, during the passage of time. (4) This teaches us that Allah has the power to bring to life all the generations past, present and future all together as asserted by the Prophets and divine Scriptures. (5) It teaches us that ignorant people have always been perverting the signs of Allah which are sent for the right guidance of the people. That is how the miracle of the sleepers of the cave, which had been shown as a proof of the Hereafter, had been turned into a means of shirk, as if they were some saints who had been sent only for this purpose.

It is obvious from the above mentioned real lessons, which one can learn from the story of the sleepers, that a wise man will pay his attention to these things and not divert it in search of their number, their names, the color of their dog and the like. Only those people, who have no interest for the reality but for superficial things, will spend their time and energy in making investigations about such things. That is why Allah instructed the Prophet (peace be upon him): You should not enter into useless and irrelevant discussions about such things even if other people try to involve you in them. Instead of wasting your time in such useless things, you should concentrate your attention only on your mission. That is why Allah has not Himself told their exact number lest it should encourage such people as are always hankering after useless things.

وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لِشَاىْءٍ إِنِّي فَاعِلٌ ذَٰلِكَ غَدًا ۙ 23

(18:23) And never say about anything: "I shall certainly do this tomorrow"

إِلَّآ أَن يَشَآءَ ٱللَّهُ ۚ وَٱذۡكُر رَّبَّكَ إِذَا نَسِيتَ وَقُلۡ عَسَىٰٓ أَن يَهۡدِيَنِ رَبِّي لِأَقۡرَبَ مِنۡ هَٰذَا رَشَدٗا 24

(18:24) unless Allah should will it. And should you forget (and make such a statement), remember your Lord and say: "I expect my Lord to guide me[24] to what is nearer to rectitude than this."

24. This is a parenthetical clause which has been inserted here because of its relevancy to the preceding verse, in which it was asserted that the correct number of the sleepers of the cave is known only to Allah and a research into it is a useless task. Therefore one should refrain from investigating into unimportant things, nor enter into discussions about them. This has led to the instruction contained in the parenthetical clause for the benefit of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the believers who have been told never to make a positive assertion like this: I will do this thing tomorrow, for you do not know whether you will be able to do that thing or not: you have neither the knowledge of the unknown nor have full powers to do what you like. If ever inadvertently you utter anything like this, you should at once remember your Lord and say, InshaAllah. Besides this you do not know whether there will be any good for you in the thing about which you say: I will do this. It is possible that you may do another thing better than that. Therefore you should trust in God and say: I hope that my Lord will guide me in this matter with that thing which is nearer to the right way for me.

وَلَبِثُواْ فِي كَهۡفِهِمۡ ثَلَٰثَ مِاْئَةٖ سِنِينَ وَٱزۡدَادُواْ تِسۡعٗا 25

(18:25) They remained in the Cave for three hundred years; and others added nine more years.[25]

25. This sentence is connected with the theme preceding the parenthetical clause like this. Some people will say: “They were three and the fourth was their dog...”, and some people will say that they remained in the cave for three hundred years and some others would add nine more years (to the reckoning of the period). We are of the opinion that the number of the years, 300 or 309, has not been stated by Allah Himself but Allah has cited these as sayings of the people. This opinion is based on this succeeding sentence: Allah knows best about the period of their stay there. If the number of years, given in (Ayat 25), had been from Allah, this succeeding sentence would have been meaningless. Abdullah bin Abbas has also opined that this is not the saying of Allah but that of the people which has been cited as a part of the story.

قُلِ اللّٰهُ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوۡا ۚ لَهٗ غَيۡبُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ؕ اَبۡصِرۡ بِهٖ وَاَسۡمِعۡ ؕ مَا لَهُمۡ مِّنۡ
دُوۡنِهٖ مِنۡ وَّلِىٍّ ۖ وَّلَا يُشۡرِكُ فِىۡ حُكۡمِهٖۤ اَحَدًا 26

(18:26) Say: "Allah knows best how long they remained in it, for only He knows all that is hidden in the heavens and the earth. How well He sees; how well He hears! The creatures have no other guardian than Him; He allows none to share His authority."

وَاتۡلُ مَاۤ اُوۡحِىَ اِلَيۡكَ مِنۡ كِتَابِ رَبِّكَ ؕ لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمٰتِهٖ ۚ وَلَنۡ تَجِدَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِهٖ
مُلۡتَحَدًا 27

(18:27) (O Prophet),[26] recite to them from the Book of your Lord what has been revealed to you for none may change His words; (and were you to make any change in His words) you will find no refuge from Him.[27]

26. After relating the story of the sleepers of the cave, the Quran begins to review the condition of the Muslims of Makkah at the time of the revelation of the Surah.

27. This does not mean at all that, God forbid, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was inclined to make any changes in the Quran to please the disbelievers of Makkah and was thinking of some formula of compromise with the chiefs of the Quraish which necessitated a warning that he was not authorized to do so. As a matter of tact, though this was apparently addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), it was really meant for the disbelievers that they should not entertain any hope whatsoever for anything like this, as if to say: You must understand it once and for all that Our Messenger is not authorized to make any changes in Our revelation, for he has to precisely convey it just as it is sent down to him. If you want to accept it, you will have to accept it in its entirety as it is being sent by the Lord of the Universe. And if you want to reject it, you may do so but you must understand it well that no modification, even in the least, will be made in it to please you. This was the answer to the repeated demand of the disbelievers: If you do insist, O Muhammad (peace be upon him), that we should accept your message in its entirety, then make certain modifications in it to accommodate some creeds and customs of our forefathers, and we will accept your message. This is our offer for a compromise and this will save our people from divsion. This demand of the disbelievers has been cited in the Quran at several places and the same answer has been given, e.g. When Our clear revelations are recited to them, those who do not expect to meet Us, say: Bring another Quran in its stead or make some amendments in it. (Surah Younus, Ayat 15).

وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدٰوةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيْدُوْنَ وَجْهَهٗ وَلَا تَعْدُ
عَيْنٰكَ عَنْهُمْ ۚ تُرِيْدُ زِيْنَةَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ اَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهٗ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ
هَوٰىهُ وَكَانَ اَمْرُهٗ فُرُطًا 28

(18:28) Keep yourself content with those who call upon their Lord, morning and evening, seeking His pleasure, and do not let your eyes pass beyond them. Do you seek the pomp and glitter of the world?[28] Do not follow him[29] whose heart We have caused to be heedless of Our remembrance, and who follows his desires, and whose attitude is of excess.[30]

28. Though these words have also been addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), they are really meant for the chiefs of the Quraish. According to a tradition related by Ibn Abbas, the chiefs of the Quraish would say to the Prophet (peace be upon him) that they considered it below their dignity to sit with such people as Bilal, Suhaib, Ammar, Khabbab, Ibn-Masud and the like who generally remained in his company, and that if he should send them away, they would be willing to attend his meetings in order to learn about his message. At this Allah revealed this verse: And keep yourself whole heartedly content with those who pray to their Lord morning and evening in order to win His approval and do not turn your attention away from them: Do you desire to discard these sincere but poor people so that the chiefs of the Quraish, the well to do people, should come and sit near you? This was meant to warn the chiefs of the Quraish to this effect: Your wealth, your pomp and show of which you are so proud has no value at all in the sight of Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him). Nay, those poor people are really more worthy in their sight, for they are sincere and always remember Allah. The same was the attitude of the chiefs of Prophet Noah's (peace be upon him) people, who said: And we also see that none but the meanest and the most shallow of our people have become your followers. Upon this, Noah (peace be upon him) replied: I am not going to drive away those who have believed in me, nor can I say about those whom you disdain that Allah has not bestowed any good on them. (Surah Al-Anbia Ayats 27, 29, (31).

29. That is, do not yield to what he says, nor submit to him, nor fulfill his desire, nor follow his bidding.

30. The original Arabic text may also mean: Who discards the truth, breaks all moral limits and rushes on headlong. But in both cases it comes to this: The one, who is neglectful of Allah and becomes a slave of his lust, inevitably transgresses all limits and becomes a victim of immoderation. Therefore the one who will submit to him, will also follow the same way and wander about in deviation after him.

وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ۟ فَمَنْ شَآءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَّمَنْ شَآءَ فَلْيَكْفُرْ ۚ اِنَّآ اَعْتَدْنَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ
نَارًا ۙ اَحَاطَ بِهِمْ سُرَادِقُهَا ۭ وَاِنْ يَّسْتَغِيْثُوْا يُغَاثُوْا بِمَآءٍ كَالْمُهْلِ يَشْوِي الْوُجُوْهَ ۭ بِئْسَ
الشَّرَابُ ۭ وَسَاۗءَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا 29

(18:29) And proclaim: "This is the Truth from your Lord. Now let him who will, believe; and let him who will, disbelieve.[31] We have prepared a Fire for the wrong-doers whose billowing folds encompass them.[32] If they ask for water, they will be served with a drink like dregs of oil[33] that will scald their faces. How dreadful a drink, and how evil an abode!

31. This verse makes it quite plain that the story of the sleepers of the cave has been related to tell the opponents of Islam: This is the truth from your Lord. Now whosoever wills, he may accept it and whosoever wills, he may reject it. But people must understand that no compromise will be made in regard to the truth just as the sleepers of the cave did not make any compromise with regard to their creed. They did not make any compromise in regard to the doctrine of Tauhid after they had believed in it and categorically declared: Our Lord is the One Who alone is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. After this declaration they did not in any way accede to the making of any compromise with their people, who had gone astray. But they firmly declared: We will not give Him up and pray to other deities, because it will be the most improper thing, if we did so. After making this declaration they left their people and deities and took refuge in the cave without taking any provisions with them. After this when they woke up, the only thing about which they showed any anxiety, was that their people might not succeed in forcing them back to their own faith. After relating these things, the Quran addresses the Prophet (peace be upon him) to the effect (though these words are really meant for the opponents of Islam): It is absolutely out of question whether any compromise can be made with mushriks and disbelievers. Present the truth intact to them whether they accept it or not. If they do not accept it, they themselves will meet with an evil end. As regards to those, who have accepted the truth, (whether they be youngsters or poor, indigent people or slaves or laborers) they are really those people who have a worth with Allah, and they alone will be honored. Therefore you should not discard them and prefer the chiefs and the rich people who may be neglectful of Allah and be slaves of their own desires, even though they might be possessors of worldly grandeur.

32. The Arabic word Suradiq literally means sides of a tent but, as used in the case of Hell, it may mean its external boundaries to which its flames and heat may reach. According to some commentators, it applies to the future tense “its walls will be surrounding them” so as to refer to the flames of Hell in the Hereafter. But we are of the opinion that its flames have already encircled, in this very world, these workers of iniquity, who have turned away from the truth and that they cannot escape them.

33. The Arabic word muhul has several lexical meanings. According to some people, it means the residue of oil; according to others, it is lava which is formed by the melting of

things in the earth; according to some others, it is molten matter and according to others, it is pus and blood.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ إِنَّا لَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ مَنْ أَحْسَنَ عَمَلًا ۚ 30

(18:30) As for those who believe and do good We shall not cause their reward to be lost.

أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهَارُ يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَيَلْبَسُونَ ثِيَابًا خُضْرًا مِنْ سُنْدُسٍ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٍ مُتَّكِئِينَ فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ ۚ نِعْمَ الثَّوَابُ ۚ وَحَسُنَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا ۚ 31

(18:31) They shall dwell in the Gardens of Eternity, beneath which streams flow. There they will be adorned with bracelets of gold,[34] will be arrayed in green garments of silk and rich brocade, and will recline on raised couches.[35]How excellent is their reward, and how nice their resting-place!"

34. The dwellers of Paradise will be adorned with bracelets of gold like the kings of ancient times. This will be to show that they will be adorned like the kings of this world, whereas an unbeliever and wicked king will be disgraced there.

35. The Arabic word araaik is plural of arikah which is that kind of throne that is covered with an umbrella. This is also to show that in Paradise the believers will sit on thrones like the kings of this world.

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلًا رَجُلَيْنِ جَعَلْنَا لِأَحَدِهِمَا جَنَّتَيْنِ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَحَفَفْنَاهُمَا بِنَخْلٍ وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمَا زَرْعًا ۚ 32

(18:32) (O Muhammad), propound a parable to them.[36] There were two men of whom We bestowed upon one of the two vineyards, surrounding both of them with date-palms and putting a tillage in between.

36. In order to understand the significance of this parable we should keep in view(Ayat 28)in which arrogant chiefs of Makkah were told that the poor companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) would not be discarded to please them.

كِلْتَا الْجَنَّتَيْنِ آتَتْ أُكُلَهَا وَلَمْ تَظْلِمْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا ۙ وَفَجَّرْنَا خِلَالَهُمَا نَهَرًا ۙ 33

(18:33) Both the vineyards yielded abundant produce without failure and We caused a stream to flow in their midst

وَكَانَ لَهٗ ثَمَرٌ ۚ فَقَالَ لِصَاحِبِهٖ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهٗٓ اَنَا اَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَّاَعَزُّ نَفَرًا 34

(18:34) so the owner had fruit in abundance and he said to his neighbour, while conversing with him: "I have greater wealth than you and I am stronger than you in numbers."

وَدَخَلَ جَنَّتَهٗ وَهُوَ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهٖ ۚ قَالَ مَآ اَظُنُّ اَنْ تَبِيْدَ هٰذِهٖٓ اَبَدًا ۙ 35

(18:35) Then he entered his vine-yard[37] and said, wronging himself: "Surely, I do not believe that all this will ever perish.

37. He considered his gardens to be Paradise. Thus he behaved like those mean persons who, when rise to power and wealth, are always involved in the misunderstanding that they are enjoying Paradise in this world, therefore they do not stand in need of any other Paradise.

وَّمَآ اَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَآئِمَةً ۙ وَّلَئِنْ رُّدِدْتُّ اِلٰى رَبِّيْ لَاَجِدَنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهَا مُنْقَلَبًا 36

(18:36) Nor do I believe that the Hour of Resurrection will ever come to pass. And even if I am returned to my Lord, I shall find a better place than this."[38]

38. That is, I don't think there is any life after death, but supposing there be one, I shall fare even better there than in my present life, for my prosperity is a clear proof that I am a favorite of God.

قَالَ لَهٗ صَاحِبُهٗ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهٗٓ اَكَفَرْتَ بِالَّذِيْ خَلَقَكَ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ سَوّٰىكَ رَجُلًا ؕ 37

(18:37) While conversing with him his neighbour exclaimed: "Do you deny Him Who created you out of dust, then out of a drop of sperm, and then fashioned you into a complete man?[39]

39. This shows that unbelief in Allah is not confined to the denial of the existence of God in so many words, but arrogance, pride, vanity and the denial of the Hereafter are also kufr. Although that person did not deny the existence of Allah, he professed it as is apparent from his words (And if I am brought back to my Lord), yet in spite of his profession, his neighbor charged him with unbelief in Allah. This is because the person, who considers his wealth and his grandeur etc. to be the fruits of his own power and capability and not the favors of Allah, and who thinks that they are everlasting and none can take than away from him and that he is not accountable to anyone, is guilty of unbelief in Allah, even though he might

profess belief in Him, for he acknowledges Allah as a Being and not as his Master, Owner and Sovereign. In fact, belief in Allah demands not merely the profession of His existence but also the acknowledgment of His Sovereignty, Mastery, Rule and the like.

لٰكِنَّا۠ هُوَ اللّٰهُ رَبِّيْ وَلَآ اُشْرِكُ بِرَبِّيْٓ اَحَدًا 38

(18:38) As for myself, Allah alone is my Lord, and I associate none with my Lord in His Divinity.

وَلَوْلَآ اِذْ دَخَلْتَ جَنَّتَكَ قُلْتَ مَا شَآءَ اللّٰهُ ۙ لَا قُوَّةَ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ ۚ اِنْ تَرَنِ اَنَا اَقَلَّ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَّوَلَدًا ۚ 39

(18:39) When you entered your vineyard, why did you not say: 'Whatever Allah wills shall come to pass, for there is no power[40] save with Allah!' If you find me less than yourself in wealth and children

40. That is, If we are able to do anything, it is by the help and support of Allah alone.

فَعَسٰى رَبِّيْٓ اَنْ يُّؤْتِيَنِ خَيْرًا مِّنْ جَنَّتِكَ وَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهَا حُسْبَانًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ فَتُصْبِحَ صَعِيْدًا زَلَقًا ۙ 40

(18:40) it may well be that my Lord will give me something better than your vineyard, and send a calamity upon your vineyard from the heavens and it will be reduced to a barren waste,

اَوْ يُصْبِحَ مَآؤُهَا غَوْرًا فَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيْعَ لَهٗ طَلَبًا 41

(18:41) or the water of your vineyard will be drained deep into the ground so that you will not be able to seek it out."

وَاُحِيْطَ بِثَمَرِهٖ فَاَصْبَحَ يُقَلِّبُ كَفَّيْهِ عَلٰى مَآ اَنْفَقَ فِيْهَا وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلٰى عُرُوْشِهَا وَيَقُوْلُ يٰلَيْتَنِيْ لَمْ اُشْرِكْ بِرَبِّيْٓ اَحَدًا 42

(18:42) Eventually all his produce was destroyed and he began to wring his hands in sorrow at the loss of what he had spent on it, and on seeing it fallen down upon its trellises, saying: "Would I had not associated anyone with my Lord in His Divinity."

وَلَمْ تَكُنْ لَّهٗ فِئَةٌ يَّنْصُرُوْنَهٗ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَمَا كَانَ مُنْتَصِرًا ؕ 43

(18:43) And there was no host, beside Allah, to help him, nor could he be of any help to himself.

هُنَالِكَ الْوَلَايَةُ لِلّٰهِ الْحَقِّ ؕ هُوَ خَيْرٌ ثَوَابًا وَّخَيْرٌ عُقْبًا ؕ 44

(18:44) (Then he knew) that all power of protection rests with Allah, the True One. He is the best to reward, the best to determine the end of things.

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَّثَلَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَآءٍ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهٖ نَبَاتُ الْاَرْضِ فَاَصْبَحَ هَشِيْمًا تَذْرُوْهُ الرِّيٰحُ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّقْتَدِرًا 45

(18:45) (O Prophet), propound to them the parable of the present life: it is like the vegetation of the earth which flourished luxuriantly when it mingled with the water that We sent down from the sky, but after that the same vegetation turned into stubble which the winds blew about. Allah alone has the power over all things.[41]

41. Allah has power over everything. He gives life and also death, He causes the rise and the downfall. It is by His command that the seasons change. Therefore, O disbelievers, if you are enjoying prosperity today, you should be under no delusion that this condition will remain forever. That God, by Whose command these things have been bestowed on you, has the power to snatch away all this by another command.

اَلْمَالُ وَالْبَنُوْنَ زِيْنَةُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَالْبٰقِيٰتُ الصّٰلِحٰتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَّخَيْرٌ اَمَلًا 46

(18:46) Wealth and children are an adornment of the life of the world. But the deeds of lasting righteousness are the best in the sight of your Lord in reward, and far better a source of hope.

وَيَوْمَ نُسَيِّرُ الْجِبَالَ وَتَرَى الْاَرْضَ بَارِزَةً ۙ وَّحَشَرْنٰهُمْ فَلَمْ نُغَادِرْ مِنْهُمْ اَحَدًا ۚ 47

(18:47) Bear in mind the Day when We shall set the mountains in motion[42] and you will find the earth void and bare.[43] On that Day We shall muster all men together, leaving none of them behind.[44]

42. The mountains will begin to move about like clouds when the gravitation of the earth shall be brought to an end. The Quran has described the same thing in(Surah An- Namal,

Ayat 88)in this way: When you see the mountains, you consider them to be firmly fixed, but they shall be floating about like clouds at that time.

43. "You will see the earth as a leveled plain": You will find no vegetation and no building on it and it will become a barren plain. It is the same thing that has been stated in (Ayat 8) of this chapter.

44. That is, We will muster together every human being from the first man, Adam, to the last one born in the last moment of the Day of Resurrection: even that child which had breathed the first breath after its birth, shall be resurrected and all shall be mustered at one and the same tune.

وَعُرِضُوا عَلٰى رَبِّكَ صَفًّا ؕ لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُوْنَا كَمَا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۢ بَلْ زَعَمْتُمْ اَلَّنْ
نَّجْعَلَ لَكُمْ مَّوْعِدًا 48

(18:48) They shall be brought before your Lord, all lined up, and shall be told: "Now, indeed, you have come before Us in the manner We created you in the first instance,[45] although you thought that We shall not appoint a tryst (with Us)."

45. This thing will be addressed to those who denied the Hereafter, as if to say: Well, now you see that the information given by the Prophets has come out to be true. They told you that Allah would bring you to life again as He first brought you out from the wombs of your mothers but you disbelieved in it. Now say whether you have been brought to life for the second time or not.

وَوُضِعَ الْكِتٰبُ فَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ مُشْفِقِيْنَ مِمَّا فِيْهِ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ يٰوَيْلَتَنَا مَالِ هٰذَا
الْكِتٰبِ لَا يُغَادِرُ صَغِيْرَةً وَّلَا كَبِيْرَةً اِلَّاۤ اَحْصٰىهَا ۚ وَوَجَدُوْا مَا عَمِلُوْا حَاضِرًا ؕ وَلَا
يَظْلِمُ رَبُّكَ اَحَدًا ع 49

(18:49) And then the Record of their deeds shall be placed before them and you will see the guilty full of fear for what it contains, and will say: "Woe to us! What a Record this is! It leaves nothing, big or small, but encompasses it." They will find their deeds confronting them. Your Lord wrongs no one.[46]

46. "And your Lord does not do injustice to anyone": Neither will an evil deed, not committed by someone, have been recorded in his conduct register, nor shall anyone be punished more than one deserved for his crime, nor shall an innocent person be punished at all.

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةِ ٱسْجُدُوا۟ لِـَٔادَمَ فَسَجَدُوٓا۟ إِلَّآ إِبْلِيسَ ۖ كَانَ مِنَ ٱلْجِنِّ فَفَسَقَ عَنْ أَمْرِ
رَبِّهِۦٓ ۖ أَفَتَتَّخِذُونَهُۥ وَذُرِّيَّتَهُۥٓ أَوْلِيَآءَ مِن دُونِى وَهُمْ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌۢ ۖ بِئْسَ لِلظَّٰلِمِينَ بَدَلًا 50

(18:50) And recall when We said to the angels: "Prostrate yourselves before Adam"; all of them fell prostrate, except Iblis.[47] He was of the jinn and so disobeyed the command of his Lord.[48] Will you, then, take him and his progeny as your guardians rather than Me although they are your open enemies? What an evil substitute are these wrong-doers taking!

47. The reference to the story of Adam and Iblis has been made here to warn the erring people of their folly. It is an obvious folly that people should discard their Prophets, who were their well wishers, and get entangled in the snare set by their eternal enemy, Iblis, who has been jealous of man ever since he refused to bow down before Adam and became accursed.

48. It was possible for Iblis to disobey Allah because he was not one of the angels but one of the jinns. It must be noted that the Quran is very explicit that the angels are inherently obedient.

(1) They do not show arrogance; they fear their Lord Who is above them, and do whatever they are bidden. (Surah An-Nahal, Ayat 50).

(2) They do not disobey the command that is given to them by their Lord and do whatever they are bidden to do. (Surah At-Tahrim, Ayat 6).

In contrast to the angels, the jinns have been, like human beings, given the option to obey or not to obey. Therefore they have been given the power to believe or disbelieve, to obey or not to obey. This thing has been made explicit here by saying that Iblis was one of the jinns, so he deliberately chose the way of disobedience. Incidentally, this verse removes all those misunderstandings that are generally found among the common people that Iblis was one of the angels and not an ordinary angel but the instructor of the angels. As regards to the difficulty that arises because of this statement of the Quran: When We said to the angels, bow down before Adam. They bowed down but Iblis did not, it should be noted that the command to the angels was meant for all those on the earth who were under the administration of the angels so that they should also be made submissive to man. Accordingly all these creatures bowed along with the angels but Iblis refused to bow down along with them.

مَّآ أَشْهَدتُّهُمْ خَلْقَ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَا خَلْقَ أَنفُسِهِمْ ۖ وَمَا كُنتُ مُتَّخِذَ ٱلْمُضِلِّينَ
عَضُدًا 51

(18:51) I did not call them to witness the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor in their own creation.[49] I do not seek the aid of those who lead people astray.

49. This thing has been asserted to impress on the disbelievers that the satans were not entitled to their submission and worship, for they had no share at all in the creation of the heavens and the earth, nay, they themselves were the creation of Allah: therefore Allah alone was worthy of worship.

وَيَوْمَ يَقُولُ نَادُوا شُرَكَآءِيَ الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ فَدَعَوْهُمْ فَلَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُم مَّوْبِقًا 52

(18:52) What will such people do on the Day when the Lord will say: "Now call upon all those whom you believed to be My partners?"[50] Thereupon they will call upon them, but they will not respond to their call; and We shall make them a common pit of doom,[51]

50. This theme has already been stated at several places in the Quran. This is to impress that it is shirk to discard the commandments and the guidance of Allah and to follow the orders and guidance of any other than Allah, though one may not be professing with his tongue that there is any partner of Allah: nay, if one might be cursing others but at the same time following their orders instead of divine commandments, even then that one shall be guilty of shirk. For instance, we see that everyone in this world curses satans but still follows them. According to the Quran, in spite of cursing them, if people follow satans, they shall be guilty of setting up satans as partners with Allah. Though this will not be shirk in so many words, it will be tantamount to the practice of shirk and the Quran denounces this as shirk.

51. Generally the commentators have assigned two meanings to this. The one is the same that we have adopted in our translation and the other is this: We will cause enmity between them. That is: Their friendship in this world shall be turned into bitter enmity in the Hereafter.

وَرَأَى الْمُجْرِمُونَ النَّارَ فَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُم مُّوَاقِعُوهَا وَلَمْ يَجِدُوا عَنْهَا مَصْرِفًا ۚ 53

(18:53) and the guilty shall behold the Fire and know that they are bound to fall into it, and will find no escape from it.

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِلنَّاسِ مِن كُلِّ مَثَلٍ ۚ وَكَانَ الْإِنسَانُ أَكْثَرَ شَيْءٍ جَدَلًا 54

(18:54) And surely We have explained matters to people in the Qur'an in diverse ways, using all manner of parables. But man is exceedingly contentious.

وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ اَنۡ يُّؤۡمِنُوۡۤا اِذۡ جَآءَهُمُ الۡهُدٰى وَيَسۡتَغۡفِرُوۡا رَبَّهُمۡ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ تَاۡتِيَهُمۡ سُنَّةُ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ اَوۡ يَاۡتِيَهُمُ الۡعَذَابُ قُبُلًا 55

(18:55) What is it that prevented mankind from believing when the guidance came to them, and from asking forgiveness of their Lord, except that they would like to be treated as the nations of yore, or that they would like to see the scourge come upon them face to face?[52]

52. This is to warn the people that the Quran has left no stone unturned in making the truth plain. It has employed all kinds of arguments, parables, similitude and used all the possible effective ways to appeal to the heart and the mind of man, and adopted the best possible style. If, in spite of this, they do not accept the truth, it is obvious that they are waiting for God's scourge like the one that visited the former communities to make them realize their error.

وَمَا نُرۡسِلُ الۡمُرۡسَلِيۡنَ اِلَّا مُبَشِّرِيۡنَ وَمُنۡذِرِيۡنَ ۚ وَيُجَادِلُ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا بِالۡبَاطِلِ لِيُدۡحِضُوۡا بِهِ الۡحَقَّ وَاتَّخَذُوۡۤا اٰيٰتِىۡ وَمَاۤ اُنۡذِرُوۡا هُزُوًا 56

(18:56) We raise Messengers only to give good news and to warn.[53] But the unbelievers resort to falsehood in order to rebut the truth with it, and scoff at My revelations and My warnings.

53. This verse has two meanings.

(1) We send Our Messengers to forewarn the people before the coming of the judgment of the good results of obedience and the evil consequences of disobedience. But these foolish people are not taking advantage of these forewarnings and insist on seeing the same evil end from which the Messengers desire to save them.

(2) If they insist on meeting with the scourge, they should not demand this from the Messenger because the Messenger is sent not to bring a scourge but to warn the people beforehand to escape from it.

وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذُكِّرَ بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهٖ فَاَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا وَنَسِيَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدٰهُ ؕ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا عَلٰى
قُلُوْبِهِمْ اَكِنَّةً اَنْ يَّفْقَهُوْهُ وَفِيْٓ اٰذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا ؕ وَاِنْ تَدْعُهُمْ اِلَى الْهُدٰى فَلَنْ يَّهْتَدُوْٓا اِذًا
اَبَدًا 57

(18:57) Who is more wicked than the man who, when he is reminded by the revelations of his Lord, turns away from them and forgets (the consequence of) the deeds wrought by his own hands? We have laid veils over their hearts lest they understand the message of the Qur'an, and We have caused heaviness in their ears. Call them as you may to the Right Path, they will not be ever guided aright.[54]

54. Allah puts a covering over the heart of a person and makes his ears hard of hearing the truth when he adopts the attitude of contention, dispute, wrangling and argumentation towards the admonition of a well wisher and tries to defeat the truth with the weapons of falsehood and cunning. Naturally this attitude produces in him obduracy and obstinacy so that he turns a deaf ear towards guidance, and is unwilling to realize his error before seeing his evil end. For such people pay no heed to admonition and warning and insist on falling into the abyss of perdition: then and then alone they are convinced that it was perdition towards which they were rushing headlong.

وَرَبُّكَ الْغَفُوْرُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ ؕ لَوْ يُؤَاخِذُهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوْا لَعَجَّلَ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابَ ؕ بَلْ لَّهُمْ
مَّوْعِدٌ لَّنْ يَّجِدُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مَوْئِلًا 58

(18:58) Your Lord is All-Forgiving, full of mercy. Had He wished to take them to task for their doings, He would have hastened in sending His scourge upon them. But He has set for them a time-limit which they cannot evade.[55]

55. This is to warn the foolish people that they should not be deluded by the respite that is given to them and presume that they will never be taken to task whatever they may go on doing. They forget that Allah gives them respite because He is Forgiving and Forbearing and does not punish the evil doers on the spot, for His Mercy demands that the evil doers should be given respite so that they may mend their ways.

وَتِلْكَ الْقُرٰٓى اَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوْا وَجَعَلْنَا لِمَهْلِكِهِمْ مَّوْعِدًا ع 59

(18:59) All the townships afflicted with scourge are before your eyes.[56] When they committed wrong, We destroyed them. For the destruction of each We had set a definite term.

56. The ruined habitations were of Saba, Thamud, Midian and the people of Prophet Lot, which were visited by the Quraish during their trade journeys, and which were quite well known to other Arabs also.

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِفَتَاهُ لَا أَبْرَحُ حَتَّىٰ أَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ أَوْ أَمْضِيَ حُقُبًا 60

(18:60) (And recount to them the story of Moses) when Moses said to his servant: "I will journey on until I reach the point where the two rivers meet, though I may march on for ages."[57]

57. Though this story was told in answer to the question of the disbelievers, it has been used to impress a very important truth on the minds of both the disbelievers and the believers. It is this: those people who draw their conclusions only from the seeming aspects of events, make a very serious error in their deductions, for they only see what is apparent and do not go deep into the divine wisdom that underlies them. When they daily see the prosperity of the tyrants and the afflictions of the innocent people, the affluence of the disobedient people and the indigence of the obedient people, the enjoyments of the wicked people and the adversity of the virtuous people, they get involved in mental conflicts, nay, they become victims of misunderstandings because they do not comprehend the wisdom behind them. The disbelievers and the tyrants conclude from this that the world is functioning without any moral laws and has no sovereign, and, if there is one, he must be senseless and unjust: therefore one may do whatever he desires for there is none to whom one shall be accountable. On the other hand, when the believers see those things, they become so frustrated and disheartened that sometimes their faiths are put to a very hard trial. It was to unravel the wisdom behind this mystery that Allah slightly lifted the curtain from the reality governing His factory, so that Moses (peace be upon him) might see the wisdom behind the events that are happening day and night and how their seeming aspect is quite different from the reality.

Now let us consider the question: When and where did this event take place? The Quran says nothing about this. There is a tradition related by Aufi in which he cites a saying of Ibn Abbas to this effect: This event happened after the destruction of Pharaoh when Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had settled his people in Egypt. But this is not supported by other more authentic traditions from Ibn Abbas which have been cited in the collection of Bukhari and other books of traditions, nor is there any other source which may prove that Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) ever settled in Egypt after the destruction of Pharaoh. On the contrary, the Quran says explicitly that Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) passed his entire life after exodus from Egypt in the desert (Sinai and At-Tih). Therefore the tradition from Aufi cannot be accepted. However, if we consider the details of this story, two things are quite obvious. (1) These things would have been demonstrated to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) in the earlier period of his Prophethood because such things are needed in the beginning of Prophethood for the teaching and training of the Prophets. (2) As this story has been cited to comfort the believers of Makkah, it can be reasonably concluded that these demonstrations would have been shown to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), when the Israelites were encountering the same conditions as the Muslims of Makkah did at the time of the revelation of this Surah. On the basis of these two things, we are of the opinion (and correct knowledge is with Allah alone) that this event relates to the period

when the persecution of the Israelites by Pharaoh was at its height and, like the chiefs of the Quraish, Pharaoh and his courtiers were deluded by delay in the scourge that there was no power above them to take them to task, and like the persecuted Muslims of Makkah, the persecuted Muslims of Egypt were crying in their agony, as if to say: Our Lord, how long will the prosperity of these tyrants and our adversity continue. So much so that Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) himself cried out: Our Lord, Thou hast bestowed on Pharaoh and his nobles splendor and possessions in the worldly life; O our Lord, hast Thou done this that they might lead astray the people from Thy Way. (Surah Younus, Ayat 88).

If our conjecture is correct, then it may be concluded that probably this event took place during Prophet Moses' (peace be upon him) journey to Sudan, and by the confluence of the rivers is meant the site of the present city of Khartum where the Blue Nile and the White Nile meet together.

The Bible does not say anything about this event but the Talmud does relate this though it assigns it to Rabbi Jochanan, the son of Levi, instead of to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), and according to it the other person was Elijah who had been taken up alive to heaven and joined with the angels for the purpose of the administration of the world. (The Talmud Selections by H. Polano, pp. 313- 16).

It is just possible that like the events, which happened before the exodus, this event also might not have remained intact but during the passage of centuries changes and alterations might have been made in it. But it is a pity that some Muslims have been so influenced by the Talmud that they opine that in this story Moses does not refer to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) but to some other person bearing the same name. They forget that every tradition of the Talmud is not necessarily correct, nor have we any reason to suppose that the Quran has related the story concerning some unknown person bearing the name Moses. Above all, when we learn from an authentic tradition related by Ubayy-bin-Kaab that the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself made it clear that in this story, by Moses is meant Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), there is absolutely no reason why any Muslim should consider any statement of the Talmud at all.

The Orientalists have, as usual, tried to make a research into the sources of this story and have pointed out that The Quranic story may be traced back to three main sources. (1) The Gilgamesh Epic. (2) The Alexander Romance. (3) The Jewish Legend of Elijah and Rabbi Joshua hen Levi (Encyclopaedia of Islam new edition and Shorter Erlcyclopaedia of Islam under the heading Al Khadir). This is because these malicious scholars decide beforehand that their scientific research must lead to the conclusion that the Quran is not a revealed book: therefore they have, anyhow or other, to produce a proof that whatever Muhammad (peace be upon him) has presented as revelation, has been plagiarized from such and such sources. In this these people brazen facedly use facts and quotations so cunningly and cleverly as to achieve their mean end and one begins to have nausea at their research. If that is research what these bigoted forgers make, then one is compelled to curse their knowledge and research.

We ask them to answer our questions in order to expose their research:

(I) What proof do they have to make the claim that the Quran has based a certain statement on the contents of a couple of ancient books? Obviously it will not be research to build this claim on the scant basis that a certain statement made in the Quran is similar to the one found in these books.

(2) Do they possess any knowledge that at the time of the revelation of the Quran there was a library at Makkah from which the Prophet (peace be upon him) collected material for the Quran? This question is pertinent because if a list were to be made of the numerous books in different languages, which they allege were sources of the stories and statements contained in the Quran, it will become long enough for a big library. Do they have any proof that Muhammad (peace be upon him) had arranged for such translators as translated into Arabic those books from different languages for his use? If it is not so and their allegation is based on a couple of journeys which the Prophet (peace be upon him) made outside Arabia, a question arises: How many books did the Prophet (peace be upon him) copy or commit to memory during these trade journeys before his Prophethood? And how is it that even a day before he claimed to be a Prophet, no sign at all was displayed in his conversation that he had gathered such information as was revealed in the Quran afterwards?

(3) How is it then that the contemporary disbelievers of Makkah and the Jews and the Christians, who like them, were always in search of such a proof, could not put forward even a single instance of plagiarism? They had a good reason to produce an instance of this because they were being challenged over and over again to refute the claim that the Quran was a revealed book and it had no other source than divine knowledge and that if they said that it was a human work, they were to prove this by bringing the like of it. Though this challenge had broken the back of the contemporary opponents of Islam, they could not point out even a single plausible source that might prove reasonably that the Quran was based on it. In the light of these facts one may ask: Why had the contemporaries of the Prophet (peace be upon him) failed in their research and how have the opponents of Islam succeeded in their attempt today after the passage of more than a thousand years?

(4) The last and the most important question is: Does it not show that it is bigotry and malice that has misled the opponents of Islam to discard the possibility that the Quran may be a revealed book of Allah and to concentrate all their efforts to prove that it is not so at all? The tact that its stories are similar to those contained in the former books, could be considered equally in this light that the Quran was a revealed book and was relating them in order to correct those errors that had crept into them during the passage of time. Why should their research be confined to prove that those books are the real source of the stories of the Quran and not to consider the other possibility that the Quran itself was a revealed book?

An impartial person who will consider these questions will inevitably arrive at the conclusion that the research which the orientalists have presented in the name of knowledge is not worth any serious consideration.

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَا مَجْمَعَ بَيْنِهِمَا نَسِيَا حُوتَهُمَا فَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ سَرَبًا 61

(18:61) But when they reached the point where the two rivers meet, they forgot their fish, and it took its way into the sea, as if through a tunnel.

فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَا قَالَ لِفَتٰىهُ اٰتِنَا غَدَآءَنَا ۫ لَقَدْ لَقِيْنَا مِنْ سَفَرِنَا هٰذَا نَصَبًا 62

(18:62) When they had journeyed further on, Moses said to his servant: "Bring us our repast. We are surely fatigued by today's journey."

قَالَ اَرَءَيْتَ اِذْ اَوَيْنَآ اِلَى الصَّخْرَةِ فَاِنِّيْ نَسِيْتُ الْحُوْتَ ۫ وَمَآ اَنْسٰنِيْهُ اِلَّا الشَّيْطٰنُ اَنْ
اَذْكُرَهٗ ۚ وَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيْلَهٗ فِي الْبَحْرِ ۖ صلے ق عَجَبًا 63

(18:63) The servant said: "Did you see what happened? When we betook ourselves to the rock to take rest, I forgot the fish and it is only Satan who caused me to forget to mention it to you so that it made its way into the sea in a strange manner."

قَالَ ذٰلِكَ مَا كُنَّا نَبْغِ ۖ صلے ق فَارْتَدَّا عَلٰٓى اٰثَارِهِمَا قَصَصًا ۙ 64

(18:64) Moses said: "That is what we were looking for."[58] So the two turned back, retracing their footsteps,

58. That is, the same was the sign of the place of our destination. This shows that Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had taken this journey at Allah's behest to meet His servant. He had been told that he would meet the servant at the place where the fish would disappear.

فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَآ اٰتَيْنٰهُ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا وَعَلَّمْنٰهُ مِنْ لَّدُنَّا عِلْمًا 65

(18:65) and there they found one of Our servants upon whom We had bestowed Our mercy, and to whom We had imparted a special knowledge from Ourselves.[59]

59. The name of this servant has been stated to be Khidr in all the authentic books of traditions. Thus there is no reason why it should be considered at all that his name was Elijah, as some people have asserted under the influence of the Israelite traditions. Their assertion is incorrect not only because it contradicts the assertion of the Prophet (peace be upon him) but it is also absurd because Prophet Elijah (peace be upon him) was born several hundred years after Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). Though the Quran does not mention the name of the attendant of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), according to some traditions he was Joshua, the son of Nun, who succeeded him.

قَالَ لَهٗ مُوْسٰى هَلْ اَتَّبِعُكَ عَلٰٓى اَنْ تُعَلِّمَنِ مِمَّا عُلِّمْتَ رُشْدًا 66

(18:66) Moses said to him: "May l follow you that you may teach me something of the wisdom which you have been taught?"

قَالَ اِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيْعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا 67

(18:67) He answered: "You will surely not be able to bear with me.

وَكَيْفَ تَصْبِرُ عَلٰى مَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهٖ خُبْرًا 68

(18:68) For how can you patiently bear with something you cannot encompass in your knowledge?"

قَالَ سَتَجِدُنِيْٓ اِنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ صَابِرًا وَّلَآ اَعْصِيْ لَكَ اَمْرًا 69

(18:69) Moses replied: "You shall find me, if Allah wills, patient; and I shall not disobey you in anything."

قَالَ فَاِنِ اتَّبَعْتَنِيْ فَلَا تَسْـَٔلْنِيْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ حَتّٰٓى اُحْدِثَ لَكَ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا ع 70

(18:70) He said: "Well, if you follow me, do not ask me concerning anything until I myself mention it to you."

فَانْطَلَقَا ۖ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا رَكِبَا فِي السَّفِيْنَةِ خَرَقَهَا ۭ قَالَ اَخَرَقْتَهَا لِتُغْرِقَ اَهْلَهَا ۚ لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْـــًٔا اِمْرًا 71

(18:71) Then the two went forth until, when they embarked on the boat, he made a hole in it, whereupon Moses exclaimed: "Have you made a hole in it so as to drown the people in the boat? You have certainly done an awful thing."

قَالَ اَلَمْ اَقُلْ اِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيْعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا 72

(18:72) He replied: "Did I not tell you that you will not be able to patiently bear with me?"

قَالَ لَا تُؤَاخِذْنِيْ بِمَا نَسِيْتُ وَلَا تُرْهِقْنِيْ مِنْ اَمْرِيْ عُسْرًا 73

(18:73) Moses said: "Do not take me to task at my forgetfulness, and do not be hard on me."

فَانْطَلَقَا ۖ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا لَقِيَا غُلٰمًا فَقَتَلَهٗ ۙ قَالَ اَقَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا زَكِيَّةًۢ بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ ۭ لَقَدْ جِئْتَ

شَيْـــًٔا نُّكْرًا 74

(18:74) Then the two went forth until they met a lad whom he slew, whereupon Moses exclaimed: "What! Have you slain an innocent person without his having slain anyone? Surely you have done a horrible thing."

قَالَ اَلَمْ اَقُلْ لَّكَ اِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيْعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا 75

(18:75) He said: "Did I not tell you that you will not be able to patiently bear with me?"

قَالَ اِنْ سَاَلْتُكَ عَنْ شَيْءٍۢ بَعْدَهَا فَلَا تُصٰحِبْنِيْ ۚ قَدْ بَلَغْتَ مِنْ لَّدُنِّيْ عُذْرًا 76

(18:76) Moses said: "Keep me no more in your company if I question you concerning anything after this. You will then be fully justified."

فَانْطَلَقَا ۤ حَتّٰٓى اِذَآ اَتَيَآ اَهْلَ قَرْيَةِ ۨ اسْتَطْعَمَآ اَهْلَهَا فَاَبَوْا اَنْ يُّضَيِّفُوْهُمَا فَوَجَدَا فِيْهَا

جِدَارًا يُّرِيْدُ اَنْ يَّنْقَضَّ فَاَقَامَهٗ ۭ قَالَ لَوْ شِئْتَ لَتَّخَذْتَ عَلَيْهِ اَجْرًا 77

(18:77) Then the two went forth until when they came to a town, they asked its people for food, but they refused to play host to them. They found in that town a wall that was on the verge of tumbling down, and he buttressed it, whereupon Moses said: "If you had wished, you could have received payment for it."

قَالَ هٰذَا فِرَاقُ بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنِكَ ۚ سَاُنَبِّئُكَ بِتَاْوِيْلِ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَّلَيْهِ صَبْرًا 78

(18:78) He said: "This brings me and you to a parting of ways. Now I shall explain to you the true meaning of things about which you could not remain patient.

اَمَّا السَّفِيْنَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسٰكِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ فِي الْبَحْرِ فَاَرَدْتُّ اَنْ اَعِيْبَهَا وَكَانَ وَرَاۗءَهُمْ

مَّلِكٌ يَّاْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِيْنَةٍ غَصْبًا 79

(18:79) As for the boat it belonged to some poor people who worked on the river, and I desired to damage it for beyond them lay the dominion of a king who was wont to seize every boat by force.

وَاَمَّا الْغُلٰمُ فَكَانَ اَبَوٰهُ مُؤْمِنَيْنِ فَخَشِيْنَآ اَنْ يُّرْهِقَهُمَا طُغْيَانًا وَّكُفْرًا ۚ 80

(18:80) As for the lad, his parents were people of faith, and we feared lest he should plague them with transgression and disbelief,

فَاَرَدْنَآ اَنْ يُّبْدِلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُ زَكٰوةً وَّاَقْرَبَ رُحْمًا 81

(18:81) and we desired that their Lord should grant them another in his place, a son more upright and more tender hearted.

وَاَمَّا الْجِدَارُ فَكَانَ لِغُلٰمَيْنِ يَتِيْمَيْنِ فِى الْمَدِيْنَةِ وَكَانَ تَحْتَهٗ كَنْزٌ لَّهُمَا وَكَانَ اَبُوْهُمَا
صَالِحًا ۚ فَاَرَادَ رَبُّكَ اَنْ يَّبْلُغَآ اَشُدَّهُمَا وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنْزَهُمَا ۖ ۗ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ ۚ وَمَا
فَعَلْتُهٗ عَنْ اَمْرِىْ ۭ ذٰلِكَ تَاْوِيْلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْطِعْ عَّلَيْهِ صَبْرًا ۧ 82

(18:82) As for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and under it there was a treasure that belonged to them. Their father was a righteous man and your Lord intended that they should come of age and then bring forth their treasure as a mercy from your Lord; I did not do this of my own bidding. This is the true meaning of things with which you could not keep your patience."[60]

60. In connection with this story, a very hard problem arises to which an answer must be found. Two of the three things done by Khidr are obviously against those commandments of the law which have always been in force since the creation of man. No law allows anyone the right to damage the property of another and kill an innocent person. So much so that if a man were to know by inspiration that some usurper would illegally seize a certain boat, and that a certain boy would be involved in a rebellion and unbelief, even then no law, sent down by Allah, makes it lawful that one should bore a hole in the boat and kill the innocent boy by virtue of his inspiration. If in answer to this, one were to say that Khidr committed these two acts by the commands of Allah, this does not solve the problem, for the question is not this: "By whose command did Khidr commit these acts", but it is this: "What was the nature of these commands"? This is important because Khidr did these acts in accordance with divine command, for he himself says that these acts of his were not done by his own authority, but were moved by the mercy of Allah, and Allah Himself has testified this by saying: "We gave him a special knowledge from Ourselves". Thus it is beyond any doubt that these acts were done by the command of Allah, but the question about the nature of the command remains there, for it is obvious that these commands were not legal because it is not allowed by any divine law, and the fundamental principles of the Quran also do not

allow that a person should kill another person without any proof of his guilt. Therefore we shall have to admit that these commands belonged to one of those decrees of Allah in accordance with which one sick person recovers, while another dies: one becomes prosperous and the other is ruined. If the commands given to Khidr were of this nature, then one must come to the conclusion that Khidr was an angel (or some other kind of Allah's creation) who is not bound by the divine law prescribed for human beings, for such commands as have no legal aspect, can be addressed to angels only. This is because the question of the lawful or the unlawful cannot arise about them: they obey the commands of Allah without having any personal power. In contrast to them, a man shall be guilty of a sin whether he does any such thing inadvertently by intuition or by some inspiration, if his act goes against some divine commandment. This is because a man is bound to abide by divine commandments as a man, and there is no room whatsoever in the divine law that an act may become lawful for a man merely because he had received an instruction by inspiration and had been informed in a secret way of the wisdom of that unlawful act.

The above mentioned principle has been unanimously accepted by scholars of the divine law and the leaders of Sufism, Allamah Alusi has cited in detail the sayings of Abdul Wahhab Shiirani, Muhy-ud-Din ibn-Arabi, Mujaddid Alf Thani, Shaikh Abdul-Qadir Jilani, Junaid Baghdadi, Sirri Saqti, Abul-Hussain An-nuri, Abu Said-al- Kharraz, Ahmad ud-Dainauri and Imam Ghazzali to this effect that it is not lawful even for a sufi to act in accordance with that inspiration of his own which goes against a fundamental of law. (Ruh-ul-Maani, Vol. XVI, pp. 16-18). That is why we have come to the conclusion that Khidr must be an angel, or some other kind of Allah's creation, exempted from human law, for he could not be the only exception to the above mentioned formula. Therefore we inevitably come to the conclusion that he was one of those servants of Allah who act in accordance with the will of Allah and not in accordance with the divine law prescribed for human beings.

We would have accepted the theory that Khidr was a human being, if the Quran had plainly asserted that the servant to whom Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was sent for training, was a man. But the Quran does not specifically say that he was a human being but says that he was one of Our servants which does not show that he was necessarily a human being. Besides this, there is no tradition which specifically says that Khidr was a human being. In the authentic traditions related by Said bin Jubair, Ibn Abbas, Ubayy bin Kaab from the Prophet (peace be upon him), the Arabic word rajul has been used for Khidr, which though generally used for human beings, is not exclusively used for human beings. In the Quran itself, this word has been used for Jinns also (Surah Al-Jin, Ayat 6). It is also obvious that when a jinn or an angel or an invisible being will come before a human being, he will surely come in human shape and, in that form; he will be called a bashar (man), just like the angel who came before Mary in the shape of a human being (Surah Maryam, Ayat 17). Thus the word rajul, used for Khidr in the above mentioned tradition by the Prophet (peace be upon him), does not necessarily mean that he was a human being. Therefore we are quite justified in the light of the above discussion to believe that Khidr was one of the angels or some other kind of Allah's creation who is not bound by the divine law prescribed for human beings. Some of the former scholars of the Quran have also expressed the same opinion which has been cited by lbn Kathir in his commentary on the authority of Mawardi.

وَيَسْـَٔلُونَكَ عَنْ ذِى الْقَرْنَيْنِ ۖ قُلْ سَاَتْلُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْهُ ذِكْرًا ۖ 83

(18:83) (O Muhammad), they ask you about Dhu al-Qarnayn.[61] Say: "I will give you an account of him."[62]

61. It is quite obvious that the conjunction wao joins this story with the previous story of Khidr. Thus it is a selfevident proof that the previous two stories of the sleepers of the cave and Moses and Khidr were also related in answer to the queries of the disbelievers of Makkah who, in consultation with the people of the Book, had put these questions to Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a test of his Prophethood.

62. The identification of Zul-Qarnain has been a controversial matter from the earliest times. In general the commentators have been of the opinion that he was Alexander the Great but the characteristics of Zul-Qarnain described in the Quran are not applicable to him. However, now the commentators are inclined to believe that Zul- Qarnain was Cyrus, an ancient king of Iran. We are also of the opinion that probably Zul-Qarnain was Cyrus, but the historical facts, which have come to light up to this time, are not sufficient to make any categorical assertion.

Now let us consider the characteristics of Zul-Qarnain in the light of his story as given in the Quran.

(1) The title Zul-Qarnain (the two-horned) should have been quite familiar to the Jews, for it was at their instigation that the disbelievers of Makkah put this question to the Prophet (peace be upon him). Therefore we must turn to the Jewish literature in order to learn who was the person known as the two-horned or which was the kingdom known as the two-horned.

(2) Zul-Qarnain must have been a great ruler and a great conqueror whose conquests might have spread from the east to the west and on the third side to the north or to the south. Before the revelation of the Quran there had been several persons who were such great conquerors. So we must confine our research for the other characteristics of Zul-Qarnain to one of these persons.

(3) This title should be applicable to such a ruler who might have constructed a strong wall across a mountain pass to protect his kingdom from the incursions of Gog and Magog. In order to investigate this thing, we will have to determine as to who were Gog and Magog. We will also have to find out when such a wall was built and by whom and to which territory it was adjacent.

(4) Besides possessing the above mentioned characteristics, he should also be a God-worshiper and a just ruler, for the Quran has brought into prominence these characteristics more than anything else.

The first of these characteristics is easily applicable to Cyrus, for according to the Bible, Prophet Daniel saw in his vision that the united kingdom of Media and Persia was like a two-horned ram before the rise of the Greeks. (Dan. 8: 3, 20). The Jews had a very high

opinion of the twohorned one, because it was his invasion which brought about the downfall of the kingdom of Babylon and the liberation of the Israelites Please also refer to (E.N. 8 of Surah Al-Isra).

The second characteristic is applicable to him to a great extent but not completely. Though his conquests spread to Syria and Asia Minor in the West and to Bakhtar (Balkh) in the East, there is no trace of any of his great expeditions to the North or to the South, whereas the Quran makes an explicit mention of his third expedition. Nevertheless, this third expedition is not wholly out of question for history tells us that his kingdom extended to Caucasia in the North. As regards to Gog and Magog, it has been nearly established that they were the wild tribes of Central Asia who were known by different names: Tartars, Mongols, Huns and Scythians, who had been making inroads on settled kingdoms and empires from very ancient times. It is also known that strong bulwarks had been built in southern regions of Caucasia, though it has not been as yet historically established that these were built by Cyrus.

As regards to the last characteristic, Cyrus is the only known conqueror among the ancient rulers, to whom this may be applicable, for even his enemies have been full of praise for him for his justice, and, Ezra, a book of the Bible, asserts that he was a God worshiper and a God fearing king who set free the Israelites because of his God worship, and ordered that the Temple of Solomon should be rebuilt for the worship of Allah, Who has no partner.

In the light of the above, we admit that of all the conquerors, who had passed away before the revelation of the Quran, Cyrus alone is the one to whom the characteristics of Zul-Qarnain are most applicable, but we need more evidence to determine specifically that Cyrus is definitely Zul-Qarnain. Anyhow, there is no other conqueror to whom the characteristics stated in the Quran are as much applicable as to Cyrus.

Historically, it is enough to say that Cyrus was a Persian ruler, whose rise began about 549 B.C. In a few years, he conquered the kingdom of Media and Lydia and afterwards conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. After this no powerful kingdom was left to oppose him. His conquests extended to Sind and the territory known as Turkistan on one side, and to Egypt and Libya and to Thrace and Macedonia and to Caucasia and Khawarzam in the North. In fact, the whole civilized world was under his sway.

إِنَّا مَكَّنَّا لَهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِن كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبَبًا ۙ 84

(18:84) We granted him power in the land and endowed him with all kinds of resources.

فَأَتْبَعَ سَبَبًا 85

(18:85) He set out (westwards) on an expedition,

حَتّٰٓى اِذَا بَلَغَ مَغۡرِبَ الشَّمۡسِ وَجَدَهَا تَغۡرُبُ فِىۡ عَيۡنٍ حَمِئَةٍ وَّوَجَدَ عِنۡدَهَا قَوۡمًا ؕ قُلۡنَا

يٰذَا الۡقَرۡنَيۡنِ اِمَّاۤ اَنۡ تُعَذِّبَ وَاِمَّاۤ اَنۡ تَتَّخِذَ فِيۡهِمۡ حُسۡنًا 86

(18:86) until when he reached the very limits where the sun sets,[63] he saw it setting in dark turbid waters;[64] and nearby he met a people. We said: "O Dhu al-Qarnayn, you have the power to punish or to treat them with kindness."[65]

63. "The setting place of the sun" does not mean the place of the setting of the sun. According to Ibn Kathir, it means that he marched to the west conquering one country after the other till he reached the last boundary of the land, beyond which there was ocean.

64. "He found it setting in a muddy spring": If Zul Qarnain was Cyrus, then that place would be the western limit of Asia Minor and the black waters would be the Aegean Sea. This interpretation is supported by the use of the word ain instead of bahr in the Quran.

65. "We said" does not necessarily mean that Allah directly revealed to him these words, and that Zul-Qarnain was a Prophet or was the one who received inspiration from Allah, and the same is the reasonable conjecture. This concerns the time when Zul-Qarnain had taken possession of the land as a conqueror and the conquered people were utterly at your mercy. Then Allah posed a question before his conscience, as if to say: Now is the time of your trial. These people are utterly at your mercy, and you have the option either to behave unjustly towards them or to treat them generously.

قَالَ اَمَّا مَنۡ ظَلَمَ فَسَوۡفَ نُعَذِّبُهٗ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّ اِلٰى رَبِّهٖ فَيُعَذِّبُهٗ عَذَابًا نُّكۡرًا 87

(18:87) He said: "We will chastise him who does wrong, whereafter he will be returned to his Lord and He will chastise him grievously.

وَاَمَّا مَنۡ اٰمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهٗ جَزَآءَ ۚ الۡحُسۡنٰى ۚ وَسَنَقُوۡلُ لَهٗ مِنۡ اَمۡرِنَا يُسۡرًا ؕ 88

(18:88) But as for him who believes and acts righteously, his will be a goodly reward and we shall enjoin upon him only mild commands."

ثُمَّ اَتۡبَعَ سَبَبًا 89

(18:89) Then he set out on another expedition

حَتّٰٓى اِذَا بَلَغَ مَطۡلِعَ الشَّمۡسِ وَجَدَهَا تَطۡلُعُ عَلٰى قَوۡمٍ لَّمۡ نَجۡعَلۡ لَّهُمۡ مِّنۡ دُوۡنِهَا سِتۡرًا ۙ 90

(18:90) until he reached the limit where the sun rises and he found it rising on a people whom We had provided no shelter from it.[66]

66. That is, when he advanced towards the east, conquering one country after the other, he reached a territory where the limits of the civilized world had come to an end and beyond which was the territory of barbaric people, who had no shelter at all of tents or buildings."

كَذٰلِكَ ؕ وَقَدۡ اَحَطۡنَا بِمَا لَدَيۡهِ خُبۡرًا 91

(18:91) Thus was the state of those people, and We encompassed in knowledge all concerning Dhu al- Qarnayn.

ثُمَّ اَتۡبَعَ سَبَبًا 92

(18:92) Then he set out on another expedition

حَتّٰۤى اِذَا بَلَغَ بَيۡنَ السَّدَّيۡنِ وَجَدَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِهِمَا قَوۡمًا ۙ لَّا يَكَادُوۡنَ يَفۡقَهُوۡنَ قَوۡلًا 93

(18:93) until when he reached a place between the two mountains,[67] he found beside the mountains a people who scarcely understood anything.[68]

67. The "two mountains" must have been parts of that mountain range which runs between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea as stated in (Ayat 96). This must be so because beyond them was the territory of Gog and Magog.

68. That is, it was difficult to communicate with them: their language was almost foreign to Zul-Qarnain and his companions, and, as they were quite barbaric, none could understand their language, nor were they acquainted with any foreign language.

قَالُوۡا يٰذَا الۡقَرۡنَيۡنِ اِنَّ يَاۡجُوۡجَ وَمَاۡجُوۡجَ مُفۡسِدُوۡنَ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ فَهَلۡ نَجۡعَلُ لَكَ خَرۡجًا عَلٰۤى اَنۡ تَجۡعَلَ بَيۡنَنَا وَبَيۡنَهُمۡ سَدًّا 94

(18:94) They said: "O Dhu al-Qarnayn, Gog and Magog[69] are spreading corruption in this land. So shall we pay you taxes on the understanding that you will set up a barrier between us and them?"

69. As has already been pointed out in (E.N. 62), Gog and Magog were the wild tribes of North Eastern Asia which, from the very early times had been making inroads on settled kingdoms and empires in Asia and Europe and ravaging them. According to Genesis (Chapter 10), they were the descendants of Japheth, the son of Noah, and the Muslim historians have also accepted this. And according to the book of Ezekiel (Chapters 38, 39), they inhabited the territories of Meshech (Moscow) and Tubal (Tubalsek). According to the Israelite historian Josephus, they were the Scythians and their territory spread to the north and the east of the Black Sea. According to Jerome, Magog inhabited the territory to the north of Caucasia near the Caspian Sea.

قَالَ مَا مَكَّنِّيْ فِيْهِ رَبِّيْ خَيْرٌ فَاَعِيْنُوْنِيْ بِقُوَّةٍ اَجْعَلْ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ رَدْمًا ۙ 95

(18:95) He answered: "Whatever my Lord has granted me is good enough. But help me with your labour and I will erect a rampart between you and them.[70]

70. That is, as a ruler it is my duty to protect you from the ravages of your enemies: therefore it is not lawful for me to levy any extra taxes on you for this purpose. The treasury that Allah has placed in my custody suffices for this purpose. You shall, however, have to help me with your manual labor.

اٰتُوْنِيْ زُبَرَ الْحَدِيْدِ ۭ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا سَاوٰى بَيْنَ الصَّدَفَيْنِ قَالَ انْفُخُوْا ۭ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَعَلَهٗ نَارًا ۙ
قَالَ اٰتُوْنِيْٓ اُفْرِغْ عَلَيْهِ قِطْرًا ۭ 96

(18:96) Bring me ingots of iron." Then after he had filled up the space between the two mountain-sides, he said: "(Light a fire) and ply bellows." When he had made it (red like) fire, he said: "Bring me molten copper which I may pour on it."

فَمَا اسْطَاعُوْٓا اَنْ يَّظْهَرُوْهُ وَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوْا لَهٗ نَقْبًا 97

(18:97) Such was the rampart that Gog and Magog could not scale, nor could they pierce it.

قَالَ هٰذَا رَحْمَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّيْ ۚ فَاِذَا جَاۗءَ وَعْدُ رَبِّيْ جَعَلَهٗ دَكَّاۗءَ ۚ وَكَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّيْ حَقًّا ۭ 98

(18:98) Dhu al-Qarnayn said: "This is a mercy from my Lord: but when the time of my Lord's promise shall come, He will level the rampart with the ground.[71] My Lord's promise always comes true."[72]

71. That is, though I have built a very strong iron wall, as far as it was possible for me, it is not ever lasting, for it will last only as long as Allah wills, and will fall down to pieces when the time of my Lord's promise shall come. Then no power in the world shall be able to keep it safe and secure.

As regards to the time of Allah's promise, it has two meanings. (1) It may mean the time of the destruction of the wall. (2) It may also mean the time of the death and destruction of everything destined by Allah at the end of the world i.e. the Hour of Resurrection.

Some people have entertained the misunderstanding that the wall attributed here to Zul-Qarnain refers to the famous wall of China, whereas this wall was built between Derbent and Daryal, two cities of Daghestan in the Caucasus, the land that lies between the Black Sea and the Caspian. There are high mountains between the Black Sea and Daryal having deep gorges which cannot allow large armies to pass through them. Between Derbent and Daryal,

however, there are no such mountains and the passes also are wide and passable. In ancient times savage hordes from the north invaded and ravaged southern lands through these passes and the Persian rulers who were scared of them had to build a strong wall, 50 miles long, 29 feet high and 10 feet wide, for fortification purposes, ruins of which can still be seen. Though it has not yet been established historically who built this wall in the beginning, the Muslim historians and geographers assign it to Zul-Qarnain because its remains correspond with the description of it given in the Quran. Ibn Jarir Tabari and Ibn Kathir have recorded the event, and Yaqut has mentioned it in his Mu jam-ul-Buldan that when after the conquest of Azerbaijan, Umar sent Suraqah bin Amr, in 22 A.H. on an expedition to Derbent, the latter appointed Abdur Rehman bin Rabiah as the chief of his vanguard. When Abdur Rehman entered Armenia, the ruler Shehrbraz surrendered without fighting. Then when Abdur Rehman wanted to advance towards Derbent, Shehrbraz informed him that he had already gathered full information about the wall built by Zul-Qarnain, through a man, who could supply all the necessary details and then the man was actually presented before Abdur Rehman. (Tabari, Vol. III, pp. 235-239; AIBidayah wan-Nihayah, Vol. VII, pp. 122-125, and Mujamul- Buldan, under Bab-ul-Abwab: Derbent).

Two hundred years later, the Abbasid Caliph Wathiq (227- 233 A.H.) dispatched a party of 50 men under Sallam-ul- Tarjuman to study the wall of Zul-Qarnain, whose observations have been recorded in great detail by Yaqut in Mujam-ul-Buldan and by Ibn Kathir in AI-Bidayah. They write that this expedition reached Samarrah from where they reached Tiflis (the present Tbilisi) and then through As-Sarir and Al-Lan, they reached Filanshah, from where they entered the Caspian territory. From there they arrived at Derbent and saw the wall. (AIBidayah Vol. II, p. 111, Vol. VII, pp. 122-125; Mujam-ul-Buldan: under BabulAbwab). This clearly shows that even up till the third century of Hijrah the Muslim scholars regarded this wall of the Caucasus as the wall of Zul-Qarnain.

Yaqut in his Mujam-ul-Buldan has further confirmed the same view at a number of places. For instance, under Khazar (Caspian) he writes:

This territory belongs to the Turks, which adjoins the wall of Zul Qarnain just behind Bab-ul-Abwab, which is also called Derbent. In the same connection, he records a report by Ahmad bin Fadlan, the ambassador of Caliph Al- Muqtadar-billah, who has given a full description of the Caspian land, saying that Caspian is the name of a country whose capital is Itil (near the present Astrakhan) right through which flows River Itil, which joins the Caspian from Russia and Bulghar.

Regarding Bab-ul-Abwab he says that this city is called both Al-Bab and Derbent, which is a highly difficult passage for the people coming from the northern lands towards the south. Once this territory was a part of the kingdom of Nausherwan, and the Persian rulers paid particular attention to strengthening their frontiers on that side.

72. Here the story of Zul-Qarnain comes to an end. Though this story has been related in answer to the questions put by the disbelievers of Makkah as a test along with the stories of the sleepers of the cave and Moses and Khidr, the Quran has utilized this story, too, for its own aim and object, as if to say: Zul Qarnain, about whose glory you have heard from the people of the Book, was not merely a conqueror, but also a believer of the doctrines of Tauhid and the life after death and acted upon the principles of justice and generosity. He

was not a mean person like you who have been puffed up by the possession of petty estates, and give yourselves airs of superiority.

وَتَرَكْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَمُوجُ فِي بَعْضٍ وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَجَمَعْنَاهُمْ جَمْعًا ۙ 99

(18:99) And on that Day[73] We shall let some of them surge like waves against others, and the Trumpet shall be blown. Then We shall gather them all together.

73. "That Day": "The Day of Resurrection". As if to continue the theme of life after death to which Zul-Qarnain referred as the time of my Lord's promise, the Quran has added (verses 99-101) to it.

وَعَرَضْنَا جَهَنَّمَ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْكَافِرِينَ عَرْضًا ۙ 100

(18:100) That will be the Day We shall place Hell before the unbelievers

الَّذِينَ كَانَتْ أَعْيُنُهُمْ فِي غِطَاءٍ عَن ذِكْرِي وَكَانُوا لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَمْعًا ۚ 101

(18:101) whose eyes had become blind against My admonition and who were utterly disinclined to hear it.

أَفَحَسِبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَن يَتَّخِذُوا عِبَادِي مِن دُونِي أَوْلِيَاءَ ۚ إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا جَهَنَّمَ

لِلْكَافِرِينَ نُزُلًا 102

(18:102) Do the unbelievers,[74] then, believe that they can take any of My creatures as their guardians beside Me?[75]Verily We have prepared Hell to welcome the unbelievers.

74. This is the conclusion of the whole Surah and is not connected with the story of Zul-Qarnain only but with the subject matter of this Surah as a whole. That theme was enunciated at the beginning of the (Surah Ayats 1-8): The Prophet (peace be upon him) invited his people. (1) To give up shirk and adopt the doctrine of Tauhid instead. (2) To give up the worship of the world and to believe in the life of the Hereafter. But the chiefs of his people, who were puffed up with their wealth and grandeur, not only rejected his invitation but also persecuted and insulted those righteous people who had accepted his invitation. The discourse deals with the same themes and utilizes in an excellent manner the three stories which were related in answer to the questions put by the opponents of Islam as a test of his Prophethood.

75. That is, do they still stick to their presumption even after hearing all this and believe that their attitude will be profitable for them?

قُلۡ هَلۡ نُنَبِّئُكُمۡ بِالۡاَخۡسَرِيۡنَ اَعۡمَالًا ؕ 103

(18:103) Say, (O Muhammad): "Shall We tell you who will be the greatest losers in respect of their works?

اَلَّذِيۡنَ ضَلَّ سَعۡيُهُمۡ فِى الۡحَيٰوةِ الدُّنۡيَا وَهُمۡ يَحۡسَبُوۡنَ اَنَّهُمۡ يُحۡسِنُوۡنَ صُنۡعًا 104

(18:104) It will be those whose effort went astray[76] in the life of the world and who believe nevertheless that they are doing good.

76. This verse has two meanings. The one is the same that we have adopted in the translation. The other meaning is this: Those who confined all their endeavors to the worldly life. That is, whatever they did, they did for this world without paying any regard to God and the Hereafter. As they considered the worldly life to be the real life, they made the success and prosperity in this world their sole aim and object. Even if they professed the existence of Allah, they never paid any heed to the two implications of this profession: to lead their lives in a way to please Allah and to come out successful on the Day they shall have to render an account of what they did in this world. This was because they considered themselves to be mere rational animals who were absolutely independent and free from every kind of responsibility and had nothing else to do but to enjoy the good things of the world like animals in a meadow.

اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمۡ وَلِقَآئِهٖ فَحَبِطَتۡ اَعۡمَالُهُمۡ فَلَا نُقِيۡمُ لَهُمۡ يَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ وَزۡنًا 105

(18:105) Those are the ones who refused to believe in the revelations of their Lord and that they are bound to meet Him. Hence, all their deeds have come to naught, and We shall assign no weight to them on the Day of Resurrection.[77]

77. “So worthless will be their deeds” in the sense that they will be of no avail to them in the life after death, even though they might have considered them as their great achievements but the fact is that they will lose all their value as soon as the world shall come to an end. When they will go before their Lord, and all their deeds shall be placed in the scales, they will have no weight at all whether they had built great palaces, established great universities and libraries, set up great factories and laboratories, constructed highways and railways, in short, all their inventions, industries, sciences and arts and other things of which they were very proud in this world, will lose their weights in the scales. The only thing which will have weight there will be that which had been done in accordance with the divine instructions and with the intention to please Allah. It is, therefore, obvious that if all of one’s endeavors were confined to the worldly things and the achievement of worldly desires whose results one would see in this world, one should not reasonably expect to see their results in the Hereafter, for they would have gone waste with the end of this world. It is equally obvious, that only the deeds of the one, who performed them strictly in accordance

with His instructions to win His approval with a view to avail of their results in the Hereafter, will find that his deeds had weight in the scales. On the contrary, such a one will find that all his endeavors in the world had gone waste.

ذٰلِكَ جَزَآؤُهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ بِمَا كَفَرُوْا وَاتَّخَذُوْٓا اٰيٰتِيْ وَرُسُلِيْ هُزُوًا 106

(18:106) Hell is their recompense for disbelieving and their taking My revelations and My Messengers as objects of jest.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتُ الْفِرْدَوْسِ نُزُلًا ۙ 107

(18:107) As for those who believe and do good works, the Gardens of Paradise shall be there to welcome them;

خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا لَا يَبْغُوْنَ عَنْهَا حِوَلًا 108

(18:108) there they will abide for ever, with no desire to be removed from there."[78]

78. "No desire will they have to be removed there from" because they will find no place and no condition better than those in Paradise.

قُلْ لَّوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا لِّكَلِمٰتِ رَبِّيْ لَنَفِدَ الْبَحْرُ قَبْلَ اَنْ تَنْفَدَ كَلِمٰتُ رَبِّيْ وَلَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهٖ مَدَدًا 109

(18:109) Say: "If the sea were to become ink to record the Words[79] of my Lord, indeed the sea would be all used up before the Words of my Lord are exhausted, and it would be the same even if We were to bring an equal amount of ink."

79. By "words" are meant the marvelous works, the excellences and the wonders of His Power and Wisdom.

قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيَّ اَنَّمَآ اِلٰهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ۚ فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوْا لِقَآءَ رَبِّهٖ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَّلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهٖٓ اَحَدًا ع 110

(18:110) Say (O Muhammad): "I am no more than a human being like you; one to whom revelation is made: 'Your Lord is the One and Only God.' Hence, whoever looks forward to meet his Lord, let him do righteous works, and let him associate none with the worship of his Lord."

19. Surah Maryam (Mary)

Name

It takes its name from v. 16.

Period of Revelation

It was revealed before the Migration to Habash. We learn from authentic Traditions that Hadrat Ja'afar recited vv. 1-40 of this Surah in the court of Negus when he called the migrants to his court.

Historical Background

We have already briefly referred to the conditions of that period in the introduction to Surah Al-Kahf. Here we shall give rather fuller details of the same conditions, which will be helpful in grasping the meaning of this Surah and the other Surahs of the period. When the chiefs of the Quraish felt that they had failed to suppress the Islamic movement by ridicule, sarcasm, and by holding out promises and threats and by making false accusations, they resorted to persecution, beating and economic pressure. They would catch hold of the new Muslims of their clans and persecute them, starve them and would even inflict physical torture on them in order to coerce them to give up Islam. The most pitiful victims of their persecution were the poor people and the slaves and the proteges of the Quraish. They were beaten black and blue, were imprisoned and kept thirsty and hungry and were dragged on the burning sands of Makkah. The people would get work from the professional laborers but would not pay them their wages. As an instance we give below the story of Hadrat Khabbab bin Arat, which is given in Bukhari and Muslim:

"I used to work as a blacksmith in Makkah. Once I did some work for As bin Wa'il. When I went to ask for my wages, he said, 'I will not pay your wages unless you disown Muhammad'."

In the same connection Hadrat Khabbab says, "One day the Holy Prophet was sitting in the shadow of the Ka'abah. I went to him and said, '0 Messenger of Allah, now persecution has gone to its extreme; why do you not pray to Allah (for relief)?' At this the Holy Prophet was greatly moved. He said, 'The believers before you were persecuted much more than you. Their bones were scraped with combs of iron and their heads were cut with saws, but still they did not give up their Faith. I assure you that Allah will fulfill this Mission, and there will come a period of such peace that one would travel from Sanna to Hadramaut, and he will have no fear from anyone, save Allah. But you people have already become impatient'." (Bukhari)

When the conditions became unbearable, the Holy Prophet, in the month of Rajab of the fifth year of Prophethood, gave advice to his Companions to this effect: "You may well migrate to Habash, for there is a king, who does not allow any kind of injustice to anyone, and there is good in his land. You should remain there till the time that Allah provides a remedy for your affliction".

Accordingly, at first, eleven men and four women left for Habash. The Quraish pursued them up to the coast but fortunately they got a timely boat for Habash at the sea-port of Shu'aibah, and they escaped attest. Then after a few months, other people migrated to Habash and their number rose to eighty-three men and eleven women of the Quraish and seven non-Quraish. After this, only forty persons were left with the Holy Prophet at Makkah.

There was a great hue and cry in Makkah after this Migration, for every family of the Quraish was adversely affected by this. There was hardly a family of the Quraish which did not lose a son, a son-in-law, a daughter, a brother or a sister. For instance, there were among the Migrants the near relatives of Abu Jahl, Abu Sufyan and other chief of the Quraish who were notorious for their persecution of the Muslims. As a result of this, some of them became even more bitter in their enmity of Islam, while there were others who were so moved by this that they embraced Islam. For instance, this Migration left a deep mark on Hadrat Umar. One of his relatives, Laila, daughter of Hathmah, says, "I was packing my luggage for Migration, while my husband, Amr bin Rabiy'ah, had gone out. In the meantime Umar came there and began to watch me, while I was engaged in preparation for the journey. Then he said, 'Are you also going to migrate?' I answered, 'Yes by God, you people have persecuted us much. But the wide earth of Allah is open for us. Now we are going to a place where Allah will grant us peace'. At this, I noticed such signs of emotion on the face of Umar as I had never seen before. He simply said, 'May God be with you' and went away."

After the migration, the Quraish held consultations, and decided to send Abdullah bin Abi Rabiy'ah, half brother of Abu Jahl, and Amr bin As to Habash with precious gifts so as to persuade Negus to send the migrants back to Makkah. Hadrat Umm Salmah (a wife of the Holy Prophet), who was among the migrants, has related this part of the story in detail. She says, "When these two clever statesmen of the Quraish reached Habash, they distributed the gifts among the courtiers of the King and persuaded them to recommend strongly to him to send the migrants back. Then they saw Negus himself and, presenting rich gifts to him, said, "Some headstrong brats of our city have come to your land and our chiefs have sent us to you with the request that you may kindly send them back. These brats have forsaken our faith and have not embraced your faith either, but have invented a new faith". As soon as they had finished their speech, all the courtiers recommended their case, saying, "We should send such people back to their city for their people know them better. It is not proper for us to keep them here." At this the King was annoyed and said, "I am not going to give them back without proper inquiry. As these people have put their trust in my country rather than in any other country and have come here to take shelter, I will not betray them. At first I will send for them and investigate into the allegations these people have made against them. Then I will make my final decision". Accordingly, the King sent for the Companions of the Holy Prophet and asked them to come to his court.

When the migrants received the message of the King, they assembled and held consultations as to what they should say to the King. At last they came to this unanimous decision: "We will present before the King the teachings of the Holy Prophet without adding anything to or withholding anything from them and leave it to him whether he lets us remain here or turns us out of his country". When they came to the court, the King put this problem abruptly before them: “I understand that you have given up the faith of your own people and have neither embraced my faith nor any other existing faith. I would like to know what your new faith is." At this, Jafar bin Abi Talib, on behalf of the migrants, made an extempore

speech to this effect: "O King! We were sunk deep in ignorance and had become very corrupt; then Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) came to us as a Messenger of God, and did his best to reform us. But the Quraish began to persecute his followers, so we have come to your country in the hope that here we will be free from persecution". After his speech, the King said, "Please recite a piece of the Revelation which has been sent down by God to your Prophet". In response, Hadrat Jafar recited that portion of Surah Maryam which relates the story of Prophets John and Jesus (Allah's peace be upon them). The King listened to it and wept, so much so that his beard became wet with tears. When Hadrat Jafar finished the recital, he said: "Most surely this Revelation and the Message of Jesus have come from the same source. By God I will not give you up into the hands of these people".

Next day `Amr bin `As went to Negus and said, "Please send for them again and ask them concerning the creed they hold about Jesus, the son of Mary, for they say a horrible thing about him". The King again sent for the migrants, who had already learned about the scheme of Amr. They again sat together and held consultations in regard to the answer they should give to the King, if he asked about the belief they held about Prophet Jesus. Though this was a very critical situation and all of them were uneasy about it, they decided that they would say the same thing that Allah and His Messenger had taught them. Accordingly, when they went to the court, the King put them the question that had been suggested by Amr bin As. So Jafar bin Abi Talib stood up and answered without the least hesitation: "He was a Servant of Allah and His Messenger. He was a Spirit and a Word of Allah which had been sent to virgin Mary." At this the King picked up a straw from the ground and said, 'Bye God, Jesus was not worth this straw more than what you have said about him." After this the King returned the gifts sent by the Quraish, saying, "I do not take any bribe". Then he said to the migrants, "You are allowed to stay here in perfect peace."

Theme and Subject

Keeping in view this historical background, it becomes quite obvious that this Surah was sent down to serve the migrants as a "provision" for their journey to Habash, as if to say, "Though you are leaving your country as persecuted emigrants to a Christian country, you should not in the least hide anything from the teachings you have received. There- fore you should plainly say to the Christians that Prophet Jesus was not the son of God."

After relating the story of Prophets John and Jesus in vv. 1-40, the story of Prophet Abraham has been related (vv. 41-50) also for the benefit of the Migrants for he also had been forced like them to leave his country by the persecution of his father, his family and his country men. On the one hand, this meant to console the Emigrants that they were following the footsteps of Prophet Abraham and would attain the same good end as that Prophet did. On the other hand, it meant to warn the disbeliever, of Makkah that they should note it well that they were in the position of the cruel people who had persecuted their forefather and leader, Abraham, while the Muslim Emigrants were in the position of Prophet Abraham himself.

Then the mention of the other Prophets has been made in vv. 51-65 with a view to impress that Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) had brought the same way of Life that had been brought by the former Prophets but their followers had become corrupt and adopted wrong ways.

In the concluding passage (vv. 66-98), a strong criticism has been made of the evil ways of the disbelievers of Makkah, while the Believers have been given the good news that they would come out successful and become the beloved of the people, in spite of the worst efforts of the enemies of the Truth.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

كٓهٰيٰعٓصٓ ۚ قٓ ۚ 1

(19:1) Kaf. Ha'. Ya'. Ayn. Sad.

ذِكۡرُ رَحۡمَتِ رَبِّكَ عَبۡدَهٗ زَكَرِيَّا ۖ صٓ 2

(19:2) This is an account[1] of the mercy of your Lord to His servant Zechariah[2]

1. For comparison please see the story of Zachariah as given in (Ayats 34-57 of Surah Aal-Imran) and the E.Ns thereof.

2. In order to understand the position held by Zachariah, a descendant of Prophet Aaron, one should be acquainted with the system of priesthood among the children of Israel.

After the conquest of Palestine, the entire land was divided among the 12 tribes of the descendants of Prophet Jacob as inheritance, and the 13th tribe, the Levites, was entrusted with religious services and duties. Even among the Levites, the house that was separated to sanctify the most holy things, to burn incense before the Lord, to minister unto him, and to bless in his name forever was the house of Prophet Aaron. The other Levites were not allowed to enter the Temple. Their duty was to wait on the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of the Lord, in the courts, and in the chambers, and in the purifying of all holy things, and to offer all burnt sacrifices unto the Lord in the Sabbaths, in the new moon, and on the set festivals. The descendants of Aaron were divided into 24 families, who came to serve the house of the Lord by turns. One of these families was of Abiah whose chief was Zachariah. Thus it was Zachariah's duty to go into the house on his family's turn and burn incense before the Lord. (For details, see 1 Chronicles, chapters 23, 24).

اِذۡ نَادٰى رَبَّهٗ نِدَآءً خَفِيًّا 3

(19:3) when he cried to his Lord in secret.

قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّىۡ وَهَنَ الۡعَظۡمُ مِنِّىۡ وَاشۡتَعَلَ الرَّاۡسُ شَيۡبًا وَّلَمۡ اَكُنۡۢ بِدُعَآئِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا 4

(19:4) He said: "Lord! My bones have grown feeble and my head is glistening with age; yet, never have my prayers to You, my Lord, been unfruitful.

وَاِنِّیۡ خِفۡتُ الۡمَوَالِیَ مِنۡ وَّرَآءِیۡ وَکَانَتِ امۡرَاَتِیۡ عَاقِرًا فَهَبۡ لِیۡ مِنۡ لَّدُنۡكَ وَلِیًّا ۙ 5

(19:5) I fear evil from my kinsmen after I am gone;[3] and my wife is barren, so grant me an heir out of Your special grace,

3. That is, I see none among my kinsmen, the family of Abiah, who is religiously and morally sound and capable of carrying on the work of the mission that has been entrusted to me.

یَّرِثُنِیۡ وَیَرِثُ مِنۡ اٰلِ یَعۡقُوۡبَ ۟ وَاجۡعَلۡهُ رَبِّ رَضِیًّا 6

(19:6) one that might be my heir and the heir of the house of Jacob;[4] and make him, Lord, one that will be pleasing to You.

4. That is, I do not pray for a successor to inherit me alone, but a successor who may inherit the good ways of the house of Jacob.

یٰزَکَرِیَّاۤ اِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلٰمِ ۣ اسۡمُهٗ یَحۡیٰی ۙ لَمۡ نَجۡعَلۡ لَّهٗ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ سَمِیًّا 7

(19:7) (He was told): "Zechariah, We bring you the good news of the birth of a son whose name shall be Yahya (John), one whose namesake We never created before."[5]

5. In Luke the words are: There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. (1: 61).

قَالَ رَبِّ اَنّٰی یَکُوۡنُ لِیۡ غُلٰمٌ وَّکَانَتِ امۡرَاَتِیۡ عَاقِرًا وَّقَدۡ بَلَغۡتُ مِنَ الۡکِبَرِ عِتِیًّا 8

(19:8) He said: "My Lord! How can I have a boy when my wife is barren and I have reached an extremely old age?"

قَالَ کَذٰلِكَ ۚ قَالَ رَبُّكَ هُوَ عَلَیَّ هَیِّنٌ وَّقَدۡ خَلَقۡتُكَ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ وَلَمۡ تَكُ شَیۡـًٔا 9

(19:9) He answered: "So shall it be." Your Lord says: "It is easy for Me," and then added: "For beyond doubt, I created you earlier when you were nothing."[6]

6. This dialogue is meant to impress that Allah is able to do whatever He wills and can make an impotent man and a barren woman give birth to a child, and likewise a virgin can be made to conceive a child.

قَالَ رَبِّ اجۡعَلۡ لِّیۡۤ اٰیَةً ؕ قَالَ اٰیَتُكَ اَلَّا تُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ ثَلٰثَ لَیَالٍ سَوِیًّا 10

(19:10) Zechariah said: "Lord, grant me a Sign." Said He: "Your Sign is that you shall not be able to speak to people for three nights, though you will be otherwise sound."

فَخَرَجَ عَلَىٰ قَوْمِهِۦ مِنَ ٱلْمِحْرَابِ فَأَوْحَىٰٓ إِلَيْهِمْ أَن سَبِّحُوا۟ بُكْرَةً وَعَشِيًّا 11

(19:11) Thereupon Zechariah came out from the sanctuary[7] and directed his people by gestures to extol His glory by day and by night.[8]

7. For the explanation of mihrab (sanctuary), see (E.N. 36 of Aal-Imran).

8. Below we reproduce the details of this event as given in Luke's Gospel so that the reader may study and compare the Quranic version with the Christian version. The references and additions within the brackets are ours:

There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, see (Surah Bani-Israil, E.N.9) a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abiah: and his wife was of the daughter of Aaron, and her name wag Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; (there is no mention of Zacharias' prayer anywhere in the Bible) and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John (that is, Yahya). And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord (Sayyidun: a great leader according to the Quran, (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 39), and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink (the Quranic version: Taqiyyun, pious and pure); and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb (the Quran says: We blessed him with judgment while he was yet a child). And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit of the power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. (This is different from the Quran, which gives it as a sign, whereas according to Luke, it was a punishment. Moreover, the Quran mentions it as the silence for three consecutive days, but Luke says that Zacharias remained dumb till the birth of John). And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless. (Luke 1: 5-22).

يٰيَحۡيٰى خُذِ الۡكِتٰبَ بِقُوَّةٍ ؕ وَاٰتَيۡنٰهُ الۡحُكۡمَ صَبِيًّا ۙ 12

(19:12) "O John! Hold the Book with all your strength."[9] We had bestowed wisdom upon him while he was still a child;[10]

9. The details regarding the birth of Prophet John (peace be upon him), according to the divine will, and his coming of age, have been left out. Here, in one sentence, the mission of Prophethood entrusted to him on attaining maturity has been stated, which was to observe and follow the Torah in letter and spirit, and to exhort the Israelites as well to do the same.

10. The Arabic word hukm implies ability (1) to make decisions, (2) to form right opinions, (3) to interpret the divine law, (4) to solve problems, and (5) it also means authority from Allah to decide affairs.

وَّحَنَانًا مِّنۡ لَّدُنَّا وَزَكٰوةً ؕ وَكَانَ تَقِيًّا ۙ 13

(19:13) and We also endowed him with tenderness[11] and purity, and he was exceedingly pious

11. The Arabic word hanan is almost synonymous with mother's love. In other words, Prophet John bore in his heart the same kind of intense love for Allah's servants as a mother has for her child.

وَّبَرًّا بِوَالِدَيۡهِ وَلَمۡ يَكُنۡ جَبَّارًا عَصِيًّا 14

(19:14) and cherishing to his parents. Never was he insolent or rebellious.

وَسَلٰمٌ عَلَيۡهِ يَوۡمَ وُلِدَ وَيَوۡمَ يَمُوۡتُ وَيَوۡمَ يُبۡعَثُ حَيًّا ع 15

(19:15) Peace be upon him the day he was born, and the day he will die, and the day he will be raised up alive.[12]

12. In order to have a full understanding of the mission and the pure character of Prophet John, about which brief references have been made in this Surah and Surah Aal- Imran, it will be useful to study this story as given in different Books of the New Testament in the following order:

According to Luke, Prophet John was older than Prophet Jesus (peace be upon them) by six months and their mothers were cousins. He was appointed a Prophet at the age of 30 years, and according to the Gospel of John, he started his mission of inviting the people toward God in Jordan. He would say: I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord. (John, I: 23)

According to Mark: John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptizm of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea,

and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. (Mark, I: 45). He thus came to be known as John the Baptist, and the Israelites held him as a prophet. (Mat. 21: 26). Prophet Jesus said about John: Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a man greater than John the Baptist." (Mat. 11 : 11).

John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leather girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. (Mat. 3: 4). He would say: Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Mat. 3: 2). By this he meant that very soon Prophet Jesus was going to start his mission of Prophethood. The same thing has been said about him in the Quran: He (John) will come to confirm a command from Allah. (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 39). For the same reason he has been called a sign of or pointer to Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him).

He urged the people to observe the Fast and Prayers. (Mat. 9: 14, Luke, 5: 33, I1: 1). He would also tell them: He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. (Luke 3: 11). When the tax-collectors asked: Master, what shall we do? He said unto them: Exact no more than that what is appointed you. (12-13). And when the soldiers sought his guidance, he said: Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages. (Luke, 3: 14).

When the corrupt scholars, Pharisees and Sadducees of the Israelites, came to be baptized by him, he rebuked them, saying: O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Think not to say within yourselves: We have Abraham to our father, now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (Mat-3 :7-10).

The Jewish ruler of his time, Herod Antipas, in whose government he was performing his mission of inviting the people to the truth, had been so deeply influenced by the Roman civilization that he was causing sin and evil to spread freely in the land. He had kept Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, unlawfully in his house; when Prophet John reproved him for this and raised his voice against other evils being committed by him, Herod got him arrested and sent to jail. However, he held him in high esteem for his piety and righteousness and even feared him on account of the great respect he enjoyed among the people. On the contrary, Herodias thought that the moral consciousness that Prophet John was producing among the people was directly aimed at women like herself and pulling them down in the public eye. Thus she nursed a grudge against him and would have him killed but could not. Soon an opportunity came her way. On the birthday banquet of Herod, her daughter danced and so delighted Herod and others that the king said to her: Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. The girl asked her mother what she should ask for. The mother said: Ask for the head of John the Baptist. The girl went back to the king and requested to have there and then the head of John the Baptist on a dish. Herod felt sorry to hear this, but could not reject the demand of the daughter of his beloved. He at once got Prophet John killed in the prison and presented his head on a dish to the dancing girl. (Mat. 14: 3-12, Mark, 6: 17-29, Luke, 3: 19-20).

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتٰبِ مَرْيَمَ ۘ اِذِ انْتَبَذَتْ مِنْ اَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْقِيًّا ۙ 16

(19:16) (O Muhammad), recite in the Book the account of Mary,[13] when she withdrew from her people to a place towards the east;

13. For comparison, see(Surah Aal-Imran, Ayats 34-57), and (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 156) and E.Ns thereof.

فَاتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ دُوْنِهِمْ حِجَابًا ۖ فَاَرْسَلْنَآ اِلَيْهَا رُوْحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا 17

(19:17) and drew a curtain, screening herself from people[14] whereupon We sent to her Our spirit and he appeared to her as a well-shaped man.

14. The Sanctuary where she had retired for devotion was an eastern chamber in the Temple, and as was customary she had hung a curtain to conceal herself from the people. It cannot be Nazareth as some people have wrongly taken it to be, because Nazareth is to the north of Jerusalem.

قَالَتْ اِنِّيْٓ اَعُوْذُ بِالرَّحْمٰنِ مِنْكَ اِنْ كُنْتَ تَقِيًّا 18

(19:18) Mary exclaimed: "I surely take refuge from you with the Most Compassionate Lord, if you are at all God-fearing."

قَالَ اِنَّمَآ اَنَا رَسُوْلُ رَبِّكِ ۖ لِاَهَبَ لَكِ غُلٰمًا زَكِيًّا 19

(19:19) He said: "I am just a message-bearer of your Lord, I have come to grant you a most pure boy."

قَالَتْ اَنّٰى يَكُوْنُ لِيْ غُلٰمٌ وَّلَمْ يَمْسَسْنِيْ بَشَرٌ وَّلَمْ اَكُ بَغِيًّا 20

(19:20) Mary said: "How can a boy be born to me when no man has even touched me, nor have I ever been unchaste?"

قَالَ كَذٰلِكِ ۚ قَالَ رَبُّكِ هُوَ عَلَيَّ هَيِّنٌ ۚ وَلِنَجْعَلَهٗٓ اٰيَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَرَحْمَةً مِّنَّا ۚ وَكَانَ اَمْرًا مَّقْضِيًّا 21

(19:21) The angel said: "Thus shall it be. Your Lord says: 'It is easy for Me; and We shall do so in order to make him a Sign for mankind[15] and a mercy from Us. This has been decreed.' "

15. The word “Thus shall it be” are very significant as has been stated in (E.N. 6). The plain meaning is this: A pure son shall be born to you just as your Lord has decreed, even though no man has touched you. The same was the response to prophet Zachariah as stated in(Ayat 9) above. And it is a sheer perversion to interpret it as: So shall it be that a man will

touch you and a son will be born to you. For, if it were to mean: You will bear a son like all other women of the world, the subsequent two sentences, Your Lord says: This is an easy thing for Me to do, and We will make that boy a sign for the people, would have become meaningless. Had this birth been an ordinary birth like the birth of every other child, there would have been no occasion to boast: It is an easy thing, and that it will be made a sign (miracle). This will be so because the child will speak in the cradle.

فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَانْتَبَذَتْ بِهٖ مَكَانًا قَصِيًّا 22

(19:22) Then she conceived him and withdrew with him to a far-off place.[16]

16. When she conceived the child, she left the sanctuary and went to a distant place (Bethlehem) in order to escape the bitter criticism of the people. They would have said: Look at the virgin daughter of the pious house of Aaron! She has conceived a child and that, too, in the sanctuary where she had retired for devotion! Thus she temporarily succeeded in concealing the shame of the conception, but this event itself is a proof that prophet Jesus was born without a father. Had Mary been married and had a husband, she would not have left his or her parents house by herself and chosen a distant place for the purpose of delivery.

فَاَجَآءَهَا الْمَخَاضُ اِلٰى جِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ ۚ قَالَتْ يٰلَيْتَنِيْ مِتُّ قَبْلَ هٰذَا وَكُنْتُ نَسْيًا مَّنْسِيًّا 23

(19:23) Then the birth pangs drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree and she said: "Oh, would that I had died before this and had been all forgotten."[17]

17. The words “Would that...” show the extreme state of anxiety in which Mary found herself at the time. She did not utter these words on account of the labor pains but due to the pangs of sorrow as to how she would conceal the child from her people. The angel’s words, grieve not at all explain why she had spoken these desperate words. When a married girl is delivering her first baby, she might be dying with pains, but she is never so sorrowful and grieved.

فَنَادٰىهَا مِنْ تَحْتِهَآ اَلَّا تَحْزَنِيْ قَدْ جَعَلَ رَبُّكِ تَحْتَكِ سَرِيًّا 24

(19:24) Thereupon the angel below her cried out: "Grieve not, for your Lord has caused a stream of water to flow beneath you.

وَهُزِّيْٓ اِلَيْكِ بِجِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ تُسٰقِطْ عَلَيْكِ رُطَبًا جَنِيًّا ۖ 25

(19:25) Shake the trunk of the palm-tree towards yourself and fresh and ripe dates shall fall upon you.

فَكُلِي وَاشْرَبِي وَقَرِّي عَيْنًا ۚ فَإِمَّا تَرَيِنَّ مِنَ الْبَشَرِ أَحَدًا ۙ فَقُولِي إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَٰنِ
صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أُكَلِّمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنسِيًّا ۚ 26

(19:26) So eat and drink and cool your eyes; and if you see any person say to him: 'Verily I have vowed a fast to the Most Compassionate Lord, and so I shall not speak to anyone today.' "[18]

18. That is, you need not say anything with regard to the child. It is now Our responsibility to answer the critics. This also indicates why Mary was so sad and grieved. Had she been married and given birth to her first baby like any other mother, there was no occasion to tell her to observe a fast of silence, though it was a common custom among the Jews.

فَأَتَتْ بِهِ قَوْمَهَا تَحْمِلُهُ ۖ قَالُوا يَا مَرْيَمُ لَقَدْ جِئْتِ شَيْئًا فَرِيًّا 27

(19:27) Then she came to her people, carrying her baby. They said: "O Mary! You have committed a monstrous thing.

يَا أُخْتَ هَارُونَ مَا كَانَ أَبُوكِ امْرَأَ سَوْءٍ وَمَا كَانَتْ أُمُّكِ بَغِيًّا ۖ 28

(19:28) O sister of Aaron![19] Your father was not an evil man, nor was your mother an unchaste woman."[19a]

19. "Sister of Aaron" may either mean that Mary had a brother of the name of Aaron, or it may mean that she belonged to the family of Prophet Aaron. The first meaning is supported by a tradition of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the second is plausible because that is supported by the Arabic idiom. But we are inclined to the second meaning, for the wording of the said tradition does not necessarily mean that she actually had a brother named Aaron. The tradition as related in Muslim, Nasai, Tirmizi, etc. says that when the Christians of Najran criticized the Quranic version of stating Mary as the sister of Aaron before Mughirah bin Shubah, he was not able to satisfy them, because Prophet Aaron had passed away centuries earlier. When he presented the problem before the Prophet (peace be upon him), he replied: Why didn't you say that the Israelites named their children after their Prophets and other pious men? That is: You could have answered their objection like this as well." See also (E.N. 32 of Aal-Imran).

19a. How can the people who reject the miraculous birth of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), explain why Mary's whole community had come out to curse and condemn her when she had appeared before them with the child?

فَأَشَارَتْ إِلَيْهِ ۖ قَالُوا كَيْفَ نُكَلِّمُ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الْمَهْدِ صَبِيًّا 29

(19:29) Thereupon Mary pointed to the child. They exclaimed: "How can we speak to one who is in the cradle, a mere child?"[20]

20. People who misinterpret the Quran translate this verse as: How shall we talk with him, who is but a child of yesterday? They attribute these words to the elderly people of the Jews, who said years later, when Jesus was a grown up boy, that they could not have any useful dialogue with a mere kid. But the person who keeps the whole context in view, will realize that this interpretation is absurd and has been given merely to avoid the miracle. As a matter of fact, the dialogue took place when the people were condemning Mary who being unmarried, had brought forth a child, and not when the child had grown up into manhood. (Ayat 46 of Surah Aal-Imran) and (Ayat 110 of Surah Al-Maidah) also support the view that Prophet Jesus had uttered these words as a baby in the cradle and not when grown up. In the first verse, the angel while giving the good news of a son to Mary, says: He will speak to the people alike when in the cradle and when grown up. In the other verse, Allah Himself says to Prophet Jesus: You talked to the people even in the cradle as you talked when you were grown up.

قَالَ اِنِّیۡ عَبۡدُ اللّٰہِ ۟ قف اٰتٰنِیَ الۡکِتٰبَ وَ جَعَلَنِیۡ نَبِیًّا ۙ 30

(19:30) The child cried out: "Verily I am Allah's servant. He has granted me the Book and has made me a Prophet

وَّ جَعَلَنِیۡ مُبٰرَکًا اَیۡنَ مَا کُنۡتُ ۪ وَ اَوۡصٰنِیۡ بِالصَّلٰوۃِ وَ الزَّکٰوۃِ مَا دُمۡتُ حَیًّا ۪ صلے ص 31

(19:31) and has blessed me wherever I might be and has enjoined upon me Prayer and Zakah (purifying alms) as long as I live;

وَّ بَرًّۢا بِوَالِدَتِیۡ ۫ وَ لَمۡ یَجۡعَلۡنِیۡ جَبَّارًا شَقِیًّا 32

(19:32) and has made me dutiful to my mother.[20a] He has not made me oppressive, nor bereft of God's blessings.

20a. The words used are: “dutiful to my mother” instead of “dutiful to my parents”. This is another proof of the fact that Jesus (peace be upon him) had no father, and for the same reason he has been called Jesus son of Mary everywhere in the Quran.

وَ السَّلٰمُ عَلَیَّ یَوۡمَ وُلِدۡتُّ وَ یَوۡمَ اَمُوۡتُ وَ یَوۡمَ اُبۡعَثُ حَیًّا 33

(19:33) Peace be upon me the day I was born and the day I will die, and the day I will be raised up alive."[21]

21. This speech in the cradle by Jesus was the sign to which the angel referred in(Ayat 21). As Allah intended to punish the children of Israel for their continuous wicked ways and evil deeds, He made a pious virgin girl of the family of Prophet Aaron, who had devoted herself to worship in the Temple under the patronage of Zachariah, bear a child and bring it before

her people in order to concentrate the whole attention of the thousands of people assembled there on this extraordinary event. Then He made this new born child speak out even in the cradle that he had been appointed a Prophet. Though they had seen this wonderful sign of Allah, they rejected the Prophethood of Jesus and brought him to the court for crucifixion, and thus incurred the wrath of Allah. (For further details, please see (Surah Aal- Imran E.Ns 44 and 53), and (Surah An-Nisa E.Ns 212, 213).

ذٰلِكَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ۚ قَوْلَ الْحَقِّ الَّذِي فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ 34

(19:34) This is Jesus, the son of Mary; and this is the truth about him concerning which they are in doubt.

مَا كَانَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ مِنْ وَلَدٍ ۖ سُبْحَانَهُ ۚ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ 35

(19:35) It does not befit Allah to take for Himself a son. Glory be to Him! When He decrees a thing He only says: "Be" and it is.[22]

22. In (Ayats 1-35), it has been shown that the "Doctrine of the son of God" in regard to Prophet Jesus is absolutely wrong. For just as the miraculous birth of Prophet John did not make him the son of God, so the miraculous birth of Prophet Jesus could not make him the son of God. For the births of both were the result of the same sort of miracle as they have been mentioned together in the same context in the Gospel of Luke. Therefore, it is mere distortion that the Christians should regard one as the servant of God and the other as the son of God.

وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ ۚ هَٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ 36

(19:36) (Jesus had said): "Indeed Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so serve Him alone. This is the Straight Way."[23]

23. This declaration by Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) has been cited to tell the Christians that Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) also taught the same doctrine of Tauhid as was taught by all other Prophets. And it was they who had invented the doctrine of shirk by making him the son of God. (Please also refer to (Aal-Imran E.N. 68, and (Al- Maidah E.Ns 100, 101 and 130).

فَاخْتَلَفَ الْأَحْزَابُ مِنْ بَيْنِهِمْ ۖ فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ مَشْهَدِ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ 37

(19:37) But different parties began to dispute with one another.[24] A dreadful woe awaits on that great Day for those that reject the Truth.

24. That is, the sects of the Christians.

أَسْمِعْ بِهِمْ وَأَبْصِرْ ۙ يَوْمَ يَأْتُونَنَا لَٰكِنِ الظَّالِمُونَ الْيَوْمَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ 38

(19:38) How well shall they hear and how well shall they see on the Day they come to Us! But today the evil-doers are in manifest error.

وَأَنذِرْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْحَسْرَةِ إِذْ قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ ۘ وَهُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ وَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ 39

(19:39) (O Muhammad), warn those who are steeped in heedlessness and are obstinately rejecting the truth that the Day shall come when things will be finally decided and they shall be left with utter remorse.

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَرِثُ الْأَرْضَ وَمَنْ عَلَيْهَا وَإِلَيْنَا يُرْجَعُونَ ۘ 40

(19:40) Ultimately, We shall inherit the earth and whatever is on it; to Us shall they be returned.[25]

25. Here the address which was meant to be delivered before King Negus and his courtiers comes to an end. In the introduction to this Surah, we have already stated the historical background of this address. In order to form an idea of its great significance, it should be kept in mind that:

(a) This address was sent down at the time when the persecuted Muslims of Makkah were going to migrate to a Christian kingdom so that they may present before the Christians the true Islamic creed about Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him). This shows that the Muslims under no circumstances should conceal the truth,

(b) It shows a most wonderful moral courage of the Muslim migrants to Habash that they recited this address in the royal court at the critical moment, when the courtiers who had been bribed were bent on handing them over to their enemies. They indeed were faced with the real threat that this frank Islamic criticism of the basic articles of the Christian faith might turn the king against them and he might hand them over to the Quraish. But in spite of this, they presented the whole truth before the king without the least hesitation.

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَّبِيًّا 41

(19:41) (O Muhammad), recite in the Book the account of Abraham.[26] Most surely he was a man of truth, a Prophet.

26. From here the address is directed towards the people of Makkah, who had forced their own near and dear relatives to emigrate from their homes, just as Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) had been exiled by his own father and brethren. The story of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) has been selected for this purpose because the Quraish professed to accept him as their religious leader and were proud of being his descendants.

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ لِمَ تَعْبُدُ مَا لَا يَسْمَعُ وَلَا يُبْصِرُ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنكَ شَيْئًا 42

(19:42) (And remind people) when he said to his father: "Father! Why do you worship that which neither sees nor hears, and which can be of no avail to you?

يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي قَدْ جَاءَنِي مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِكَ فَاتَّبِعْنِي أَهْدِكَ صِرَاطًا سَوِيًّا 43

(19:43) Father, a knowledge that has not reached you has come to me. So follow me that I may guide you to a Straight Way.

يَا أَبَتِ لَا تَعْبُدِ الشَّيْطَانَ ۖ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَٰنِ عَصِيًّا 44

(19:44) Father, do not serve Satan,[27] for Satan has indeed been a persistent rebel against the Most Compassionate Lord.

27. It should be noted that the literal translation of the Arabic text is: “Do not worship Satan”, though Abraham’s father and the other people did not worship Satan in the same sense as they worshiped idols. But as they followed and obeyed Satan, he accused them of worshiping Satan. Thus it is clear that if somebody follows and obeys Satan, he virtually worships him. For Satan has never been a deity in the sense that people have made him an object of worship; nay, they have always been cursing him and following him at the same time. (For further details see (Surah Al-Kahf E.Ns 49-50).

يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَن يَمَسَّكَ عَذَابٌ مِّنَ الرَّحْمَٰنِ فَتَكُونَ لِلشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيًّا 45

(19:45) Father, I fear that a punishment from the Most Compassionate Lord might strike you and you may end up as one of Satan's companions?"

قَالَ أَرَاغِبٌ أَنتَ عَنْ آلِهَتِي يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ ۚ لَئِن لَّمْ تَنتَهِ لَأَرْجُمَنَّكَ وَاهْجُرْنِي مَلِيًّا 46

(19:46) The father said: "Abraham, have you turned away from my gods? If you do not give this up, I shall stone you to death. Now begone from me forever."

قَالَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكَ ۚ سَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكَ رَبِّي ۖ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِي حَفِيًّا 47

(19:47) Abraham answered: "Peace be upon you. I shall seek pardon for you from my Lord.[27a] My Lord has always been kind to Me.

27a. For explanation, see (Surah At-Taubah E.N. 112).

وَاَعۡتَزِلُكُمۡ وَمَا تَدۡعُوۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ وَاَدۡعُوۡا رَبِّىۡ ۖ صلے عَسٰٓى اَلَّاۤ اَكُوۡنَ بِدُعَآءِ رَبِّىۡ

شَقِيًّا 48

(19:48) I shall withdraw from you and all that you call upon beside Allah. I shall only call upon my Lord. I trust the prayer to my Lord will not go unanswered."

فَلَمَّا اعۡتَزَلَهُمۡ وَمَا يَعۡبُدُوۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ ۙ وَهَبۡنَا لَهٗۤ اِسۡحٰقَ وَيَعۡقُوۡبَ ؕ وَكُلًّا جَعَلۡنَا

نَبِيًّا 49

(19:49) Thereupon Abraham dissociated himself from his people and the deities they worshipped instead of Allah, and We bestowed upon him Isaac and Jacob and made each of them a Prophet;

وَوَهَبۡنَا لَهُمۡ مِّنۡ رَّحۡمَتِنَا وَجَعَلۡنَا لَهُمۡ لِسَانَ صِدۡقٍ عَلِيًّا ۚ 50

(19:50) and We bestowed on them Our mercy, and granted them a truly lofty renown.[28]

28. This is to give comfort to the migrants who had been forced to migrate from their homes. They were told that they would be honored and blessed with true renown just as Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) had been blessed with true renown after his migration.

وَاذۡكُرۡ فِى الۡكِتٰبِ مُوۡسٰۤى ۫ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ مُخۡلَصًا وَّكَانَ رَسُوۡلًا نَّبِيًّا 51

(19:51) And recite in the Book the account of Moses.[29] He was a chosen one, a Messenger, a Prophet.[30]

29. The word used is mukhlasan, which means purified. In other words, Allah had specially chosen Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) for the mission of Prophethood.

30. Rasul literally means the one who is sent; therefore it is used for an ambassador, envoy, messenger and representative. The Quran has used this title for angels, who are sent by Allah on a special mission, or for the human beings who brought His Message to mankind.

As regards the word Nabi, it literally means the one who brings news, or the one who is high in rank, or the one who shows the way. This title is used for the Prophets in all the three senses. Thus Moses was a Messenger Prophet because he was a Messenger of high rank who gave news from Allah and showed the right way to the people.

The Quran does not necessarily differentiate between the use of the two titles, for sometimes it uses the title Rasul for one person at one place and the title Nabi for the same person at another place, and sometimes uses both the titles together for one and the same person. However, at some places each title has been used in a way as to show that there is some technical distinction between the two, though that has not been precisely marked out, except that every Rasul (Messenger) is a Nabi (Prophet) as well, but every Nabi may not be a Rasul, and that a Rasul has a special and more important mission to perform. This is supported by a tradition of the Prophet (peace be upon him), which has been reported by Imam Ahmad from Abu Umamah and by Hakim from Abu Zarr. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked how many Messengers and Prophets had been sent to the world, he said that the number of the Messengers was 313 or 315 and of the Prophets 124,000

وَنَادَيْنٰهُ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّوْرِ الْاَيْمَنِ وَقَرَّبْنٰهُ نَجِيًّا 52

(19:52) We called out to him from the right side of the Mount,[31] and We drew him near to Us by communing to him in secret,[32]

31. "The right side of the Mount" means the eastern side of the mountain. As Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), on his way from Midian to Egypt, was passing from the southern side of Mountt Toor, the eastern side would lie on his right and the western on his left if he faced the mountain, otherwise a mountain by itself cannot have a right or a left side.

32. See(E.N. 206 of Surah An-Nisa).

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهٗ مِنْ رَّحْمَتِنَآ اَخَاهٗ هٰرُوْنَ نَبِيًّا 53

(19:53) and out of Our mercy We appointed his brother Aaron, a Prophet (that he may assist him).

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتٰبِ اِسْمٰعِيْلَ ۚ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ وَكَانَ رَسُوْلًا نَّبِيًّا ۚ 54

(19:54) And recite in the Book the account of Ishmael. He was ever true to his promise, and was a Messenger, a Prophet.

وَكَانَ يَاْمُرُ اَهْلَهٗ بِالصَّلٰوةِ وَالزَّكٰوةِ ۖ وَكَانَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهٖ مَرْضِيًّا 55

(19:55) He enjoined his household to observe Prayer and to give Zakah (purifying alms); and his Lord was well pleased with him.

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتٰبِ اِدْرِيْسَ ۚ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ صِدِّيْقًا نَّبِيًّا ۙ 56

(19:56) And recite in the Book the account of Idris.[33] He was a man of truth, a Prophet;

33. There is a difference of opinion as to who Prophet Idris (peace be upon him) was. Some commentators opine that he was a Prophet from among the Israelites, but the majority of them are inclined to the view that he was a Prophet before Noah (peace be upon him). There is no authentic tradition which may help determine his identity. The next (verse 58), however, supports the view that he appeared before Prophet Noah (peace be upon him). For of all the Prophets mentioned, he alone was the one who may be said to be from the descendants of Adam.

The commentators are of the opinion that Idris was Enoch of the Old Testament, about whom it is said:

And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years.... and he was not; for God took him. (Gen. 5: 21-24).

In Talmud, there are greater details about Enoch, which are briefly as follows: Before Noah when the descendants of Adam began to degenerate, the angel of God called to Enoch, who led a pious life away from the people, and said: O Enoch, arise, come out from seclusion, and go about among the people of the earth, guiding them to the path which they should follow and the ways which they should adopt.

Receiving this Divine Command, Enoch left his seclusion and gathered the people together and preached to them what he had been commanded, with the result that they listened to him and adopted the worship of God. Enoch ruled over mankind for 353 years: his rule was based on justice and truth, and consequently God favored mankind with all kinds of blessings." (H. Polano: The Talmud Selections, pp. 18-21)

وَّرَفَعْنٰهُ مَكَانًا عَلِيًّا 57

(19:57) and We exalted him to a lofty position.34

34. The plain meaning is that God had favored Idris with a high rank, but according to the Israelite traditions, God took up Idris (Enoch) to heavens. The Bible says: And he was not; for God took him, but the Talmud has a long story to tell, which ends with the words: Enoch ascended to heaven in a whirlwind, with chariot and horses of fire.

اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ اٰدَمَ ۗ وَمِمَّنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوْحٍ ۗ وَّمِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاِسْرَآءِيْلَ ۗ وَمِمَّنْ هَدَيْنَا وَاجْتَبَيْنَا ۭ اِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتُ الرَّحْمٰنِ خَرُّوْا سُجَّدًا وَّبُكِيًّا ۩ 58

(19:58) These are the Prophets upon whom Allah bestowed His favour from the seed of Adam, and from the seed of those whom We carried (in the Ark) with Noah, and

from the seed of Abraham and Israel. They were those whom We guided and chose (for an exalted position). They were such that when the words of the Most Compassionate Lord were recited to them, they fell down in prostration, weeping.

فَخَلَفَ مِنۢ بَعۡدِهِمۡ خَلۡفٌ اَضَاعُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاتَّبَعُوا الشَّهَوٰتِ فَسَوۡفَ يَلۡقَوۡنَ غَيًّا ۙ 59

(19:59) They were succeeded by a people who neglected the Prayers[35] and pursued their lusts.[36] They shall presently meet with their doom,

35. It appears that the degenerate people totally discarded Salat, or they had become neglectful and careless in its observance. This is the first evil that is committed by a degenerate people. For, after this there remains no connection whatever between them and God. Here it has been stated as a universal principle that the degeneration of the people of all the former Prophets started with the abandonment of Salat by them.

36. This was the inevitable result of the loss of the connection with Allah. As they became more and more neglectful of their Salat, their lusts took complete hold of them and they fell to the lowest depths of moral depravity and began to follow their whims instead of the divine commands.

اِلَّا مَنۡ تَابَ وَاٰمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَاُولٰٓئِكَ يَدۡخُلُوۡنَ الۡجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظۡلَمُوۡنَ شَيۡـًٔا ۙ 60

(19:60) except those who repent and believe and act righteously. Such shall enter Paradise and shall not be wronged at all.

جَنّٰتِ عَدۡنِ ۨالَّتِىۡ وَعَدَ الرَّحۡمٰنُ عِبَادَهٗ بِالۡغَيۡبِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ وَعۡدُهٗ مَاۡتِيًّا 61

(19:61) Theirs shall be everlasting Gardens which the Most Compassionate Lord has promised His servants in a realm which is beyond the ken of perception.[37] Surely His promise shall he fulfilled.

37. That is, the promised gardens which are yet unseen by His servants.

لَّا يَسۡمَعُوۡنَ فِيۡهَا لَغۡوًا اِلَّا سَلٰمًا ؕ وَلَهُمۡ رِزۡقُهُمۡ فِيۡهَا بُكۡرَةً وَّعَشِيًّا 62

(19:62) They shall not hear in it anything vain; they shall hear only what is good;[38] and they shall have their provision in it, morning and evening.

38. The word used is salam, which means free from defect and fault. It implies to mean that the greatest blessing that man will enjoy in Paradise will be that there he will hear no idle, vile or indecent talk. All the dwellers of Paradise will be neat and clean and pure people and every individual will be gentle and right minded by nature. Everybody will be secure

against backbiting, slander and indecent songs and other ugly sounds. Whatever men will hear will be good, sensible and right.

This is indeed a great blessing which only that person can fully appreciate, who possesses a neat and fine taste, because only such a one can feel the misery of living among a dirty society, where his ears are never immune against lies, backbiting, slander, and mischievous and sensual talk.

تِلْكَ الْجَنَّةُ الَّتِي نُوْرِثُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا مَنْ كَانَ تَقِيًّا 63

(19:63) Such is the Paradise which We shall cause those of Our servants who have been God-fearing to inherit.

وَمَا نَتَنَزَّلُ اِلَّا بِاَمْرِ رَبِّكَ ۚ لَهٗ مَا بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْنَا وَمَا خَلْفَنَا وَمَا بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ نَسِيًّا ۚ 64

(19:64) (The angels will say):[39] "(O Muhammad!) We descend not except by the command of your Lord. To Him belongs all that is before us and all that is behind us, and all that is in between. Your Lord is not forgetful in the least.

39. This paragraph is a parenthesis, which has been inserted at the end of one theme and before the commencement of the other. It is obvious from this that this Surah was sent down after a long delay. At that time the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions were passing through very hard times and were always expecting a revelation to guide and comfort them. When Angel Gabriel came with other angels with this revelation, he at first delivered that part of the message which was immediately needed. Then before proceeding further, he said these words by the leave of Allah as an explanation for the delay and to give them comfort from Allah and counsel of fortitude. This interpretation is not only borne out by the wording of the passage but also by some traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), which have been cited by Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir, and the author of Ruh-ul-Maani in their commentary on this passage.

رَّبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فَاعْبُدْهُ وَاصْطَبِرْ لِعِبَادَتِهٖ ۭ هَلْ تَعْلَمُ لَهٗ سَمِيًّا ۧ 65

(19:65) He is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is in between. Serve Him, then, and be constant in serving Him.[40] Do you know anyone that might be His compeer?"[41]

40. That is, you should not only follow strictly the way of service and face all the obstacles and afflictions with patience, but also should not get uneasy, if there is a delay in revelation

and help. You should rest content with His service as an obedient servant and perform persistently the duties and responsibilities entrusted to you as a servant and Messenger.

41. The word Samiya literally means a name sake. Here it implies: Allah is the only Deity. Do you know of any other deity besides Him? If there is none, and you know that there is none, then you do not have any alternative but to serve Him and obey His commands.

وَيَقُولُ الْإِنسَانُ أَإِذَا مَا مِتُّ لَسَوْفَ أُخْرَجُ حَيًّا 66

(19:66) Man is prone to say: "Shall I be raised to life after I die?"

أَوَلَا يَذْكُرُ الْإِنسَانُ أَنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُ مِن قَبْلُ وَلَمْ يَكُ شَيْئًا 67

(19:67) Does man not remember that We created him before when he was nothing?

فَوَرَبِّكَ لَنَحْشُرَنَّهُمْ وَالشَّيَاطِينَ ثُمَّ لَنُحْضِرَنَّهُمْ حَوْلَ جَهَنَّمَ جِثِيًّا ج 68

(19:68) By your Lord, We will surely muster them and the devils together.[42] Then We will surely bring them all, on their knees, around Hell,

42. The Satans are the leaders who persuade the wicked people to enjoy themselves in this worldly life, for there is no life in the Hereafter, where they shall have to present themselves before Allah and give an account of their deeds.

ثُمَّ لَنَنزِعَنَّ مِن كُلِّ شِيعَةٍ أَيُّهُمْ أَشَدُّ عَلَى الرَّحْمَٰنِ عِتِيًّا ج 69

(19:69) and then We will draw aside from each party those who were most rebellious against the Most Compassionate Lord,[43]

43. The leader of every rebel band.

ثُمَّ لَنَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِالَّذِينَ هُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِهَا صِلِيًّا 70

(19:70) and then We shall know well all those most worthy to be cast in Hell.

وَإِن مِّنكُمْ إِلَّا وَارِدُهَا ط كَانَ عَلَىٰ رَبِّكَ حَتْمًا مَّقْضِيًّا ج 71

(19:71) There is not one of you but shall pass by Hell.[44] This is a decree which your Lord will fulfil.

44. According to some traditions, “pass over it (Hell)” means to enter Hell, but none of these traditions is authentic. Then this interpretation goes against the Quran and a great many authentic traditions, which clearly state that the true believers will never be cast into Hell.

Lexically also, variduha (being presented unto) is not synonymous with dukhul (causing to enter). Therefore, the correct meaning would be that every human being will be presented before Hell, but then, as the next verse clarifies, the pious people will be rescued and the transgressors left therein on their knees. 7

ثُمَّ نُنَجِّي الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوا وَّنَذَرُ الظّٰلِمِينَ فِيهَا جِثِيًّا 72

(19:72) Then We shall deliver those that feared Allah and leave the wrong-doers there on their knees.

وَإِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتُنَا بَيِّنٰتٍ قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوٓا ۙ اَيُّ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ خَيْرٌ مَّقَامًا وَّاَحْسَنُ نَدِيًّا 73

(19:73) When Our clear revelations are recited to those who deny the Truth they are wont to say to those who have faith: "Which of the two groups has a better status and whose assemblies are grander?"[45]

45. In response to the recital of clear revelations, instead of accepting their message, the unbelievers put such questions as these to the believers to show that they were in the right: Who has grander houses to live in? Who has a higher standard of life? Who enjoys splendid meetings? If we are enjoying all these things while you are deprived of them, you may decide for yourselves whether we, who are enjoying happy worldly lives, are in the wrong, or you who are living miserable lives of indigence are in the right? Also see (Surah Al-Kahf E.Ns 37-38). 7

وَكَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْنٍ هُمْ اَحْسَنُ اَثَاثًا وَّرِءْيًا 74

(19:74) How numerous are the peoples We destroyed before them - those that were more resourceful and grander in outward appearance!

قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الضَّلٰلَةِ فَلْيَمْدُدْ لَهُ الرَّحْمٰنُ مَدًّا ۚ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا رَاَوْا مَا يُوعَدُونَ اِمَّا الْعَذَابَ وَاِمَّا السَّاعَةَ ۭ فَسَيَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ هُوَ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا وَّاَضْعَفُ جُنْدًا 75

(19:75) Say: "The Most Compassionate Lord grants respite to those who stray into error, until they behold what they had been threatened with, either God's chastisement (in the world) or the Hour (of Resurrection)" - then they fully know whose station is worse, and who is weaker in hosts!

وَيَزِيْدُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اهْتَدَوْا هُدًى ؕ وَالْبٰقِيٰتُ الصّٰلِحٰتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَّخَيْرٌ

مَّرَدًّا 76

(19:76) (On the contrary), Allah increases in guidance those who follow the Right Way.[46] Lasting acts of righteousness are better in the sight of your Lord as reward and conducive to a better end.

46. That is, On every critical occasion, Allah guides them to make right decisions and helps them to adopt the right way, and protects them from evil and wrong things; thus they go on making more and more progress on the right way.

اَفَرَءَيْتَ الَّذِىْ كَفَرَ بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَقَالَ لَاُوْتَيَنَّ مَالًا وَّوَلَدًا ؕ 77

(19:77) Have you seen him who rejected Our signs and said: "Surely I shall continue to be favoured with riches and children."[47]

47. The boastful person was not a particular man but a typical chief of the disbelievers of Makkah. Everyone of them claimed: Howsoever you may call me an erroneous and un-righteous person and threaten me with the divine scourge, the fact is that I am more prosperous than you today and shall continue being blessed with favors in future as well. Just have a look at my riches, at my grandeur and at my estate, and at my well-known sons, and then say where you see any signs of the wrath of God.

اَطَّلَعَ الْغَيْبَ اَمِ اتَّخَذَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمٰنِ عَهْدًا ۙ 78

(19:78) Has he obtained knowledge of the Unseen, or has he taken a covenant with the Most Compassionate Lord?

كَلَّا ؕ سَنَكْتُبُ مَا يَقُوْلُ وَنَمُدُّ لَهٗ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ مَدًّا ۙ 79

(19:79) By no means! We shall write down all what he says;[48] and We shall greatly prolong his chastisement,

48. That is, the boastful words of his shall also be included in the record of his crimes and he shall have to bear the consequences of his arrogant claim.

وَّنَرِثُهٗ مَا يَقُوْلُ وَيَاْتِيْنَا فَرْدًا 80

(19:80) and We shall inherit all the resources and hosts of which he boasts, and he will come to Us all alone.

وَاتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اٰلِهَةً لِّيَكُوْنُوْا لَهُمْ عِزًّا ۙ 81

(19:81) They have taken other gods instead of Allah that they may be a source of strength for them.[49]

49. The Arabic word Izzan (from Izat) implies a powerful and strong person whom nobody may dare do any harm; here it means a person's having such a strong supporter that no enemy or opponent of his may even cherish an evil intention against him.

كَلَّا ۭ سَيَكْفُرُوْنَ بِعِبَادَتِهِمْ وَيَكُوْنُوْنَ عَلَيْهِمْ ضِدًّا ۚ 82

(19:82) By no means! They shall soon deny their worship[50] and shall become their adversaries instead.

50. That is, they will say: We never asked them to worship us nor were we aware that these foolish people were worshiping us.

اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّآ اَرْسَلْنَا الشَّيٰطِيْنَ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ تَؤُزُّهُمْ اَزًّا ۙ 83

(19:83) Do you not see that We have sent devils upon the unbelievers who greatly incite them (to oppose the Truth)?

فَلَا تَعْجَلْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۭ اِنَّمَا نَعُدُّ لَهُمْ عَدًّا ۚ 84

(19:84) Therefore, do not hasten (in seeking a scourge against them). We are counting their days.[51]

51. That is: Endure their persecutions patiently a little more, for the time of their punishment is coming near, for We have given them respite for a fixed term, and let that term expire.

يَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ اِلَى الرَّحْمٰنِ وَفْدًا ۙ 85

(19:85) The Day shall soon come when We shall bring together the God-fearing to the Most Compassionate Lord, as honoured guests;

وَّنَسُوْقُ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ اِلٰى جَهَنَّمَ وِرْدًا ۙ 86

(19:86) and We shall drive the guilty ones to Hell as a thirsty herd.

لَا يَمْلِكُوْنَ الشَّفَاعَةَ اِلَّا مَنِ اتَّخَذَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمٰنِ عَهْدًا ۘ 87

(19:87) On that Day none will have the power to intercede for them except those who received a sanction from the Most Compassionate Lord.[52]

52. This implies two things: (1) Intercession will be allowed only for the one who might have received permission for it from the Merciful, that is, the one who believed in Allah in the world and made himself deserving of His pardon. (2) Only that one will be able to plead intercession who might have received permission for this from the Merciful, and not those ones whom people themselves had made their intercessors without any reason.

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمٰنُ وَلَدًا ۟ 88

(19:88) They claim: "The Most Compassionate Lord has taken a son to Himself."

لَقَدْ جِئْتُمْ شَيْـًٔا اِدًّا ۙ 89

(19:89) Surely you have made a monstrous statement.

تَكَادُ السَّمٰوٰتُ يَتَفَطَّرْنَ مِنْهُ وَتَنْشَقُّ الْاَرْضُ وَتَخِرُّ الْجِبَالُ هَدًّا ۙ 90

(19:90) It is such a monstrosity that heavens might well-nigh burst forth at it, the earth might be cleaved, and the mountains fall

اَنْ دَعَوْا لِلرَّحْمٰنِ وَلَدًا ۚ 91

(19:91) at their ascribing a son to the Most Compassionate Lord.

وَمَا يَنْۢبَغِيْ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ اَنْ يَّتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا ۟ 92

(19:92) It does not befit the Most Compassionate Lord that He should take a son.

اِنْ كُلُّ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ اِلَّاۤ اٰتِي الرَّحْمٰنِ عَبْدًا ۟ 93

(19:93) There is no one in the heavens and the earth but he shall come to the Most Compassionate Lord as His servant.

لَقَدْ اَحْصٰىهُمْ وَعَدَّهُمْ عَدًّا 94

(19:94) Verily He encompasses them and has counted them all.

وَكُلُّهُمْ اٰتِيْهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فَرْدًا 95

(19:95) On the Day of Resurrection each one of these will come to Him singly.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمَٰنُ وُدًّا 96

(19:96) Indeed, the Most Compassionate Lord will soon create enduring love for those who believe and do righteous works.[53]

53. This is to comfort the righteous people who were being persecuted and insulted in the streets of Makkah. They are being assured that the time is coming near when the people will honor and love them because of their righteous deeds and good conduct. Hearts will be attracted towards them and the world will hold them in high esteem. And this will happen according to a universal principle. Those who are wicked, proud and haughty and try to rule over the people with falsehood and hypocrisy can never captivate the hearts of the people. On the other hand, those who invite the people to the right way with truth, honesty, sincerity and good conduct succeed in winning their hearts in the end, even though at first they might have to face the indifference and opposition of the dishonest people. 97. So, We have only made this (Quran) easy in your tongue that you may give good tidings therewith to those who are righteous, and warn with it a contentious people.

فَإِنَّمَا يَسَّرْنَاهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لِتُبَشِّرَ بِهِ الْمُتَّقِينَ وَتُنذِرَ بِهِ قَوْمًا لُّدًّا 97

(19:97) Therefore, We have revealed the Qur'an in your tongue and made it easy to understand that you may give glad tidings to the God-fearing and warn a contentious people.

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُم مِّن قَرْنٍ ۖ هَلْ تُحِسُّ مِنْهُم مِّنْ أَحَدٍ أَوْ تَسْمَعُ لَهُمْ رِكْزًا ۚ 98

(19:98) How numerous are the peoples that We destroyed before them! Do you now perceive any one of them, or hear even their whisper?

20. Surah Ta Ha

Name

This Surah takes its name from its "first word "Ta Ha." This name, like the names of many other Surahs, is merely symbolic.

Period of Revelation

The period of its revelation is the same as of Surah Maryam. It is just possible that it was sent down during the Migration to Habash or just after it. Anyhow, it is certain that this Surah was revealed before Hadrat Umar embraced Islam.

According to a well known and authentic tradition when Hadrat Umar set out to kill the Holy Prophet, he met a certain person, who said, "Before you do anything else, you should know that your own sister and brother-in-law have embraced Islam" Hearing this, he directly went to the house of his sister. There he found his sister, Fatimah, and his brother-in-law, Said bin Zaid, learning the contents of a scroll from Khabbab bin Art. When Fatimah saw him coming she hid the scroll at once, but Hadrat Umar had heard the recital, so he began to interrogate them about it. Then he began to thrash his brother-in-law, and wounded his sister, who tried to protect him. At last both of them confessed, "We have become Muslims; you may do whatever you like." As Hadrat Umar was moved to see blood running down from her head, he said, "Show me the thing you were reading." The sister asked him to promise on oath that he would not tear it, and added, "You cannot touch it unless you have a bath." Accordingly, Hadrat Umar took his bath and when he began to read the scroll, which contained this Surah, he spontaneously spoke out, "What an excellent thing!" At this Hadrat Khabbab, who had hidden himself at the sound of his footsteps, came out of his hiding and said, "By God, I have high expectations that Allah will get great service from you to propagate the Message of His Prophet, for just yesterday I heard the Holy Prophet praying to Allah, 'My Lord, make Abul Hakam bin Hisham (Abu Jahl) or Umar bin Khattab a supporter of Islam. So O Umar, turn to Allah, turn to Allah." These words proved to be so persuasive that he at once accompanied Hadrat Khabbab and went to the Holy Prophet to embrace Islam. This happened a short time after the Migration to Habash.

Theme and Topics of Discussion

This Surah begins with the enunciation of the object of the Revelation of the Qur'an to this effect: "O Muhammad, this Quran has not been sent down to you to put you unnecessarily to some great affliction. It does not demand from you to perform the impossible task of imbuing the hearts of the obdurate disbelievers with Faith. It is merely an admonition meant to guide on to the Right Path those who fear God and want to save themselves from His punishment. This Quran is the Word of the Master of the earth and the heavens and God-head belongs to Him alone: These two facts are eternal whether one believes them or not."

After this introduction, the Surah abruptly moves on to relate the story of Prophet Moses without any apparent relevancy and without even hinting at its applicability to the events of the period. However, if we read between the lines, we realize that the discourse is addressed very relevantly to the people of Makkah. But before we explain the hidden meaning of the

discourse, we must keep in view the fact that the Arabs in general acknowledged Moses as a Prophet of God. This was so because they had "been influenced by the large number of the Jews around them and by" the neighboring Christian kingdoms. Now let us state those things which are hidden between the lines of the story:

1. Allah does not appoint a Prophet by the beat of drums or My celebrating the occasion in a regular and formal ceremony, as if to say, "We are appointing such and such a person as Our Prophet from today." On the contrary, He bestows Prophethood in a confidential manner just as He did in the case of Prophet Moses. Therefore you should not consider it strange if Hadrat Muhammad has been appointed as a Prophet all of a sudden and without any public proclamation.
2. The fundamental principles presented by Prophet Muhammad - Tauhid and the Hereafter - are just the same as were taught to Prophet Moses at the time of his appointment.
3. Prophet Muhammad has been made the standard bearer of the Message of the Truth among the people of the Quraish all by himself without material provisions, just as Prophet Moses was entrusted with the Mission to go to a tyrant king like Pharaoh and ask him to give up his attitude of rebellion. These are the mysterious ways of Allah. He catches hold of a way farer of Midian on his way to Egypt and says, "Go and fight with the greatest tyrant of the time." He did not provide him with armies and provisions for this Mission. The only thing He did was to appoint his brother as his assistant at his request.
4. You, O People of Makkah, should note it well that Pharaoh employed the same devices against Prophet Moses as you are employing against Prophet Muhammad -- frivolous objections, accusations, and cruel persecutions. You should know that Allah's Prophet came out victorious over Pharaoh, who possessed large armies and war equipment. Incidentally, the Muslims have been consoled and comforted, though not in so many words, that they should not be afraid of fighting with the Quraish against fearful odds, for the mission which is supported by Allah comes out victorious in the end. At the same time, the Muslims have been exhorted to follow the excellent example of the magicians of Egypt, who remained steadfast in their Faith, though Pharaoh threatened them with horrible vengeance.
5. An incident from the story of the Israelites has been cited to show in what ridiculous manner the idolization of false gods and goddesses starts and that the Prophets of God do not tolerate even the slightest tinge of this preposterous practice. Likewise, Prophet Muhammad is following the former Prophets in opposing shirk and idol worship today.

Thus, the story of Moses has been used to throw light on all those matters which were connected with the conflict between the Holy Prophet and the Quraish. Then at the end of the story, the. Quraish have been briefly admonished, as if to say, "The Quran has been sent down in your tongue for your own good. If you listen to it and follow its admonition, you will be doing so for your own good but if you reject it, you will yourselves meet with an evil end."

After this the story of Prophet Adam has been related, as if to tell the Quraish, "The way you are following is the way of Satan, whereas the right way for a man is to follow his father Adam. He was beguiled by Satan, but when he realized his error, he plainly confessed it and

repented and again turned back to the service of Allah and won His favor. On the other hand, if a person follows Satan and sticks to his error obdurately in spite of admonition, he does harm to himself alone like Satan."

In the end, the Holy Prophet and the Muslims have been advised not to be impatient in regard to the punishment to the disbelievers, as if to say, "Allah has His Own scheme concerning them. He does not seize them at once but gives them sufficient respite. Therefore you should not grow impatient but bear the persecutions with fortitude and go on conveying the Message."

In this connection, great emphasis has been laid on Salat so that it may create in the believers the virtues of patience, forbearance, contentment, resignation to the will of God and self analysis for these are greatly needed in the service of the Message of the Truth.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

ج

طٰہٰ 1

(20:1) Ta' Ha'

مَاۤ اَنۡزَلۡنَا عَلَیۡکَ الۡقُرۡاٰنَ لِتَشۡقٰۤی ۙ 2

(20:2) We did not reveal the Qur'an to you to cause you distress;

اِلَّا تَذۡکِرَۃً لِّمَنۡ یَّخۡشٰی ۙ 3

(20:3) it is only a reminder for him who fears Allah;[1]

1. This verse makes plain the meaning of the previous one. The object of the revelation of the Quran is not to make the Prophet (peace be upon him) do something impossible and to put him to unnecessary distress by demanding from him to imbue the hearts of the obdurate people with faith, but to admonish those people who have fear of Allah. Therefore the Prophet (peace be upon him) should not waste his efforts on those people who have no fear of God left in them, and who do not bother at all about what is truth and what is falsehood.

تَنۡزِیۡلًا مِّمَّنۡ خَلَقَ الۡاَرۡضَ وَ السَّمٰوٰتِ الۡعُلٰی ؕ 4

(20:4) a revelation from Him Who created the earth and the high heavens.

اَلرَّحۡمٰنُ عَلَی الۡعَرۡشِ اسۡتَوٰی 5

(20:5) The Most Compassionate Lord is settled on the Throne (of the Universe).[2]

2. That is, after creating the universe, He is ruling over it and conducting all the affairs of its management.

لَهٗ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ الثَّرٰى 6

(20:6) To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth, and all that is in between, and all that is beneath the soil.

وَاِنْ تَجْهَرْ بِالْقَوْلِ فَاِنَّهٗ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَاَخْفَى 7

(20:7) Whether you speak out aloud (or in a low voice), He knows what is said secretly, and even that which is most hidden.3

3. That is, you need not complain to Allah in a loud voice against the persecution from which you and your companions are suffering and the mischievous machinations your enemies are devising to defeat you for Allah is fully aware of all those things, and He hears even the complaints you cherish in your hearts.

اَللّٰهُ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ لَهُ الْاَسْمَآءُ الْحُسْنٰى 8

(20:8) Allah - there is no god but He. His are the most excellent names.4

4. That is, He possesses all the excellent attributes and characteristics.

وَهَلْ اَتٰىكَ حَدِيْثُ مُوْسٰى ۘ 9

(20:9) Has the story of Moses reached you?

اِذْ رَاٰ نَارًا فَقَالَ لِاَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوْۤا اِنِّيْۤ اٰنَسْتُ نَارًا لَّعَلِّيْۤ اٰتِيْكُمْ مِّنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ اَوْ اَجِدُ عَلَى النَّارِ هُدًى 10

(20:10) When he saw a fire5 and said to his family: "Hold on! I have just perceived a fire; perhaps I will bring a brand from it for you, or I will find some guidance at the fire about the way to follow."6

5. This happened when Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was returning to Egypt after passing several years in exile in Midian, along with his wife whom he had married there. According to the early part of his history, which has been related in Surah Al-Qasas, an Egyptian had been killed by Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), so he had to leave Egypt in order to escape arrest and had taken refuge in Midian.

6. It appears that this happened during a night of winter, when Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was passing through the southern part of the Sinai Peninsula. When he saw a fire at a distance, he went towards it in the hope that he might get some of it to keep his wife and children warm during the night, or at least get some guidance concerning the direction of his journey. But instead of this it was his good fortune that he found the guidance to the right way.

فَلَمَّآ اَتٰىهَا نُوْدِيَ يٰمُوْسٰى ۙ 11

(20:11) When he came to it, a voice called out: "Moses!

اِنِّيْٓ اَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ ۚ اِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى ۭ 12

(20:12) Verily I am your Lord! Take off your shoes.7 You are in the sacred valley, Tuwa!8

7. Probably, it is because of this that the Jews do not say their prayers with their shoes on. The Prophet (peace be upon him), however, removed this misunderstanding, saying: Act in contrast to the practice of the Jews who do not say their prayers with their shoes or leather socks on. (Abu Daud). It does not, however, mean that one must say his prayers with the shoes on, but it is merely to make it lawful to say prayers with shoes on. This is confirmed by another tradition, related by Abu Daud from Amar bin Aas, that he had seen the Prophet (peace be upon him) saying his prayer both with and without the shoes. There are other traditions also to this effect but it should also be kept in mind that there were no carpets, mats, etc. in the mosques in those days, not even in the Prophet's (peace be upon him) Mosque. Therefore it would be improper to go with shoes on into the mosques of today which have carpets, mats, etc. However, one may say his prayer on grassy plots or open ground with shoes on.

8. In general, the commentators are of the opinion that Tuwa was the name of the valley, but according to some, it is the valley that had been made sacred for the time being.

وَاَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوْحٰى 13

(20:13) I Myself have chosen you; therefore, give ear to what is revealed.

اِنَّنِيْٓ اَنَا اللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِيْ ۙ وَاَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ لِذِكْرِيْ 14

(20:14) Verily I am Allah. There is no god beside Me. So serve Me and establish Prayers to remember Me.9

9. This is the real object of Salat. It has been prescribed to remind people that they should not become neglectful of Allah by worldly diversions and that they should remember that

man is not an unbridled free being but a servant of Allah. Salat has been prescribed five times a day to remind man of Allah's presence.

Some people are of the opinion that it means:

Establish Salat, so that I may remember you. Incidentally, according to this verse, if one forgets to offer a prayer in time, he should offer it when he recollects it. This is also supported by a tradition related by Anas: If one forgets to offer a certain prayer at the proper time, he should offer it whenever he recollects this, for there is no other expiation for this omission. (Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmed). There is another tradition related by Abu Hurairah to the same effect. It was inquired from the Prophet (peace be upon him): What should we do if we remained asleep during the time of prayer? The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: There is no sin if one remained asleep. The sin is that one should neglect his prayer intentionally while awake. Therefore if one forgets to offer a prayer or remained asleep, he should offer that prayer on remembering it or on awaking. (Tirmizi, Nasai, Abu Daud).

إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ أَكَادُ أُخْفِيهَا لِتُجْزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعَىٰ 15

(20:15) The Hour of Resurrection is coming. I have willed to keep the time of its coming hidden so that everyone may be recompensed in accordance with his effort.[10]

10. After Tauhid, the second thing that was revealed to all the Prophets was the reality of the Hereafter, and they were appointed to impart its knowledge to their peoples. Here its object has also been stated. The Hour of Resurrection is destined to come so that everyone should get the recompense in the Hereafter of what he did in this world, and that Hour has been kept secret to fulfill the requirement of the trial. For the one who believes in the Hereafter will always be on his guard against any deviation from the right way, and the one who does not believe in the coming of that Hour will remain engaged in other things, for he will think that he did not see any sign of the coming of the Hour.

فَلَا يَصُدَّنَّكَ عَنْهَا مَنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ فَتَرْدَىٰ 16

(20:16) Let him who does not believe in it and follows his lust not turn your thought away from it, lest you are ruined.

وَمَا تِلْكَ بِيَمِينِكَ يَا مُوسَىٰ 17

(20:17) And what is in your right hand, O Moses?"[11]

11. This question was not asked for the sake of getting any information, for Allah knew that Moses (peace be upon him) held a staff in his hand. The question was posed with a view to impressing upon him the fact that it was a staff so that he might be mentally prepared to see the miracle which was going to be performed with it.

قَالَ هِيَ عَصَايَ ۚ أَتَوَكَّؤُا عَلَيْهَا وَأَهُشُّ بِهَا عَلَىٰ غَنَمِي وَلِيَ فِيهَا مَآرِبُ أُخْرَىٰ 18

(20:18) Moses answered: "This is my staff. I lean on it (when I walk), and with it I beat down leaves for my flock, and I have many other uses for it."[12]

12. Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) deliberately prolonged his answer and did not stop at: It is my staff. This was because he naturally wanted to prolong the dialogue to make the privilege meeting last longer.

قَالَ أَلْقِهَا يَا مُوسَىٰ 19

(20:19) He said: "Moses, throw it down."

فَأَلْقَاهَا فَإِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعَىٰ 20

(20:20) So he threw it down, and lo! it was a rapidly moving snake.

قَالَ خُذْهَا وَلَا تَخَفْ ۖ سَنُعِيدُهَا سِيرَتَهَا الْأُولَىٰ 21

(20:21) Then He said: "Seize it and have no fear. We shall restore it to its former state.

وَاضْمُمْ يَدَكَ إِلَىٰ جَنَاحِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ ۖ آيَةً أُخْرَىٰ 22

(20:22) And place your hand in your armpit, it will come forth shining white, without blemish.[13] This is another Sign of Allah,

13. That is, your hand will shine brightly like the sun, but it will not cause any hurt to you. It is strange that the Bible interprets this miracle, saying that his hand was leprous as snow but it was turned again as his other flesh. The Talmud also interprets the miracle in the same way and adds that this was a miracle which was meant for Pharaoh who was suffering from leprosy. It is a pity that the same interpretation has been adopted by our own commentators, though the correct interpretation is the one that has been adopted by us, and many former commentators. Obviously, it is bad taste to attribute to a Prophet the repugnant miracle of leprosy and that, too, before a king in his court.

لِنُرِيَكَ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا الْكُبْرَى ۚ 23

(20:23) for We shall show you some of Our greatest Signs.

اذْهَبْ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ ۖ 24

(20:24) And go to Pharaoh now for he has transgressed all bounds."

قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي ۙ 25

(20:25) Moses said: "Lord! Open my breast for me;[14]

14. That is, fill my heart with the courage that may enable me to perform the obligations connected with the great mission of a Messenger, and give me the confidence for its fulfillment. Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) prayed for this because he realized the grave responsibilities of the great mission.

وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي ۙ 26

(20:26) and ease my task for me,

وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِّن لِّسَانِي ۙ 27

(20:27) and loosen the knot from my tongue

يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي ۖ 28

(20:28) so that they may understand my speech;[15]

15. Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) prayed to Allah for this because he was conscious that he was not a fluent speaker but was slow of speech. He also knew that as a Messenger he would have to be fluent in order to impress Pharaoh and his courtiers. This is confirmed by the Bible (Exodus 4: 10) but the Talmud gives a strange explanation for this impediment in his speech. According to it, when he was a child he burnt his tongue with a live coal to escape punishment from Pharaoh whose crown he had taken off from his head and put it on his own head. The same story has been adopted by many of our commentators though it is absurd on the face of it. Our interpretation is also confirmed by the Quran. The fact is, that at first he was not a fluent speaker and Pharaoh had also taunted him on this impediment. (Surah Az-Zukhruf, Ayat 52). Prophet Moses realized the same for he said: My brother Aaron is more fluent than me, so send him with me as a helper, so that he may support me (with his fluent speech). (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 34). Afterwards this impediment in his speech was removed and he was able to deliver very fluent speeches. This may be testified by his speeches which have been cited both in the Bible and in the Quran for they are masterpieces of eloquence and rhetoric.

Above all, it does not stand to reason that Allah should appoint a lisper or a stammerer or a stutterer as His Messenger. That is why the Messengers have always been the best of mankind in regard to their appearance, personality and capabilities for they had to be most impressive both in their appearance and conduct, so that they could not be made the target of ridicule and contempt by the people because of such personal defects as stammering or stuttering.

وَاجۡعَلۡ لِّىۡ وَزِيۡرًا مِّنۡ اَهۡلِىۡ ۙ 29

(20:29) and appoint for me, from my household, someone who will help me bear my burden -

هٰرُوۡنَ اَخِى ۙ 30

(20:30) Aaron, my brother.[16]

16. Prophet Aaron was three years older than Prophet Moses (peace be upon them). (Exodus7:7).

اشۡدُدۡ بِهٖۤ اَزۡرِىۡ ۙ 31

(20:31) Strengthen me through him

وَاَشۡرِكۡهُ فِىۡۤ اَمۡرِىۡ ۙ 32

(20:32) and let him share my task

كَىۡ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيۡرًا ۙ 33

(20:33) that we may abundantly extol Your glory;

وَّنَذۡكُرَكَ كَثِيۡرًا ؕ 34

(20:34) and may remember You much.

اِنَّكَ كُنۡتَ بِنَا بَصِيۡرًا 35

(20:35) Verily, You have always watched over us."

قَالَ قَدۡ اُوۡتِيۡتَ سُؤۡلَكَ يٰمُوۡسٰى 36

(20:36) He said: "Moses, your petition is granted.

وَلَقَدۡ مَنَنَّا عَلَيۡكَ مَرَّةً اُخۡرٰۤى ۙ 37

(20:37) We have again bestowed Our favour upon you.[17]

17. Allah recounts the favors He had shown to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) since his birth in order to impress upon him the fact that he had been brought up under divine care right from his birth for the purpose of appointing him as a Messenger. Here mere references have been made but in Surah Al-Qasas details of the favors have been given.

إِذْ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَىٰٓ أُمِّكَ مَا يُوحَىٰٓ ۙ 38

(20:38) Recall, when We indicated to your mother through inspiration:

أَنِ اقْذِفِيهِ فِي التَّابُوتِ فَاقْذِفِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ فَلْيُلْقِهِ الْيَمُّ بِالسَّاحِلِ يَأْخُذْهُ عَدُوٌّ لِّي وَعَدُوٌّ
لَّهُ ۚ وَأَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِّنِّي ۚ وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلَىٰ عَيْنِي ۘ 39

(20:39) 'Put the baby into a chest and then throw him in the river. The river will throw him up on the shore, and then an enemy of Mine and an enemy of his will take him.' And I spread My love over you in order that you might be reared in My sight.

إِذْ تَمْشِيٓ أُخْتُكَ فَتَقُولُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ مَن يَكْفُلُهُ ۖ فَرَجَعْنَاكَ إِلَىٰٓ أُمِّكَ كَيْ تَقَرَّ
عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ ۚ وَقَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا فَنَجَّيْنَاكَ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَفَتَنَّاكَ فُتُونًا ۚ فَلَبِثْتَ سِنِينَ فِيٓ
أَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ ۙ ثُمَّ جِئْتَ عَلَىٰ قَدَرٍ يَا مُوسَىٰ 40

(20:40) Recall, when your sister went along, saying: 'Shall I direct you to one who will take charge of him?' Thus We brought you back to your mother so that her heart might be gladdened and she might not grieve. Moses, recall when you slew a person. We delivered you from distress and made you go through several trials. Then you stayed for several years among the people of Midian, and now you have come at the right moment as ordained.

وَاصْطَنَعْتُكَ لِنَفْسِي ۚ 41

(20:41) I have chosen you for My service.

اذْهَبْ أَنتَ وَأَخُوكَ بِآيَاتِي وَلَا تَنِيَا فِي ذِكْرِي ۚ 42

(20:42) So go forth, both you and your brother, with My Signs, and do not slacken in remembering Me.

اِذۡهَبَاۤ اِلٰى فِرۡعَوۡنَ اِنَّهٗ طَغٰى ۚ 43

(20:43) Go both of you to Pharaoh, for he has transgressed all bounds,

فَقُوۡلَا لَهٗ قَوۡلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهٗ يَتَذَكَّرُ اَوۡ يَخۡشٰى 44

(20:44) and speak to him gently, perhaps he may take heed or fear (Allah)."[18]

18. The only two ways of bringing a man to the right way are: (1) To convince him by argument and admonition, or (2) To warn him of the consequences of deviation.

قَالَا رَبَّنَاۤ اِنَّنَا نَخَافُ اَنۡ يَّفۡرُطَ عَلَيۡنَاۤ اَوۡ اَنۡ يَّطۡغٰى 45

(20:45) The two said:"[18a] Lord! We fear he may commit excesses against us, or transgress all bounds."

18a. It appears that they implored Allah thus before going before Pharaoh when Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had reached Egypt and Aaron had joined him in the propagation of the mission.

قَالَ لَا تَخَافَاۤ اِنَّنِىۡ مَعَكُمَاۤ اَسۡمَعُ وَاَرٰى 46

(20:46) He said: "Have no fear. I am with you, hearing and seeing all.

فَاۡتِيٰهُ فَقُوۡلَاۤ اِنَّا رَسُوۡلَا رَبِّكَ فَاَرۡسِلۡ مَعَنَا بَنِىۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ ۬ؕ وَلَا تُعَذِّبۡهُمۡ ؕ قَدۡ جِئۡنٰكَ بِاٰيَةٍ مِّنۡ رَّبِّكَ ؕ وَالسَّلٰمُ عَلٰى مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الۡهُدٰى 47

(20:47) So, go to him, and say: 'Behold, both of us are the Messengers of your Lord. Let the Children of Israel go with us, and do not chastise them. We have come to you with a sign from your Lord; and peace shall be for him who follows the true guidance.

اِنَّا قَدۡ اُوۡحِىَ اِلَيۡنَاۤ اَنَّ الۡعَذَابَ عَلٰى مَنۡ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلّٰى 48

(20:48) It has been revealed to us that chastisement awaits those who called the lie to the truth and turned away from it.' "[19]

19. A comparative study of this incident as given in the Bible and the Talmud will show that the Quran does not copy the stories from these books, but gives its own version in order to portray the Messengers in their true glory and dignity. According to the Bible, when God said to Moses (peace be upon him) that He would send him to Pharaoh, Moses (peace be

upon him) replied: Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? (Exodus 3: 11). God persuaded and encouraged Moses (peace be upon him) by giving him signs but he was still reluctant and said: O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send. (Exodus 4: 13). And the Talmud goes even further than this and says that there was an argument between God and Moses (peace be upon him) for seven days that he should become a Prophet but Moses (peace be upon him) did not accept the offer. At this God was angry with him and so made his brother Aaron (peace be upon him) a partner in his Prophethood. Moreover, He deprived the descendants of Moses (peace be upon him) of the office of priesthood and bestowed it on the descendants of Aaron (peace be upon him). These two versions depict Allah to be suffering from human weaknesses and Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) from inferiority complex.

قَالَ فَمَنْ رَّبُّكُمَا يٰمُوْسٰى 49

(20:49) Pharaoh[20] said:" Moses![21] Who is the Lord of the two of you?"

20. Here the details have been omitted. These have been given in (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats: 103-108); (Surah Ash- Shuara, Ayats 10-33); (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayats 28-40); (Surah An-Naziat, Ayats 15-25) . As regards to the necessary information about Pharaoh, see (E.N. 85 of Surah Al-Aaraf).

21. Pharaoh addressed Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) because he was, in regards to Prophethood, the senior of the two. It is also possible that he deliberately addressed him in order to exploit his impediment in speech, and ignored Prophet Aaron (peace be upon him), who was more fluent.

As regards to the implication of this question of Pharaoh, he meant to say: You say that you have brought a message from my Lord to me. Who is that Lord? You should know that I am the Lord of Egypt and the people of Egypt. In regards to this claim of his, see (Surah An-Naziat, Ayat 24); (Surah Az-Zukhruf, Ayat 51); (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 38) and (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayat 29).

It may also be noted that by this claim Pharaoh did not mean to say that he was the sole deity of his people nor did it mean that none other was worshiped in Egypt. As a matter of fact, he himself based his right of sovereignty on his claim of being the incarnation of the sun god. And we also learn from the history of Egypt that there were many other gods and goddesses. In fact, what he claimed was that he was politically the Lord of not only Egypt but also of the whole of mankind theoretically. Therefore, he would not acknowledge that there was any supreme sovereign over him whose delegate might bring an order to him and demand its obedience from him.

قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِيْٓ اَعْطٰى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهٗ ثُمَّ هَدٰى 50

(20:50) He said: "Our Lord is He[22] Who gave everything its form and then guided it."[23]

22. That is, we acknowledge Him alone as our Lord in every sense. He is our Sustainer, our Maker, our Master, our Sovereign and is Supreme in everything, and there is no other lord in any sense but Him.

23. This concise sentence needs serious attention. It means that it is Allah alone Who has created everything and given it its distinctive structure, form, capabilities, characteristics, etc.

(1) For instance, man has been given the hands and feet which are given the most appropriate structure that was needed for their right functioning.

(2) A human being, an animal, a plant, mineral and the like, air, water and light, everything has been given that particular form which was needed for its right functioning in the universe.

(3) Then He has guided everything aright to function properly. It is He Who has taught everything the way to fulfill that object for which it has been created. He has taught the ear to hear and the eye to see, the fish to swim and the bird to fly; the earth to grow vegetation and the tree to blossom and bear fruit. In short, He is not only the Creator of everything but also its Guide and Teacher.

Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) employed this concise and meaningful sentence to convey the message to Pharaoh and his people. He not only gave a suitable reply to Pharaoh as to who his Lord was, but also told him why He was his Lord, and how there was no other lord but God. The argument implied in it was this: As Pharaoh and every one of his subjects was obliged to Allah for his human form and could not live even for a moment without the functioning of the different parts of his body which were performing their functions in accordance with the guidance of Allah, so Pharaoh's claim that he was the lord of the people was absurd, and its acknowledgment by his people that he was their lord, a folly.

Besides this, Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) also hinted at the need of Prophethood which was denied by Pharaoh. When Allah guides everything in the universe, He has also to fulfill the need of the guidance of mankind. Whereas the guidance of the animals and birds has been provided by instinct, the guidance of rational human beings has been provided by sending Messengers who appealed to them by rational arguments.

قَالَ فَمَا بَالُ الْقُرُونِ الْأُولَىٰ 51

(20:51) Pharaoh asked: "Then, what is the state of the former generations?"[24]

24. The question posed by Pharaoh was very subtle. He meant to say: If there is no other lord than the One Who has given a distinctive form to everyone, then what will be the position of our forefathers who had been worshiping other deities since centuries? Were all those people in error? Did all of them deserve torment? Did they all lack common sense? Thus Pharaoh perhaps wanted to give vent to his anger against Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) for showing disrespect to his forefathers. At the same time he also wanted to incite his courtiers and the common people of Egypt against the message of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). And this trick has always been used against the people who propagate the truth and has always proved very effective to incite those people who lack common

sense. This same trick has been mentioned here for it was being employed at the very time against the Prophet (peace be upon him) by the people of Makkah.

قَالَ عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّيْ فِيْ كِتٰبٍ ۚ لَا يَضِلُّ رَبِّيْ وَلَا يَنْسَى ۙ 52

(20:52) Moses said: "Its knowledge is with my Lord, recorded in the Book. My Lord does not err, nor does He forget."[25]

25. This answer is full of wisdom. If Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had said: Yes, they all lacked common sense and had gone astray and would become the fuel of Hell, this answer, though true, would have served the very purpose Pharaoh had in mind in putting the question. But the answer given by the Prophet was true and it frustrated the trick of Pharaoh as well. His answer was to this effect: Well, those people have now gone before their Lord, and I have no means of judging their deeds and intentions. However, their whole record is safe and secure with Allah, and nothing can escape Him. Allah alone knows how to deal with them. What concerns you and me is our own position and attitude to life. We should be more concerned about our own end than of those who have already passed away into Allah's presence.

الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ مَهْدًا وَّسَلَكَ لَكُمْ فِيْهَا سُبُلًا وَّاَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً ؕ

فَاَخْرَجْنَا بِهٖۤ اَزْوَاجًا مِّنْ نَّبَاتٍ شَتّٰى 53

(20:53) He[26] it is Who spread the earth for you; and made in it paths for you, and sent down water from the sky, and then through it We brought forth many species of diverse plants.

26. It is quite obvious that (Ayats 53-55)are an addition by Allah to the foregoing answer by Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). There are other instances of this in the Quran that Allah added a few sentences to the speech of someone by way of admonition. Moreover, it is connected not only with the preceding verse but also with the whole reply of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). (Ayats 50-52).

كُلُوْا وَارْعَوْا اَنْعَامَكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّاُولِي النُّهٰى ؕ 54

(20:54) So eat yourself and pasture your cattle. Surely there are many Signs in this for people of understanding.[27]

27. That is, those who use their common sense in their search for the truth, find a way to the reality by the help of these signs, which clearly show that the universe has One Lord Who alone is sustaining it, and there is no room here for any other lord.

مِنۡهَا خَلَقۡنٰكُمۡ وَفِيۡهَا نُعِيۡدُكُمۡ وَمِنۡهَا نُخۡرِجُكُمۡ تَارَةً اُخۡرٰى 55

(20:55) From this very earth We created you and to the same earth We shall cause you to return, and from it We shall bring you forth to life again.[28]

28. That is, every man has to pass through three stages: (1) From birth to death. (2) From death to Resurrection, and (3) From the Day of Resurrection to Eternity. According to this verse, all the three stages will take place on this earth.

وَلَقَدۡ اَرَيۡنٰهُ اٰيٰتِنَا كُلَّهَا فَكَذَّبَ وَاَبٰى 56

(20:56) Indeed We showed Pharaoh Our Signs,[29] all of them, but he declared them to be false and rejected them.

29. "Signs" comprised those arguments which were based on natural phenomena and human life and those miracles which were given to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). These arguments are contained in the speeches of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) which he delivered before Pharaoh, and the miracles which he showed and are mentioned at several places in the Quran.

قَالَ اَجِئۡتَنَا لِتُخۡرِجَنَا مِنۡ اَرۡضِنَا بِسِحۡرِكَ يٰمُوۡسٰى 57

(20:57) He said: "Have you come to us to drive us out of our land by your sorcery?[30]

30. Here by sorcery are meant the miracles of the staff and the shining hand, which according to the details given in Surahs Al-Aaraf and Ash-Shuara, were shown to Pharaoh by Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) in his first visit to his court. On seeing these miracles Pharaoh was so upset that he cried out: Have you come to drive us out of our country by the power of your sorcery? Although he knew that it had never happened in history that a magician had conquered a country by the power of sorcery. Moreover, there were hundreds of magicians in his own country, who used to show their feats to earn rewards and prizes. Accordingly, Pharaoh's statement that "you are a sorcerer" on the one hand, and his apprehension that "you want to snatch my kingdom" on the other, were a clear indication of his perturbed mind. In fact, Pharaoh had come to understand that the well reasoned speech of Moses and his miracles were bound to influence not only his courtiers, but also the common people and accordingly he tried to play upon their prejudices through falsehood and treachery. He did not admit that it was a miracle, but called it sorcery. He wanted to create an impression that any sorcerer of his empire could turn a staff into a serpent. He also incited the people, saying: Look, he says that your forefathers were on the wrong way and deserved perdition. So beware of him, he is not a Prophet. He simply aspires for power. He wants that the Israelites should again capture power here like the times of Joseph and wrest the reigns of government from the Copts. Pharaoh, in fact, wanted to suppress the invitation to the truth through such devices. (For details please see (E.Ns 87-89 of Surah Al-Aaraf); (E.N. 75 of Surah Younus).

فَلَنَأْتِيَنَّكَ بِسِحْرٍ مِّثْلِهِ فَاجْعَلْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَّا نُخْلِفُهُ نَحْنُ وَلَا أَنتَ مَكَانًا

سُوًى 58

(20:58) We shall confront you with a sorcery like your own. So appoint a day when both of us might meet face to face in an open space; an appointment which neither we nor you shall fail to keep."

قَالَ مَوْعِدُكُمْ يَوْمُ الزِّينَةِ وَأَن يُحْشَرَ النَّاسُ ضُحًى 59

(20:59) Moses said: "The appointment to meet you is on the Day of the Feast and let all people come together before noon."[31]

31. The object of Pharaoh was this: Once the sorcerers are able to transform the staffs and ropes into serpents, the entire effect of the miracle performed by Moses (peace be upon him) would disappear from the people's minds. That was exactly to Moses' (peace be upon him) advantage, who suggested that it was no good fixing an ordinary day or place for the purpose. The Day of the Feast was at hand. People would flock on that occasion from all corners of the empire. Therefore, the encounter should be held in the open so that all might witness it, and in the day time so that everyone should be able to see it clearly.

فَتَوَلَّىٰ فِرْعَوْنُ فَجَمَعَ كَيْدَهُ ثُمَّ أَتَىٰ 60

(20:60) Pharaoh went back and concerted all his stratagem and returned for the encounter.[32]

32. Pharaoh and his courtiers considered the coming encounter as a decisive one as far as their own future was concerned and, therefore, they attached the utmost importance to it. Courtiers were sent throughout the country to muster round all the magicians wherever available. People were especially encouraged to come in the largest numbers to witness the magic skills so as to keep them immune from the awe inspired by the staff of Moses (peace be upon him). It was openly said that the fate of their religion hinged on the skill of their magicians. Their religion could survive only if they won, otherwise the religion of Moses (peace be upon him) would have its sway see (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayat 34-51).

Here one should bear in mind the fact that the religion of the royal family and the elite of Egypt was much different from that of the common people. They had separate gods and temples and different creeds and concepts about the life after death. They also differed in the practice of religion as well as in the ideologies. (Toynbee: A Study of History: Somervell's Abridgment Vols. I-VI, pp. 31-32). Moreover, there were sufficiently strong pockets of the population, who under the influence of various religious upheavals, were prone to prefer Monotheism to a creed of polytheism. Besides this, there was also a fairly large element of the worshipers of One God for the Israelites and their fellow believers were at least ten per cent of the total population. Pharaoh also remembered that about 150 years

earlier a religious revolution had been brought about by Pharaoh Amenophis IV or Akhenaton (1377-1360 B.C.) by military force, which had abolished all deities except Aton, a single, universal god, which was worshiped by the king and his family. Though this religious revolution had been reversed later by another king, yet its influence retrained, and Pharaoh dreaded that Moses (peace be upon him) might bring about yet another revolution.

قَالَ لَهُمْ مُّوْسٰى وَيْلَكُمْ لَا تَفْتَرُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا فَيُسْحِتَكُمْ بِعَذَابٍ ۚ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنِ
افْتَرٰى 61

(20:61) (At the time of the encounter) Moses said to them:[33] "Woe to you! Do not invent falsehoods against Allah[34] lest He destroy you with a scourge. Surely those who invent lies shall come to grief."

33. The adversaries whom Prophet Moses addressed were Pharaoh and his courtiers who had dubbed him as a sorcerer, and not the common people, who had yet to see the encounter between him and the magicians.

34. The inventing of lie was that they had dubbed Allah's Messenger as a sorcerer and his miracles as a piece of sorcery.

فَتَنَازَعُوْٓا اَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ وَاَسَرُّوا النَّجْوٰى 62

(20:62) Thereupon they wrangled among themselves about the matter and conferred in secret.[35]

35. This shows that those people felt in their hearts that their position was weak and knew that the miracle shown by Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was not a piece of magic. Therefore, they had come for the encounter with hesitation and fear. But when the timely, sudden warning of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) shook them to the core, they began to debate the wisdom of holding the encounter on the Feast Day in an open place in the broad day light. For they thought that if they were defeated in the presence of the common people, all would come to know of the difference between magic and a miracle and they would lose the battle once for all.

قَالُوْٓا اِنْ هٰذٰنِ لَسٰحِرٰنِ يُرِيْدٰنِ اَنْ يُّخْرِجٰكُمْ مِّنْ اَرْضِكُمْ بِسِحْرِهِمَا وَيَذْهَبَا
بِطَرِيْقَتِكُمُ الْمُثْلٰى 63

(20:63) Some of them said:[36] "These two are magicians, who want to drive you out of your land with their magic and to destroy your excellent way of life.[37]

36. Those who were of this view must have been a few fanatics of Pharaoh's party who were prepared to go to any extent to oppose Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). Those people must have been preparing the public for a determined encounter, while the reasonable people among them must have been advising caution and restraint.

37. Probably those people based their argument on two things:

(1) If their magicians would be able to turn their staffs into serpents, it would be a clear proof that Moses (peace be upon him) was a sorcerer.

(2) If, on the other hand, Moses (peace be upon him) won, the rulers would lose their country, and their ideal way of life, which reflected their culture, their arts, their civilization, their recreations, etc. would automatically come to an end. Therefore they should do all they could to defeat Moses (peace be upon him).

فَأَجْمِعُوا كَيْدَكُمْ ثُمَّ ائْتُوا صَفًّا ۚ وَقَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْيَوْمَ مَنِ اسْتَعْلَىٰ 64

(20:64) So muster all your stratagem and come forth in a row.[38] Whoever prevails today shall triumph."

38. They also urged them to present a united front and not to show their differences on the very occasion of the encounter. For, they argued, any hesitation and secret consultation before the very eyes of the public would show that they did not consider themselves to be in the right.

قَالُوا يَا مُوسَىٰ إِمَّا أَنْ تُلْقِيَ وَإِمَّا أَنْ نَكُونَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ أَلْقَىٰ 65

(20:65) The magicians[39] said: "Moses, will you throw down or shall we be the first to throw?"

39. That confidence was subsequently restored among Pharaoh's party by the speech of the head-strong people, and the magicians were asked to come into the field for the encounter.

قَالَ بَلْ أَلْقُوا ۖ فَإِذَا حِبَالُهُمْ وَعِصِيُّهُمْ يُخَيَّلُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ سِحْرِهِمْ أَنَّهَا تَسْعَىٰ 66

(20:66) Moses replied: "No, let it be you to throw first." Then suddenly it appeared to Moses, owing to their magic,[40] as if their ropes and staffs were running.

40. In (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 116), it was stated: When they threw down their devices they bewitched the eyes of the people and filled their hearts with terror. Here it is stated that it was not the common people alone who were terrified by their magic but Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) also suffered from its effect. He not only seemed to see that the staffs and cords were running about like serpents but he also felt a dread of them.

فَأَوْجَسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ خِيفَةً مُّوسَىٰ 67

(20:67) So Moses' heart was filled with fear.[41]

41. It appears that no sooner did Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) say: Cast down, the magicians immediately cast their staffs and cords and it seemed as if hundreds of serpents were running towards him, and he instinctively felt a dread of them. And there is nothing strange in this because a Prophet is after all a human being. Besides this, it is also possible that Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) apprehended that the demonstration of the magic might create a misunderstanding among the people about his miracle. This is also a proof that a Prophet too can be influenced by magic to a certain extent like the common people, though magicians have no power to produce any effect on his Prophethood or interfere with revelation, or misguide him. Therefore there is no reason why one should consider as false those traditions in which it has been stated that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) suffered temporarily from the effect of magic.

قُلْنَا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْأَعْلَىٰ 68

(20:68) We said to him: "Have no fear; for it is you who will prevail.

وَأَلْقِ مَا فِي يَمِينِكَ تَلْقَفْ مَا صَنَعُوا ۖ إِنَّمَا صَنَعُوا كَيْدُ سَاحِرٍ ۖ وَلَا يُفْلِحُ السَّاحِرُ حَيْثُ أَتَىٰ 69

(20:69) And throw down what is in your right hand; it will swallow up all that they have wrought. They have wrought only a magician's stratagem.[42] A magician cannot come to any good, come whence he may."

42. This is capable of two interpretations:

(1) The staff, which was turned into a dragon by a miracle, actually swallowed up all the staffs and cords which had been made to appear as serpents.

(2) The dragon of the staff did not actually swallow up the serpents of the magicians but wiped out the effect of their magic from these things and they again became ordinary cords and staffs.

We prefer the second interpretation because the wording of (Surahs Al-Aaraf, Ayat 117) and (Ash-Shuara, Ayat 45) is this: It swallowed up their false magic. And here the wording is: It will swallow up what they have crafted. Obviously, the staffs and cords were not their creation but the magic which had made them appear like serpents.

فَأُلْقِيَ السَّحَرَةُ سُجَّدًا قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّ هٰرُونَ وَمُوسَىٰ 70

(20:70) Eventually the magicians were impelled to fall down prostrate[43] and said: "We believe in the Lord of Moses and Aaron."[44]

43. When they saw the power of the staff of Moses (peace be upon him), they involuntarily fell prostrate as if someone had made them do so, because they were convinced that it was a miracle and not a feat of magic.

44. This profession of faith by the magicians shows that everyone was aware of the basic object of the encounter. It was not an encounter between the feats of the magicians and those of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), but it was to decide whether the claim of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) that he was a Messenger of Allah was true or not. If this staff was actually turned into a dragon, it was by means of a miracle. On the other hand, Pharaoh intended to prove by the feats of his magicians that it was not a miracle but a feat of magic. Incidentally, this also shows that Pharaoh and his magicians and the common people fully understood the distinction between a miracle and a feat of magic. ,That is why when the magicians saw that it was a miracle shown by the power of Allah which had exposed their magic, they did not say that Moses (peace be upon him) was a more skillful magician, but straightway fell prostrate, saying: We believe in the Lord of Aaron and Moses.

It is obvious that the defeat turned the tables on Pharaoh who had himself arranged the encounter to expose Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). He had mustered all his magicians with a view to demonstrating before the public that there was nothing extraordinary in turning a staff into a serpent for this could be done by any magician. But the defeat of the magicians and their acknowledgment testified that Moses (peace be upon him) was really a Messenger of Allah and the transformation of the staff was not a feat of magic but a miracle.

قَالَ آمَنتُمْ لَهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ آذَنَ لَكُمْ ۖ إِنَّهُ لَكَبِيرُكُمُ الَّذِي عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ ۚ فَلَأُقَطِّعَنَّ
أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُم مِّنْ خِلَافٍ وَلَأُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ فِي جُذُوعِ النَّخْلِ ۖ وَلَتَعْلَمُنَّ أَيُّنَا أَشَدُّ
عَذَابًا وَأَبْقَىٰ 71

(20:71) Pharaoh said: "What! Did you believe in Him even before I permitted you to do so? Surely, he must be your chief who taught you magic.[45] Now I will certainly cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides,[46] and will crucify you on the trunks of palm-trees,[47] and then you will come to know which of us can inflict sterner and more lasting torment."[48]

45. In(Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat, 123), it has been stated: Indeed it was a plot you conspired in the city to deprive the rightful owners of their power. Here the same thing has been further explained, as if to say: It is not merely a plot between you and him but it appears that Moses

is your master and leader. You conspired beforehand that you would be defeated by your master in the encounter to prove that he was a Messenger who had shown the miracle of the staff to frustrate your magic and bring about a political revolution in the country.

46. That is, right hand and left foot or vice versa.

47. This was a very cruel way of punishment in ancient times. They fixed a long pole in the ground or used the trunk of a tree for this purpose. Then a piece of wood was tied across it at the top. Then the hands of the criminal were nailed on to it and he was left hanging there for hours to die a slow, painful death.

48. This was the last trick played by Pharaoh to win the losing game. He held out the threat of a cruel punishment in order to coerce them to admit that there really was a conspiracy between Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and them against the kingdom. But the fortitude and determination of the magicians turned the tables on him. The very fact that, they were ready to endure the terrible punishment proved to the world that they had sincerely believed in the Prophethood of Moses (peace be upon him) and that the charge of conspiracy was an impudent trick that had been invented as a device.

قَالُوْا لَنْ نُّؤْثِرَكَ عَلٰى مَا جَآءَنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنٰتِ وَالَّذِىْ فَطَرَنَا فَاقْضِ مَآ اَنْتَ قَاضٍ ؕ اِنَّمَا
تَقْضِىْ هٰذِهِ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا ؕ 72

(20:72) The magicians answered: "By Him Who has created us, we shall never prefer you to the Truth after manifest Signs have come to us.[49] So decree whatever you will. Your decree will pertain, at the most, to the present life of the world.

49. It may also be interpreted like this: It cannot be that we should prefer you to these plain signs which have come before us and to that Being Who has created us.

اِنَّآ اٰمَنَّا بِرَبِّنَا لِيَغْفِرَ لَنَا خَطٰيٰنَا وَمَآ اَكْرَهْتَنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنَ السِّحْرِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ خَيْرٌ وَّاَبْقٰى 73

(20:73) We believe in our Lord that He may forgive us our sins and also forgive us the practice of magic to which you had compelled us. Allah is the Best and He alone will abide."

اِنَّهٗ مَنْ يَّاْتِ رَبَّهٗ مُجْرِمًا فَاِنَّ لَهٗ جَهَنَّمَ ۚ لَا يَمُوْتُ فِيْهَا وَلَا يَحْيٰى 74

(20:74) The truth is[50] that Hell awaits him who comes to his Lord laden with sin; he shall neither die in it nor live.[51]

50. This is a saying of Allah, which has been added to the foregoing words of the magicians.

51. This is the most terrible of all the punishments that have been mentioned in the Quran. The criminal will prefer death to the horrible life in Hell, but death will not come to him. He will remain in that state of agony without any hope of relief from it.

وَمَنْ يَّاْتِهٖ مُؤْمِنًا قَدْ عَمِلَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمُ الدَّرَجٰتُ الْعُلٰى ۙ 75

(20:75) But he who comes to Him with faith and righteous works shall be exalted to high ranks,

جَنّٰتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۭ وَذٰلِكَ جَزٰٓؤُا مَنْ تَزَكّٰى ۧ 76

(20:76) and shall live for ever in everlasting Gardens beneath which rivers flow. Such will be the reward of those who purify themselves.

وَلَقَدْ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلٰى مُوْسٰٓى ۙ اَنْ اَسْرِ بِعِبَادِيْ فَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ طَرِيْقًا فِي الْبَحْرِ يَبَسًا ۙ لَّا تَخٰفُ دَرَكًا وَّلَا تَخْشٰى 77

(20:77) Most certainly We[52] revealed to Moses: "Proceed with My servants in the night and strike for them a dry path in the sea.[53] Have no fear of being overtaken, nor be afraid of treading through the sea."

52. Here the details of the events which happened during the long period of Prophet Moses'(peace be upon him) stay in Egypt have been omitted. For these please see (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 130-147), (Surah Younus, Ayats 83-92); (Surah Al-Momin, Ayats 23-50) and (Surah Az-Zukhuruf 46-56).

53. This happened when God at last appointed a night for the exodus of the Israelites and the other Muslims from Egypt. They were asked to gather at a fixed place and set forth as a caravan. Just at the time when they reached the coast of the Red Sea from where they had to cross to the Sinai Peninsula, Pharaoh arrived there with a large army in their pursuit. We learn from (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 61-63) that when they were literally between the army and the deep sea, Allah commanded Moses (peace be upon him) to smite the sea with his staff and according to this verse the sea split and stood like two high walls on both sides, leaving a dry path between them for the caravan to pass. Thus, it is quite clear and plain that it was a miracle, and not the result of a wind storm or tide, for when the water rises in this way it does not remain standing like two high walls, leaving a dry path between them. (For details see (E.N. 47 of Surah Ash-Shuara).

فَاَتْبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ بِجُنُوْدِهٖ فَغَشِيَهُمْ مِّنَ الْيَمِّ مَا غَشِيَهُمْ ۭ 78

(20:78) Pharaoh pursued them with his hosts, but they were fully overwhelmed by the sea.[54]

54. According to(Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 64-66), Pharaoh with his hosts followed the caravan on the dry path and they all were drowned. In Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 50, it has been stated that the Israelites had reached the other shore and saw them drowning in the sea. From (Surah Younus, Ayats 90-92), we learn that Pharaoh professed to believe in God while he was drowning but this was rejected by God and he was told that his dead body would he preserved for the coming generations to serve as a lesson for them.

وَاَضَلَّ فِرْعَوْنُ قَوْمَهٗ وَمَا هَدٰى 79

(20:79) Pharaoh led his people astray; he did not guide them aright.[55]

55. This was a subtle warning to the disbelievers of Makkah, as if to say: Your chiefs and leaders are leading you on the same way on which Pharaoh led his people. Now you can see yourselves that he did not guide them aright.

In conclusion, it will be worthwhile to consider the version as given in the Bible, for this will make it plain that it is absolutely false and ridiculous to say that the Quran has copied these stories from the Israelite traditions. We learn from Exodus the following:

(1) According to 4: 2-5, the miracle of the staff was given to Prophet Moses, and in 4:17 he was instructed: And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs, but according to 7: 9, the same rod was transferred to Prophet Aaron and then it remained with him to work miracles.

(2) The first dialogue between Prophet Moses and Pharaoh has been given in Chapter 5, but there is no mention in it whatever of the doctrine of Tauhid was presented by Moses. In answer to Pharaoh's question: Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, Moses and Aaron merely said: The God of the Hebrews hath met with us. (5: 2-3).

(3) The encounter with the magicians has been summed up in a few sentences thus: And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent. And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the Lord had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. (7: 8-12).

When we compare this with the version of it in the Quran, it becomes obvious that the description in the Bible lacks the real essence of the whole encounter, for it does not mention that the encounter took place on the Day of the Feast in the open as a result of a regular challenge, and there is no mention at all that the magicians became believers in the Lord of Moses and Aaron and remained steadfast in their faith even in face of terrible threats.

(4) According to the Quran, Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) demanded full freedom and liberty for the Israelites, but according to the Bible his demand was only this: Let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God. (5:3).

(5) In Chapters 11 to 14, the details of the events concerning the exodus from Egypt to the drowning of Pharaoh have been given. Though these contain some useful information and details about the events which have been briefly described in the Quran, they contain some strange contradictions as well. For instance, in 14:15-16 the staff (rod) again comes into the hands of Prophet Moses, who is commanded: Lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it, and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. But in vv. 21-22, it is said: And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground. And the waters were a wall unto them, on their right hand, and on their left. It is not clear whether the sea was divided by a miracle or by a strong east wind which incidentally has never been known to divide the sea into two parts leaving a dry path between them.

It will also be worthwhile to make a study of these events as given in the Talmud. The Talmudic account differs from the Biblical version but is nearer to the one given in the Quran. A comparative study of the two clearly shows that the one is based on direct revelation from Allah and the other on centuries old oral traditions which have been handed down from one generation to the other and thus considerably tampered with. (See H. Polano: The Talmud Selections, pp. 150-154).

يٰبَنِيٓ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ قَدۡ اَنۡجَيۡنٰكُمۡ مِّنۡ عَدُوِّكُمۡ وَوٰعَدۡنٰكُمۡ جَانِبَ الطُّوۡرِ الۡاَيۡمَنَ وَنَزَّلۡنَا

عَلَيۡكُمُ الۡمَنَّ وَالسَّلۡوٰى 80

(20:80) Children of Israel![56] We saved you from your enemy and made a covenant with you on the right side of the Mount[57] [58] and sent down on you manna and quails,[59]

56. The part of the story relating to their journey from the Red Sea to the foot of Mount Toor has been omitted. This has already been given in (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 138-147). It has also been stated there that the Israelites said to Moses: O Moses, make a god for us like the gods these people have. See (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 138 and its E.N. 98).

57. That is, on the eastern side of Toor.

58. According to (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 51) and (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 142), Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and the chiefs of the Israelites were summoned to Mount Toor for receiving the divine commandments on stone tablets for the guidance of the people. See (E.N. 71 of Surah Al-Baqarah).

59. For details please see (E.N. 73 of Surah Al-Baqarah)and (E.N. 119 of Surah Al-Aaraf). According to the Bible, manna and salva started being provided to the Israelites when they

were passing through the wilderness between Elim and Sinai. According to Exodus, manna and salva were sent down thus.

And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat. And the house of Israel called the name thereof manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. (16: 13-15, 31).

In Numbers, the following details have been given:

And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil. And when the dew fell upon the camp in the bight, the manna fell upon it. (11: 8-9).

كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا فِيْهِ فَيَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبِيْ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّحْلِلْ عَلَيْهِ غَضَبِيْ فَقَدْ هَوٰى 81

(20:81) saying: "Partake of the good things that We have provided for you, but do not transgress lest My wrath fall upon you; for he upon whom My wrath falls is ruined.

وَاِنِّيْ لَغَفَّارٌ لِّمَنْ تَابَ وَاٰمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدٰى 82

(20:82) But I am indeed Most Forgiving to him who repents and believes and does righteous works and keeps to the Right Way."[60]

60. According to this (verse 82), there are four conditions for forgiveness:

(1) Repentance: to refrain from rebellion, disobedience, shirk or disbelief.

(2) Faith: sincere belief in Allah and the Messenger and the Book and the Hereafter.

(3) Righteous works: to do good deeds according to the instructions of Allah and His Messenger.

(4) Guidance: to follow the right way steadfastly and to refrain from straying into any wrong path.

وَمَآ اَعْجَلَكَ عَنْ قَوْمِكَ يٰمُوْسٰى 83

(20:83) "But, O Moses,[61] what has made you come in haste from your people?"[62]

61. From here the same account is resumed that was interrupted by the parenthesis (Ayats 81-82). The Israelites were told to stay on the right side of Mount Toor, and they would be given the commandments after forty days.

62. This shows that in his eagerness to see his Lord as soon as possible, Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had left them in the way and reached the meeting place alone. For the details of that meeting the reader should see (Surah Al- Aaraf, Ayats 143-145). Here only that portion has been mentioned which is connected with the calf-worship by the Israelites. This has been stated here to bring home to the disbelievers of Makkah how idol-worship starts and how deeply a Prophet of Allah is concerned about this evil.

قَالَ هُمْ أُولَآءِ عَلَىٰٓ أَثَرِى وَعَجِلْتُ إِلَيْكَ رَبِّ لِتَرْضَىٰ 84

(20:84) He said: "They are close behind me, and I hastened to You, Lord, that You may be pleased with me."

قَالَ فَإِنَّا قَدْ فَتَنَّا قَوْمَكَ مِنۢ بَعْدِكَ وَأَضَلَّهُمُ السَّامِرِىُّ 85

(20:85) Said He: "Verily We tested your people in your absence and the Samiri[63] led them astray."

63. It is obvious from the last Arabic letter 'ya' that Samiri was not the proper name of the person, for this Arabic letter is always added to show a person's connection with his race or clan or place. Moreover, the prefix al (definite article 'the') in the original Arabic text clearly denotes that the Samiri was a particular man from among many other persons of the same race or clan or place, who had propagated the worship of the golden calf. In fact, this does not require any further explanation than this, but this has been necessitated because many Christian missionaries and the Western Orientalists have tried to criticize the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Quran on this account. They say, (God forbid,) "This is a proof of the grievous ignorance of history on the part of Muhammad (peace be upon him), the author of the Quran, and is one of the anachronisms of the Quran. They base this absurd criticism on the assumption that this Samiri was the inhabitant of Samaria, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Israel, which was built in 925 B.C. long after this happening; then centuries after this, a generation of the Samaritans came into existence as a result of inter-marriage between the Israelites and the non-Israelites. As the Samaritans worshiped the golden calf, the critics accuse the Prophet (peace be upon him) of inventing this story on the basis of mere hearsay. They say that the Prophet (peace be upon him) might have heard something like this from the neighboring Jews and inserted it in the Quran. That is not all. They also criticize that Haman who was a courtier of Cyrus has been mentioned in the Quran as a minister of Pharaoh. It is a pity that these so called scholars seem to think that in the ancient times there used to be only one person bearing one name in a clan or a place, and there was absolutely no possibility of another person or persons having the same name. They do not know, or pretend they do not know, that during the time of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), a famous people known as the Sumerians inhabited Iraq and the neighboring regions, and it is just possible that during the time of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) there were some people known as the Samiris who might have migrated to Egypt from Iraq. Besides this,

according to the Bible (1 Kings, 16: 24), Samaria itself was built on a hill which was bought from Shemer and named Samaria after him. This is a clear proof that there were people named Shemer (or Sumer) even before Samaria came into existence and it is also just possible that some clans might have been called Samiri

فَرَجَعَ مُوسَىٰٓ إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِۦ غَضْبَٰنَ أَسِفًا ۖ قَالَ يَٰقَوْمِ أَلَمْ يَعِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ وَعْدًا حَسَنًا ۖ
أَفَطَالَ عَلَيْكُمُ ٱلْعَهْدُ أَمْ أَرَدتُّمْ أَن يَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُم
مَّوْعِدِى 86

(20:86) Moses returned to his people full of wrath and grief, and said: "My people! Has your Lord not made good an excellent promise He made to you?[64] And has a long time passed since those promises were fulfilled?[65] Or was it to incur the wrath of your Lord that you broke your promise with me?"[66]

64. That is, did not Allah fulfill the promises He made with you of showing His favors to you? For instance, He safely brought you out of Egypt and not only freed you from the slavery of your enemy but also destroyed him totally. He provided you with provisions in the desert and in the mountainous regions. It may also be translated like this: Did not Allah make a good promise with you? In that case, it will mean: He made a promise that he will give you the law and guidance. Was this not a good promise for your well being and betterment?

65. That is, had a long time passed since those great favors were done to you that you forgot them? Had long ages passed since you were afflicted with persecution by your enemy that you committed such a blasphemy? It may also be translated like this: Had you to wait for a long time for the fulfillment of God's promise that you became so impatient? In that case, the meaning is obvious: You had not to wait for a long time to see the fulfillment of the promise of guidance. Therefore there was no excuse for what you did.

66. This covenant was the one which every community makes with its Prophet and promises that it will steadfastly follow the guidance brought by him and will not worship anyone except Allah.

قَالُوا۟ مَآ أَخْلَفْنَا مَوْعِدَكَ بِمَلْكِنَا وَلَٰكِنَّا حُمِّلْنَآ أَوْزَارًا مِّن زِينَةِ ٱلْقَوْمِ فَقَذَفْنَٰهَا
فَكَذَٰلِكَ أَلْقَى ٱلسَّامِرِىُّ ۖ 87

(20:87) They answered: "We did not break our promise with you out of our own volition; but we were laden with the load of people's ornaments, and we simply threw them down[67](into the fire), and[68] the Samiri also threw down something,

67. This excuse was put forward by those people who were involved in the shirk fabricated by the Samiri. They meant to say: We did not throw down the ornaments with the intention of setting up a calf nor did we know what was going to be made of these, but when the calf was brought before us, we involuntarily got involved in shirk. The Arabic text which we have translated into: "We were laden with burdens of ornaments of the people", simply means this: The heavy ornaments which our men and women were wearing like the Egyptians proved very burdensome to us in our wanderings in the desert and we did not know how to get rid of them for it appeared very difficult for us to travel in the desert with them. But according to the Bible these ornaments had been borrowed by every family of the Israelites from their Egyptian neighbors with this intention, "....and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters and ye shall spoil the Egyptians....and let every man borrow of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold....And the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians....so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians." And that, too, on the advice of Prophet Moses, whom God Himself had instructed to do this noble deed. (Exodus, 3: 14-22, 11: 2-3, and I 2: 35-36).

It is a pity that some of our commentators have interpreted this verse in the light of the above traditions of the Bible. They say that the Israelites felt burdened with the weight of those ornaments which they had borrowed from their Egyptian neighbors, with the intention of carrying them away as a spoil bestowed by God.

We are of the opinion that the clause of the verse under discussion means this: When the people were tired of carrying their ornaments on their bodies, they decided by mutual consultation that all the ornaments should be gathered at one place and it should be noted down how much gold and silver belonged to each of the owners. Then it should be melted into bars and rods and placed on the backs of the beasts of burden. Accordingly, they might have brought their ornaments and thrown them in the common heap.

68. It is obvious from the context that the answer of the people ended with "threw them", and Allah Himself has added the remaining story up to the end of the paragraph. It appears from this that the people including the Samiri went on bringing their ornaments and throwing them down into the heap while they were absolutely unaware of what was going to be done by the Samiri. After this the Samiri offered his services to melt it. Then he shaped it into a calf which lowed like a cow. Thus the Samiri deluded the people, saying: This god of yours has come into being by itself for I had simply thrown the gold in the fire.

فَأَخْرَجَ لَهُمْ عِجْلًا جَسَدًا لَّهُ خُوَارٌ فَقَالُوا هَٰذَا إِلَٰهُكُمْ وَإِلَٰهُ مُوسَىٰ فَنَسِيَ 88

(20:88) and brought out of there (from the molten gold) the effigy of a calf that lowed." The people cried out: "This is your deity and the deity of Moses, whom Moses has forgotten."

أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَلَّا يَرْجِعُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَوْلًا وَلَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا 89

(20:89) Did they not see that it did not return a word to them, and had no power either to hurt them or to cause them any benefit?

وَلَقَدْ قَالَ لَهُمْ هٰرُوْنُ مِنْ قَبْلُ يٰقَوْمِ اِنَّمَا فُتِنْتُمْ بِهٖ ۚ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ الرَّحْمٰنُ فَاتَّبِعُوْنِيْ وَاَطِيْعُوْٓا اَمْرِيْ 90

(20:90) Certainly Aaron had said to them even before (the return of Moses): "My people, you were fallen into error because of the calf. Surely your Lord is Most Compassionate; so follow me and obey my command."

قَالُوْا لَنْ نَّبْرَحَ عَلَيْهِ عٰكِفِيْنَ حَتّٰى يَرْجِعَ اِلَيْنَا مُوْسٰى 91

(20:91) But they answered: "By no means shall we cease to worship it until Moses returns to us."[69]

69. Here the Quran exonerates Prophet Aaron (peace be upon him) from the sin of taking any part in the calfworship, but in contrast to this, the Bible makes him wholly responsible for making the golden calf and setting it up as a god. According to Exodus:

And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at his hand, and fashioned it with a graying tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord. (1,32: 1-5).

It is just possible that the real name of the Samiri was also Aaron which later on might have misled the Israelites to attribute the making of the golden calf to Prophet Aaron. Thus it is obvious that the Quran has shown a favor to the Jews and Christians by exonerating Prophet Aaron from the sin, but it is an irony that the Christian missionaries and the Orientalists still insist that the Quran is guilty of anachronism and that the calf was made a deity of worship by a holy prophet of theirs. In their blind obduracy they forget that even according to the Bible this was a great sin. (Exodus, 32: 21). A little further on in the same chapter the Bible again contradicts itself. It says that Prophet Moses ordered the Levites to kill all their kinsfolk, their friends and their fellow countrymen who had been guilty of the sin of calf-worship. Accordingly, about three thousand men fell that day. (Exodus, 32: 27-29).

Now the question arises: Why was Prophet Aaron not killed, if he was the inventor of the calf-worship? Why didn't the Levites ask Prophet Moses to kill his brother, Prophet Aaron,

who was the real sinner, just as they were asked to kill theirs. The Bible also says that after this Moses went back to the Eternal and prayed Him to forgive their sins or blot him out of His list of the living, and the Eternal answered: Whosoever has sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book (Exodus, 32: 31-33). But we learn from the Bible that the name of Prophet Aaron was not blotted out, but, on the other hand, he and his sons and his family were given the charge of the sanctuary and the office of priesthood (Numbers, 18: 1-7). Thus it is quite evident from the internal testimony of the Bible itself, that it contradicts itself and supports the Quran in its exoneration of Prophet Aaron.

قَالَ يٰهٰرُوْنُ مَا مَنَعَكَ اِذْ رَاَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوْٓا ۙ 92

(20:92) (After rebuking his people) Moses turned to Aaron and said: "Aaron! What prevented you, when you saw them going astray,

اَلَّا تَتَّبِعَنِ ؕ اَفَعَصَيْتَ اَمْرِيْ 93

(20:93) from following my way? Have you disobeyed my command?"[70]

70. The "command" refers to the instructions which Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) gave to his brother Prophet Aaron (peace be upon him) when he made him his deputy in his absence when he went up to Mount Toor: After me take my place and do the right and follow not the way of the mischief-makers. (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 142).

قَالَ يَبْنَؤُمَّ لَا تَاْخُذْ بِلِحْيَتِيْ وَلَا بِرَاْسِيْ ۚ اِنِّيْ خَشِيْتُ اَنْ تَقُوْلَ فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ وَلَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِيْ 94

(20:94) Aaron answered: "Son of my mother! Do not seize me with my beard, nor by (the hair of) my head.[71] I feared that on returning you might say: 'You sowed discord among the Children of Israel, and did not pay heed to my words.'"[72]

71. See (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 150).

72. It can also be interpreted like this: You did not wait for orders from me. In order to understand fully the statement of Prophet Aaron (peace be upon him), one should read this verse along with (verse 150 of Surah Al-Aaraf), where he says: Son of my mother, these people overpowered me and were going to kill me. So, let not the enemies gloat over me. Do not count me among the people who have done wrong. Now if both these verses are read together, one can easily see the true picture of the event. Prophet Aaron (peace be upon him) did his utmost to stop the people from committing the sin of calf-worship, but they revolted against him and might even have killed him. Fearing a clash between them, therefore, he held his peace lest Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), on his return, might blame him for letting the situation worsen and failing to control it effectively in his absence. The last clause

of (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 150) also gives the hint that there existed among the people a good number of the enemies of the two brothers.

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكَ يٰسَامِرِيُّ 95

(20:95) Moses said: "What, then, is your case, O Samiri?"

قَالَ بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوْا بِهٖ فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِّنْ اَثَرِ الرَّسُوْلِ فَنَبَذْتُهَا وَكَذٰلِكَ سَوَّلَتْ لِيْ نَفْسِيْ 96

(20:96) He answered: "I saw what the people did not see. So I took a handful of dust from the trail of the Messenger, and I flung it (into the fire). Thus did my mind prompt me."[73]

73. Here it has been a good deal of divergence of opinion in regard to the interpretation of this verse. According to the majority of the early commentators and their followers, it means: The Samiri saw the Messenger (Angel Gabriel) when he was passing and took a handful of dust from his footprints. Then he sprinkled this upon the idol of the golden calf. This created life in it and it began to low like a living calf. The Quran, in fact, does not say that this actually happened but merely cites the reply given by the Samiri to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) when the latter took him to task for the great sin he had committed.

There are others who interpret the words of the Samiri like this: I saw a weakness in the Messenger (Prophet Moses) or in his creed, which others did not see. Therefore I followed in his footsteps to a certain limit but afterwards I left his way. This interpretation was most probably put forward first of all by Abu Muslim Isfahani. Then Imam Razi not only cited it in his own commentary but also approved of it. And now it is being followed by some modernistic commentators, who try to prove their own favorite theories by giving far-fetched interpretations to the obvious meaning of the words of the Quran. Such people forget that the Quran has not been sent down in the terminology of enigmas, riddles and puzzles but in clear, plain and intelligible Arabic. Therefore the Quran would have never employed the words it has used in the text to convey the meaning given by them because their usage cannot support that far-fetched interpretation. What such interpreters really mean to imply is that Allah has failed to express Himself clearly and plainly; therefore, they wish to come to His rescue by their interpretations in order to save Him from the ridicule of the learned people.

If we study the verse in the context in which it occurs, we shall be able to understand easily that the Samiri was a mischief-monger who had contrived his deceitful scheme after a good deal of consideration. As he appears to have been a good craftsman, he caused the golden calf he had made to produce a lowing sound, and successfully deluded the ignorant and simple people. He did not rest content with this but impudently invented the story that he had seen what the common people could not see and that he had taken a handful of the dust from the footprints of the Messenger and sprinkled it on the calf which made it low like a

living calf. It is possible that by the Messenger, he meant Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) himself and might have cunningly tried to flatter him, saying, that the dust of his footprints was miraculous. By saying so, he was playing the most subtle trick. He wanted to offer an intellectual bait to Moses (peace be upon him) so that he might feel elated about the miraculous effect of the dust trodden by his feet and utilize his services for propagating his own miraculous acts. Anyhow, the fact is that the Quran has presented the whole thing as a trick of the Samiri and has not given the account as if it were a real event by itself. The subsequent reaction of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) to the statement of the Samiri clearly shows that he considered it as a deceitful story, and so laid the curse on him.

قَالَ فَاذْهَبْ فَإِنَّ لَكَ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ أَنْ تَقُولَ لَا مِسَاسَ ۖ وَإِنَّ لَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَّنْ تُخْلَفَهُ ۚ
وَانْظُرْ إِلَىٰ إِلٰهِكَ الَّذِي ظَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفًا ۖ لَّنُحَرِّقَنَّهُ ثُمَّ لَنَنسِفَنَّهُ فِي الْيَمِّ
نَسْفًا 97

(20:97) Moses said: "Be gone, then. All your life you shall cry: 'Untouchable.'[74] There awaits a term for your reckoning that you cannot fail to keep. Now look at your god that you devotedly adored: We shall burn it and scatter its remains in the sea.

74. The words show that he was not only made an outcast for life but was made to inform the people himself that he was an outcast, as given in Leviticus:

And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be. (13: 45-46).

We conclude from this that either he was inflicted with leprosy as a scourge by Allah or the punishment inflicted on him was that, being a moral "leper", he should be made an outcast and should himself proclaim to be an unclean and impure person, saying: Touch me not. 9

إِنَّمَا إِلٰهُكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ وَسِعَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا 98

(20:98) Your God is none else than Allah, beside Whom there is no god. His knowledge embraces everything."

كَذٰلِكَ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنۢبَآءِ مَا قَدْ سَبَقَ ۚ وَقَدْ آتَيْنٰكَ مِن لَّدُنَّا ذِكْرًا ۖ 99

(20:99) (O Muhammad),[75] thus do We recount to you the events of the past, and We have bestowed upon you from Ourself an admonition.[76]

75. Now that the story of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) comes to an end, the same theme, that was interrupted by this story, has been resumed.

76. That is, the Quran about which it was said at the beginning of the Surah that it had not been sent down to put the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) in distress, and that it was an admonition for the God-fearing.

مَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَحْمِلُ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وِزْرًا ۙ 100

(20:100) He who turns away from it will surely bear a heavy burden on the Day of Resurrection,

خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهِ ؕ وَسَآءَ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ حِمْلًا ۙ 101

(20:101) and will abide under this burden for ever. Grievous shall be the burden on the Day of Resurrection,77

77. Here the people have been warned that whoso will turn away front the Quran and will reject its guidance, he shall do harm to himself only and not to Allah and His Messenger, and that the one, who rejects His Message, shall inevitably be punished in the Hereafter. And this warning holds good for every people, every country and every age. This is because there are only two alternatives for an individual or a community, whom the message of the Quran reaches. They can either accept it or reject it, there is no third way.

يَّوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّوْرِ وَنَحْشُرُ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ يَوْمَئِذٍ زُرْقًا ۚ صلج 102

(20:102) the Day when the Trumpet shall be sounded78 and We shall muster the sinners, their eyes turned blue with terror.79

78. As regards to the nature of the blowing of the Trumpet on the Day of Resurrection, it may be likened to the blowing of the bugle in the army to muster or disperse the soldiers. It is obvious that these words and terms have been used because these are known to the people. Therefore it will be wrong to consider the Trumpet to be exactly like the bugles and trumpets of this world.

79. According to some commentators, it means this: The bodies of the criminals will turn white as if no drop of blood had been left in them.

يَّتَخَافَتُوْنَ بَيْنَهُمْ اِنْ لَّبِثْتُمْ اِلَّا عَشْرًا 103

(20:103) They shall whisper among themselves: "You stayed on the earth barely ten days."80

80. The original text may also be interpreted to mean: After your death, you may have passed hardly ten days till now. As regards to the interpretation adopted in the translation,

it is supported by (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 112-113): When Allah will ask them, for how many years did you stay on the earth? They will say: We stayed there for a day or part of a day. You may ask those who have kept the record. The second interpretation is supported by (Surah Ar-Room, Ayats 55-56): And on the day when Resurrection will take place, the criminals will declare under oaths: We have not remained in the state of death for more than an hour. And likewise they were deluded on the earth. On the other hand, those who have been given knowledge and faith will say: According to the Book of Allah, you have remained in this state up to the Day of Resurrection, and this is the very Day of Resurrection, but you did not know of it. Both the interpretations are supported by other verses of the Quran. It is clear from these that they will consider both the life on the earth and the life in the interval between death and Resurrection to be very short. They will consider the earthly life to be very short because, against all their expectations, they will have to face the eternal life in the Hereafter which they denied in their earthly life. As they had made no preparation for this life, they will regret that they had ruined their eternal life for the sake of a few transitory pleasures of the short life they had been given on the earth. As regards to the duration of the interval between death and Resurrection, they will consider it to be very short, for they will imagine that they had been suddenly awakened by the Trumpet from their last sleep or unconsciousness in their earthly life. Thus, they will not at first realize that the Trumpet was the signal for the Day of Resurrection because they had no expectation whatever that the Day of Resurrection would ever come. As a matter of fact, they used to make fun of this Day as a nonsensical thing.

نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذْ يَقُولُ أَمْثَلُهُمْ طَرِيقَةً إِن لَّبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا يَوْمًا ۚ 104

(20:104) We know well[81] what they will say to one another: We also know that even the most cautious in his estimate will say: "You lived in the world no more than a day."[82]

81. This is a parenthesis that has been inserted to remove this doubt of the hearers: How has it been known today what the people will be talking in whispers on the Day of Resurrection?

82. This is another parenthesis which has been inserted in answer to another objection raised by some hearer. It appears that when this Surah was being recited, someone might have raised this question as a ridicule: Where will these high mountains go on the Day of Resurrection, for it appears from your description of Resurrection that all the people of the world will be running about in a level plain? In order to understand the background of the question, it should be kept in mind that Makkah, where this Surah was first recited on the occasion of its revelation, is surrounded on all sides by high mountains. The answer to this question follows immediately: Allah will reduce them to fine dust and scatter it away.

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْجِبَالِ فَقُلْ يَنسِفُهَا رَبِّي نَسْفًا ۙ 105

(20:105) They ask you concerning the mountains: "Where will they go?" Say: "My Lord will scatter them like dust,

فَيَذَرُهَا قَاعًا صَفْصَفًا ۙ 106

(20:106) and leave the earth a levelled plain

لَّا تَرٰى فِيْهَا عِوَجًا وَّلَآ اَمْتًا ۭ 107

(20:107) in which you shall find no crookedness or curvature.[83]

83. According to the Quran, the earth will take a new shape in the Hereafter:

The earth will be spread. (Surah Al-Inshiqaq, Ayat 3).

The bottoms of the oceans will be split (and the whole water will sink down in the earth). (Surah Al-Infitar, Ayat 3).

The oceans will be filled up. (Surah At-Takweer, Ayat 6).

The mountains will be reduced to fine dust and scattered away and there will be left no curve or crease in the earth. (Surah Taaha, Ayats 105-107).

On that day the earth will be totally changed. (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 48).

And it will be turned into a garden and given to the pious people to dwell therein forever. (Surah Az-Zumur, Ayat 74).

This shows that ultimately this earth will be turned into Paradise which will be inherited by the pious and righteous servants of Allah. The whole earth will become one country, and there will be no mountains, oceans, rivers and deserts which today divide it into countless countries and homelands and divide mankind as well into as many tribes, races and classes. Ibn Abbas and Qatadah have the same view that Paradise will be established on this very earth.

يَوْمَىِٕذٍ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ الدَّاعِيَ لَا عِوَجَ لَهٗ ۚ وَخَشَعَتِ الْاَصْوَاتُ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ فَلَا تَسْمَعُ اِلَّا

هَمْسًا 108

(20:108) On that Day people shall follow straight on to the call of the summoner, no one daring to show any haughtiness. Their voices shall be hushed before the Most Compassionate Lord, so that you will hear nothing but a whispering murmur.[84]

84. The original Arabic word hams is used for the sound of footsteps, the sound of whispering and other low sounds. What it implies here is that the people will be so awestricken on that Day that there will be no sound other than that of footsteps and whispering.

يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّا تَنفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ إِلَّا مَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَٰنُ وَرَضِيَ لَهُ قَوْلًا 109

(20:109) On that Day intercession shall not avail save of him whom the Most Compassionate Lord permits, and whose word of intercession is pleasing to Him.[85]

85. This also has another interpretation: On that Day intercession will not be effective except in the case of the one for whom the Merciful may allow it and be pleased to hear it for him. Both these interpretations are supported by the following:

Who is there that can intercede with Him except by His own permission? (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 255).

On that Day when the spirit and the angels will stand with folded hands, they will not be able to say anything except what the Merciful will permit, and they will say the right thing. (Surah An-Naba, Ayat 38). They do not intercede for anyone except for whom the Merciful may be pleased to listen to, and they are always fearful of Him. (Surah Al-Anbia, Ayat 28).

There are many angels in the heavens whose intercession avails nothing at all except when it is made after getting permission from Allah, and for the one for whom He wills to hear and approves of it. (Surah An-Najam, Ayat 26).

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِهِ عِلْمًا 110

(20:110) He knows all that is ahead of them and all that is behind them, while the others do not know.[86]

86. Here the reasons for the restrictions on intercession have been stated. On the one hand, no angel, no prophet, no saint, nor anyone else knows, nor can know, the full details about the records of others. On the other hand, Allah has full knowledge of all the deeds and misdeeds of everyone and He knows who deserves pardon or punishment, and how much. If, therefore, there had been full freedom for intercession, the whole purpose of the creation of man would have become meaningless. According to this verse, the door against intercession has not been entirely closed. The righteous people will be allowed to show their sympathy for other human beings as they did in the world, but they will have to get permission for this beforehand and even then make only a right sort of recommendation.

وَعَنَتِ الْوُجُوهُ لِلْحَيِّ الْقَيُّومِ ۖ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ حَمَلَ ظُلْمًا 111

(20:111) All faces shall be humbled before the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsisting Lord, and he who bears the burden of iniquity will have failed;

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَا يَخَافُ ظُلْمًا وَلَا هَضْمًا 112

(20:112) but whosoever does righteous works, being a believer, shall have no fear of suffering wrong or loss."[87]

87. From this, it is clear that in the Hereafter the case of every individual will be decided on merits. If a man had been guilty of iniquity and injustice in regard to the rights of God or the rights of man or even his own rights, he shall be dealt with accordingly. On the other hand, those, who are both believers and workers of righteous deeds, shall have no fear that they would be deprived of their rights or punished even though they were innocent.

وَكَذٰلِكَ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ قُرْاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا وَّصَرَّفْنَا فِيْهِ مِنَ الْوَعِيْدِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُوْنَ اَوْ يُحْدِثُ لَهُمْ ذِكْرًا 113

(20:113) (O Muhammad), thus have We revealed this as an Arabic Qur'an[88] and have expounded in it warning in diverse ways so that they may avoid evil or become heedful.[89]

88. This means that the Quran is full of such high themes, wise teachings and admonitions as are contained in the preceding portion of this Surah as well as in the other Surahs of the Book.

89. That is, the Arabic Quran might awaken them from their heedlessness and they might recollect the forgotten lessons and feel that they are going astray and might realize the consequences thereof.

فَتَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ ۚ وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْاٰنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يُّقْضٰٓى اِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهٗ ۫ وَقُلْ رَّبِّ زِدْنِيْ عِلْمًا 114

(20:114) Exalted is Allah, the True King![90] Hasten not with reciting the Qur'an before its revelation to you is finished, and pray: "Lord! Increase me in knowledge."[91]

90. Such sentences as this are usually found in the Quran at the end of a discourse so that it may end with the praise of Allah. It is plain from the context that the discourse ends with "the Sovereign."

91. At the end of the discourse, the angel cautions the Prophet (peace be upon him) by Allah's command to guard against a thing that had been noticed during the revelation, for it was not considered appropriate to do so during its recital. It is obvious from the wording of the caution that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was trying to learn the revealed discourse and was repeating it during its recital by the angel. Naturally this might have diverted his attention over and over again from listening to and grasping the revelation. Therefore it was felt necessary that he should be taught the right method of the receipt of the message of revelation and be asked not to try to commit it to memory during the revelation.

This sentence shows that this portion of Surah TaaHa is one of the earliest revelations, for we learn from the other early Surahs that the Prophet (peace be upon him) tried to commit to memory the Quranic revelation and Allah cautioned him against it. For instance in (Surah Al-Qiamah, Ayats 16-19), he was told: Do not move your tongue over and over again in order to learn the revelation, for it is Our responsibility to cause you to remember it by heart and recite it. Therefore when it is being recited to you, listen to it carefully. Then it is also Our responsibility to make its meanings clear to you.

Again in (Surah Al-Aala, Ayat 6), he was assured: We will teach you how to recite it and you will not forget it. It appears that afterwards when the Prophet (peace be upon him) had learnt how to receive the messages of revelation, this did not occur. That is why there is no such caution in the Surahs of the later period.

وَلَقَدْ عَهِدْنَآ إِلَىٰٓ ءَادَمَ مِن قَبْلُ فَنَسِىَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهُۥ عَزْمًا ۚ 115

(20:115) Most certainly We[92] had given Adam a command before,[93] but he forgot. We found him lacking in firmness of resolution.[94]

92. From here begins a new discourse, which probably was revealed some time after the preceding discourse see (E.N. 90), and it was incorporated in this Surah by the command of Allah because both deal with the same theme. The following are the similarities between the two:

(1) Both the discourses remind mankind of the forgotten lesson, the admonition, which Allah had taught man on the occasion of his creation.

(2) Both teach that it is Satan who seduces man to forget that lesson. He succeeded in this by causing his first parents to forget it. Since then he has been forgetting it over and over again and, therefore, has been cautioned against this.

(3) Both warn man that his ultimate success or failure depends upon his attitude towards this admonition.

(4) Both warn mankind to discriminate between an inadvertent error and an intentional rebellion and their consequences. If man (like Prophet Adam and his offspring and the magicians of Pharaoh) realizes that he has been seduced by Satan, his eternal enemy, and then repents of his error, he is forgiven. But there is no forgiveness for intentional rebellion as was the case with Satan, Pharaoh and the Samiri.

93. The story of Prophet Adam has already been stated in (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 30-39); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 11- 27, 189); (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 28-42); (Surah Al-Isra, Ayats 61-65) and (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayats 51-52). But at every place only that part of the story which was relevant to the context has been cited. Therefore, in order to understand the entire story well, one should read it in all the Surahs along with the relevant E.N's.

94. This means that he disobeyed the command because he lacked the firmness of purpose and not because of intentional rebellion. He did not say: I don't care for Allah. If it is His command, let it be. I will do whatever I like. Who is Allah to intervene in my private affairs?

On the contrary, he disobeyed because he forgot Allah's command, and did not show firmness of purpose and determination against the temptations presented by Satan. This is shown by his subsequent repentance.

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةِ ٱسْجُدُوا۟ لِءَادَمَ فَسَجَدُوٓا۟ إِلَّآ إِبْلِيسَ ۖ أَبَىٰ 116

(20:116) Recall when We said to the angels: "Prostrate yourselves before Adam"; all prostrated themselves save Iblis. He refused.

فَقُلْنَا يَٰٓـَٔادَمُ إِنَّ هَٰذَا عَدُوٌّ لَّكَ وَلِزَوْجِكَ فَلَا يُخْرِجَنَّكُمَا مِنَ ٱلْجَنَّةِ فَتَشْقَىٰٓ 117

(20:117) Then We said: "Adam![95] He is an enemy to you and to your wife.[96] So let him not drive both of you out of Paradise[97] and plunge you into affliction,

95. Here the command, which was given to Prophet Adam, has not been mentioned, which was: You must not eat the fruit of this tree. This has been mentioned at other places but has been omitted here because the emphasis here is on this weakness of man that he is easily seduced by Satan in spite of the forewarnings and admonitions to this effect.

96. Both knew that Satan was their enemy, for Adam himself had witnessed the demonstration of his enmity, when he had refused to bow down before him and declared in plain words: I am better than him. You created me of fire and him of clay. (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 12); (Surah Suad, Ayat 76), see also (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayat 33). Should I bow before the one whom You created out of clay. And then added: Just consider was he worthy of this that You have exalted him over me. (Surah Al-Isra, Ayats 61-62). Then Satan did not rest content with this bragging of superiority but evinced his jealousy by giving an open challenge that he would prove it by seducing Adam. (Surah Al_Aaraf, Ayats 16, 17); (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 36-42); (Surah Al-Isra, Ayats 62-66); (Surah Suad, Ayats 82-83).

97. This was to forewarn both of them of the consequences of disobedience of the command.

إِنَّ لَكَ أَلَّا تَجُوعَ فِيهَا وَلَا تَعْرَىٰ ۙ 118

(20:118) (for in Paradise) neither are you hungry nor naked,

وَأَنَّكَ لَا تَظْمَؤُا۟ فِيهَا وَلَا تَضْحَىٰ 119

(20:119) nor face thirst or scorching heat."[98]

98. This is the explanation of the distress which they had to undergo immediately after their expulsion from the Garden. Here instead of mentioning the high and perfect blessings of the Garden, only four basic necessities of life have been stated, namely, food, drink, dress, and shelter, as if to say: In the Garden you are being supplied with all these necessities without any labor from you. But if you succumb to the temptations and seduction of Satan, you will be totally deprived not only of these facilities but also of the higher blessings of the Garden.

In that case, you will have to work so hard for these necessities that very little energy and time and leisure will be left with you to strive for higher aims of life.

فَوَسْوَسَ إِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطَانُ قَالَ يَا آدَمُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكَ عَلَىٰ شَجَرَةِ الْخُلْدِ وَمُلْكٍ لَّا يَبْلَىٰ 120

(20:120) But Satan seduced him,[99] saying: "Adam! Shall I direct you to a tree of eternal life and an abiding kingdom?"[100]

99. According to this verse, it was Adam whom Satan primarily wanted to seduce and not Eve. Though according to (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 20), he tempted both of them and both were seduced, but Satan's efforts were mainly directed to Adam. On the contrary, according to the Bible, the serpent first tempted the woman to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree and then she seduced her husband. (Genesis, 3).

100. According to this verse, Satan tempted Adam to eat the fruit of the tree so that he might get eternal life and everlasting kingdom, and according to (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 20), he put an additional temptation in their way, saying that they would become angels and immortal.

فَأَكَلَا مِنْهَا فَبَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْآتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِن وَرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ ۚ وَعَصَىٰ آدَمُ رَبَّهُ فَغَوَىٰ ص صلے 121

(20:121) Then the two of them ate the fruit of that tree and their shameful parts became revealed to each other, and they began to cover themselves with the leaves from the Garden.[101] Thus Adam disobeyed his Lord and strayed into error.[102]

101. No sooner did they disobey the command, they were deprived of all the facilities, but naturally the immediate effect of this as felt by them was that they were stripped of their garments. Then gradually, as they felt thirsty, hungry etc. they realized that they had been deprived of all the facilities that they enjoyed in the Garden.

102. It is worth while to understand the nature of human weakness which helped Satan to seduce Adam and Eve. They succumbed to seduction because Satan tempted them in the garb of a true friend and well-wisher even though they knew well that he was their enemy. For, Adam had a direct knowledge of the envy and enmity of Satan, who had challenged to seduce and ruin him in his very presence. Allah had also warned them to guard against the envy of and the temptations by Satan and had informed them of the consequences of disobedience. Above all, Adam and Eve still believed in Allah and never thought of intentional disobedience. But in spite of this, when Satan tempted them in the garb of a friend, they disobeyed their Lord: they forgot the command for the time being for lack of fineness of purpose. And since then this human weakness has persisted in their descendants during all ages.

ثُمَّ اجْتَبٰهُ رَبُّهٗ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ وَهَدٰى 122

(20:122) Thereafter his Lord exalted him,[103] accepted his repentance, and bestowed guidance upon him,

103. "His Lord chose him" because he did not disobey Him intentionally and did not persist in sin arrogantly. As soon as he realized his error, he felt ashamed of it and asked Allah's pardon: O our Lord, we have wronged ourselves gravely. If You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we shall be totally ruined. (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 23). In contrast to Adam and Eve, Satan was cursed because he not only disobeyed his Lord but also persisted in his sin, and boldly challenged Him that it was He Who was responsible for his disobedience, for He had preferred Adam whom He had created of clay over him whom He had made of fire.

قَالَ اهْبِطَا مِنْهَا جَمِيْعًا ۚ بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ ۚ فَاِمَّا يَاْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِّنِّيْ هُدًى ۙ فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشْقٰى 123

(20:123) and said:[104] "Get down, both of you, (that is, man and Satan), and be out of it; each of you shall be an enemy to the other. Henceforth if there comes to you a guidance from Me, then whosoever follows My guidance shall neither go astray nor suffer misery.

104. That is, Allah not only pardoned him but also gave him guidance and taught him the way to follow it. 1

وَمَنْ اَعْرَضَ عَنْ ذِكْرِيْ فَاِنَّ لَهٗ مَعِيْشَةً ضَنْكًا وَّنَحْشُرُهٗ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ اَعْمٰى 124

(20:124) But whosoever turns away from this Admonition from Me shall have a straitened life;[105] We shall raise him blind on the Day of Resurrection,"[106]

105. "A life of hardship" does not mean a life of poverty. It means that such a one shall be deprived of the peace of mind, even though he may be a millionaire or the ruler of a vast empire. For, the one who will turn away from the admonition will win all the worldly successes by unlawful means and, therefore, will always be suffering from pangs of a guilty conscience and deprived of the peace of mind and real happiness.

106. Here the story of Prophet Adam (peace be upon him) ends. In the light of this part of the story which has been related here and at other places in the Quran, I have come to the conclusion (and correct knowledge is with Allah alone) that the vicegerency of the earth was the same as was initially bestowed on Adam in the Garden, which might have been created in the heavens or on this earth. Anyhow the vicegerent of Allah was supplied gratis with all the necessities of life and the angels were placed under his command for service. This was to enable him to discharge the high and noble obligations of vicegerency, without any worry about the procurement of the necessities of life. But in order to make him permanent in this

office, it was necessary to put him to a test so that all his capabilities, excellences and weaknesses might be known. Accordingly, he had to take his test in which some of his weaknesses came to the surface. He was prone to be seduced by greed and temptation. He did not remain firm in obedience. He was capable of forgetfulness. That is why he was given the vicegerency as a trial on the earth for a fixed term up to the Day of Judgment. During this period of trial, he had himself to make arrangements for the necessities of life though he was allowed to exploit all the resources of the earth and to rule over other creatures. The trial is this: does he or does he not obey his Lord in spite of having the power to obey or not to obey. And if he forgets or is seduced by greed, does he or does he not repent through warning and admonition, when he realizes his error. At the same time, his Lord has warned him that a full and perfect record of all his deeds and misdeeds is being kept, and that he shall be judged on the Day of Reckoning in accordance with it. Those who will come out successful will be given permanent vicegerency and that eternal life and everlasting kingdom by which Satan seduced him. The righteous servants will become the heirs to the Garden, if they had obeyed their Lord or repented after forgetfulness. It should also be noted well that life in the Garden will not merely be to eat, drink and be merry, but there will be such higher things to achieve as no human being can conceive in this world. That is why only those blessings of the Garden have been mentioned in the Quran which can be comprehended by human beings in this world.

It will be worthwhile to make a comparative study of the account of Adam and Eve as given in the Quran with that given in the Bible. According to Genesis:

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying: Of every tree of the garden thou mayst freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. (2:725). Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die. For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And He said, who told thee that thou west naked? Hast thou eaten, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gayest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the woman said, the serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle,

and above every blast of the field. Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception, in sorrow thou shall bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which 1 commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread. Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them. And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. (3 :1-23).

It is obvious that the Bible has not done justice to Adam and Eve, nay, even to God Himself. On the other hand, the account given in the Quran is itself a clear proof that the stories given in it have not been copied from the Bible; for the Quran not only corroborates those parts of the Bible which have remained un-tampered but also corrects its wrong statements.

قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِيْٓ اَعْمٰى وَقَدْ كُنْتُ بَصِيْرًا 125

(20:125) where-upon he will say: "Lord! Why have You raised me blind when I had sight in the world?"

قَالَ كَذٰلِكَ اَتَتْكَ اٰيٰتُنَا فَنَسِيْتَهَا ۚ وَكَذٰلِكَ الْيَوْمَ تُنْسٰى 126

(20:126) He will say: "Even so it is. Our Signs came to you and you ignored them. So shall you be ignored this Day."[107]

107. The Quran has described the different conditions and experiences through which the criminals will pass from the Day of Resurrection to the time of their entry into Hell: You were neglectful of this, now We have removed the curtain from before you and your sight has become very sharp. (Surah Qaaf, Ayat 22). He is only deferring them to the Day when all eyes shall stare with consternation. They will be running in terror with heads uplifted and eyes fixed upwards and hearts void. (Surah Ibrahim, Ayats 42-43). We have fastened the augury of every man to his own neck and on the Day of Resurrection We will bring forth a writing which he will find like an open book. (It will be said to him:) Here is your record: read it. Today you can yourself reckon your account. (Surah Al-Isra, Ayats 13-14). In the light of the above and this (verse 126), it appears that in the Hereafter, the criminals shall be enabled to see the horrible sights and to realize the consequences of their evil deeds, but in other respects they will be like the blind man who cannot see his way and is deprived of even a staff to feel his way, nor is there anyone to guide him. So he stumbles and is knocked about and does not know where to go and how to satisfy his needs. This very state has been expressed thus: You forgot Our Revelations when they came to you, so you are being forgotten today, as if, you were blind and had no one to look after you.

وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجۡزِىۡ مَنۡ اَسۡرَفَ وَلَمۡ يُؤۡمِنۡۢ بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهٖ‌ ؕ وَلَعَذَابُ الۡاٰخِرَةِ اَشَدُّ وَاَبۡقٰى 127

(20:127) Thus do We requite him who transgresses and does not believe in the signs of your Lord[108] (during the life of the world); and surely the punishment of the Hereafter is even more terrible and more enduring.

108. This refers to the wretched life which will be the lot of those who turn away from the admonition in this worldly life.

اَفَلَمۡ يَهۡدِ لَهُمۡ كَمۡ اَهۡلَكۡنَا قَبۡلَهُمۡ مِّنَ الۡقُرُوۡنِ يَمۡشُوۡنَ فِىۡ مَسٰكِنِهِمۡ‌ ؕ اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ

لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّاُولِى النُّهٰى ؕ 128

(20:128) Did they[109] not find any guidance in the fact that We destroyed many nations in whose ruined dwelling-places they now walk about? Surely there are many Signs in them for people endowed with wisdom.[110]

109. "For them": means people of Makkah.

110. That is, in this lesson of history and in the observation of the archaeological remains and in this experience of mankind.

وَلَوۡلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتۡ مِنۡ رَّبِّكَ لَكَانَ لِزَامًا وَّاَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى ؕ 129

(20:129) Were it not for a word already gone from your Lord, the decree (of their destruction) would have come to pass.

فَاصۡبِرۡ عَلٰى مَا يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ وَسَبِّحۡ بِحَمۡدِ رَبِّكَ قَبۡلَ طُلُوۡعِ الشَّمۡسِ وَقَبۡلَ غُرُوۡبِهَا ۚ وَمِنۡ

اٰنَآئِ الَّيۡلِ فَسَبِّحۡ وَاَطۡرَافَ النَّهَارِ لَعَلَّكَ تَرۡضٰى 130

(20:130) So bear patiently with what they say. Glorify your Lord, praising Him before sunrise and before sunset, and in the watches of the night,[111] and glorify Him and at the ends of the day that you may attain to happiness.[112]

111. This is to comfort and console the Prophet (peace be upon him), as if to say: Allah does not intend to destroy them yet, for He has appointed for them a term of respite, so you should endure with patience whatever they do against you and hear their harsh talk and go on performing the obligations of your mission. For this purpose you should offer Salat in accordance with the prescribed times because it will create in you necessary forbearance and fortitude.

"Glorify Him" means: Offer your prescribed Prayers, as is clear from Ayat 132.

Incidentally in this verse (130) the times of Salat have been prescribed: (1) Fajr Prayer before sunrise. (2) Asr Prayer before sunset. (3) Isha and Tahajjud Prayers during the hours of night. Morning and Afternoon (Dhuhr) and Evening (Maghrib) Prayers at the extremes of the day. See also (E.Ns. 91 to 97 of Surah Al-Isra).

112. The original Arabic Text admits of two meanings.

(1) Rest content with your present condition in which you have to hear many unpleasant things for the sake of your mission, and submit to this decree that they are not being punished for the time being, for they will continue to persecute you and at the same time lead prosperous lives.

(2) Go on performing your mission, for as a result of this, you will be fully satisfied.

This second meaning is supported by (a) (Surah AL-Isra, Ayat 79): That time is not far when your Lord may exalt you to a laudable position, which follows the commandment about Salat, (b) (Surah Ad-Duha, Ayats 4-5): Surely the later period of life will be better for you than the former, and in the near future your Lord will give you so much that you will be fully satisfied.

وَلَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِّنْهُمْ زَهْرَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۙ لِنَفْتِنَهُمْ فِيهِ ۚ وَرِزْقُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ 131

(20:131) Do not turn your eyes covetously towards the embellishments of worldly life that We have bestowed upon various kinds of people to test them. But the clean provision bestowed upon you[113] by your Lord is better and more enduring.

113. It means: It does not behoove you and your companions to be envious of the riches of the wicked people who are amassing wealth by unlawful means. The best thing for you is the lawful provision which you earn by your hard labor, even though this may be meager in quantity. That is better for the pious and righteous and is of everlasting virtue.

وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا ۖ لَا نَسْأَلُكَ رِزْقًا ۖ نَّحْنُ نَرْزُقُكَ ۗ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ 132

(20:132) Enjoin Prayer on your household,[114] and do keep observing it. We do not ask you for any worldly provision; rather, it is We Who provide you, and ultimately the pious will end up the best.[115]

114. That is, also teach your children that lawful provision is much better than the unlawful riches of the wicked people. For this purpose, enjoin them to say their prescribed Prayers, for this will change their attitude, their standard of values, and make them contented with pure provisions and virtuous life in preference to the life of sin and luxury.

115. It implies this: We do not ask you to offer your Prayers for any benefit of Our own. We ask you to do that for your own good, because this will create piety in you which will bring about true success for you in this world and in the Hereafter.

وَقَالُوْا لَوْلَا يَاْتِيْنَا بِاٰيَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ ؕ اَوَلَمْ تَاْتِهِمْ بَيِّنَةُ مَا فِي الصُّحُفِ الْاُوْلٰى 133

(20:133) They ask: "Why does he not bring us a (miraculous) sign from his Lord?" Has there not come to them a Book containing the teachings of the previous scriptures?116

116. This means that the Quran itself is a great miracle, for though it is being presented by an unlettered person from among them, it contains the essence of the teachings and guidance of all tire previous divine Books. Not only that, it makes those teachings and guidance so plain and clear that even a simple man of the desert can benefit from them.

وَلَوْ اَنَّاۤ اَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِهٖ لَقَالُوْا رَبَّنَا لَوْلَاۤ اَرْسَلْتَ اِلَيْنَا رَسُوْلًا فَنَتَّبِعَ اٰيٰتِكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ نَّذِلَّ وَنَخْزٰى 134

(20:134) Had We destroyed them through some calamity before his coming, they would have said: "Our Lord! Why did You not send any Messenger to us that we might have followed Your signs before being humbled and disgraced?"

قُلْ كُلٌّ مُّتَرَبِّصٌ فَتَرَبَّصُوْا ۚ فَسَتَعْلَمُوْنَ مَنْ اَصْحٰبُ الصِّرَاطِ السَّوِيِّ وَمَنِ اهْتَدٰى ع 135

(20:135) Tell them, (O Muhammad): "Everyone is waiting for his end.117 Wait, then, and you will soon know who are the people of the Right Way, and are rightly-guided."

117. That is, ever since the message of Islam is being presented in your city (Makkah), it is not only every person of this city who is waiting for its ultimate result but also every one outside it, who has heard of it.

21. Surah Al Anbiyaa (The Prophets)

Name

The name of this Surah has not been taken from any verse but it has been called Al-Anbiyaa because it contains a continuous account of many Anbiyaa (Prophets). Nevertheless, it is a symbolic name and not a title.

Period of Revelation

Both the subject matter and the style of the Surah indicate that it was sent down in the third stage of the life of the Holy Prophet at Makkah.(Sea Introduction to Chapter VI).

Subject and Topics

This Surah discusses the conflict between the Holy Prophet and the chiefs of Makkah, which was rampant at the time of its Revelation and answers those objections and doubts which were being put forward concerning his Prophethood and the Doctrines of Tauhid and the Hereafter. The chiefs of Makkah have also been rebuked for their machinations against the Holy Prophet and warned of the evil consequences of their wicked activities. They have been admonished to give up their indifference and heedlessness that they were showing about the Message. At the end of the Surah, they have been told that the person whom they considered to be a "distress and affliction" had in reality come to them as a blessing.

Main Themes

In vv. 1-47, the following themes have been discussed in particular :

1. The objection of the disbelievers that a human being could not be a Messenger and therefore they could not accept Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a Prophet, has been refuted.
2. They have been taken to task for raising multifarious and contradictory objections against the Holy Prophet and the Qur'an.
3. Their wrong conception of life has been proved to be false because it was responsible for their indifferent and heedless attitude towards the Message of the Holy Prophet. They believed that life was merely a sport and pastime and had no purpose behind or before it and there was no accountability or reward or punishment.
4. The main cause of the conflict between the disbelievers and the Holy Prophet was their insistence on the doctrine of shirk and antagonism to the Doctrine of Tauhid. So the doctrine of shirk has been refuted and the Doctrine of Tauhid reinforced by weighty and impressive though brief arguments.
5. Arguments and admonitions have been used to remove another misunderstanding of theirs. They presumed that Muhammad (peace be upon him) was a false prophet and his warnings of a scourge from God were empty threats, just because no scourge was visiting them in spite of their persistent rejection of the Prophet.

In vv. 48-91, instances have been cited from the important events of the life stories of the Prophets to show that all the Prophets, who were sent by God, were human beings and had all the characteristics of a man except those which were exclusive to Prophethood. They had

no share in Godhead and they had to implore Allah to fulfill each and every necessity of theirs.

Along with these two other things have also been mentioned:

1. All the Prophets had to pass through distress and affliction; their opponents did their worst to thwart their mission, but in spite of it they came out successful by the extraordinary succor from Allah.
2. All the Prophets had one and the same "way of life', the same as was being presented by Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him), and that was the only Right Way of Life and all other ways invented and introduced by mischievous people were utterly wrong.

In vv. 92-106, it has been declared that only those who follow the Right Way, will come out successful in the final judgment of God and those who discard it shall meet with the worst consequences.

In vv. 107-112, the people have been told that it is a great favor of Allah that He has sent His Messenger to inform them beforehand of this Reality and that those, who consider his coming to be an affliction instead of a blessing, are foolish people.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اِقۡتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمۡ وَهُمۡ فِیۡ غَفۡلَةٍ مُّعۡرِضُوۡنَ ۙ 1

(21:1) The time of people's reckoning has drawn near,[1] and yet they turn aside in heedlessness.[2]

1. “Draws near for mankind their reckoning”: the time of Resurrection. This is to warn the people that the time of Resurrection when they will have to appear before their Lord to render their accounts is not far. This was because the coming of the Prophet (peace be upon him) was a sign and a clear evidence of the fact that mankind had entered into the last stage of its history. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has himself explained it by holding out two of his adjoining fingers and said: I have been sent at a time which joins to the time of Resurrection just as these two fingers adjoin. By this he meant to say: No other Prophet is coming between me and the Resurrection. Therefore mend your ways now, for after me no guide is coming with good news and warning.

2. That is, they do not pay heed to any warning nor reflect on their end nor listen to the admonition of the Messenger.

مَا یَاۡتِیۡهِمۡ مِّنۡ ذِکۡرٍ مِّنۡ رَّبِّهِمۡ مُّحۡدَثٍ اِلَّا اسۡتَمَعُوۡهُ وَهُمۡ یَلۡعَبُوۡنَ ۙ 2

(21:2) Whenever any fresh admonition[3] comes to them from their Lord they barely heed it and remain immersed in play,[4]

3. "New revelation": A new Surah of the Quran.

4. The words of the original text may also be interpreted as: They do not take life seriously but treat it as a sport and a joke.

لَاهِيَةً قُلُوبُهُمْ ۗ وَأَسَرُّوا النَّجْوَى ۖ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ۖ هَلْ هَٰذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ ۚ أَفَتَأْتُونَ

السِّحْرَ وَأَنتُمْ تُبْصِرُونَ 3

(21:3) their hearts being set on other concerns. The wrong-doers whisper to one another: "This person is no more than a mortal like yourselves. Will you, then, be enchanted by sorcery while you see?"[5]

5. This may also be translated as: What, are you then being ensnared by his magic?

The disbelievers, who were the chiefs of Makkah, whispered to one another to this effect: Anyhow this man cannot be a Prophet because he is a human being like us and eats and drinks and has wife and children like us. We see nothing unusual about him that might distinguish him from us and make him worthy of the office of Prophethood. We, however, admit that there is some magic in his talk and personality. That is why anyone who listens to him or goes near Him is charmed. Therefore, the best thing for you is not to listen to him at all, nor go near him, for listening to him or going near him will only be involving yourselves intentionally in his snare.

The reason why they accused the Prophet (peace be upon him) of practicing magic was that even his antagonists were charmed by his personality when they met him. Muhammad bin Ishaq (152 A.H.) says: Once Utbah bin Rabiah, the father-in-law of Abu Sufyan, said to the chiefs that he wanted to see Muhammad and give him counsel. They said: We have full confidence in you. You may go and have a talk with him. Accordingly, he went to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said: Dear nephew, you know that you were held in great honor here before this and you belong to a noble family. Why have you then brought this affliction to your people? You have caused discard among them. You consider your people to be fools. You speak ill of their religion and deities, and you declare their deceased forefathers to be disbelievers. My dear nephew, if your object is to become a rich man, we can give you so much wealth that you will become the richest man among us. If you are seeking a high rank, we will make you our chief, even our king, if you so like. But if you are suffering from a mental illness which makes you see illusions, we will have you treated by the best physicians. He went on talking in this strain and the Prophet (peace be upon him) remained silent. When he was done talking, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Abul Walid, have you had your say or do you want to say anything more? He replied that he had said what he had to say. Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Now listen to me. And he began to recite Surah Ha-Mim-Sajdah after Bismillah and Utbah listened to him as if he had been charmed. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) came to (Ayat 38), he fell down in prostration. Then raising his head, he said: O Abul Walid, I have said whatever I had to say, and you have heard it. Now I have nothing more to say. After this Utbah walked back towards the chiefs who perceived him to be a changed man and remarked: By God, his face

shows that he is not the same man that he was when he went from here. When he came to them, they asked: What has been the result of your mission? He answered: By God, today I have heard a thing the like of which I had never heard before. By Allah! It is not poetry nor sorcery nor divination. O people of Quraish, I advise you to leave him to himself. From what I have heard from him, I conclude that his message is going to bring about a great revolution here. If the Arabs overcome him, you will stand absolved from the charge of murdering your own brother, and if he overpowers the Arabs, his sovereignty will be your own sovereignty and his honor your own honor. The people answered: By God, you too, O Abul Walid, have been charmed by him. To this he replied: I have expressed my opinion. Now it is for you to accept or reject it. (Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, pp. 313-314). Baihaqi, in his narration of the above event, makes this addition: When the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited (Ayat 13): If they turn away from your message, say to them, I have warned you of the coming of a thunderbolt like the thunderbolt that visited the Aad and the Thamud, Utbah placed his hand on the mouth of the Prophet (peace be upon him), saying: For God's sake, have mercy on your own people.

In this connection, ibn Ishaq has cited another event. Once a man from the clan of Arash came to Makkah with some camels and Abu Jahl bought them. When he demanded their price, he put him off by lame excuses. At last the man came to the Sanctuary of the Kabah and began to bewail publicly the dishonesty of Abu Jahl. The Prophet (peace be upon him) was also sitting in a corner of the Sanctuary. The chiefs of the Quraish said to the man: We cannot help you in any way in this matter; look, there is a man sitting: go to him and he will get you your money. Accordingly, the Arashi went towards the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the chiefs began to whisper jokingly: Today there will be great fun. When the man expressed his complaint before the Prophet (peace be upon him), he at once stood up and accompanied him to the house of Abu Jahl, followed by an informer of the chiefs. The Prophet (peace be upon him) knocked at Abu Jahl's door, who asked from inside: Who is there? He answered: Muhammad. Hearing this, he at once came out and the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to him: Pay this man his dues. Abu Jahl went in without uttering a word, brought the price of the camels and paid the man. At this the informer ran back to the Quraish and told them the whole story and said: By God, today I have seen something which I had never seen before. When Abu Jahl came out, Muhammad asked him to pay the dues, and he obeyed him as if he were spell bound. (Ibn Hisham, Vol. II, pp. 29-30).

It was this charm of the personality, character and words of the Prophet (peace be upon him) which these people considered to be the effects of charm and warned the people not to go near him for fear of his magic.

قُلَ رَبِّيۡ يَعۡلَمُ الۡقَوۡلَ فِي السَّمَآءِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ۖ وَهُوَ السَّمِيۡعُ الۡعَلِيۡمُ 4

(21:4) He said: "My Lord knows well all that is spoken in the heavens and the earth. He is All-Hearing, All- Knowing."[6]

6. This was the answer of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to their false propaganda and whispering campaign. Instead of giving a tit for tat answer, he said: My Lord will deal with you for He hears everything and knows everything.

بَلۡ قَالُوۡۤا اَضۡغَاثُ اَحۡلَامٍۢ بَلِ افۡتَرٰىهُ بَلۡ هُوَ شَاعِرٌ ۚ فَلۡيَاۡتِنَا بِاٰيَةٍ كَمَاۤ اُرۡسِلَ

الۡاَوَّلُوۡنَ 5

(21:5) They say: "Nay, these are confused dreams; nay, he has forged it; nay, he is a poet.[7] So let him bring us a sign, even as the Messengers of the past were sent with signs."

7. The background of this verse is this: When the message of the Prophet (peace be upon him) started gaining adherents, the chiefs of Makkah decided among themselves to start a propaganda campaign to counteract it. For this purpose they decided that every visitor to Makkah for pilgrimage should be approached and his mind so poisoned against the Prophet (peace be upon him) that he does not even go near and listen to him. Though this campaign continued throughout the year, in the pilgrimage season specially a large number of men were deputed to go to the tents of the pilgrims to warn them to beware of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Different sorts of things were said against the Prophet (peace be upon him) during these talks. Sometimes it was said that he was a sorcerer or that he had fabricated the Quran by himself but attributed it to Allah. Some would say that his revelations were the words of an insane person and a bundle of incoherent ideas. Others would say that these were ordinary poetic ideas which were being dubbed as the words of Allah. All they wanted to do was to poison the minds of the visitors irrespective of the correctness of their own versions. They had no considered and definite opinion in the matter.

This false propaganda, however, had just the opposite effect. The name of the Prophet (peace be upon him) became known throughout the country through the nefarious activities of the chiefs of Makkah. A positive kind of approach from the Muslims would not have achieved the same publicity in years as was achieved so rapidly through this negative campaign of the Quraish. It made everybody thinking: After all, who is this man against whom such a campaign of vilification has been started? The serious type among them rather came to the conclusion that they must hear to the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself and said to themselves: After all we are not children who can be easily enticed away.

For instance, Ibn Ishaq has related in detail the story of Tufail-bin-Amr Dausi in his own words: I was a poet of the clan of Daus. Once I went to Makkah and was, on my arrival there, surrounded by some people of the Quraish who told me all sorts of things against the Prophet (peace be upon him). So I grew suspicious and tried to avoid him as much as possible. The very next day, when I went to visit the Sanctuary, I saw him saying his prayer. I heard a few sentences and felt that what he was reciting were excellent words. I said to myself: I am a poet and a sensible young man and no child who cannot discriminate between the right and the wrong. Why should I not therefore meet him and inquire what he is reciting? Accordingly, I followed him to his house and said: The people had so much poisoned me against you that I had actually put cotton into my ears lest I should hear your voice, but what I have heard today from you was so appealing that I feel urged to inquire into your message rather in detail. At this the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited a passage of the Quran. As a result of which I embraced Islam there and then. On my return home I

induced my father and wife to become Muslims, which they did, and then invited the people of my clan to embrace Islam with the result that by time of the battle of the Trench, as many as eighty families from my clan had entered the fold of Islam. (Ibn Hisham, Vol. II, pp. 22-24).

According to another tradition cited by Ibn Ishaq, the chiefs of the Quraish confessed in their private meetings that all their charges against the Prophet (peace be upon him) were false. According to him, addressing a meeting, Nadr bin Harith once said: You cannot overcome Muhammad by the methods you are adopting against him. When he was a young man you regarded him as your bestmannered person and looked upon him as your most truthful and honest man. Now that he has attained advanced age, you say, he is a sorcerer, he is a soothsayer, he is a poet, he is insane. By God, he is not a sorcerer, for we very well know what kind of people the sorcerers are and what kind of tricks they resort to. By God, he is not a soothsayer, for we are fully aware of the guess works of the soothsayers. By God, he is not a poet for we know what poetry is and can judge that his words cannot be classified under poetry in any sense. By God, he is not insane, for we all know what nonsensical things the insane people utter. Therefore, O chiefs of the Quraish, let us think of some other plan to defeat him. After this, he himself proposed that stories from Persia like those of Rustam and Asfandyar should be given publicity to divert the people's attention from the Quran. Accordingly, they put this scheme into practice and Nadr himself began to relate such stories before the people. (Ibn Hisham, Vol. l, pp. 320-321).

مَآ اٰمَنَتۡ قَبۡلَهُمۡ مِّنۡ قَرۡيَةٍ اَهۡلَكۡنٰهَا ۚ اَفَهُمۡ يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ 6

(21:6) Not one township that We destroyed before them believed. Would they, then, believe?[8]

8. This contains a concise answer to the demand for a sign in the previous verse.

(1) You ask for signs like the ones which were shown by the former Messengers but you forget that those obdurate people did not believe in spite of the signs shown to them.

(2) While demanding a sign, you fail to realize that the people, who disbelieved even after seeing a sign, were inevitably destroyed.

(3) It is indeed a favor of Allah that He is not showing the sign as demanded by you. Therefore, the best course for you would be to believe without seeing a sign. Otherwise, you will meet the same doom that the former communities met, when they did not believe even after seeing the signs.

وَمَآ اَرۡسَلۡنَا قَبۡلَكَ اِلَّا رِجَالًا نُّوۡحِىۡۤ اِلَيۡهِمۡ فَسۡـَٔـلُوۡۤا اَهۡلَ الذِّكۡرِ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ لَا تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ 7

(21:7) (O Muhammad), even before you We never sent any other than human beings as Messengers, and to them We sent revelation.[9] Ask the People of the Book[10] if you do not know.

9. This is the answer to their objection: This man is no more than a human being like yourselves, and therefore, cannot be a Messenger of God. They have been told that the former Prophets, too, whom you also recognize as Prophets, were human beings and were blessed with revelations from Allah.

10. That is, you may have it testified by the Jews, who are the enemies of Islam like you, and are teaching you the ways to oppose it, that all the Messengers including Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) were human beings.

وَمَا جَعَلْنٰهُمْ جَسَدًا لَّا يَاْكُلُوْنَ الطَّعَامَ وَمَا كَانُوْا خٰلِدِيْنَ 8

(21:8) We did not endow the Messengers with bodies that would need no food; nor were they immortals.

ثُمَّ صَدَقْنٰهُمُ الْوَعْدَ فَاَنْجَيْنٰهُمْ وَمَنْ نَّشَآءُ وَاَهْلَكْنَا الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ 9

(21:9) Then We fulfilled the promise We had made to them: We rescued them and those whom We wished, and We destroyed those who exceeded all bounds.[11]

11. History not only tells us that the former Messengers were human beings but it also contains a lesson that they all received Allah's succor as promised by Him and their enemies were completely destroyed. Therefore you should seriously consider the goal for which you are heading.

لَقَدْ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكُمْ كِتٰبًا فِيْهِ ذِكْرُكُمْ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ع 10

(21:10) We have bestowed upon you a Book that mentions you. Do you not understand?[12]

12. This is a comprehensive answer to the various objections which were being raised in desperation by the disbelievers of Makkah against the Quran and the Prophet (peace be upon him), as if to say: What is there in this Book that you cannot understand? Why don't you consider it in the right spirit? There is nothing contradictory in it. It discusses you and your own problems and affairs of life. It describes your own nature, origin and end. It discriminates between good and evil and presents high moral qualities which your own consciences endorse and confirm. Why don't you, then, use your minds to understand this simple and easy thing?

وَكَمْ قَصَمْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ كَانَتْ ظَالِمَةً وَّاَنْشَاْنَا بَعْدَهَا قَوْمًا اٰخَرِيْنَ 11

(21:11) How many a wrong-doing town did We shatter and then raise up another people.

فَلَمَّآ اَحَسُّوْا بَاْسَنَآ اِذَا هُمْ مِّنْهَا يَرْكُضُوْنَ ؕ 12

(21:12) Then, when they perceived Our chastisement[13] they took to their heels and fled.

13. That is, when they realized that Allah's scourge was actually coming.

لَا تَرْكُضُوْا وَارْجِعُوْٓا اِلٰى مَآ اُتْرِفْتُمْ فِيْهِ وَمَسٰكِنِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْـَٔلُوْنَ 13

(21:13) (They were told): "Flee not, but return to your comforts and to your dwellings. You are likely to be questioned."[14]

14. This is a very meaningful sentence. It may mean:

(1) Examine this scourge minutely so that if someone asks you about it, you may be able to give an accurate account of it.

(2) Hold your grand meetings as usual. Perhaps your servants may come with folded hands before you to receive orders.

(3) Hold your councils as before, perhaps people may still come to ask for your wise counsels.

قَالُوْا يٰوَيْلَنَآ اِنَّا كُنَّا ظٰلِمِيْنَ 14

(21:14) They said: "Woe to us; surely we were wrong-doers."

فَمَا زَالَتْ تِّلْكَ دَعْوٰىهُمْ حَتّٰى جَعَلْنٰهُمْ حَصِيْدًا خٰمِدِيْنَ 15

(21:15) They did not cease to cry this until We reduced them to stubble, still and silent.

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَآءَ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لٰعِبِيْنَ 16

(21:16) We did not create in sport the heavens and the earth and all that lies between the two.[15]

15. This was to refute their entire conception of life which was based on the assumption that man was free to do whatever he liked, and there was none to call him to account or take him to task: that there was no life in the Hereafter where one's good deeds would be rewarded and evil deeds punished. In other words, this meant that the whole universe had been created without any serious purpose and therefore there was no need to pay any heed to the message of the Prophet.

لَوۡ اَرَدۡنَاۤ اَنۡ نَّتَّخِذَ لَهۡوًا لَّاتَّخَذۡنٰهُ مِنۡ لَّدُنَّاۤ ۖ صلے ق اِنۡ كُنَّا فٰعِلِيۡنَ 17

(21:17) Had it been Our will to find a pastime, We would have found one near at hand; if at all We were inclined to do so.[16]

16. That is, this world has been created with a definite purpose and not as a plaything. For, if We had wanted to enjoy a sport, We would have done so without creating a sentient, rational and responsible creature like you. Far be it from Us to put man to trial and conflict for the sake of mere fun.

بَلۡ نَقۡذِفُ بِالۡحَقِّ عَلَى الۡبَاطِلِ فَيَدۡمَغُهٗ فَاِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ ؕ وَلَـكُمُ الۡوَيۡلُ مِمَّا تَصِفُوۡنَ 18

(21:18) Nay, We hurl the Truth at falsehood so that the Truth crushes falsehood, and lo! it vanishes. Woe to you for what you utter![17]

17. That is, the object for which this world has been created is to stage a conflict between the truth and falsehood. And you yourselves know that in this conflict falsehood has always been defeated and destroyed. You should, therefore, consider this reality seriously. For, if you build the system of your life on the false presumption that it is mere fun, you will meet with the same consequences as the former people did, who presumed that the world was a mere show and pastime. Therefore you should reconsider your whole attitude towards the message which has come to you. Instead of making fun of it and scoffing at the Messenger, you should take a warning from the fate of the former peoples.

وَلَهٗ مَنۡ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ؕ وَمَنۡ عِنۡدَهٗ لَا يَسۡتَكۡبِرُوۡنَ عَنۡ عِبَادَتِهٖ وَلَا يَسۡتَحۡسِرُوۡنَ ۚ 19

(21:19) To Him[18] belongs whosoever dwells in the heavens and on earth. Those (angels) that are with Him[19] neither disdain to serve Him out of pride, nor do they weary of it.[20]

18. From here begins the discourse on the confirmation of Tauhid and the refutation of shirk for these were the actual bases of the conflict between the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the disbelievers of Makkah. The line of argument is this: The whole system of the universe is a clear proof that there is One Allah Who is its Creator, Sovereign, Ruler, and Lord and it is a falsehood that there are many gods who are partners in His Kingdom and Sovereignty, or that there is a Supreme God Who has under Him some minor gods to conduct the affairs of His Kingdom. This proof is also based on the preceding verses in which it has been stated that the universe has not been created as a pastime or a plaything, but for a serious purpose

and that there has always been a conflict between the truth and falsehood, and falsehood has always been defeated and destroyed.

19. That is, the angels whom the mushriks of Arabia believed to be the children of God and worshiped them as partners in Godhead.

20. That is, they are engaged in His service day and night without grumbling or ever feeling wearied.

يُسَبِّحُونَ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لَا يَفْتُرُونَ 20

(21:20) They glorify Him night and day, without flagging.

أَمِ اتَّخَذُوا آلِهَةً مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ هُمْ يُنشِرُونَ 21

(21:21) Have they taken earthly gods who are such that they raise up the dead to life?21

21. This question has been posed to bring home to the disbelievers that when they themselves believed that there is no being other than Allah who can give life to inanimate matter, why do they then acknowledge other deities besides Allah?

لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا ۚ فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ 22

(21:22) Had there been any gods in the heavens and the earth apart from Allah, the order of both the heavens and the earth would have gone to ruins.22 Glory be to Allah, the Lord of the Throne,23 Who is far above their false descriptions of Him.

22. This concise sentence contains two arguments:

(1) The obviously simple argument is that no institution, no household, not to speak of the vast universe containing multitudes of countless distant stars, can function smoothly and properly, if it has two masters.

(2) The deeper argument is that the system of the whole universe, including that of the earth, is functioning according to a universal law. It could not work so even for a moment, if there had been no proper proportion, balance, harmony and coordination between the different powers and countless things. This is a clear proof that there is a universal and all powerful law and system which binds and forces these powers and things to cooperate and coordinate between themselves with a perfect proportion and harmony and this could not have happened if there had been different independent rulers. The existence of such a system is itself a clear proof that there must be One All Powerful Manager and Administrator governing and ruling the entire universe. For further details, please see (E.N. 47 of Surah Bani-Israil).

23. That is, The Sovereign of the whole universe.

لَا يُسْـَٔلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْـَٔلُوْنَ 23

(21:23) None shall question Him about what He does, but they shall be questioned.

اَمِ اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اٰلِهَةً ؕ قُلْ هَاتُوْا بُرْهَانَكُمْ ۚ هٰذَا ذِكْرُ مَنْ مَّعِيَ وَذِكْرُ مَنْ قَبْلِيْ ؕ
بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ الْحَقَّ فَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ 24

(21:24) Have they taken gods other than Him? Say, (O Muhammad): "Bring forth your proof! Here is the Book with admonition for those of my time and there are also scriptures with admonition for people before me."[24] But most people do not know the Truth, and have, therefore, turned away from it.[25]

24. The first two were rational arguments and this is a historical one. This means that the study of all the former Scriptures shows that the Creator of the universe is One Allah and He alone is worthy of service and worship, while your religion is neither supported by rational arguments nor by historical evidence.

25. It is their lack of the knowledge of the reality which has created this indifference towards the message of the Prophet, and the same has made them heedless of the message.

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَّسُوْلٍ اِلَّا نُوْحِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ اَنَّهٗ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنَا فَاعْبُدُوْنِ 25

(21:25) Never did We send any Messenger before you to whom We did not reveal: "There is no god but Me. So serve Me alone."

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمٰنُ وَلَدًا سُبْحٰنَهٗ ؕ بَلْ عِبَادٌ مُّكْرَمُوْنَ ۙ 26

(21:26) They say: "The Most Compassionate Lord has taken to Himself a son."[26] Glory be to Him! Those whom they so designate are only His honoured servants.

26. Here it refers to the angels as is clear from Ayat

لَا يَسْبِقُوْنَهٗ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ بِاَمْرِهٖ يَعْمَلُوْنَ 27

(21:27) They do not outstrip Him in speech and only act as He commands.

يَعۡلَمُ مَا بَيۡنَ اَيۡدِيۡهِمۡ وَمَا خَلۡفَهُمۡ وَلَا يَشۡفَعُوۡنَ ۙ اِلَّا لِمَنِ ارۡتَضٰى وَهُمۡ مِّنۡ خَشۡيَتِهٖ

مُشۡفِقُوۡنَ 28

(21:28) He knows whatever is before them and whatsoever is remote from them and they do not intercede except for him, intercession on whose behalf pleases Him, and they stand constantly in awe of Him.[27]

27. These two verses refute the two reasons for which the mushriks had made the angels their deities:

(1) They took them for the offspring of Allah.

(2) They thought that if they worshiped the angels, they would be so pleased that they would intercede with Allah on their behalf. See (Surah Younus, Ayat 18); (Surah AzZumur, Ayat 3).

In this connection, it should also be noted that the Quran refutes the doctrine of intercession of the mushriks, saying, that their so called intercessors are not qualified to intercede for anyone. This is so because they have no knowledge of the hidden things, whereas Allah knows all that is hidden from or open to them. Therefore, the angels or Prophets or saints shall be allowed intercession only with the prior permission of Allah. As Allah alone has the power to hear or accept intercession, none else is entitled to divine worship or rights. For further details, please see (Surah TaHa, E. Ns 85-86).

وَمَنۡ يَّقُلۡ مِنۡهُمۡ اِنِّىۡۤ اِلٰهٌ مِّنۡ دُوۡنِهٖ فَذٰلِكَ نَجۡزِيۡهِ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نَجۡزِى الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ ۧ 29

(21:29) And if anyone of them were to claim: "Indeed I am a god apart from Him," We shall recompense both with Hell. Thus do We recompense the wrong-doers.

اَوَلَمۡ يَرَ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡۤا اَنَّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضَ كَانَتَا رَتۡقًا فَفَتَقۡنٰهُمَا ؕ وَجَعَلۡنَا مِنَ

الۡمَآءِ كُلَّ شَىۡءٍ حَىٍّ ؕ اَفَلَا يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ 30

(21:30) Did the unbelievers (who do not accept the teaching of the Prophet) not realize that the heavens and the earth were one solid mass, then We tore them apart,[28] and We made every living being out of water?[29] Will they, then, not believe (that We created all this)?

28. From the wording of the text, it appears that at first the whole universe was a single mass of matter; then it was split into different parts and the earth and the other heavenly bodies were formed. For more details, please see (Surah HaMim, E.Ns 13-15).

29. From the wording of the text, it appears that Allah made water the cause and origin of life. See also (Surah An- Nur, Ayat 45).

وَجَعَلْنَا فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِهِمْ ۖ وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا فِجَاجًا سُبُلًا لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ 31

(21:31) And We placed firm mountains on earth lest it should sway with them,[30] and We made wide paths[31] in them that they may find their way;[32]

30. For explanation, see (E. N. 12 of Surah An-Nahl).

31. "Broad highways" are the passes between high mountains and the valleys and ravines made by the rivers in the mountainous regions and other natural ways that connect different regions on the earth.

32. This is a very meaningful sentence. It may mean that the people may find paths for traveling on the earth, and it may also mean that the wisdom that underlies the skill and the system of their creation may guide them to the reality.

وَجَعَلْنَا السَّمَاءَ سَقْفًا مَّحْفُوظًا ۖ وَهُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِهَا مُعْرِضُونَ 32

(21:32) and We made the sky a secure canopy;[33] and yet they turn away from these Signs.[34]

33. For explanation, see (Surah Al-Hijr, E. Ns 8 and 10-12).

34. That is, those signs which are in the sky.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ۖ كُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ 33

(21:33) It is He Who created the night and the day, and the sun and the moon. Each of them is floating in its orbit.[35]

35. The use of the words kullun (all) and yasbahun (float) in the plural (for more than two) indicates that not only the sun and the moon but all the heavenly bodies are floating in their own separate orbits and none of them is fixed or stationary. These (verses 30-33) are capable of being interpreted in the modern scientific terms in accordance with the present day conceptions of Physics, Biology and Astronomy.

Here it should also be noted that(verses 19-23) refute shirk while verses 30-33 present positive proofs of Tauhid. They imply that the creation and regular functioning of the universe clearly show that it is the work of One All- Powerful Creator, and no sensible person can say that it has been created as a mere pastime for the sake of fun. When the fact is this and you see proofs of the doctrine of Tauhid all around you, in the earth and heavens,

why do you reject the message of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and demand other signs from him.

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا لِبَشَرٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ الْخُلْدَ ۖ أَفَإِن مِّتَّ فَهُمُ الْخَالِدُونَ 34

(21:34) (O Muhammad),[36] We did not grant everlasting life to any human being even before you. If you were to die, will they live for ever?

36. From here the same theme of the conflict between the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the disbelievers, that was interrupted by (verses 19-33), has been resumed.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ۗ وَنَبْلُوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً ۖ وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ 35

(21:35) Every living being shall taste death[37] and We shall subject you to ill and good by way of trial,[38] and to Us shall all of you be eventually sent back.

37. This is a brief answer to all those warnings and curses with which the Prophet (peace be upon him) was being threatened and the conspiracies which the Quraish were hatching against him day and night. On the one hand, the women of the Quraish cursed him because according to them he had ruined their home life by enticing away their kith and kits. While on the other hand, the chiefs of the Quraish threatened him with horrible consequences for the propagation of Islam. After the emigration to Habash especially, which almost affected every home of Makkah, these curses and threats increased all the more. This verse is meant to comfort and console the Prophet (peace be upon him) as well so that he should continue his mission without any fear of their threats.

38. That is, Allah is always putting human beings to test and trial both through adversity and affluence. This is to judge whether prosperity makes them proud, cruel and slaves of their lusts or they become grateful to Allah. On the other hand, He inflicts adversity upon them in order to see whether they remain within the prescribed and lawful limits or become low-spirited and down-hearted. A sensible person therefore should not be deluded by prosperity and adversity, but should keep their trial element in view and try to pass through it gracefully.

وَإِذَا رَآكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِن يَتَّخِذُونَكَ إِلَّا هُزُوًا ۖ أَهَٰذَا الَّذِي يَذْكُرُ آلِهَتَكُمْ ۖ وَهُم

بِذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ 36

(21:36) When the unbelievers see you they make you an object of fun, saying: "Is he the one who mentions your gods?"[39] They say so, and yet they reject with disdain the very mention of the Most Compassionate Lord.[40]

39. It should be noted that this sentence contains only the reason why they scoffed at him, but does not refer to the expression of scoff itself. Obviously, the disbelievers must have

been using some other words or expressions of derision to avenge themselves on the Prophet (peace be upon him) for his rejecting their self-made deities.

40. This is to rebuke the disbelieves as if to say: You cherish so much love of your self-made idols and false gods that you cannot tolerate anything against them. So much so, that you scoff at the Messenger of Allah, and you are not ashamed when you hear the name of the Merciful and discard His mention with disdain.

خُلِقَ الْاِنْسَانُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ ؕ سَاُورِيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِيْ فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُوْنِ 37

(21:37) Man is hasty by nature.[41] I shall certainly show you My Signs.[42] Do not ask Me to be hasty.

41. This is not the literal translation of the text; its purport according to the Arabic usage is: Man is a hasty and impatient creature by his very nature. The same thing has been stated in (Surah Al-Isra, Ayat 11): Man is very hasty and impatient.

42. From the succeeding sentences it is obvious that signs here stands for the things that have been mentioned therein, the threat of the scourge of Allah, Resurrection and Hell. They made fun of these, as if to say: This man threatens us with the scourge of Allah and the torment of the Day of Resurrection if we deny him and that we shall become fuel of Hell, but nothing of the sort has befallen us. We are as strong as ever and nothing seems to be happening.

وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْوَعْدُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ 38

(21:38) They say: "(Tell us) when will the threat of punishment come to pass if you are truthful?"

لَوْ يَعْلَمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا حِيْنَ لَا يَكُفُّوْنَ عَنْ وُّجُوْهِهِمُ النَّارَ وَلَا عَنْ ظُهُوْرِهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ 39

(21:39) If only the unbelievers knew of the Hour when they shall not be able to keep off the Fire from their faces, nor from their backs; nor shall they be helped.

بَلْ تَاْتِيْهِمْ بَغْتَةً فَتَبْهَتُهُمْ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ رَدَّهَا وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُوْنَ 40

(21:40) That will suddenly come upon them and stupefy them. They shall not be able to ward it off, nor shall they be granted any respite.

وَلَقَدِ اسْتُهْزِئَ بِرُسُلٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَحَاقَ بِالَّذِينَ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا بِهِ
يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ع 41

(21:41) Other Messengers before you were also mocked, but those who scoffed at the Messengers were overtaken by the same scourge that they had scoffed at.

قُلْ مَن يَكْلَؤُكُم بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ مِنَ الرَّحْمَٰنِ ۚ بَلْ هُمْ عَن ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِم
مُّعْرِضُونَ 42

(21:42) Tell them, (O Muhammad): "Who protects you, during the night or the day from the Most Compassionate Lord?"[43] And yet they turn away from the Admonition of their Lord.

43. That is to say, who is there to protect and save you from the scourge of Allah if you are suddenly visited by it any time during the night or day.

أَمْ لَهُمْ آلِهَةٌ تَمْنَعُهُم مِّن دُونِنَا ۚ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ نَصْرَ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَا هُم مِّنَّا
يُصْحَبُونَ 43

(21:43) Do they have any gods who would protect them against Us? They have no power even to help themselves; nor do they enjoy Our support.

بَلْ مَتَّعْنَا هَٰؤُلَاءِ وَآبَاءَهُمْ حَتَّىٰ طَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ ۗ أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَنَّا نَأْتِي الْأَرْضَ
نَنقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا ۚ أَفَهُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ 44

(21:44) Nay, We generously provided them and their fathers, and they enjoyed Our provision for long.[44] Do they not see that We are now advancing into their territory, diminishing it from different sides?[45] Is it they, then, who will triumph?"[46]

44. In other words it means: These people have been deluded by Our favor and Our provisions. They think they are enjoying prosperity and good life as their personal right and there is none to take it away from them. They have forgotten that there is God above them Who is able to make or mar their fortune.

45. In this connection, see (Surah Ar-Raad, Ayat 41 and E.N. 60) thereof. Here it bears an additional meaning also: Do they not see that an All-Powerful Being is showing His signs every now and then everywhere on the earth in the form of famines, epidemics, floods, earthquakes and other calamities. Millions of people are killed, habitations and harvests are destroyed and other damages are caused, which frustrate all human designs?

46. It means: When they know that all the resources and provisions of life are in Our hands and that We can increase or decrease them as We will, do they have the power and strength to defend themselves against Our punishment? Can they not see from these signs that their power, prosperity and luxury are not everlasting and that there is an All-Powerful Allah to seize and punish them.

قُلْ إِنَّمَآ أُنذِرُكُم بِالْوَحْيِ ۖ وَلَا يَسْمَعُ الصُّمُّ الدُّعَآءَ إِذَا مَا يُنذَرُونَ 45

(21:45) Tell them: "I only warn you by the Revelation." But the deaf do not hear the cry when they are warned.

وَلَئِن مَّسَّتْهُمْ نَفْحَةٌ مِّنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّكَ لَيَقُولُنَّ يَٰوَيْلَنَآ إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَٰلِمِينَ 46

(21:46) Were only the slightest whiff from your Lord's punishment to touch them,[47] they would cry out: "Woe to us; we were indeed wrong-doers."

47. That is, the same scourge which they are demanding to be hastened and of which they are making fun.

وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَٰمَةِ فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْـًٔا ۖ وَإِن كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا ۗ وَكَفَىٰ بِنَا حَٰسِبِينَ 47

(21:47) We shall set up just scales on the Day of Resurrection so that none will be wronged in the least. (We shall bring forth the acts of everyone), even if it be the weight of a grain of mustard seed. We shall suffice as Reckoners.[48]

48. See also (verses 8-9 and E.Ns 8-9 of Surah Al-Aaraf). It is difficult for us to understand the exact nature of the balance. Anyhow, it is clear that the balance will weigh accurately all the human moral deeds instead of material things, and will help judge whether a man is virtuous or wicked and how much. The Quran has used this word to make mankind understand that every deed, good or bad, will be weighed and judged according to merit.

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ وَهَٰرُونَ الْفُرْقَانَ وَضِيَآءً وَذِكْرًا لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ 48

(21:48) Surely[49] We had granted to Moses and Aaron the Criterion[50] (between right and wrong), and Light and Admonition for the good of the God-fearing,[51]

49. From here begin the stories of the Prophets. If we consider these stories in the context in which they occur, it becomes clear that these have been related to impress the following themes.

(1) All the former Prophets were human beings. Therefore there is nothing strange or unusual that a human being like Muhammad (peace be upon him) has been sent as a Messenger.

(2) The mission and teachings of this Prophet are the same as of those who were sent before him.

(3) All the Prophets had been granted a privileged position by Allah, Who blessed them with special favors. For instance, though they were made to suffer from hardships and persecutions for years, ultimately Allah heard their prayers and helped them in miraculous ways against their enemies and persecutors.

(4) In spite of Allah's special favors on them they were no more than His humble servants and human beings and had no share whatever in Godhead. So much so that sometimes they committed errors of judgment, fell ill, were put to trials and even committed faults, for which they were called to account by Allah.

50. All the three words have been used in praise of the Torah: (1) Alfurqan: A criterion which distinguished the truth from falsehood. (2) Dhiaun: A light which showed the right way of life. (3) Zikrun: An admonition, which reminded the erring descendants of Adam to remember the lesson they had forgotten.

51. Though it was sent for the good of all human beings, only the pious people, having these characteristics, could benefit from it.

الَّذِيْنَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَيْبِ وَهُمْ مِّنَ السَّاعَةِ مُشْفِقُوْنَ 49

(21:49) for those who fear their Lord without seeing Him and dread the Hour[52] (of Reckoning).

52. The Hour of Resurrection.

وَهٰذَا ذِكْرٌ مُّبٰرَكٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ ؕ اَفَاَنْتُمْ لَهٗ مُنْكِرُوْنَ ۘ 50

(21:50) This is a Blessed Admonition that We have revealed. Are you, then, going to reject it?

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَاۤ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ رُشْدَهٗ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا بِهٖ عٰلِمِيْنَ ۚ 51

(21:51) Surely We had bestowed wisdom upon Abraham even earlier, and We knew him well.[53]

53. The Arabic word rushd is very comprehensive and means righteousness as well.

We had blessed Abraham with discretion: The discretion he showed in discriminating between the right and the wrong etc. was not of his own acquirement but had been bestowed on him by Us.

We knew him well: We knew that he was worthy of Prophethood, therefore We appointed him as such. According to (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 124): Allah knows best whom to entrust with His Mission. It contains a subtle answer to the objection raised by the chiefs of the Quraish: Why has Allah appointed this man, the Prophet (peace be upon him) to the office of Prophethood, when he is in no way superior to us. This objection has been answered, as if to say: The same objection might even have been raised against Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) by his people, but We knew his capabilities. Therefore We selected him for Prophethood.

In this connection, please also see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 124-141, 258-260): (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayats 74-84): (Surah At- Tauba, Ayat 114): (Surah Houd, Ayats 69-76): (Surah Ibrahim, Ayats 35-41): (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 51-58)and (Surah An-Nahal, Ayats 120-122) and the E.Ns thereof.

اِذۡ قَالَ لِاَبِيۡهِ وَقَوۡمِهٖ مَا هٰذِهِ التَّمَاثِيۡلُ الَّتِىۡۤ اَنۡتُمۡ لَهَا عٰكِفُوۡنَ 52

(21:52) Recall,[54] when he said to his father and his people: "What are these images to which you are devoutly clinging?"

54. Before proceeding further, it should be kept in mind that the incident from the history of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) has been cited here to refute the erroneous creeds of the Quraish. This was meant to hit them hard for they were the descendants of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) and were proud of their relationship with him. It was he who had built the Kabah which had become the center of the entire Arabia and they, being its keepers, were its most important clan. Therefore, they could not remain indifferent to this answer.

قَالُوۡا وَجَدۡنَاۤ اٰبَآءَنَا لَهَا عٰبِدِيۡنَ 53

(21:53) They answered: "We found our fathers worshipping them."

قَالَ لَقَدۡ كُنۡتُمۡ اَنۡتُمۡ وَاٰبَآؤُكُمۡ فِىۡ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيۡنٍ 54

(21:54) He said: "Certainly you and your fathers have all been in manifest error."

قَالُوۡۤا اَجِئۡتَنَا بِالۡحَـقِّ اَمۡ اَنۡتَ مِنَ اللّٰعِبِيۡنَ 55

(21:55) They said: "Are you expressing your true ideas before us or are you jesting?"[55]

55. The literal translation will be: Are you presenting the truth before us, or just playing with us? They were so sure of the truth of their creed that they could never imagine that anyone could be serious in declaring it to be false.

قَالَ بَل رَّبُّكُمْ رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ الَّذِىْ فَطَرَهُنَّ ۖ وَاَنَا عَلٰى ذٰلِكُمْ مِّنَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ 56

(21:56) He said: "Nay, but your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth which He created and to that I bear witness before you.

وَتَاللّٰهِ لَاَكِيْدَنَّ اَصْنَامَكُمْ بَعْدَ اَنْ تُوَلُّوْا مُدْبِرِيْنَ 57

(21:57) By Allah, I shall certainly carry out my plan against your gods after you are gone."[56]

56. That is, if you do not understand this by argument, I will present a practical proof that these idols are helpless and have no powers. Therefore, it is wrong to make them your deities.

فَجَعَلَهُمْ جُذٰذًا اِلَّا كَبِيْرًا لَّهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ اِلَيْهِ يَرْجِعُوْنَ 58

(21:58) Then he broke them all into pieces,[57] sparing only the supreme one among them that they may possibly return to him.[58]

57. This was that practical proof. In the absence of the priests and attendants, Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) entered their central Temple and broke all the idols to pieces.

58. The pronoun in the original text may be translated into it or him. In the former case, it will refer to the chief idol and in the latter to Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him). In the first case, it will imply a subtle sarcasm in order to make them realize that their creed of idol worship was foolish, for obviously the chief idol could not break the minor idols. In the second case, it will refer to Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), who thought that they might turn to him about the incident and he might get an opportunity to have a frank talk with them about their absurd creed.

قَالُوْا مَنْ فَعَلَ هٰذَا بِاٰلِهَتِنَآ اِنَّهٗ لَمِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ 59

(21:59) (When they saw the idols in this state) they said: "Who has done this to our gods? Surely he is one of the wrong-doers."

قَالُوْا سَمِعْنَا فَتًى يَّذْكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهٗٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمُ ۭ 60

(21:60) Some of them said: "We heard a youth called Abraham speak (ill) of them."

قَالُوْا فَاْتُوْا بِهٖ عَلٰٓي اَعْيُنِ النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْهَدُوْنَ 61

(21:61) The others said: "Bring him, then, before the eyes of the people that they may see (what will be done to him)."[59]

59. This was exactly what Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) expected to happen. He wished that the matter should not remain confined to the priests and the attendants but the common people also should be present there to witness that their deities were helpless and their priests were deluding them about their powers. The priests committed the same folly as was later committed by Pharaoh when he arranged an encounter between Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and the magicians in the open in front of the multitudes of the common people, and the former got an opportunity to show publicly the miracle of the staff which shattered the illusory, magical tricks of the magicians.

قَالُوْٓا ءَاَنْتَ فَعَلْتَ هٰذَا بِاٰلِهَتِنَا يٰٓاِبْرٰهِيْمُ ۭ 62

(21:62) (On Abraham's arrival) they said: "Abraham, are you he who has done this to our gods?"

قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهٗ ڰ كَبِيْرُهُمْ هٰذَا فَسْـَٔـلُوْهُمْ اِنْ كَانُوْا يَنْطِقُوْنَ ۝ 63

(21:63) He answered: "Rather it was this supreme one who has done it. So ask them, if they can speak."[60]

60. The very sentence, “So ask them, if they can speak”, is a clear proof that it was not a lie when Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) said: “But this has done it, biggest of them, this one”. What he intended by this was to make them realize and confess that their idols were helpless because they could do nothing to protect themselves and could not even speak. It is clear that when a person poses an unreal question for the sake of argument in order to bring home the fact that the position taken by the other party is untenable, it cannot be considered as a lie; firstly, because the speaker himself never intended it to be a lie, and secondly, because the addressees also knew that it was not a lie.

The foregoing remarks have been necessitated because of a tradition that Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) told three lies in his life, of which one is the above mentioned event. The second lie is contained in SUrah As-Saffaat, Ayat 89: I am indisposed, and the third lie is not contained in the Quran but in the Bible that he declared his wife to be his sister. (Gen. 12:12,13, 18;19). It is a pity that this tradition has given rise to two divergent opinions. The orthodox traditionalists actually believe that Prophet Abraham told these lies just because an authentic tradition says so. They do not consider that it is far better to discard the

tradition according to which a Prophet is accused of being a liar. On the other hand, those who are against the traditions, discard all of them just because this solitary tradition, which has been reported as authentic by Bukhari and Muslim, is unreliable on the very face of it. Obviously it needs no elaborate arguments to prove that all the traditions cannot be discarded just because one or a few of them are unreliable. As regards the upholders of the first opinion, they have gone to the other extreme and think that a tradition can be discarded in spite of the authenticity of its reporters for cogent reasons. They do this without reference to the contents of the tradition itself. But if the text of the tradition itself clearly shows that such a thing could not have been said by the Prophet (peace be upon him), there is no reason to insist that it should be accepted as authentic merely because its reporters are authentic.

This, tradition is unreliable for other reasons also. As has already been shown, the first lie is no lie at all. As regards the second lie, "I am indisposed"; it cannot be considered as a lie unless it is proved beyond doubt that Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) was perfectly healthy at that time, and the text does not testify this. As regards the third lie, the event stated in the Bible in chapter 12 of Genesis is absurd on the face of it. When Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) went to Egypt with his wife Sarah, he was, according to the Bible itself, 75 years old and his wife was 65. Therefore the very age of Sarah is a clear proof that she could not be a fair woman to look upon to force Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) to pose that she was his sister in order to save his life. The tradition under discussion, which accuses Prophet Abraham to be guilty of telling a lie, has accordingly no basis at all and cannot be taken as reliable in spite of its authentic reporters.

فَرَجَعُوٓا۟ إِلَىٰٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ فَقَالُوٓا۟ إِنَّكُمْ أَنتُمُ ٱلظَّٰلِمُونَ ۙ 64

(21:64) Thereupon they turned to their (inner) selves and said (to themselves): "Surely it is you who are the wrong-doers."

ثُمَّ نُكِسُوا۟ عَلَىٰ رُءُوسِهِمْ ۚ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا هَٰٓؤُلَآءِ يَنطِقُونَ 65

(21:65) Then their minds were turned upside down,[61] and they said: "You know well that they do not speak."

61. Literally the original text means: They were turned down upon their heads. Some commentators have interpreted it to mean: They hung down their heads with shame. But this does not fit in the context and the wording of the text. The right interpretation would be: When they considered the answer of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), they realized that they themselves were in the wrong, because they had set up helpless idols as deities, which could not even speak a word as to who had broken them. But soon after this, they were overpowered by obduracy and ignorance which perverted their minds and they again relapsed into crookedness.

قَالَ أَفَتَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنفَعُكُمْ شَيْـًٔا وَلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ ۖ 66

(21:66) Abraham said: "Do you, then, worship beside Allah a thing that can neither benefit you nor hurt you?

أُفٍّ لَّكُمْ وَلِمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ ۖ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ 67

(21:67) Fie upon you and upon all that you worship beside Allah. Do you have no sense?"

قَالُوا حَرِّقُوهُ وَانصُرُوا آلِهَتَكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ 68

(21:68) They said: "Burn him, and come to the support of your gods, if you are going to do anything."

قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ۙ 69

(21:69) We said: "O fire, become coolness and safety for Abraham."[62]

62. Though this is one of those miracles which have been clearly stated in the Quran, there are people who try to prove that there was no such miracle at all. According to this passage (Ayats 68-70), Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) was actually threatened to be burnt alive and he was accordingly thrown into the burning fire, but Allah ordered the fire to become cool and harmless for him. In the face of the clear words of the Quran, these people deny this miracle because according to them it is impossible even for Allah to go beyond the routine of the physical laws. They say that miracles cannot appeal to the rationalists of the modern age, and therefore these should be interpreted in accordance with physical laws. They forget that according to the Quran, Allah is able to do everything, and He does extraordinary and unusual things which cannot be explained by science. Therefore they should accept the Quran as it is or discard it, but they should not twist it to suit their so called rationalism.

وَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَخْسَرِينَ ۚ 70

(21:70) They had sought to do evil to him, but We caused them to be the worst losers,

وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَلُوطًا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا لِلْعَالَمِينَ 71

(21:71) and We saved him and Lot[63] and brought him to the land upon which We had bestowed Our blessings for all the people of the world.[64]

63. According to the Bible, Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) had two brothers, Nahor and Haran; Prophet Lot was the son of Haran (Gen. 11:26), and he was the only person to believe in Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him). (Surah Al-Ankaboot, Ayat 26).

64. The blessed land refers to Syria and Palestine, which contains both material and spiritual blessings. It is one of the most fertile regions in the world. Moreover, it was blessed for two thousand years with more Prophets than any other region of the world.

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهٗٓ اِسْحٰقَ ؕ وَيَعْقُوْبَ نَافِلَةً ؕ وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا صٰلِحِيْنَ 72

(21:72) And We bestowed upon him Isaac and Jacob as an additional gift,[65] making each of them righteous.

65. That is, We made his son a Prophet and his grandson too.

وَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ اَئِمَّةً يَّهْدُوْنَ بِاَمْرِنَا وَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرٰتِ وَاِقَامَ الصَّلٰوةِ وَاِيْتَآءَ الزَّكٰوةِ ۚ وَكَانُوْا لَنَا عٰبِدِيْنَ ۙ 73

(21:73) And We made them into leaders to guide people in accordance with Our command, and We inspired them to good works, and to establish Prayers and to give Zakah. They worshipped Us alone.[66]

66. This important event of the life of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) has found no mention whatever in the Bible. In fact nothing about his life in Iraq, his conflict with Nimrod, his father and the community at large, his efforts to eradicate idolatry, the incident of his being cast into the fire, which ultimately led to his forced exile from the country, is mentioned anywhere in the Bible. The Bible merely mentions his migration, and that too, in a manner as if a family was migrating from one country to another in search of livelihood. There is another interesting difference between the Quran and the Bible. According to the Quran, the father of Abraham, who was a mushrik, was foremost in tyrannizing over his son, but the Bible gives a different account, which is as follows.

Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees. And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah. But Sarai was barren; she had no child. And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and settled there. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran. (Gen. 11:27-32).

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And 1 will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. (Gen. 12: 1-3).

The Talmud, however, gives quite a few details about the life of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) about the period of his stay in Iraq, which are generally the same as given in the Quran, but there is a glaring discrepancy in some of the important events. In fact, one can clearly feel that the account given in the Talmud is full of heterogeneous and hypothetical things while the one given in the Quran is most clear and contains nothing unworthy of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him). We reproduce below the account as given in the Talmud so that the reader may know the difference between the Quranic and Jewish versions. This will also remove the misunderstanding of those who think that the Quran has borrowed stories from the Bible or Jewish literature.

According to the Talmud: The wise men saw a large star in the sky on the night Abram was born and they advised Nimrod to kill the child born in the house of Terah. The King decided to kill the child but Terah hid his child and had a servant's son killed in exchange. Terah thereupon hid his wife and child in a cave where they lived for ten years. In the 11th year Abram was taken by Terah to Noah, where he lived under the guidance of Noah and his son Shem for 39 years. During the same period Abram married his niece Sarai, who was 42 years his junior. (The Bible does not mention that Sarai was the niece of Abram; moreover, the difference in their ages is mentioned as ten years). (Gen. 11: 29, 17: 17).

The Talmud then says: Abram left Noah at the age of 50 and came back to his father. Here he found that his father was an idolatry and had twelve idols in the house according to the twelve months of the year. He tried to preach to his father against idolatry but when the latter did not listen to him, Abram one day broke all the idols in the house. Seeing this Terah went straight to Nimrod and complained that the son who was born in his house 50 years ago had misbehaved and broken the idols. He wanted the King's verdict on this. Nimrod summoned Abram for interrogation, but the replies given by Abram were straight, terse and clear. Nimrod sent him to jail and then referred the matter to the council for a decision. The council decided that Abram should be burnt to death. A fire was accordingly prepared and Abram was cast into it. His brother and father-in-law Haran was also similarly cast into the fire. Haran was punished because Nimrod enquired of Terah as to why he had another child killed in place of Abram when he wanted to kill Abram on the day of his birth. Terah replied that this was done at the instigation of Haran. Nimrod accordingly let off Terah but threw Haran into the fire along with Abram. Haran was burnt to death instantly but people saw that Abram was walking unhurt through the flames. When Nimrod was informed of it, he witnessed it with his own eyes and cried out: O man of the God of Heaven, come out of the fire and stand before me. Thereupon, Abram came out and Nimrod became one of his believers and gave him many costly presents. After this, according to the Talmud, Abram stayed in Iraq for two more years when Nimrod saw a dreadful dream and the astrologers told him that the destruction of his empire would come through Abram and that he should, therefore, put him to death. Nimrod sent people to kill Abram but Abram came to know of the plot before hand through Eleazar, a slave presented to him by Nimrod himself. Abram accordingly fled and took refuge with Noah where Terah also met him off and on secretly. The father and the son at last decided to leave the country and Noah and his son Shem also approved of their plan. Accordingly, Terah along with his son Abram and his grandson Lot and his granddaughter and son's wife Sarai, left Ur and went to Haran. (H. Polano: The Talmud Selections, London, pp. 30-42).

Can a reasonable person after reading this account of the Talmud ever imagine that this could be a source book for the story as given in the Quran?

وَلُوطًا اٰتَيْنٰهُ حُكْمًا وَّعِلْمًا وَّنَجَّيْنٰهُ مِنَ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِيْ كَانَتْ تَّعْمَلُ الْخَبٰٓئِثَ ۭ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا
قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فٰسِقِيْنَ ۙ 74

(21:74) We bestowed upon Lot sound judgement and knowledge,[67] and We delivered him from the city that was immersed in foul deeds. They were indeed a wicked people, exceedingly disobedient.

67. The original Arabic word hukm is very comprehensive. It means judgment, wisdom and discretion, and authority from Allah. Ilm stands for the revealed knowledge of the truth. Thus, We bestowed hukm and ilm on Lot. We appointed Lot as a Prophet. (For the story of Lot, see (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 80-84); (Suran Younus, Ayats 70-83); (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 57-74)and the E.Ns there of).

وَاَدْخَلْنٰهُ فِيْ رَحْمَتِنَا ۭ اِنَّهٗ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ۡ 75

(21:75) And We admitted him into Our mercy. Verily he was of the righteous.

وَنُوْحًا اِذْ نَادٰى مِنْ قَبْلُ فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهٗ فَنَجَّيْنٰهُ وَاَهْلَهٗ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيْمِ ۚ 76

(21:76) We bestowed the same favour upon Noah. Recall, when he cried to Us before;[68] We accepted his prayer and delivered him and his household from the great distress[69]

68. This refers to Prophet Noah's (peace be upon him) prayer which he at last made after having tried his utmost to reform his people: Lord, help me for I have been overpowered. (Surah Al-Qamar, Ayat 10), and Lord, do not leave even a single disbeliever on the earth. (Surah Nooh, Ayat 26).

69. "Great affliction" may either refer to living a miserable life among the wicked people, or to the flood. (For the story of Prophet Noah, see (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats: 59-64); (Surah Younus, Ayats 72-74); (Surah Houd, Ayats 25-48), and(Surah Al-Isra, Ayat 3) and the E.N.s thereof).

وَنَصَرْنٰهُ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا ۭ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فَاَغْرَقْنٰهُمْ
اَجْمَعِيْنَ 77

(21:77) and We helped him against a people who rejected Our signs as false. They were indeed an evil people and so We drowned them all.

وَدَاوٗدَ وَسُلَيۡمٰنَ اِذۡ يَحۡكُمٰنِ فِى الۡحَرۡثِ اِذۡ نَفَشَتۡ فِيۡهِ غَنَمُ الۡقَوۡمِ ۚ وَكُنَّا لِحُكۡمِهِمۡ شٰهِدِيۡنَ ۙ 78

(21:78) We bestowed the same favour upon David and Solomon. Recall, when they gave judgement regarding a tillage into which the sheep of some people had strayed at night, and We were witnesses to their judgement.

فَفَهَّمۡنٰهَا سُلَيۡمٰنَ ۚ وَكُلًّا اٰتَيۡنَا حُكۡمًا وَّعِلۡمًا ۚ وَّسَخَّرۡنَا مَعَ دَاوٗدَ الۡجِبَالَ يُسَبِّحۡنَ وَالطَّيۡرَ ؕ وَكُنَّا فٰعِلِيۡنَ 79

(21:79) We guided Solomon to the right verdict, and We had granted each of them[70] judgement and knowledge. We made the mountains and the birds celebrate the praise of Allah[71] with David. It was We Who did all this.

70. There is no mention of this event in the Bible, nor in the Jewish literature. According to the Muslim commentators, it happened like this: The goats of one person entered into the field of another person at night. The latter brought his complaint to Prophet David who decided that the strayed goats should be given to the owner of the field. Prophet Solomon, however, differed with this and opined that the goats should remain with the owner of the field up to the time that the former tilled and prepared the field as before. In regard to this Allah says: We led Solomon to the right decision. As regards the legal aspect of the matter, we cannot say with certainty what is the Islamic law in such a case nor is there any tradition of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to explain or support it. That is why the jurists have differed about it.

It should, however, be noted that in this context, the incident has been cited to show that the Prophets were after all human beings in spite of their God given powers and abilities. In this case, Prophet David committed an error of judgment because he was not guided by Allah as was Prophet Solomon, though both of them were Prophets. In the succeeding passage the wonderful powers of both have been mentioned to show that they were God given and did not make anyone a god.

Incidentally, we learn from this verse that if two judges give different decisions about one and the same case, both of them will be regarded as righteous, though the decision of only one of them will be correct, provided that both are duly qualified for sitting in judgment on the case. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has stated the same principle more elaborately. In a tradition of Bukhari, he is reported by Amar bin Aas to have said: If a judge does his very best to arrive at the right decision, he will get a double reward in case of a right judgment and a single reward if his judgment is wrong. According to another tradition, cited by Abu

Daud and Ibn Majah, on the authority of Buraidah, he is reported to have said: Judges are of three kinds and only one of them will go to Paradise: the one who recognizes the truth and decides according to it. On the other hand, the one who recognizes the truth but gives his decision against it, will go to Hell, and he too, who sits in judgment on a case without the necessary knowledge (and competence).

71. From the wording of the text, it is clear that the mountains and the birds were subjected to join Prophet David (peace be upon him) with him in glorifying Allah. This is also supported by Surah Suad, Ayat 19: We had subdued the mountains by Our command so that they praised Us with him (David) in the morning and evening, and the birds too, which gathered together and repeated Our praise with him. And, according to Surah Saba, Ayat 10: We commanded the mountains to repeat Our praise with him and also the birds to do the same. We are of the opinion that it means this: When Prophet David (peace be upon him) sang hymns of Allah's praise and glory, in his rich and sweet voice, the mountains echoed back his melodies and the birds gathered round him and the whole scene became charming. Our interpretation is supported by this tradition.

Once when Abu Musa Ashari, who had an extremely sweet voice, was reciting the Quran, the Prophet (peace be upon him) who was passing by, stood and listened to him for a long time. When he finished the recital, the Prophet (peace be upon him) remarked: This man has been granted a portion of the melody of David.

وَعَلَّمْنٰهُ صَنْعَةَ لَبُوْسٍ لَّكُمْ لِتُحْصِنَكُمْ مِّنْۢ بَاْسِكُمْ ۚ فَهَلْ اَنْتُمْ شٰكِرُوْنَ 80

(21:80) It was We Who taught him the art of making coats of mail for your benefit so that it may protect you from each other's violence.[72] Do you, then, give thanks?[73]

72. According to (Surah Saba, Ayats 10-11), it was like this: And We made the iron soft for him (and commanded him): Make coats of mail complete in every way, and arrange the plates properly. This shows that Allah had made Prophet David an expert in the use of iron, and had especially taught him the art of an armorer for defense purposes. This fact is confirmed by archaeological and historical researches, for according to these the iron age in the world started between 1200 and 1000 BC and this was precisely the period of Prophet David. At first the Hittites in Syria and Asia Minor, who flourished between 2000 and 1200 BC, discovered a method of melting and molding iron, but they guarded it as a close secret from the world, and it could not be put to common use. Later on, the Philistines came to know of it, but they too guarded it as a secret. The incessant defeats suffered by the Israelites at the hands of the Hittites and the Philistines before King Saul, were due mainly to the use of chariots of iron in their wars by the latter. (Joshua, 17:16; Judges, 1: 19, 4: 2-3). In 1020 BC when Saul became ruler over the Israelites by Allah's command, he subdued the Canaanites and recaptured most of Palestine. After him Prophet David (1004-965 BC) not only annexed the whole of Palestine and Jordan to the Israeli kingdom but a major portion of Syria as well. This was the time when the secret of armor making closely guarded by the Hittites and the Philistines, became well known and cheaper articles of daily use began to be made. The recent archaeological excavations conducted in Edom, to the south of Palestine, which is rich in iron ore, have brought to light furnaces for melting and molding iron. The furnace excavated near Ezion-geber, a port on the Gulf of Aqabah, in the time of Prophet Solomon,

seems to have been built on the principles which are used in the modern blast furnaces. It is therefore natural that Prophet David must have first of all utilized this discovery for war purposes, because a little earlier the hostile Canaanites around his kingdom had made life really difficult for his people. The Bible also says that Prophet David was an expert in the art of melting and using iron for war purposes. (See Joshua, 17: 16; Judges, 1:19 and 4: 2-3).

73. For further details about Prophet David, please see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 251) and (Sura Al-Isra, Ayat 55)and the E.Ns thereof.

وَلِسُلَيْمٰنَ الرِّيْحَ عَاصِفَةً تَجْرِيْ بِاَمْرِهٖٓ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ الَّتِيْ بٰرَكْنَا فِيْهَا ؕ وَكُنَّا بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عٰلِمِيْنَ 81

(21:81) And We subdued the strongly raging wind to Solomon which blew at his bidding towards the land We blessed.[74] We know everything.

74. This is also explained in (Surah Saba, Ayat 12): And for Solomon We had subjected the wind which covered a month's journey in the morning and a month's journey in the evening, and in (Surah Suad, Ayat 36): So We subjected the wind to him. It blew softly at his bidding wherever he wanted it to blow. Thus it is clear that the wind was so subjected to Prophet Solomon that the voyages to places at one month's sea journey could be performed conveniently, because a favorable wind was always blowing for his ships to and from those places.

It is confirmed by the Bible that Prophet Solomon had developed sea trade on a large scale. (I Kings, 10: 22). On the one side, his trade ships sailed from Ezion-geber, through the Red Sea, towards Yaman and other southern and eastern lands, and on the other, his naval fleet called Thar-shish, sailed on the Mediterranean to the western countries. The great furnace which he had built at Eziongeber for melting and molding ores extracted from the copper and iron mines in the Arabah in Edom, has been confirmed by modem archaeological researches as well. This molten iron and copper was used in building ships besides being put to other uses. The Quran refers to this when it says: And We made a fountain of molten copper to flow for him (Solomon). (Surah Saba, Ayat 12).

As regards to the subjection of the wind, it may mean that Allah, by His special favor, had so arranged that the wind, and sea voyages in those days depended entirely on wind, was always favorable for Prophet Solomon's fleet. But if we take the literal meaning of verse 81: It blew at his command, there will be no harm, for Allah is able to give such powers to any of His servants He pleases.

وَمِنَ الشَّيٰطِيْنِ مَنْ يَّغُوْصُوْنَ لَهٗ وَيَعْمَلُوْنَ عَمَلًا دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَكُنَّا لَهُمْ حٰفِظِيْنَ ۙ 82

(21:82) And We subdued many devils who dived (into the sea) for him and carried out other jobs besides that. We kept watch over all of them.[75]

75. The subjection of satans has been explained in (Surah Saba, Ayats 12-13). Incidentally, these verses of the Quran clearly show that the satans and jinns who worked for Prophet Solomon belonged to quite a different genus from human beings. Therefore, it is wrong to pervert the Quran to prove that they were human beings as some modernist commentators have tried to do. It is obvious from the wording of the Quran and the context in which the story of the jinns has been related, that they were not human beings. Had they been so this would have been no special favor to Solomon, because human beings had already built the gigantic monuments like the pyramids of Egypt.

وَاَيُّوْبَ اِذْ نَادٰى رَبَّهٗٓ اَنِّيْ مَسَّنِيَ الضُّرُّ وَاَنْتَ اَرْحَمُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ ۚ 83

(21:83) We bestowed (the same wisdom, judgement and knowledge) upon Job.[76] Recall, when he cried to his Lord: "Behold, disease has struck me and You are the Most Merciful of those that are merciful."[77]

76. There is a wide divergence of opinion concerning the personality, period and nationality of Prophet Job. Some commentators opine that he was an Israelite, while others think that he was an Egyptian or an Arab who lived before Prophet Moses, or during the time of Prophets David and Solomon (peace be upon them all). As all these conjectures are based on the Book of Job, which is self-contradictory and against the Quran. Nothing can be said about him with certainty, but in the light of the Book of Isaiah (8th century BC) and the Book of Ezekiel (6th century BC), which are more trustworthy works, he lived in the 9th century BC or even earlier. As regards to his nationality, the context in which his name occurs in (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 163) and (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 84), it may be assumed that he was an Israelite. According to a saying of Wahb bin Munabbih, he might have been from the offspring of Esau, a son of Prophet Isaac.

77. The words of the prayer are note-worthy. Prophet Job mentions his distress but does not say anything more to his Lord except: You are the most Merciful. This is a great proof of his fortitude, noble and contented nature.

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهٗ فَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهٖ مِنْ ضُرٍّ ۖ وَّاٰتَيْنٰهُ اَهْلَهٗ وَمِثْلَهُمْ مَّعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا وَذِكْرٰى لِلْعٰبِدِيْنَ 84

(21:84) We accepted his prayer and removed the affliction[78] from him, and We not only restored to him his family but as many more with them as a mercy from Us and as a lesson to the worshippers.[79]

78. How his disease was cured has been explained in (Surah Suad, Ayat 42): Stamp the ground with your foot: here is cool water for you to wash with and to drink. From this it appears that no sooner did he stamp the ground than a spring gushed forth. He took bath and drank the water and was cured of his disease. The nature of the treatment hints that he was suffering from a skin disease. This is confirmed by the Bible as well. Satan smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. (Job, 2:7).

79. It will be worthwhile to compare the high character of Prophet Job as given in the Quran with that in the Book of Job in the Bible. The Quran presents him as a veritable picture of patience and fortitude and an excellent model for the worshippers of Allah, but his general picture presented in the Book of Job is that of a man who is full of grievance against God: Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. Let them curse (the night) that curse the day. Because it shut not the doors of my mother's womb, nor did sorrow from mine eyes. Why died I not from the womb? (Chapter 3). Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balance together, the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me. (Chapter 6) I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men? Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am a burden to myself? And why dost thou not pardon my transgressions, and take away my iniquity? (Chapter 7: 20-21).

His three friends try to console him and counsel patience, but in vain. He says: My soul is weary of my life. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul (10:1). I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all. (16:2). So these three men ceased to answer Job. Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu against Job, because he justified himself rather than God." (32:1-3), but he also failed to console him. Then the Lord himself came down and condemned the three friends and Elihu and rebuked Job and then forgave him, accepted him and blessed him. (Chapters 41, 42). It should be noted that in the first two chapters of this Book, Prophet Job is presented as a perfect and upright man who feared God, but in the following chapters he becomes an embodiment of grievance against God, as though the estimate of Satan about him was correct and that of God incorrect. Thus this Book itself is a clear evidence that it is neither the word of God nor of Prophet Job but had been written afterwards by some literary man and incorporated in the Bible as a scripture.

وَإِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَإِدْرِيْسَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ ؕ كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ۖ 85

(21:85) And (We bestowed the same favour) upon Ishmael, Idris[80] and Dhu al-Kifl,[81] for they were all steadfast.

80. For explanation, see(Surah Maryam E. N. 33).

81. Zul-Kifl is not the name but the title of a righteous man, which literally means a man of luck. Here it does not refer to worldly prosperity but to his high character and ranks in the Hereafter. He has also been mentioned by this title in(Surah Suad, Ayat 48). There are different opinions about his identity and nationality. Some have regarded him as Zacharias (but this is not correct because Zacharias has been mentioned separately in(verse 89). Others say that he was Elias, or Joshua, son of Nun, or Elisha, but this again is incorrect, because in (Surah Suad, Ayat 49)Elisha and Zul- Kifl have been mentioned as separate personalities. Some others say that he was Prophet Job's son, named Bishr, who succeeded him as Prophet.

Allamah Alusi says: The Jews claim that he was Ezekiel who was appointed to Prophethood during the captivity (597 BC) of the Israelites and he performed his mission in a habitation by the side of the Chebar canal.

These conflicting opinions indeed confirm nothing. The modern commentators, however, are inclined to believe that he was Ezekiel, though there is no convincing argument about it. This opinion is sound because his description in this verse that he was a patient and righteous man and was blessed by God is fully confirmed by the Book of Ezekiel. He was one of those people who had been taken prisoner by Nebuchadnezzer at the downfall of Jerusalem, who settled the Israeli exiles at Tel-abib by the river Chebar in Iraq. Here, in 594 BC, Ezekiel was raised to Prophethood when he was hardly 30, and he continued preaching the message of God to the exiled Israelites as well as to the iniquitous people and rulers of Jerusalem for full 22 years. In the 9th year of his mission, his wife whom he called the desire of his eyes died, but when the people came to mourn her death, he warned them of the wrath of God and the impending disaster. (Chapter 24: 15-21). The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel in the Bible is one of those scriptures which appear to be genuine and divinely inspired.

وَاَدۡخَلۡنٰهُمۡ فِىۡ رَحۡمَتِنَا ؕ اِنَّهُمۡ مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيۡنَ 86

(21:86) And We admitted them into Our mercy, for they were of the righteous.

وَذَا النُّوۡنِ اِذۡ ذَّهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ اَنۡ لَّنۡ نَّقۡدِرَ عَلَيۡهِ فَنَادٰى فِى الظُّلُمٰتِ اَنۡ لَّاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّاۤ
اَنۡتَ سُبۡحٰنَكَ ۖ اِنِّىۡ كُنۡتُ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ ۖ 87

(21:87) And We bestowed Our favour upon Dhu al-Nun.[82] Recall, when he went forth enraged,[83] thinking We have no power to take him to task.[84] Eventually he cried out in the darkness:"[85] There is no god but You. Glory be to You! I have done wrong."

82. That is, Jonah, literally Dhun-Nun means the man of the fish. He was called so because he was devoured by a fish by the command of Allah. (Also See (Surah As-Saffaat, Ayat 142) and (Surah Younus, Ayat 98 and its E.Ns 98-100).

83. Prophet Jonah left his people before he received Allah's command for migration.

84. He presumed that he should leave, the place which was going to be visited by the scourge of Allah. This was not by itself an offence but it was an offence for a Prophet to leave the place of his mission without the permission of Allah.

85. "Darkness": the darkness in the belly of the fish and the darkness of the sea over and above it.

فَاسۡتَجَبۡنَا لَهٗ ۙ وَنَجَّيۡنٰهُ مِنَ الۡغَمِّ ؕ وَكَذٰلِكَ نُـنۡجِى الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ 88

(21:88) Thereupon We accepted his prayer, and rescued him from grief. Thus do We rescue the believers.

وَزَكَرِيَّآ اِذْ نَادٰى رَبَّهٗ رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْنِيْ فَرْدًا وَّاَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْوٰرِثِيْنَ ۖ 89

(21:89) And We bestowed favour upon Zechariah, when he cried to his Lord: "Lord! Leave me not solitary (without any issue). You are the Best Inheritor."

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهٗ ۗ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهٗ يَحْيٰى وَاَصْلَحْنَا لَهٗ زَوْجَهٗ ۭ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا يُسٰرِعُوْنَ فِي الْخَيْرٰتِ وَ
يَدْعُوْنَنَا رَغَبًا وَّرَهَبًا ۭ وَكَانُوْا لَنَا خٰشِعِيْنَ 90

(21:90) So We accepted his prayer and bestowed upon him John, and We made his wife fit[86] (to bear a child). Verily they hastened in doing good works and called upon Us with longing and fear, and humbled themselves to Us.[87]

86. "Cured his wife": We cured his wife of sterility. As "You are the best of the Inheritors", I shall have no grief even if You do not give me any child. (For further details, please see (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayats 37-41) and (Surah Maryam, Ayats 2-14) and the E.Ns thereof).

87. It will be worthwhile to reiterate the reasons why the stories of the Prophets have been cited in this Surah.

(1) The story of Prophet Zacharias has been cited to impress on the minds that all the Prophets were human beings and servants of Allah and had no tinge of Godhead in them. They had no power to bestow children upon others because they themselves had to pray to Allah for children for themselves.

(2) The story of Prophet Jonah has been cited to show that even a great Prophet like him did not go unnoticed when he committed an error in regard to Allah's message. But when he repented, Allah, by His grace, delivered him alive from the belly of the fish.

(3) The mention of Prophet Job has been made to show that even Prophets were put to hard trials and afflictions and even they had to beg Allah to restore them to health, not to speak of curing others of diseases.

Along with these, the other important thing which is meant to be impressed is that all the Prophets believed in the doctrine of Tauhid. That is why they begged and prayed to One Allah alone to fulfill their needs and requirements. Though they met with trials, Allah helped them and granted their prayers in supernatural and miraculous ways.

وَالَّتِيْٓ اَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيْهَا مِنْ رُّوْحِنَا وَجَعَلْنٰهَا وَابْنَهَآ اٰيَةً لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ 91

(21:91) And also recall the woman who guarded her chastity:[88] We breathed into her of Our spirit,[89] and made her and her son a Sign to the whole world.[90]

88. That is, Mary (peace be upon her).

89. It should be noted that the incident of the birth of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) was not different from that of Prophet Adam, because the wording of the Arabic text in the two cases is almost identical: See (Surah Suad, Ayats 71-72). Besides this in (verse 91), almost similar words have beets used in regard to the birth of Jesus (peace be upon him). See also (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat l71) and(Surah At-Tahrim, Ayat 12). Allah Himself has stated that the birth of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) was just like the birth of Prophet Adam: In the sight of Allah, the case of the birth of Jesus is like that of Adam, whom He created out of dust and said, Be, and he was. (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 59). In the light of these verses, we may conclude that Allah uses words like: We breathed into him or her of Our spirit for miraculous births. (For details please see (Surah An-Nisa E.Ns 212-213).

90. That is, The mother and the son were not partners of God nor had any share whatsoever in Godhead, but were a sign from among the signs of God. (See (Surah Maryam, E.N. 21).

إِنَّ هَٰذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً ۖ وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ 92

(21:92) Verily this community of yours is a single community, and I am your Lord; so worship Me.

وَتَقَطَّعُوا أَمْرَهُم بَيْنَهُمْ ۖ كُلٌّ إِلَيْنَا رَاجِعُونَ 93

(21:93) But they tore asunder their faith into many parts.[91] But to Us they are bound to return.

91. In this verse, the addressees are the entire mankind. It means: O mankind, in reality all of you belonged to one community and had one and the same religion and all the Prophets brought one and the same creed which was this: Allah alone is the Lord of all mankind, therefore they should worship Him alone. But afterwards the people corrupted this creed and invented and adopted the things they liked and mixed their own theories, whims and practices in it. This brought into being countless communities and religions. Thus it is absolutely wrong to say that a particular Prophet was the founder of a particular religion and another of another, and so on. The very fact that different religions came into being at different periods of time, does not prove that the Prophets created these differences. It is obvious that the Prophets of God could not found different religions nor could they teach their followers to worship any beings other than Allah.

فَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَا كُفْرَانَ لِسَعْيِهِ ۖ وَإِنَّا لَهُ كَاتِبُونَ 94

(21:94) Then whosoever does righteous works, while believing, his striving will not go unappreciated. We record them all for him.

وَحَرَامٌ عَلَىٰ قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا أَنَّهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ 95

(21:95) It has been ordained against every town that We ever destroyed that they shall not return[92] (to enjoy a new lease of life)

92. The Arabic text of (verse 95) may be interpreted in three ways.

(I) The community which is once destroyed by the scourge of Allah can never have a second or new life.

(2) After its destruction, its people are not given a second chance for their test, then they shall be presented in the court of Allah for final judgment.

(3) When a community transgresses the last limits in its wickedness, injustices and disobedience, and Allah ordains to destroy it, no other chance of repentance is given to it because it becomes incapable of turning back to right guidance.

حَتّٰٓى اِذَا فُتِحَتْ يَاْجُوْجُ وَمَاْجُوْجُ وَهُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ حَدَبٍ يَّنْسِلُوْنَ 96

(21:96) until Gog and Magog are let loose, and begin swooping from every mound,

وَاقْتَرَبَ الْوَعْدُ الْحَقُّ فَاِذَا هِيَ شَاخِصَةٌ اَبْصَارُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا يٰوَيْلَنَا قَدْ كُنَّا فِيْ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هٰذَا بَلْ كُنَّا ظٰلِمِيْنَ 97

(21:97) and the time for the fulfilment of the true promise of Allah draws near,[93] whereupon the eyes of those who disbelieved will stare in fear, and they will say: "Woe to us, we were indeed heedless of this; nay, we were wrongdoers."[94]

93. For the details about Gog and Magog, see (E.Ns 62 and 69 of Surah Al-Kahf). They will be let loose in the sense that they will swoop down on the regions of the earth like a beast of prey which is set free from its cage suddenly. The time of the fulfillment of the true promise will come on the eve of Resurrection and the appearance of Gog and Magog will be a sign of it. In a tradition related in Muslim, by Huzaifah bin Asid Ghifari, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Resurrection will not take place until ten signs appear:

(1) The smoke. (2) Dajjal. (3) Daabat-ul-Ard. (4) Rising of the sun from the west. (5) Coming down of Jesus, son of Mary. (6) Sudden attack of Gog and Magog. (7-9) Three land slides, one in the east, the second in the west and the third in Arabia. (10) The flare up of a great fire from Yaman which will drive the people to the Plain of Resurrection. In another tradition the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated that after the swoop of Gog and Magog, Resurrection will be so near that it may take place at any moment just as a pregnant woman might deliver the child at any moment, in the day or night, after her term has expired. But the reference to the appearance of Gog and Magog in the Quran and Hadith does not indicate that they will swoop on mankind jointly. It may be that they will clash against each other near the time of Resurrection and their mutual conflict might result in a universal catastrophe and destruction.

94. “We were in heedlessness” contains a kind of excuse in it, as if to say: The Prophets warned us of the Day of Resurrection but we were wrongdoers and paid no heed to their warning.

إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ أَنتُمْ لَهَا وَارِدُونَ 98

(21:98) (They will be told): "Verily you and the gods you worshipped beside Allah are the fuel of Hell. All of you are bound to arrive there.[95]

95. We learn from traditions that Abdullah bin Azzaara raised an objection in this connection, saying: According to this not only our deities but Prophets Jesus and Uzair (peace be upon them) and the Angels also will become fuel for Hell because they are also worshiped. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Yes, everyone who would approve of his own worship instead of Allah’s will go to Hell along with those who worshiped him. He meant to say: There is no reason why Prophets Jesus and Uzair (peace be upon them) and the Angels should go to Hell because they never approved that they should be worshiped instead of Allah, and were not responsible for this. On the other hand, they taught people to worship Allah alone. Of course, those who tried to become deities and became partners in the shirk of others will certainly go to Hell along with their worshipers. Likewise those, who induced others to take deities other than Allah, will go to Hell. Satan comes under this category for he induces others to make deities. Thus it is Satan who is made the real deity whom they obey and commit shirk. Besides this, idols of stone and wood and other accessories of shirk will also be thrown into Hell along with the mushriks so that the latter should see that their deities were becoming a cause of the intensity of their torture of fire instead of becoming their intercessors.

لَوْ كَانَ هَٰؤُلَاءِ آلِهَةً مَّا وَرَدُوهَا ۖ وَكُلٌّ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ 99

(21:99) Had these indeed been gods they would not have gone there. But (as it is), all of you shall ever abide in it."

لَهُمْ فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا يَسْمَعُونَ 100

(21:100) There they shall groan[96] with anguish and the din and noise in Hell will not let them hear anything.

96. The Arabic word zafeer means hard breathing because of excessive heat, hard work and weariness.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُم مِّنَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُونَ ۙ 101

(21:101) But for those whom We had decided to favour with good reward, they shall be kept far removed from Hell.[97]

97. These will be the people who practiced virtue and righteousness in this world. Allah has already promised that they will be kept safe from the torture and will be granted salvation.

لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ حَسِيْسَهَا ۚ وَهُمْ فِيْ مَا اشْتَهَتْ اَنْفُسُهُمْ خٰلِدُوْنَ ۚ 102

(21:102) They shall not hear even a whisper of it, and they shall live for ever in the delights which they had desired.

لَا يَحْزُنُهُمُ الْفَزَعُ الْاَكْبَرُ وَتَتَلَقّٰىهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ ۭ هٰذَا يَوْمُكُمُ الَّذِيْ كُنْتُمْ

تُوْعَدُوْنَ 103

(21:103) The Hour of the Great Terror shall not grieve them,[98] and the angels shall receive them saying: "This is your Day which you had been promised."

98. That is, the time of mustering and going before Allah will be very dreadful for the common people but the righteous people will have full peace of mind because everything will be happening according to their expectations. Their faith and the righteous deeds they did in the world, will help console them by the grace of Allah and, instead of grief and sorrow, they will be filled with the hope that they are going to get their promised rewards.

يَوْمَ نَطْوِي السَّمَاۗءَ كَطَيِّ السِّجِلِّ لِلْكُتُبِ ۭ كَمَا بَدَاْنَآ اَوَّلَ خَلْقٍ نُّعِيْدُهٗ ۭ وَعْدًا

عَلَيْنَا ۭ اِنَّا كُنَّا فٰعِلِيْنَ 104

(21:104) On that Day We shall roll up the heavens like a scroll for writing. Even as We originated the creation first so We shall repeat it. This is a promise binding on Us; and so We shall do.

وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُوْرِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ اَنَّ الْاَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصّٰلِحُوْنَ 105

(21:105) Surely We wrote in the Psalms, after the exhortation, that the earth shall be inherited by My righteous servants.

اِنَّ فِيْ هٰذَا لَبَلٰغًا لِّقَوْمٍ عٰبِدِيْنَ ۭ 106

(21:106) Herein, surely, is a message for those devoted to worship.[99]

99. The interpretation of this verse has given rise to a great misunderstanding. Some people have tried to interpret it in a way, which is entirely opposed to the ideology of the Quran. They interpret it to mean: The inheritance of the kingdom and the resources of the earth are

given to the righteous people alone in this worldly life, and upon them alone Allah showers His favors and blessings. Then they apply this formula conversely and conclude that the gift of this inheritance of the earth is the sole criterion between the righteous and the unrighteous men. The righteous is the one who inherits the sovereignty of the earth and the unrighteous the one who is deprived of this inheritance. But when they apply their formula in the historical perspective, they find that most of those nations which have inherited the earth in the past and are inheriting it today, have been and are mostly disbelieving, mushriks, atheists and immoral, and that these are not the characteristics of the righteous people when judged by the criterion put forward by the Quran. From Nimrod and Pharaoh to the present day communist despots, who have been inheriting the earth, were and are unbelievers and the enemies of God and therefore could not be considered righteous, according to the Quranic formula. Faced with this situation, they start arguing that there must be some error in the conception of the righteous which should be such as would fit all the inheritors of the earth whether they were Caliphs like Abu Bakr Siddiq and Umar Farooq or Chingez and Halaku. This research leads them to the Darwinian theory of the survival of the fittest and they assume fitness to be a synonym of righteousness.

According to this new conception or definition of righteousness, the proposition would plainly mean: Any person, or a group of persons, who is capable of conquering and subduing countries by military force and has the ability to exploit the resources of the earth successfully is a righteous servant of Allah and his achievement is a criterion and message of righteousness and worship for other human beings to follow. Consequently, if they fail to achieve the inheritance of the earth, they will neither be regarded among the righteous nor among the servants of Allah. As a result of this interpretation of the verse, and this conception of righteousness and service, they were confronted with the interpretation of some basic and fundamental articles of the Islamic faith. For instance, according to the Quran, no deed, howsoever good, could be regarded as righteous without belief in Allah, the Hereafter, the Prophets and the Books. Moreover, the invitation of the Prophet to accept the moral and legal systems of Islam would become meaningless. Then these people could not reconcile their interpretation with the teachings of the Quran that obedience to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the commandments of Allah was absolutely essential for a righteous man and that the lack of this would make a person a disbeliever and a transgressor who deserved the wrath of Allah. If they had faced this problem boldly and honestly, they would have realized that their interpretation was wrong, but instead of this, they very impudently changed the universally accepted conception of faith, Islam, Tauhid, Prophethood and the Hereafter in order to make these basic articles of the faith fit in with their interpretation of this verse. Thus, they turned all the teachings of the Quran upside down and tampered with its meaning without the least hesitation. Now let us consider their interpretation and point out its errors.

(1) Their interpretation contradicts the teachings of the Quran as a whole, for according to these virtue, piety and goodness do not comprise material progress and ability to rule over the land. Moreover, if the Quranic word Salih (virtuous, good) is regarded as synonymous with Sahib Salahiyyat (i.e. possessor of fitness and competence), this one verse will clash with the whole of the Quran.

(2) They isolate this verse from its context and ascribe to it whatever meaning they like; otherwise, they would have seen that the inheritance referred to in the context is the

promise to the believers which is to be fulfilled in the Hereafter, and thus has nothing to do with inheritance in this world.

If this verse is interpreted in the context in which it occurs, it becomes very plain from the preceding verses that this promise to the righteous people holds good for the life in the Hereafter. This thing has been made more explicit in (Surah Az-Zumur, Ayats 73-74). According to this passage (which is definitely about life in the Hereafter), when the pious people will enter into Paradise, they will say: God be praised, Who has fulfilled His promise and made us heirs to the land.

Now let us consider this matter in the light of the Psalms (whether the Book of Psalms in the Bible is genuine or tampered with, because the real Psalms of Prophet David are nowhere available) to which this verse refers. According to 37:9-29: Evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace....and their inheritance shall be forever....The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever. Thus the Psalms also confirm word for word (verse 105). It is obvious that (They shall) dwell therein forever refers to the life in the Hereafter.

As regards to the inheritance of the earth in this worldly life, Allah gives it as a heritage to those of His servants whom He pleases (Surah Al-Anfaal, Ayat 128), irrespective of whether they are believers or disbelievers, righteous or wicked, not as a reward but for their trial. Your Lord will make you rulers on the earth, and then He will see how you conduct yourselves. (Surah Al-Anfaal, Ayat 129). The heritage of the earth in this worldly life is neither permanent nor everlasting. It is merely bestowed as a trial for different communities. On the other hand, the heritage of the land referred to in (verse 105) is permanent and forever and, according to the Quran, it will be bestowed on the basis of this formula: The land belongs to Allah and He will make only His righteous servants heirs to it not for their test but as a permanent reward for the righteous attitude they adopted in this worldly life.

وَمَآ أَرۡسَلۡنَٰكَ إِلَّا رَحۡمَةٗ لِّلۡعَٰلَمِينَ 107

(21:107) We have sent you forth as nothing but mercy to people of the whole world.[100]

100. This verse can also be translated as: We have sent you only as a blessing for the people of the world. In both cases it will mean that the appointment of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is indeed a blessing and mercy of Allah to the whole world. This is because he aroused the neglectful world from its heedlessness and gave it the knowledge of the criterion between truth and falsehood, and warned it very clearly of both the ways of salvation and ruin. This fact has been stated here to tell the disbelievers of Makkah that they were quite wrong in their estimate of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that he was an affliction and distress for them because they said: This man has sown seeds of discard among our clans and separated near relatives from each other. They have been told here: O people, you are wrong to presume that he is an affliction for you; but he is in reality a blessing and mercy of Allah for you.

قُلْ اِنَّمَا يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيَّ اَنَّمَآ اِلٰهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ۚ فَهَلْ اَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ 108

(21:108) Say: "It is revealed to me that your God is only One God. Will you, then, submit to Him?"

فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ اٰذَنْتُكُمْ عَلٰى سَوَآءٍ ۭ وَاِنْ اَدْرِيْٓ اَقَرِيْبٌ اَمْ بَعِيْدٌ مَّا تُوْعَدُوْنَ 109

(21:109) If they turn away, say to them: "I have warned you all alike; and I cannot say whether what you have been promised[101] is near or distant.

101. That is, I do not know the time and the form of the punishment of Allah for your rejection of the message. It may come at any time in any shape.

اِنَّهٗ يَعْلَمُ الْجَهْرَ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْتُمُوْنَ 110

(21:110) Indeed He knows what you say loudly and what you hide.[102]

102. This refers to their secret schemes, plots and their whispering campaign which have been mentioned in (verse 3). There, too, the Prophet (peace be upon him) had said: My Lord has the knowledge of everything that is said in the heavens or the earth for He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (verse 4). This was to warn them that they would be taken to task for these things, too.

وَاِنْ اَدْرِيْ لَعَلَّهٗ فِتْنَةٌ لَّكُمْ وَمَتَاعٌ اِلٰى حِيْنٍ 111

(21:111) I think that this [reprieve] is possibly a trial for you,[103] an opportunity to enjoy yourselves until an appointed time."

103. This was a trial because the delay in the punishment was deluding them into believing: All the things put forward by the Prophet are false. Had he been a true Prophet of Allah, we would have been punished long before this for our disbelief. They did not realize that the reason for the delay was that Allah willed to give them respite for mending their ways.

قٰلَ رَبِّ احْكُمْ بِالْحَقِّ ۭ وَرَبُّنَا الرَّحْمٰنُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلٰي مَا تَصِفُوْنَ ع 112

(21:112) The Messenger said: "My Lord! Judge with truth. Our Compassionate Lord alone is our support against your (blasphemous) utterances."

22. Surah Al Hajj (The Hajj)

Name

This Surah takes its name from v. 27.

Period of Revelation

As this Surah contains the characteristics of both the Makki and the Madani Surahs, the commentators have differed as to its period of revelation, but in the light of its style and themes we are of the opinion that a part of it (vv. 1-24) was sent down in the last stage of the Makki life of the Holy Prophet a little before migration and the rest (vv. 25-78) during the first stage of his Madani life. That is why this Surah combines the characteristics of both the Makki and the Madani Surahs.

The sudden change of the style from v. 25 shows that probably vv. 25-78 were sent down in the month of Zul-Hijjah in the very first year after Hijrah. This is indicated by vv. 25-41 and confirmed by the occasion of the revelation of vv. 39-40. It appears that the month of Zul-Hijjah must have brought to the immigrants nostalgic memories of their homes in Makkah and naturally they must have thought of their Sacred City and of their Hajj congregation there, and grieved to think that the mushrik Quraish had debarred them from visiting the Sacred Mosque. Therefore, they might even have been praying for and expecting Divine permission to wage war against those tyrants who had expelled them from their homes and deprived them of visiting the House of Allah and made it difficult for them to follow the way of Islam. It was at this psychological occasion that these verses were sent down. That is why the purpose for which Masjid-al- Haram was built has been specifically mentioned. It has been made plain that Hajj(pilgrimage) had been enjoined for the worship of One Allah. But it is an irony that afterwards it had been dedicated to the rituals of shirk and the worshipers of One Allah had been debarred from visiting it. Therefore, permission for waging war against those tyrants has been given to oust them from there and to establish the righteous way of life for establishing virtue and eradicating evil. According to Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, Urwah bin Zubair, Zaid bin Aslam, Muqatil bin Hayyan, Qatadah and other great commentators, v. 39 is the first verse that grants the Muslims permission to wage war. Collections of Hadith and books on the life of the Holy Prophet confirm that after this permission actual preparations for war were started and the first expedition was sent to the coast of the Red Sea in Safar A.H. 2, which is known as the Expedition of Waddan or Al-Abwa.

Subject Matter and Theme

This Surah is addressed to: (1) The mushriks of Makkah, (2) the wavering Muslims, and (3) the True Believers. The mushriks have been warned in a forceful manner to this effect: "You have obdurately and impudently persisted in your ideas of ignorance and trusted in your deities instead of Allah, though they possess no power at all and you have repudiated the Divine Messenger. Now you will meet the same end as has been the doom of those like you before. You have only harmed yourselves by rejecting Our Prophet and by persecuting the best element of your own community; now your false deities shall not be able to save you from the wrath of God". At the same time, they have been admonished time and again for

their creed of shirk and sound arguments have been given in favor of Tauhid and the Hereafter.

The wavering Muslims, who had embraced Islam but were not prepared to endure any hardship in its way, have been admonished to this effect: "What is this faith of yours? On the one hand, you are ready to believe in Allah and become His servants provided you are given peace and prosperity but, on the other, if you meet with afflictions and hardships in His Way, you discard your Allah and cease to remain His servant. You should bear in mind that this wavering attitude of yours cannot avert those misfortunes and losses which Allah has ordained for you."

As regards the true Believers, they have been addressed in two ways: (1) in a general way so as to include the common people of Arabia also, and (2) in an exclusive way:

1. The Believers have been told that the mushriks of Makkah had no right to debar them from visiting the Holy Mosque. They had no right to prevent anyone from performing Hajj because the Holy Mosque was not their private property. This objection was not only justified but it also acted as an effective political weapon against the Quraish. For it posed this question to the other clans of Arabia: Were the Quraish mere attendants of the Holy Mosque or its owners? It implied that if they succeeded in debarring the Muslims from Hajj without any protest from others, they would feel encouraged in future to debar from Hajj and Umrah the people of any other clan, who happened to have strained relations with the Quraish. In order to emphasize this point, the history of the construction of the Holy Mosque has been cited to show that it was built by Prophet Abraham by the Command of Allah and he had invited all the peoples to perform Hajj there. That is why those coming from outside had enjoyed equal rights by the local people from the very beginning. It has also been made clear that that House had not been built for the rituals of shirk but for the worship of One Allah. Thus it was sheer tyranny that the worship of Allah was being forbidden there while the worship of idols enjoyed full license.
2. In order to counteract the tyranny of the Quraish, the Muslims were allowed to fight with them. They were also given instructions to adopt the right and just attitude as and when they acquired power to rule in the land. Moreover, the Believers have been officially given the name of "Muslims", saying, "You are the real heirs to Abraham and you have been chosen to become witnesses of the Truth before mankind. Therefore you should establish salat and pay the zakat dues in order to become the best models of righteous life and perform Jihad for propagating the Word of Allah." (vv. 41,77, 78.)

It will be worth while to keep in view the introductions to Chapters II (Al-Baqarah) and VIII (Al Anfal).

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوۡا رَبَّكُمۡ ۚ اِنَّ زَلۡزَلَةَ السَّاعَةِ شَىۡءٌ عَظِيۡمٌ 1

(22:1) O mankind, fear the (wrath of) your Lord! Indeed, the earthquake of the Hour (of Judgement) will be an awesome thing.[1]

1. According to the early commentators, this earthquake will be a prelude to Resurrection. This will probably take place when the earth will begin to rotate in the reverse order, and the sun will rise in the west. In a lengthy tradition reported by Ibn Jarir, Tabarani and Ibn Abi Hatim from Abu Hurairah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has stated that when the first Trumpet will be blown, there will be a general confusion. At the second all people will die and at the third they will be brought back to life and presented before Allah. At the first blowing of the Trumpet, the earth will begin to rock like a boat which is beaten about by huge waves, or like a hanging lamp which is moved from side to side by a strong wind.

This condition has been depicted in the Quran at several other places. For instance (Surah Al-Waqiah, Ayat 6); (Surah Al-Haqqa, Ayats 13-14); (Surah Al-Muzzammil, Ayats 14,17-18); (Surah An-Naziat, Ayats 6-9) and (Surah Al-Zalzalah, Ayats 1-3).

According to other commentators, this earthquake will occur when the dead will be brought back to life and presented before their Lord. Though this is supported by some traditions, we prefer the first interpretation (in spite of the fact that the tradition reported by Abu Hurairah is weak) because that is supported by clear verses of the Quran.

يَوْمَ تَرَوْنَهَا تَذْهَلُ كُلُّ مُرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّآ أَرْضَعَتْ وَتَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمْلٍ حَمْلَهَا وَتَرَى
النَّاسَ سُكٰرٰى وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكٰرٰى وَلٰكِنَّ عَذَابَ اللّٰهِ شَدِيْدٌ 2

(22:2) On the Day when you witness it, the suckling woman shall utterly neglect the infant she suckles,[2] and every pregnant woman shall cast her burden, and you will see people as though they are drunk, when they are not drunk; but dreadful shall be Allah's chastisement.[3]

2. This is to show the intensity and horror of the earthquake. At that time there will be so much confusion and terror that mothers will forsake their dear children at the very time they will be suckling them.

3. It should be noted that it is not meant to depict here the condition of the Resurrection but to impress upon the people the dreadful torment of the Hour in order to admonish them to mend their ways. This is supported by the subsequent passage.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّجَادِلُ فِي اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَّيَتَّبِعُ كُلَّ شَيْطٰنٍ مَّرِيْدٍ ۙ 3

(22:3) Among people there are some who wrangle about Allah without knowledge[4] and follow every rebellious devil,

4. They do not indulge in discussions or disputes about the being or existence of Allah but about His rights and powers and His Revelations, as is evident from the succeeding passage. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) tried to convince them of Tauhid and Resurrection,

inevitably the dispute arose whether there is One Allah, the sole Sovereign or there were other partners as well in His Godhead and whether He has the power to bring about Resurrection, etc.

كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِ اَنَّهٗ مَنْ تَوَلَّاهُ فَاَنَّهٗ يُضِلُّهٗ وَيَهْدِيْهِ اِلٰى عَذَابِ السَّعِيْرِ 4

(22:4) although it is decreed about him that he shall lead into error whosoever takes him for a friend, and will direct him to the torment of the Fire.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِيْ رَيْبٍ مِّنَ الْبَعْثِ فَاِنَّا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ
ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ مُّضْغَةٍ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ وَّغَيْرِ مُخَلَّقَةٍ لِّنُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ ؕ وَنُقِرُّ فِي الْاَرْحَامِ مَا نَشَآءُ
اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ نُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوْٓا اَشُدَّكُمْ ۚ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُّتَوَفّٰى وَمِنْكُمْ
مَّنْ يُّرَدُّ اِلٰٓى اَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ عِلْمٍ شَيْـًٔا ؕ وَتَرَى الْاَرْضَ هَامِدَةً فَاِذَآ
اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَآءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ وَاَنْۢبَتَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍۢ بَهِيْجٍ 5

(22:5) O mankind! If you have any doubt concerning Resurrection, then know that it is surely We Who created you from dust, then from a drop of sperm,[5] then from a clot of blood, then from a little lump of flesh, some of it shapely and other shapeless.[6] (We are rehearsing this) that We may make the reality clear to you. We cause (the drop of sperm) that We please to remain in the wombs till an appointed time. We bring you forth as infants (and nurture you) that you may come of age. Among you is he that dies (at a young age) and he who is kept back to the most abject age so that after once having known, he reaches a stage when he knows nothing.[7] You see the earth dry and barren and then no sooner than We send down water upon it, it begins to quiver and swell and brings forth every kind of beauteous vegetation.

5. "We have created you from dust, then from a drop of sperm": The first man Adam was created directly from clay and after him the process of procreation started by means of sperm-drop. This has been stated in Surah AsSajda, Ayats 7-8 as well. It may also mean that man is created from sperm-drop but his body is made of those elements which are all available in the earth.

6. This refers to the different stages of development of the child in the womb of its mother. This description is based on observation and not on scientific research, and there was no need for it for the purpose for which reference to this has been made here.

7. That is, in old age man is again reverted to the same condition in which he was in childhood. He loses his senses and knows little or nothing like a child.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَاَنَّهٗ يُحْيِ الْمَوْتٰى وَاَنَّهٗ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ۙ 6

(22:6) All this is because Allah, He is the Truth,[8] and because He resurrects the dead, and because He has power over everything,

8. The Arabic text may mean three things: (1) Allah is telling the truth and you are wrong in presuming that there is no possibility of life-after-death. (2) Allah's existence is not merely a supposition but it is a reality. He is not only the first cause but has supreme authority, and is conducting every affair in the universe according to His Will, Knowledge and Wisdom. (3) All His designs and works are based on truth and are, therefore, serious, meaningful and full of wisdom.

وَّاَنَّ السَّاعَةَ اٰتِيَةٌ لَّا رَيْبَ فِيْهَا ۙ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَبْعَثُ مَنْ فِى الْقُبُوْرِ 7

(22:7) (all of which shows that) the Hour shall surely come to pass - in this there is no doubt - and Allah shall surely resurrect those that are in graves.[9]

9. In (Ayats 5-7), the effects of rain on the earth and the growth of vegetation and different stages of the life of man have been cited as pointers to five realities.

(1) Allah alone is the truth.

(2) He brings the dead to life.

(3) He has power over everything.

(4) The Day of Resurrection and the end of the world is inevitable.

(5) Most surely Allah will bring back to life all the people who have died.

Let us now consider how these signs point to the above five realities.

(1) Allah is the truth: In order to prove this, let us first take the case of man. All the stages of his development are a clear proof that Allah has designed them with wisdom. He takes his birth from a sperm-drop which itself is produced in a wonderful manner. The food, which a man takes, turns into hair, flesh, bones and a part of it is turned into semen, which is potentially capable of producing millions of human beings. It is the Wise and True God Who decides which of these millions of seeds from the semen should be utilized to make a woman pregnant by mixing the seed with the eggcell. This insignificant thing turns into a living child in nine months in the womb of the mother. If we consider the different stages of the child's birth, we come to the inevitable conclusion that all these have been designed by the True, Ever Living Designer. For it is He Who decides whether it should be a male or a female, seeing or blind, etc. Then it is He Who decides how long a child is destined to live. All these things are a clear proof that Allah alone is the Truth.

(2) He brings the dead to life: Even a little thinking on the right lines will convince every sensible and honest man that this process of bringing the dead to life is continuously going on before our eyes. Every human being has been created from a dead sperm-drop. Then he gets life from dead things like food containing dead matter like coal, iron, lime, salts, gases, which help make him a living human being. Then let us consider our surroundings. Seeds of different things which had been scattered here and there by the wind and birds, and the roots of different kinds of vegetation which lay rotten and dead in the soil, spring up to life as soon as there occurs a sprinkling of rain water. This process of the dead coming to life is observed during every rainy season year after year.

(3) Allah has power over everything: There are people who believe that no doubt Allah created everything and is governing the universe, but He cannot do anything in the future in addition to or apart from this. This is because they do not observe the phenomena of His powers which have been and are appearing every moment. They do not realize that if man, His creation can perform wonderful feats of science which could not even be dreamed of in the former ages, why should Allah alone be held as having only limited powers?

(4-5) "The Day of Resurrection is inevitable" and "Most surely Allah will bring back to life all the people who have died": These two are the rational corollaries of the preceding three premises. Allah is All-Powerful and therefore can bring about Resurrection at any moment He wills. He can also bring back to life all the dead people just as He brought to life human beings out of nothing in the first instance. As He is All-Wise, He has not created human beings without any object and purpose. He will judge their worldly lives in accordance with the object and purpose for which He created them. He will call them to account for everything He entrusted to them. This is very simple, even human beings ask one another to render an account of the property etc. they entrust to others. Likewise, Allah's wisdom requires calling every human being to account for the things entrusted to him. Then human nature also demands that there should be a differentiation between good and bad, and it expects the reward of good works and dreads the punishment of bad deeds. That is why the people have set up judicial courts. Thus man cannot imagine that the Creator will not call him to account for the things, powers and faculties, etc. which He has entrusted to him. Therefore common sense confirms that Allah will hold the Last Judgment so that everyone should get his due reward and his due punishment.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّجَادِلُ فِي اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَّلَا هُدًى وَّلَا كِتٰبٍ مُّنِيْرٍ ۙ 8

(22:8) And among people are those that wrangle[10] about Allah without knowledge,[11] without any true guidance,[12]and without any scripture to enlighten them.[13]

10. That is, they are so proud, arrogant, obdurate and obstinate that they do not pay any heed to admonition.

11. Knowledge: That personal information which is gained directly through observation and experience.

12. Guidance: That information which is gained by reasoning or through another person who has knowledge.

13. Book with light: Source of information gained from divine revelation.

ثَانِيَ عِطْفِهٖ لِيُضِلَّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ لَهٗ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَّنُذِيْقُهٗ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ عَذَابَ الْحَرِيْقِ 9

(22:9) They wrangle arrogantly, intent on leading people astray from the Way of Allah.[14] Such shall suffer disgrace in this world and We shall cause them to taste the chastisement of burning (in the Next).

14. Verse 3 mentioned those people who have themselves gone astray, but verse 9 mentions those who have not only deviated from the right way themselves but are also bent upon misleading others from it.

ذٰلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدٰكَ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيْدِ ع 10

(22:10) That is the outcome of what your own hands have wrought, for Allah never wrongs His creatures.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّعْبُدُ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى حَرْفٍ ۚ فَاِنْ اَصَابَهٗ خَيْرُ ِۨاطْمَاَنَّ بِهٖ ۚ وَاِنْ اَصَابَتْهُ فِتْنَةُ ِۨانْقَلَبَ عَلٰى وَجْهِهٖ ۚ قف خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةَ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِيْنُ 11

(22:11) And among people is he who worships Allah on the borderline; if any good befalls him,[15] he is satisfied; but if a trial afflicts him, he utterly turns away.[16] He will incur the loss of this world and the Hereafter. That indeed is a clear loss.[17]

15. This type of man is a time server, who stands on the boundary line between Islam and kufr so that he may join the winning side whether it be Islam or kufr.

16. As this type of man has a weak character and wavers between kufr and Islam he becomes the slave of his self. He accepts Islam for the sake of self interest. He is faithful to it if all his wishes are fulfilled and he has a life of ease and comfort, he is well-pleased with his Allah and is firm in his faith. On the contrary, if his faith demands some sacrifice from him, or he is visited by some affliction, or encounters some hardship and loss in the way of Allah, or he does not have his way, he begins to waver about the Godhead of Allah and the Prophethood of the Messenger and becomes skeptical about everything of the faith. Then he is ready to bow down before any power from which he expects some benefit and security from loss.

17. This is a great moral proposition that has been stated concisely. The fact is that the wavering man remains a loser in this world as well as in the next world, and fares worse even than an unbeliever. The unbeliever applies himself exclusively to the benefits of this world and becomes more or less successful in his object because he is not handicapped by the fear of Allah, accountability of the Hereafter and restrictions of divine law. Likewise, a true believer follows the way of Allah with fortitude and perseverance and may as well become successful in this world, but even if he loses it altogether, he is assured of success in the next world. But the wavering Muslim becomes a loser both in this world and in the next world because he is handicapped by doubt and indecision and cannot make his choice between the two worlds. As he cannot decide whether there is Allah and the Hereafter, he cannot apply himself exclusively to the worldly affairs with that single-mindedness which the unbeliever enjoys. And when he thinks of Allah and the Hereafter, the allurements of this world and the fear of the disadvantages here and the abhorrence of observing the divine restrictions do not let him apply himself exclusively to the demands of the Hereafter. This conflict between God worship and world worship makes him a loser in this world as well as in the next.

يَدْعُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَضُرُّهٗ وَمَا لَا يَنْفَعُهٗ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الضَّلٰلُ الْبَعِيْدُ ۚ 12

(22:12) He invokes, instead of Allah, those who can neither harm nor benefit him. That indeed is straying far away.

يَدْعُوْا لَمَنْ ضَرُّهٗۤ اَقْرَبُ مِنْ نَّفْعِهٖ ؕ لَبِئْسَ الْمَوْلٰى وَلَبِئْسَ الْعَشِيْرُ 13

(22:13) He invokes those that are more likely to cause him harm than benefit.[18] Such is surely an evil patron, and an evil associate.[19]

18. (Verses 12-13)clarify two things about the deities whom the mushriks invoke. Firstly, they can do a person neither any good nor any harm. Nay, it is more probable that they do harm rather than good. For when the mushrik invokes other deities than Allah, he loses his faith forthwith. Secondly, the mushrik himself knows that there is no guarantee or probability of any good from his god who is utterly helpless and powerless. As regards to the occasional grant of his request through his god, this is done by Allah merely to test his faith.

19. That is, the one, who leads a person to the way of shirk is the worst guardian and the worst comrade, whether he be a human being or a satan.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيْدُ 14

(22:14) (In contrast) Allah will assuredly cause those who believe and act righteously[20] to enter Gardens beneath which rivers flow. For, most certainly, Allah does whatever He pleases.[21]

20. "Those who believed and did righteous deeds" are quite different from the wavering Muslims, for they have a firm belief in Allah, His Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Hereafter. Therefore they follow the way of truth both in prosperity and in adversity.

21. That is, Allah's powers are unlimited. He may bestow anything on anyone He wills in this world or in the Hereafter or in both, and bar anything from anyone. None has the power to interfere with what He wills and does.

مَنْ كَانَ يَظُنُّ اَنْ لَّنْ يَّنْصُرَهُ اللّٰهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ فَلْيَمْدُدْ بِسَبَبٍ اِلَى السَّمَآءِ ثُمَّ لْيَقْطَعْ فَلْيَنْظُرْ هَلْ يُذْهِبَنَّ كَيْدُهٗ مَا يَغِيْظُ 15

(22:15) Anyone who fancies that Allah will not support him in this world and in the Hereafter, let him reach out to heaven through a rope, and then make a hole in the sky and see whether his device can avert that which enrages him.[22]

22. There is a great divergence of opinion about the exact meaning of this verse. Some of the interpretations are:

(1) One who presumes that Allah will not help him (Muhammad: peace be upon him), he should hang himself by a rope from the ceiling.

(2) One who presumes that Allah will not help him (Muhammad: peace be upon him), he should ascend to the sky by a rope and try to stop Allah's help.

(3) One who presumes that Allah will not help him (Muhammad: peace be upon him), he should ascend to the sky and stop the process of revelations.

(4) One who presumes that Allah will not help him (Muhammad: peace be upon him), he should ascend to the sky and stop his provisions.

(5) The one who presumes that Allah will not help him (the presumer himself), he should hang himself by a rope from the ceiling of his house.

(6) The one who presumes that Allah will not help him (the presumer himself), he should try to ascend to the sky to seek help.

The first four interpretations are obviously irrelevant to the context, and the last two, though they might fit in with the context, do not explain the real meaning of the verse. If we consider this in the context, it becomes obvious that the one who presumes is the one who serves Allah standing on the border line. This is to rebuke him, as if to say: You may do whatever you can to change the decrees of Allah, but you will see that no device of yours can succeed, whether these decrees are favorable to your designs or unfavorable to them.

Obviously, "so let him stretch a rope up to the sky, then cut it off" has not been used in the literal but in the figurative sense.

وَكَذٰلِكَ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ اٰيٰتٍۢ بَيِّنٰتٍ ۙ وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَهْدِىْ مَنْ يُّرِيْدُ 16

(22:16) Even so We have revealed the Qur'an with Clear Signs. Verily Allah guides whomsoever He wills.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَالَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا وَالصّٰبِـُٔوْنَ وَالنَّصٰرٰى وَالْمَجُوْسَ وَالَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْٓا ۖ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيْدٌ 17

(22:17) On the Day of Resurrection Allah will most certainly judge among those who believe,[23] and those who became Jews,[24] and Sabaeans,[25] and Christians,[26] and Magians,[27] and those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity.[28] Surely Allah watches over everything.[29]

23. This means the Muslims of every age who believed in the Prophets of Allah and His Books up to the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): they included both the sincere Muslims and the wavering Muslims.

24. See(E.N. 72 of Surah An-Nisa).

25. Sabaeans: In ancient times two sects were known by this title:

(1) The followers of Prophet John, who were found in upper Iraq in large numbers and practiced baptism.

(2) The worshipers of stars, who ascribed their creed to Prophets Shith and Idris (peace be upon them) and believed that the elements were governed by the planets and the planets by the angels. Their center was at Harran with branches spread all over Iraq. These people have been well known for their knowledge of philosophy and science and their achievements in medicine. Probably here the first sect is referred to, because the second sect was not known by this name at the time the Quran was revealed.

26. See (E. N. 36 of Surah Al-Maidah).

27. That is, the fire worshipers of Iran, who believed in two gods, one of light and the other of darknesses, and regarded themselves as the followers of Zoroaster. Their creed and morals were so corrupted by Mazdak that a brother could easily enter into matrimony with his sister.

28. That is, the mushriks of Arabia and of other countries, who had no special name like those mentioned above.

29. That is, Allah will pass His judgment on the Day of Resurrection in regard to all the differences and disputes which take place between different people and different religions and will decide which of them was right and which was wrong.

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ
وَالنُّجُومُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ وَالدَّوَآبُّ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنَ النَّاسِ ۗ وَكَثِيرٌ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ الْعَذَابُ ۗ
وَمَنْ يُّهِنِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ مُّكْرِمٍ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَآءُ ۩ 18

(22:18) Have you not seen that all those who are in the heavens and all those who are in the earth prostrate themselves before Allah;[30] [31] and so do the sun and the moon, and the stars and the mountains, and the trees, and the beasts, and so do many human beings,[32] and even many of those who are condemned to chastisement?[33] And he whom Allah humiliates, none can give him honour.[34] Allah does whatever He wills.[35]

30. See (E.N. 25 of Surah Ar-Ra`d) and (E.N. 41 of Surah An-Nahl).

31. That is, "Angels, stars, planets, etc. and all the creation that exists in other parts of the universe, whether it is rational and possesses freedom of will and choice like man, or irrational like animals, vegetation, solid matter, air and light.

32. That is, "A large number of the people bow down before Allah not by compulsion but willingly. On the other hand, there are many other people who bow down before Him under compulsion along with everything else in the universe, but they deserve punishment because they refuse to obey Allah in those spheres of life in which they have the choice to obey or not to obey.

33. That is, though the Final Judgment will be passed on the Day of Resurrection, a discerning eye can see even today those "who have already deserved the torment." For instance, the man who rejects the Message of the open book of Nature and the Message of the Prophets and adopts self-made false creeds and then disputes about them with the Believers, proves himself to be in manifest error in this world as well.

34. In this verse "honor" and "disgrace" mean the acceptance of the Truth and its rejection. It is obvious that the one who does not see manifest realities is doomed to disgrace: for Allah lets him attain what he desires and works for; and when Allah does not bestow on anyone the honor of following the Truth, there is none else who can bestow it on him.

35. Here it is obligatory to perform a sajdah (prostration), which is agreed upon by all Jurists. For further details please see (E.N. 157 of Surah Al-A'raf)

هٰذٰنِ خَصۡمٰنِ اخۡتَصَمُوۡا فِىۡ رَبِّهِمۡ‌ ۖ فَالَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا قُطِّعَتۡ لَهُمۡ ثِيَابٌ مِّنۡ نَّارٍ‌ يُّصَبُّ
مِنۡ فَوۡقِ رُءُوۡسِهِمُ الۡحَمِيۡمُ‌ 19

(22:19) These two groups (the believers and unbelievers) are in dispute about their Lord.[36] As for those that disbelieve, garments of fire have been cut out for them;[37] boiling water shall be poured down over their heads,

36. Here all the disputants about Allah have been divided into two main categories in spite of their large numbers.

(1) Those who believe in the message of the Prophets and adopt the righteous way of life.

(2) Those who reject their message and follow different ways of disbelief, though they may have countless differences and disputes among themselves.

37. See (Ayat 50 and E.N. 58 of Surah Ibrahim) for explanation.

يُصۡهَرُ بِهٖ مَا فِىۡ بُطُوۡنِهِمۡ وَالۡجُلُوۡدُ‌ 20

(22:20) causing (not only) their skins but all that is in their bellies as well to melt away.

وَلَهُمۡ مَّقَامِعُ مِنۡ حَدِيۡدٍ 21

(22:21) There shall be maces of iron to lash them.

كُلَّمَاۤ اَرَادُوۡۤا اَنۡ يَّخۡرُجُوۡا مِنۡهَا مِنۡ غَمٍّ اُعِيۡدُوۡا فِيۡهَا‌ ۘ وَذُوۡقُوۡا عَذَابَ الۡحَرِيۡقِ‌ 22

(22:22) Whenever they try, in their anguish, to escape from Hell, they will be driven back into it, (and shall be told): "Now taste the torment of burning."

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُدۡخِلُ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ جَنّٰتٍ تَجۡرِىۡ مِنۡ تَحۡتِهَا الۡاَنۡهٰرُ يُحَلَّوۡنَ
فِيۡهَا مِنۡ اَسَاوِرَ مِنۡ ذَهَبٍ وَّلُؤۡلُؤًا‌ ؕ وَلِبَاسُهُمۡ فِيۡهَا حَرِيۡرٌ‌ 23

(22:23) (On the other hand), Allah will cause those who believed and acted righteously to enter the Gardens beneath which rivers flow. They shall be decked in them with bracelets of gold and pearls[38] and their raiment shall be of silk.

38. This is to show that they will be honored like the kings and chiefs who used to wear ornaments of gold and jewelry in the period the Quran was revealed.

وَهُدُوٓا۟ إِلَى ٱلطَّيِّبِ مِنَ ٱلْقَوْلِ ۖ وَهُدُوٓا۟ إِلَىٰ صِرَٰطِ ٱلْحَمِيدِ 24

(22:24) They were guided (to accept) the pure word;[39] they were guided to the Way of the Praiseworthy (Lord).[40]

39. "Purest of the speeches": though it may imply every pure thing, here it refers to the basic articles of the faith.

40. As already stated in the introduction, the portion of the Surah, which was revealed at Makkah, comes to an end here. Though its style is clearly that of the Makki Surahs and there is nothing to indicate that any part (or the whole) of it was revealed at Al-Madinah, yet the words, "these are the two parties", have given rise to the misunderstanding that this verse was revealed at Al-Madinah. Some commentators are of the opinion that the two parties referred to were the parties who met in the Battle of Badr, but there is nothing in the context to support this opinion. On the other hand, from the context in which these words occur, it becomes obvious that the two parties referred to were the believers and the disbelievers. For the conflict between belief and disbelief has always been going on ever since the creation of man and will go on upto the Day of Resurrection.

Incidentally, this latter view helps prove that the Quran is a continuous whole and every part of it is closely connected with the other: whereas the comments mentioned earlier would imply that there is no continuous theme in the Quran but different parts of it have been put together without rhyme or reason.

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ وَٱلْمَسْجِدِ ٱلْحَرَامِ ٱلَّذِى جَعَلْنَٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ سَوَآءً ٱلْعَٰكِفُ فِيهِ وَٱلْبَادِ ۚ وَمَن يُرِدْ فِيهِ بِإِلْحَادٍۭ بِظُلْمٍ نُّذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ۞ 25

(22:25) Indeed those who disbelieve[41] and who (now) hinder people from the Way of Allah and hinder them from the Holy Mosque[42] which We have set up (as a place of worship) for all people, equally for those who dwell therein and for those who come from outside,[43] (they surely deserve punishment). Whosoever deviates therein from the Right Way and acts with iniquity,[44] We shall cause him to taste a painful chastisement.

41. "Those who disbelieved" were the people who rejected the message of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The subsequent theme clearly shows that they were the disbelievers of Makkah.

42. That is, they debarred the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his followers from performing Hajj and Umrah.

43. That is, this is not exclusively the property of any person or family or clan but is meant for all mankind alike. Therefore none has any right to debar others from it.

In this connection, two questions have arisen among the Jurists of Islam:

(1) What is meant by the Sacred Mosque? Does it mean the mosque itself or includes the whole Inviolable Place of Makkah?

(2) What is meant by equal rights of its dwellers and the outsiders?

According to some jurists it means the Sacred Mosque itself and not the whole of Inviolable Makkah. They base this opinion on the apparent wording of the Quran, and say that by equal rights is meant equal rights only in regard to worship in it. They cite a tradition of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to support their opinion. He said: O children of Abd Manaf, those of you who will have authority over the affairs of the people, should not stop anybody from moving round the Kabah or from offering prayers in it at any time of the day or night.

Imam Shafai and others who support this view are of the opinion that it is wrong to conclude from this verse that the rights of the dwellers and the outsiders are equal in every respect, but they are equal only in regard to the right of worship and in nothing else, for the people of Makkah owned the lands and the houses of Makkah before Islam and also after it. So much so that during the time of Caliph Umar, the house of Safwan bin Umayyah was actually purchased from him for the purpose of making a prison in Makkah.

The others who hold that the Sacred Mosque refers to the whole of the Inviolable Place of Makkah derive their authority from (verses 196 and 217 of Surah Al-Baqarah). They argue that Hajj is not performed only in the Kabah (the Sacred Mosque), but the pilgrim has to visit Mina, Muzdalifah, Arafat, etc. for the performance of Hajj rites. Thus, they hold that equality is not merely in regard to worship in the Sacred Mosque, but in regard to all other rights in Makkah. As this place has been appointed for Hajj by Allah for all alike, none has any right of ownership in it. Anyone can stay anywhere he likes and none can prohibit him from doing so. They cite many traditions in support of their opinion.

(1) Abdullah bin Umar reports that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Makkah is the place where travelers have to stay: therefore its lands cannot be sold nor can anyone charge rent for its houses.

(2) According to Ibrahim Nakhai, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Makkah has been made an Inviolable Place by Allah: therefore selling its land and charging of rent for its houses is unlawful. Mujahid has also reported a tradition almost in similar words.

(3) Alqamah says: During the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and of the first three Caliphs, the lands of Makkah were regarded as common property and one could live there or allow others to live therein.

(4) Abdullah bin Umar says: Caliph Umar had ordered that no resident of Makkah should close the door of his house during the Hajj season. According to Mujahid; Caliph Umar had ordered that the people of Makkah should not put doors to enclose their courtyards but keep them open so that anyone who liked might come in and stay there. The same has been related by Ata with the addition that Suhail bin Amr was the only exception to this rule, who was allowed to put a door in his courtyard in order to safeguard his camels in connection with his trade.

(5) Abdullah bin Umar also says that the one who receives rent for his house in Makkah fills his belly with fire.

(6) Abdullah bin Abbas says that Allah has made the whole of Makkah the Sacred Mosque where all have equal rights. Therefore the people of Makkah have no right to charge rent.

(7) Umar bin Abdul Aziz sent an order to the governor of Makkah to this effect: No rent should be charged for the houses of Makkah because it is unlawful.

On the basis of the above traditions, quite a few of the followers of the companions and also, Imams Malik, Abu Hanifah, Sufyan Thauri, Ahmad bin Hanbal and Ishaq bin Rahawayah from among the Jurists, are of the opinion that it is unlawful to sell a piece of land and to charge rent, at least during the Hajj season, in Makkah. However, the majority of the Jurists are of the opinion that people can own houses in Makkah and can sell them as buildings but not as land. In my opinion, this last view seems to be the right one because it conforms with the Quran and the Sunnah and the practice of the rightly guided Caliphs. It is obvious that Allah has not made Hajj obligatory for the Muslims of the whole world in order to provide a means of income for the people of Makkah. As Allah has set apart the Inviolable Place for the benefit of all the believers, that land is not the property of anyone and every pilgrim has the right to stay anywhere he can find room for himself.

44. It does not imply any specific act, but means every act that deviates from righteousness and falls under the definition of iniquity. Though all such acts are sins at all times and places; their commission in the Inviolable Place makes them all the more heinous; so much so that the commentators are of the opinion that even taking of an unnecessary oath brings it under the same category.

Besides common sins, there are certain other things whose commission in the Inviolable Place brings them under the same category. For instance.

(l) It is prohibited to take legal action even against a murderer, etc. who takes shelter within the Inviolable Place: so much so that he cannot be arrested as long as he retrains therein. This sanctity of the Inviolable Place is being observed since the time of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him). The Quran says: Whoso even enters it, he becomes safe and secure. (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 97).

(2) The consensus of opinion is that there can be no retribution within the Inviolable Place for the crimes committed outside it. Hadrat Umar, Abdullah bin Umar and Abdullah bin Abbas declared: We will not take any action in it even against the murderer of our fathers.

(3) It is unlawful to wage war or shed blood within it. On the second day of the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) declared: O people, Allah has made Makkah a Sanctuary since the very creation of this world, and it will remain so by Allah's ordinance up to the Day of Resurrection; therefore, it is not lawful for any man, who believes in Allah and the Day of Resurrection, to shed blood here. Then he added: Suppose a man legalizes bloodshed here on the basis of the precedent that I waged war here, tell him, Allah made it lawful for His Messenger and not for you. It was made lawful for me for a short interval of the day. Then it was again made Inviolable as before.

(4) It is unlawful to cut naturally growing trees or uproot the grass which has grown there. It is also prohibited to hunt birds and animals within the boundary or to drive them out from the Inviolable Place for hunting. It is, however, lawful to kill a serpent, a scorpion and other harmful animals and to uproot dry grass and izkhir which is a kind of grass.

(5) It is prohibited to pick up anything that has fallen to the ground. In a tradition, reported by Abu Dawud, the Prophet (peace be upon him) prohibited people to pick up, anything belonging to a pilgrim that had fallen to the ground.

(6) It is unlawful for a pilgrim who comes with the intention of performing Hajj or Umrah to enter therein without Ihram. However, there is a divergence of opinion in regard to the entry of others than the pilgrims without Ihram. According to Abdullah bin Abbas, no one is allowed to enter therein without Ihram in any case, and this has been supported by a saying each of Imam Ahmad and Imam Shafai. According to other sayings of Imams Ahmad and Shafai, those people who have to visit the Inviolable Place frequently in connection with trade and business, are excepted. Imam Abu Hanifah, however, holds the view that the person who lives within the limits of the appointed Miqats can visit Makkah without Ihram but the outsiders cannot enter it without Ihram.

وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرٰهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ أَنْ لَّا تُشْرِكْ بِي شَيْئًا وَّطَهِّرْ بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّآئِفِينَ
وَالْقَآئِمِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ 26

(22:26) Call to mind when We assigned to Abraham the site of the House (Kabah), directing him: "Do not associate aught with Me" and "Keep My House pure for those who walk around it,[45] and for those who stand and who bow down and who prostrate themselves (in worship),

45. Some commentators opine that the address to Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) ends with (verse 26) and say that the command contained in (verse 27) was addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him); but this opinion does not fit in with the context. For it is obvious that this command was also addressed to Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) when he had built the Kabah. Moreover, the command implies that the House of Allah had been built for the worship of One Allah and there was general permission from the very first day for all worshipers to visit it for performing Hajj.

وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَّعَلٰى كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَّأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ ۙ 27

(22:27) and publicly proclaim Pilgrimage for all mankind so that they come to you on foot and mounted on lean[46]camels[47] from every distant point

46. The expression lean camels has been deliberately used to depict the picture of the camels of pilgrims coming from far off places to perform Hajj.

47. In my opinion the address to Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) comes to an end with (verse 27, and verses 28- 29) have been added to emphasize and give further instructions for the performance of Hajj. We have based this opinion on the use of the epithet Ancient House of the Kabah. It could not have been used at the time when Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) built it. (For further details about the construction of the Kabah see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 125-129); (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayats, 96-97); and (Surah Ibrahim, Ayats 35-41).

لِّيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَّعْلُومَاتٍ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُم مِّن بَهِيمَةِ
الْأَنْعَامِ ۖ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعِمُوا الْبَائِسَ الْفَقِيرَ ۖ 28

(22:28) to witness the benefits in store for them,[48] and pronounce the name of Allah during the appointed days over the cattle that He has provided them.[49] So eat of it and feed the distressed and the needy.[50]

48. "The benefits" include both religious and worldly benefits. It was due mainly to the Kabah that during the period of 2500 years between the times of Prophet Abraham and the Prophet (peace be upon them), the Arabs, in spite of their tribal life, remained attached to one central place and continued to visit it from all parts of Arabia for performing Hajj year after year. This in turn preserved their language, their culture and their Arab identity. Then during the course of the year they were afforded at least four months of perfect peace when anybody and everybody could safely travel alone or in trade caravans; thus the ritual of Hajj was directly beneficial to economic life of the country as well. For details see (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 97 and E.Ns 80, 81) thereof, and (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 97 and E.N. 113)thereof.

49. "The cattle" here imply the camel, cow, sheep and goat as has been clearly mentioned in (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayats 142-144), "they should mention the name of Allah over the cattle", implies that they should slaughter the cattle for Allah's sake and in His name, as is clear from the subsequent sentences. Allah's name should be recited at the time the cattle are slaughtered to show that the Muslims are to slaughter and sacrifice animals in Allah's name alone so as to distinguish them from the disbelievers who slaughtered animals without mentioning Allah's name or by mentioning other names than that of Allah.

As regards to "the appointed days", there is a difference of opinion as to their exact identity. Some of the opinions as to what the appointed days mean are.

(1) The first ten days of Zil-Hajj. This view is supported by Ibn Abbas, Hasan Basri, Ibrahim Nakhai, Qatadah and several other companions and their followers. Imams Abu Hanifah, Shafai and Ahmad bin Hanbal have also favored this view.

(2) The tenth of Zil-Hajj and the three days following it. This view is supported by Ibn Abbas, Ibn Umar, Ibrahim Nakhai, Hasan and Ata. Imams Shafai and Ahmad are also reported to have favored this in a saying each.

(3) The tenth day of Zil-Hajj and the two following days. This view has been supported by Umar, Ali, Ibn Umar, Ibn Abbas, Anas bin Malik, Abu Hurairah, Said bin Musayyab and Said bin Jubair. Sufyan Thauri, Imam Malik, Imam Abu Yusuf and Imam Muhammad from among the jurists have also adopted it, and the Hanafites and the Malikites are also generally agreed on this.

50. The imperative mood of the verb has given rise to the misunderstanding that it is obligatory to eat their flesh and also to give of it to the needy people, Imams Shafai and Malik opine that it is good to eat of it and it is obligatory to give of it to others. According to Imam Abu Hanifah, both these things are permitted but are not obligatory. It is good to eat of it, for the people in the days of ignorance considered it unlawful to eat sacrificial meat of their own animals, and it is good to give of it to the poor by way of help. Ibn Jarir has cited instances from Hasan Basri, Ata, Mujahid and Ibrahim Nakhai to prove that the imperative mood does not always imply a command, as for example in (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 2) Thus, "give of it to the indigent" does not mean that the flesh cannot be given to a rich person for the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to give of it to their friends, neighbors, relatives whether they were rich or poor. According to Ibn Umar, one third of the flesh may be consumed at home, one third may be given to the neighbors and the remaining one third distributed among the needy.

ثُمَّ لْيَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ وَلْيُوفُوا نُذُورَهُمْ وَلْيَطَّوَّفُوا بِالْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ 29

(22:29) Thereafter, let them tidy up[51] and fulfil their vows[52] and circumambulate the Ancient House."[53]

51. It means that after performing the essential Hajj rites, one should put off Ihram, have a shave, bath, etc. for one is free from the restrictions of Ihram after Hajj. However, one is not allowed to have sexual relations with his wife till one has performed the Tawaf of Ziyarah or Ifadah.

52. That is, the vow one has made for that occasion.

53. The Arabic word Atiq, which has been used for the Kabah, is very meaningful for it implies.

(1) Ancient.

(2) Free from the sovereignty and ownership of anyone.

(3) Honored and revered. I am of the opinion that here the word Tawaf refers to the circumambulation performed on the tenth day of Zil-Hajj after setting aside Ihram, as the last ritual of Hajj, and is called Tawaf of Ifadah or Ziyarah (visit).

ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّعَظِّمْ حُرُمٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّهٗ عِنْدَ رَبِّهٖ ؕ وَاُحِلَّتْ لَكُمُ الْاَنْعَامُ اِلَّا مَا
يُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْاَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوْا قَوْلَ الزُّوْرِ ۙ 30

(22:30) Such (was the purpose of building the Kabah). Whosoever, then, venerates Allah's sanctities will find it to be good for him in the sight of his Lord.[54] Cattle have been made lawful for you[55] except those mentioned to you (as unlawful).[56] So shun the abomination of idols[57] and shun all words of falsehood.[58]

54. Though the command is of a general nature, here it refers particularly to the prohibitions which are connected with the Sacred Mosque, Hajj, Umrah and Makkah. Incidentally, there is a subtle hint in it to the Quraish; who had driven out the Muslims from Makkah and debarred them from Hajj and violated the sanctity of the Ancient House by associating indecent, filthy, and ungodly rites with Hajj and the House in contradiction to the ways of Abraham.

55. "And the cattle have been made lawful for you" has been cited here for two objects.

(1) It is to refute the custom of the Quraish under which certain cattle, bahirah. saibah, wasilah and ham, were considered unlawful. They are being told that these are also lawful like other cattle.

(2) It is not unlawful as was held by the Quraish to eat the flesh of the cattle even in the state of Ihram.

56. This refers to (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 145) and (Surah An-Nahal, Ayat 115) in which Allah has forbidden the Muslims to eat what dies of itself, blood, flesh of swine or what has been slaughtered in any name other than Allah's.

57. That is, refrain from and guard against the worship of idols just as you avoid filthy and dirty things.

58. Though the expression "false speech" is general and implies lies, false evidence, calumny, etc., here it particularly refers to those false creeds, rites, and rituals and superstitious things on which kufr and shirk have been founded. It is obvious that there is no greater lie than associating others with Allah in His Being, Attributes, Powers and Rights. It was a falsehood to make bahirah, etc. unlawful. See also (Surah An-Nahal, Ayat 116).

To take a false oath and give a false evidence also come under this commandment. A tradition from the Prophet (peace be upon him) says:

A false evidence is equal to shirk with Allah. That is why according to the Islamic Law, a false witness should be punished and disgraced. Imams Abu Yusuf and Muhammad have expressed the opinion that a person who brings a false witness in the court should be publicly exposed and sentenced to a long imprisonment. This was the actual practice in the time of Umar. According to Makhul, he said:

Such a person should be whipped, his head shaved and face blackened and he should be sentenced to a long imprisonment.

Abdullah bin Amir has reported from his father that a person's false evidence was established in Umar's court, whereupon the Caliph kept him exposed to public for a day, saying that he was so and so and a false witness so that people might recognize him, and then he imprisoned him. These days this can be done by publishing the culprit's name in the newspapers, etc.

حُنَفَآءَ لِلّٰهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِيْنَ بِهٖ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ فَكَاَنَّمَا خَرَّ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ فَتَخْطَفُهُ

الطَّيْرُ اَوْ تَهْوِىْ بِهِ الرِّيْحُ فِىْ مَكَانٍ سَحِيْقٍ 31

(22:31) Become exclusively devoted to Allah, ascribing Divinity to none other than Him. Whoso ascribes Divinity to aught beside Allah, it is as though he fell down from the sky whereafter either the birds will snatch him away, or the wind will sweep him to a distant place[59] (causing him to be shattered to pieces).

59. In this parable heaven means the original human nature. Man by nature is the servant of none else but Allah and inherently accepts the doctrine of Tauhid. That is why the one who follows the guidance of the Prophets becomes firm in these dictates of his nature and soars higher and higher. On the other hand, the one who rejects Allah or associates a partner with Him falls down from the heaven of his nature. Then he either becomes a victim of satans and evil leaders like the birds of the parable, which snatch away the fallen man, or he becomes a slave of his lusts, passions, whims, etc., which have been likened to the wind in the parable. They lower him down from one wrong position to the other till he falls into the deepest abyss of degradation.

ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّعَظِّمْ شَعَآئِرَ اللّٰهِ فَاِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوْبِ 32

(22:32) Such is the fact. And whoso venerates the sanctity of all that have been ordained as symbols[60] of Allah surely does so because it is part of the true piety of the hearts.[61]

60. "Symbols of Allah": the performance of Salat, Hajj, Fasting, etc., or things like a Mosque or sacrificial offerings, etc. See (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 2 and E.Ns 5-7) thereof).

61. That is, the observance of the sanctity of the symbols by a man is a proof that there is piety in his heart. On the other hand, the man who violates their sanctity proves himself to be void of piety and fear of God. It shows that he either does not believe at all in Allah or adopts a rebellious attitude against Him.

لَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَنَافِعُ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ مَحِلُّهَآ اِلَى الْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيْقِ ۚ 33

(22:33) You may derive benefit (from sacrificial animals) until an appointed time.[62] Thereafter their place (of sacrifice) is near the Ancient House.[63]

62. This is to remove the misunderstanding about getting any benefit from the animals dedicated for sacrifice as they were also included in the symbols of Allah. This was necessitated because the Arabs believed that it was unlawful to get any benefit from them. One could neither ride on them nor carry any load on them nor consume their milk, after they had been dedicated for sacrifice during Hajj. In this verse that misunderstanding has been removed. Abu Hurairah and Anas have reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) saw a man walking in a miserable condition on foot leading his camel by the nosestring. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked him to ride on it, he replied that it was his sacrificial offering. The Prophet (peace be upon him) again urged him to ride on his camel.

There is a divergence of opinion in regard to the interpretation "of an appointed term". Some commentators, particularly Ibn Abbas, Qatadah, Mujahid, Dahhak and Ata are of the view that it refers to the time of the dedication of the animals for sacrifice. Obviously this is not the correct view, because in that case the permission to get benefit from them becomes meaningless. There are other commentators including Urwah bin Zubair and Ala bin Abi Rabah, who are of the view that "appointed term" means the time of sacrifice and one can get benefit from them up till then. One may ride on them, drink their milk, take their young ones for use and shear their hair, wool, etc. Imam Shafai has adopted this view. The Hanafites are of the opinion that one can get benefit from them, if need be, though it is preferable not to do so.

63. It does not mean that the sacrifice is to be made in the precincts of the Ancient House of the Kaah. The Quran uses the House of Allah or Masjid-i-Haram for the whole of the Inviolable Place of Makkah and not for that particular building. (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 95).

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنْسَكًا لِّيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُم مِّن بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ ۗ فَإِلَٰهُكُمْ إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ فَلَهُ أَسْلِمُوا ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُخْبِتِينَ ۙ 34

(22:34) For every people We have laid down a ritual of sacrifice (- although the purpose of the ritual is the same -) that they pronounce the name of Allah over the cattle He has provided them.[64] Your Lord is One God; so submit yourselves to Him alone. And give, (O Prophet), glad tidings to those that humble[65] themselves (before Allah),

64. This verse implies two things.

(1) Sacrifice has been an essential part of the worship of One Allah in all the revealed religions. In order to inculcate Tauhid, Allah prohibited sacrifice for anyone other than Himself. This was in keeping with the other prohibitions which were made for others than Allah. For instance, prostration before anyone other than Allah, making vows for others than Allah, visiting holy places others than those prescribed by Allah, fasting in the name of others than of Allah, etc., were all prohibited.

(2) The other thing which has been common in all the revealed religions was the object of the sacrifice in the name of Allah though its details have been different in different religions, times and countries.

65. The Arabic word mukhbitin has no equivalent in English. It includes those who;

(1) Give up pride, arrogance and adopt humility before Allah.

(2) Surrender themselves to His service and slavery.

(3) Accept His decrees sincerely.

الَّذِيْنَ اِذَا ذُكِرَ اللّٰهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ وَالصّٰبِرِيْنَ عَلٰى مَآ اَصَابَهُمْ وَالْمُقِيْمِى الصَّلٰوةِ ۙ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ 35

(22:35) whose hearts shiver whenever Allah is mentioned, who patiently bear whatever affliction comes to them, who establish Prayer, and who spend (for good purposes) out of what We have provided them.[66]

66. It means that righteous people spend their lawful provisions in the way of Allah to meet their own and their dependents' lawful needs, to help their relatives, neighbors and other needy people, on public works and propagation of the word of Allah. It does not include expenditure in unlawful ways for unlawful purposes. The Quranic term Infaq implies neither over spending nor being miserly and stingy, but spending one's wealth on himself and others according to his means and status in society.

وَالْبُدْنَ جَعَلْنٰهَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ شَعَآئِرِ اللّٰهِ لَكُمْ فِيْهَا خَيْرٌ ۖ فَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهَا صَوَآفَّ ۚ فَاِذَا وَجَبَتْ جُنُوْبُهَا فَكُلُوْا مِنْهَا وَاَطْعِمُوا الْقَانِعَ وَالْمُعْتَرَّ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ سَخَّرْنٰهَا لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ 36

(22:36) We have appointed sacrificial camels[67] among the symbols of (devotion to) Allah. There is much good in them for you.[68] So make them stand[69] (at the time of sacrifice) and pronounce the name of Allah over them,[70] and when they fall down on their sides[71](after they are slaughtered), eat and also feed them who do not ask and those who ask. Thus have We subjected these animals that you may give thanks.[72]

67. Seven persons can become partners in the sacrifice of one camel and likewise in the sacrifice of one cow and the like, as enjoined by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in a tradition reported by Jabir bin Abdullah in the collection of Hadith by Muslim.

68. That is, you should sacrifice animals because you get many benefits from them to show your gratitude to Allah, the Giver, and also to acknowledge His Supremacy and Sovereignty.

69. "Mention the name of Allah over them" implies that animals should be slaughtered by pronouncing the name of Allah over them, because without that their flesh would be unlawful to eat. This shows that in the Islamic Law there is no conception of slaughtering an animal without pronouncing the name of Allah over it. According to traditions, there are different wordings for pronouncing the name of Allah over the animals at the time of their slaughter. Some of these are:

(I) Bismillahi Allahu Akbar; Allahumma minka wa laka: In the name of Allah, Allah is most Great! O Allah, this is Thine and is presented to Thee.

(2) Allahu Akbar- La ilaha ill-Allahu; Allahumma minka wa laka: Allah is most Great: There is no god but Allah: O Allah, this is Thine and is presented to Thee.

(3) Inni wajjahtu wajhiya lillazi fatar-as-sama wati wal-arda, hanif-an-wa ma ana min-al-mushrikin. Inns Salati wa nusuki wa mahyaya wa mamati lillahi Rabb-il-alamin. La sharika lahu wa bi-zalika umirtu wa ana min-al-Muslimin. A llahumma minks wa laka. I have turned my face sincerely towards the Being Who created the heavens and the earth, and I am not from among the idolatrous people. My Salat and my rites of worship and my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the universe, Who has no partner with Him. This is what I have been enjoined and I am the first to surrender to Him. O Allah! This is Thine, and is presented to Thee.

70. It should be noted that a camel is sacrificed while it is standing. This was enjoined by the Prophet (peace be upon him) and is supported by Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, Dahhak, etc. Muslim and Bukhari have reported a tradition from Ibn Umar, who saw a man slaughtering his camel in the sitting position. He said to him: Tie one foot of your camel and make it stand, because that is the way of Abu Qasim (peace be upon him). According to a tradition reported by Jabir bin Abdullah, in Abu Dawud, the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions would tie a left foot of the camel and would make it stand on three feet, then they would slaughter it.

71. "Then, when they are down on their sides (after slaughter)" means till they die completely, for the Prophet (peace be upon him) prohibited to cut off a piece of flesh if there is still any sign of life in the slaughtered animal. If this is done, the piece of flesh would be unlawful.

72. This is another reason why animals should be sacrificed: "Thus have We made them (animals) subject to you, that you may give thanks".

لَنْ يَّنَالَ اللّٰهَ لُحُوْمُهَا وَلَا دِمَآؤُهَا وَلٰكِنْ يَّنَالُهُ التَّقْوٰى مِنْكُمْ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ
لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللّٰهَ عَلٰى مَا هَدٰىكُمْ ؕ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ 37

(22:37) Neither their flesh reaches Allah nor their blood; it is your piety that reaches Him.[73] He has subjected these animals (to you) that you may magnify Allah for the guidance He has bestowed upon you. Give glad tidings,[74] (O Prophet), to those who do good.

73. This prescribes a very important condition for the sacrifice made in the worship of Allah. A sacrifice is acceptable to Allah only if it is accompanied by piety and sincerity. Though sacrifice is a symbol of Allah, yet it has been made plain that it is accepted only if it is accompanied by piety, saying: "Neither their meat that reaches Allah nor their blood, but what reaches Him is the piety from you". This was also meant to condemn the ritual of the days of ignorance, when the Arabs took the flesh to the Kabah and smeared its walls with the blood of the sacrificed animal.

74. "That you may glorify Allah" at the time of sacrifice verbally also in order to acknowledge that the animals really belong to Allah and to no one else. One of the sentences uttered at the time of sacrifice is Allahumma minka wa laka (O Allah, this animal is Thine and is presented to Thee).

It should be noted that the command of sacrifice as contained in (verses 36 and 37) is not for the pilgrims alone and that the performance of sacrifice is not confined to Makkah on the occasion of Hajj. It is a general command for all those Muslims who are well off. They have been enjoined to be grateful to Allah because He has subjected these animals for the good of all human beings. Therefore they are required to sacrifice the animals during these days so that they may spiritually join those who go to Makkah to perform Hajj.

There are many authentic traditions to the effect that the Prophet (peace be upon him) made sacrifice on this occasion, while he was personally at Al-Madinah.

(1) The one who does not perform sacrifice even though he can, should not join us in the Eid Prayer. (Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Majah).

(2) According to a tradition reported by Ibn Umar, the Prophet (peace be upon him) dwelt at Al-Madinah for ten years and performed sacrifice every year. (Tirmizi).

(3) According to Anas, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

The one who sacrificed an animal before the Eid Prayer, should offer another sacrifice; but the one who sacrificed his animal after the Eid Prayer, did the right thing and followed the way of the Muslims. (Bukhari).

It this connection, it is note-worthy that no Eid Prayer is held on the tenth of Zil-Hajj in Makkah: therefore the injunction was meant for all Muslims and not only for those performing Hajj at Makkah.

Thus, it is clear that the sacrifice on the occasion of Eid which is observed in the entire Muslim world is a Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and has been enjoined by him. The only dispute is whether it is obligatory in nature or only a Sunnah. Ibrahim Nakhai, Imams Abu Hanifah, Malik, Muhammad and, according to a tradition, Imam Abu Yusuf too, are of the opinion that it is obligatory in nature. On the other hand, Imams Shafai and

Ahmad bin Hanbal regard it only as a Sunnah of the Muslims, and Sufyan Thauri has also agreed with them, saying that there will be no harm if a person does not offer a sacrifice. It is, however, an irony that some of the learned Muslims of our time, who follow neither the Quran nor the Sunnah, and are only guided by personal whims, have declared that if there is a consensus of opinion of the Muslims, they can give up the practice of sacrifice on the occasion of Eid.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدَافِعُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ خَوَّانٍ كَفُورٍ ۝38

(22:38) Surely[75] Allah defends those who believe.[76] Certainly Allah has no love for the perfidious, the thankless.[77]

75. From here the address for the first time prepares the Muslims for Jihad. In order to understand this, we should keep in view the preceding portion (verses 19-24) in which the ideological conflict between the two parties (believers and disbelievers) and the result thereof have been described. This naturally serves as a prelude to the armed conflict between the two parties. That is why in (verses 26- 37) the immediate causes which necessitated war have been stated to serve as an introduction and justification for war with the disbelievers of Makkah.

After the migration to Al-Madinah, when the first Hajj season approached, it naturally brought along with it anguish and anger both for the Muhajirs and the Ansar, who had been debarred froth visiting Makkah and performing Hajj, That is why, in this passage (verse 26-37), the rituals and the objects of Hajj have been described to bring home to the disbelievers that they had no right to debar anyone from Hajj. On the other hand, the Muslims are being prepared to fight not with the intention of wreaking vengeance but for the sake of reform. At the same time sacrifice on the occasion of Hajj has been prescribed as a permanent rite to enable them (and the Muslims of the whole world) to commemorate Hajj and the rites connected with it, so that they might refrain from wreaking vengeance on the people of Makkah for the persecution to which they had been subjected. They have, therefore, been enjoined to fight to bring about better conditions and not to take revenge on their persecutors.

76. The Arabic word mudafiat implies two things.

(1) To fight with the enemy to ward off his aggressive attack.

(2) To fight with the enemy not just once but whenever the need arises. Allah has assured the believers that He will defend them against the enemy every time there is a conflict between Islam and kufr. This is to encourage the believers that they will not be left alone in their defense, but Allah Himself will be a party with them and will help them to frustrate the cunning designs of the enemy and to ward off their attacks. Indeed this verse is a great encouragement for the believers, for it imbues their hearts with spirit and strength which nothing else can.

77. Allah becomes a party with the believers because they are justified in waging war against the disbelievers who are treacherous and ungrateful to Allah in spite of His many blessings and favors to them.

أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتَلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظُلِمُوا ۚ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ ۙ 39

(22:39) Permission (to fight) has been granted to those for they have been wronged.[78] Verily Allah has the power to help them:[79]

78. This (verse 39) is the first verse of the Quran in which permission to tight was given in the month of Zil-Hajj in the first year after Hijrah according to our research. Then the command to fight was given in (verse 190, 191, 193, 216 and 244 of Surah Al-Baqarah) in Rajab or Shaban of A.H. 2.

79. "Allah surely has Power over giving them victory": this assurance was urgently needed by the persecuted Muslims whose fighting strength at that time was very meager, not even a thousand including all the migrants and the Muslims of Al-Madinah. On the other hand, the fighting strength of the Quraish by themselves was much greater. Besides, they had all the other mushrik clans of Arabia at their back and were joined later by the Jews as well. Therefore, this assurance was most opportune and the challenge to the disbelievers was very significant, for it meant to say that they were not fighting against a small number of the Muslims but against Allah. Therefore, "You are welcome to fight if you dare".

ٱلَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِن دِيَارِهِم بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَن يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ۗ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ
بَعْضَهُم بِبَعْضٍ لَّهُدِّمَتْ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَمَسَاجِدُ يُذْكَرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ
كَثِيرًا ۗ وَلَيَنصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَن يَنصُرُهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ 40

(22:40) those who were unjustly expelled from their homes[80] for no other reason than their saying: "Allah is Our Lord."[81] If Allah were not to repel some through others, monasteries and churches and synagogues[82] and mosques wherein the name of Allah is much mentioned, would certainly have been pulled down.[83] Allah will most certainly help those who will help Him. Verily Allah is Immensely Strong, Overwhelmingly Mighty.

80. The mention of their expulsion from their homes in (verse 40) is a clear proof that this portion of Surah Al-Hajj was revealed at Al-Madinah.

81. In order to have an idea of the severe persecution of the Muslims, a few instances of this are cited.

(1) Suhaib Rumi was deprived of everything, when he was about to migrate to Al-Madinah. When he reached there, he had nothing with him except the clothes he was wearing.

Though he had earned all that through his own labors, he was deprived of everything by the disbelievers of Makkah.

(2) When Abu Salmah was about to leave Makkah with his wife and a suckling child, his in laws forcibly separated his wife from him, and then the people of his own family took away the child from them. Thus the poor woman had to pass one whole year in sorrow and grief. After a year, she secured the child somehow and journeyed from Makkah to Al-Madinah with it all alone on a dangerous route.

(3) Ayyash bin Rabiah was a half brother of Abu Jahl. When he migrated to Al-Madinah, he was followed by Abu Jahl and another brother of his, and they told him the lie: Your mother has taken the oath that she will not move from the sun to the shade nor comb her hair until she should see you (Ayyash). You should therefore go back with us to Makkah, show her your face and then come back. He was taken in by this trick. When they were journeying back the two brothers made him a prisoner, took him to Makkah with his hands and feet tied, and proclaimed: O people of Makkah, this is how these lads should be treated and set right. He remained in that state for a long time and was at last rescued by a brave Muslim.

82. Saumah (pl. Swami), Biya and Salawat in the original text are the places of worship of the monks who have left the world, the Christians and the Jews respectively. Salawat was Salauta in Aramaic, which might be the origin of the English words salute and salutation.

83. In this sentence, a divine principle has been stated:

Allah does not let a group of people or a community have authority forever. Every now and then He repels one group by means of another.

If this had not been the case, the permanent dominator would have created chaos not only in the political and economic spheres, but would have encroached upon the places of worship as well. This principle has also been stated in Ayat 251 of Surah Al-Baqarah.

اَلَّذِيْنَ اِنْ مَّكَّنّٰهُمْ فِي الْاَرْضِ اَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتَوُا الزَّكٰوةَ وَاَمَرُوْا بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْاُمُوْرِ 41

(22:41) (Allah will certainly help) those[84] who, were We to bestow authority on them in the land, will establish Prayers, render Zakah, enjoin good, and forbid evil.[85] The end of all matters rests with Allah.[86]

84. Those who help Allah are the people who invite mankind to Tauhid and exert their utmost to establish the true faith and righteousness. For further explanation see (E.N. 50 of Surah Aal-Imran).

85. "If We give them authority": In this one sentence, the real aim of the Islamic State and the characteristics of those who conduct its affairs have been stated concisely but comprehensively. Those who help Allah and deserve His succor behave righteously,

establish Salat, make arrangements for the collection of Zakat and use their power and authority to propagate good and eradicate evil.

86. That is, it is Allah Who decides whom to give power in the land and when. This is meant to remove the misunderstanding of the proud and arrogant people who think that the destiny of the land and its dwellers is in their hands, and there is none to depose them from power. But Allah dethrones the most haughty ruler in supernatural ways and gives power to the most humble in order to show that He is All-Powerful, All-Mighty.

وَاِنۡ يُّكَذِّبُوۡكَ فَقَدۡ كَذَّبَتۡ قَبۡلَهُمۡ قَوۡمُ نُوۡحٍ وَّعَادٌ وَّثَمُوۡدُ ۙ 42

(22:42) (O Prophet), if they[87] give the lie to you, then before them the people of 'Ad and Thamud, also gave the lie (to the Prophets),

87. The disbelievers of Makkah.

وَقَوۡمُ اِبۡرٰهِيۡمَ وَقَوۡمُ لُوۡطٍ ۙ 43

(22:43) and so too did the people of Abraham and the people of Lot;

وَّاَصۡحٰبُ مَدۡيَنَ ۚ وَكُذِّبَ مُوۡسٰى فَاَمۡلَيۡتُ لِلۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ ثُمَّ اَخَذۡتُهُمۡ ۚ فَكَيۡفَ كَانَ نَكِيۡرِ 44

(22:44) and so did the dwellers of Midian, and Moses too was branded a liar. Initially I granted respite to the unbelievers for a while and then seized them.[88] How dreadful was My punishment![89]

88. The instances of some peoples who rejected their Prophets have been cited to impress that they were given respite to reform themselves before they were punished. Therefore: O people of Makkah, you should not be deluded by the delay in your punishment. When the term of respite comes to an end, you shall also be punished like the former people, if you do not mend your ways in the meantime.

89. The Arabic word nakeer is very comprehensive and implies two meanings:

(1) Displeasure at the evil conduct of the other.

(2) A terrible punishment which disfigures the culprit so badly that he cannot even be recognized. The sentence therefore will mean: Just see when I seized them for this evil conduct, how terrible was My chastisement.

فَكَاَيِّنۡ مِّنۡ قَرۡيَةٍ اَهۡلَكۡنٰهَا وَهِىَ ظَالِمَةٌ فَهِىَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلٰى عُرُوۡشِهَا وَبِئۡرٍ مُّعَطَّلَةٍ وَّقَصۡرٍ

مَّشِيۡدٍ 45

(22:45) How many towns have We destroyed because their people were steeped in iniquity:[90] so they lie fallen down upon their turrets! How many wells lie deserted; and how many towering palaces lie in ruins!

90. In Arabic a well is synonymous with a habitation. Thus "many a wells" means "many a habitation has been destroyed".

اَفَلَمۡ يَسِيۡرُوۡا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ فَتَكُوۡنَ لَهُمۡ قُلُوۡبٌ يَّعۡقِلُوۡنَ بِهَاۤ اَوۡ اٰذَانٌ يَّسۡمَعُوۡنَ بِهَا ۚ فَاِنَّهَا

لَا تَعۡمَى الۡاَبۡصَارُ وَلٰكِنۡ تَعۡمَى الۡقُلُوۡبُ الَّتِىۡ فِى الصُّدُوۡرِ 46

(22:46) Have they not journeyed in the land that their hearts might understand and their ears might listen? For indeed it is not the eyes that are blinded;[91] it is rather the hearts in the breasts that are rendered blind.

91. The words "blinded are the hearts" have been used in the metaphorical and not in the literal sense. Since the heart is regarded as the center of emotions, feelings and of mental and moral qualities, these words have been used to imply that their obduracy has inhibited them from feeling and acting rationally.

وَيَسۡتَعۡجِلُوۡنَكَ بِالۡعَذَابِ وَلَنۡ يُّخۡلِفَ اللّٰهُ وَعۡدَهٗ ؕ وَاِنَّ يَوۡمًا عِنۡدَ رَبِّكَ كَاَلۡفِ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا

تَعُدُّوۡنَ 47

(22:47) They ask you to hasten the punishment.[92] Allah shall most certainly not fail His promise; but a Day with your Lord is as a thousand years of your reckoning.[93]

92. This refers to the oft-repeated challenge by the disbelievers: Well, if you are a true prophet, why does not that chastisement come with which you have been threatening us, for we have been rejecting your claim of being a true Prophet of Allah.

93. That is, the decisions of Allah do not follow your time and calendar, nor do the consequences of your wrong attitudes appear immediately after the deeds. Therefore it will be very foolish for the part of a people to argue that the threat of punishment was empty just because a decade or a century had passed since they had adopted a wicked attitude and conduct with impurity.

وَكَاَيِّنۡ مِّنۡ قَرۡيَةٍ اَمۡلَيۡتُ لَهَا وَهِىَ ظَالِمَةٌ ثُمَّ اَخَذۡتُهَا ۚ وَاِلَىَّ الۡمَصِيۡرُ ۧ 48

(22:48) How many towns did I respite at first though they were steeped in iniquity, and then I seized them! To Me are all destined to return.

قُلۡ يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنَّمَاۤ اَنَا لَـكُمۡ نَذِيۡرٌ مُّبِيۡنٌ ۚ 49

(22:49) Say (O Muhammad): "O people! I have been sent to you only as a plain warner[94] (before the Doom strikes you)."

94. That is, I am merely a warner and not the maker of your destinies. It is Allah Who passes judgment and decides about the punishment.

فَالَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَهُمۡ مَّغۡفِرَةٌ وَّرِزۡقٌ كَرِيۡمٌ 50

(22:50) So those who believe and act righteously shall be granted forgiveness and an honourable sustenance,[95]

95. The believers shall have forgiveness' means that Allah will overlook their faults, weaknesses, and acts of omission and commission. They will have honorable provisions means that they will have excellent supplies which will be given to them in an honorable way.

وَالَّذِيۡنَ سَعَوۡ فِىۡۤ اٰيٰتِنَا مُعٰجِزِيۡنَ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصۡحٰبُ الۡجَحِيۡمِ 51

(22:51) whereas those who strive against Our Signs, seeking to profane them, they are the friends of the Fire!

وَمَاۤ اَرۡسَلۡنَا مِنۡ قَبۡلِكَ مِنۡ رَّسُوۡلٍ وَّلَا نَبِىٍّ اِلَّاۤ اِذَا تَمَنّٰٓى اَلۡقَى الشَّيۡطٰنُ فِىۡۤ اُمۡنِيَّتِهٖ ۚ فَيَنۡسَخُ اللّٰهُ مَا يُلۡقِى الشَّيۡطٰنُ ثُمَّ يُحۡكِمُ اللّٰهُ اٰيٰتِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيۡمٌ حَكِيۡمٌ ۙ 52

(22:52) Never did We send a Messenger or a Prophet[96] before you (O Muhammad), but that whenever he had a desire,[97] Satan interfered with that desire.[98] Allah eradicates the interference of Satan and strengthens His Signs.[99]Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.[100]

96. For the distinction between Nabi and Rasul, refer to (E. N. 30 of Surah Maryam).

97. The Arabic word tamanna has two meanings: "desire" and "to recite" something.

98. If the first meaning is taken, it will imply: Satan tried to prevent the fulfillment of his desire. If the second meaning is taken, it will imply: When the Prophet recited the Revelations, Satan created different sorts of doubts about its truth and meanings in the minds of the people.

99. If the first meaning is adopted, it will imply: Allah fulfills the Prophet's desire and makes his mission successful in spite of the obstacles of Satan and confirms the truth of His revelations by fulfilling His promises to the Prophet. In case of the second meaning, it will imply: Allah eradicates all the doubts and objections inspired by Satan in the hearts of the people and clarifies the confusion created about any verse of the Quran in subsequent revelations.

100. "Allah is All-Knower" and has full knowledge of the mischief worked by Satan and of its effects, and being All- Wise, He counteracts every mischief of Satan.

لِّيَجْعَلَ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطٰنُ فِتْنَةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ وَّالْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ۭ وَاِنَّ
الظّٰلِمِيْنَ لَفِيْ شِقَاقٍۢ بَعِيْدٍ 53

(22:53) (He does this) in order that He may make the evil caused by Satan a trial for those in whose hearts there is sickness (of hypocrisy), whose hearts are hard (and vitiated). Surely these wrong-doers have gone too far in their dissension.

وَّلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ اَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ فَيُؤْمِنُوْا بِهٖ فَتُخْبِتَ لَهٗ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ۭ وَاِنَّ
اللّٰهَ لَهَادِ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ 54

(22:54) (He also does this) in order that those endowed with knowledge may know that it is the Truth from your Lord and that they may have faith in it and their hearts may humble themselves before Him. Verily Allah always directs those that believe to the Right Way.[101]

101. That is, Allah lets Satan work such mischief to put to the test both the righteous and the wicked people. The people with a perverted mentality deduce wrong conclusions from these and deviate from the right way, while those, who think on the right lines, realize that all these things are the mischief of Satan and that the message of the Prophet is based on the truth. They conclude that the very fact that Satan has been so much agitated and become active against it is a clear proof of its being the truth. It is very important to understand the real significance of this passage (verses 52-54) for this has given rise to a grave misunderstanding.

If we consider it in the context in which it occurs, it becomes obvious that it was sent down to refute the wrong appraisal of the casual observers that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had failed to achieve his desired object. This was because he had striven for thirteen long

years to persuade his people to accept his message but the apparent result was that he had not only failed in this, but he and the small band of his followers had been forced to leave their homes. As this exile contradicted his claim that he was a Prophet of Allah and had His approval and succor with him, some people became skeptical about it. Moreover, they became doubtful about the truth of the Quran, because they were not being visited by the scourge, which was inflicted on those who treated the Prophet as false. His antagonists scoffed at him, saying: Where is that succor of Allah and the scourge with which we were threatened? The answer to these doubts of the disbelievers was given in the preceding passage, and in this passage the addressees were those who were influenced by this propaganda. Briefly the whole answer was to this effect.

It is not a new thing that the people of a Messenger have treated him as an impostor for it has always been happening like this. You can see from the remnants of those peoples who treated their Messengers as impostors how they were punished for their mischief. You can learn a lesson from them, if you will. As regards to the delay in the coming of scourge, the Quran never threatened the disbelievers with immediate punishment, nor is it the job of the Messenger to inflict punishments. The scourge is sent by Allah, but He is not hasty in sending His torment. He gives respite to the people to mend their ways as He is giving you now. Therefore, you should not be under any delusion that the threats of scourge are empty threats.

It is also not a new thing that the desires and wishes of a Prophet meet with obstacles or that false propaganda is made against his message for the same has already happened with regard to the messages of the former Prophets. But ultimately Allah eradicated the mischief worked by Satan and made the message successful. Therefore you should take a warning from the past history of Satan's mischief and its ultimate failure. You should note it well that the obstacles and the mischief of Satan are a trial and means that help attract the righteous people towards Islam and winnow the dishonest people away from it.

It is a pity that in spite of the above clear and simple meaning of the passage which fits in well with the context, a grave misunderstanding has arisen because of a tradition which has not only changed its meaning entirely and rendered it irrelevant in the context but has helped make doubtful the very basic articles of the faith. Therefore we are making a critical appraisal of the tradition in order to show how to make the right use of traditions for the correct interpretation of the Quran.

According to this tradition, the Prophet (peace be upon him) had a strong longing and desire to this effect: I wish some revelations were sent down to tone down the abhorrence of the mushrik Quraish against Islam so as to bring them nearer to it, or at least the criticism against their creed may not be so severe as to arouse their enmity.

While he was cherishing this desire, it so happened that one day when he was sitting in a big gathering of the Quraish, Surah An-Najm was revealed and he began to recite it. When he came to (verses 19, 20): Have you ever considered about this Lat and this Uzza, and a third (goddess) Manat, all of a sudden he recited, "These are exalted goddesses; indeed their intercession may be expected". After this he continued to recite Surah An-Najm up to the last verse and then fell down in prostration and all the Muslims and the mushriks of the Quraish also did the same, for the latter said: Now we have no difference with Muhammad.

We also profess that Allah is the Creator and the Provider and that these deities of ours are merely our intercessors with Him. After this, when in the evening Angel Gabriel came, he said: What have you done? I did not bring these two sentences. At this the Prophet (peace be upon him) became very sad and Allah sent down (verse 73-75 of Surah Bani Israil): O Muhammad, these people have left no stone unturned to tempt you away from that which We have revealed to you so that you might fabricate something in Our name. Had you done that, they would have made you their friend. It was just possible that you might have inclined a little towards them, if We had not given you strength. But if you had done so, We would have made you taste double chastisement in this world as well as in the Hereafter, then you would have found no helper against Us.

But in spite of this, he continued to be grieved till Allah sent down (verse 52 of this Surah Al-Hajj) in which Allah consoled him, saying that the same had been happening to the former Prophets.

Another thing that happened in the meantime was that the story reached the migrants to Habash that there had been a reconciliation between the Prophet and the disbelievers of Makkah. Accordingly, many of them returned to Makkah only to learn that the news of reconciliation was wrong and the conflict between Islam and kufr was raging as furiously as before.

Now let us make a critical study of this story which has been cited by Ibn Jarir and many other commentators and is even contained in many collections of traditions.

(1) None of its reporters, except Ibn Abbas, is a companion.

(2) There are many major discrepancies and variations in its details.

(3) The wording ascribed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in praise of the idols in each tradition is different from that of others.

Moreover, these words have been attributed to different sources according to different traditions: (a) These words were put in by Satan during the revelation and the Prophet (peace be upon him) imagined that they were revealed by Gabriel. (b) He himself uttered these words inadvertently, being urged by his own desire. (c) He was dozing when he uttered these words. (d) He intentionally uttered these words but in a manner as to question their veracity. (e) Satan interpolated these words into the revelation, giving an impression that the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself had recited them. (f) It was one of the mushriks who had recited these words.

Yet scholars of tradition like Hafiz Ibn Hajar and jurists like Abu Bakr alJassas and rationalists like Zamakhshari and commentators like Ibn Jarir accept this story as true and consider it as a commentary on (verse 52) of this Surah. Ibn Hajar argues like this:

"Even though the links by which this tradition has been related are either weak or broken, except in one case, the very fact that it has been related through so many links is a proof that there is some truth about it. The one which has strong links is by Said bin Jubair who has related it from Ibn Abbas and the reporters of two more traditions (which have been cited by Tabari) have been declared authentic by Bukhari and Muslim.

On the other side, there are other eminent scholars who declare this story to be utterly baseless. Ibn Kathir says: All the links of this tradition are unauthentic and I have found no correct version of this with continuous links. Baihaqi says: This story has not been proved to be correct by the rules of reporting. When Ibn Khuzaimah was asked about it, he said: This story has been invented by heretics. Qazi Ayad says: The very fact that this tradition is neither contained in any of the six authentic collections of Hadith nor has it been related in an authentic way by authentic reporters shows its weakness. Besides them, Imam Razi, Qazi Abu Bakr Ibn al-Arabi, Alusi etc. have rejected it altogether.

It is a pity that even those who reject this story have not done full justice to their cases. There are some who reject it because its links are weak. In other words, they would have accepted it, if its links were strong. Then there are others who reject it because its acceptance makes the whole faith doubtful. This kind of reasoning may satisfy the believers but it cannot satisfy those who are already skeptical or intend to make a research into it with a view to making a correct appraisal of Islam. They will rather say: When a story is related by an eminent companion and is contained in the collections of traditions, there is no reason why we should reject it just because it makes your faith doubtful.

Now let us consider the story critically and rationally to prove that it is unacceptable.

(1) Its internal evidence proves it to be wrong: (a) According to the story the incident happened after the first migration to Habash, for according to it some of the migrants returned to Makkah after hearing the story. Now the fact is that the migration took place in the month of Rajab of the fifth year of Prophethood and some of the migrants returned to Makkah three months later, i.e. in Shawwal of the same year. (b) (Verses 73-75 of Surah Al-Isra) in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) was reproved for this incident were revealed in the eleventh or twelfth year of Prophethood. In other words, he was reproved by Allah five or six years after the incident. (c) This (verse 52) in which the interpolation by Satan was abrogated was sent down in the first year of Hijrah, i.e. about two years after the reproof. Can a person in his senses believe that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was reproved for the interpolation after six years, and it was abrogated after nine years?

(2) According to the story, this interpolation was made in Surah An-Najm. When the Prophet was reciting the words, “And a third (goddess) Manat”; he also recited the interpolated sentence, and then continued the recital up to the end of the Surah. It is said that the disbelievers of Makkah were so pleased with the interpolation that they declared: The differences between us and Muhammad (peace be upon him) have now come to an end.

Let us now read (verses 19-23 of An-Najm) along with the alleged interpolation (in italics): Have you ever considered about the reality of this Lat and Uzza and a third (goddess) Manat? These are exalted goddesses; indeed their intercession may be expected. What, do you have sons for yourselves and daughters for Him (Allah)? This is indeed an unfair division. They are nothing but mere names which you and your forefathers have invented. Allah has sent down no authority in regard to them. They follow only conjectures and the whims of their own minds, although right guidance has come from their Lord.

Even a casual reader will detect an obvious contradiction in the passage. Immediately after praising the goddesses there is a hard hit on their worshipers, as if to say: O foolish people!

How is it that you have ascribed daughters to Allah and sons to yourselves? All this is your own invention which has no authority from Allah. On the face of it, the interpolation makes the passage absurd which cannot be assigned even to a rational person not to speak of Allah. Then the story presumes that all the Quraish who were listening to it must have lost their senses; otherwise they could not have declared that their differences with Muhammad (peace be upon him) had been made up from thence.

From this internal evidence it has become clear that this story is absurd and meaningless.

(3) Now let us consider whether the occasions, ascribed by the commentators to the revelation of the verses under discussion, fit in with the chronological order of the Quran. According to the story, the interpolation in Surah An-Najm was made in the fifth year of Prophethood. The reproof was made in (verses 73-75 of Bani Israil) and then the interpolation was annulled and the incident explained in (verses 52-54 of Surah Al-Hajj). Now there could be only two possibilities about the time of their revelation. Either the verses containing the reproof and the abrogation were sent down in the period in which the interpolation took place, or the verse containing the reproof was sent down along with Surah Al-Hajj. In the first case, the question arises: Why were these verses (Surah Bani-Israil, 73-75) not inserted in Surah An-Najm? Why were they held in abeyance for six long years and then inserted in Surah Bani Israil, when it was revealed, and (verses 52-54) (containing the abrogation) inserted in Surah Al-Hajj after a further delay of more than two years? Does it mean that the verses were sent down on one occasion and inserted years later haphazardly in one Surah or the other? In the second case, the question would arise: Does it stand to reason that the verses containing the reproof (Surah Bani-Israil, 73-75)were sent down six years after the interpolation, and the verse of abrogation (Surah Al-Hajj, Ayat 52) nine years after the incident? Still another question arises: What was the occasion of the revelation of the verses of reproof and abrogation in Surahs Surah Bani-Israil and Al-Hajj in the context in which they occur?

(4) Now let us turn to the third principle of correct appraisal of the Quran.

For a correct appreciation of the Quran it is essential to consider whether a particular commentary fits in with the relevant context of the Quran or not. If we make even a cursory study of (Surah Bani Israil, verses 71-73), it will become obvious that there was no occasion for the alleged reproof in (verse 73) and that there is no tinge of reproof in it, for the words of the verse refute the allegation that the Prophet was taken in by the mischief of the disbelievers. Then in Surah Al-Hajj, if we make a critical study of the verses that precede (verses 52-54)and follow them, it will become obvious that there was no occasion to console the Prophet for the interpolation and to annul it after nine years.

(5) We reiterate that no tradition, however strong links it might have, can be accepted when the text itself is a clear evidence against it, and when it does not fit in with the wording, the context, the order etc. of the Quran. When the incident is considered in this background, even a skeptical research scholar would be convinced that the tradition is absolutely wrong. As regards to a believer, he can never accept it, when he knows that it contradicts not only one verse but a large number of other verses of the Quran. He would rather believe that the reporters of the tradition might have been deluded by Satan and not the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). He would never believe that the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him)

could interpolate even a single word in the Quran under the influence of a desire of his own: or that there could ever occur such a desire in his mind that he should make a compromise with the disbelievers by associating shirk with Tauhid: or that he could ever wish that Allah might not say anything to displease the disbelievers: or that the revelation was made in such an unsafe and doubtful manner as to enable Satan to mix with it even a word in a manner as if it was also brought by Gabriel. Each of these things is contradictory to the clear revelation of the Quran and the basic articles of the faith which we have learned from the Quran and the Prophet (peace be upon him). God forbid that we should accept any such tradition that might lead to the above mentioned presumptions just because the tradition seems to be authentic in every way.

It will be worth-while to consider the question: How is it that so many reporters of traditions have related this story? Does it not show that there must have been some reality about it? Otherwise, so many reporters, who included many authentic and eminent scholars, could not have made such an heinous slander against the Quran and the Prophet (peace be upon him). Its answer is contained in the authentic collections of traditions by Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, Nasai and Musnad Ahmad. The reality of the incident is this.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) recited Surah An-Najm and performed prostration at the end of it. At this, all the hearers, both the Muslims and the mushriks, fell down in prostration. This was what really happened and there is nothing strange about it. Let us depict the occasion: The Prophet (peace be upon him) was reciting a forceful piece of the eloquent Quran in a very impressive manner. Naturally the occasion produced an emotional effect and all the listeners instinctively fell down in prostration along with him. It was because of such ecstasies produced by the Prophet's (peace be upon him) recital of the Quran as this that the disbelievers dubbed him a sorcerer. As regards the story that the Prophet (peace be upon him) praised the deities of the disbelievers, it appears that the Quraish concocted the story to hide their defeat. Probably someone or other of them explained away their defeat, saying: We ourselves heard Muhammad praising our deities. Therefore we also fell down in prostration along with him. As regards to the migrants to Habash, they returned to Makkah when they heard the concocted story that there had been a compromise between the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Quraish. It appears that some of those people who had seen the Muslims and the mushriks falling down together in prostration, presumed that peace had been made between them, so the story traveled to the migrants in Habash who had no means to verify it and thus thirty three of them returned to Makkah.

Naturally these three things, prostration by the Quraish, their explanation of it, and the return of the migrants from Habash, combined to evolve that story. So much so that some authentic people were also deluded by it, for to err is human, and the pious and intelligent people are no exception to it. However, the error of the latter proves to be more harmful, because their credulous followers accept with closed eyes their misconceptions along with their right conclusions. On the other hand, mischief mongers collect all such errors of the righteous people and exploit them to prove that all the collections of traditions are false and should be rejected forthwith.

وَلَا يَزَالُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فِيْ مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْهُ حَتّٰى تَاْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً اَوْ يَاْتِيَهُمْ عَذَابُ يَوْمٍ عَقِيْمٍ 55

(22:55) The unbelievers will not cease to be in doubt about it until the Hour suddenly comes upon them, or the chastisement of an ominous day[102] overtakes them.

102. The epithet "barren" has been applied to the day in its metaphorical and not literal sense. :A day is barren if all the plans, hopes and devices remain unproductive in it, or it does not bring forth its night. For instance, the days on which the people of Prophet Noah, the tribes of Aad and Thamud, the people of Lot and of Midian met with their destruction by scourge from Allah, were barren days in this sense, because those days did not bring forth any tomorrow for them, and no device of theirs could avert their doom.

اَلْمُلْكُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلّٰهِ ؕ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فِيْ جَنّٰتِ النَّعِيْمِ 56

(22:56) On that Day all sovereignty shall be Allah's and He will judge among them. Then those who believed and acted righteously shall be in Gardens of Bliss.

وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَاُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ع 57

(22:57) A humiliating chastisement awaits those who disbelieved and denied Our Signs.

وَالَّذِيْنَ هَاجَرُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ قُتِلُوْٓا اَوْ مَاتُوْا لَيَرْزُقَنَّهُمُ اللّٰهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا ؕ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرّٰزِقِيْنَ 58

(22:58) As for those who migrated in the way of Allah, whereafter they were slain, or died, Allah will certainly grant them a goodly provision. Indeed, Allah is the Best of all those who provide.

لَيُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ مُّدْخَلًا يَّرْضَوْنَهٗ ؕ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَعَلِيْمٌ حَلِيْمٌ 59

(22:59) He will surely admit them to a resort which will please them. Most certainly Allah is All-Knowing, Most Forbearing.[103]

103. As Allah is All-Knowing, He knows well those who left their homes for His sake and what reward they deserve. He is Clement, and forgives minor errors and weaknesses of the people; therefore these things will not hinder Him from rewarding the believers for their services and sacrifices.

ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَمَنْ عَاقَبَ بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوْقِبَ بِهٖ ثُمَّ بُغِيَ عَلَيْهِ لَيَنْصُرَنَّهُ اللّٰهُ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَعَفُوٌّ

غَفُوْرٌ 60

(22:60) That indeed is so, as for him who retaliates in proportion to the excess committed against him, and is thereafter again subjected to transgression, Allah will surely aid him.[104] Verily Allah is All-Pardoning, All-Forgiving.[105]

104. The preceding verses referred to those persecuted people who could not retaliate and here the reference is to those victims of persecution who could fight back.

From this verse, Imam Shafai has concluded that retaliation will be effected in the way as life was taken in the original act. If a person is killed by immersion in water, the killer also should be put to death by immersion in water; or if a person is burnt to death, the killer also will be burnt to death. The Hanafites dispute this. According to them, retaliation against a murderer will be incurred in one and the same established way no matter how life was taken by the culprit in the original act.

105. This verse (60) may imply two things:

(1) Allah forgives that killing which is done in self-defense, though killing of people is not a good thing in itself. (2) As Allah, Whose slaves the believers are, is Forgiving and Forbearing, they should also forgive and forbear as much as possible. Though they have the right of retaliation, they should not resort to carnage and massacre.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُوْلِجُ الَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُوْلِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي الَّيْلِ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌۢ بَصِيْرٌ 61

(22:61) So shall it be[106] because it is Allah Who causes the night to emerge out of the day and causes the day[107] to emerge out of the night and Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.[108]

106. "That is" (as stated in the preceding paragraph) because Allah is the Ruler of the universe and has the power to give punishments and rewards to those who deserve them.

107. The fact that "Allah causes.....night" is a proof that He is the Master, Sovereign and Ruler of the universe. But the deeper meaning of the verse is that Allah, Who is able to bring forth the light of the day out of the darkness of the night, has the power to bring out the light of the truth out of the darkness of disbelief and ignorance, and the light of justice out of the darkness of tyranny.

108. He hears everything and sees everything and is not unaware of anything.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الۡحَقُّ وَاَنَّ مَا يَدۡعُوۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِهٖ هُوَ الۡبَاطِلُ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الۡعَلِىُّ الۡكَبِيۡرُ 62

(22:62) So shall it be because Allah, He is the Truth, and all whom they invoke instead of Him are false.[109] Allah is Most High, All-Great.

109. As Allah is in fact the Sovereign of the universe, His worshipers will surely attain true success and the worshipers of false gods will meet with utter failure.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ اَنۡزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَتُصۡبِحُ الۡاَرۡضُ مُخۡضَرَّةً ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَطِيۡفٌ خَبِيۡرٌ ۚ 63

(22:63) Do you not see that Allah sends down water from the sky whereby the earth turns green?[110] Verily Allah is Subtle, All-Aware.[111]

110. This verse has a deeper meaning also, though apparently it merely declares that Allah alone has the power to send down rain which makes the land green. The deeper meaning is that the rainfall of the blessed revelation will, in the near future, turn the barren land of Arabia into a garden of knowledge, morality and bring forth a high and righteous civilization.

111. Latif implies that Allah fulfills His designs in such fine ways that it is difficult to understand them till they become real and apparent.

As He is fully aware of everything, He knows how to conduct the affairs of His Kingdom.

لَهٗ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهُوَ الۡغَنِىُّ الۡحَمِيۡدُ ۧ 64

(22:64) To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. Surely Allah - He alone is Self- Sufficient, Praiseworthy.[112]

112. He alone is All-Sufficient and is not in need of anyone in any way. He is All-praiseworthy because all praise belongs to Him alone whether anyone praises Him or not.

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالْفُلْكَ تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ ۖ وَيُمْسِكُ
السَّمَاءَ أَن تَقَعَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ 65

(22:65) Have you not seen how Allah has subjected to you all that is in the earth, and the vessels that sail in the sea by His command,[113] and it is He Who holds back the sky that it may not fall on earth except by His leave? Surely Allah is Most Gentle, Ever Compassionate to people.

113. Here "the heaven" implies the whole of the universe above and below the earth where everything is held in its own place and sphere.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ لَكَفُورٌ 66

(22:66) And it is He Who has endowed you with life and it is He who causes you to die, and it is He Who will then resurrect you. Man is indeed extremely prone to denying the Truth.[114]

114. That is, though man sees every reality presented by the Prophets, yet he denies it.

لِّكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنسَكًا هُمْ نَاسِكُوهُ فَلَا يُنَازِعُنَّكَ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَادْعُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ ۖ إِنَّكَ
لَعَلَىٰ هُدًى مُّسْتَقِيمٍ 67

(22:67) For every people[115] We have prescribed a way of worship[116] which they follow. So, (O Muhammad), let them not dispute with you concerning this,[117] and call them to Your Lord. You are certainly on the Straight Way.[118]

115. That is, the community of every Prophet.

116. Here the Arabic word mansak has been used in its most comprehensive sense which also includes sacrifice (verse 34). It means service, worship, in short, the entire way of life. The same theme has been expressed in (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 48): We prescribed a law and a way of life for each of you.

117. That is, now you have brought a way of life just as the former Prophets brought ways of life for their people. Therefore the people have no right to dispute with you concerning the law you have brought.

118. This confirms the explanation given in(E.N. 117) above.

وَاِنۡ جَادَلُوۡكَ فَقُلِ اللّٰهُ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ 68

(22:68) And if they dispute with you, say: "Allah knows well what you do.

اللّٰهُ يَحۡكُمُ بَيۡنَكُمۡ يَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ فِيۡمَا كُنۡتُمۡ فِيۡهِ تَخۡتَلِفُوۡنَ 69

(22:69) Allah will judge among you on the Day of Resurrection concerning matters about which you disagreed."

اَلَمۡ تَعۡلَمۡ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعۡلَمُ مَا فِى السَّمَآءِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ فِىۡ كِتٰبٍ ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيۡرٌ 70

(22:70) Are you not aware that Allah knows all that is in the heaven and the earth? Surely it is all preserved in a Book. Indeed that is easy with Allah.[119]

119. In order to understand the significance of this paragraph, we should keep in view (verse 55- 57) with which this is connected.

وَيَعۡبُدُوۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَمۡ يُنَزِّلۡ بِهٖ سُلۡطٰنًا وَّمَا لَيۡسَ لَهُمۡ بِهٖ عِلۡمٌ ؕ وَمَا لِلظّٰلِمِيۡنَ مِنۡ نَّصِيۡرٍ 71

(22:71) Instead of Allah they worship those concerning whom He has revealed no sanction and concerning whom they have no true knowledge.[120] None shall be able to help such evil-doers.[121]

120. That is, neither there is any mention of their deities in any revealed Book nor do they have any other source of knowledge about them nor any authority to worship them. Therefore, it is sheer ignorance that they have associated their self invented deities with Allah and worship them, make vows and offer sacrifices to them and supplicate them for their needs etc.

121. This is to warn the foolish people that they are absolutely wrong in expecting that their deities would help them in this world and in the Hereafter because they have no power to help them. Thus, they will find no helper, for Allah alone could help them and they have already displeased Him by their rebellious behavior.

وَاِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتُنَا بَيِّنٰتٍ تَعْرِفُ فِيْ وُجُوْهِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوا الْمُنْكَرَ ؕ يَكَادُوْنَ يَسْطُوْنَ
بِالَّذِيْنَ يَتْلُوْنَ عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِنَا ؕ قُلْ اَفَاُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِشَرٍّ مِّنْ ذٰلِكُمْ ؕ اَلنَّارُ ؕ وَعَدَهَا اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْا ؕ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ۚ 72

(22:72) When Our Signs are plainly recited to them, you will perceive utter repugnance on their faces and it all but seems as if they will soon pounce upon those who recite Our Signs to them. Say: "Shall I tell you what is worse than that?[122] The Fire with which Allah has threatened those who disbelieve. That is truly an evil end."

122. That is, you will meet with a far worse state of anguish than that which you display against those who recite divine revelations to you.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ضُرِبَ مَثَلٌ فَاسْتَمِعُوْا لَهٗ ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ لَنْ يَّخْلُقُوْا
ذُبَابًا وَّلَوِ اجْتَمَعُوْا لَهٗ ؕ وَاِنْ يَّسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْـًٔا لَّا يَسْتَنْقِذُوْهُ مِنْهُ ؕ ضَعُفَ
الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوْبُ 73

(22:73) O people, a parable is set forth: pay heed to it. Those who call upon aught other than Allah shall never be able to create even a fly, even if all of them were to come together to do that. And if the fly were to snatch away anything from them, they would not be able to recover that from it. Powerless is the supplicant; and powerless is he to whom he supplicates.[123]

123. This parable has been cited to impress upon the idolworshipers that their deities are absolutely powerless, for even if they all collaborated to create an insignificant thing like a fly, they could not; nay, even if a fly snatched away anything from them they could not prevent it. This shows how weak they themselves are and how powerless are the idols they supplicate.

مَا قَدَرُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيْزٌ 74

(22:74) They have not formed a true estimate of Allah. Indeed, Allah is All-Powerful, All-Mighty.

اَللّٰهُ يَصْطَفِيْ مِنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ رُسُلًا وَّمِنَ النَّاسِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌۢ بَصِيْرٌ ۚ 75

(22:75) Allah chooses Messengers from among angels and from among human beings (to convey His command)[124]. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.

124. In continuation of the refutation of shirk, Allah has taken two kinds of the most revered of deities to show their real status, as if to say: The angels and the Prophets whom you have set up as deities are mere Messengers of Allah. Allah has chosen them to convey His messages to human beings and this does not make them God or partners in His Godhead.

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ۗ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ 76

(22:76) He knows all that is before them and that which is hidden from them.[125] And it is to Allah that all affairs are returned.[126]

125. The Quran employs this sentence to refute the creed of the mushriks in regard to intercession, as if to say: You imagine that angels, prophets, saints and the like can intercede with Allah on your behalf and therefore you worship them. You are absolutely wrong. For none of your deities knows what is good for you and what is not. Allah alone hears everything, sees everything and knows everything. Therefore He has not given the right of intercession and recommendation to anyone except when He Himself is pleased to give such permission.

126. This is to impress upon them that every affair and every matter, big or small, is presented before Allah for a decision. Therefore you should not invoke anyone else other than Allah, for all others are utterly helpless and powerless and cannot even fulfill their own desires and needs.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ارْكَعُوا وَاسْجُدُوا وَاعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ وَافْعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ۩ 77

(22:77) Believers, bow down and prostrate yourselves before Your Lord and serve Your Lord and do good that you may prosper.[127]

127. This is the right way of attaining the success, but even after adopting these ways of worship and performing good deeds one should not rest content or be proud that he would surely attain success because he is worshiping Allah and is doing good deeds. He should only expect that Allah will by His grace accept his services and bless him with the success.

Imam Shafai, Ahmad bin Hanbal, Abdullah bin Mubarak and Ishaq bin Rahawayah hold the view that this verse of Surah Al-Hajj requires a prostration. But Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik, Hasan Basri, Said bin al-Musayyab, Said bin Jubair, Ibrahim Nakhai and Sufyan Thauri dispute this. The arguments of the two sides are briefly as follows:

The former group of commentators base their opinion on the following:

(1) The verb in the verse is in the imperative mood.

(2) The tradition of Uqbah bin Amir which has been reported by Imam Ahmad, Abu Dawud, Tirmizi, Ibn Marduyah and Baihaqi, says: I asked, O Messenger of Allah! Does the merit of Surah Al-Hajj consist in the fact that it contains two verses requiring prostration? He replied: Yes, the one who does not prostrate on these two verses, should not recite them.

(3) The tradition of Abu Dawud and Ibn Majah in which Amr bin Aas says that he was told by the Prophet (peace be upon him) that there were two verses requiring prostration in Surah Al-Hajj.

(4) Sayings of Umar, Ali, Uthman, Ibn Umar, Ibn Abbas, Abul Darda, Abu Musa Ashari and Ammar bin Yasir to the effect that Surah AIHajj contains two prostrations.

The latter group of commentators argue as follows;

(1) The verse contains a command both for Sajdah (prostration) and for Ruku (bowing in prayer), which implies the whole Islamic Prayer according to the Quranic usage, and not prostration alone.

(2) The tradition reported by Uqbah bin Amir is unauthentic as it has weak links.

(3) The tradition of Amr bin Aas is also unreliable, because its reporters are not well known.

(4) As for the sayings of the companions, Ibn Abbas has clearly explained that prostration in respect of the first verse (in Surah Al-Hajj) is obligatory, whereas in regard to the second, it is only suggestive.

وَجَاهِدُوْا فِي اللّٰهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهٖ ؕ هُوَ اجْتَبٰىكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّيْنِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ ؕ
مِلَّةَ اَبِيْكُمْ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ ؕ هُوَ سَمّٰىكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ۙ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِيْ هٰذَا لِيَكُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلُ
شَهِيْدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُوْنُوْا شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ ۚ فَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ
وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ ؕ هُوَ مَوْلٰىكُمْ ۚ فَنِعْمَ الْمَوْلٰى وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيْرُ ۧ 78

(22:78) Strive in the cause of Allah in a manner worthy of that striving.[128] He has chosen you[129] (for His task), and He has not laid upon you any hardship in religion.[130] Keep to the faith of your father Abraham.[131] Allah named you Muslims earlier and even in this[132] (Book), that the Messenger may be a witness over you, and that you may be witnesses over all mankind.[133] So establish Prayer, and pay Zakah, and hold fast to Allah.[134] He is your Protector. What an excellent Protector; what an excellent Helper!

128. The Arabic word jihad is very comprehensive. It includes every kind of effort, exertion, conflict and war. Jihad for the cause of Allah means that it should be performed for His

service and for His approval against those who prevent others from following His Way. The performance of jihad also requires that one should first of all fight against his own self in order to subdue it. For there can be no true jihad unless one fights against his evil self and subdues his desires and lusts to the obedience of Allah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself has emphasized the need for this jihad. Once when the warriors for the cause of Allah returned from jihad, he said: You have returned from the lesser jihad to the greater jihad. They asked: What is that greater Jihad. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: It is the jihad against his own desires and lusts.

Moreover, the battlefield for jihad is, in fact, the whole world, and Islam demands that one should exert his utmost against all the rebels of Allah and the wicked powers with all of his heart and mind and body and wealth.

129. The direct addressees of this were the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), for they were the first who had the honor to be chosen for this service; others have been addressed only indirectly being their followers. This thing has been mentioned in the Quran in other ways as well. For reference, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 143) and (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 110).

130. "(Allah) has not placed upon you in religion any hardship". That is, the creed you have been given is very simple and straightforward and the laws and regulations you have to obey are practicable. You are free within its bounds to make as much progress as you can. This was to impress that the lives of the Muslims were free from all those useless and unnatural restrictions which had been imposed upon the former communities by their priests and law givers. The negative aspect of the same thing has been mentioned in (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 157): He enjoins them to follow virtue and forbids them from evil: He makes pure things lawful for them and impure things unlawful. He relieves them of their burdens and frees them from the shackles that bound them.

131. Though Islam may be called the religion of Prophets Noah, Moses, Jesus, etc. yet the Quran emphasizes over and over again that it is the religion of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon them all). Therefore, you should follow it. This is for three reasons.

(1) The first addressees of the Quran were the Arabs who were more familiar with Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) than with any other Prophet and acknowledged him to be a holy personage and their leader.

(2) Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) alone was the person whom the Jews, the Christians, the Muslims and the mushriks of Arabia and of the adjoining countries unanimously acknowledged as a great Prophet.

(3) When the Quran invites all these communities to follow the way of Abraham, it in fact, admonishes them that all their religions had been invented long after Prophet Abraham and, therefore, were not trustworthy because they contradicted many things taught by him. As for the mushriks of Arabia, they also acknowledged that idolworship among them had been started by Amr bin Luhayy, who was a leader of Bani Khuzaah, and had brought an idol, called Hubal, from Moab in about 600 B.C. So the religion to which Prophet Muhammad

(peace be upon him) invited them was the same pure, un-adulterated religion which was taught by Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him).

For further details, see (E.Ns 134, 135 of Surah Al-Baqarah)and (E.Ns 58, 79 of Surah Aal-Imran) and (E.Ns 119, 120 of Surah An-Nahal).

132. Here the word "you" has not been addressed exclusively to those believers who lived at the time of the revelation of this verse, or those who believed after its revelation. It includes all those human beings, who, from the beginning of human history, believed in Tauhid, the Hereafter, Prophethood and the divine Books. They were not Jews, Christians, etc. but Muslims in the sense that they had surrendered themselves to Allah. Likewise the followers of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are not Muhammadans but Muslims.

133. For explanation see(E. N. 144 of Surah Al-Baqarah).

134. "Hold fast to Allah": Follow exclusively the guidance and the law of Allah: obey Him alone: fear Him and have all your hopes and expectations in Him: invoke Him alone for help: trust in Him and pray to Him for all your needs.

23. Surah Al Muminoon (The Believers)

Name

The surah takes its name, Al-Mu'minun, from the first verse.

Period of Revelation.

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

Theme Topics

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

Summary

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

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

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

1. The objections and the doubts that the antagonists are raising against the Message of Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) are not new. These were raised against the former Prophets also whom they themselves acknowledged as Messengers of Allah. Therefore they should learn a lesson from their history and judge for themselves whether the Prophets were in the right or their objectors.
2. The Message of Tauhid and the Hereafter that Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) is conveying is the same as was brought by the former Prophets; therefore they should accept it.

3. They should take a warning from the consequences met by those communities who rejected the Message of their Prophets.
4. All the Prophets brought one and the same religion from Allah and they all belonged to one and the same community. All other religions were invented by the people themselves and none of them is from Allah. **23 - 54**

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

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

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

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

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

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

قَدْ اَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ۙ 1

(23:1) The believers have indeed attained true success:[1]

1. “Believers”, who have attained true success, are those who have accepted the message of Muhammad (peace be upon him), and have acknowledged him as their guide and followed the way of life taught by him.

This assertion cannot be fully appreciated unless one keeps in view the background in which it was made. On the one hand, there were the well-to-do and prosperous chiefs of Makkah, the opponents of Islam, whose business was thriving and who were enjoying every good thing of life, and on the other hand, there were the followers of Islam, majority of

whom were either poor from the beginning, or had been reduced to poverty by ruthless antagonism to Islam. Therefore, the assertion: Most certainly the believers have attained true success, with which the discourse begins, was meant to tell the disbelievers that the criterion of success and failure that they had in mind was not correct. It was based on misconceptions besides being transitory and limited in nature: it led to failure and not true success. On the contrary, the followers of Muhammad (peace be upon him), whom they regarded as failures, were truly successful, because by accepting the invitation to the right guidance given by the Messenger of Allah, they had struck a bargain which would lead them to true success and everlasting bliss in this world as well as in the Hereafter, whereas by rejecting the message the opponents had incurred loss and would meet with the evil consequences both in this world and in the next.

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

الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ ۙ 2

(23:2) those who,[2] in their Prayers, humble themselves;[3]

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

3. Khashiun in the text is from khushu (to bow down, to express humility) which is a condition of the heart as well as of the body. Khushu of the heart is to fear and stand in awe of a powerful person and khushu of the body is to bow his head and lower his gaze and voice in his presence. In Salat one is required to show khushu both of the heart and of the body, and this is the essence of the Prayer. It has been reported that when the Prophet (peace be upon him) once saw a person offering his Prayer as well as playing with his beard, he remarked: If he had khushu in his heart, his body would have manifested it.

Though khushu is actually a condition of the heart, as stated by the above tradition, it is manifested by the body as a matter of course. The Shariah has enjoined certain etiquette which, on the one hand, helps produce khushu in the heart, and on the other, helps sustain the physical act of the Prayer in spite of the fluctuating condition of the heart. According to this etiquette, one should neither turn to the right or left, nor raise his head to look up, One may, however, look around from the corner of the eye, but as far as possible, he must fix the gaze on the place where the forehead would rest in prostration. One is also forbidden to shift about, incline sideways, fold the garments or shake off dust from them. It is also forbidden that while going down for prostration, one should clean the place where he would sit or perform prostration. Similarly it is disrespectful that one should stand stuffy erect, recite the verses of the Quran in a loud resounding voice, or sing them, or belch or yawn repeatedly and noisily. It has also not been approved that one should offer the Prayer in a hurry. The injunction is that each article of the Prayer should be performed in perfect peace and tranquility, and unless one article has been completely performed, the next should not be begun. If one feels hurt by something during the Prayer, he may cast it aside by one hand, but moving the hand repeatedly or using both the hands for the purpose is

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

وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُوْنَ ۙ 3

(23:3) who avoid whatever is vain and frivolous;[4]

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

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

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

وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِلزَّكٰوةِ فٰعِلُوْنَ ۙ 4

(23:4) who observe Zakah;[5]

5. The word Zakat literally means purification and development, to help something grow up smoothly and develop without obstruction. As an Islamic term, it implies both the portion of wealth taken out for the purpose of purifying the rest of wealth and the act of purification itself. The words of the original text mean that the believer constantly practices purification.

Thus the meaning is not confined to the paying off of Zakat dues only but it is extended to self purification which includes purification of morals as well as wealth, property and life in general. Then it does not mean purification of one's own self, but includes the purification of the lives of other people as well. So the verse means: The believers are the people who purify themselves as well as others. This thing has also been stated at other places in the Quran, for instance: Successful is he who practiced purification and remembered his Lord and prayed. (Surah Al-Aala, Ayats 14-15). And: Successful is he who purified himself and failure is he who corrupted it. (Surah Ash-Shams, Ayats 9-10). But this verse is more comprehensive in meaning because it stresses the purification of both society and one's own person.

وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِفُرُوْجِهِمْ حٰفِظُوْنَ ۙ 5

(23:5) who strictly guard their private parts[6]

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

اِلَّا عَلٰٓى اَزْوَاجِهِمْ اَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُمْ فَاِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُوْمِيْنَ ۚ 6

(23:6) save from their wives, or those whom their right hands possess; for with regard to them they are free from blame "

فَمَنِ ابْتَغٰى وَرَآءَ ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْعٰدُوْنَ ۚ 7

(23:7) As for those who seek beyond that, they are transgressors"[7]

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

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

(1) Two categories of women have been excluded from the general command of guarding the private parts: (a) wives, (b) women who are legally in one's possession, i.e. slavegirls. Thus the verse clearly lays down the law that one is allowed to have sexual relations with his slave-girl as with his wife. The basis being possession and not marriage. If marriage had been the condition, the slave-girl also would have been included among the wives, and there was no need to mention them separately. Some modern commentators, who dispute

the permissibility of having sexual relations with the slave-girl, argue from (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 25)to prove that one can have sexual relations with a slave-girl only after entering wedlock with her, because that verse enjoins that if a person cannot afford to marry a free Muslim woman, he may marry a Muslim slave-girl. But these commentators have a strange characteristic. They accept a part of a verse if it suits them, but conveniently ignore another part of the same verse if it goes against their wish and whim. The law about marrying the slave-girls as enunciated in (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 25) reads: You may marry them with the permission of their guardians and give them their fair dowries. Obviously the person under reference here is not the master of the slave-girl himself but the person who cannot afford to marry a free Muslim woman, and therefore, wants to marry a slave-girl, who is in the possession of another person. For if the question had been of marrying his own slave-girl, who would then be the guardian whose permission would have to be sought? Then, the interpretation they give of this verse contradicts other verses dealing with the same subject in the Quran. A sincere person who wants to understand the Quranic law in this regard should study (Surah An-Nisa, Ayats 3, 25); (Surah Al-Ahzab, Ayats 50, 52), and (Surah Al-Maarij Ayat 30)together with this verse of Al-Mominoon. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 44 of Surah An-Nisa)

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

(3) The sentence “Then whoever seeks beyond that, so it is they who are the transgressors” has made satisfaction of sex desire in other ways unlawful, whether it be through fornication, homosexuality, sex gratification with animals, or some other means. The jurists differ only with regard to masturbation. Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal regards it as lawful, but Imams Malik and Shafai regard it as absolutely unlawful: and though the Hanafites also regard it as unlawful, they give the opinion that if a person indulges sometimes in masturbation under the fit of passion, it is expected that he will be forgiven the error.

(4) Some commentators have proved the prohibition of mutah (temporary marriage) from this verse. They argue that the woman with whom one has entered into wedlock temporarily, can neither be regarded as a wife nor a slavegirl. She is obviously not a slave-girl, and she is also not a wife, because the legal injunctions normally applicable to the wife are not applicable to her. She cannot inherit the wealth of the man. Likewise, the man cannot inherit her wealth. She is neither governed by the law pertaining to Iddah (waiting period after divorce or death of husband), divorce, subsistence, nor by that pertaining to the vow

by man that he will not have conjugal relations with her, false accusation, etc. She is also excluded from the prescribed limit of four wives. Thus, when she is neither a wife nor a slave-girl in any sense, she will naturally be included among those "beyond this", whose seeker has been declared as a "transgressor" by the Quran.

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

It would be worth-while to clarify two other points in connection with mutah:

(a) lts prohibition is based on the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and therefore it is wrong to say that it was prohibited by Umar. As a matter of fact, Umar only enforced it as a law of Islam and publicised it among the people. This had not been done earlier because the Prophet (peace be upon him) had forbidden mutah only during the latter part of his worldly life.

(b) The Shiite view that mutah is absolutely lawful and permissible has no sanction and support in the Quran or Sunnah. The fact is that a few of the companions, their followers and jurists who regarded it permissible in the early days of Islam, did so only in case of extreme necessity and need. None of them held the view that it was absolutely lawful like marriage and could be practised in normal circumstances. Abdullah bin Abbas, who is generally cited as a prominent supporter of the view of permissibility, has himself explained his position thus: It is just like carrion which is lawful for a person only in extreme necessity. Even Ibn Abbas had to revise his opinion when he saw that people were abusing permissibility and had started practising mutah freely regardless of genuine need and necessity. Again, even if the question, whether Ibn Abbas and the few likeminded jurists had revised their opinion or not, is ignored, the fact is that the supporters of mutah allow it only in case of extreme necessity. Holding mutah as absolutely permissible, practising it without any real necessity, or resorting to it even when one has a legally wedded wife or wives is a kind of licence which is abhorred by good taste, much less it be attributed to the Shariah of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and imputed to the learned jurists of his family. I think that among the Shiite Muslims themselves no respectable person would like that somebody should ask for the hand of his daughter or sister not in marriage but for the purpose of mutah. For, if mutah is held as absolutely permissible, it would imply that there should exist in society a low class of women, like the prostitutes, who should be available for the purpose as and when required, or if not that, mutah be restricted to the daughters and sisters of the poor stratum of society and the well-to-do be given the freedom and right to exploit them as and when they like. Can such an injustice and discrimination be expected of the divine law? And will Allah and His Messenger permit an act which every respectable woman would regard not only disgraceful for herself but shameful, too?

وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِاَمٰنٰتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رٰعُوْنَ ۙ 8

(23:8) who are true to their trusts and their covenants,[8]

8. The believers fulfill the terms of the trusts which are placed in their charge. In this connection it should be noted that the Arabic word amanat is very comprehensive and includes all those trusts which are placed in their charge by Allah or society or individuals. Likewise aahd includes all those compacts, pledges, and promises which are made between Allah and man, and man and man. The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself used to impress the importance of the fulfillment of pledges in his addresses: The one, who does not fulfil the terms of his trust, has no faith, and the one, who does not keep promises and pledges has no Islam. (Baihaqi). According to a tradition reported both by Bukhari and Muslim, he said: Four characteristics are such that if a person has all four in him, he is beyond any doubt a hypocrite, and the one who has one of these, is a hypocrite to that extent till he gives it up:

(a) When something is placed in his trust, he commits breach of the trust.

(b) When he speaks, he tells a lie.

(c) When he makes a promise, he breaks it.

(d) When he has a quarrel with somebody, he exceeds all limits (of decency and morality).

وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ عَلٰى صَلَوٰتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُوْنَ ۘ 9

(23:9) and who guard their Prayers.[9]

9. Salawat is plural of Salat. In(verse 2) the act of Salat itself was implied, but here the plural number implies the individual Prayers offered in their own times. They strictly guard their Prayers: they strictly adhere to the prescribed times of the Prayers: they perform them with due regard for their pre-requisites, conditions and articles with clean body and dress and necessary ablutions: they do not regard their Prayers as an unnecessary burden, which has to be cast off somehow: they do not recite mechanically but understand what they recite and are conscious that they are supplicating to their Lord like humble servants. 1

اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْوٰرِثُوْنَ ۙ 10

(23:10) Such are the inheritors

الَّذِيْنَ يَرِثُوْنَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ ؕ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ 11

(23:11) that shall inherit Paradise;[10] and in it they shall abide for ever.[11]

10. Firdaus (Paradise) is a common word found in almost all human languages in very nearly similar forms. It means a vast garden adjoining the dwelling of a person and enclosed by defence walls and containing all kinds of fruit trees, especially vines. In some languages, the word has the sense of containing pet birds and animals, too. Firdaus was in common use in pre-Islamic Arabic literature. The Quran, however, has used it for a plurality of gardens as in (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayat 107). This gives the idea that Firdaus is a vast place containing a great number of gardens, vineyards, etc. The inheritance of Paradise by believers has been explained in detail in (E.N. 83 of Surah TaHa) and (E.N. 99 of Surah Al- Anbiya).

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

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

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

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

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

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلٰلَةٍ مِّنْ طِيْنٍ ۚ 12

(23:12) We created man out of the extract of clay,

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنٰهُ نُطْفَةً فِيْ قَرَارٍ مَّكِيْنٍ ۖ 13

(23:13) then We made him into a drop of life-germ, then We placed it in a safe depository,

ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظٰمًا فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظٰمَ لَحْمًا ثُمَّ اَنْشَاْنٰهُ خَلْقًا اٰخَرَ ؕ فَتَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنُ الْخٰلِقِيْنَ ؕ 14

(23:14) then We made this drop into a clot, then We made the clot into a lump, then We made the lump into bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh,[12] and then We caused it to grow into another creation.[13] Thus Most Blessed is Allah, the Best of all those that create.[14]

12. For explanation see(E.Ns 5, 6 and 9 of Surah Al-Hajj).

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

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

ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ لَمَيِّتُونَ ۟ 15

(23:15) Thereafter you are destined to die,

ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ تُبْعَثُونَ 16

(23:16) and then on the Day of Resurrection you shall certainly be raised up.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعَ طَرَآئِقَ ۖ وَمَا كُنَّا عَنِ الْخَلْقِ غٰفِلِينَ 17

(23:17) We have indeed fashioned above you seven paths.[15] Never were We unaware of the task of creation.[16]

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

16. This may also be translated as: We were not nor are heedless of Our creation. According to the first translation, it will mean that the whole of the creation has been brought about in a perfect manner with a definite design and purpose. For Allah, their Creator, is perfect in every respect. The creation itself a proof that it is not the work of a novice or an inexpert. All

the physical laws of the entire system of the universe are so closely interconnected as to prove that it is the creation of the All-Wise Allah. If we take the second translation, it will mean that Allah has not been heedless in making provisions for every thing according to its nature from the most insignificant to the greatest of all.

وَاَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءًۢ بِقَدَرٍ فَاَسْكَنّٰهُ فِى الْاَرْضِ ۖ وَاِنَّا عَلٰى ذَهَابٍۢ بِهٖ لَقٰدِرُوْنَ ۚ 18

(23:18) We sent down water from the sky in right measure, and caused it to stay in the earth,[17] and We have the power to cause it to vanish[18] (in the manner We please).

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

18. This is to warn that Allah is able to take away the water if He so wills, and deprive the world of its most important means of life. Thus, this verse is more comprehensive in meaning than (verse 30 of Surah Al-Mulk): Ask them, have you ever considered that if the water of your wells should sink down into the earth, who would then restore to you running springs of water?

فَاَنْشَاْنَا لَكُمْ بِهٖ جَنّٰتٍ مِّنْ نَّخِيْلٍ وَّاَعْنَابٍ ۖ لَكُمْ فِيْهَا فَوَاكِهُ كَثِيْرَةٌ وَّمِنْهَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ۙ 19

(23:19) Then through water We caused gardens of date-palms and vines to grow for you wherein you have an abundance of delicious fruits[19] and from them you derive your livelihood.[20]

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

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

وَشَجَرَةً تَخْرُجُ مِن طُورِ سَيْنَاءَ تَنۢبُتُ بِالدُّهْنِ وَصِبْغٍ لِّلْآكِلِينَ 20

(23:20) And We also produced the tree which springs forth from Mount Sinai,[21] containing oil and sauce for those that eat.

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

وَإِنَّ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً ۖ نُّسْقِيكُم مِّمَّا فِي بُطُونِهَا وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ كَثِيرَةٌ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ 21

(23:21) And indeed there is also a lesson for you in cattle. We provide you with drink out of what they have in their bellies;[22] and you have many other benefits in them: you eat of them,

22. That is, milk. Refer to(Surah An-Nahl, Ayat 66 and E.N. 54) thereof.

وَعَلَيْهَا وَعَلَى الْفُلْكِ تُحْمَلُونَ 22

(23:22) and are carried on them and also on ships.[23]

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

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۖ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ 23

(23:23) We sent Noah to his people,[24] and he said: "My people! Serve Allah; you have no deity other than He. Do you have no fear?"[25]

24. See also (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 59-64); (Surah Yunus, Ayats 71-73); (Surah Houd, Ayats 25-48); (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 3)and (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 76-77).

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

فَقَالَ الْمَلَؤُا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ قَوْمِهٖ مَا هٰذَآ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ ۙ يُرِيْدُ اَنْ يَّتَفَضَّلَ
عَلَيْكُمْ ۭ وَلَوْ شَاۗءَ اللّٰهُ لَاَنْزَلَ مَلٰۗىِٕكَةً ۚ مَّا سَمِعْنَا بِهٰذَا فِيْٓ اٰبَاۗىِٕنَا الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ۚ 24

(23:24) But the notables among his people had refused to believe, and said: "This is none other than a mortal like yourselves[26] who desires to attain superiority over you.[27] Had Allah wanted (to send any Messengers) He would have sent down angels.[27a] We have heard nothing like this in the time of our forebears of old (that humans were sent as Messengers).

26. There has been a common deviation that a human being cannot be a Prophet, and a Prophet cannot be a human being. That is why the Quran has refuted this wrong conception over and over again, and has stated forcefully that all the Prophets were human beings and that a human being only could be sent as a Prophet to human beings. For details, see (Suras Al-Aaraf Ayats 63, 69); (Yuonus, Ayat 2); (Houd, Ayats 27-31); (Yousuf, Ayat 109); (Ar- Raad, Ayat 38); (Ibrahim, Ayats 10-11); (An-Nahl, Ayat 43), (Bani Israil, Ayats 94-95); (Al-Kahf, Ayat 110); (Al-Anbiya, Ayats 3, 34); (Al-Mominoon, Ayats 33-34, 47); (Al-Furqan, Ayats 7, 20); (Ash-Shuara, Ayats 154, 186); (Ya-Sin, Ayat 15), (Ha Mim Sajdah, Ayat 6) along with the relevant E.Ns.

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

As a matter of fact, the people who exhaust themselves in pursuit of worldly benefits and gains cannot believe that somebody in this world could also exert himself sincerely and selflessly for the sake of human welfare. They regard deceptive slogans, which they raise to capture power, and false promises, which they make day and night to bring about reforms as natural. They think that sincerity and selflessness can be employed only to deceive people and these cannot be put to any better use. That is why the epithet of power hungry for the reformers in all ages has been used by those already in power as if their own power and domination in the land was their birth right, and they were in no way blame worthy for struggling for it and achieving it. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 36)below)

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

27a. This is a clear proof of the fact that Noah's people were not disbelievers in the existence of God nor did they reject Him as Lord of the universe and the angels as His obedient

servants. They were only guilty of shirk: they had set up other deities as partners in God's attributes and powers and rights.

اِنۡ هُوَ اِلَّا رَجُلٌۢ بِهٖ جِنَّةٌ فَتَرَبَّصُوۡا بِهٖ حَتّٰى حِيۡنٍ 25

(23:25) He is a person who has been seized with a little madness; so wait for a while (perhaps he will improve)."

قَالَ رَبِّ انۡصُرۡنِىۡ بِمَا كَذَّبُوۡنِ 26

(23:26) Noah said: "My Lord! Come to my help at their accusation that I am lying."[28]

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

فَاَوۡحَيۡنَاۤ اِلَيۡهِ اَنِ اصۡنَعِ الۡفُلۡكَ بِاَعۡيُنِنَا وَوَحۡيِنَا فَاِذَا جَآءَ اَمۡرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّوۡرُ ۙ فَاسۡلُكۡ فِيۡهَا مِنۡ كُلٍّ زَوۡجَيۡنِ اثۡنَيۡنِ وَاَهۡلَكَ اِلَّا مَنۡ سَبَقَ عَلَيۡهِ الۡقَوۡلُ مِنۡهُمۡ‌ ۚ وَلَا تُخَاطِبۡنِىۡ فِى الَّذِيۡنَ ظَلَمُوۡا‌ ۚ اِنَّهُمۡ مُّغۡرَقُوۡنَ 27

(23:27) Thereupon We revealed to him, saying: "Build the Ark under Our eyes and according to Our revelation. And when Our command comes to pass[29] and the oven boils over, take on board a pair each from every species, and also take your household except those of them against whom sentence has already been passed and do not plead to Me on behalf of the wrong-doers. They are doomed to be drowned.

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

فَاِذَا اسۡتَوَيۡتَ اَنۡتَ وَمَنۡ مَّعَكَ عَلَى الۡفُلۡكِ فَقُلِ الۡحَمۡدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِىۡ نَجّٰىنَا مِنَ الۡقَوۡمِ الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ 28

(23:28) And then when you and those accompanying you are firmly seated in the Ark, say: "Thanks be to Allah Who has delivered us from the wrong-doing people."[30]

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

وَقُلۡ رَّبِّ اَنۡزِلۡنِىۡ مُنۡزَلًا مُّبٰرَكًا وَّاَنۡتَ خَيۡرُ الۡمُنۡزِلِيۡنَ 29

(23:29) And say: "My Lord! Make my landing a blessed landing, for You are the Best of those Who can cause people to land in safety."[31]

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

اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ وَّاِنۡ كُنَّا لَمُبۡتَلِيۡنَ 30

(23:30) There are great Signs in this story;[32] and surely We do put people to test.[33]

32. At the conclusion of the story of Prophet Noah (peace be upon him), particular attention has been drawn to the many signs in the story from which one can learn many lessons. For instance, the Prophet who invited the people to Tauhid was in the right and those who practiced and insisted on shirk and disbelief were in the wrong and were destroyed. That the same kind of conflict, which took place between Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) and his people, was going on in Makkah. Therefore, ultimately the Prophet (peace be upon him) will come out victorious over his antagonists just like Prophet Noah (peace be upon him).

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

ثُمَّ اَنۡشَاۡنَا مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِهِمۡ قَرۡنًا اٰخَرِيۡنَ ۚ 31

(23:31) Then, after them, We brought forth another generation;[34]

34. The people of Aad, who were raised to power after the people of Noah. Refer to (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 69). 3

فَأَرْسَلْنَا فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۖ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿32﴾

(23:32) and We sent among them a Messenger from among themselves, saying: "Serve Allah; you have no god other than He. Do you have no fear?"

وَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِن قَوْمِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِلِقَاءِ الْآخِرَةِ وَأَتْرَفْنَاهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۙ مَا هَٰذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ ۙ يَأْكُلُ مِمَّا تَأْكُلُونَ مِنْهُ وَيَشْرَبُ مِمَّا تَشْرَبُونَ ﴿33﴾

(23:33) The notables among his people who had refused to believe and who denied the meeting of the Hereafter, and those whom We had endowed with ease and comfort in this life,[35] cried out: "This is no other than a mortal like yourselves who eats what you eat and drinks what you drink.

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

وَلَئِنْ أَطَعْتُم بَشَرًا مِّثْلَكُمْ إِنَّكُمْ إِذًا لَّخَاسِرُونَ ﴿34﴾

(23:34) If you were to obey a human being like yourselves, you will certainly be losers.[36]

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

أَيَعِدُكُمْ أَنَّكُمْ إِذَا مِتُّمْ وَكُنتُمْ تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَنَّكُم مُّخْرَجُونَ ۖ 35

(23:35) Does he promise you that when you are dead and are reduced to dust and bones, you will be brought forth to life?

هَيْهَاتَ هَيْهَاتَ لِمَا تُوعَدُونَ ۖ 36

(23:36) Far-fetched, utterly far-fetched is what you are being promised.

إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ ۖ 37

(23:37) There is no other life than the life of the world. We shall live here and here shall we die; and we are not going to be raised again.

إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا رَجُلٌ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا وَمَا نَحْنُ لَهُ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ 38

(23:38) This man has forged a mere lie in the name of Allah[36a] and we shall never believe what he says."

36a. These words show that the people of Aad were also not disbelievers in the existence of God. They too were involved in the sin of shirk. Refer to (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 70); (Surah Houd, Ayats 53-54); (Surah HaMim Sajdah, Ayat 14), and (Surah Al-Ahqaf, Ayats 21-22).

قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي بِمَا كَذَّبُونِ 39

(23:39) The Messenger said: "My Lord! Come to my help at their accusing me of lying."

قَالَ عَمَّا قَلِيلٍ لَّيُصْبِحُنَّ نَادِمِينَ ۚ 40

(23:40) He answered: "A short while, and they shall be repenting."

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ بِالْحَقِّ فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ غُثَاءً ۚ فَبُعْدًا لِّلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ 41

(23:41) Then a mighty blast quite justly overtook them, and We reduced them to a rubble.[37] So away with the wrong-doing folk!

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

ثُمَّ اَنۡشَاۡنَا مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِهِمۡ قُرُوۡنًا اٰخَرِيۡنَ ؕ 42

(23:42) Then, after them, We brought forth other generations.

مَا تَسۡبِقُ مِنۡ اُمَّةٍ اَجَلَهَا وَمَا يَسۡتَاۡخِرُوۡنَ ؕ 43

(23:43) No nation can outstrip its term, nor can it put it back.

ثُمَّ اَرۡسَلۡنَا رُسُلَنَا تَتۡرَا ؕ كُلَّ مَا جَآءَ اُمَّةً رَّسُوۡلُهَا كَذَّبُوۡهُ فَاَتۡبَعۡنَا بَعۡضَهُمۡ بَعۡضًا وَّجَعَلۡنٰهُمۡ اَحَادِيۡثَ ۚ فَبُعۡدًا لِّقَوۡمٍ لَّا يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ 44

(23:44) Then We sent Our Messengers in succession. Whenever a Messenger came to his people they rejected him, calling him a liar. Thereupon, We made each people to follow the other (to its doom), reducing them to mere tales (of the past). Scourged be the people who do not believe![38]

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

ثُمَّ اَرۡسَلۡنَا مُوۡسٰى وَاَخَاهُ هٰرُوۡنَ ۙ بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَسُلۡطٰنٍ مُّبِيۡنٍ ۙ 45

(23:45) Then We sent Moses and his brother Aaron with Our Signs and a clear authority[39]

39. The use of a manifest Authority along with Our signs may either mean that the signs were a clear proof that they were Messengers of Allah, or the signs may refer to all other miracles of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) than the staff, which may stand here for a clear authority, because the miracles shown by means of it were a clear proof that the two brothers had been sent by Allah.

اِلٰى فِرۡعَوۡنَ وَمَلَا۟ئِهٖ فَاسۡتَكۡبَرُوۡا وَكَانُوۡا قَوۡمًا عَالِيۡنَ ۚ 46

(23:46) to Pharaoh and to his chiefs, but they behaved superciliously and they were haughty.[40]

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

فَقَالُوۡۤا اَنُؤۡمِنُ لِبَشَرَيۡنِ مِثۡلِنَا وَقَوۡمُهُمَا لَنَا عٰبِدُوۡنَ ۚ 47

(23:47) They said: "Shall we put faith in two mortals like ourselves[40a] when their people are slaves to us?"[41]

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

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

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

فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَكَانُوا مِنَ الْمُهْلَكِينَ 48

(23:48) So they rejected them, calling them liars, and they too eventually became of those that were destroyed.[42]

42. For further details of the story of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and Pharaoh, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 49-50); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 103-136); (Surah Younus, Ayats 75-92), (Surah H0ud, Ayats 96-99), (Surah Bani Israil, Ayats 101-104), (Surah TaHa, Ayats 9-80) along with the relevant E. Ns.

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ 49

(23:49) And We gave Moses the Book that people might be guided by it.

وَجَعَلْنَا ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهُ آيَةً وَآوَيْنَاهُمَا إِلَىٰ رَبْوَةٍ ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَمَعِينٍ ع 50

(23:50) And We made Mary's son, and his mother, a Sign,[43] and We gave them refuge on a lofty ground, a peaceful site with springs flowing in it.[44]

43. The wording “We made the son of Mary and his mother a sign” is very significant, because it means that neither the son of Mary nor his mother was each a separate sign, but both of them together were a sign. This verse is a clear proof that a son was born to Mary without cohabitation with a man and that Jesus had no father. For further details see (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayats 45-49); (Surah An-Nisa, Ayats 156, 171); (Surah Maryam, Ayats 16-35) and (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 91) and the relevant E.N.s.

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

44. Different people have mentioned different places, like Damascus, Ar-Ramlah, Jerusalem and Egypt, in regard to the plateau where Allah gave them shelter. From the Christian traditions it appears that Mary had to leave her home twice after the birth of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), first in the time of Herod when she took him to Egypt and stayed there till Herod's death, and then in the time of Arichelaus when she took him to Nazareth in Galilee. (Matthew, 2: 13-23). Therefore it cannot be said with certainty to which of these two emigrations the Quran refers here. It is, however, obvious that the place of shelter was a plateau which provided them with all the necessities of life.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلرُّسُلُ كُلُوا۟ مِنَ ٱلطَّيِّبَٰتِ وَٱعْمَلُوا۟ صَٰلِحًا ۖ إِنِّى بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ ۖ 51

(23:51) Messengers![45] Partake of the things that are clean, and act righteously.[46] I know well all that you do.

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

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

وَإِنَّ هَٰذِهِۦٓ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَٰحِدَةً وَأَنَا۠ رَبُّكُمْ فَٱتَّقُونِ 52

(23:52) This community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord; so hold Me alone in fear.[47]

47. The original Arabic word ummat (community) comprises those individuals who have some basic things common among them. All the Messengers of Allah belonged to one and

the same community because they had the same creed and the same religion and the same message. See also (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 130-133, 213); (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayats 19-20, 33-34, 64,79-85); (Surah An- Nisa, Ayats 150-152); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 59, 65, 73, 85); (Surah Yusuf, Ayats 37-40); (Surah Maryam, Ayats 49-59); and (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 71-93) along with the relevant E.Ns.

فَتَقَطَّعُوْٓا اَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ زُبُرًا ؕ كُلُّ حِزْبٍۢ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُوْنَ 53

(23:53) But people later cut up their religion into bits, each group rejoicing in what they have.[48]

48. This is not a mere statement of a fact, but it is a link of the same argument which is being put forward from the very beginning of the Surah. The argument is this: Islam has been the real and original religion of all the Prophets from Noah to Jesus (peace be upon them all), because all of them brought and taught the same doctrines of Tauhid and the Hereafter. On the contrary, all the other religions are the perversions of the real and original religion, which has been tampered with in many ways. Therefore, those who are following the perverted religions are in the wrong and not the Prophet (peace be upon him) who is inviting them to the real and original religion.

فَذَرْهُمْ فِيْ غَمْرَتِهِمْ حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ 54

(23:54) So leave them immersed in their heedlessness till an appointed time.[49]

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

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

اَيَحْسَبُوْنَ اَنَّمَا نُمِدُّهُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ مَّالٍ وَّبَنِيْنَ ۙ 55

(23:55) Do they fancy that Our continuing to give them wealth and children (means) that

نُسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ ۚ بَل لَّا يَشْعُرُونَ 56

(23:56) We are busy lavishing on them all kinds of good? Nay, they do not perceive the reality of the matter.[50]

50. This question has been posed as a proof of the main theme of the Surah. It is meant to remove their misconception of success, welfare and prosperity, which the disbelievers had formed to delude themselves. According to them, the one, who enjoyed the good things of life and wielded power and influence in the society, had attained success. On the other hand, the he who was deprived of these things was a failure. This misconception had involved them in another serious misunderstanding. They thought that the one who had attained success was in the right, and the beloved of Allah. Otherwise, how could he have attained all the successes? On the contrary, the one who was apparently deprived of these things was surely wrong in his creed and erroneous in his deeds, and was under the wrath of God (or gods). As this misconception is one of the greatest deviations of the materialists, the Quran has stated it and refuted it in different ways at different places and made the reality plain. For instance, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 126, 212); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 32); (Surah At-Taubah, Ayats 55, 69, 85); (Surah Yunus, Ayat 17); (Surah Houd, Ayats 3, 27-31, 38-39); (Surah Ar-Rad, Ayat 26); (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayats 28, 32-43, 103-105); (Surah Maryam, Ayats 77-80); (Surah Ta-Ha, Ayats 131-132); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 44) along with the relevant E.Ns. In order to remove the above mentioned misconceptions one should keep in view the following.

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

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

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

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

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

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ هُم مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ رَبِّهِم مُّشْفِقُونَ ۙ 57

(23:57) Surely those who stand in awe for fear of their Lord,[51]

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

وَالَّذِينَ هُم بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ ۙ 58

(23:58) who have full faith in the Signs of their Lord;[52]

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

وَالَّذِينَ هُم بِرَبِّهِمْ لَا يُشْرِكُونَ ۙ 59

(23:59) who associate none with their Lord in His Divinity,[53]

53. Though belief in the revelations itself ingrains the doctrine of Tauhid in the hearts, yet the believers have been warned to guard against shirk. This is because, in spite of believing in the revelations, man is inclined to commit shirk in one form or the other, for instance, in exaggerating the teachings of the Prophets and righteous people, supplicating and serving others than Allah, etc.

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوا وَّقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ ۙ 60

(23:60) who give, whatever they give in charity, with their hearts trembling at the thought that they are destined to return to their Lord;[54]

54. This verse (60) may be elaborated like this: They serve their Lord and try their best to obey Him and do righteous deeds, but all along they remain humble in their hearts and are

not puffed up with the pride of their piety. Nay, in spite of all their good deeds, their hearts are always filled with awe that they shall have to render an account to their Lord, and they are not sure whether they will come out successful in the judgment of their Lord or not. A concrete interpretation of this verse is afforded by Umar. Although he served his Allah in a way that was exemplary, yet he was so afraid of accountability to Him that he is reported to have said before death: I shall consider it a favor, if I am neither rewarded nor punished in the Hereafter. Hasan Basri has expressed the same thing in a beautiful manner: A believer obeys Allah and is yet fearful of Him, and a hypocrite disobeys Allah and is yet fearless of Him.

أُولَٰئِكَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سَابِقُونَ 61

(23:61) it is these who hasten to do good works and vie in so doing with one another.

وَلَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا وَلَدَيْنَا كِتَابٌ يَنطِقُ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ 62

(23:62) We do not lay a burden on anyone beyond his capacity.[55] We have a Book with Us that speaks the truth(about everyone)[56]; and they shall in no wise be wronged.[57]

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

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

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

بَلْ قُلُوبُهُمْ فِي غَمْرَةٍ مِّنْ هَٰذَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْمَالٌ مِّن دُونِ ذَٰلِكَ هُمْ لَهَا عَامِلُونَ 63

(23:63) Nay, their hearts are lost in ignorance of all this;[58] and their deeds too vary from the way (mentioned above). They will persist in these deeds

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

حَتّٰٓى اِذَآ اَخَذۡنَا مُتۡرَفِيۡهِمۡ بِالۡعَذَابِ اِذَا هُمۡ يَجۡـَٔرُوۡنَ ؕ 64

(23:64) until We seize with Our chastisement those of them that are given to luxuriant ways.[59] They will then begin to groan.[60]

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

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

لَا تَجۡـَٔرُوا الۡيَوۡمَ ۖ اِنَّكُمۡ مِّنَّا لَا تُنۡصَرُوۡنَ 65

(23:65) "Put[61] a stop to your groaning now! Surely no help shall be provided to you from Us.

61. That is, they will be told this at that time. 6

قَدۡ كَانَتۡ اٰيٰتِىۡ تُتۡلٰى عَلَيۡكُمۡ فَكُنۡتُمۡ عَلٰٓى اَعۡقَابِكُمۡ تَنۡكِصُوۡنَ ۙ 66

(23:66) My Signs were rehearsed to you and you turned back on your heels and took to flight,[62]

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

مُسۡتَكۡبِرِيۡنَ ۖ بِهٖ سٰمِرًا تَهۡجُرُوۡنَ 67

(23:67) behaving arrogantly, and making fun,[63] and talking nonsense (about the Book in your nightly chats)."

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

اَفَلَمۡ يَدَّبَّرُوا الۡقَوۡلَ اَمۡ جَآءَهُمۡ مَّا لَمۡ يَاۡتِ اٰبَآءَهُمُ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ ۚ 68

(23:68) Did they never ponder over this Word[64] (of God)? Or has he (to wit, the Messenger) brought something the like of which did not come to their forefathers[65] of yore?

64. That is, do they mean to imply that they reject the message because they do not understand it? Whereas the Quran is not an enigma, nor is it being presented in an

incomprehensible language, nor does it deal with themes and subjects which are beyond human understanding. The fact is that they understand everything it presents, but they oppose and reject it, because they have no intention to follow and believe what it presents.

65. That is, is the Quran presenting something which they had never heard before? No, that is not so. Allah had been sending His messages through His Prophets, who came to Arabia and in the adjoining lands and they are well acquainted with them, especially with Prophets Abraham and Ismael, and Houd, Saleh and Shoaib (peace be upon them all), who are acknowledged by them as Prophets of God, and who were not idol worshipers but enjoined the worship of One God. For further explanation, see (E.N. 84 of Surah Al-Furqan), (E.N. 5 of Surah As-Sajdah)and (E.N. 35 of Surah Saba).

أَمْ لَمْ يَعْرِفُوا رَسُولَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكِرُونَ ۝69

(23:69) Or is it that they were unaware of their Messenger and were therefore repelled by him for he was a stranger to them?66

66. That is, do they reject the message because Muhammad (peace be upon him), who is inviting them to it, is a stranger among them? No, this is not so, for he was born and bred among them in a noble family. He bears a pure and high character. He has been truthful, upright, trustworthy, honest and morally chaste throughout his life, He is a noble and gentle person, peace-loving and just by nature, honest in word and deed, sympathetic and helpful to the weak and poor. And they themselves testified to all this before he claimed to be a Messenger of Allah. Then he has been consistently preaching the same message from the first day of his mission. Then whatever he has preached, he has first practiced it himself and demonstrated its truth. There has been no contradiction between his word and deed. He and his followers have faithfully and honestly put into practice the message of the Quran and shown excellent results. For further details, see (E.N. 21 of Surah Al-Anaam), (E.N. 21 of Surah Yunus) and (E.N. 105 of Surah Bani Israil).

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ بِهِ جِنَّةٌ ۚ بَلْ جَاءَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كَارِهُونَ ۝70

(23:70) Or do they say that there is madness in him?67 Nay, he has brought them the Truth and it is the Truth that most of them disdain.

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

وَلَوِ اتَّبَعَ الْحَقُّ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمٰوٰتُ وَالْاَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيْهِنَّ ؕ بَلْ اَتَيْنٰهُمْ
بِذِكْرِهِمْ فَهُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِهِمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ؕ 71

(23:71) Were the Truth to follow their desires, the order of the heavens and the earth and those who dwell in them would have been ruined.[68] Nay, the fact is that We have brought to them their own remembrance; and yet it is from their own remembrance that they are turning away.[69]

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

69. Here the word zikr means.

(1) Mention of human nature and its demands. (2) Admonition. (3) Esteem, honor and fame.

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

اَمْ تَسْـَٔلُهُمْ خَرْجًا فَخَرٰجُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ ۖ صلے ۚ وَّهُوَ خَيْرُ الرّٰزِقِيْنَ ق 72

(23:72) Are you asking them for something? What Allah has given you is the best. He is the Best of providers.[70]

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

well. See (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 90); (Surah Yunus, Ayat 72); (Surah Hud, Ayats 29,51); (Surah Yusuf, Ayat 104); (Surah Ya-Seen, Ayat 21) along with the relevant E.Ns.

وَإِنَّكَ لَتَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ 73

(23:73) You are calling them to a Straight Way,

وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ عَنِ الصِّرَاطِ لَنَاكِبُونَ 74

(23:74) but those who do not believe in the Hereafter are ever prone to deviate from the Right Way.[71]

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

وَلَوْ رَحِمْنَاهُمْ وَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِم مِّن ضُرٍّ لَّلَجُّوا فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ 75

(23:75) Were We to be merciful to them and remove from them their present afflictions, they would persist in their transgression, blindly wandering on.[72]

72. The affliction alluded to in this verse was the famine which occurred in Makkah some time after the advent of Prophethood. According to Abdullah bin Masud, when the Quraish persistently refused to accept the invitation of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and started putting up stiff resistance, he prayed: O Allah, help me against them with a seven year famine like the seven year famine of the time of Prophet Joseph. So a severe famine started in Makkah with the result that people were obliged to eat carrion. This famine has been alluded to in a number of Makki Surahs. For instance see (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayats 42-44); (Surah Al- Aaraf, Ayats 94-99); (Surah Yunus, Ayats 11, 12, 21); (Surah An-Nahl, Ayats 112-113) and (Surah Ad-Dukhan, Ayats 10- 16) along with the relevant E.Ns.

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذْنَاهُم بِالْعَذَابِ فَمَا اسْتَكَانُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَمَا يَتَضَرَّعُونَ 76

(23:76) (They are such) that We seized them with chastisement (and yet) they did not humble themselves before their Lord, nor do they entreat

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَابًا ذَا عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ إِذَا هُمْ فِيهِ مُبْلِسُونَ ع 77

(23:77) until We opened upon them the door of a severe chastisement. Then lo, in this state they become utterly despaired of any good.[73]

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

وَهُوَ الَّذِيٓ اَنشَاَ لَكُمُ السَّمۡعَ وَالۡاَبۡصَارَ وَالۡاَفۡـِٕدَةَ ؕ قَلِيۡلًا مَّا تَشۡكُرُوۡنَ 78

(23:78) It is He Who has endowed you with the faculties of hearing and sight and has given you hearts (to think). Scarcely do you give thanks.[74]

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

وَهُوَ الَّذِىۡ ذَرَاَكُمۡ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ وَاِلَيۡهِ تُحۡشَرُوۡنَ 79

(23:79) It is He Who has dispersed you all around the earth, and it is unto Him that you shall all be mustered.

وَهُوَ الَّذِىۡ يُحۡىٖ وَيُمِيۡتُ وَلَهُ اخۡتِلَافُ الَّيۡلِ وَالنَّهَارِ ؕ اَفَلَا تَعۡقِلُوۡنَ 80

(23:80) It is He Who gives life and causes death, and He holds mastery over the alternation of night and day.[75] Do you not understand this?[76]

75. If one makes the right use of his faculties and observes these things properly, he can find the truth, for it is obvious that the great mechanism of the universe could not have come into existence by a mere accident. There must be its Creator who need not have any associates or partners and that the universe could not have been created without a purpose as a mere sport. The very existence of a wonderful, rational thinking and feeling creature, man, who has been delegated with powers, is a clear proof that his real life will not come to an end at death.

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

بَلۡ قَالُوۡا مِثۡلَ مَا قَالَ الۡاَوَّلُوۡنَ 81

(23:81) Nay, but they say the like of what their predecessors of yore had said.

قَالُوۡۤا ءَاِذَا مِتۡنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَّعِظَامًا ءَاِنَّا لَمَبۡعُوۡثُوۡنَ 82

(23:82) They say: "Is it that when we are dead and have been reduced to dust and bones, shall we then be raised up again?

لَقَدْ وُعِدْنَا نَحْنُ وَاٰبَآؤُنَا هٰذَا مِنْ قَبْلُ اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّآ اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ 83

(23:83) We were promised such things and so were our forefathers before us. All these are no more than tales of the past."[77]

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

قُلْ لِّمَنِ الْاَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيْهَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ 84

(23:84) Ask them: "Whose is the earth and those who are in it? Tell us if you know"

سَيَقُوْلُوْنَ لِلّٰهِ ؕ قُلْ اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ 85

(23:85) They will surely say: "Allah's." Say: "Then why do you not take heed?"[78]

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

قُلْ مَنْ رَّبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيْمِ 86

(23:86) Ask them: "Who is the Lord of the seven heavens, the Lord of the Great Throne?"

سَيَقُوْلُوْنَ لِلّٰهِ ؕ قُلْ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ 87

(23:87) They will surely say: "Allah."[79] Say: "Will you not, then, fear (Allah)?"[80]

79. See (E.N. 78 of this Surah).

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

قُلْ مَنْۢ بِيَدِهٖ مَلَكُوْتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّهُوَ يُجِيْرُ وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ 88

(23:88) Ask them: "Say, if you indeed know, to whom belongs the dominion[81] over all things; (Who is it) that grants asylum, but against Whom no asylum is available?"

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

سَيَقُوْلُوْنَ لِلّٰهِ ؕ قُلْ فَاَنّٰى تُسْحَرُوْنَ 89

(23:89) They will surely say: "(The dominion over all things) belongs to Allah." Say: "Whence are you then deluded?"[82]

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

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

بَلْ اَتَيْنٰهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ 90

(23:90) We have brought before them the Truth, and there is no doubt that they are lying.[83]

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

مَا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ وَّلَدٍ وَّمَا كَانَ مَعَهٗ مِنْ اِلٰهٍ اِذًا لَّذَهَبَ كُلُّ اِلٰهٍۢ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَا بَعْضُهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ ؕ سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ ۙ 91

(23:91) Never did Allah take unto Himself any son,[84] nor is there any god other than He. (Had there been any other gods) each god would have taken his creatures away with him, and each would have rushed to overpower the other.[85] Glory be to Allah from all that they characterize Him with!

84. It should be, noted that this is a general refutation of the belief that Allah has a child or children, and incidentally refutes the Christian belief that Christ is the son of God. Yet even some eminent commentators confine this to the refutation of the Christian belief. Obviously,

there is no reason why it was necessary to refute the Christian belief specifically in this context, when the whole discourse has been directed towards the disbelievers of Makkah alone, who were, like the Christians, guilty of this sort of shirk.

85. Here the argument of Tauhid is based on this principle: Had there been more than one God or partners in Godhead, there would have been serious differences, conflicts and wars among the different sovereigns and rulers. See (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 42 and E.N. 47) thereof, and (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 22 and E. N. 22)thereof.

عٰلِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ۧ 92

(23:92) He knows both what is visible and what is not visible.[86] Exalted is Allah above all that they associate with Him.

86. This contains a subtle allusion to the refutation of the doctrine of intercession. See (E.Ns 85, 86 of Surah Ta-Ha) and (E.N. 27 of Surah AI-Anbiya).

قُلْ رَّبِّ اِمَّا تُرِيَنِّيْ مَا يُوْعَدُوْنَ ۙ 93

(23:93) Pray, (O Muhammad): "My Lord, if You should bring the scourge of which they had been warned in my presence,

رَبِّ فَلَا تَجْعَلْنِيْ فِي الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ 94

(23:94) then do not include me, my Lord, among these wrong-doing people."[87]

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

وَاِنَّا عَلٰٓى اَنْ نُّرِيَكَ مَا نَعِدُهُمْ لَقٰدِرُوْنَ 95

(23:95) Surely We are able to show you what We warn them against.

اِدۡفَعۡ بِالَّتِیۡ هِیَ اَحۡسَنُ السَّیِّئَةَ ؕ نَحۡنُ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَا یَصِفُوۡنَ 96

(23:96) (O Muhammad)! Repel evil in the best manner. We are well aware of all that they say about you.

وَقُلۡ رَّبِّ اَعُوۡذُبِكَ مِنۡ هَمَزٰتِ الشَّیٰطِیۡنِ ۙ 97

(23:97) And pray: "My Lord! I seek Your refuge from the suggestions of the evil ones;

وَاَعُوۡذُبِكَ رَبِّ اَنۡ یَّحۡضُرُوۡنِ 98

(23:98) I even seek Your refuge, my Lord, lest they should approach me."[88]

88. For explanation, see (E.Ns 71, 72 of Surah Al-Anaam); (E.Ns 138, 150 to 153 of Surah Al-Aaraf); (E.N. 39 of Surah Younus); (E.N. 48 of Surah Al-Hijr); (E.Ns 122 to 124 of Surah An-Nahl); (E.Ns 58 to 63 of Surah Bani-Israil) and (E.Ns 35 to 41 of Surah HaMim-Sajdah).

حَتّٰۤی اِذَا جَآءَ اَحَدَهُمُ الۡمَوۡتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارۡجِعُوۡنِ ۙ 99

(23:99) (They shall persist in their deeds) until when death comes to anyone of them he will say: "My Lord, send me back to the world[89]

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

لَعَلِّیۡۤ اَعۡمَلُ صَالِحًا فِیۡمَا تَرَكۡتُ ؕ كَلَّا ؕ اِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَآئِلُهَا ؕ وَمِنۡ وَّرَآئِهِمۡ بَرۡزَخٌ اِلٰی

یَوۡمِ یُبۡعَثُوۡنَ 100

(23:100) that I have left behind. I am likely to do good."[90] Nay,[91] it is merely a word that he is uttering.[92] There is a barrier behind all of them (who are dead) until the Day[93] when they will be raised up.

90. It occurs at several places in the Quran that each of the criminals, after his death till his entry into Hell, and even after that, will plead again and again: Lord, send me back to the world, I will no more disobey Thee, I will now do righteous deeds. See (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayats 27, 28); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 53); (Surah Ibrahim, Ayats 44, 45); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayat 102); (Surah Al-Fatir, Ayat 37); (Surah Az- Zumar, Ayats 58, 59); (Surah Al-Momin, Ayats 10-12), and (Surah Ash-Shura, Ayats 44)along with the relevant E.Ns.

91. That is, he will never be sent back nor given another opportunity, for in that case the test and trial for which man is sent to this world becomes meaningless. For further explanation, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 210 and E. N. 228)thereof, andE.Ns 6, 139, 140 of Surah Al-Anaam) and (E.N. 26 of Surah Younus).

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

93. That is, now there is a barrier between them and the world, which will not allow them to go back to it. Therefore they shall remain in that state until the Day of Resurrection.

فَإِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَلَا أَنسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَلَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ 101

(23:101) And then no sooner the Trumpet is blown than there will remain no kinship among them that Day, nor will they ask one another.[94]

94. It does not mean that the father will not remain father and the son will not remain son, etc. It only means that they will not be able to help each other, nor shall they be able to inquire about each other as father and son, for each one will be worried and anxious about his own plight. See (Surah Al-Maarij, Ayats 10-14), and (Surah Abasa, Ayats 34- 37).

فَمَن ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ 102

(23:102) It will be an Hour when those whose scales are heavy,[95] they alone will attain success;

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

وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ فِي جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدُونَ ۚ 103

(23:103) and those whose scales are light, those will be the ones who will have courted loss.[96] They will abide in Hell.

96. For the criterion of success and failure in the Hereafter, please refer to(E.Ns 1 and 50)above.

تَلْفَحُ وُجُوهَهُمُ النَّارُ وَهُمْ فِيهَا كَالِحُونَ 104

(23:104) The Fire shall scorch their faces, exposing their jaws.[97]

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

اَلَمۡ تَكُنۡ اٰيٰتِىۡ تُتۡلٰى عَلَيۡكُمۡ فَكُنۡتُمۡ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُوۡنَ 105

(23:105) "Are you not those to whom My revelations were recited, and you dubbed them as lies?"

قَالُوۡا رَبَّنَا غَلَبَتۡ عَلَيۡنَا شِقۡوَتُنَا وَكُنَّا قَوۡمًا ضَآلِّيۡنَ 106

(23:106) They will say: "Our Lord! Our misfortune prevailed over us. We were indeed an erring people.

رَبَّنَاۤ اَخۡرِجۡنَا مِنۡهَا فَاِنۡ عُدۡنَا فَاِنَّا ظٰلِمُوۡنَ 107

(23:107) Our Lord! Take us out of this. Then if we revert (to evil-doing) we shall indeed be wrongdoers."

قَالَ اخۡسَـئُوۡا فِيۡهَا وَلَا تُكَلِّمُوۡنِ 108

(23:108) Allah will say: "Away from Me; stay where you are and do not address Me.[98]

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

اِنَّهٗ كَانَ فَرِيۡقٌ مِّنۡ عِبَادِىۡ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ رَبَّنَاۤ اٰمَنَّا فَاغۡفِرۡ لَنَا وَارۡحَمۡنَا وَاَنۡتَ خَيۡرُ الرّٰحِمِيۡنَ ۖ ج 109

(23:109) You are those that when a party of My servants said: 'Our Lord, we believe, so forgive us, and have mercy on us, for You are the Best of those that are merciful,'

فَاتَّخَذۡتُمُوۡهُمۡ سِخۡرِيًّا حَتّٰۤى اَنۡسَوۡكُمۡ ذِكۡرِىۡ وَكُنۡتُمۡ مِّنۡهُمۡ تَضۡحَكُوۡنَ 110

(23:110) you made a laughingstock of them and your hostility to them caused you to forget Me, and you simply kept laughing.

اِنِّىۡ جَزَيۡتُهُمُ الۡيَوۡمَ بِمَا صَبَرُوۡۤا ۙ اَنَّهُمۡ هُمُ الۡفَآئِزُوۡنَ 111

(23:111) Lo! I have rewarded them this Day for their steadfastness, so that they, and they alone, are triumphant."[99]

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

قٰلَ كَمۡ لَبِثۡتُمۡ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ عَدَدَ سِنِيۡنَ 112

(23:112) Then Allah will ask them: "For how many years did you stay on earth?"

قَالُوۡا لَبِثۡنَا يَوۡمًا اَوۡ بَعۡضَ يَوۡمٍ فَسۡـَٔـلِ الۡعَآدِّيۡنَ 113

(23:113) They will say: "We stayed for a day or part of a day.100 Ask of those who keep count of this."

100. For explanation, see (Surah Ta-Ha Ayat 103 and E.N. 80) thereof.

قٰلَ اِنۡ لَّبِثۡتُمۡ اِلَّا قَلِيۡلًا لَّوۡ اَنَّكُمۡ كُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ 114

(23:114) He will say: "You stayed only for a while, if you only knew that.101

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

اَفَحَسِبۡتُمۡ اَنَّمَا خَلَقۡنٰكُمۡ عَبَثًا وَّاَنَّكُمۡ اِلَيۡنَا لَا تُرۡجَعُوۡنَ 115

(23:115) Did you imagine that We created you without any purpose,102 and that you will not be brought back to Us?"

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

فَتَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ الۡمَلِكُ الۡحَـقُّ ۚ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ رَبُّ الۡعَرۡشِ الۡكَرِيۡمِ 116

(23:116) So, exalted be Allah,103 the True King! There is no god but He, the Lord of the Great Throne.

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

وَمَنْ يَّدْعُ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ ۙ لَا بُرْهَانَ لَهٗ بِهٖ ۙ فَاِنَّمَا حِسَابُهٗ عِنْدَ رَبِّهٖ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ
الْكٰفِرُوْنَ 117

(23:117) He who invokes any other god along with Allah " one for whom he has no evidence"[104] his reckoning is with his Lord alone.[105] Indeed, these unbelievers shall not prosper.[106]

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

105. That is, he cannot escape accountability.

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

وَقُلْ رَّبِّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ وَاَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ ع 118

(23:118) And say, (O Muhammad): "My Lord, forgive us and have mercy on us, for You are the Best of those that are merciful."[107]

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

24. Surah An Noor (The Light)

Name

This Surah takes its name, An Nur, from verse 35.

Period of Revelation

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

According to Ibn Sa'd, the Campaign against Bani al Mustaliq took place in Shaban 5 A. H. and the Battle of the Trench in Zil- Qa'dah the same year. This opinion is based on some traditions from Hadarat Ayesha about the events connected with the "Slander" in which she refers to a dispute between Hadrat Sa'd bin 'Ubadah and Sa'd bin Mu'az. Hadrat Sa'd bin Mu'az, according to authentic traditions, died during the Campaign against Bani Quraizah, which took place immediately after the Battle of the Trench. It is, therefore, evident that he could not be present in 6 A. H. to take part in a dispute about the "Slander".

On the other hand, Muhammad bin Ishaq says that the Battle of the Trench took place in Shawwal 5 A. H. and the Campaign against Bani al-Mustaliq in Sha'ban 6 A. H. This opinion is supported by many authentic traditions from Hadrat Ayesha and others. According to these traditions, (1) the Commandments about purdah had been sent down in Surah Al-Ahzab before the incident of the "Slander", (2) the Holy Prophet had married Hadrat Zainab in Zil-Qa'dah 5 A. H. after the Battle of the Trench, (3) Hamnah, sister of Hadrat Zainab, had taken a leading part in spreading the "Slander", just because Hadrat Ayesha was a rival of her sister. All this evidence supports the view of Muhammad bin Ishaq.

Now let us consider the two opinions a little more closely. The only argument in favor of the first opinion is the mention of the presence of Hadrat Sa'd bin Mu'az in a dispute connected with the incident of the "Slander". But this argument is weakened by some other traditions from Hadrat Ayesha, in which she mentions Hadrat Usaid bin Hudair instead of Hadrat Sa'd bin Mu'az in this dispute. It may, therefore, be assumed that there has been some confusion regarding the two names in reporting the traditions. Moreover, if we accept the first opinion, just because of the mention of the name of Hadrat Sa'd bin Mu'az in some traditions, we encounter other difficulties that cannot be resolved in any way. For, in that

case, we shall have to admit that the revelation of the Commandments of purdah and the Holy Prophet's marriage with Hadrat Zainab had taken place even earlier than the Battle of the Trench. But we learn from the Qur'an and many authentic traditions that both these events happened after that Battle and the Campaign against Bani Quraizah. That is why Ibn Hazm, Ibn Qayyim and some other eminent scholars have held the opinion of Muhammad bin Ishaq as correct, and we also hold it to be so. Thus, we conclude that Surah Al Ahzab was sent down earlier than Surah An-Nur, which was revealed in the latter half of 6 A. H. several months after Surah Al Ahzab.

Historical Background

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

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

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

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

The first opportunity for the use of the new strategy was afforded in Zil-Qa'dah 5 A. H. when the Holy Prophet married Hadrat Zainab (daughter of Jahsh), who was the divorced wife of his adopted son, Zaid bin Harithah. The Holy Prophet had arranged this marriage in order to put an end to the custom of ignorance, which gave the same status to the adopted son that was the right only of the son from one's own loins. The hypocrites, however,

considered it a golden opportunity to vilify the Holy Prophet from inside the community, and the Jews and the mushriks exploited it from outside to ruin his high reputation by this malicious slander. For this purpose fantastic stories were concocted and spread to this effect: "One day Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) happened to see the wife of his adopted son and fell in love with her; he maneuvered her divorce and married her." Though this was an absurd fiction it was spread with such skill, cunning and artfulness that it succeeded in its purpose; so much so that some Muslim traditionalists and commentators also have cited some parts of it in their writings, and the orientalists have exploited these fully to vilify the Holy Prophet. As a matter of fact, Hadrat Zainab was never a stranger to the Holy Prophet that he should see her by chance and fall in love with her at first sight. For she was his first cousin, being the daughter of his real paternal aunt, Umaimah, daughter of Abdul Muttalib. He had known her from her childhood to her youth. A year before this incident, he himself had persuaded her to marry Hadarat Zaid in order to demonstrate practically that the Quraish and the liberated slaves were equal as human being. As she never reconciled herself to her marriage with a liberated slave, they could not pull on together for long, which inevitably led to her divorce. The above mentioned facts were well known to all, yet the slanderers succeeded in their false propaganda with the result that even today there are people who exploit these things to defame Islam.

The second slander was made on the honor of Hadrat Ayesha, a wife of the Holy Prophet, in connection with an incident which occurred while he was returning from the Campaign against Bani al-Mustaliq. As this attack was even severer than the first one and was the main background of this Surah, we shall deal with it in greater detail.

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

Now the main theme. When in Sha'ban 6 A. H. the Holy Prophet learned that the people of Bani al-Mustaliq were making preparations for a war against the Muslims and were trying to muster other clans also for this purpose, he fore- stalled and took the enemy by surprise. After capturing the people of the clan and their belongings, the Holy Prophet made a halt near Muraisi, a spring in their territory. One day a dispute concerning taking water from the spring started between a servant of Hadrat Umar and an ally of the clan of Khazraj, and developed into a quarrel between the Muhajirs(immigrants) and the Ansar(Muslims of Madinah), but was soon settled. This, however, did not suit the strategy of Abdullah bin Ubayy, who also had joined the expedition with a large number of hypocrites. So he began to incite the Ansar, saying, "You yourselves brought these people of the quraish from Makkah and made them partners in your wealth and property. And now they have become your rivals and want domination over you. If even now you withdraw your support from them, they shall be forced to leave your city." Then he swore and declared, "As soon as we reach back Al-Madinah, the respectable people will turn out the degraded people from the city."

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

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

"Whenever the Holy Prophet went out on a journey, he decided by lots as to which of his wives should accompany him. Accordingly, it was decided that I should accompany him during the expedition to Bani al Mustaliq. On the return journey, the Holy Prophet halted for the night at a place which was the last stage on the way back to Al- Madinah. It was still night, when they began to make preparations for the march. So I went outside the camp to ease myself. When I returned and came near my halting place, I noticed that my necklace had fallen down somewhere. I went back in search for it but in the meantime the caravan moved off and I was left behind all alone. The four carriers of the litter had placed it on my camel without noticing that it was empty. This happened because of my light weight due to lack of food in those days. I wrapped myself in my sheet and lay down in the hope that when it would be found that I had been left behind, a search party would come back to pick me up. In the meantime I fell asleep. In the morning, when Safwan bin Mu'attal Sulami passed that way, he saw me and recognized me for he had seen me several times before the Commandment about purdah had been sent down. No sooner did he see me than he stopped his camel and cried out spontaneously : "How sad! The wife of the Holy Prophet has been left here!" At this I woke up all of a sudden and covered my face with my sheet. Without uttering another word, he made his camel kneel by me and stood aside, while I climbed on to the camel back. He led the camel by the nose-string and we overtook the caravan at about noon, when it had just halted and nobody had yet noticed that I had been left behind. I learnt afterwards that this incident had been used to slander me and Abdullah bin Ubayy was foremost among the slanderers.(According to other traditions, when Hadrat Ayesha reached the camp on the camel, led by Safwan, and it was known that she had been left behind, Abdullah bin Ubayy cried out, 'By God, she could not have remained chaste. Look, there comes the wife of your Prophet openly on the camel led by the person with whom she passed the night.')

"When I reached Al-Madinah, I fell ill and stayed in bed for more than a month. Though I was quite unaware of it, the news of the "Slander" was spreading like a scandal in the city, and had also reached the Holy Prophet. Anyhow, I noticed that he did not seem as concerned about my illness he used to be. He would come but without addressing me directly, would inquire from others how I was and leave the house. Therefore it troubled my mind that something had gone wrong somewhere. So I took leave of him and went to my mother's house for better nursing.

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

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

"On that same day the Holy Prophet addressed the people from the pulpit, saying: 'O Muslims, who from among you will defend my honor against the attacker of the person who has transgressed all bounds in doing harm to me by slandering my wife. By God, I have made a thorough inquiry and found nothing wrong with her nor with the man, whose name has been linked with the "Slander". At this Usaid bin Hudair (or Sa'd bin Mauz) according to other traditions) stood up and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, if that person belongs to our clan, we will kill him by ourselves, but if he belongs to the Khazraj clan, we will kill him if you order us to do so.' Hearing this Sa'd bin 'Ubadah, chief of the Khazraj clan, stood up and said, 'You lie you can never kill him. You are saying this just because the person belongs to our clan of Khazraj. Had he belonged to your clan, you would never have said so.' Hadrat Usaid retorted, 'You are a hypocrite: that is why you are defending a hypocrite.' At this, there was a general turmoil in the mosque, which would have developed into a riot, even though the Holy Prophet was present there the whole time. But he cooled down their anger and came down from the pulpit."

The remaining details of the incident will be cited along with our commentary on the Text, which honorably absolved Hadrat Aishah from the blame. But here we would only want to point out the enormity of the mischief that was engineered by Abdullah bin Ubayy: (1) It implied an attack on the honor of the Holy Prophet and Hadrat Abu Bakr Siddiq.(2) He meant to undermine the high moral superiority which was the greatest asset of the Islamic Movement (3) He intended to ignite civil war between the Muhajirs and the Ansar, and between Aus and Khazraj, the two clans of the Ansar.

Theme and Topics

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

1. The wives of the Holy Prophet were enjoined to remain within their private quarters, to avoid display of adornments and to be cautious in their talk with other persons (vv. 32, 33).
2. The other Muslims were forbidden to enter the private rooms of the Holy Prophet and instructed to ask whatever they wanted from behind the curtain.(v. 53).
3. A line of demarcation was drawn between the mahram and the non-mahram relatives. Only the former were allowed to enter the private rooms of those wives of the Holy Prophet with whom they were so closely related as to prohibit marriage with them.(v. 55).
4. The Muslims were told that the wives of the Prophet were prohibited for them just like their own real mothers; therefore every Muslim should regard them with the purest of intentions.(vv. 53, 54).
5. The Muslims were warned that they would invite the curse and scourge of Allah if they offended the Holy Prophet. Likewise it was a heinous sin to attack the honor of or slander any Muslim man or woman.(vv. 57, 58).
6. All the Muslim women were enjoined to cover their faces with their sheets if and when they had to go out of their houses.(v. 59).

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

1. Fornication which had already been declared to be a social crime (IV: 15,16) was now made a criminal offense and was to be punished with a hundred lashes.
2. It was enjoined to boycott the adulterous men and women and the Muslims were forbidden to have any marriage relations with them.
3. The one, who accused the other of adultery but failed to produce four witnesses, was to be punished with eighty lashes.
4. The Law of Li'an was prescribed to decide the charge of adultery against his own fife by a husband.
5. The Muslims were enjoined to learn a lesson from the incident of the "Slander" about Hadrat Aishah, as if to say, "You should be very cautious in regard to charges of adultery against the people of good reputation, and should not spread these; nay, you should refute and suppress them immediately." In this connection, a general principle

was enunciated that the proper spouse for a pure man is a pure woman, for he cannot pull on with a wicked woman for long, and the same is the case with a pure woman, as if to say, "When you knew that the Holy Prophet was a pure man, nay, the purest of all human beings, how could you believe that he had experienced happiness with a wicked woman and exalted her as the most beloved of his wives? For it was obvious that an adulterous woman could not have been able to deceive, with her affected behavior, a pure man like the Holy Prophet. You ought also to have considered the fact that the accuser was a mean person while the accused was a pure woman. This should have been enough to convince you that the accusation was not worth your consideration; nay, it was not even conceivable.

6. Those who spread news and evil rumors and propagate wickedness in the Muslim Community, deserve punishment and not encouragement.
7. A general principle was laid down that relations in the Muslim Community should be based on good faith and not on suspicion: everyone should be treated as innocent unless he is proved to be guilty and vice versa.
8. The people were forbidden to enter the houses of others unceremoniously and were instructed to take permission for this.
9. Both men and women were instructed to lower their gaze and forbidden to cast glances or make eyes at each other.
10. Women were enjoined to cover their heads and breasts even inside their houses.
11. Women were forbidden to appear with make-up before other men except their servants or such relatives with whom their marriage is prohibited.
12. They were enjoined to hide their make-ups when they went out of their houses, and even forbidden to put on jingling ornaments, while they moved out of their houses.
13. Marriage was encouraged and enjoined even for slaves and slave girls, for unmarried people help spread indecency.
14. The institution of slavery was discouraged and the owners and other people were enjoined to give financial help to the slaves to earn their freedom under the law of Mukatabat.
15. Prostitution by slave girls was forbidden in the first instance, for prostitution in Arabia was confined to this class alone. This in fact implied the legal prohibition of prostitution.
16. Sanctity of privacy in home life was enjoined even for servants and under age children including one's own. They were enjoined not to enter the private rooms of any man or woman without permission; especially in the morning, at noon and at night.
17. Old women were given the concession that they could set aside their head covers within their houses but should refrain from display of adornments. Even they were told that it was better for them to keep themselves covered with head wrappers.
18. The blind, lame, crippled and sick persons were allowed to take any article of food from the houses of other people without permission, for it was not to be treated like theft and cheating, which are cognizable offenses.
19. On the other hand, the Muslims were encouraged to develop mutual relationships by taking their meals together, and the nearest relatives and intimate friends were allowed to take their meals in each other's house without any formal invitation. This was to produce mutual affection and sincere relationships between them to counteract any future mischief. Side by side with these instructions, clear signs of the Believers and the hypocrites were stated to enable every Muslim to discriminate between the

two. At the same time the Community was bound together by adopting disciplinary measures in order to make it stronger and firmer than it was at the time so as to discourage the enemies from creating mischief in it.

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

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

سُوۡرَۃٌ اَنۡزَلۡنٰہَا وَ فَرَضۡنٰہَا وَ اَنۡزَلۡنَا فِیۡہَاۤ اٰیٰتٍۭ بَیِّنٰتٍ لَّعَلَّکُمۡ تَذَکَّرُوۡنَ 1

(24:1) This is a surah which We have revealed, and which We have made obligatory; We have revealed in it clear instructions[1] so that you may take heed.

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

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

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

This is the preamble of this blessed message after which the specific commandments follow. The cone of the preamble itself indicates the great importance which Allah has attached to the commandments contained in Surah An- Noor. The preamble of no other Surah containing commandments is so forceful as this.

اَلزَّانِيَةُ وَالزَّانِيْ فَاجْلِدُوْا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا مِائَةَ جَلْدَةٍ ۖ وَّلَا تَاْخُذْكُمْ بِهِمَا رَاْفَةٌ فِيْ
دِيْنِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ۚ وَلْيَشْهَدْ عَذَابَهُمَا طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنَ
الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ 2

(24:2) Those who fornicate - whether female or male - flog each one of them with a hundred lashes.[2] And let not tenderness for them deter you from what pertains to Allah's religion, if you do truly believe in Allah and the Last Day[3]; and let a party of believers witness their punishment.[4]

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

(1) The common meaning of zina which everyone knows is sexual intercourse between a man and a woman without the legal relationship of husband and wife existing between them. There has been complete unanimity of view among all the social systems from the earliest times to this day that this act is morally wicked, religiously sinful and socially evil and objectionable, and there has been no dissenting voice except from those stray individuals who have subordinated their moral sense to their lust, or who in their misguided notions try to be original and philosophical in their approach. The universal unanimity of view in this respect is due to the fact that man by nature abhors zina. In fact, the future of human race and civilization depends on this that the relationship between the husband and wife should be built upon the basis of an enduring and everlasting bond of fidelity, which should not only be fully recognized in the social life but should also be guaranteed by the existing social structure. Without this the human race cannot survive. This is because the human child requires years of tender care and training for survival and development and a woman alone cannot bear the burden without the cooperation of the man who became the cause of the birth of the child. Similarly human civilization itself is the product of the corporate life of a man and a woman, their setting up a home, bringing up a family, and establishing mutual relationships and inter-connections between families. If men and women were to lose sight of this essential fact, that is, the establishment of a home and raising a family, and were to meet freely just for pleasure and lust, the entire structure of human society would crumble. In fact, the very foundations on which the structure of human civilization and culture has been built will topple down and the whole basis of the concept of a social life will disappear. It is for these reasons that free mixing of men and women, without any recognized and stable bonds of fidelity, is abhorrent to human nature, and it is for this reason that in every age zina has been considered as a moral evil and, in religious terminology, a grave sin. Accordingly, the social systems in every age recognized and adopted the institution of marriage and also adopted preventive measures against adultery or fornication. The forms of the measures adopted in this direction have, however, differed under different social, cultural and religious systems. This difference has been the

result of the realization of the disastrous effects of adultery (or fornication) in varying degrees: some societies have considered it to be more heinous than others, and some have conceived it clearly and some others not so clearly and confused it with other problems.

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

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

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

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

The same commandment is repeated in different words in Deuteronorny, which is as below.

If a man finds a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with, and they be found. Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver (about fifty-five rupees), and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her. (Deut. 22: 28, 29).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

However, long before the advent of Christ, the Jewish jurists and scholars, the rich and the poor, had practically ceased to observe these laws. Though it was written in the Old Testament, and it was considered as a divine commandment, nobody was inclined to apply

it practically. In the entire Jewish history, there is not a single instance where this commandment was ever enforced. When Jesus (peace be upon him) embarked upon his prophetic mission, and invited the people to the eternal truth, the learned Jews, seeing that there was no way to stop the tide, brought a woman guilty of adultery before him and asked him to decide her case. (John 8: 111). Their object was to create a dilemma for Jesus and to tempt and embarrass him. If he decided in favour of any punishment other than stoning, they would vilify him saying: Here comes a strange Prophet who has changed the divine law for the sake of worldly considerations. And if he were to give the verdict of stoning, this would, on the one hand, bring him in direct clash with the Roman law, and on the other, give them the opportunity to tell the people: Look, what you believe in a Prophet who will expose you to all the severities of the Torah? But Jesus turned the tables on them with one sentence, saying: He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. This put the jurists to shame and they departed one by one in humiliation, and the moral degeneration of the learned in law was totally exposed. When the woman was left alone, Jesus admonished her and after her repentance let her go. Jesus did this because he was neither a judge of any court competent to decide the case, nor any evidence had been produced against her, nor was there any government to enforce the divine law.

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

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

(3) The Islamic law, in contrast to all these conceptions, holds zina as a punishable crime and its committal by the married person enhances the guilt all the more. This is not so because of the violation of the oath of fidelity taken by the man or the woman nor because of the

encroachment on the conjugal rights of the other, but because the criminal resorted to an unlawful method when there existed a lawful method for satisfying his sex desires. The Islamic law views zina as an act which, if allowed to be indulged in freely, will strike at the very roots of both human race and human civilization. In the interest of the preservation of the human race and the stability of human civilization, it is imperative that relationship between man and woman should be regulated only through lawful and reliable means. And it is not possible to restrain this relationship if opportunities for free mixing of the sexes are allowed to exist, for it cannot be expected from a man or a woman to be prepared to bear the onerous responsibilities of the family life if he or she has the opportunities for the gratification of the sex desires without this. For in that case it will be as meaningless as buying a ticket for a journey when people can travel without a ticket as well. A ticket is essential only when travelling without a ticket is declared to be an offense. If somebody is found traveling without a ticket because he cannot afford to buy it, he is a criminal though in a lesser degree. But if a rich man resorts to this, his guilt becomes all the more serious.

(4) Islam does not rely on punitive law alone for saving humanity from the menace of zina. It employs both reformatory and prohibitory measures on a large scale. It has provided legal punishment only as a last resort. Islam does not want that the people should go on committing this crime and getting flogged with stripes day and night. Its real aim is that the people should not commit this crime at all and there should be no occasion to resort to the extreme punishment. For this purpose Islam first of all purifies man: it imbues him with the fear of All-Powerful and AllKnowing Allah: it inculcates in him the sense of accountability for his actions in the Hereafter from which even death cannot release him. It fills him with obligation of obedience to divine law which is sure to follow true faith. Then, it repeatedly warns him that zina and unchastity are heinous crimes, which Allah will call to account with a severe reckoning. This theme occurs again and again in the Quran. Moreover, Islam provides all possible facilities for a man to marry. If he is not satisfied with one wife, he is allowed to take up to four. If the husband and the wife cannot pull on amicably, there are provisions for separation. In case of a dispute between the two, provision exists for reconciliation through the intervention of the members of the family and failing that through the judicial courts so that they should either reconcile or separate and then remarry wherever they like. All this has been explained in Surahs Al-Baqarah, An-Nisa and At-Talaq. In this Surah too, it is not considered good and right to remain unmarried and a clear commandment has been given that marriages should be arranged between unmarried persons and even slaves (men and women) should not be allowed to remain unmarried. Then Islam puts an end to all those factors which allure a man to zina or provide occasions for it. A year before the punishment for zina was prescribed, women were commanded (in Surah Al-Ahzab) to cover themselves with sheets and lower their head-covers over their faces when going out of their houses. The wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him), who were a model for every Muslim family, were ordered to restrict themselves to their houses with decorum and dignity and not to display their charms and adornments. Moreover, they were required to communicate with men from behind the curtain if there be any need for that. This was a model which was followed by all the believing women who considered the Prophet's wives and daughters patterns of virtue and not the immodest women of the age of ignorance. Similarly, the free mixing of the men and women was discouraged before it was declared as a criminal offense and women were prohibited from going out openly in make-up.

After adopting such measures zina was declared to be a punishable offense and spreading of indecency in any way was also prohibited. Prostitution was legally banned and severe punishment was prescribed for charging men and women with adultery and propagating it without proof. Men were enjoined to restrain their gaze so that unrestricted feasting of eyes should not lead to lust for beauty and further on to illicit love. At the same time women were also enjoined to differentiate between mahram and non-mahram relatives. This enables one to understand the entire scheme of reform, a constituent part of which is the prescribed punishment for zina. This extreme punishment is for those incorrigible persons who persist in resorting to the illegal course for the gratification of their sex desires in spite of all the treasures adopted to reform the individual and society. They certainly deserve to be flogged. Punishment of a wicked person serves as a, psychological deterrent for those who have similar tendencies.

Mahram relatives are those between whom marriage is not permissible under the Islamic Law, e.g. father and daughter, uncle and niece, nephew and aunt, and so on. Non-mahram are those between whom marriage is permissible e.g. cousins, etc. Punishment is not merely a punishment for the criminal but is a declaration of the policy that the Islamic society has no room for debauchery and people cannot be allowed to live lives of indulgence and pleasures without restraint. If one tries to understand the Islamic scheme of reform from this point bf view, one will realize that not a single part of the law can either be dispensed with or amended. Only a fool who assumes the role of a self-styled reformer, without understanding this divine law, will ever think of changing it, or a mischievous person, who deliberately wants to alter the very object of the social order designed by Allah, will try to tamper with it.

(5) Zina was declared a culpable act in the third year of Hijrah, but, it was not a legal crime at that time; as such the police and the courts were not competent to initiate legal proceedings. It was considered as a social crime against the institution of family. Accordingly the members of the family themselves were competent to punish the accused. The commandment at that time was that if four men should bear witness to having seen a man and a woman committing zina, both the culprits should get a beating and the woman should be imprisoned in the house. But at the same time there was a suggestion that this commandment would apply till further orders and that the real law was yet to follow. (See (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 15). After about two to three years the present commandment was revealed which canceled the previous commandment and declared zina to be a cognizable offense.

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

If any of your women are guilty of indecency, call four witnesses from among yourselves to testify this. If they give evidence and prove the guilt, then confine them to their houses until death comes to them, or Allah opens some other way out for them. (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 15). Whoso cannot afford to marry free Muslim women, he should marry one of the Muslim slave-girls in your possession. Allah has full knowledge of your faith. You all belong to one and the same community. Therefore you may marry them with the permission of their

guardians and give them their dowries so that they may live a decent life in wedlock and not in licentiousness nor may have secret illicit relations. Then if they are guilty of indecency, after they have been fortified by wedlock, they shall be given half the punishment prescribed for free women. (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 25).

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

(7) As regards to the punishment for adultery after marriage, the Quran does not mention it, but it has been prescribed in the traditions. We learn from many authentic traditions that not only did the Prophet (peace be upon him) prescribe the punishment of stoning to death for it verbally but also enforced it practically in several cases. Then after him his successors not only enforced this punishment during their caliphates but also declared repeatedly that this was the legal punishment. The companions and their followers were unanimous on this point and there is not a single saying of anyone to suggest that anybody doubted the authenticity of this law during that period. After them the jurists of all ages and countries have been unanimous that this is the legal punishment prescribed by the Sunnah, for there have been so many strong and continuous proofs of its authenticity that no scholar can refute them. In the entire history of the Muslims, nobody ever denied this except the Kharijites and some Mutazilites and even they did not deny it on the ground that there was some weakness in the proof of its having been enjoined by the Prophet (peace be upon him), but because they considered it to be against the Quran. This was, however, due to their lack of understanding the Quran. They argued that by using the words Az-zani wazzaniyatu in their general sense the Quran has prescribed a punishment of one hundred stripes for this crime. Therefore, according to them, the only punishment for adultery (or fornication) prescribed in the Quran was this, and to prescribe a different punishment for the married persons who committed adultery would be against the divine law. But they forgot that the explanation of the Quranic verses by the Prophet (peace be upon him) carries the same weight and authority in law as the words of the Quran itself, provided that the explanation is proved to be from the Prophet (peace be upon him). The Quran has used As-sariqu was-sariqatu in similar general terms and prescribed the punishment of amputation of hands for the thief, both male and female. Now if this commandment were to be interpreted literally

without the limitations authentically emanating from the Prophet (peace be upon him), the generality of the words used would demand that every man or woman, who steals a needle or a plum, should be declared to be a thief and his or her hand cut off from the shoulder. On the other hand, if a thief, who has stolen millions, declares on his arrest that he has reformed himself and has repented of theft, he should be let off in accordance with: But whoso repents after his iniquity and reforms himself, Allah will surely turn towards him with His favour. (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 39).

Likewise, the Quran forbids marriage only with a foster mother and a foster sister. According to their argument, such a ban should not apply to a foster daughter. The Quran forbids a person to keep two sisters as wives at one and the same time; therefore if a person keeps the aunt (paternal or maternal) and her niece together as wives, he should not be charged with violating the Quranic injunction. Again, the Quran forbids marriage with a stepdaughter only when she has been brought up in the house of her step-father; therefore, according to their way of reasoning, the absolute prohibition of marriage with a stepdaughter should be regarded as against the Quran. Similarly the Quran allows mortgage only when a man is on a journey and nobody is available to prepare the loan documents; therefore if a person is at home and a scribe is also available, mortgage should be regarded as un-Quranic. Then, the Quran enjoins in general terms: You should have witnesses whenever you buy or sell goods. Therefore, according to them, all sales and purchases taking place in the markets without witnesses should be unlawful.

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

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

with a woman in the natural way and does not extend to other forms of sexual gratification. Besides, it is well known that there was a difference of opinion about the punishment for sodomy among the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Had sodomy been included in zina according to the Islamic terminology, there would have been no occasion for such a difference of opinion.

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

Establish salat at the two ends of the day and in early part of the night; indeed virtues remove evils. (Surah Houd, Ayat 114) At this a man asked: Does the commandment apply to him alone? The Holy Prophet replied: No, it is for all. (Muslim, Tirmizi, Abu Daud, Nasai).

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

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

(a) There is unanimity of opinion that the offender must be a free person and not a slave. The Quran itself has indicated that a slave shall not be stoned to death on the charge of zina. As has already been stated, a slave-girl, if found guilty of adultery after marriage, shall get half the punishment prescribed for a free unmarried woman. The jurists agree that the same Quranic law will apply to a slave.

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

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

(d) The criminal should be a Muslim. But Imam Shafai, Imam Abu Yusuf and Imam Ahmad have disputed this. According to them, even if a non-Muslim married person, who is a protege of the Islamic State, is found guilty of zina, he will be stoned to death. But Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam Malik have concurred that the punishment of stoning to death for adultery after marriage, applies only to the Muslims. The most weighty argument advanced in this connection is that a man, who is to be given the extreme punishment of stoning to death, should be the one who, in spite of enjoying the complete state of ihsan does not refrain from committing adultery. The Arabic word ihsan means moral fortification, which has three essential components. First, the man should be a believer in Allah and in the accountability after death and should owe allegiance to divine law. Second, he should be a free member of society and not a slave of somebody which might hinder him from satisfying his desires in a lawful manner, and his helplessness and indigence should make him commit a sin when there is no family to help him in protecting his morality and honour. Third, he should be married and should have the means of statisfying his sex desires lawfully. Where these three components exist, the moral fortification would be complete and anybody who breaks through these three fortifications for the sake of illicit sex gratification would really deserve the extreme penalty of being stoned to death. But in a case where the very first and foremost component of belief in Allah, in the Hereafter and in divine law, does not exist, the fortification is not complete, and accordingly, the gravity of the guilt is not such as to entail the extreme punishment. This is supported by a tradition related by Ibn Umar and cited by Ishaq bin Rahaviah in his Musnad and Daraqutni in his Sunan: Whoever is guilty of shirk, he is not muhsan (morally fortified). There is, however, a difference of opinion whether Ibn

Umar has quoted this as a saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him) or as his own verdict. In spite of this lacuna, the principle is very strong and sound in its theme.

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

(11) In order to hold a person guilty of zina as punishable, it is necessary to prove that he committed the act of his own free will. If a person is forced to commit the act under compulsion or pressure, he or she is neither an offender nor liable to any punishment. This is not only based on the general principle of the Shariah that a person cannot be held responsible for acts done under compulsion, but this is also in accordance with the Quranic law. In the subsequent verses of this Surah the Quran proclaims pardon for those women who are forced into prostitution. It has also been made clear in the various traditions that in a case of rape only the man was punished and the woman, who had been violated, was let off. According to a tradition cited by Tirmizi and Abu Daud, a woman went out in darkness for prayers when on the way she was overpowered by a man and raped. She raised a hue and cry and the adulterer was caught red-handed and stoned to death by the order of the Prophet (peace be upon him), but the woman was let off. According to a tradition in Bukhari, a man raped a girl during the Caliphate of Umar, who had the man flogged with stripes and let the girl off. It is clear from these instances that there is unanimity of opinion about the law in regard to the case of a woman raped or forced into prostitution. However, there is a difference of opinion in respect of the man who commits the act under compulsion and coercion. Imam Abu Yusuf, Imam Muhammad, Imam Shafai and Imam Hasan bin Salih express the opinion that the man too, who is forced to commit zina under pressure, will be pardoned. Imam Zufar is of the opinion that he will not be let off because the act of zina could not have been performed unless the male organ was fully excited, which means that his own lust and sex desire had urged him to commit the act. Imam Abu Hanifah says that if the act is done under coercion, of the government or any of its officials, the man will not be punished because when the government itself compels a man to commit it, it has no right to punish him. But if somebody else compels him to it, the adulterer will be punished because he could not have committed this without his own desire for it, as sexual lust cannot be aroused by coercion. Of the three opinions, the first one is convincing. This is because even if erection of the male organ is a proof of the sexual urge of the man, it is not necessarily a proof of his willing participation in the act. Suppose, for example, that a tyrant imprisons a simple God-fearing man and puts a beautiful young woman stripped naked in the same cell and does not want to release him until he commits zina and the tyrant brings four witnesses to prove it in the court, it will not be justice to stone them to death or flog them with stripes

in utter disregard of the circumstances. This is because there is a probability that circumstances may be created whereby sexual desire may overpower a man even though he may not be a willing partner. Supposing a man were imprisoned and not given anything to drink except wine; then if he drinks it, will he be punished simply because not a single drop of wine could have gone down his throat if he did not intend it, even though he was forced by the circumstances to drink it? For in order to establish a guilt, mere existence of intention is not enough, but it is also necessary to see that the person was in a position to exercise his free will. Therefore, if a person is placed in such circumstances that he is compelled to commit a crime, he will not be a real culprit in some cases, and in some his offence will be very light.

(12) The Islamic law does not confer on anybody the authority except the government to sit in judgment against the man or the woman accused of zina and none except an Islamic court has the authority to punish them. There is a complete consensus of all the jurists that in (verse 2)the commandment, flog them with stripes, is not addressed to the common people but to the officials and judges of an Islamic government. There is, however, a difference of opinion whether the owner of a slave is competent to punish him or not. According to the Hanafi scholars, he is not, but according to the Shafais he is. The Malikis hold that the owner has no right to cut the hand in case of theft, but in case of zina, calumny and drinking of wine, he can enforce the prescribed punishments.

(13) Under the Islamic law the punishment for zina is a part of the law of the land. Accordingly, it will apply to all people in the Islamic State whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims. Probably none of the jurists except Imam Malik has differed with this opinion. As regards to the opinion of Imam Abu Hanifah that a non-Muslim guilty of zina should not be stoned to death, it is not based on the reason that a non-Muslim is not a complete muhsin, which is one of the conditions of stoning for zina, for this condition is not satisfied unless one is a Muslim. On the other hand, Imam Malik says that a non-Muslim should not be stoned to death because the commandment is a part of the Muslim personal law and the addressees are the Muslims and not the non-Muslims. As for the foreigner who has entered into an Islamic State with due permission and is found guilty of zina, he should also be stoned according to Imam Shafai and Imam Abu Yusuf, but according to Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam Muhammad he cannot be given the prescribed punishment.

(14) The Islamic Law does not make it obligatory that a person must confess his guilt of zina, or those who have knowledge of it must inform the authorities about it. But in case his guilt comes to the notice of the authorities, there is then no room for pardoning the guilt. This is based on a tradition of the Prophet (peace be upon him): If any of you is guilty of any immorality, he should better remain hidden under the curtain of Allah, but if he discloses it to us, we shall certainly enforce the law of Allah on him. According to a tradition of Abu Daud, when Maiz bin Malik Aslami committed the crime of zina, he, on the advice of Hazzal bin Nuaim, went before the Prophet (peace be upon him) and confessed his guilt. The Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered that he should be stoned to death, but at the same time he said to Hazzal: Would that you had kept the matter hidden: this would have been better for you. In another tradition cited in Abu Daud and Nasai, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: You should yourselves pardon the crimes which merit prescribed punishments because when a crime which calls for such a punishment comes to my notice, it will become obligatory on me to award the punishment.

(15) Under the Islamic Law zina is not a compoundable crime. This is based on a tradition which has been cited in almost all the collection of Hadith. A boy who was working as a laborer in a certain house committed zina with the wife of his employer. The father of the boy gave 100 goats and one slave girl to the man and made a compromise with him. But when the case came before the Prophet (peace be upon him), he said: The goats and the slave girl are yours and they are returned to you. Then he awarded the prescribed punishment to both the guilty ones. This shows that the crime of zina is not compoundable and that under the Islamic law, an outraged chastity cannot be compensated in terms of money. This shameless conception of monetary compensation for outraged modesty is a part of Western laws only.

(16) The Islamic government shall not take action against anybody for zina unless it is fully proved. If the guilt is not proved, the authorities cannot pass orders for punishment even if they have the knowledge of the crime through many other sources. There was a woman in Al-Madinah who openly practised prostitution according to traditions cited in Bukhari and Ibn-Majah, but in spite of this no punishment was given to her as there was no proof of zina against her, so much so that the Prophet (peace be upon him) once uttered the following words about her. lf I were to stone anybody to death without a proof, I would have certainly gotten this woman stoned.

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

(a) The Quran explicitly ordains that there should at least be four eyewitnesses to prove the guilt. This has been stated in (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 15), and in this Surah An-Noor, too, it has been reiterated twice (verses 4, 13). A judge is not authorized to decide the case on the basis of his own knowledge even if he has seen with his own eyes the couple committing the crime.

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

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

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

These conditions amply indicate that the Islamic law does not intend to punish people as a matter of course. It inflicts severe punishment only when, in spite of all the measures to reform and eradicate the evil, there still exists a shameless couple in the Islamic society who commits the crime in a way as to be witnessed by as many as four men.

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

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

First, the Quran holds false accusation about zina as a punishable offense. But this argument is incorrect because the Quran makes a distinction between the qazif (the slanderer) and the shahid (one who appears in a court as an eyewitness). An eyewitness cannot be branded as a slanderer merely because the court did not hold his evidence as a sufficient proof of the crime.

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

The facts of the case are that Mughirah bin Shubah, the Governor of Basrah, did not have good relations with Abu Bakrah, whose house was opposite to his house across the same street. One day the windows of the two houses were opened by a strong current of wind. When Abu Bakrah got up to close his window, he saw through the opposite window across

the street Mughirah in a state of actual sexual intercourse. He asked three of his friends (Nafi bin Kaladah, and Shibl bin Mabad) who were also sitting with him to stand up and witness what Mughirah was doing. The friends asked him who was the woman. Abu Bakrah said that she was Umm Jamil. The next day a complaint to this effect was sent to Umar, who immediately suspended Mughirah and appointed Abu Musa Ashari as Governor of Basrah. Mughirah along with the witnesses was called to Al-Madinah. When they were asked about the case, Abu Bakrah said that they had seen Mughirah actually committing sexual intercourse with umm Jamil, but Ziad said that the woman was not clearly visible and that he could not say definitely whether it was Umm Jamil or not. During the cross examination, Mughirah proved that they could not have seen the woman distinctly from the place where they were standing. He also proved that there was a close resemblance between his wife and Umm Jamil. Besides this, circumstantial evidence also showed that during the Caliphate of Umar, the governor of a province could not have committed this crime in his official residence, especially when his wife was also living with him. Thus the supposition of Abu Bakrah and his companions that Mughirah was having sexual intercourse with Umm Jamil, instead of his own wife, was nothing but a misplaced suspicion. It was for this reason that Umar not only acquitted the accused but also punished Abu Bakrah, Nafi and Shibl as slanderers. It is obvious that this isolated decision was based on the specific circumstances of the case and not on the principle that the witnesses must be punished when they are not able to prove the charge by their evidence. (For details of this case, see Ahkam al- Quran, Ibn al-Arabi, Vol. II, pp. 88, 89).

(20) Besides the evidence, the other thing by which the offense of zina can be established, is the confession of the accused himself. This confession must be in clear and plain words and the guilty one must confess that he committed zina with a woman who was unlawful for him. He should also admit that the act of zina was complete in every respect. The court must satisfy itself that the guilty person is confessing his guilt voluntarily without any external pressure and that, at the time of confession, he is in his right senses. Some jurists hold that one confession is not enough and that the guilty one must make four separate confessions. This is the view of Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Ahmad, Ibn Abi Laila, Ishaq bin Rahaviah and Hasan bin Salih. But according to Imam Malik, Imam Shafai, Uthman al-Batti, only one confession is enough. In cases where the conviction is based on the confession of the guilty person himself without the support of any other proof, the infliction of punishment should be suspended if during the course of punishment the guilty one retracts his confession. It does not matter even if it is quite evident that he is retracting his confession in order to escape the torture of punishment. This entire law is based on the precedents which have been cited in the traditions in the various cases of zina.

The most important case is that of Maiz bin Malik Aslami, which has been related by a large number of reporters on the authority of many companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and almost all books of traditions contain details with regard to it. Maiz was an orphan boy from the clan of Aslam who had been brought up by Hazzal bin Nuaim. He committed zina with a freed slave-girl. Hazzal said to him: Go to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and inform him of your sin, may be he will pray for your forgiveness. Maiz went before the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the mosque and said: I have committed zina, please purify me. The Prophet (peace be upon him) turned his face away from him and said: Woe be to you, go back and pray to Allah for forgiveness. But the boy again appeared before the

Prophet (peace be upon him) and said the same thing and the Prophet (peace be upon him) again turned his face away. The boy then repeated his offense for the third time and the Prophet (peace be upon him) again turned his face away. Abu Bakr warned the boy that if he confessed the crime for the fourth time, the Prophet would get him stoned. But the boy persisted and repeated the same thing again. At this the Prophet turned to him and said: You might have only kissed or embraced or caressed her, or you might have looked at her with lust (and you thought it was an act of zina. The boy said: No. The Prophet asked: Did you lie with her in the same bed? The boy replied in the affirmative. The Prophet again asked: Did you have sexual intercourse with her? The boy again replied in the affirmative. The Prophet then inquired in the most explicit Arabic expression specifically used for this act. Such a naked expression had never before been heard nor was ever heard afterwards from him. Had it not been the question of the life of an individual, the Prophet (peace be upon him) would never have uttered such words. But the boy again replied in the affirmative to this explicit question. The Prophet (peace be upon him) then asked: Did you commit the act in such a manner that your male organ disappeared in her female part? The boy answered: Yes. Again he was asked whether the act was as complete as is a piston in a cylinder and a rope in a well. The boy again answered in the affirmative. Again he was asked whether he really understood what zina meant, and the boy said: Yes, I have committed the same act with her illegitimately which a husband commits legitimately with his wife. The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked: Are you married? He said: Yes. Again the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked whether he had taken any wine. He said: No, and one of the companions smelt his mouth and confirmed that he had not. After this the Prophet (peace be upon him) inquired of his neighbors whether he was suffering from insanity. They replied that he had not exhibited any sign of insanity. Then the Prophet said to Hazzal: Had you kept it secret, it would have been better for you. Then he ordered Maiz to be stoned to death and he was stoned to death outside the city. When they began to throw stones at him, Maiz tried to escape, and said: O people, take me back to the Prophet (peace be upon him). The people of my clan deluded me, assuring that the Prophet would not condemn me to death. But they did not let him escape. Afterwards when this incident was reported to the Prophet, he said: Why didn't you let him go? Had you brought him to me, he might have repented and Allah might have accepted his repentance.

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

In both these cases, four confessions have clearly been mentioned. According to a tradition, cited by Buraidah in Abu Daud, the companions of the Prophet, in general, held the opinion that if Maiz and Ghamidiyyah had not confessed their guilt four times, they would not have been stoned to death. In the third incident of this nature, the only words used therein, as contained in other traditions, were: Go and inquire from his wife about this. If she confesses her guilt, stone her to death. There is no mention of four confessions here and it is on the basis of this that some jurists have argued that only one confession is enough.

(21) The three cases mentioned above clearly show that a guilty person, who confesses his sin, will not be questioned about the other person with whom he or she committed zina. This is because in that case two persons shall have to be punished instead of one. The Islamic law is not anxious to punish people. But if the guilty person names the other party to the crime, then that party will be interrogated and also punished in case of confession. But if the other party denies it, only the person confessing the guilt will be punished. However, there is a difference of opinion among the jurists as to whether such a person will be punished for zina or for false accusation. According to Imam Malik and Imam Shafai, he will be awarded the prescribed punishment for zina, because he has confessed that crime alone. According to Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam Auzai, he shall be convicted as a false accuser, because the denial of the other party has made his crime of zina doubtful but his guilt of false accusation stands proved anyhow. According to Imam Muhammad and it is supported by a saying of Imam Shafai also, he will be punished for zina as well as for slander. This is because he has confessed the guilt of zina himself and has not been able to prove his accusation against the other party. A similar case was brought before the Prophet (peace be upon him). A tradition to this effect cited in Musnad Ahmad and in Abu Daud by Sahl bin Saad contains these words: A person confessed before the Prophet (peace be upon him) that he had committed zina with such and such a woman. The Prophet (peace be upon him) inquired of the woman but she denied it. Then he gave him the prescribed punishment but forgave the woman. This tradition, however, does not specify the punishment that was awarded. In another tradition cited in Abu Daud and Nasai from Ibn Abbas, it has been stated that on the man's confession the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave him the prescribed punishment for zina. But when the woman denied it, the man was flogged with stripes for making a false accusation. But this tradition is weak as regards to its links, because one of its reporters, Qasim bin Fayyaz, is not considered as reliable by many scholars of traditions. Moreover, this tradition appears to be opposed to reason because it cannot be expected of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that he would first punish the man for zina and then make an inquiry from the woman. Common sense and justice, which the Prophet (peace be upon him) could not have overlooked, demanded that his case should not have been decided before making an inquiry from the woman. This is supported by a tradition cited by Sahl bin Saad. Therefore, the second tradition cannot be considered as reliable.

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

(a) According to Imam Ahmad, Daud Zahiris and Ishaq bin Rahaviah they shall be flogged with 100 stripes and then stoned to death.

(b) All other jurists are unanimous that they shall be stoned to death; stoning to death and flogging will not be combined together.

Punishment for unmarried persons:

(a) According to Imam Ahmad, Imam Shafai, Daud Zahiri, Sufyan Thauri, Ibn Abi Laila and Hasan bin Salih; the punishment is flogging with 100 stripes and exile for one year both for the man and the woman.

(b) According to Imam Malik and Imam Auzai, the man should be flogged with 100 stripes and exiled for one year, while the woman should only be flogged with 100 stripes. (According to these jurists, exile means that the guilty one should be banished from his own habitation and sent to such a distant place where one has to shorten one's prayer. But according to Zaid bin Ali and Imam Jafar Sadiq, imprisonment also serves the purpose of exile).

(c) Imam Abu Hanifah and his disciples Imam Abu Yusuf, Imam Zufar and Imam Muhammad are of the opinion that the hadd (prescribed punishment) for zina in such cases is only 100 stripes both for the man and for the woman. Any additional punishment, such as exile or imprisonment, is not hadd but tazir (discretionary punishment). If the judge feels that the guilty man is of immoral character, or that the illicit relations of the guilty ones are too intimate, he may exile or imprsion them as the occasion may demand. The difference between hadd and tazir is that hadd is a specific punishment which must be inflicted provided that the guilt has been proved according to the conditions laid down in the Shariah, whereas tazir is a punishment which has not been specified by the Shariah with regard to its nature and gravity, but is determined by the court in accordance with the circumstances of the case.

All the above different opinions have been based on various traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), which are given below.

According to a tradition related by Ubadah bin Samit and cited by Muslim, Abu Daud, Ibn Majah, Tirmizi and Imam Ahmad, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Take it from me. Take it from me. Allah has prescribed the method for dealing with women guilty of zina. An unmarried man committing zina with an unmarried woman should get 100 stripes and one year's exile. The married man committing zina with a married woman should get 100 stripes and stoning to death. Though this tradition is technically correct according to its authentic links, we learn from a large number of correct Traditions that it was neither acted upon during the time of the Prophet nor during the rightlyguided Caliphate nor any jurist ever gave any verdict strictly in accordance with it. According to a tradition from Abu Hurairah and Zaid bin Khalid Juhani, which has been cited by Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, Tirmizi Nasai, Ibn Majah and Ahmad, a case was brought by two beduins before the Prophet (peace be upon him). One of them said: My son, who worked as a laborer in the house of this man, got involved with his wife. I compromised with him by giving him 100 goats and one slave girl, but I have been told by the scholars that this is against the Book of Allah. Please decide the case between us according to the Book of Allah. The second man also said the same thing and asked for the decision according to the divine Book. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: I will decide according to the divine Book. You should take back your goats and

the slave girl. Your son shall get 100 stripes and a year's exile. Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to a man from the clan of Aslam: O Unais, go to this man's wife and inquire from her about this. If she confesses her guilt, stone her to death. The woman confessed the guilt and was stoned to death. It should be noted that in this tradition there is no mention of flogging the married woman before stoning her to death, whereas the unmarried man, guilty of zina with a married woman, was punished with flogging and exile. Besides this, the accounts of the cases of Maiz and Ghamidiyyah, which have been cited in the various books of traditions, do not mention anywhere that the Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered flogging of the guilty person before stoning him or her to death. There is no tradition in any book of traditions to the effect that the Prophet (peace be upon him), in any case, combined flogging with stoning to death. In all the cases of zina by married persons, he awarded the punishment of stoning to death only. In his well-known address, cited by Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmizi, and Nasai on the authority of various reporters, Umar declared most emphatically that the punishment for zina after marriage is stoning to death. Imam Ahmad also has cited various traditions regarding this but in none of these there is any mention of flogging before stoning to death. From among the rightly guided Caliphs Ali alone combined flogging with stoning to death in one case. Imam Ahmad and Bukhari have cited this case on the authority of Amir Shabi that a woman named Shuaha confessed being pregnant as a result of illicit intercourse. Ali got her flogged on Thursday and stoned to death on Friday, saying: We flogged her according to the Book of Allah and stoned her to death in accordance with the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him). There is no other case than this in which both the punishments were combined during the rightly-guided Caliphate.

According to a tradition cited in Abu Daud and Nasai on the authority of Jabir bin Abdullah, a man committed zina and the Prophet (peace be upon him) awarded him the punishment of flogging. Afterwards when it came to be known that he was a married man, he ordered that he should be stoned to death. Besides this, we have already cited several other traditions showing that the Prophet (peace be upon him) awarded the punishment of flogging only to the unmarried persons guilty of zina. For instance, the man who raped a woman while she was going out for prayers, and the man who confessed his crime of zina but the woman did not, were given the punishment of flogging.

As regards to exile, the authority may use its own discretion. Umar exiled Rabiah bin Umayyah bin Khalf on a charge of drinking and he fled and joined the Romans. At this Umar said that in future he would not exile a man and a woman guilty of zina, because he feared that there was a risk of mischief in it. (Ahkam al-Quran, AI-Jassas, Vol. III, p. 315).

In the light of these traditions and cases as a whole, it becomes quite clear that the view of Imam Abu Hanifah and his disciples is correct. The punishment for a married man or woman for zina is stoning to death alone while the punishment for unmarried persons is 100 stripes only. Flogging and stoning to death were never combined from the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) up to the Caliphate of Uthman. As for combining flogging and exile, it was practiced on some occasions while on others it was not. This clearly establishes the correctness of the way of Imam Abu Hanifah.

(23) The first reference to the nature of flogging with stripes is implied in the word fajlidu of the Quran itself. The word jald is derived from jild, which means skin. Accordingly all lexicographers and commentators have taken it to mean that flogging should be carried out

in such a way that its effect should be confined to the skin only and should not reach the flesh under it. The flogging that causes deep wounds into the flesh or tears it up into pieces is against the Quran.

The whip or the cane used for the purpose of flogging should be medium in all respects: it should neither be thick and hard nor thin and soft. According to a Ttradition cited by Imam Malik in Muatta, the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked for a whip for flogging but as it had worn out owing to long use, he said: Bring a harder one. Then a new whip was brought which was very hard because of lack of use. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Get me one between these two. Accordingly, a whip was brought which had been used in riding and with it he gave the flogging. A similar tradition has also been cited by Abu Uthman an-Nahdi about Umar that he always used a medium whip. (Ahkam al-Quran, AI-Jassas,Vol. III, p. 322). A whip with knots or one having two or three prongs is also prohibited.

Flogging should also be of average intensity. Umar used to instruct the flogger, Strike in such a way that your armpit should not become visible during flogging, i.e. do not stretch your arm fully to strike with full force. (Ahkam alQuran, Ibn al-Arabi, Vol. II, p. 84, and Ahkam al-Quran, AIJassas, Vol. III, p. 322). All the jurists agree that.

(a) The stripe should not be such as may cause a wound.

(b) The flogging should not be confined to one and the same place but should be spread over the whole body.

(c) The face and the private parts, and, according to the Hanafis, the head also should be spared but all other parts should get some flogging. Ali once said to the flogger: Let every part of the body get its due share except the face and the private parts. According to another tradition, he said: Save the head and the private parts only. (Ahkam al- Quran, Al Jassas Vol. III, p. 321). The Prophet (peace be upon him) has said: When anyone of you is flogging, he should not strike on the face. (Abu Daud).

While flogging, a man should be made to stand and a woman to sit. In the time of Imam Abu Hanifah, Qazi Ibn Abi Laila of Kufah got a woman flogged while she was standing. The Imam took a strong objection to it and openly declared it to be a wrong thing. Incidentally, this also throws light on Imam Abu Hanifah's stand with regard to the law of the contempt of court. At the time of flogging, the woman should be in her full dress: her clothes should rather be tied down on her so that no part of her body might be exposed; her thick clothes only will be taken off. But in regard to a man, there is some difference of opinion. According to some jurists, he will be allowed to remain in his pajamas only, and according to some others, the shirt will not be taken off. Abu Ubaidah bin al-Jarrah sentenced a person guilty of zina to be flogged. The man said: This sinful body should get a severe flogging. Then he started taking off his shirt, but Abu Ubaidah said: Do not let him take off his shirt. (Ahkam al-Quran, Al-Jassas, Vol. III, p. 322). During the time of Ali, a man was flogged while he was wrapped in a sheet of cloth.

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

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

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

Flogging should not be entrusted to uncouth, uncultured executioners, but it should be done by men of deep insight who understand how the flogging should be carried out in order to meet the requirements of the Shariah. Ibn Qayyim has cited in zad al-Maad that the Prophet (peace be upon him) employed the services of such pious and respectable people as Ali, Zubair, Miqdad bin Amr, Muhammad bin Maslamah, Asim bin Thabit and Dahak bin Sufyan for this purpose. (Vol. I, pp. 44, 45).

If the guilty person is suffering from some disease and there is no hope of his recovery or is too old, it is enough to strike him once with a branch of 100 twigs, or with a broom of 100 twigs in order to meet the requirements of the law. During the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), an old man, who was suffering from some disease, was found guilty of zina and the Prophet (peace be upon him) awarded him the same kind of punishment. (Ahmad, Abu Daud, Nasai Ibn Majah). In the case of a pregnant woman, the flogging will be postponed till the delivery and the complete discharge of blood after childbirth. But if she is to be stoned to death, the punishment will not be given till the child has been weaned.

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

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

proved criminals but on suspects, especially those suspected of criminal crimes, are well known to every one.

(24) After a convict has been stoned to death, he (or she) will be treated like any other Muslim. His (or her) body will be washed and shrouded: funeral prayer will be said in the Islamic way, and he (or she) will be buried with due respect in a Muslim graveyard. Prayers for his (or her) forgiveness will be offered and it will be improper for anyone to talk ill of him (or her). According to Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari, as cited in Bukhari, when Maiz bin Malik was stoned to death, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said good words about him and himself led his funeral prayer. A tradition from Buraidah, as cited in Muslim, states that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Pray for the forgiveness of Maiz bin Malik: he has offered such a repentance that if it were to be distributed over a whole community, it would suffice for the forgiveness of all its people. In the same tradition it has been mentioned that when Ghaimidiyyah died due to stoning, her funeral prayer was led by the Prophet (peace be upon him). When Khaid bin Walid talked ill of her, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Khalid, hold your tongue! I swear by Him Who controls my life that her repentance was such that even if a cruel tax-collector had offered such a repentance, he would have been forgiven. According to Abu Hurairah, as cited in Abu Daud, after the stoning of Maiz one day when the Prophet (peace be upon him) was walking along, he heard two men talking ill of Maiz. When he had gone a few paces further, he saw the dead body of a donkey. He stopped there and asked the two men: Come on and eat something out of it. They said: O Prophet of Allah, who can eat a dead donkey? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Talking ill of your own brother was much worse than eating a dead donkey.

According to a tradition from Imran bin Hunain cited in Muslim, when the funeral prayer of Ghamidiyyah was about to be offered, Umar said to the Prophet (peace be upon him): Are we going to offer funeral prayer for this adulteress? The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: She has offered such a repentance that if it were to be distributed over the entire population of Al-Madinah, it would suffice for their forgiveness. According to another tradition from Abu Hurairah, cited in Bukhari; when a man was being punished for drinking, somebody said: May God defame him! The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Do not utter such words and thus help Satan against him. In Abu Daud there is an addition to this, according to which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Pray like this, O Allah, pardon him and show mercy to him. This is the true spirit of punishment in Islam. Islam does not punish even the biggest criminal with vindictiveness but with the intention to reform him. That is why after the punishment, mercy and compassion are shown towards him. In contrast to this, the modern civilization adopts a very mean attitude towards those who are killed by the state military or police and whose death is upheld by a judicial inquiry. It is not tolerated that even somebody may carry his dead body to the graveyard or utter a good word about him. In the face of this behavior, they have the moral courage (a euphemism for impudence) to preach tolerance to the world.

(25) As regards to the law of punishment concerning zina with prohibited relations, see (E.N. 33 of Surah An-Nisa), and for the punishment of sodomy see (E.Ns 64-68 of Surah Al-Aaraf). As regards to the committal of this heinous act with animals, some jurists treat it as zina and hold that the guilty person deserves the prescribed punishment of this crime. But Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Yusuf, Imam Muhammad, Imam Zufar, Imam Malik and Imam Shafai hold that it is not zina, and therefore, the offender should he given the discretionary punishment

and not the prescribed punishment. We have already stated that the discretionary punishment has been left to the judge, or if necessary the state legislature can devise some appropriate form of punishment for it.

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

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

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

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

Some commentators have interpreted this verse to mean that the culprit should neither be forgiven after his guilt has been proved nor his punishment reduced. He must be flogged with 100 stripes. Some others have taken it to mean that the flogging should not be so light that the culprit may not feel its effect at all. The verse covers both the above interpretations and, in fact, both are plausible. It also means that the one guilty of fornication should get the same punishment which has been prescribed by Allah and no other type of punishment. It is a sin to inflict any other type of punishment instead of flogging even for the sake of compassion or pity. But if any other type of punishment is inflicted on the ground that flogging with stripes is a barbarous type of punishment, it amounts to kufr; which should never be tolerated even for a moment by a true believer. To believe in the divinity of Allah and then to call Him a barbarian, suits only those who are the meanest of hypocrites.

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

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

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

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

(b) To stop him from repeating the crime,

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

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

اَلزَّانِیۡ لَا یَنۡکِحُ اِلَّا زَانِیَۃً اَوۡ مُشۡرِکَۃً ۫ وَّ الزَّانِیَۃُ لَا یَنۡکِحُہَاۤ اِلَّا زَانٍ اَوۡ مُشۡرِکٌ ۚ وَ حُرِّمَ ذٰلِکَ عَلَی الۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ 3

(24:3) Let the fornicator not marry any except a fornicatress or idolatress and let the fornicatress not marry any except a fornicator or an idolater. That is forbidden to the believers.[5]

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

According to Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, the prohibition of marriage with an adulterous man implies that such a marriage, if contracted, will have no legal effect. But this view is not correct. Prohibition does not have any legal implications. It cannot mean that if a person violates this prohibition, the marriage will be void, and the parties concerned will be involved in zina in spite of marriage. For the Prophet (peace be upon him) has stated: The unlawful does not make the lawful unlawful. (Tabarani, Daraqutni). In other words, an illegal act does not make a legal act also illegal. Therefore, if a person commits zina and then

marries, his conjugal relations with his spouse cannot be considered as zina, because in that case the other party of the marriage contract who is not immoral, will also have to be considered as involved in zina. As a rule, no illegal act except open rebellion can cause the one guilty of it to be declared an outlaw, so that no act of his can be regarded legal after that. If the verse is considered in this light the plain meaning would be this: It is a sin to select such persons for marriage as are known to be immoral. The believers should shun them, otherwise they will feel encouraged, whereas the Shariah intends to segregate them as the undesirable and contemptible element of society.

Similarly this verse does not validate the marriage of an adulterous Muslim with an idolatrous woman and of an adulterous Muslim woman with an idolatrous man. The verse simply means to emphasize the act of zina, and declares that the person who commits it being a Muslim, makes himself unfit for contracting a marriage in the pure and pious Muslim society. Even if the accuser is an eyewitness of an immoral act, he should keep the secret and let the filth remain where it is instead of causing it to spread. However, if he has witnesses, he should abstain from publicizing the matter in society but should bring the case to the notice of the authorities and get the criminals duly punished by the court of law. Below, we give the details of the law in serial order.

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

(2) Though the verse only mentions al-muhsanat (pure and chaste women), the jurists agree that the law is not confined to the accusation in respect of women, but it extends to the accusation in respect of chaste men also. Likewise, though the masculine gender has been used for the accusers, the law is not confined to male accusers only but extends to female accusers as well. For as regards to the gravity and wickedness of the crime, it does not make any difference whether the accuser or the accused is a man or a woman. Therefore in either case, the man or accuser or the woman accusing a virtuous and chaste man or woman of zina, will be dealt with under this law.

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

(4) For an act of qazf to be considered as punishable, it is not enough that somebody has accused somebody else of immorality without a proof, but there are certain conditions which have to be fulfilled in respect of the qazif (accuser), maqzuf (the accused) and the act of qazf itself. As for the qazif, he should satisfy the following conditions:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(d) He should be free; accusing a slave or a slave-girl, or a free person that has committed zina when a slave, does not call for the prescribed punishment, for the helplessness and weakness of the slave can hinder him from safeguarding his honor and chastity. The Quran itself has considered the state of slavery as excluded from the state of ihsan (moral fortification). (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 25). But Daud Dhahiri does not concede this argument; he holds that the qazif of the slave or slave-girl also deserves the prescribed punishment of qazf.

(e) He should possess a pure and blameless character, i.e. he himself should be free from zina proper and everything resembling therewith, This means that he should neither have been held guilty of zina in the past, nor should have had sexual intercourse in an illegal marriage, nor with a slave girl who was not clearly in his possession legally, nor with a woman whom he mistook for his wife. His day to day life should be such that nobody could accuse him of immorality, nor he should have been held guilty of lesser crimes than zina before. In all such cases the moral purity of the person falls into disrepute, and the accuser of such a person cannot deserve the prescribed punishment of 80 stripes. So much so that if the guilt of zina against an accused person is proven on the basis of evidence just before the enforcement of the prescribed punishment on an accuser, the latter will be forgiven; because the former is no longer chaste and morally pure.

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

Now let us consider the conditions which must be found in the act of qazf itself An accusation will be considered as qazf, if either an accuser accuses a person of such a sexual act which, if proved to be correct by necessary evidence, would make the accused liable to the prescribed punishment, or the accuser holds the accused as of illegitimate birth. But in either case the accusation must be unambiguous and in clear terms. Vague references in which the accusation of zina or illegitimacy depends upon the accuser's intention, are not reliable. For instance, using words like adulterer, sinner, wicked, immoral, etc. for a man, and prostitute, harlot, whore, etc. for a woman is only a reference and not qazf. Similarly, words which are used as an abuse like bastard, etc. cannot be regarded as qazf. There is, however, a difference of opinion among the jurists whether an allusion is also gazf or not. According to Imam Malik, if the allusion is clear and is meant to charge the addressee of zina or hold him as of illegitimate birth, it will be qazf, and the qazif will be liable to the prescribed punishment. But Imam Abu Hanifah and his companions and Imam Shafai, Sufyan Thauri, Ibn Shubrumah, and Hasan bin Saleh hold the view that an allusion is in any way ambiguous and doubtful, and wherever there is doubt, prescribed punishment cannot be awarded. Imam Ahmad and Ishaq bin Rahaviyah maintain that if an allusion is made in the heat of a quarrel or fight, it is qazf, but if in sport and fun, it is not. Umar and Ali, from among the Caliphs, awarded the prescribed punishment in cases of allusion. In the time of Umar, one of the two men, who were involved in a brawl, said to the other: Neither was my

father an adulterer nor was my mother an adulteress. The case was brought before Umar. He asked those present there what they understood by the remark. Some said that the man had only praised his parents and had not imputed anything to the other man's parents. Others objected to the use of the words and said that by these he had clearly alluded that the other man's parents were adulterous. Umar concurred with the latter and awarded the prescribed punishment. (Al-Jassas, vol. III, p. 330). There is also a difference of opinion as to whether accusing somebody of sodomy is qazf or not. lmam Abu Hanifah does not regard it qazf but Imam Abu Yusuf, Imam Muhammad; Imam Malik and Imam Shafai hold it as qazf and recommend the prescribed punishment for it.

(5) There is a difference of opinion among the jurists as to whether qazf is a cognizable offence or not. Ibn Abi Laila says that this is the right of Allah; therefore, the qazif will be awarded the prescribed punishment whether maqzuf (the accused) demands it or not. Imam Abu Hanifah and his companions hold that it is certainly a right of Allah in so far as the enforcement of the prescribed punishment on the establishment of the offence is concerned, but in so far as the trial of the accuser under the law is concerned, it depends on the demand of the accused, and in this respect it is the right of man. The same is the opinion of Imam Shafai, and Imam Auzai. According to Imam Malik, if the offense of gazf is committed in the presence of the ruler, it is a cognizable offense, otherwise legal action against the accuser will depend on the demand of the accused.

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

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

prescribed punishment for qazf be inheritable there is no reason why the husband and the wife should be debarred from exercising that right.

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

(9) The Quran has given three commandments in respect of the person who fails to produce proper evidence which can cause his acquittal of the crime of qazf.

(a) He should be awarded 80 stripes.

(b) His evidence should not be accepted in future.

(c) He himself is a transgressor.

After this the Quran says: Except those who repent of it and mend their ways; Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

The question arises: To which of these three commands is the forgiveness due to repentance and reformation as mentioned in the verse related? The jurists agree that it is not related to the first command. That is, repentance will not render the punishment null and void, and the criminal will be given flogging in any case. The jurists also agree that the forgiveness is related to the third command, which means that after repentance and reformation the criminal will no longer be a sinner and Allah will forgive him. Here the difference of opinion is only in this matter whether the criminal becomes a sinner due to the crime of qazf itself, or after his conviction by the court. Imam Shafai and Laith bin Saad hold that he becomes a sinner due to the crime of qazf itself, and therefore, they reject his evidence

thenceforth. On the contrary, lmam Abu Hanifah, his companions and lmam Malik maintain that he becomes a sinner after the enforcement of the sentence; therefore, till the enforcement of the sentence his evidence will be acceptable. But the truth is that in the sight of Allah the criminal becomes a sinner as a result of the crime of qazf itself, but for the people his being a sinner depends on his conviction by the court and the enforcement of the punishment on him. Now as far as the second command, viz. "The evidence of qazif should not be accepted in future, is concerned, there has been a great difference of opinion among the jurists as to whether the sentence "except those who repent" is related to this or not. One group says that this sentence is related only to the last command. That is, a person who repents and mends his ways will no longer be a sinner in the sight of Allah and the common Muslims, but the first two commands will remain effective, i.e. the sentence will be enforced on him and his evidence will never be accepted in future. To this group belong eminent jurists like Qazi Shuraih, Said bin Musayyab, Said bin Jubair, Hasan Basri, Ibrahim Nakhai Ibn Sirin, Makhul, Abdur Rahman bin Zaid, Abu Hanifah, Abu Yusuf, Zufar, Muhammad, Sufyan Thauri, and Hasan bin Saleh. The other group says that the clause "except those who repent" is not related to the first command but is related to the other two. That is, after repentance, not only will the evidence of the offender who has been punished for qazf be acceptable, but he will also not be regarded as a sinner. This group comprises jurists of the status of Ata, Taus, Mujahid, Shabi, Qasim bin Muhammad, Salim, Zuhri, Ikrimah, Umar bin Abdul Aziz, Ibn Abi Nujaih, Sideman bin Yasar, Masruq, Zahhak, Malik bin Anas, Uthman al- Batti, Laith bin Saad, Shafai, Ahmad bin Hanbal and Ibn Jarir Tabari. Among other arguments, these scholars cite the verdict of Umar which he gave in the case of Mughirah bin Shubah. For, according to some traditions, after enforcing the punishment, Umar said to Abu Bakrah and his two companions: If you repent (or confess your lie), I shall accept your evidence in future, otherwise not. His companions confessed but not Abu Bakrah. On the face of it, it appears to be a strong argument. But from the details given above of Mughirah bin Shubah's case, it would become obvious that it is not correct to cite this precedent in support of this view. For in that case, there was complete unanimity as far as the act (of sexual intercourse) was concerned and Mughirah bin Shubah himself did not deny it. The point of dispute was the identity of the woman. Mughirah said that she was his own wife, whom the accusers had mistaken for Umm Jamil. Then it had also been established that the wife of Mughirah and Umm Jamil resembled with each other to a degree that from the distance and in the kind of light that they were seen, the former could be mistaken for the latter. But the circumstantial evidence was wholly in favour of Mughirah bin Shubah, and a witness of the case also had admitted that the woman was not clearly visible. That is why Umar decided the case in favour of Mughirah bin Shubah, and after punishing Abu Bakrah, said the words as mentioned in the above-quoted traditions. This clearly shows that the real intention of Umar was to impress on the accusers that they should confess that they had given way to undue suspicion and that they should repent of accusing people on the basis of such suspicions in future, otherwise their evidence would never be accepted. From this it cannot be concluded that in the eyes of Umar the evidence of a person whose falsehood had been established, could become acceptable just after he had repented. The truth is that in this matter the view of the former group is stronger. None except Allah can know whether a person has repented sincerely or not. If a person repents before us, we may not consider him as a transgressor afterwards, but once his falsehood has been established, we cannot afford to trust him in future simply because he has uttered repentance. Moreover, the words in the text themselves indicate that "except those who

repent" is related only to "they themselves are transgressors". The reason is that the first two things, in the sentence "flog them with eighty stripes, and never accept their evidence afterwards" have been given in the imperative form, while the third thing "they themselves are transgressors" is a predicate. Then the clause "except those who repent" just after the predicate itself indicates that the exception relates to the predicate and not to the two imperative sentences. Nevertheless, if it is conceded that the exception is not confined to the last sentence, one does not understand why it should be made to apply to "never accept their evidence" only and not extended to "flog them with eighty stripes" also.

(10) A question may be asked: Why should not the exception in "except those who repent" be made applicable to the first command also? Qazf after all is a sort of defamation. Why should not a person who confesses his guilt, apologizes and repents, be let off, when Allah Himself says: "except those who repent and trend their ways; Allah is Forgiving and Merciful." It will be strange that Allah forgives while the people do not forgive. The answer is that the act of taubah (repentance) is not merely uttering the word taubah with the tongue; it rather implies having a feeling of regrets, a resolve to reform and an inclination to do right; and this can only be known to Allah whether a person has repented sincerely or not. That is why on repentance worldly punishments are not forgiven but only punishments of the Hereafter; and that is why, Allah does not say that if the offenders repent, then they be forgiven, but says: "For those who repent, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful." If the worldly punishments are also excused on repentance, there will be no offender who will not offer repentance in order to escape his sentence.

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

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

(13) Majority of the jurists including the Hanafis are of the view that only one punishment will be enforced on the qazif no matter how often he repeats the accusation before or during

the enforcement of the punishment. If after the punishment the qazif goes on repeating the same accusation, the punishment which he has already been awarded, will suffice. However, if after the enforcement of the prescribed punishment, he brings another charge of zina against the accused, he will be tried again for the new charge of qazf. Abu Bakrah after getting the punishment in the case against Mughirah bin Shubah, went on repeating openly that he bore witness that Mughirah had committed zina. Umar wanted to try him again, but as he was repeating the same accusation, Ali expressed the opinion that he could not be tried again and Umar conceded it. After this the jurists became almost unanimous that a qazif who has received the prescribed punishment for a crime, cannot be tried again unless he commits a fresh crime of qazf.

(14) There is a difference among the jurists with regard to qazf against a group. According to the Hanafis, if a person accuses a number of persons in one word or in more words separately, he will be awarded only one prescribed punishment unless, of course, lie commits a fresh crime of qazf after the enforcement of the first punishment. The words of the verse "Those who accuse chaste woman" indicate that the accuser of one person or more persons deserves only one punishment. Moreover, there can be no zina for which at least two persons cannot be accused, but in spite of that the law-giver has prescribed only one punishment and not two, one for accusing the woman and the other for accusing the man. Contrary to this, Imam Shafai holds that the person who accuses a group of persons, whether in one word or in more words separately, will be awarded as many punishments as the number of the persons accused, one for each. The same is the opinion of Uthman al-Batti. However, the ruling of Ibn Abi Laila, to which Shabi and Auzai also subscribe, is that the one who accuses a group of persons of zina in one word, deserves one punishment, and the one who accuses them separately in separate words, deserves separate punishments, one for each.

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَرْمُوْنَ الْمُحْصَنٰتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَاْتُوْا بِاَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَآءَ فَاجْلِدُوْهُمْ ثَمٰنِيْنَ جَلْدَةً وَّلَا تَقْبَلُوْا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً اَبَدًا ۚ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ۙ 4

(24:4) Those who accuse honourable women (of unchastity) but do not produce four witnesses, flog them with eighty lashes, and do not admit their testimony ever after. They are indeed transgressors,

اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ وَاَصْلَحُوْا ۚ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ 5

(24:5) except those of them that repent thereafter and mend their behaviour. For surely Allah is Most Forgiving, Ever Compassionate.[6]

6. Allah is the most merciful of all.

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَرْمُوْنَ اَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُمْ شُهَدَآءُ اِلَّآ اَنْفُسُهُمْ فَشَهَادَةُ اَحَدِهِمْ اَرْبَعُ شَهٰدٰتٍۢ بِاللّٰهِ ۙ اِنَّهٗ لَمِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ 6

(24:6) As for those who accuse their wives (of unchastity), and have no witnesses except themselves: the testimony of such a one is that he testify, swearing by Allah four times, that he is truthful (in his accusation),

وَالْخَامِسَةُ اَنَّ لَعْنَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ اِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ 7

(24:7) and a fifth time, that the curse of Allah be on him if he be lying (in his accusation).

وَيَدْرَؤُا عَنْهَا الْعَذَابَ اَنْ تَشْهَدَ اَرْبَعَ شَهٰدٰتٍۢ بِاللّٰهِ ۙ اِنَّهٗ لَمِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ۙ 8

(24:8) And the punishment shall be averted from the woman if she were to testify, swearing by Allah four times that the man was lying,

وَالْخَامِسَةَ اَنَّ غَضَبَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهَآ اِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ 9

(24:9) and a fifth time that the wrath of Allah be on her if the man be truthful (in his accusation).[7]

7. These verses were revealed some time after the preceding verses. The law of qazf prescribed the punishment for the person who accused the other man or woman of zina, and did not produce witnesses to prove his charge, but the question naturally arose, what should a man do if he finds his own wife involved in zina? If he kills her, he will be guilty of murder and punishable. If he goes to get witnesses, the offender might escape. If he tries to ignore the matter, he cannot do so for long. He can, of course, divorce the woman, but in this case there will be no moral or physical punishment either for the woman or her seducer. And if the illicit intercourse results in pregnancy, he will have to suffer the burden of bringing up another person's child. Initially this question was raised by Saad bin Ubadah as a hypothetical case, who said that if he happened to see such a thing in his own house, he would not go in search of witnesses, but would settle the matter there and then with the sword. (Bukhari, Muslim). But soon afterwards actual cases were brought before the Prophet (peace be upon him) by the husbands who were eyewitnesses of this thing. According to traditions related by Abdullah bin Masud and Ibn Umar, an Ansar Muslim (probably Uwaimir Ajlani) came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said: O Messenger of Allah, if a person finds another man with his wife, and utters an accusation, you will enforce the prescribed punishment of qazf on him; if he commits murder, you will have him killed; if he keeps quiet, he will remain involved in anguish; then, what should he do? At this the Prophet (peace be upon him) prayed: O Allah, give a solution of this problem. (Muslim, Bukhari, Abu Daud, Ahmad, Nasai). Ibn Abbas has reported that Hilal bin

Umayyah presented the case of his wife whom he had himself witnessed involved in the act of sin. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Bring your proof, otherwise you will have the prescribed punishment of qazf inflicted on you. At this a panic spread among the companions, and Hilai said: I swear by Allah Who has sent you as a Prophet that I am speaking the truth. I have seen it with my eyes and heard it with my ears. I am sure Allah will send down a command, which will protect my back (from the punishment). So, this verse was revealed. (Bukhari, Ahmad, Abu Daud). The legal procedure which has been laid down in this verse is termed as the law of lian.

The details of the cases which the Prophet (peace be upon him) judged in accordance with the law of lian are found in the books of Hadith and these form the source and basis of this law.

According to the details of Hilai bin Umayyah's case as reported in sihah-sitta, Musnad Ahmad and Tafsir Ibn Jarir, on the authority of Ibn Abbas and Anas bin Malik, both Hilai and his wife were presented before the Prophet (peace be upon him), who first of all apprised them of the divine law, and then said: You should note it well that the punishment of the Hereafter is much severer than the punishment of this world. Hilai submitted that his charge was absolutely correct. The woman denied it. The Prophet (peace be upon him) then said: Let us proceed according to the law of lian. So, Hilai stood up first and swore oaths according to the Quranic command. The Prophet (peace be upon him) went on reminding them again and again: Allah knows that one of you is certainly a liar: then, will one of you repent? Before Hilai swore for the fifth time, the people who were present there, said to him: Fear God, the punishment of the world is lighter than of the Hereafter. The fifth oath will make the punishment obligatory on you. But Hilai said that God Who had protected his back (from punishment) in this world, will also spare him in the Hereafter. After this he swore the fifth oath, too. Then the woman began to swear oaths. Before she swore the fifth oath, she was also stopped and counseled: Fear God, the worldly punishment is easier to bear than the punishment of the Hereafter. This last oath will make the divine punishment obligatory on you. Hearing this the woman hesitated a little. The people thought that she was going to make the confession. But instead of that she said: I do not want to put my clan to disgrace for ever, and swore for the fifth time, too. At this the Prophet ordered separation between them and ruled that her child after birth would be attributed to her and not to the man; that nobody after that would blame her or her child; that anybody who accused either of them would incur the punishment of qazf and that she had no right left to claim maintenance, etc. from Hilai during her legal waiting period, because she was being separated neither on account of divorce nor due to the husband's death. Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked the people to see whether the child on birth looks after Hilai or the man who was being accused in connection with the woman. After delivery when it was seen that the child looked after the other man, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: If there had been no swearing of the oaths (or if Allah's Book had not settled the matter before this), I would have dealt with this woman most severely.

The details of the case of Uwaimir Ajlani have been cited in Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, Nasai, Ibn Majah and Musnad Ahmad, on the authority of Sahl bin Saad Saidi and Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with them both). According to these, Uwaimir and his wife were both summoned to the Prophet's Mosque. Before proceeding against them in accordance with the law of lian, the Prophet (peace be upon him) warned them thrice, saying: Allah knows well

that one of you is a liar; then, will one of you repent? When neither repented, they were told to exercise lian. After that Uwaimir said: O Messenger of Allah, now if I keep this woman, I would be a liar and then he divorced her thrice there and then even without the Prophet's (peace be upon him) permission to do so. According to Sahl bin Saad, the Prophet (peace be upon him) enforced the divorce to separate them, and said: There shall be separation between the husband and the wife if they exercise lian. This became established as a Sunnah that the couple who swore against each other would separate never to marry again. Ibn Umar only says this that the Prophet (peace be upon him) enforced separation between them. Sahl bin Saad, however, adds that the woman was pregnant and Uwaimir said that it was not due to his seed; so the child was attributed to the mother. The practice that thus became established was that such a child would inherit the mother and the mother him.

Apart from these two cases, we find several other traditions also in the books of Hadith, which may or may not be related to these cases, but some of these traditions mention other cases as well, which provide important components of the law of lian.

Ibn Umar has reported traditions according to which the Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered separation between the spouses after lian and ruled that in case of pregnancy the child would be attributed to the mother (sihah Sitta, Ahmad). According to another tradition of Ibn Umar, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to a man and woman after lian: Now your affair is with Allah, in any case one of you is a liar. Then he said to the man: Now she is not yours, you have no right on her, nor can you treat her vindictively in any way. The man requested to have my dowry returned. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: You have no right to have the dowry back. If you are true in your accusation, the dowry is the price of the pleasure you had from her when she was lawful to you; and if your accusation is false, the dowry has receded farther away from you than it is from her. (Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud).

Daraqutni has quoted Ali bin Abi Talib and Ibn Masud (may Allah be pleased with them both) as saying: The Sunnah that has become established is that the spouses who have exercised lian against each other, can never re-unite in marriage. Again Daraqutni has quoted Abdullah bin Abbas as saying: The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself has ruled that the two can never re-unite in wedlock.

Qabisah bin Zuaib has reported that a man in the time of Umar alleged that his wife was pregnant by illicit intercourse, then admitted that it was by his own seed, but after delivery again denied that the child was his. The case was brought to the court of Umar, who enforced the prescribed punishment of qazf on the man and ruled that the child would be attributed to him. (Daraqutni, Baihaqi).

Ibn Abbas has reported that a man came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said: I have a wife for whom I have great love; but her weakness is that she does not mind if the other man touches her. (By this he might have meant zina or a lesser moral evil). The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: You may divorce her. The man said: But I cannot live without her. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Then you should pull on with her. The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not ask the man for any explanation, nor took his complaint as an accusation of zina, nor applied the law of lian. (Nasai).

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

According to another tradition of Abu Hurairah, explaining the verse of lian the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The woman who brings a child into a family which does not actually belong to it (i.e. marries a man of the family with illicit pregnancy), has no relation with Allah. Allah will never admit her into Paradise. Similarly, the man who denies the fatherhood of his child, whereas the child looks up towards him, will never see Allah on the Day of Judgment, and Allah will put him to disgrace in front of all mankind. (Abu Daud, Nasai, Darimi).

Thus, the verse of lian, the traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the precedents and the general principles of the Shariah together form the basis of the law of lian, which the jurists have formulated a complete code with the following main clauses.

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

(2) The law of lian cannot be applied mutually at home, but in a court of law in front of the judge.

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

(4) There is a difference of opinion among the jurists as to whether lian can be resorted to between any husband and his wife, or whether they have to satisfy certain conditions. Imam

Shafai holds that only that husband whose oath is legally reliable and who can exercise the right of divorce, can swear the oaths of lian. In other words, sanity and maturity according to him, are the sufficient conditions which entitle a husband to exercise lian no matter whether the spouses are Muslim or non-Muslim, slave or free, and whether their evidence is acceptable or not, and whether the Muslim husband has a Muslim or a zimmi wife. Imam Malik and Imam Ahmad have also given almost the same opinion. But the Hanafis maintain that lian can be exercised only by free Muslim spouses, who should not have been convicted of qazf previously. If both husband and wife are non Muslim, or slaves, or convicted of qazf previously, they cannot exercise lian against each other. Further more, if the woman was ever found guilty of an illicit or doubtful relationship with another man, exercise of lian will not be valid. The Hanafis have imposed these conditions, because according to them, there is no other difference between lian and qazf than this: the other man commits qazf, he is given the prescribed punishment, but if the husband himself commits it, he can escape the punishment by exercising lian. In all other respects, lian and qazf are identical. Moreover, since according to the Hanafis, the oaths of lian are in the nature of evidence, they do not concede this right to a person who is not legally fit to give evidence. But the truth is that in this matter the position of the Hanafis is weak, and the opinion of Imam Shafai is correct, because the Quran has not made the accusation of the wife a component part of the verse of qazf, but has prescribed a separate law for it. Therefore, it cannot be linked with the law of qazf and treated under the conditions prescribed for qazf. Then, the wording of the verse of lian is different from the wording of the verse of qazf and the two lay down separate injunctions. Therefore, the law of lian should be derived from the verse of lian and not from the verse of qazf. For instance, according to the verse of qazf, the person who accuses chaste women (muhsanat) of zina, deserves to be punished. But in the verse of lian, there is no condition of the chastity of the wife. A woman might have committed sins in life, but if she repents later on and marries somebody, the husband is not authorised by the verse of lian to accuse her unjustly whenever he likes, and to deny fatherhood of her children simply because she had once lived in sin. The other equally important reason is that there is a world of difference between accusing a wife and accusing the other woman. The law cannot treat the two alike. A man has nothing to do with the other woman. He is neither attached to her emotionally, nor his honor, nor his family relations and rights are at stake, nor his lineage. The only meaningful interest he can have in the woman's character can be his desire to see a morally pure and clean society. Contrary to this, his relationship with his wife is deep and of varied nature. She is the custodian of the purity of his race, of his property and his house; she is his life partner, sharer of his secrets, and with her he is attached in most delicate and deep feelings. If she is morally corrupt, it will deal a serious blow to his honor, his interests and his progeny. These two things, therefore, cannot be considered alike, and the law cannot treat them as equal to each other. Is an evil affair of the wife of a zimmi, or a slave, or a convicted husband in any way different, or less serious, in consequences than that of the wife of a free, mature and sound Muslim? If the husband himself sees his wife involved in zina with another person, or has reasons to believe that his wife is pregnant by illicit intercourse, how can he be denied the right of lian? And if he is denied this right, what else is there in our law which can help him out of his awkward situation? The intention of the Quran seems to be to open a way out of a difficult situation for married couples in which a husband may find himself placed due to the wife's immorality or illicit pregnancy, or a wife due to the husband's false accusation or unjustified denial of the fatherhood of her child. This is not particularly the need of the free and sound Muslims alone; there is in fact nothing

in the Quranic text which may confine it to them only. As for the argument that the Quran has described the oaths of lian as evidence (shahadat), and therefore the conditions of evidence will apply here, the logical implication would be that in case a righteous and just husband whose evidence is acceptable, takes the necessary oaths, and the wife declines to take the oaths, she would have to be stoned to death, because her immorality would thus become established. But it is strange that in this case the Hanafis do not recommend stoning. This is a clear proof of the fact that they too do not regard the oaths as exactly identical with evidence. The truth is that though the Quran describes the oaths of lian as evidence, it does not regard them as evidence in the technical sense, otherwise it would have required the woman to swear eight oaths and not four.

(5) Lian is not necessitated by an allusion or expression of doubt or suspicion, but only when the husband accuses his wife clearly of zina, or denies in plain words that the child is his. Imam Malik and Laith bin Saad impose an additional condition that the husband while exercising lian must say that he has himself seen his wife involved in zina. But this is an unnecessary restriction which has no basis whatever in the Quran and Hadith.

(6) If after accusing his wife, the husband declines to swear the oaths, the verdict of Imam Abu Hanifah and his companions is that he will be imprisoned and shall not be released until he exercises lian or confesses the falsehood of his accusation, in which case he will be awarded the prescribed punishment of qazf. On the contrary, Imam Malik, Shafai, Hasan bin Saleh and Laith bin Saad express the opinion that refusal to exercise lian itself amounts to confessing one's being a liar, which makes the prescribed punishment of qazf obligatory.

(7) If after the swearing of oaths by the husband, the wife declines to take the oaths, the Hanafis give the opinion that she should be imprisoned and should not be released until she exercises lian, or else confesses her guilt of zina. On the contrary, the other Imams (as mentioned in clause 6 above) say that in this case she will be stoned to death. They base their argument on the Quranic injunction: "it shall avert the punishment from her if she swears four times by Allah," Now that she declines to swear the oaths, she inevitably deserves the punishment. But the weakness in this argument is that the Quran does not specify here the nature of punishment; it simply mentions punishment. If it is argued that punishment here means the punishment of zina only, the answer is that for the punishment of zina the Quran has imposed the condition of four witnesses in clear words, and this condition cannot be fulfilled by four oaths sworn by one person. The husband's oaths can suffice for him to escape the punishment of qazf and for the wife to face the injunction of lian, but they are not enough to prove the charge of zina against her. The woman's refusal to swear the oaths in self-defense certainly creates a suspicion, and a strong suspicion indeed, but a prescribed punishment cannot be enforced on the basis of suspicions. This thing cannot be considered as analogous with the prescribed punishment of qazf for the man, because his qazf is established, and that is why he is made to exercise lian. But contrary to this, the woman's guilt of zina is not established unless she herself makes a confession of it or four eyewitnesses are produced to prove it.

(8) If the woman is pregnant at the time of lian, according to Imam Ahmad, lian itself suffices to absolve the husband from the responsibility for pregnancy whether he has denied accepting it or not. Imam Shafai, however, says that accusation of zina by the husband and his refusal to accept responsibility for pregnancy are not one and the same thing. Therefore,

unless the husband categorically refuses to accept the responsibility for pregnancy, he will be considered as responsible for it in spite of the accusation of zina by him, because the woman's being adulterous does not necessarily mean that her pregnancy is also due to zina.

(9) Imam Malik, Imam Shafai and Imam Ahmad concede the husband's right to deny responsibility for pregnancy during pregnancy, and allow him the right of lian on that basis. But Imam Abu Hanifah says that if the basis for the man's accusation is not zina, but only this that he has found pregnancy in the woman when it could not possibly be due to him, exercise of lian should be deferred until after delivery because sometimes symptoms of pregnancy appear due to some disease and not actual pregnancy.

(10) If a husband denies fatherhood of a child, there is a consensus that lian becomes necessary There is also a consensus that after he has accepted e child once (whether it is in clear words or by implication, e.g. by receiving congratulatory messages on its birth, or by treating it lovingly like one's own child and taking due interest in its bringing up), he loses his right to deny him later, and if he does so, he makes himself liable to the prescribed punishment of qazf.

There is, however, a difference of opinion as to how long the father retains a right to deny fatherhood of the child. According to Imam Malik, if the husband was present at home while the wife was pregnant, he can deny the responsibility from the time of pregnancy till the time of delivery; after that he will have no right. However, if he was away from home and delivery took place in his absence, he can deny the child's fatherhood as soon as it comes to his knowledge. According to Imam Abu Hanifah, if he denies within a day or two of the child's birth, he will be absolved from the responsibility of the child after exercising lian, but if he denies after a year or two, lian will be valid, but he will not be absolved from the responsibility of the child. According to Imam Abu Yusuf, the father has the right to deny fatherhood within 40 days of the child's birth or knowledge of its birth; after that he will have no right. But this restriction of 40 days is meaningless. The correct view is that of Imam Abu Hanifah that fatherhood can be denied within a day or two of the child's birth or knowledge of its birth, unless one is hindered from doing so due to a sound and genuine reason.

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

(12) There is a complete consensus of opinion in respect of certain legal implications of lian, but certain others have been disputed by the jurists. The agreed ones are the following. Neither the woman nor the man is liable to punishment. If the man denies fatherhood of the child, it will be attributed to the mother alone; it will neither be attributed to the father nor

will inherit him; the child will inherit the mother and the mother him. Thereafter nobody will have the right to call the woman adulterous nor the child illegitimate, whether the people might be completely sure of her being adulterous under the circumstances at the time of lian. Any person who repeats the old charge against the woman or her child, will make himself liable to the punishment of qazf. The woman's dowry will remain intact, but she will not be entitled to claim maintenance, etc. from the man, and she will become forbidden to him forever. There is, however, a difference of opinion in respect of two things.

(a) After lian how will separation be effected between the husband and the wife?

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

As regards to the first question, Imam Shafai holds the opinion that as soon as a man has exercised his lian, the woman stands automatically separated whether she refutes the man's charge by her lian or not. Imam Malik, Laith bin Saad and Zufar maintain that separation is effected when both a man and a woman have exercised their lian one after the other. Imam Abu Hanifah, Abu Yusuf and Muhammad hold that separation does not take place automatically after lian, but it is affected by the judge. If the husband pronounces divorce, it takes effect otherwise the judge will announce their separation.

Regarding the second, question, the opinion of Imam Malik, Abu Yusuf, Zufar, Sufyan Thauri, Ishaq bin Rahaviyah, Shafai, Ahmad bin Hanbal and Hasan bin Zaid is that the spouses who have been separated due to lian are forbidden to each other forever. Even if they wish to remarry, they cannot do so in any case. The same is the opinion also of Umar, Ali and Abdullah bin Masud. Contrary to this, Said bin Musayyab, Ibrahim Nakhai, Shabi, Said bin Jubair, Abu Hanifah and Muhammad (may Allah be pleased with them all) opine that if the husband confesses his lie, and he is awarded the prescribed punishment for qazf, the two can re-unite in marriage. They argue that it is lian which makes them unlawful for each other. As long as they stand by their lian, they will remain forbidden for each other, but when the husband confesses his lie and receives the punishment, lian will become null and void and so will their prohibition to marry each other again.

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهٗ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ تَوَّابٌ حَكِيْمٌ ۚ 10

(24:10) Were it not for Allah's Bounty and His Mercy unto you and that Allah is much prone to accept repentance and is Wise, (you would have landed yourselves into great difficulty on the question of unsubstantiated accusation of your spouses).

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ جَآءُوْ بِالْاِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ ؕ لَا تَحْسَبُوْهُ شَرًّا لَّكُمْ ؕ بَلْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ؕ لِكُلِّ

امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَّا اكْتَسَبَ مِنَ الْاِثْمِ ۚ وَالَّذِيْ تَوَلّٰى كِبْرَهٗ مِنْهُمْ لَهٗ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ 11

(24:11) Surely those who invented this calumny[8] are a band from among you.[9] Do not deem this incident an evil for you; nay, it is good for you.[10] Every one of them has accumulated sin in proportion to his share in this guilt;[11] and he who has the greater part of it shall suffer a mighty chastisement.

8. This is an allusion to the slander against Aishah. Allah has Himself described it as ifk (false accusation, calumny) which implies its total refutation. From here begins the mention of the incident which provided the occasion of this Surah's revelation. We have reproduced the initial part of it in the introduction as related by Aishah herself; the rest of it is reproduced below. She says:

Rumours about this slander went on spreading in the city for about a month, which caused great distress and anguish to the Prophet (peace be upon him). I cried due to helplessness and my parents were sick with mental agony. At last one day the Prophet (peace be upon him) visited us and he sat near me, which he had not done since the slander had started. Feeling that something decisive was going to happen that day, Abu Bakr and Umm Ruman (Aishah's mother) also sat near us. The Prophet (peace be upon him) started the conversation, saying: Aishah, I have heard this and this about you: if you are innocent, I expect that Allah will declare your innocence. But it you you have committed a sin, you should offer repentance and ask for Allah's forgiveness; when a servant (of Allah) confesses his guilt and repents, Allah forgives him. Hearing these words, tears dried in my eyes. I looked up to my father expecting that he would reply to the Prophet (peace be upon him), but he said: Daughter, I do not know what I should say. Then I turned to my mother, but she also did not know what to say. At last I said: You have all heard something about me and believed it. Now if I say that I am innocent and Allah is my witness that I am innocent, you will not believe me; and if I confess something which I never did and Allah knows that I never did it, you will believe me. At that time I tried to call to memory the name of Prophet Jacob but could not recall it. Therefore in view of the predicament that I was placed in, I said: I cannot but repeat the words which the father of Prophet Joseph had spoken: fasabrun jamil: I will bear this patiently with good grace. (Surah Yousuf, Ayat 83). Saying this I lay down and turned to the other side. I was thinking that Allah was aware of my innocence, and He would certainly reveal the truth, but I could never imagine that divine revelation would come down in my defense, which the people will read and recite till the Last Day. What I thought probable was that the Prophet (peace be upon him) would see a dream in which Allah would indicate my innocence. But in the meantime suddenly, the state of receiving revelation appeared on the Prophet (peace be upon him), when pearl-like drops of perspiration used to gather on his face even in severe winter. We all held our breath and sat silent. As for me I was fearless, but my parents seemed to be struck with fear; they did not know what the divine revelation would be. When the revelation was over, the Prophet (peace be upon him) seemed to be very pleased. Over-joyed with happiness the first words he spoke were: Congratulations, Aishah, Allah has sent down proof of your innocence and then he recited these ten (verses 11-21). At this my mother said to me: Get up and thank the Prophet (peace be upon him). I said: I shall neither thank him nor you two, but thank Allah Who has sent down my absolution. You did not even so much as contradict the charge against me. (This is not the translation of any one tradition, but the substance of many traditions which are found in the books of Hadith in connection with the incident of the slander against Hadrat Aishah).

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

9. Only a few persons have been mentioned in traditions, who were spreading the rumours. They were: Abdullah bin Ubayy, Zaid bin Rifaah (who was probably the son of Rifaah bin Zaid, the Jewish hypocrite), Mistah bin Uthathah, Hassan bin Thabit, and Hamnah bint Jahsh. The first two of these were hypocrites, and the other three Muslims, who had been involved in the mischief due to misunderstanding and weakness. Names of the other people who were more or less involved in the mischief have not been mentioned in the books of Hadith and life of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

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

As mentioned in the introduction above, the hypocrites had planned to inflict a defeat on the Muslims on the moral front, which was their real field of superiority and responsible for their victory on every other front against the opponents. But Allah turned this mischief into a means of strength for the Muslims. On this occasion, the conduct and attitude adopted by the Prophet (peace be upon him), Abu Bakr and his family, and the Muslims at large proved beyond any doubt that they were the purest people morally, tolerant and just in nature, noble and forbearing in character. If the Prophet (peace be upon him) had wished he could have gotten the people responsible for the attack on his honor beheaded immediately. But he bore everything with patience for a whole month. And when divine injunction came down from Allah, he enforced the punishment for qazf only on those three Muslims whose guilt was established, and even spared the hypocrites. Abu Bakr's own relative, whose whole family he had been supporting all along, continued heaping disgrace on him publicly, but that noble man neither severed his family relations with him nor stopped monetary help to him and his family. None of the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) took the least part in the slander nor even expressed the slightest approval of it. So much so that Zainab (a wife of the Prophet), for whose sake her real sister, Hamnah bint Jahsh, was taking part in the slander, did not utter anything about her rival (Aishah) except good words. According to Aishah herself: Zainab, among the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him), was my strongest rival, but when in connection with the incident of the slander, the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked her opinion of me, she said: O Messenger of Allah, I swear by God that I have perceived nothing in her except piety. Aishah's own nobility of character can be judged by this that though Hassan bin Thabit had played a prominent role in the campaign of slander against her, she continued to treat him with due honour and esteem. When the

people reminded her that he was the man who had slandered her, she retorted: No, he it was who used to rebut the anti-Islamic poets on behalf of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and Islam. Such was the conduct and attitude of those people who were directly affected by the slander. As for the other Muslims, their attitude can be judged from one instance. When Abu Ayyub Ansari's wife mentioned before him the rumours of the slander, he said: Mother of Ayyub, if you had been there in place of Aishah, would you have done that? She replied: By God, I would never have done it. Ayyub then said: Well, Aishah is a much better woman than you. As for myself, if I had been in place of Safwan, I could never have entertained such an evil thought and Safwan is a better Muslim than me. Thus, the result of the mischief engineered by the hypocrites was contrary to what they had planned to achieve, and the Muslims emerged out of this test morally stronger than before.

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

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

11. That is, Abdullah bin Ubayy, who was the real author of the false accusation and mischief. In some traditions it has been wrongly claimed that this verse refers to Hassan bin Thabit; this is actually due to a misunderstanding of the narrators themselves. As a matter of fact, Hassan bin Thabit's only weakness was that he became involved in the mischief engineered by the hypocrites. Hafiz Ibn Kathir has rightly observed that if this tradition had not been included in Bukhari, it would not have deserved any notice. The greatest falsehood, rather a calumny, in this connection is the assertion by the Umayyads that it was Ali who had been referred to in this verse. A saying of Hisham bin Abdul Malik has been cited in Bukhari, Tabarani and Baihaqi to the effect: The one who had the greatest share of responsibility in it refers to Ali bin Abi Talib. The fact, however, is that Ali had no hand whatever in this mischief. The truth is that when Ali saw the Prophet (peace be upon him) in a perturbed state of mind and the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked for his counsel, he said: Allah in this matter has not laid any restriction on you: suitable women are plenty: you may if you like divorce Aishah and marry another woman. But this did not at all mean that

Ali had supported the accusation against Aishah. His object was only to allay the Prophet's (peace be upon him) mental anguish.

لَوْلَآ إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَٰتُ بِأَنفُسِهِمْ خَيْرًا وَقَالُوا هَٰذَآ إِفْكٌ مُّبِينٌ 12

(24:12) When you heard of it, why did the believing men and women not think well of their own folk[12] and say: "This is a manifest calumny?"[13]

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

13. That is, the accusation was not worth any consideration; the Muslims should have rejected it there and then as a lie and a falsehood. A question might be asked: Why did not the Prophet (peace be upon him) and Abu Bakr Siddiq reject it on the very first day, and why did they give it all that importance? The answer is that the position of the husband and

the father is different from that of the common people. Though none else can know a woman better than her husband and a righteous husband cannot doubt the character of a virtuous and pious wife only on account of the people's accusations, but when the wife is accused, the husband is placed in a difficult situation. Even if he rejects it outright as a calumny, the accusers will not listen. They will rather say that the woman is clever and has beguiled the husband into believing that she is virtuous and pious whereas she is not. A similar situation is faced by the parents. They also cannot remove the accusers' slander regarding their daughter's chastity even if they know that the accusation is manifestly false. The same thing had afflicted the Prophet (peace be upon him), Abu Bakr and Umm Ruman, otherwise they did not entertain any doubt about Aishah's character. That is why the Prophet (peace be upon him) had declared in his sermon that he had neither seen any evil in his wife nor in the man who was being mentioned in the slander.

لَوْلَا جَآءُوْ عَلَيْهِ بِاَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَآءَ ۚ فَاِذْ لَمْ يَاْتُوْا بِالشُّهَدَآءِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ هُمُ الْكٰذِبُوْنَ 13

(24:13) Why did they not bring four witnesses in support of their accusation? Now that they have brought no witnesses, it is indeed they who are liars in the sight of Allah.[14]

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

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

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهٗ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِيْ مَآ اَفَضْتُمْ فِيْهِ عَذَابٌ
صلج
عَظِيْمٌ 14

(24:14) Were it not for Allah's Bounty and His Mercy unto you in the world and in the Hereafter a grievous chastisement would have seized you on account of what you indulged in.

اِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَهٗ بِاَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَتَقُوْلُوْنَ بِاَفْوَاهِكُمْ مَّا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ وَّتَحْسَبُوْنَهٗ هَيِّنًا ۖ صلے ق
وَّهُوَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ عَظِيْمٌ 15

(24:15) (Just think, how wrong you were) when one tongue received it from another and you uttered with your mouths something you knew nothing about. You deemed it to be a trifle while in the sight of Allah it was a serious matter.

وَلَوْلَآ اِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوْهُ قُلْتُمْ مَّا يَكُوْنُ لَنَآ اَنْ نَّتَكَلَّمَ بِهٰذَا ۖ صلے ق سُبْحٰنَكَ هٰذَا بُهْتَانٌ
عَظِيْمٌ 16

(24:16) And why, no sooner than you had heard it, did you not say: "It becomes us not even to utter such a thing? Holy are You (O Allah)! This is a mighty calumny."

يَعِظُكُمُ اللّٰهُ اَنْ تَعُوْدُوْا لِمِثْلِهٖٓ اَبَدًا اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ج 17

(24:17) Allah admonishes you: If you are true believers, never repeat the like of what you did.

وَيُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ط 18

(24:18) Allah clearly expounds to you His instructions. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.[15]

15. These verses, especially (verse 12), wherein Allah says: “Why did not the believing men and the believing women have a good opinion of themselves” provide the general principle that all dealings in the Islamic society must be based on good faith. The question of a bad opinion should arise only when there is a definite and concrete basis for it. Every person should, as a matter of principle, be considered as innocent unless there are sound reasons to

hold him guilty or suspect. Every person should be considered as truthful unless there are strong grounds for holding him as unreliable.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَن تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا
وَالْآخِرَةِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ 19

(24:19) Verily those who love that indecency should spread among the believers deserve a painful chastisement in the world and the Hereafter.[16] Allah knows, but you do not know.[17]

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

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

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ۝ 20

(24:20) Were it not for Allah's Bounty and His Mercy unto you, and that Allah is Most Forgiving and Wise, (the evil that had been spread among you would have led to terrible consequences).

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّبِعُوْا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ۭ وَمَنْ يَّتَّبِعْ خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ فَاِنَّهٗ
يَاْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاۗءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ۭ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهٗ مَا زَكٰى مِنْكُمْ مِّنْ اَحَدٍ
اَبَدًا ۙ وَّلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُزَكِّيْ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ 21

(24:21) Believers! Do not follow in Satan's footsteps. Let him who follows in Satan's footsteps (remember that) Satan bids people to indecency and evil. Were it not for Allah's Bounty and His Mercy unto you, not one of you would have ever attained purity.[18] But Allah enables whomsoever He wills to attain purity. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.[19]

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

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

وَلَا يَاْتَلِ اُولُوا الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ وَالسَّعَةِ اَنْ يُّؤْتُوْٓا اُولِي الْقُرْبٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنَ وَالْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ
فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۡ وَلْيَعْفُوْا وَلْيَصْفَحُوْا ۭ اَلَا تُحِبُّوْنَ اَنْ يَّغْفِرَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ
رَّحِيْمٌ 22

(24:22) Let those among you who are bounteous and resourceful not swear to withhold giving to the kindred, to the needy, and to those who have forsaken their homes in the cause of Allah; rather, let them forgive and forbear. Do you not wish that Allah should forgive you? Allah is Ever Forgiving, Most Merciful.[20]

20. Aishah has stated that after the revelation of (verses 11- 21)absolving her from the accusation, Abu Bakr swore that he would no longer support Mistah bin Uthatha. This was because the man had shown absolutely no regard for the relationship, nor for the favors that Abu Bakr had all along been showing him and his family. At this (verse 22)was revealed and Abu Bakr, on hearing it, immediately said: By God, we do want that Allah should forgive us. Consequently he again started to help Mistah and in a more liberal manner than before. According to Abdullah bin Abbas, some other companions, besides Abu Bakr, also

had sworn that they would discontinue helping those who had taken an active part in the slander. After the revelation of this verse, all of them revoked their oaths and the ill-will that had been created by the mischief was gone.

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

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

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ الْغَافِلَاتِ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ لُعِنُوا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ۙ 23

(24:23) Those that accuse chaste, unwary, believing women,[21] have been cursed in the world and the Hereafter, and a mighty chastisement awaits them.

21. The word ghafilat as used in the text means the women who are simple, unpretentious souls, who do not know any artifice, who have pious hearts and have no idea of immorality. They cannot even imagine that their names could ever be associated with any slander. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has said: To slander chaste women is one of the seven deadly sins. According to another tradition cited by Tabarani from Huzaifah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: To slander a pious woman suffices to ruin the good deeds of a hundred years.

يَّوۡمَ تَشۡهَدُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ اَلۡسِنَتُهُمۡ وَاَيۡدِيۡهِمۡ وَاَرۡجُلُهُمۡ بِمَا كَانُوۡا يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ 24

(24:24) (Let them not be heedless of) the Day when their own tongues, their hands, and their feet shall all bear witness against them as to what they have been doing.[21a]

21a. For explanation, see (E.N. 55 of Surah YaSin) and (E.N. 25 of Surah HaMim Sajdah).

يَوۡمَئِذٍ يُّوَفِّيۡهِمُ اللّٰهُ دِيۡنَهُمُ الۡحَـقَّ وَيَعۡلَمُوۡنَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الۡحَـقُّ الۡمُبِيۡنُ 25

(24:25) On that Day Allah will justly requite them, and they will come to know that Allah - and He alone - is the Truth, the One Who makes the Truth manifest.

اَلۡخَبِيۡثٰتُ لِلۡخَبِيۡثِيۡنَ وَالۡخَبِيۡثُوۡنَ لِلۡخَبِيۡثٰتِ ۚ وَالطَّيِّبٰتُ لِلطَّيِّبِيۡنَ وَالطَّيِّبُوۡنَ لِلطَّيِّبٰتِ ۚ اُولٰٓئِكَ مُبَرَّءُوۡنَ مِمَّا يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ ؕ لَهُمۡ مَّغۡفِرَةٌ وَّرِزۡقٌ كَرِيۡمٌ ۚ 26

(24:26) Corrupt women are for corrupt men, and corrupt men for corrupt women. Good women are for good men, and good men for good women. They are innocent of the calumnies people utter.[22] There shall be forgiveness for them and a generous provision.

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

Some commentators have interpreted this verse to mean that evil things are for the evil people and good things for the good people. The good people are free from the evil things which the wicked people utter about them. Some others have interpreted it to mean that evil deeds only go with evil people and good deeds with good people. The pious people are free from the evil deeds which the wicked people ascribe to them. Still others interpret it to mean that evil and filthy talk is indulged in only by the evil and filthy people and good and pious

talk only by the good and pious people. The pious people are free from the sort of talk that these mischievous people are indulging in. The words of the verse are comprehensive and can be interpreted in any of the three ways, but the first meaning that strikes the reader is the one that we have adopted above and the same fits in more meaningfully with the context than others.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ لَا تَدۡخُلُواْ بُيُوتًا غَيۡرَ بُيُوتِكُمۡ حَتَّىٰ تَسۡتَأۡنِسُواْ وَتُسَلِّمُواْ عَلَىٰٓ أَهۡلِهَاۖ ذَٰلِكُمۡ خَيۡرٞ لَّكُمۡ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَذَكَّرُونَ 27

(24:27) Believers![23] Enter not houses other than your own houses until you have obtained the permission of the inmates[24] of those houses and have greeted them with peace. This is better for you. It is expected that you will observe this.[25]

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

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

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

24. The Arabic word tasta nisu in the text has been generally interpreted to mean the same as tasta zinu. There is, however, a fine difference between the two words which should not be lost sight of. Had the word in the text been tasta zinu, the verse would have meant: Do not enter other people's houses until you have taken their permission. Allah has used tasta nisu which is derived from the root uns, meaning fondness, affection, regard, etc. According to this, the verse would mean: Do not enter other people's houses until you are sure of their affection and regard for yourself. In other words, you should make sure that your entry in the house is not disagreeable to the inmates and you are sure of a welcome. That is why we have translated the word into approval of the inmates instead of permission of the inmates, because the word approval expresses the sense of the original more precisely.

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

(1) The right of privacy was not merely confined to the question of entry in the houses, but it was declared as a common right according to which it is forbidden to peep into a house, glance from outside, or even read the other person's letter without his permission. According to Thauban, who was a freed slave of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: When you have already cast a look into a house, what is then the sense in seeking permission for entry? (Abu Daud). Huzail bin Shurahbil has reported that a man came to see the Prophet (peace be upon him) and sought permission for entry while standing just in front of the door. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to him: Stand aside: the object of the commandment for seeking permission is to prevent casting of looks inside the house. (Abu Daud). The practice of the Prophet (peace be upon him) was that whenever he went to see somebody, he would stand aside, to the right or the left of the door, and seek permission as it was not then usual to hang curtains on the doors. (Abu Daud). Anas, the attendant of the Prophet (peace be upon him), states that a man glanced into the room of the Prophet (peace be upon him) from outside. The Prophet (peace be upon him) at that time was holding an arrow in his hand. He advanced towards the man in a way as if he would thrust the arrow into his belly. (Abu Daud). According to Abdullah bin Abbas, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Whoever glances through the letter of his brother without his permission, glances into fire. (Abu Daud). According to Muslim and Bukhari, the Prophet (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: If someone peeps into your house, it will be no sin if you injure his eye with a piece of stone. In another tradition, he has said: The inmates of a house, who injure the eye of the man peeping into their house, are not liable to any punishment. Imam Shafai has taken this commandment literally and permits smashing of the eye of the one who casts a glance like this. The Hanafis, however, do not take the command in the literal sense. They express the opinion that it is applicable only in that case where an outsider forces his entry into a house in spite of the resistance from the inmates and has his eye or some other limb smashed in the scuffle. In such a case, no penalty will lie on the inmates. (Ahkamal-Quran, Al-Jassan, Vol. III, p. 385). (2) The jurists have included hearing also under glancing. For instance, if a blind man enters a

house without permission, he will not be able to see anybody, but he will certainly be able to hear whatever is going on in the house. This also amounts to violation of the other person's right of privacy.

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

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

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

A man named Kaladah bin Hanbal went to see the Prophet (peace be upon him) and got seated without the customary salutation. The Prophet (peace be upon him) told him to go out and come in again after calling: Assalamo- alaikum (peace be upon you). (Abu Daud). Thus, the correct method of seeking permission was to disclose one's identity first and then ask for permission. It is related that whenever Umar went to see the Prophet (peace be upon him), he would say: Assalam-o-alaikum ya Rasul-Allah, I am Umar: May I enter! (Abu Daud). The Prophet (peace be upon him) enjoined that permission should be asked thrice at the most. If there is no reply even at the third call, one should go back. (Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dud). The same was his own practice. Once he went to the house of Saad bin Ubadah and sought permission twice after greeting with: Assalam-o-alaikum wa Rahmatullah (peace be upon you and mercy of Allah), but there was no response. After calling for the third time when he received no response, he turned back. Saad came out running from the house, and said: O Messenger of Allah, I was hearing you all right, but I desired to have Allah's peace and mercy invoked upon me through your sacred tongue as often as possible; therefore, I was replying to you in a low voice. (Abu Dud, Ahmad). The three calls as

enjoined above should not be made in quick succession, but at suitable intervals so as to allow sufficient time to the inmates to make the response in case they are not free to do so.

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

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

فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَجِدُوْا فِيْهَآ اَحَدًا فَلَا تَدْخُلُوْهَا حَتّٰى يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ قِيْلَ لَكُمُ ارْجِعُوْا
فَارْجِعُوْا ۚ هُوَ اَزْكٰى لَكُمْ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ عَلِيْمٌ 28

(24:28) Then if you find no one in them, do not enter until you have been given permission (to enter).[26] And if you are told to go back, then do go back. This is a purer way for you.[27] Allah knows all what you do.

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

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

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ اَنْ تَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتًا غَيْرَ مَسْكُوْنَةٍ فِيْهَا مَتَاعٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا
تُبْدُوْنَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُوْنَ 29

(24:29) However, it is not blameworthy for you if you enter houses that are uninhabited but wherein there is something of use to you.[28] Allah is well aware of what you disclose and what you conceal.

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

قُلْ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ يَغُضُّوْا مِنْ اَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوْا فُرُوْجَهُمْ ؕ ذٰلِكَ اَزْكٰى لَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا يَصْنَعُوْنَ 30

(24:30) (O Prophet), enjoin believing men to cast down their looks[29] and guard their private parts.[30] That is purer for them. Surely Allah is well aware of all what they do.

29. The word ghadd means to reduce, shorten or lower down something. Accordingly, ghadd basar is generally translated as lowering the gaze or keeping it lowered. But the command of ghadd basar does not imply that the gaze should always be kept lowered. It only means to imply that one should restrain his gaze and avoid casting of looks freely. That is, if it is not desirable to see a thing, one should turn the eyes away and avoid having a look at it. The restriction of a restrained gaze is applicable only in a limited sphere. The context in which the words occur shows that this restriction applies to the men's gazing at women, or casting looks at the satar of the other persons, or fixing the eyes at indecent scenes.

The details of this divine commandment as explained in the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) are given below.

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

According to a tradition related by Buraidah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) instructed Ali: O Ali, do not cast a second look after the first look. The first look is pardonable but not the second one. (Tirmizi;, Ahmad, Abu Daud). Jarir bin Abdullah Bajali says that he asked the Prophet, What should I do if I happen to cast a chance look? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Turn your eyes away or lower your gaze. (Muslim, Ahmad, Tirmizi, Abu Daud, Nasai). Abdullah bin Masud quotes the Prophet (peace be upon him) as having said: Allah says that the gaze is one of the poisonous arrows of Satan. Whoever forsakes it, out of His fear, he will be rewarded with a faith whose sweetness he will relish in his own heart. (Tabarani). According to a tradition related by Abu Umamah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: If a Muslim happens to glance at the charms of a woman and then turns his eyes away, Allah will bless his worship and devotion and will make it all the more sweet. (Musnad Ahmad). Imam Jafar Sadiq has quoted from his father, Imam Muhammad Baqir, who has quoted Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari as saying: On the occasion of the Farewell Pilgrimage, Fadal bin Abbas, who was a young cousin of the Prophet (peace be upon him), was riding with him on the camel-back during the return journey from Masharal-Haram. When they came to a few women passing on the way, Fadal started looking at them. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) put his hand on his face and turned it to the

other side. (Abu Da'ud). On another occasion during the same pilgrimage, a woman of the clan of Khatham stopped the Prophet (peace be upon him) on the way and sought clarification about a certain matter pertaining to Hajj. Fadal bin Abbas fixed his gaze at her, but the Prophet turned his face to the other side. (Bukhari, Abu Daud, Tirmizi). (2) Nobody should have the misunderstanding that the command to restrain the gaze was enjoined because the women were allowed to move about freely with open faces, for if veiling of the face had already been enjoined, the question of restraining or not restraining the gaze would not have arisen. This argument is incorrect rationally as well as factually. It is incorrect rationally because even when veiling of the face is the usual custom, occasions can arise where a man and a woman come face to face with each other suddenly, or when a veiled woman has to uncover her face under necessity. Then even if the Muslim women observe hijab, there will be non-Muslim women who will continue to move about unveiled. Thus, the commandment to lower the gaze or restrain the eyes, does not necessarily presume existence of a custom allowing the women to move about with unveiled faces. It is incorrect factually because the custom of hijab which was introduced after the revelation of the commandments in Surah Al- Ahzab included veiling of the face, and this is supported by a number of traditions relating to the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself. Aishah in her statement relating to the incident of the slander, which has been narrated on the authority of reliable reporters, has said: When I came back to the camp, and found that the caravan had left, I lay down and was overpowered by sleep. In the morning when Safwan bin Muattal passed that way he recognised me because he had seen me before the commandment of hijab had been sent down. On recognising me he exclaimed: Inna lillahi wa inna ilaihi rajiun: To Allah we belong and to Him we shall return; and I awoke and covered my face with my sheet. (Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Hisham). Abu Daud contains an incident that when the son of Umm Khallad was killed in a battle, she came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) to enquire about him and was wearing the veil as usual. It was natural to presume that on such a sad occasion one is liable to lose one's balance and ignore the restrictions of hijab. But when questioned she said: I have certainly lost my son but not my modesty. Another tradition in Abu Daud quoted on the authority of Aishah relates that a woman handed an application to the Prophet (peace be upon him) from behind a curtain. The Prophet enquired: Is it a man's hand or a woman's? She replied that it was a woman's. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: If it is a woman's hand, the nails at least should have been coloured with henna! As regards to the two incidents relating to the occasion of Hajj, which we have mentioned above, they cannot be used as an argument to prove that the veil was not in vogue in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him). This is because wearing of the veil is prohibited in the state of ihram. However, even in that state pious women did not like to uncover their faces before the other men. Aishah has stated that during the Farewell Pilgrimage when they were moving towards Makkah in the state of ihram, the women would lower down their head sheets over their faces whenever the travellers passed by them, and would uncover their faces as soon as they had passed by. (Abu Daud). (3) There are certain exceptions to the command of lowering the gaze or restraining the look. These exceptions relate to occasions when it is really necessary to see a woman, for instance, when a man intends to marry her. It is not only permissible to see the woman in such a case but even commendable. Mughirah bin Shubah has stated: I wanted to marry in a certain family. The Holy Prophet asked me whether I had seen the girl or not. When 1 replied in the negative, he said: Have a look at her; this will enhance harmonious relationship between you two. (Ahmad, Tirmizi, Nasai,

Ibn Majah, Darimi). According to a tradition related by Abu Hurairah, a man wanted to marry in a family of the Ansar. The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked him to have a look at the girl, for the Ansar usually had a defect in their eyes. (Muslim, Nasai, Ahmad). According to Jabir bin Abdullah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: When a person from among you wants to marry a woman, he should have a look at her to satisfy himself that there is some quality in the woman which induces him to marry her. (Ahmad, Abu Daud). According to another tradition emanating from Abu Humaidah and quoted in Musnad Ahmad, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that there was no harm in such a procedure. He also permitted that the girl may be seen without her being aware of it. From this the jurists have concluded that there is no harm in looking at a woman when it is really necessary. For instance, there is no harm in looking at a suspect woman when investigating a crime, or in the judge's looking at a female witness, who appears in the court, or in the physician's looking at a female patient, etc. (4) The intention of the command to restrain the gaze also implies that no man or woman should look at the private parts of the other man or woman. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has said: No man should look at the satar of another man nor a woman at the satar of another woman. (Ahmad, Muslim, Abu Daud, Tirmizi). Ali has quoted the Prophet (peace be upon him) as saying: Do not look at the thigh of another person, living or dead. (Abu Daud, Ibn Majah).

30. Guard their private parts: Abstain from illicit sexual gratification and from exposing their satar before others. For males, the satar is the part of the body from the navel to the knee, and it is not permissible to expose that part of the body intentionally before anybody except one's own wife. (Daraqutni, Baihaqi). Jarhad Aslami states that once he was sitting in the company of the Prophet (peace be upon him) with his thigh exposed. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Do you not know that the thigh has to be kept concealed. (Tirmizi, Abu Daud, Muatta). AIi reports that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Do not expose your thigh. (Abu Daud, Ibn Majah). Not only is the satar to be kept concealed before others but even when alone. The Prophet has warned: Beware, never remain naked, for with you are those (that is, the angels of goodness and mercy), who never leave you alone except when you ease yourself or you go to your wives. So feel shy of them and give them due respect. (Tirmizi). According to another tradition, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Guard your satar from everybody except from your wife and your slave-girl. The questioner asked: Even when we are alone? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Yes, even when alone, for Allah has a greater right that you should feel shy of Him. (Abu Daud, Tirmizi, Ibn Majah).

وَقُلْ لِّلْمُؤْمِنٰتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ اَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوْجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِيْنَ زِيْنَتَهُنَّ اِلَّا
مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلٰى جُيُوْبِهِنَّ ۖ وَلَا يُبْدِيْنَ زِيْنَتَهُنَّ اِلَّا لِبُعُوْلَتِهِنَّ اَوْ
اٰبَآئِهِنَّ اَوْ اٰبَآءِ بُعُوْلَتِهِنَّ اَوْ اَبْنَآئِهِنَّ اَوْ اَبْنَآءِ بُعُوْلَتِهِنَّ اَوْ اِخْوَانِهِنَّ اَوْ بَنِيْٓ اِخْوَانِهِنَّ اَوْ

بَنِيٓ اَخَوٰتِهِنَّ اَوۡ نِسَآئِهِنَّ اَوۡ مَا مَلَكَتۡ اَيۡمَانُهُنَّ اَوِ التّٰبِعِيۡنَ غَيۡرِ اُولِى الۡاِرۡبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ
اَوِ الطِّفۡلِ الَّذِيۡنَ لَمۡ يَظۡهَرُوۡا عَلٰى عَوۡرٰتِ النِّسَآءِ ۖ وَلَا يَضۡرِبۡنَ بِاَرۡجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعۡلَمَ مَا
يُخۡفِيۡنَ مِنۡ زِيۡنَتِهِنَّ ؕ وَتُوۡبُوۡۤا اِلَى اللّٰهِ جَمِيۡعًا اَيُّهَ الۡمُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تُفۡلِحُوۡنَ 31

(24:31) And enjoin believing women to cast down their looks[31] and guard their private[32] parts[33] and not reveal their adornment[34] except that which is revealed of itself,[35] and to draw their veils over their bosoms,[36] and not to reveal their adornment save to their husbands,[37] or their fathers, or the fathers of their husbands,[38] or of their own sons, or the sons of their husbands,[39] or their brothers,[40] or the sons of their brothers,[41] or the sons of their sisters,[42] or the women with whom they associate,[43] or those that are in their bondage,[44] or the male attendants in their service free of sexual interest,[45] or boys that are yet unaware of illicit matters pertaining to women.[46] Nor should they stamp their feet on the ground in such manner that their hidden ornament becomes revealed.[47] Believers, turn together, all of you, to Allah in repentance[48] that you may attain true success.[49]

31. The commandments of restraining the gaze for women are the same as for men. They should not glance intentionally at the other men, and if they happen to cast a chance look, they should turn their eyes away; and they should abstain from looking at the satar of others. However, the commandments relating to the men's looking at women are a little different from those relating to the women's looking at men. On the one hand, there is an incident related in a tradition saying that Umm Salamah and Umm Maimunah, wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him), were sitting with him when lbn Umm Maktum, a blind companion, made his appearance. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to his wives: Conceal your faces from him. The wives said: O Messenger of Allah, is he not a blind man? Neither will he see us nor recognize us. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) remarked: Are you two also blind? Do you not see him? Umm Salamah has clarified that this incident occurred at a time when the commandments about the observance of hijab had already been sent down. (Ahmad, Abu Daud, Tirmizi). This is also supported by a tradition in Muatta saying that a blind man came to see Aishah and she observed hijab from him. When asked as to why she observed hijab when the man could not see her, she replied: But I do see him. On the other hand, there is a different tradition from Aishah. In 7 A.H. a deputation of the Africans came to Al-Madinah and they gave a performance of physical skill in the compound of the Prophet's Mosque. The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself showed their performance to Aishah. (Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad). In another case, we find that when Fatimah bint Qais was irrevocably divorced by her husband, the question arose as to where she should pass her Iddah (the prescribed waiting term after divorce or death of husband). The Prophet (peace be upon him) first told her to stay with Umm Sharik Ansari, but then instructed her to stay in the house of Ibn Umm Maktum, where she could stay with greater freedom as he was a blind man. He did not approve of her staying in the house of Umm Sharik because she was a rich lady and her house was frequented by the companions whom she entertained

generously. (Muslim, Abu Daud). Read together these traditions show that the restrictions about the women's looking at men are not so hard as about the men's looking at women. While it is forbidden for women to sit face to face with men, it is not unlawful if they cast a look at men while passing on the way or see a harmless performance by them from a distance. There is also no harm for women to see the other men in case of real need if they are living in the same house. Imam Ghazzali and lbn Hajar Asqalani have also reached almost the same conclusion. Shaukani in his Nail al-Autar (Vol. Vl, p. 101) has quoted Ibn Hajar as saying: Such a permission in respect of women is also supported by the fact that they have always enjoyed this type of freedom in outdoor duties while they came out veiled when visiting the mosques, or moving in the streets, or during the journey, so that men may not gaze at them, the men were never commanded to use the veil so that women may not gaze at them. This shows that the commandments in respect of the two sexes are different.. However, it is not at all permissible that women should gaze leisurely at men and draw pleasure of the eye in doing so.

32. That is, they should abstain from illicit gratification of their sex desire as well as from exposing their satar before others. Though the commandments for men in this respect are the same as for women, the boundaries of satar for women are different from those prescribed for men. Moreover, the female satar with respect to men is different from that with respect to women. The female satar with respect to men is the entire body, excluding only the hand and the face, which should not be exposed before any other man, not even the brother and father, except the husband. The woman is not allowed to wear a thin or a tight fitting dress which might reveal the skin or the outlines of the body. According to a tradition from Aishah, once her sister Asma came before the Prophet (peace be upon him) in a thin dress. The Prophet (peace be upon him) immediately turned his face away and said: O Asma, when a woman has attained her maturity, it is not permissible that any part of her body should be exposed except the face and the hand. (Abu Daud). Ibn Jarir has related a similar incident from Aishah saying that once the daughter of Abdullah bin Tufail, who was her mother's son from her former husband, came to her house on a visit. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) entered the house, he saw her but turned his face to the other side. Aishah said: O Messenger of Allah, she is my niece. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) remarked: When a woman reaches the age of puberty, it is not lawful for her to display her body except the hand and the face. (Then he indicated what he meant by the hand by gripping his own hand from the wrist so that there was hardly a breadth left between his grip and the palm of the hand). The only relaxation permitted in this connection is that a woman can uncover only that much of her body before her close relatives (for example, her brother, father, etc.) as is absolutely necessary for attending to the household duties. For instance, she can roll up her sleeves while kneading the flour, or tuck up her trousers while washing the floor.

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

33. It should be carefully noted that the demands that divine law makes from women are not only those it has made from men, that is restraining of looks and guarding of the private

parts, but it makes some other demands from them also, which it has not made from men. This shows that men and women are not identical in this respect.

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

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

We are, however, unable to subscribe to this view. There is a world of difference between displaying something and its becoming displayed of itself. The first implies intention and the second compulsion and a state of helplessness. Moreover, such an interpretation also goes against the traditions which state that the women never moved out with open and uncovered faces in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) after the commandments of hijab had been sent down. These commandments implied veiling of the face as well, and the veil had become a part of the female dress except during Hajj when one has to be in the prescribed state of ihram and keep the face uncovered. Another argument that is advanced in support of this view is that the hands and the face are not included in the satar of the woman, whereas satar and hijab are two entirely different things. Sanctity of satar is such that it cannot be violated even before the mahram males like the father, brother, etc. As for hijab it is over and above satar which is meant to segregate women from non mahram males; the discussion here relates to the commandments of hijab and not to satar.

36. In the pre-lslamic days of ignorance, women used to wear a sort of head-band, which was tied in a knot at the rear of the head. The slit of the shirt in the front partly remained open exposing the front of the neck and the upper part of the bosom. There was nothing except the shirt to cover the breasts, and the hair was worn in a couple or two of plaits hanging behind like tails. (AI-Kashshaf, Vol. II, p. 90, and Ibn Kathir, Vol. III, pp. 283-284). At the revelation of this verse, the head-wrapper was introduced among the Muslim women, which was meant to cover the head, the breasts, and the back, completely. The way the Muslim women responded to this command has been described by Aishah in a vivid manner. She states that when Surah An- Noor was revealed and the people learned of its

contents from the Prophet (peace be upon him), they immediately went back to their houses and recited the verses before their wives, daughters and sisters. There was an instantaneous response. The Ansar women, one and all, immediately got up and made wrappers from whatever piece of cloth that was handy. The next morning all the women who came to the Prophet's Mosque for prayers were dressed in wrappers. In another tradition Aishah says that thin cloth was discarded and the women selected only coarse cloth for the purpose. (Ibn Kathir, Vol. III, p. 284, Abu Daud).

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

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

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

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

40. Brothers' include real and stepbrothers.

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

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

First, some jurists hold that the freedom of movement and display of adornment by a woman is restricted to the circle of relatives mentioned in this verse. All others, even the real paternal and maternal uncles, are excluded from this list and a woman should observe hiab from them because they have not been mentioned in the Quran. This is, however, not a correct view. Let alone the real uncles, the Prophet (peace be upon him) disallowed Aishah to observe hijab even from her foster uncles. A tradition quoted in Sihah Sitta and Musnad Ahmad on the authority of Aishah says that once Aflah, brother of Abul Quais, came to see her and sought permission to enter the house. But since the commandment of hijab had been received, Hadrat Aishah refused him permission. On this Aflah sent back the word saying,

You are my niece: you were suckled by my brother Abul Quais's wife. But Aishah still was hesitant whether it was permissible to appear unveiled before such a relative or not. In the meantime the Prophet (peace be upon him) arrived and he ruled that he could see her. This shows that the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself did not interpret the verse in the way these jurists do that it was lawful to appear unveiled only before those relatives who have been mentioned in the verse and not before others. He interpreted it to mean that hijab need not be observed from those relatives with whom marriage is prohibited, for instance, paternal and maternal uncles, son-in-law and foster relatives. Hasan Basri from among the followers has expressed the same opinion and the same has been supported by Allama Abu Bakr al-Jassas in his Ahkam-ul- Quran. (Vol. III, p. 390).

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

Thirdly, in cases where the relationship itself becomes doubtful, hijab should be observed even from the mahram relatives. Bukhari, Muslim and Abu Daud have related a case where Saudah, a wife of the Prophet (peace be upon him), had a brother born of a slave woman. Utbah, the father of Saudah and the boy, left a will enjoining his brother, Saad bin Abi Waqqas, to look after the boy as a nephew for he was from his own seed. When the case came before the Prophet (peace be upon him), he rejected the claim of Saad, saying: The boy belongs to him on whose bed he was born; as for the adulterer, let stones and pebbles be his lot. But at the same time he told Saudah to observe hijab from the boy because it was doubtful whether he was really her brother.

43. The Arabic word nisa-i-hinna means their female associates. Before we consider what women are exactly meant, it is worth noting that the word used here is not annisa, which merely means women, but nisa-i-hinna which means their female associates. In the former case, it would be quite permissible for a Muslim woman to appear unveiled before all sorts of women and display her adornment. The use of nisa-i-hinna, however, has circumscribed her freedom within a specific circle. As to what specific circle of women is implied, the commentators and jurists have expressed different opinions.

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

Another group, which includes Imam Razi, is of the view that female associates are all women without exception. But it is not possible to accept this view as in that case an-nisa should have sufficed and there was no need to use nisa-ihinna. The third opinion, and this appears to be reasonable and nearer the Quranic text, is that their female associates mean those familiar and known women with whom a woman usually comes into contact in her daily life and who share in her household chores, etc. whether they are Muslim or non-Muslim. The object here is to exclude those women from the circle who are either strangers and whose cultural and moral background is not known or whose antecedents are apparently doubtful, which make them unreliable. This view is also supported by the authentic traditions which state that zimmi women used to visit the wives of the Prophet (peace be upn him). The real thing to be considered in this connection would be the moral character and not the religious belief. Muslim women can meet and have intimate social contacts with noble, modest and virtuous women, who come from well-known and reliable families even if they are non-Muslim. But they must observe hijab from immodest, immoral and vulgar women even if they happen to be Muslims. Their company from the moral viewpoint is as dangerous as of other men. As for contacts with un-known, unfamiliar women, they may at the most be treated like non-mahram relatives. A woman may uncover her face and hands before them but she must keep the rest of her body and adornments concealed.

44. There is a good deal of difference of opinion among the jurists about the correct meaning of this injunction. One group holds that this refers only to the slave girls owned by a lady. Accordingly they interpret the divine command to mean that the Muslim woman can display her adornment before a slave girl, whether she is an idolatress or a Jew or a Christian, but she cannot appear before a slave man even if he is legally owned by her. For purposes of hijab, he is to be treated just like a free male stranger. This is the view of Abdullah bin Masud, Mujahid, Hasan Basri, Ibn Sirin, Said bin Musayyab, Taus and Imam Abu Hanifah, and a saying of Imam Shafai also supports this. They argue that the slave is not a mahram to the lady. If he is freed, he can marry his former owner. Therefore the fact of

his being a slave cannot by itself entitle him to be treated like the male mahrams and allow the lady to appear freely before him. The question why should the words those in their possession which are general and applicable to both slaves and slave girls, be restricted to mean only slave girls, is answered by these jurists like this: Though the words are general, the context and background in which they occur make them specifically applicable to slave girls only. The words those in their possession occur just after their female associates in the verse; therefore one could understand that the reference was to a woman's relatives and other associates; this could lead to the misunderstanding that the slave girls perhaps were excluded; the words those in their possession therefore were used to clarify that a woman could display her adornments before the slave girls as before her free female associates.

The other group holds that the words those in their possession include both the male slaves and the slave girls. This is the view of Hadrat Aishah, Umm Salamah and some learned scholars of the house of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and also of Imam Shafai. They do not argue merely on the basis of the general meaning of the words, but they also cite precedents from the Sunnah in support of their view. For instance, the incident that the Prophet (peace be upon him) went to the house of his daughter, Fatimah, along with his slave Abdullah bin Musadah al-Fazari. She was at that time wearing a sheet which, would leave the feet exposed if she tried to cover the head, and the head exposed if she tried to cover the feet. The Prophet (peace be upon him) felt her embarrassment and said: No harm: there are only your father and your slave! (Abu Daud, Ahmad, Baihaqi on the authority of Anas bin Malik). Ibn Asakir has stated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had given that slave to Fatimah, who brought him up and then freed him. (But the man turned out to be an ungrateful wretch; in the battle of Siffin, he was the bitterest opponent of Ali and a zealous supporter of Amir Muawiyah). They also quote the following words of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in support of their stand: When any of you agrees to a deed of emancipation with her slave, and the slave has the necessary means to buy his freedom, she (the owner) should observe hijab from him. (Abu Daud, Tirmizi, Ibn Majah on the authority of Umm Salamah).

45. The literal translation of the text would be: those from among the men who are your subordinates and have no desire. The obvious meaning is that apart from the mahram males, a Muslim woman can display her adornment only before the man who satisfies two conditions: firstly, he should be in a subordinate capacity, and secondly, he should be free from sexual urges either due to advanced age, impotence, mental weakness, poverty or low social position, so that he cannot cherish the desire or have the boldness to think evilly of his master's wife, daughter, sister or mother. Anybody who studies this injunction in the right spirit with a view to obeying it, and not for the sake of finding ways and means of escaping from or violating it, will readily appreciate that the bearers, cooks, chauffeurs and other grown up servants employed these days in the houses do not fall in this category. The following clarifications given by the commentators and the jurists of this point would show the type of men envisaged in the verse. According to Ibn Abbas: This implies a man who is a mere simpleton and has no interest in women. According to Qatadah: A poor man who is attached to you merely for his sustenance. According to Mujahid: A fool who only needs food and has no desire for women. According to Shabi: The one who is a subordinate and entirely dependent on his master, and cannot have the boldness to cast an evil look at the womenfolk of the house. According to lbn Zaid: The one who remains attached to a family

for such a long time that he is regarded as a member brought up in that house, and who has no desire for the women of the house. He is there merely because he gets his sustenance from the family. According to Taus and Zuhri: One who does not cherish the desire for the women nor has the courage to do so. (Ibn Jarir, Vol. XVIII, pp. 95-96, Ibn Kathir, Vol. III, p. 285).

The best explanation in this regard is the incident that happened at the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), which has been quoted by Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, Nasai and Ahmad on the authority of Aishah and Umm Salamah. There was a certain eunuch in Madinah who was allowed free access to the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the other women of the city, on the assumption that he being incapable of sex was free from the sexual urge. One day when the Prophet (peace be upon him) went to the house of his wife, Umm Salamah, he heard him talking to her brother, Abdullah bin Abi Umayyah. He was telling Abdullah that if Taif was taken the following day, he should try to have Badia, daughter of Ghailan Thaqafi. And then he started praising Badia's beauty and her physical charms and even went to the extent of describing her private parts. On hearing this, the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) said: O enemy of Allah, you seem to have seen her through. Then he ordered that the women should observe hijab from him and he should not be allowed to enter the houses in future. After this he turned him out of Madinah and forbade the other eunuchs also to enter the houses, because the women did not mind their presence, while they would describe the women of one house before the other men of other houses in the society. This shows that the word incapable of sex desire do not merely imply physical impotence. Anyone who is physically unfit but cherishes sex desire in the heart and takes interest in women can become the cause of many mischiefs.

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

47. The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not restrict this injunction to the jingle of the ornaments, but has derived from it the principle that besides the look, anything which tends to excite any of the senses, is opposed to the objective for which Allah has forbidden the women to display their adornment. Therefore, he ordered the women not to move out with perfumes. According to Abu Hurairah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Do not stop the bondmaids of Allah from coming to the mosques, but they should not come with perfumes. (Abu Daud, Ahmad). According to another tradition, Abu Hurairah passed by a woman who was coming out of the mosque and felt that she had perfumed herself. He stopped her and said: O bondmaid of Allah, are you coming from the mosque? When she replied in the affirmative, he said: I have heard my beloved Abul Qasim (peace be upon him) say that the prayer of the woman who comes to the mosque with perfumes, is not accepted till she purifies herself with a complete bath as is done after a sexual intercourse. (Abu Daud, Ibn Majah, Ahmad, Nasai). Abu Musa Ashari has quoted the Prophet (peace be upon him) as saying: A woman who passes on the way with perfumes so that people may enjoy her perfumes, is such and such: he used very harsh words for her. (Tirmizi, Abu Daud, Nasai). His instruction was that women should use scents with bright colors but light odors. (Abu Daud). Similarly the Prophet (peace be upon him) disapproved that feminine voices should enter the ears of men unnecessarily. In case of genuine need the Quran itself has allowed women to speak to men, and the Prophet's (peace be upon him) wives themselves used to

instruct people in religious matters. But where there is no necessity, nor any moral or religious objective, the women have been discouraged to let their voices be heard by men. Thus if the imam happens to commit a mistake during a congregational prayer, and he is to be warned of the lapse, the men have been taught to say Subhan-Allah (Glory be to Allah), while the women have been instructed to tap their hands only. (Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, Tirmizi, Abu Daud, Nasai, Ibn Majah).

48. Turn towards Allah: Repent of the lapses and errors that you have been committing in this regard so far, and reform your conduct in accordance with the commands given by Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him).

49. It would be useful to give here a resume of the other reforms which the Prophet (peace be upon him) introduced in the Islamic society after the revelation of these commandments.

(1) He prohibited the other men (even if they are relatives) to see a woman in privacy or sit with her in the absence of her mahram relatives. Jabir bin Abdullah has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Do not visit the women whose husbands are away from home, because Satan circulates in one of you like blood. (Tirmizi). According to another tradition from Jabir, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should never visit a woman when alone unless she has a mahram relative also present, because the third one would be Satan. (Ahmad). Imam Ahmad has quoted another tradition from Amir bin Rabiah to the same effect. The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself was extremely cautious in this regard. Once when he was accompanying his wife Safiyyah to her house at night, two men of Ansar passed by them on the way. The Prophet (peace be upon him) stopped them and said: The woman with me is my wife Safiyyah. They said: Glory be to Allah! O Messenger of AIlah, could there be any suspicion about you? The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Satan circulates like blood in the human body; I was afraid lest he should put an evil thought in your minds. (Abu Daud).

(2) The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not approve that a man's hand should even touch the body of a non-mahram woman. That is why while administering the oath of allegiance, he would take the hand of the men into his own hand, but he never adopted this procedure in the case of women. Aishah has stated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) never touched the body of any other woman. He would administer the oath verbally to them; when this was done, he would say: You may go, Your allegiance is complete. (Abu Daud).

(3) He strictly prohibited the woman from proceeding on a journey alone without a mahram or in company with a non-mahram. A tradition from Ibn Abbas has been quoted in Bukhari and Muslim saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave a sermon and said: No man should visit the other woman when she is alone unless she has a mahram also present, and no woman should travel alone unless accompanied by a mahram. A man stood up and said: My wife is going for Hajj, while I am under orders to join a certain expedition. The Prophet said: You may go for Hajj with your wife. Several other traditions on the subject, emanating from Ibn Umar, Abu Said Khudri and Abu Hurairah, are found in authentic books of traditions, which concur that it is not permissible for a Muslim woman who believes in Allah and the Last Day that she should go on a journey without a mahram. There is, however, a variation with regard to the duration and the length of the journey. Some traditions lay down the minimum limit as 12 miles and some lay down the duration as one

day, a day and night, two days or even three days. This variation, however, neither renders the traditions unauthentic nor makes it necessary that we should accept one version as legally binding in preference to others. For a plausible explanation for the different versions could be that the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave different instructions at different occasions depending on the circumstances and merit of each case. For instance, a woman going on a three-day journey might have been prohibited from proceeding without a mahram, while another going on a day's journey might also have been similarly prohibited. Here the real thing is not the different instructions to the different people in different situations, but the principle that a woman should not go on a journey without a mahram as laid down in the tradition quoted above from lbn Abbas.

(4) He not only took practical measures to stop free mixing of the sexes together but prohibited it verbally as well. Everyone knows the great importance of the congregational and the Friday prayers in Islam. The Friday prayer has been made obligatory by Allah Himself; the importance of the congregational prayer can be judged from a tradition of the Prophet (peace be upon him), which says: If a person does not attend the mosque without a genuine reason and offers his prayer at home, it will not be acceptable to Allah. (Abu Daud, Ibn Majah, Daraqutni, Hakim on the authority of Ibn Abbas). But in spite of this, the Prophet (peace be upon him) exempted the women from compulsory attendance at the Friday prayer. (Abu Daud, Daraqutni, Baihaqi). As for the other congregational prayers, he made the women's attendance optional, saying: Do not stop them if they want to come to the mosque. Then at the same time, he made the clarification that it was better for them to pray in their houses than in the mosques. According to Ibn Umar and Abu Hurairah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Do not prohibit the bondmaids of Allah from coming to the mosques of Allah. (Abu Daud). Other traditions from Ibn Umar are to the effect: Permit the women to come to the mosques at night. (Bukhari, Muslim, Trimizi, Nasai, Abu Daud). And do not stop your women-folk from coming to the mosques though their houses are better for them than the mosques. (Ahmad, Abu Daud). Umm Humaid Saidiyyah states that once she said to the Prophet (peace be upon him): O Messenger of Allah, I have a great desire to offer my prayer under your leadership. He replied: Your offering the prayer in your room is better than your offering it in the verandah, and your offering the prayer in your house is better than your offering it in the neighboring mosque, and your offering the prayer in the neighboring mosque is better than offering it in the principal mosque (of the town). (Ahmad, Tabarani). A tradition to the same effect has been reported from Abdullah bin Masud in Abu Daud. According to Umm Salamah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The best mosques for women are the innermost portions of their houses. (Ahmad, Tabarani). But when Aishah saw the conditions that prevailed in the time of the Umayyads, she said: If the Prophet (peace be upon him) had witnessed such conduct of the women, he would certainly have stopped their entry into the mosques as was done in the case of the Israelite women, (Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud). The Prophet (peace be upon him) had appointed a separate door in his mosque for the entry of women, and Umar in his time had given strict orders prohibiting men to use that door. (Abu Daud). In the congregational prayers the women were instructed to stand separately behind the men. At the conclusion of the prayer, the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his followers used to remain sitting for a while so that the women could leave the mosque before the men. (Ahmad, Bukhari). The Prophet (peace be upon him) would say: The best row for the men is the front row and the worst the last one (nearest to the women's row); and the best row for the women is the rearmost row and the

worst the front one (just behind the men's). (Muslim, Abu Daud, Tirmizi Nasai, Ahmad). The women joined the Eid congregational prayers but they had a separate enclosure from men. After the sermon the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to address them separately (Abu Daud, Bukhari, Muslim). Once outside the Mosque the Prophet (peace be upon him) saw the men and women moving side by side in the crowd. He stopped the women and said: It is not proper for you to walk in the middle of the road; walk on the sides. On hearing this the women immediately started walking along the walls. (Abu Daud). All these commandments clearly show that mixed gatherings of the men and women are wholly alien to the temper of Islam. It cannot therefore be imagined that divine law which disallows the men and women to stand side by side for prayers in the sacred houses of Allah, would allow them to mix together freely in colleges, offices, clubs and other gatherings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

These instructions have been reported in Sihah Sitta and in Musnad Ahmad on the authority of Aishah, Asma bint Abu Bakr, Abdullah bin Masud, Abdullah bin Umar, Abdullah bin Abbas and Amir Muawiyah through reliable narrators.

After having the knowledge of these clear commandments from Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him), a Muslim has only two courses open before him. Either he should follow these commandments practically and purify himself, his family life and the society at large of the moral evils for the eradication of which Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him) have given such detailed commandments, or if due to some weakness he violates one or more of these commandments, he should at least realize that he is committing a sin, and regard it as such, and should abstain from labeling it as a virtue by misinterpretation. Apart from these alternatives, the people who adopt the Western, ways of life against the clear injunctions of the Quran and Sunnah, and then try their utmost to prove them Islam itself, and openly claim that there is no such thing as hijab in Islam, not only commit the sin of disobedience but also display ignorance and hypocritical obstinacy. Such an attitude can neither be commended by any right-thinking person in this world, nor can it merit favor with Allah in the Hereafter. But among the Muslims there exists a section of modern hypocrites who are so advanced in their hypocrisy that they repudiate the divine injunctions as false and believe those ways of life to be right and based on truth, which they have

borrowed from the non-Muslim communities. Such people are not Muslims at all, for if they still be Muslims, the words Islam and unIslam lose all their meaning and significance. Had they changed their Islamic names and publicly declared their desertion of Islam, we would at least have been convinced of their moral courage. But in spite of their wrong attitudes, these people continue to pose themselves as Muslim. There is perhaps no meaner class of people in the world. People with such character and morality cannot be unexpected to indulge in any forgery, fraud, deception or dishonesty.

وَاَنْكِحُوا الْاَيَامٰى مِنْكُمْ وَالصّٰلِحِيْنَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَاِمَآئِكُمْ ؕ اِنْ يَّكُوْنُوْا فُقَرَآءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيْمٌ 32

(24:32) Marry those of you that are single, (whether men or women),[50] and those of your male and female slaves that are righteous.[51] [52] If they are poor, Allah will enrich them out of His Bounty.[53] Allah is Immensely Resourceful, All-Knowing.

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

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

52. The imperative mood of the verb "Marry: Arrange marriages....the righteous", has led some scholars to assume that it is obligatory to arrange such marriages; whereas the nature of the problem indicates that it cannot be so. Obviously it cannot be obligatory for somebody to arrange the marriage of the other person. Marriage is not a onesided affair; it needs another party also. If it were obligatory, what would be the position of the person who is going to be married? Should he willingly accept to be married wherever others arrange it? If so, it would mean that he or she had absolutely no choice in the matter. And if the one has a right to refuse, how are the others going to discharge their responsibility? Taking all these aspects into account the majority of the jurists have held that the commandment is not obligatory but recommendatory. The intention is that the Muslims should ensure that none in the society should remain unmarried. The people of the house, friends and neighbors, all should take necessary interest in the matter, and where no such help is available, the state should make necessary arrangements.

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

وَلْيَسْتَعْفِفِ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ نِكَاحًا حَتّٰى يُغْنِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ يَبْتَغُوْنَ
الْكِتٰبَ مِمَّا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ فَكَاتِبُوْهُمْ اِنْ عَلِمْتُمْ فِيْهِمْ خَيْرًا ۖ وَّاٰتُوْهُمْ مِّنْ مَّالِ
اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْٓ اٰتٰىكُمْ ؕ وَلَا تُكْرِهُوْا فَتَيٰتِكُمْ عَلَى الْبِغَآءِ اِنْ اَرَدْنَ تَحَصُّنًا لِّتَبْتَغُوْا عَرَضَ
الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ؕ وَمَنْ يُّكْرِهْهُّنَّ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اِكْرَاهِهِنَّ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ 33

(24:33) Let those who cannot afford to marry keep themselves chaste until Allah enriches them out of His Bounty.[54] And write out a deed of manumission for such of your slaves that desire their freedom[55] in lieu of payment[56] - if you see any good in them[57] - and give them out of the wealth that Allah has given you.[58] And do not compel your slave-girls to prostitution for the sake of the benefits of worldly life the while they desire to remain chaste.[59] And if anyone compels them to prostitution, Allah will be Most Pardoning, Much Merciful (to them) after their subjection to such compulsion.

54. The best commentary on these verses are the traditions which have been reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him) in this connection. Abdullah bin Masud has related that the Prophet (peace be upon him) once said: O young men, whoso among you can afford to marry, he should marry, because this will be a means of restraining the eyes from casting the evil look and of keeping one pure and chaste, and the one who cannot afford, should fast, because fasting helps cool down the passions. (Bukhari, Muslim). According to Abu Hurairah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Allah has taken upon Himself to succor three men: (a) the one who marries with a view to guarding his chastity, (b) the slave who works to earn his freedom, and (c) the one who goes out to fight in the way of Allah." (Tirmizi, Nasai, Ibn Majah, Ahmad) For further explanation, see (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 25).

55. Mukatabat as a term means a deed of emancipation between the owner and the slave entitling the latter to earn his or her freedom after payment of an agreed sum of money in a certain period. This is one of the methods laid down in Islam for the slaves to attain their freedom. It is not essential that the slave must always pay in cash; he can also earn his freedom by rendering some special service to the owner, provided that both the parties agree. Once the agreement is signed, the owner is not entitled to put any obstacles in the way of the slave's freedom. He will have to provide opportunities to enable him to earn for his emancipation and shall have to free him when the agreed amount has been paid in time. In the time of Umar, a slave entered into such an agreement with his lady owner, but managed to collect the amount in advance of the time limit. When the amount was offered to the lady, she refused to accept it on the ground that she would like to have it in monthly and yearly installments. The slave complained to Umar who ordered that the amount be deposited in the state treasury and the slave be set free. The lady was informed that her money lay in the treasury and she had the option to take it in a lump sum or in yearly or monthly installments. (Daraqutni).

56. A group of jurists have interpreted this as "execute the deed of emancipation with them", that it is obligatory for the owner to accept the offer of a slave to earn his emancipation. This is the view of Ata, Amr bin Dinar Ibn Sirin, Masruq, Dahhak, Ikrimah, the Zahiriyyah and Ibn Jarir Tabari, and Imam Shafai also favoured it in the beginning. The other group holds that it is not obligatory but only recommendatory and commendable. This group includes jurists like Shabi, Muqatil bin Hayyan, Hasan Basri, Abdul Rahman bin Zaid, Sufyan Thauri, Abu Hanifah and Malik bin Anas and Imam Shafai later on also had adopted this view. The first view is supported by two things:

(a) The imperative mood of the verb to execute the deed suggests that it is a command front Allah.

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

The other group argues that Allah does not merely say: Execute the deed of emancipation with them, but adds: Provided that you find some good in them. This condition of finding some good in them lies entirely on the owner, and there is no fixed standard or means by which the question of finding good in them could be adjudicated through a court. Legal injunctions are never couched in such language. As such this injunction can only be regarded as recommendatory and not as legally mandatory. As regards to the precedent of the case of Sirin, the jurists say that there was not one slave who asked for a deed of emancipation but thousands of them in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the rightly-guided Caliphs, and a large number of them earned their freedom in that way. But apart from Sirin's there is no case where an owner was forced by a judicial verdict to execute a deed of emancipation. Accordingly, this decision of Umar cannot be taken as a judicial decision. All that can be said is that Umar, apart from his position of a judge, was like a

father to the Muslims and might have used his paternal authority in a matter where he could not intervene as a judge.

57. Good" implies three things.

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

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

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

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

(a) The owner is instructed that he should remit a part of the emancipation money. There are traditions to confirm that the companions used to remit a sizable amount of the emancipation money to their slaves. Ali used to remit a quarter of the amount and exhorted others also to do the same. (lbn Jarir).

(b) The common Muslim is instructed that he should extend liberal help to all such slaves who asked for help in this regard. One of the heads of Zakat expenditure as laid down in the Quran is the ransoming of slaves. (Surah AtTaubah, Ayat 60). In the sight of Allah freeing of slaves is a great act of virtue. (Surah AlBalad, Ayat 13). According to a tradition, a bedouin came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and requested him to instruct him what he should do to earn Paradise. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied You have asked about the most important thing in a most concise way. You should free the slaves and help them to earn their freedom, If you present a cattle to somebody, present such a one as gives plenty of milk. Treat your relatives kindly even if they treat you unjustly. If you cannot do all this, you should feed the poor, give water to the thirsty, exhort the people to do good and forbid them to do evil. If you cannot do even this, you should restrain your tongue: if you have to speak, speak something good, otherwise keep quiet. (Baihaqi).

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

Here it should be noted that slaves in the ancient times were of three kinds: (i) Prisoners of war, (ii) Free men who were captured and traded as slaves, (iii) Hereditary slaves who did not know when their ancestors became slaves and to which of the above categories they originally belonged. Before the advent of Islam, Arabia as well as the outside world abounded in all kinds of slaves. The entire social and economic structure of society

depended more on slave labor than on servants and wage-earners. The first question before Islam was to tackle the problem of the hereditary slaves, and secondly, to find a solution to the entire problem of slavery for all times to come. In tackling the first problem, Islam did not abruptly abrogate the ownership rights in respect of the hereditary slaves as it would have completely paralyzed the entire social and economic system, and involved Arabia in a far more destructive civil war than the one fought in America. Islam did not follow any such policy of reform. Instead it generated a great moral movement for the emancipation of slaves and employed inducements, persuasions, religious injunctions and legal enactments to educate and motivate the people to free the slaves voluntarily for earning their salvation in the Hereafter, or as expiation of their sins as enjoined by Islam, or by accepting monetary compensation. To set the pace the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself freed 63 slaves. One of his wives, Aishah, alone treed 67 slaves. The Holy Prophet's (peace be upon him) uncle, Abbas, freed 70 slaves. Among others, Hakim bin Hizam freed 100 slaves, Abdullah bin Umar 1,000, Zulkala Himyari 8,000, and Abdur Rehman bin Auf 30,000. The other companions among whom Abu Bakr and Uthman were prominent also set a large number of slaves free. The people, in order to win Allah's favor, not only emancipated their own slaves, but also bought them from others and then set them free. The result was that in so far as hereditary slaves were concerned, almost all of them had been freed even before the righteous Caliphate came to an end.

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

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

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

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

(b) Open prostitution which was carried out entirely through slave girls was of two kinds. First, the slave girls were obliged to pay a fixed heavy amount every month to the owner, which they could only earn through prostitution. The owner knew well how the money was earned, and in fact there was no other object of imposing a heavy demand on the poor slave girl, especially when it was much higher than the usual wages for work or labor. Secondly, beautiful and young slave girls were made to stay in the brothel and a flag was put at the door to indicate that a needy person could satisfy his lust there. Such women were called qaliqiyat and their houses were known as mawakhir. All prominent men of the day owned and maintained such houses of prostitution. Abdullah bin Ubayy (the chief of the hypocrites of Madinah, who had been nominated as king of Madinah before the Prophet's (peace be upon him) arrival there and who was in the forefront of the campaign to slander Aishah) himself owned a regular house of prostitution in Madinah, which had six beautiful slave girls. Not only did he earn money through them but also used them to entertain his respectable and important guests who came to see him from different parts of Arabia. He employed the illegitimate children thus born to enhance the splendor and strength of his army of slaves. When one of these prostitutes, named Muazah, accepted Islam and wanted to offer repentance for her past sins, Ibn Ubayy subjected her to torture. She complained of it to Abu Bakr, who brought it to the notice of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered that the woman be taken away from the cruel man. (Ibn Jarir, Vol. XVIII, pp. 55 -58, and 103-104; Al Istiab Vol 11, p. 762; p. 762; Ibn Kathir, Vol. III, pp. 288-289). Such were the conditions when this verse was revealed. If these conditions are kept in view, it will become obvious that the real object was not merely to stop the slave girls from being forced into prostitution but to ban prostitution itself as illegal within the boundaries of the Islamic state. Simultaneously, there was a declaration of general pardon for those who had been forced into this business in the past.

After the revelation of this divine command the Prophet (peace be upon him) declared: There is no place for prostitution in Islam. (Abu Da'ud). The second command that he gave was that the earnings made through adultery were unlawful, impure and absolutely forbidden. According to a tradition reported by Rafi bin Khadij, the Prophet (peace be upon him) described such earnings as impure, product of the worst profession and most filthy income. (Abu Daud, Tirmizi, Nasai). According to Abu Huzaifah, he termed the money earned through prostitution as unlawful. (Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad). Abu Masud Uqbah bin Amr says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade the people to take prostitution earnings. (Sihah Sitta and Ahmad). The third command was that the slave girl could be employed for lawful manual labor, but the owner had no right to impose or receive any money from her about which he was not sure how it had been earned. According to Rafi bin

Khadij, he prohibited accepting any earnings from the slave girl unless it was known how she had earned it. (Abu Daud). Rafi bin Rifaah Ansari has reported the same command in clearer words. He says: The Prophet (peace be upon him) of Allah prohibited us from accepting anything from the earnings of a slave girl except that which she earned through manual labor, such as (and he indicated this with his hand) baking bread, spinning cotton or carding wool or cotton. (Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud). Another tradition quoted from Abu Hurairah in Abu Daud and Musnad Ahmad says that taking of money earned by a slave girl through unlawful means is prohibited. Thus the Prophet (peace be upon him) in accordance with the intention of this verse, banned by religious injunction and law all kinds of prostitution prevalent in Arabia in those days. Over and above this, the decision he gave in the case of Muazah, the slave girl of Abdullah bin Ubayy, shows that an owner who forces his slave girl into prostitution loses his rights of ownership over her. This is a tradition from Imam Zuhri, which Ibn Kathir has quoted on the authority of Musnad Abdur Razzaq.

وَلَقَدْ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتٍ مُّبَيِّنٰتٍ وَّمَثَلًا مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ع 34

(24:34) Verily We have sent down for you revelations which clearly expound true guidance, and examples of those who passed away before you, and an admonition for those who fear (Allah).[60]

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

اَللّٰهُ نُوْرُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ مَثَلُ نُوْرِهٖ كَمِشْكٰوةٍ فِيْهَا مِصْبَاحٌ ؕ اَلْمِصْبَاحُ فِيْ زُجَاجَةٍ ؕ اَلزُّجَاجَةُ كَاَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُّوْقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُّبٰرَكَةٍ زَيْتُوْنَةٍ لَّا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَّلَا

غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَّكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيْٓءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ ۭ نُوْرٌ عَلٰي نُوْرٍ ۭ يَهْدِي اللّٰهُ لِنُوْرِهٖ مَنْ
يَّشَاۗءُ ۭ وَيَضْرِبُ اللّٰهُ الْاَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ 35

(24:35) Allah[61] is the Light of the heavens and the earth.[62] His Light (in the Universe) may be likened to a niche wherein is a lamp, and the lamp is in the crystal which shines in star-like brilliance. It is lit from (the oil) of a blessed olive tree[63] that is neither eastern nor western.[64] Its oil well nigh glows forth (of itself) though no fire touched it: Light upon Light.[65] Allah guides to His Light whom He wills.[66] Allah sets forth parables to make people understand. Allah knows everything.[67]

61. From here the discourse is directed towards the hypocrites, who were bent upon starting mischief in the Islamic community, and were as active from within as the unbelievers were from without to harm the Islamic movement and the body politic of Islam. As these people professed belief, and apparently belonged to the Muslim community, and had blood relationships with the Muslims, especially with the Ansar, they were better placed to start and spread mischief. The result was that even some sincere Muslims, due to simplicity or weakness, became tools in their hands and even their supporters. But in spite of their profession of faith, the lure of worldly gains had utterly blinded them to the light that was spreading in the world through the teachings of the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The indirect address to the hypocrites here has three things in view. Firstly, to admonish them, for the first and foremost demand of Allah's providence and His mercy is to go on admonishing the misguided and the erring one till the last in spite of his persistence in mischief and wickedness. Secondly, to differentiate clearly between belief and hypocrisy so that every right thinking person from the Muslim community should be able to distinguish between a true believer and a hypocrite. Then if anybody, in spite of this differentiation, falls a prey to the machinations of the hypocrites or supports them, he should himself be responsible for his conduct.

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

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

Light is something which makes things visible; which is itself manifest and helps make other things manifest. The human mind conceives light in this very sense. Absence of light is termed darkness, invisibility and obscurity. On the other hand, when there is visibility and things become exposed to view, man says there is light. Allah has been called Light' in this basic sense, and not in the sense of a beam of light which travels at the speed of 186,000 miles per second and stimulates the optic nerve through the retina. This conception of light has nothing to do with the reality of the meaning for which human mind has coined this

word; rather the word light is used for all those lights which we experience in this physical world. All human words used for Allah are used in their basic sense and meaning, and not with reference to their physical connotation. For instance, when, the word sight is used with respect to Allah, it does not mean that Allah has an eye like men and animals with which He sees. Similarly when we say that Allah hears or grips or grasps, it does not mean that He hears through ears, or grips or grasps with the hand like us. These words are used in a metaphorical sense and only a man of very poor intelligence would have the misconception that hearing or seeing or grasping is not possible except in the limited and specific sense in which we experience it. Similarly it will be shortsightedness to interpret the word light in the sense of physical light rays emanating from a luminous body and affecting the retina. This word is not applicable to Allah in its limited sense, but in its absolute sense. That is, He alone in this universe is the real and prime cause of manifestation, otherwise there is nothing but darkness here. Everything which gives light and illuminates other things has received its light from Him; it has no light of its own.

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

63. "Blessed": yielding multiple benefits.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

فِيْ بُيُوْتٍ اَذِنَ اللّٰهُ اَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ فِيْهَا اسْمُهٗ ۙ يُسَبِّحُ لَهٗ فِيْهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْاٰصَالِ ۙ 36

(24:36) (Those who are directed to this Light are found) in houses which Allah has allowed to be raised and wherein His name is to be remembered:[68] in them people glorify Him in the morning and in the evening,

68. Some commentators have interpreted these houses to mean the mosques, and raising them to mean constructing and reverencing them. Some others, however, take them to mean the houses of the believers and raising them to mean raising their moral status. The words to mention His name therein seem to refer to the mosques and support the first interpretation, but if we look deeper, we see that they support the second interpretation equally well. This is because divine law does not confine worship to mosques alone as is the case with the priest-ridden religions where the rituals can only be performed under the leadership of a clergy. In Islam a house is also a place of worship like the mosque and every man is his own

priest. As this Surah mostly contains instructions for ennobling domestic life, we feel that the second interpretation is more in keeping with the context though there is no reason for rejecting the first interpretation. There will be no harm if both the mosques and the houses of the believers are implied here.

رِجَالٌ لَّا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَّلَا بَيْعٌ عَن ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ ۙ يَخَافُونَ
يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ ۙ 37

(24:37) people whom neither commerce nor striving after profit diverts them from remembering Allah, from establishing Prayer, and from paying Zakah; people who dread the Day on which all hearts will be overturned and eyes will be petrified;

لِيَجْزِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا وَيَزِيدَهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَن يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ
حِسَابٍ 38

(24:38) (people who do all this so) that Allah may reward them in accordance with the best that they did; indeed He will bestow upon them more out of His Bounty, for Allah grants whomsoever He wills beyond all measure.[69]

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

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَسَرَابٍ بِقِيعَةٍ يَحْسَبُهُ الظَّمْآنُ مَاءً ۚ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَهُ لَمْ
يَجِدْهُ شَيْئًا وَوَجَدَ اللَّهَ عِندَهُ فَوَفَّاهُ حِسَابَهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ۙ 39

(24:39) But for those who deny the Truth,[70] their deeds are like a mirage in the desert, which the thirsty supposes to be water until he comes to it only to find that it was

nothing; he found instead that Allah was with Him and He paid his account in full. Allah is swift in settling the account.[71]

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

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

أَوْ كَظُلُمَٰتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لُّجِّيٍّ يَغْشَىٰهُ مَوْجٌ مِّن فَوْقِهِۦ مَوْجٌ مِّن فَوْقِهِۦ سَحَابٌ ظُلُمَٰتٌۢ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ إِذَآ أَخْرَجَ يَدَهُۥ لَمْ يَكَدْ يَرَىٰهَا وَمَن لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ ٱللَّهُ لَهُۥ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُۥ مِن نُّورٍ ع 40

(24:40) Or its similitude is that of depths of darkness upon an abysmal sea, covered by a billow, above which is a billow, above which is cloud, creating darkness piled one upon another; when he puts forth his hand, he would scarcely see it.[72] He to whom Allah assigns no light, he will have no light.[73]

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

73. Here is stated the real object of the discourse which began with: Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. When in fact there is no light in the universe except the Light of Allah and all manifestation of reality is due to that Light, where from can the one whom Allah does not give light have light? There exists no other source of light from where he can receive a ray.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُسَبِّحُ لَهٗ مَنۡ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ وَالطَّيۡرُ صٰٓفّٰتٍ ؕ كُلٌّ قَدۡ عَلِمَ صَلَاتَهٗ وَتَسۡبِيۡحَهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيۡمٌۢ بِمَا يَفۡعَلُوۡنَ 41

(24:41) Do you not see that all that is in the heavens and the earth, even the birds that go about spreading their wings in flight, extol His glory? Each knows the way of its prayer and of its extolling Allah's glory. Allah is well aware of whatever they do.

وَلِلّٰهِ مُلۡكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ۚ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ الۡمَصِيۡرُ 42

(24:42) Allah's is the dominion of the heavens and the earth and to Him are all destined to return.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُزۡجِىۡ سَحَابًا ثُمَّ يُؤَلِّفُ بَيۡنَهٗ ثُمَّ يَجۡعَلُهٗ رُكَامًا فَتَرَى الۡوَدۡقَ يَخۡرُجُ مِنۡ خِلٰلِهٖ ۚ وَيُنَزِّلُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مِنۡ جِبَالٍ فِيۡهَا مِنۡۢ بَرَدٍ فَيُصِيۡبُ بِهٖ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ وَيَصۡرِفُهٗ عَنۡ مَّنۡ يَّشَآءُ ؕ يَكَادُ سَنَا بَرۡقِهٖ يَذۡهَبُ بِالۡاَبۡصَارِ ؕ 43

(24:43) Do you not see[74] that it is Allah Who gently drives the clouds, then He joins them together and then turns them into a thick mass and thereafter you see rain-drops fall down from its midst? And then He sends down hail from the heaven - thanks to the mountains[75] - and causes it to smite whom He wills and averts it from whom He wills. The flash of His lightning almost takes away the sight.

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

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

يُقَلِّبُ اللّٰهُ الَّيۡلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ؕ اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَعِبۡرَةً لِّاُولِى الۡاَبۡصَارِ 44

(24:44) It is Allah Who alternates the night and the day. Surely there is a lesson in it for those that have sight.

وَاللّٰهُ خَلَقَ كُلَّ دَآبَّةٍ مِّنۡ مَّآءٍ ۚ فَمِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ يَّمۡشِىۡ عَلٰى بَطۡنِهٖ ۚ وَمِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ يَّمۡشِىۡ عَلٰى رِجۡلَيۡنِ وَمِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ يَّمۡشِىۡ عَلٰٓى اَرۡبَعٍ ؕ يَخۡلُقُ اللّٰهُ مَا يَشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرٌ 45

(24:45) Allah has created every animal from water. Of them some move on their bellies, some move on two legs and some on four. Allah creates whatever He wills. Surely Allah has power over everything.

لَقَدۡ اَنۡزَلۡنَآ اٰيٰتٍ مُّبَيِّنٰتٍ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَهۡدِىۡ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسۡتَقِيۡمٍ 46

(24:46) Verily We have sent down revelations that clearly explain the Truth. Allah guides whomsoever He wills to a Straight Way.

وَيَقُوۡلُوۡنَ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَبِالرَّسُوۡلِ وَاَطَعۡنَا ثُمَّ يَتَوَلّٰى فَرِيۡقٌ مِّنۡهُمۡ مِّنۡۢ بَعۡدِ ذٰلِكَ ؕ وَمَآ اُولٰٓئِكَ بِالۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ 47

(24:47) They say: "We believe in Allah and the Messenger, and we obey," but thereafter a faction of them turns away (from obedience). These indeed are not believers.[76]

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

وَاِذَا دُعُوۡۤا اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَرَسُوۡلِهٖ لِيَحۡكُمَ بَيۡنَهُمۡ اِذَا فَرِيۡقٌ مِّنۡهُمۡ مُّعۡرِضُوۡنَ 48

(24:48) When they are called to Allah and His Messenger that he (that is, the Messenger) may judge (the disputes) among them,[77] a faction of them turns away.[78]

77. These words clearly state that the judgment of the Prophet is the judgment of Allah and the command of the Prophet is the command of Allah. Therefore, the invitation to obey the Prophet is an invitation to obey both Allah and His Prophet. Also see (Surah An-Nisa, Ayats 59-61, and the E.Ns thereof).

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

وَاِنۡ يَّكُنۡ لَّهُمُ الۡحَـقُّ يَاۡتُوۡۤا اِلَيۡهِ مُذۡعِنِيۡنَ ؕ 49

(24:49) However if the right is on their side they come to him (professing) their submissiveness.[79]

79. This verse states that a person who willingly accepts only that part of the divine law which serves his advantage, but rejects that which goes against his interests and desires, and prefers the worldly laws instead, is not a believer but a hypocrite. His profession of faith is false for he does not in fact believe in Allah and His Prophet but in his own interests and desires. With this attitude even if he believes in and follows a portion of the divine law, his belief has no value whatever in the sight of Allah.

اَفِىۡ قُلُوۡبِهِمۡ مَّرَضٌ اَمِ ارۡتَابُوۡۤا اَمۡ يَخَافُوۡنَ اَنۡ يَّحِيۡفَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ وَرَسُوۡلُهٗ ؕ بَلۡ اُولٰٓـئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوۡنَ ؕ 50

(24:50) Do their hearts suffer from the disease (of hypocrisy)? Or have they fallen prey to doubts? Or do they fear that Allah and His Messenger will wrong them? Nay, the truth is that they themselves are wrong-doers.[80]

80. That is, there can be only three reasons for such a conduct. First, a person may not have believed at all but may only be posing as a Muslim in order to enjoy the benefits of belonging to the Muslim community. Secondly, he might have believed but may still be having doubts about the reality of the Prophethood, revelations, life-afterdeath, and even the existence of Allah Himself. Thirdly, he may be a believer but might at the same time be apprehending injustice from Allah and His Prophet and considering their commands

disadvantageous to him personally in one way or the other. There can be no doubt that the people belonging to any of these categories are themselves unjust. A person who, having such doubts and suspicions, enters the Muslim community and enjoys undeserved benefits posing himself as a member thereof, is indeed a deceiver, cheater and forger. He is not only doing injustice to himself, practicing constant falsehood and developing the meanest traits of character, but he is being unjust to the Muslim people as well, who look upon him as one of themselves merely on the basis of his verbal profession of the faith and let him enjoy all sorts of social, cultural, political and moral relations with them as such.

إِنَّمَا كَانَ قَوْلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذَا دُعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ أَن يَقُولُوا سَمِعْنَا
وَأَطَعْنَا ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ 51

(24:51) When those that believe are called to Allah and His Messenger in order that he (that is, the Messenger) may judge their disputes among them, nothing becomes them but to say: "We hear and we obey." Such shall attain true success.

وَمَن يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَخْشَ اللَّهَ وَيَتَّقْهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ 52

(24:52) Those who obey Allah and His Messenger and fear Him and avoid disobeying Him: such, indeed, shall triumph.

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِنْ أَمَرْتَهُمْ لَيَخْرُجُنَّ ۖ قُل لَّا تُقْسِمُوا ۖ طَاعَةٌ
مَّعْرُوفَةٌ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ 53

(24:53) (The hypocrites) solemnly swear by Allah: "If you order us, we shall surely go forth (and fight in the cause of Allah)." Tell them: "Do not swear. The state of your obedience is known.[81] Allah is well aware of all that you do."[82]

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

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

قُلْ اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوا الرَّسُوْلَ ۚ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاِنَّمَا عَلَيْهِ مَا حُمِّلَ وَعَلَيْكُمْ مَّا حُمِّلْتُمْ ؕ
وَاِنْ تُطِيْعُوْهُ تَهْتَدُوْا ؕ وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُوْلِ اِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ 54

(24:54) Say: "Obey Allah and obey the Messenger. But if you turn away, then (know well) that the Messenger is responsible for what he has been charged with and you are responsible for what you have been charged with. But if you obey him, you will be guided to the Right Way. The Messenger has no other responsibility but to clearly convey (the command)."

وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ كَمَا
اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۪ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِيْنَهُمُ الَّذِى ارْتَضٰى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ
مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ اَمْنًا ؕ يَعْبُدُوْنَنِىْ لَا يُشْرِكُوْنَ بِىْ شَيْـًٔا ؕ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ
هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ 55

(24:55) Allah has promised those of you who believe and do righteous deeds that He will surely bestow power on them in the land even as He bestowed power on those that preceded them, and that He will firmly establish their religion which He has been pleased to choose for them, and He will replace with security the state of fear that they are in. Let them serve Me and associate none with Me in My Divinity.[83] Whoso thereafter engages in unbelief,[84] such indeed are the ungodly.

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

Some people interpret Khilafat (successorship in the land) to mean political power and authority, and conversely conclude that whosoever possesses power and authority in the land is necessarily a true believer and a follower of Allah's approved religion and His devotee, free from all traces of shirk. Then in order to get support for their wrong conclusion, they even change the very meanings of faith, virtue, divine creed, Allah's worship, idolatry, etc. to suit their interpretation. This is the worst distortion of the meaning of the Quran, even worse than what the Jews and Christians did with their Scriptures. This interpretation of the verse tends to destroy the very message of the Quran. If successorship in the land

were to mean mere power and authority in the land; then all those people who wielded power and authority in the world, or wield it today, would fit in with the description contained in the verse, even if they denied Allah, revelations, Prophethood, life in the Hereafter, and were involved in all kinds of major sins like usury, adultery, drinking and gambling. Now if all such people are regarded as pious believers and considered worthy of holding the high offices because of their qualities as such, then faith would imply simple obedience to physical laws and virtue would mean making use of those laws effectively and successfully. Allah's approved religion would mean making maximum progress in the fields of industry and trade, commerce and politics by achieving excellence in the physical sciences; devotion to Allah would mean abiding by the rules and procedures which are naturally useful and essential for success in individual and collective enterprises; and shirk would mean adopting a few harmful methods also along with the useful procedures and rules. But the question is: Would a person who has studied the Quran with an open heart and mind ever believe that the terms faith, righteous deeds, true religion, devotion to Allah, tauhid and shirk as used in the Quran really mean this? As a matter of fact, such a meaning can be understood either by the one who has never made an intelligent study of the Quran as a whole, but has picked up verses from here and there and given them his own biased meaning according to preconceived notions and theories, or by the one who has read the Quran through but has all along been holding all those verses as wrong and absurd, which invite people to accept Allah as the One and only Lord, His revelations as the only source of guidance, His Messengers as the only true guides worthy of absolute obedience, and which demand not only belief in the lifeafter- death, but also state that the people who would consider success in the worldly life as their sole and ultimate objective, without any idea of their accountability in the Hereafter, would be deprived of real success. The Quran has repeated these themes so frequently in diverse ways and in such clear and plain language that it is difficult to believe that anybody who studies it honestly can ever be involved in those misunderstandings in which the modern interpreters of this verse have been involved. The fact is that they have misconstrued Khilafat and Istikhlaf (successorship) after their own notions, which cannot be held as correct by anybody who has some knowledge of the Quran.

The Quran has used Khilafat and Istikhlaf in the following three meanings and the context determines in which particular meaning it has been used in a particular place:

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

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

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

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

Another thing that needs to be mentioned here is that the direct addressees of this promise were the Muslims living in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) though indirectly it applies to the future generations of Muslims as well. When in the beginning this promise was held out by Allah, the Muslims were living in a state of fear and Islam had not yet taken firm roots even in Hejaz. A few years later this state of fear not only gave way to peace and equanimity but Islam also spread outside Arabia to large parts of Africa and Asia, and it became firmly established not only in its own land of birth but outside it as well. This is a historical proof of the fact that Allah fulfilled His promise in the times of Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman (may Allah he pleased with them all). No right thinking person, therefore, can have any doubt that the Khilafat of the first three Caliphs has been authenticated by the Quran itself and Allah Himself has testified to their being pious believers. If anybody still has a doubt, he should read the address of AIi in Nahjal Balaghah, which was meant to dissuade Umar from going personally to fight against the Iranians. He said:

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

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

وَاَقِيۡمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَاَطِيۡعُوا الرَّسُوۡلَ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تُرۡحَمُوۡنَ 56

(24:56) Establish Prayer and pay Zakah and obey the Messenger so that mercy may be shown to you.

لَا تَحۡسَبَنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا مُعۡجِزِيۡنَ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ ۚ وَمَاۡوٰىهُمُ النَّارُ ؕ وَلَبِئۡسَ الۡمَصِيۡرُ ع 57

(24:57) Do not even imagine that those who disbelieve can render Allah powerless in the land. Their abode is the Fire; what an evil abode!

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا لِيَسۡتَاۡذِنۡكُمُ الَّذِيۡنَ مَلَكَتۡ اَيۡمَانُكُمۡ وَالَّذِيۡنَ لَمۡ يَبۡلُغُوا الۡحُلُمَ مِنۡكُمۡ ثَلٰثَ مَرّٰتٍ ؕ مِنۡ قَبۡلِ صَلٰوةِ الۡفَجۡرِ وَحِيۡنَ تَضَعُوۡنَ ثِيَابَكُمۡ مِّنَ الظَّهِيۡرَةِ وَمِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ صَلٰوةِ الۡعِشَآءِ ۚ ثَلٰثُ عَوۡرٰتٍ لَّكُمۡ ؕ لَيۡسَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَلَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ جُنَاحٌۢ بَعۡدَهُنَّ ؕ طَوّٰفُوۡنَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ بَعۡضُكُمۡ عَلٰى بَعۡضٍ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمُ الۡاٰيٰتِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيۡمٌ حَكِيۡمٌ 58

(24:58) Believers![85] At three times let those whom your right hands possess and those of your children[86] who have not yet reached puberty[87] ask leave of you before entering your quarters: before the Morning Prayer and when you take off your clothes at noon, and after the Night Prayer. These are the three times of privacy for you.[88] If they come to you at other times then there is no sin for them[89] nor for you, for you have to visit one another frequently.[90] Thus does Allah clearly explain His directives to you. Allah is All- Knowing, All-Wise.

85. From here again, the commandments for social life are being resumed. It is just possible that this portion of Surah An-Noor was revealed at a later date.

86. According to the majority of commentators and jurists, this refers to both male and female slaves. Ibn Umar and Mujahid, however, have expressed the opinion that it refers to the male slaves only. But in view of the commandment that follows there appears to be no reason for making this distinction. Violation of one's privacy by his children is as

undesirable as by his female slaves. All jurists agree that the commandment given in this verse is applicable both to the minor and to the grown up slaves.

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

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

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

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

وَإِذَا بَلَغَ الْأَطْفَالُ مِنكُمُ الْحُلُمَ فَلْيَسْتَأْذِنُوا كَمَا اسْتَأْذَنَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ
يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ 59

(24:59) And when your children attain puberty[91] let them ask leave to come to you like their elders used to ask leave. Thus does Allah clearly explain to you His Signs. He is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

91. That is, when they have reached the age of puberty. As has been explained in E.N. 87 above, the signs of puberty in the case of boys and girls are nocturnal emission and menstrual discharge respectively. There is, however, a difference of opinion among the jurists regarding the beginning of puberty in those boys and girls who for some reason do

not show these physical signs for an unduly long time. According to Imam Shafai, Imam Abu Yusuf, Imam Muhammad and Imam Ahmad, a boy or a girl of 15 years will be considered to have attained puberty, and a saying of Imam Abu Hanifah also supports this view. But the well known view of Imam Abu Hanifah is that in such cases the age of puberty will be 17 years for girls and 18 years for boys. Both these opinions are the result of juristic reasoning and neither is based on any injunction of the Quran or Sunnah. It is therefore not necessary that the age limits of 15 or 18 years be accepted as marking the beginning of puberty everywhere in the world in abnormal cases. In different countries and ages there are different conditions of physical development and growth. The age of puberty in a certain country can be determined by means of the law of averages in normal cases. As for abnormal cases, the mean difference of ages may be added to the upper age limit to determine the age of puberty. For instance, if in a country, the minimum and maximum ages for noctural discharge are normally 12 and 15 years respectively, the mean difference of one and a half years may be added to the maximum limit of 15 years to determine the beginning of puberty for abnormal cases. The same principle can be used by the legal experts of various countries to fix the age of puberty keeping in view their peculiar local conditions.

There is a tradition quoted from Ibn Umar in support of the age of 15 years for puberty. He says: I was 14, when I presented myself before the Prophet (peace be upon him) to ask his permission to join the battle of Uhud, but he declined permission. Then on the occasion of the battle of the Trench, when I was 15, I was again presented and he permitted me to join. (Sihah Sitta, Musnad Ahmad). This tradition, however, does not stand scrutiny for the following two reasons:

(a) The battle of Uhud took place in Shawwal, 3 A.H., and the battle of the Trench in Shawwal, 5 A.H. according to Ibn Ishaq, and in Zil-Qad, 5 A.H. according to Ibn Saad. There is an interval of two years or more between the two events. Now if Ibn Umar was 14 at the time of the battle of Uhud, he could not be 15 at the time of the battle of the Trench. It may be that he mentioned 14 years for 13 years and 11 months and 15 years for 15 years and 11 months.

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

وَالْقَوَاعِدُ مِنَ النِّسَآءِ الّٰتِيْ لَا يَرْجُوْنَ نِكَاحًا فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْهِنَّ جُنَاحٌ اَنْ يَّضَعْنَ ثِيَابَهُنَّ
غَيْرَ مُتَبَرِّجٰتٍۭ بِزِيْنَةٍ ۭ وَاَنْ يَّسْتَعْفِفْنَ خَيْرٌ لَّهُنَّ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ 60

(24:60) The women who are past their youth (and can no longer bear children) and do not look forward to marriage[92] will incur no sin if they cast off their outer garments[93] without displaying their adornment.[94] But if they remain modest, that is still better for them. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

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

93. Obviously it cannot mean that they should strip themselves naked. That is why all the jurists and commentators agree that it implies the outer garments which are used to hide the adornments as enjoined in (Surah Al-Ahzab, Ayat 59).

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

لَيْسَ عَلَى الْاَعْمٰى حَرَجٌ وَّلَا عَلَى الْاَعْرَجِ حَرَجٌ وَّلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيْضِ حَرَجٌ وَّلَا عَلٰٓى
اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَنْ تَاْكُلُوْا مِنْۢ بُيُوْتِكُمْ اَوْ بُيُوْتِ اٰبَآئِكُمْ اَوْ بُيُوْتِ اُمَّهٰتِكُمْ اَوْ بُيُوْتِ
اِخْوَانِكُمْ اَوْ بُيُوْتِ اَخَوٰتِكُمْ اَوْ بُيُوْتِ اَعْمَامِكُمْ اَوْ بُيُوْتِ عَمّٰتِكُمْ اَوْ بُيُوْتِ
اَخْوَالِكُمْ اَوْ بُيُوْتِ خٰلٰتِكُمْ اَوْ مَا مَلَكْتُمْ مَّفَاتِحَهٗٓ اَوْ صَدِيْقِكُمْ ؕ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ
اَنْ تَاْكُلُوْا جَمِيْعًا اَوْ اَشْتَاتًا ؕ فَاِذَا دَخَلْتُمْ بُيُوْتًا فَسَلِّمُوْا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِكُمْ تَحِيَّةً مِّنْ عِنْدِ
اللّٰهِ مُبٰرَكَةً طَيِّبَةً ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ع 61

(24:61) There is no blame on the blind nor any blame on the lame nor any blame on the sick nor on yourselves that you eat in your own houses, or your fathers' houses, or your mothers' houses, or your brothers' houses, or the houses of your sisters, or the houses of your fathers' brothers or the houses of your fathers' sisters, or in the houses of your mothers' brothers, or in the houses of your mothers' sisters or in the houses whose keys you possess, or the house of a friend.[95] There is no blame if you eat together or separately.[96] But when you enter such houses, greet each other with a salutation appointed by Allah, a salutation that is blessed and good. Thus, does Allah expound His signs to you in order that you will act with understanding.

95. Three things are necessary to understand this verse:

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

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

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

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

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

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَإِذَا كَانُوا مَعَهُ عَلَىٰ أَمْرٍ جَامِعٍ لَّمْ يَذْهَبُوا حَتَّىٰ
يَسْتَأْذِنُوهُ ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَأْذِنُونَكَ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ۚ فَإِذَا
اسْتَأْذَنُوكَ لِبَعْضِ شَأْنِهِمْ فَأْذَن لِّمَن شِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمُ اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ
رَّحِيمٌ 62

(24:62) The true believers[97] are only those who sincerely believe in Allah and in His Messenger and who, whenever they are with him on some common errand,[98] they do not go away until they have asked leave of him. Verily those who ask leave of you, it is they who truly believe in Allah and His Messenger. So if they ask your leave in connection with some of their affairs,[99] give leave to those whom you will,[100] and ask Allah for forgiveness on their behalf.[101]Surely Allah is Much Forgiving, Ever Merciful.

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

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

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

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

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

لَا تَجْعَلُوْا دُعَآءَ الرَّسُوْلِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَآءِ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا ؕ قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ يَتَسَلَّلُوْنَ
مِنْكُمْ لِوَاذًا ۚ فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِيْنَ يُخَالِفُوْنَ عَنْ اَمْرِهٖۤ اَنْ تُصِيْبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ اَوْ يُصِيْبَهُمْ
عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ 63

(24:63) (Muslims!) Do not make the calling of the Messenger among you as your calling one another.[102] Allah knows well those of you who surreptitiously steal away, taking shelter behind one another. Let those who go against the order (of the Messenger) beware lest a trial or severe punishment afflict them.

102. Dua means to summon, to pray and to call. Dua-ar- Rasul, therefore, may mean summoning or praying by the Messenger or calling the Messenger. The verse can thus have three meanings which would all be equally correct; (a) The Prophet's summons should not be treated as a common man's summons, for the Prophet's summon is of extraordinary importance, which you cannot ignore, because if you fail to respond to it, or feel hesitant about it, you will be doing so at the very risk of your faith. (b) Do not consider the Prophet's prayer as a common man's prayer. If he is pleased with you and prays for you, there can be no greater good fortune for you. But if he is displeased with you and curses you, there can be no greater misfortune for you. (c) Calling the Prophet should not be like calling among yourselves of each other. That is, you should not call or address the Prophet just as you call and address other people aloud by their names. You should have full respect for him, because the slightest disrespect in this regard will call for Allah's reckoning in the Hereafter.

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

أَلَآ إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ ۖ قَدْ يَعْلَمُ مَآ أَنتُمْ عَلَيْهِ ۖ وَيَوْمَ يُرْجَعُونَ إِلَيْهِ
فَيُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا عَمِلُوا ۗ وَٱللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ۝64

(24:64) Lo! Whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah. He is well aware of your ways. And the Day when they will be returned to Him, He will tell them all what they did. Allah knows everything.

25. Surah Al Furqan (The Criterion)

Name

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

Period of Revelation

It appears from its style and subject matter that, like Surah Al- Mu'minun, it was also revealed during the third stage of Prophethood at Makkah. Ibn Jarir and Imam Razi have cited a tradition of Dahhak bin Muzahim that this Surah was revealed eight years before Surah An Nisa. This also confirms our opinion as to its period of revelation. (Ibn Jarir, Vol. XIX, pp. 28-30, and Tafsir Kabir, Vol. VI,p. 358).

Subject Matter and Topics

The Surah deals with the doubts and objections that were being raised against the Qur'an, the Prophethood of Muhammad (Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) and his teachings by the disbelievers of Makkah. Appropriate answers to each and every objection have been given and the people have been warned of the consequences of rejecting the Truth. At the end of the Surah, a clear picture of the moral superiority of the Believers has been depicted as in the beginning of Surah Al-Mu'minun, as if to say, 'Here is the criterion for distinguishing the genuine from the counterfeit. This is the noble character of those people who have believed in and followed the teachings of the Holy Prophet and this is the kind of people that he is trying to train. You may yourselves compare and contrast this type of people with those Arabs, who have not as yet accepted the Message, and who are upholding "ignorance" and exerting their utmost to defeat the Truth. Now you may judge for yourselves as to which you would like to choose." Though this question was not posed in so many words, it was placed before every one in Arabia in a tangible shape. It may be noted that during the next few years, the practical answer given to this question by the whole nation, with the exception of a small minority, was that they chose Islam.

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

تَبٰرَكَ الَّذِيْ نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ عَلٰى عَبْدِهٖ لِيَكُوْنَ لِلْعٰلَمِيْنَ نَذِيْرَا ۙ 1

(25:1) Most blessed is He[1] Who sent down this Criterion[2][3] on His servant, to be a warner to all mankind;[4]

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. Al-Furqan: The Criterion. The Quran has been called Al-Furqan because it is the Criterion for judging right and wrong virtue and vice, truth and falsehood.

3. The word nazzala implies revelation of the Quran piecemeal by degrees. The wisdom of this introductory remark will be explained in the study of verse 32, where the objection of the disbelievers of Makkah as to why the Quran has not been sent down all at once, has been dealt with.

4. "Warner to all mankind": To warn all mankind of the evil consequences of their heedlessness and deviation. The warner may be Al-Furqan or the Prophet (peace be upon him) to whom it was revealed. In fact, both were the warners because they were both sent for one and the same purpose. The message of the Quran and Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) were not meant for any particular country but for the whole world; and not for their own time, but for all times to come. This has been stated at several places in the Quran. For instance: O Muhammad, say, O mankind, I am a Messenger to all of you from Allah (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 158). And this Quran has been revealed to me so that I should thereby warn you all and to whom it may reach. (Surah Al Anaam, Ayat 19). We have sent you only as a bearer of good news and as a warner to all mankind. (Surah Saba, Ayat 28). We have sent you as a mercy to all mankind. (Surah Al Anbiya, Ayat 107). The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself has stated this clearly in the Hadith. For instance, he said: I have been sent to all men, the red and the black. Before me a Prophet was sent only to his own people, but 1 have been sent to all mankind. (Bukhari, Muslim). I have been sent to all mankind, and I am the last of the Prophets. (Muslim).

ٱلَّذِى لَهُۥ مُلْكُ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُۥ شَرِيكٌ فِى ٱلْمُلْكِ
وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ فَقَدَّرَهُۥ تَقْدِيرًا 2

(25:2) He to Whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth;[5] Who has taken to Himself no son[6] nor has He taken any partner in His kingdom;[7] Who created everything and then determined its destiny.[8]

5. "To Him belongs the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth." That is, He alone has an exclusive right to it, and no one else has any right to it nor any share in it.

6. That is, He has neither any relation of direct parenthood to anyone, nor has He taken anyone as a son. Therefore, none else in the universe is entitled to worship. He is Unique and there can be no partner in His Godhead. Thus all those who associate with Him angels or jinns or saints as His offspring, are ignorant. Likewise, those who believe that someone is His son, are also ignorant. They have no true conception of the Greatness of Allah and consider Him to be weak and needy like human beings, who require someone to become their inheritor. It is sheer ignorance and folly. For further details, see (E.Ns 66 to 68 of Surah Younus).

7. The Arabic word mulk means Sovereignty, Supreme Authority, and Kingship. Thus the sentence will mean: Allah is the Absolute Ruler of the whole universe and there is none other who may have any right to authority; therefore He alone is God. For, whenever a man takes anything else as his lord, he does so under the presumption that his deity has the power to do good or bring harm and make or mar his fortune; nobody will like to worship a powerless deity. Now when it is recognized that none but Allah has the real power and authority in the universe, nobody will bow before anyone other than Him in worship, nor will sing anybody else's hymns, nor commit the folly of bowing in worship before anything else except his real God, or recognize any other as his ruler, because "To Allah belongs the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and to Him alone."

8. There may be other translations of this also: He has ordained it in due proportion; or He has appointed an exact measure for everything. But no translation can convey its real meaning, which is: Allah has not only created everything in the universe but also determined its shape, size, potentialities, characteristics, term of existence, the limitations and extent of its development and all other things concerning it. Then, He has created the means and provisions to enable it to function properly in its own separate sphere.

This is one of the most comprehensive verses of the Quran with regard to the doctrine of Tauhid. According to traditions, the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself taught this verse to every child of his family as soon as it was able to speak and utter a few words. Thus, this verse is the best means of impressing the doctrine of Tauhid on our minds, and every Muslim should use it for educating his children as soon as they develop understanding.

وَاتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً لَّا يَخْلُقُونَ شَيْئًا وَّهُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ وَلَا يَمْلِكُونَ لِأَنفُسِهِمْ ضَرًّا وَّلَا نَفْعًا وَّلَا يَمْلِكُونَ مَوْتًا وَّلَا حَيٰوةً وَّلَا نُشُورًا 3

(25:3) Yet people have taken, instead of Him, other deities; those that create nothing but are themselves created;[9] who do not have the power to hurt or benefit even themselves; who have no power over death, nor over life, nor over the resurrection of the dead.[10]

9. The words are comprehensive and cover all the false gods whom the mushriks worship whether they are angels, jinns, Prophets, saints, the sun, the moon, the stars, trees, rivers, animals etc., which have been created by Allah, or those which have been created by man, as the idols of stone, wood, etc.

10. That is, Allah has sent down Al-Furqan on His servant so that he may invite the people to the truth, which they have forsaken due to heedlessness and waywardness, and warn them of the evil consequences of their folly. The Furqan is being revealed piecemeal so that he may distinguish right from wrong and the genuine from the counterfeit.

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّآ اِفْكُ ِۨافْتَرٰىهُ وَاَعَانَهٗ عَلَيْهِ قَوْمٌ اٰخَرُوْنَ ۚ فَقَدْ جَآءُوْ
ظُلْمًا وَّزُوْرًا ۚ 4

(25:4) Those who disbelieve in the Message of the Prophet say: "This (Criterion) is nothing but a lie which he has forged with the help of others." Such have indeed resorted to a grievous wrong and sheer falsehood.[11]

11. Another translation may be: a great injustice.

وَقَالُوْٓا اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ اكْتَتَبَهَا فَهِيَ تُمْلٰى عَلَيْهِ بُكْرَةً وَّاَصِيْلًا 5

(25:5) They say: "These are merely fairy tales of the ancients which he has got inscribed and they are then recited to him morning and evening."

قُلْ اَنْزَلَهُ الَّذِيْ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا 6

(25:6) Say to them (O Muhammad): "It is He Who knows the secrets of the heavens and the earth[12] Who has sent down this Book. Indeed, He is Most Forgiving, Most Compassionate."[13]

12. This is the same objection which the modern orientalists have raised against the Quran, but strange as it may seem, no contemporary of the Prophet (peace be upon him) ever raised such an objection against him. Nobody, for instance, ever said that Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a boy had met Buhairah, the monk, and had attained religious knowledge from him, nor did anybody claim that he had obtained all that information from the Christian monks and Jewish rabbis during the trade journeys in his youth. In fact, they knew that he had never traveled alone but in the caravans and if they said such a thing, it would be refuted by hundreds of their own people from the city.

Then, one could ask, if he had gained all that knowledge from Buhairah when he was about 12, and during trade journeys when he was 25, why did he keep it secret from the people till he became 40? Whereas he did not leave his country even for a single day, but lived for years among his own people in the same city. That is why the people of Makkah dared not

bring such an impudent and baseless charge against him. Their objections related to the time when he claimed to be a Prophet (peace be upon him) of Allah and not to the time preceding that claim. Their argument was like this: This man is illiterate and cannot obtain any knowledge through books. He has lived among us for forty years, but we have never heard from him anything that might have shown that he had any acquaintance with what he is preaching; therefore he must have had the help of other people who copied these things from the writings of the ancients for him: he learns these things from them and recites them as divine revelations: this is a fraud. So much so that according to some traditions, they named some of his helpers, who were the people of the Book, were illiterate and lived in Makkah. They were: (1) Addas, a freed slave of Huvaitib bin Abdul Uzza. (2) Yasar, a freed slave of Ala bin Al Hadrami. (3) Jabr, a freed slave of Amir bin Rabbiah.

Apparently this is a weighty argument. For there can be no greater proof of the fraud of Prophethood than to specify its source. But it looks strange that no argument has been put forward to refute this charge except a mere denial, as if to say: Your charge is an impudent lie: you are cruel and unjust to bring such a false charge against Our Messenger; for the Quran is the Word of Allah Who knows all the secrets in the heavens and the earth. Had their charge been based on facts, it would not have been rejected with contempt, for in that case the disbelievers would have demanded a detailed and clear answer. But they realized the strength of the arguments and did not make such a demand. Moreover, the fact that the weighty argument failed to produce any doubt in the minds of the new Muslims, was a clear proof that it was a lie.

The enigma is clearly explained if we keep in view the prevalent circumstances.

(1) The disbelievers of Makkah did not take any decisive steps to prove their charge, although they could, had there been any truth in their charge. For instance, they could have made raids on the houses of the alleged helpers and on the house of the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself and taken hold of the whole material which was being used in this fraud, and made it public to expose his Prophethood. And this was not difficult for them because they never hesitated to resort to anything to defeat him, including persecution, as they were not bound by any moral code.

(2) The alleged helpers were not strangers. As they lived in Makkah, everyone knew it well how learned they were. The disbelievers themselves knew that they could never have helped to produce a unique and sublime Book like the Quran which had the highest literary excellence and merit. That is why none of them challenged the answer to the charge. That is why even those people, who did not know them, considered this frivolous. Then if the alleged helpers were such geniuses, why did they not claim to be prophets themselves?

(3) Then, all the alleged helpers were freed slaves who were attached to their former masters even after their freedom according to the customs of Arabia; therefore they could not have become willing accomplices of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in this fraud of false prophethood because their former masters could have coerced them to expose it. The only reason for them to help the Prophet (peace be upon him) in his claim could have been some greed or interest which, under the circumstances, could not even be imagined. Thus, apparently there was no reason why they should have offended those whose protection and patronage they needed and enjoyed, and become accomplices in the fraud.

(4) Above all, all these alleged helpers embraced Islam. Could it be possible that those very persons, who had helped the Prophet (peace be upon him) to make his fraud successful, could have possibly become his devoted followers? Moreover, if, for the sake of argument, it be admitted that they helped him, why was not any of them raised to a prominent rank as a reward of his help? Why were not Addas and Yasar and Jabr exalted to the same status as were Abu Bakr and Umar and Abu Ubaidah? Another odd thing is that if the fraud of prophethood was being carried on with the help of the alleged helpers, how could it remain hidden from Zaid bin Harithah, Ali bin Abi Talib, Abu Bakr and other people, who were the Prophet's (peace be upon him) closest and most devoted companions? Thus the charge was not only frivolous and false, but it was also below the dignity of the Quran to give any answer to it. The charge has been cited merely to prove that those people had been so blinded by their opposition to the truth that they could say anything.

13. "He is All Forgiving and All Merciful" is very meaningful here. It means that Allah is giving full respite to the enemies of the truth, for He is Forgiving and Merciful; otherwise He would have sent down a scourge to annihilate them because of the false charges they were bringing against the Messenger. It also contains an admonition, as if to say: O unjust people, if even now you give up your enmity and obduracy and accept the truth, We shall forgive your previous misdeeds.

وَقَالُوْا مَالِ هٰذَا الرَّسُوْلِ يَاْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشِيْ فِي الْاَسْوَاقِ ؕ لَوْلَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ
فَيَكُوْنَ مَعَهٗ نَذِيْرًا ۙ 7

(25:7) They say: "What sort of a Messenger is this: he eats food and walks about in the markets?[14] Why was an angel not sent down to him so that he may remain with the Messenger and warn those that do not believe in him?[15]

14. That is, he cannot be a Messenger of Allah because he is a human being like us. Had Allah willed to send a Messenger, He would have sent an angel, and if at all a human being was to be sent, he should have been a king or a millionaire, who would have resided in a castle and been guarded by attendants. A Messenger could not be an ordinary person who has to move about in the market places like the common people, for it is obvious that such a human Messenger cannot attract the attention of the people. In other words, they thought that a Messenger was not meant to guide the people to the right path but to coerce them to obedience by show of worldly power and grandeur. For details, see (E.N. 26 of Surah Al-Mominoon).

15. That is, if a human being was to be sent as a Messenger, an angel should have been appointed to accompany him to proclaim: If you do not believe in him, I will scourge you. But what kind of a Messenger is he, who has to suffer from abuse and persecution?

أَوْ يُلْقَىٰٓ إِلَيْهِ كَنزٌ أَوْ تَكُونُ لَهُۥ جَنَّةٌ يَأْكُلُ مِنْهَا ۚ وَقَالَ ٱلظَّٰلِمُونَ إِن تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا رَجُلًا

مَّسْحُورًا 8

(25:8) Why was a treasure not bestowed upon him, or a garden whereof he might obtain his sustenance?"[16] The evil-doers say: "You are simply following a bewitched man."[17]

16. That is, if nothing else, Allah should at least have made extraordinary arrangements for his livelihood. But this man has no treasure and no gardens; yet he claims to be a Messenger of the Lord of the universe.

17. The disbelievers of Makkah made the false propaganda against the Prophet (peace be upon him) that he had been bewitched by some jinn or by the sorcery of an enemy or by the curse of some god or goddess for his insolence. But it is strange that they also admitted that he was a clever man who could make use of extracts from the ancient writings for the sake of his prophethood, could practice sorcery and was also a poet.

ٱنظُرْ كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوا۟ لَكَ ٱلْأَمْثَالَ فَضَلُّوا۟ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَبِيلًا ۧ 9

(25:9) See what specious arguments they put forth before you: they are so strayed that they will not find their way to anything sound.[18]

18. As these objections were frivolous and meaningless like others, the Quran has ignored them, saying: Your objections are irrelevant, unreasonable and void of sense. You bring no sound argument to prove your doctrine of shirk, or to refute the doctrine of Tauhid put forward by him, whereas the Messenger gives such proofs of the doctrine of Tauhid that you cannot refute them except by saying: He is bewitched. The same is true of the doctrine of the life-after-death and of the moral system of the Quran, which has produced men of high character. You cannot deny these things; you reject them, saying, He is a human being like us, etc.

تَبَارَكَ ٱلَّذِىٓ إِن شَآءَ جَعَلَ لَكَ خَيْرًا مِّن ذَٰلِكَ جَنَّٰتٍ تَجْرِى مِن تَحْتِهَا ٱلْأَنْهَٰرُ ۙ وَيَجْعَل

لَّكَ قُصُورًا 10

(25:10) Most blessed[19] is He Who, if He wills, can grant you even better than what they propose: Gardens beneath which rivers flow, and stately mansions.

19. Here again the word tabaraka has been used and in the context it means: Allah has full control over everything and has unlimited powers: if he wills to favor somebody, He can do so as and when He wills without let or hindrance.

بَلۡ كَذَّبُوۡا بِالسَّاعَةِ ۚ وَاَعۡتَدۡنَا لِمَنۡ كَذَّبَ بِالسَّاعَةِ سَعِيۡرًا ۚ 11

(25:11) Nay, the truth is that it is the Hour[20] [21] to which they give the lie.¹ We have kept a Blazing Fire ready for him who denies the Hour.

20. The word as-saat, meaning the time or the Hour, has been used in the Quran as a term for the promised Hour of Resurrection, when all human beings of all ages will be raised from the dead and gathered together before Allah Almighty to account for their beliefs and deeds, right or wrong, and rewarded or punished accordingly.

21. That is, the objections they are raising are not due to the reason that they doubt the authenticity of the Quran on some rational ground, or that they do not believe in you for the reason that you eat food and walk about in the streets like the common people, or that they did not accept your message of truth only because you were not escorted by an angel, or were not given a treasure. But the real reason why they are putting forward all sorts of absurd arguments to reject your message is that they do not believe in the lifeafter- death, and this denial has made them free from all moral obligations. For when one denies the life-after death, there remains no need for him to consider and decide what is true or false, or what is right or wrong, etc. Their argument is like this: There is going to be no life after this one on the earth when we will be called to account for our deeds before God. Death will be the end of everything, and it will therefore make no difference whether one was a worshiper of God or a disbeliever or a mushrik or an atheist. When the ultimate end is to become one with the dust, there is no need of judging what is right and what is wrong except by the criterion of success and failure in this life. Those who deny the Hereafter also see that worldly success or failure does not entirely depend upon one's faith or conduct; nay, they very often see that the righteous and the wicked persons meet with the same end irrespective of their faith for which there is no ordained punishment or reward in this life; one righteous person may be living a life of hardship while another enjoying all the good things of life; one wicked person may be suffering for his misdeeds while the other enjoying a life of pleasure and plenty. As such, as far as the worldly consequences of adopting a particular moral attitude are concerned, the disbelievers in the Hereafter cannot be satisfied whether it is right or wrong. In view of this, those who deny the Hereafter, do not see any need to consider an invitation to faith and morality even if it is presented in a most forceful way.

اِذَا رَاَتۡهُمۡ مِّنۡ مَّكَانٍۢ بَعِيۡدٍ سَمِعُوۡا لَهَا تَغَيُّظًا وَّزَفِيۡرًا 12

(25:12) When it sees[22] them from a place afar, they will hear its raging and roaring,

22. "The Fire sees them" The words used in the text may be metaphorical, or they may mean that the Fire of Hell will be endowed with the faculties of seeing, thinking and judging.

وَاِذَاۤ اُلۡقُوۡا مِنۡهَا مَكَانًا ضَيِّقًا مُّقَرَّنِيۡنَ دَعَوۡا هُنَالِكَ ثُبُوۡرًا ؕ 13

(25:13) and when they are flung, chained together, into a narrow place in it, they will fervently call there for annihilation.

لَا تَدْعُوا الْيَوْمَ ثُبُورًا وَاحِدًا وَادْعُوا ثُبُورًا كَثِيرًا 14

(25:14) (They will then be told): "Do not call for a single annihilation, but for many an annihilation."

قُلْ أَذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ أَمْ جَنَّةُ الْخُلْدِ الَّتِي وُعِدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ ۚ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَزَاءً وَمَصِيرًا 15

(25:15) Ask them: "Is this state better or the Garden of Eternity which the God-fearing have been promised?" It shall be their recompense and the end-point of their journey;

لَّهُمْ فِيهَا مَا يَشَاءُونَ خَالِدِينَ ۚ كَانَ عَلَىٰ رَبِّكَ وَعْدًا مَّسْئُولًا 16

(25:16) the Garden wherein whatever they desire will be fulfilled. In it they shall abide for ever. This is a promise whose fulfilment Your Lord has made incumbent on Himself.[23]

23. Literally: It is a promise whose fulfillment can be demanded (from Allah).

Here one may ask the question: How can the promise of the Garden and the threat of the Fire produce any effect on the attitude of a parson who denies resurrection and the existence of Paradise and Hell? In order to understand the wisdom of this method of admonition, one should keep in view that it is meant to appeal to the self-interest of an obdurate person, who does not otherwise listen to such arguments. This is, as if to say: Even if, for the sake of argument, there is no proof of the reality of the life-afterdeath, there is also no proof that such an event will not occur at all, and there is a possibility for both. In the latter case, the believer and the disbeliever both will be in one and the same position, but if there is life in the Hereafter, as the Prophet asserts, then the disbelievers will be doomed to utter ruin. Therefore, such an approach breaks the stubbornness of the disbelievers and proves to be highly effective when the entire scene of resurrection gathering of the people, their accountability and of Hell and Heaven is presented in a vivid manner as if the Prophet (peace be upon him) had himself seen it with his own eyes. For further explanation, see (Surah HaMim Sajdah, Ayat 52 and E. N. 69) thereof, and (Surah Al-Ahqaf, Ayat 10).

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَقُولُ أَأَنتُمْ أَضْلَلْتُمْ عِبَادِي هَٰؤُلَاءِ أَمْ هُمْ ضَلُّوا السَّبِيلَ ۚ 17

(25:17) On the Day when He will muster together all the unbelievers as well as the deities that they worship beside Allah,[24] and He will ask them: "Was it you who

caused these servants of Mine to stray away, or did they themselves stray away from the Right Path?"[25]

24. Here, deities do not mean idols but the angels, the prophets; the saints, the martyrs and the pious men, whom the mushriks of different communities have made their deities.

25. Such dialogues between Allah and the gods of the disbelievers occur at several places in the Quran. For instance, in Surah Saba it has been stated: On the day when He will gather them all together, He will ask the angels, Did these people worship you? They will answer, Glory be to Thee! Thou art our Patron and not they: they in fact worshiped the jinns (that is, satans); most of these believed in them. (verses 40-41). Similarly in Surah Al- Maidah, it is said: And when Allah will say, O Jesus, son of Mary, did you ever say to the people: Make me and my mother gods instead of Allah? He will answer, Glory be to Thee! It did not behoove me to say that which I had no right to say. I told them only that which Thou didst bid me: Worship Allah, Who is my Lord as well as your Lord. (verses. 116, 117).

قَالُوْا سُبْحٰنَكَ مَا كَانَ يَنْۢبَغِيْ لَنَآ اَنْ نَّتَّخِذَ مِنْ دُوْنِكَ مِنْ اَوْلِيَآءَ وَلٰكِنْ مَّتَّعْتَهُمْ وَاٰبَآءَهُمْ حَتّٰى نَسُوا الذِّكْرَ ۚ وَكَانُوْا قَوْمًۢا بُوْرًا 18

(25:18) They will say: "Glory be to You! It did not behove us to take any other than You as our guardians, but You lavished the pleasures of life upon them and their forefathers until they forgot the Admonition and became doomed to destruction."[26]

26. That is, they were mean people: You gave them all the provisions of life so that they may show gratitude to You, but they became ungrateful and ignored all the admonitions given by the Prophets.

فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوْكُمْ بِمَا تَقُوْلُوْنَ ۙ فَمَا تَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ صَرْفًا وَّلَا نَصْرًا ۚ وَمَنْ يَّظْلِمْ مِّنْكُمْ نُذِقْهُ عَذَابًا كَبِيْرًا 19

(25:19) Thus will those deities give the lie to all what you now say,[27] and you will not be able to avert your doom, nor obtain any succour. We shall cause whoever of you commits wrong[28] to taste an enormous chastisement.

27. That is, on that day your religion, which you now believe, to be true, will prove to be false and even your gods, whom you yourselves have set up, will declare it to be a lie; for none of them ever asked you to make them your deities and worship them as such. Consequently, instead of interceding on your behalf; they will bear witness against you.

28. They will be guilty of iniquity. They will be unjust to the reality and the truth and guilty of disbelief and shirk. The context shows that those who reject the Prophet (peace be upon

him) and set up other deities instead of Allah and deny life in the Hereafter, are guilty of zulm (iniquity).

وَمَآ اَرۡسَلۡنَا قَبۡلَكَ مِنَ الۡمُرۡسَلِيۡنَ اِلَّاۤ اِنَّهُمۡ لَيَاۡكُلُوۡنَ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمۡشُوۡنَ فِى الۡاَسۡوَاقِ ؕ
وَجَعَلۡنَا بَعۡضَكُمۡ لِبَعۡضٍ فِتۡنَةً ؕ اَتَصۡبِرُوۡنَ ۚ وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ بَصِيۡرًا ۧ 20

(25:20) (O Muhammad), We never sent any Messengers before you but they ate food and walked about in the markets.[29] We made some of you a means to test each by the other[30] to see whether you remain patient.[31] Your Lord is All-Seeing.[32]

29. This is an answer to the objection of the disbelievers of Makkah that Muhammad (peace be upon him) could not be a Messenger of Allah because he ate food and moved about in the streets. They have been told that all the Messengers of Allah who came before Muhammad, like Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Moses and many others (peace be upon them all) whom they knew and acknowledged as Prophets and Messengers of Allah also ate food and walked about in the streets. Nay, even Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), son of Mary, himself, whom the Christians had made the son of God (and whose image had also been placed in the Kabah by the disbelievers of Makkah) ate food and walked about in the streets like a common man even according to the Gospels themselves.

30. It is obvious that the Messenger and the believers were a test for the disbelievers as to whether they would believe even after hearing the divine message and seeing their pure character. On the other hand, the disbelievers were a test for the Messenger and his followers in the sense that they were a means of proving and trying their true faith by their persecution. For it is this test alone which helps to discriminate the true believers from the hypocrites. That is why, at first, only the poor and the helpless but sincere people embraced Islam. Had there been no persecution and hardships but prosperity, wealth and grandeur, the worshipers of the world and the selfish people would have been the first to embrace Islam.

31. That is, now when you have understood the wisdom of the test by persecution, it is hoped that you will endure all kinds of hardships without complaint, and willingly undergo the persecutions that are inevitable.

32. It probably means two things: First, the way your Lord is conducting your affairs, is according to His will and nothing that happens is without His knowledge. Second: He is fully aware of your sincerity and righteousness in serving His cause under all kinds of hardships. You should therefore rest assured that you will have your full reward. He also sees the persecution and iniquity of the disbelievers; therefore they will not escape the consequences of their wickedness.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَآءَنَا لَوْلَآ أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ أَوْ نَرَىٰ رَبَّنَا ۗ لَقَدِ اسْتَكْبَرُوا

فِىٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَعَتَوْ عُتُوًّا كَبِيرًا 21

(25:21) Those who do not look forward to meet Us say:[33] "Why should angels not be sent to us, or why do we ourselves not observe our Lord?"[34] Surely they are too proud of themselves[35] and have gone beyond all limits in their rebellion.

33. That is, if Allah had really intended to convey His message to us, He would not have chosen a prophet and sent an angel only to him, but to each one of us individually with the guidance, or He should have sent a deputation of angels to appear before the people with the message. The same objection has been stated in Surah Al-Anaam thus: When a revelation comes before them, they say: We will not believe in it unless we are given the like of what has been given to the Messengers of Allah. Allah knows best whom to entrust with His mission and how it should be enforced. (verse 124).

34. That is, Allah Himself should appear before us and make the appeal.

35. Another translation could be: They have formed a very high opinion of their own selves.

يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ الْمَلَٰٓئِكَةَ لَا بُشْرَىٰ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُجْرِمِينَ وَيَقُولُونَ حِجْرًا مَّحْجُورًا 22

(25:22) On that Day - the Day when they will behold angels - there will be no good news for those immersed in evil,[36]and they will cry out: "We seek refuge (in Allah)."

36. This very theme has been expressed in much greater detail in (Al-Anaam, Ayat 8); (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 7-8 and 51-64); and in (Surah BaniIsrail, Ayats 90-95.

وَقَدِمْنَآ إِلَىٰ مَا عَمِلُوا مِنْ عَمَلٍ فَجَعَلْنَٰهُ هَبَآءً مَّنثُورًا 23

(25:23) And We shall turn to their deeds and shall reduce them to scattered dust.[37]

37. For explanation, see (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 18 and E.Ns 25, 26) thereof.

أَصْحَٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ يَوْمَئِذٍ خَيْرٌ مُّسْتَقَرًّا وَأَحْسَنُ مَقِيلًا 24

(25:24) On that Day it is the inmates of Paradise that will be graced with a better abode and a fairer resting place.[38]

38. In contrast to the miserable plight of the disbelievers on the Day of Resurrection, the believers will be protected from the hardships of that Day. They will be treated with honor and will have a blissful place for midday rest. According to a tradition, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: I declare on oath by Allah, in Whose hand is my life, that the long,

horrible Day of Resurrection will be made very short and light for a believer, as short and light as the time taken in offering an obligatory Prayer. (Musnad Ahmad).

وَيَوْمَ تَشَقَّقُ السَّمَآءُ بِالْغَمَامِ وَنُزِّلَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ تَنْزِيْلًا 25

(25:25) On that Day the sky shall be rent asunder by a cloud and a whole cavalcade of angels will be made to descend.

اَلْمُلْكُ يَوْمَئِذِ ۨ الْحَقُّ لِلرَّحْمٰنِ ؕ وَكَانَ يَوْمًا عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَسِيْرًا 26

(25:26) On that Day the true kingdom will belong only to the Merciful Lord.[39] That will be a hard day for those that deny the Truth;

39. That is, on that Day all other kingdoms, which deluded man in the world, will come to an end, and there will be only the Kingdom of Allah, Who is the real Sovereign of the universe. In (Surah Momin, Ayat 16), the same thing has been stated thus: On that Day when all the people will stand exposed, and nothing of them will be hidden from Allah, it will be asked: Whose is the Sovereignty today? The response from every side will be: Of Allah, the Almighty. According to a tradition, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Allah will take the heavens in one hand and the earth in the other, and will declare: I am the Sovereign: I am the Ruler. Where are the other rulers of the earth? Where are those tyrants? Where are the arrogant people? (Musnad Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, and Abu Daud, with slight variations).

وَيَوْمَ يَعَضُّ الظَّالِمُ عَلٰى يَدَيْهِ يَقُوْلُ يٰلَيْتَنِي اتَّخَذْتُ مَعَ الرَّسُوْلِ سَبِيْلًا 27

(25:27) a Day when the wrong-doer will bite his hands, saying: "Would that I had stood by the Messenger!

يٰوَيْلَتٰى لَيْتَنِيْ لَمْ اَتَّخِذْ فُلَانًا خَلِيْلًا 28

(25:28) Woe is me! Would that I had not taken such a one for a friend!

لَقَدْ اَضَلَّنِيْ عَنِ الذِّكْرِ بَعْدَ اِذْ جَآءَنِيْ ؕ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطٰنُ لِلْاِنْسَانِ خَذُوْلًا 29

(25:29) He led me astray from the Admonition that had come to me. Satan proved to be a great betrayer of man."[40]

40. Satan has proved very treacherous to man. It may also be a part of the disbelievers' lament, or it may be a remark by Allah, in which case the meaning will be: And Satan is indeed the one who always deceives man.

وَقَالَ الرَّسُوْلُ يٰرَبِّ اِنَّ قَوْمِي اتَّخَذُوْا هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ مَهْجُوْرًا 30

(25:30) And the Messenger will say: "My Lord! My own people had made this Qur'an an object of laughter."[41]

41. The Arabic word mahjur is capable of several meanings. As such, the sentence may mean: these people did not regard the Quran as worthy of their consideration: they neither accepted it nor followed it. Or they considered it to be nonsense or the delirium of insanity. Or they made it the target of their ridicule and mockery.

وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا مِّنَ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِرَبِّكَ هَادِيًا وَّنَصِيْرًا 31

(25:31) (O Muhammad), thus did We make for every Prophet enemies[42] from among those immersed in evil. Your Lord suffices you as a Guide and a Helper.[43]

42. That is, it is not a new thing that the disbelievers have become your enemies, for it has always been so with all the former Prophets and Messengers. See also (Surah Al- Anaam, Ayats 112-113). This is inevitable because it is Our Law that the criminals will always oppose the truth. You should, therefore, pursue your mission with full confidence and determination without expecting any immediate results.

43. Guidance does not only imply bestowing of the knowledge of the truth, but it also means giving the right guidance at the right time to guide the Islamic movement on the right lines and to defeat the strategy and scheme of the enemies of Islam. Help means all kinds of moral, spiritual and material help to the followers of the truth in their conflict against falsehood. Thus, Allah is All Sufficient for the righteous people and they need no other support provided they have full faith in Allah and fight falsehood with all their energies and strength.

This meant to encourage the Prophet (peace be upon him), otherwise the previous assertion would have been very discouraging without this. It meant to say: Even if the unbelievers have become your enemies, you should continue your mission, for We shall guide you in every stage and situation and help you against them. We shall defeat all the schemes of your enemies and help you in every way in your conflict with falsehood. We shall provide you with material means also, but you should trust in Us and exert your utmost against falsehood.

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْاٰنُ جُمْلَةً وَّاحِدَةً ۚ كَذٰلِكَ ۚ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهٖ

فُؤَادَكَ وَرَتَّلْنٰهُ تَرْتِيْلًا 32

(25:32) Those who disbelieve say: "Why was the Qur'an not revealed to him all at once?"[44] It was revealed thus that We may fully impress it on your mind;[45] (and for the same end) We have revealed it gradually (according to a scheme) in fragments.

44. As the disbelievers of Makkah considered this objection to be very strong, they repeated it over and over again. The Quran also has cited it with its answer at several places. For instance, see (E.Ns 101-106 of Surah An-Naml) and (E.N. 119 of Surah Bani Israil). Their question implied: Had the Quran been really the Word of Allah, it would have been sent as a complete book all at once; for Allah has the knowledge of everything and every human affair. Thus it is obvious that nothing is being sent down from above; but this man himself fabricates all its themes or gets these from other people or other books.

45. So that by it We may strengthen your heart and imbue it with courage. The words are comprehensive. This concise sentence contains the following explanation why the Quran was revealed piecemeal by degrees:

(1) So that the Prophet (peace be upon him) may commit it to memory perfectly and recite it to his people, who are illiterate, rather than present it in a written form.

(2) So that its teachings and messages may be impressed deeply on the minds.

(3) So that the way of life it teaches, may be followed with complete conviction, which would not be possible if all the commandments and the whole system of life had been sent down all at once.

(4) So that the hearts of the Prophet and his followers may be imbued with courage during the conflict between the truth and falsehood. This required that the divine guidance and messages of encouragement should be revealed as and when needed according to the practical situation. Obviously, this could not have been possible if these had been sent down all at once. This also showed that Allah had not left His Messenger alone amidst persecution to counter all sorts of resistance and opposition after appointing him to the mission, but He Himself was watching the struggle with concern and guiding His Prophet through every difficulty by direct communion in every critical situation.

وَلَا يَأْتُونَكَ بِمَثَلٍ إِلَّا جِئْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَأَحْسَنَ تَفْسِيرًا ۖ 33

(25:33) (This was also done so that) whenever they put any strange question to you, We sent its right answer and explained the matter in the best manner.[46]

46. This is yet another point of wisdom of sending down the Quran by degrees. Allah did not intend to produce a book on guidance and spread its teachings through the agency of His Prophet (peace be upon him). Had it been so the disbelievers would have been justified in their objection as to why the Quran had not been sent down as a complete book all at once. The real object of the revelation of the Quran was that Allah intended to start a movement of faith, piety and righteousness to combat disbelief, ignorance and sin, and He had raised a Prophet to lead and guide the movement. Then, on the one hand, Allah had taken it upon Himself to send necessary instructions and guidance to the leader and his followers as and when needed, and on the other, He had also taken the responsibility to

answer the objections and remove the doubts of opponents and give the right interpretation of things which they misunderstood. Thus the Quran was the collection of the different discourses that were being revealed by Allah; it was not merely meant to be a code of laws or of moral principles, but a Book, which was being sent down piecemeal to guide the movement in all its stages to suit its requirements on different occasions.

اَلَّذِيْنَ يُحْشَرُوْنَ عَلٰى وُجُوْهِهِمْ اِلٰى جَهَنَّمَ ۙ اُولٰٓئِكَ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا وَّاَضَلُّ سَبِيْلًا ع 34

(25:34) Those who shall be mustered in the Hell upon their faces, their stand is the worst and their way most erroneous.[47]

47. That is, they will be driven towards Hell upon their faces because of their perversion and their perverted thinking.

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ وَجَعَلْنَا مَعَهٗٓ اَخَاهُ هٰرُوْنَ وَزِيْرًا ۚ صلج 35

(25:35) Verily We granted Moses the Book[48] and appointed his brother Aaron with him as his helper

48. Here by the Scripture is not meant the Torah, which was given to Prophet Moses after the exodus from Egypt, but it implies that divine guidance which was given to him after his appointment as a Prophet up to the Exodus. It included the orations delivered by him in the court of Pharaoh and also the instructions given to him during his conflict with Pharaoh as mentioned in the Quran here and there. Most probably, these things were not included in the Torah; the Torah began with the Ten Commandments which were given to Moses engraved on stone tablets on Mount Sinai after the exodus.

فَقُلْنَا اذْهَبَآ اِلَى الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا ۭ فَدَمَّرْنٰهُمْ تَدْمِيْرًا ۭ 36

(25:36) and said to him: "Go the two of you to the people who have given the lie to Our Signs."[49] Thereafter We utterly destroyed them.

49. The divine teachings which had reached them through Prophets Jacob and Joseph, and which had been preached to them by the righteous people of Israel for centuries.

وَقَوْمَ نُوْحٍ لَّمَّا كَذَّبُوا الرُّسُلَ اَغْرَقْنٰهُمْ وَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ لِلنَّاسِ اٰيَةً ۭ وَاَعْتَدْنَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ
عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ۚ صلج 37

(25:37) (The same happened with) the people of Noah: when they gave the lie to the Messengers[50] We drowned them and made of them a Sign of warning for all mankind. We have kept ready a painful chastisement for the wrong-doers[51].

50. They did not charge only Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) with imposture because he was a man, but, in fact, charged all the Prophets with imposture because they were all human beings.

51. That is, a painful chastisement in the Hereafter.

وَّعَادًا وَّثَمُوْدَا۠ وَاَصْحٰبَ الرَّسِّ وَقُرُوْنًۢا بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ كَثِيْرًا 38

(25:38) And in like manner were the 'Ad and the Thamud destroyed and the people of al-Rass[52] and many a nation in the centuries in between.

52. There is no definite knowledge about the people of the Raas. Different commentators have said different things about them, but nothing is convincing. The only thing that may be said about them is that they were a people who had killed their Prophet by throwing him into or hanging him down a Rass (an old or dry well).

وَكُلًّا ضَرَبْنَا لَهُ الْاَمْثَالَ ۫ وَكُلًّا تَبَّرْنَا تَتْبِيْرًا 39

(25:39) We warned each (of them) by examples (of the nations so destroyed in the past), and We totally annihilated each of them.

وَلَقَدْ اَتَوْا عَلَى الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِيْٓ اُمْطِرَتْ مَطَرَ السَّوْءِ ۭ اَفَلَمْ يَكُوْنُوْا يَرَوْنَهَا ۚ بَلْ كَانُوْا لَا

يَرْجُوْنَ نُشُوْرًا 40

(25:40) They have surely passed by the town which was rained upon by an evil rain.[53] Have they not seen it? Nay; but they do not believe in being raised up after death.[54]

53. The habitation referred to was that of the people of Prophet Lot (peace be upon him), which was destroyed by a rain of stones. The people of Hijaz while traveling to Palestine and Syria, passed by its ruins and heard the horrible tales of its destruction.

54. As the disbelievers did not believe in the Hereafter, they looked at these ancient ruins as mere spectators and did not take any warning from them. Incidentally, this is the difference between the observation of a disbeliever and of a believer in the Hereafter. The former looks at such things as a mere spectator or at the most as an archaeologist whereas the latter learns moral lessons from the same and obtains an insight into the realities beyond this worldly life.

وَاِذَا رَاَوْكَ اِنْ يَّتَّخِذُوْنَكَ اِلَّا هُزُوًا ۭ اَهٰذَا الَّذِيْ بَعَثَ اللّٰهُ رَسُوْلًا 41

(25:41) Whenever they see you they take you for nothing else but an object of jest, saying: "Is this whom Allah has sent as a Messenger?

إِنْ كَادَ لَيُضِلُّنَا عَنْ اٰلِهَتِنَا لَوْلَآ اَنْ صَبَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا ؕ وَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ حِيْنَ يَرَوْنَ
الْعَذَابَ مَنْ اَضَلُّ سَبِيْلًا 42

(25:42) Had we not firmly persevered in our devotion to them[55] (he had almost) led us astray from our gods." But soon, when they see the chastisement, they will come to know who had strayed too far from the Right Way.

55. Obviously there is a contradiction between the question posed by the disbelievers and the assertion made by them about their deities. The question was meant to bring the Prophet (peace be upon him) into contempt, as if to say: You are making a claim that is far above your low position. On the other hand, their assertion shows that they indirectly admitted the force of the arguments and the high character of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and were even afraid of the effectiveness and success of his message, because, according to them, it was going to turn them away from their false gods.

اَرَءَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ اِلٰهَهٗ هَوٰىهُ ؕ اَفَاَنْتَ تَكُوْنُ عَلَيْهِ وَكِيْلًا ۙ 43

(25:43) Have you ever considered the case of him who has taken his carnal desire for his god?[56] Can you take responsibility for guiding him to the Right Way?

56. "The person who makes his desire as his god" is the one who becomes the slave of his lusts and desires. As he serves his lust like the one who warships his deity. He becomes as much guilty of shirk as the one who worships an idol. According to a tradition, related by Abu Hurairah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Of all the false gods being worshipped and served instead of Allah, the worst in the sight of Allah is one's own lust. (Tabarani). For further explanation, see (E.N. 50 of Surah Al-Kahf).

The man who keeps his desires under control, and uses his common sense to make decisions, can be expected to come to the right path by making an appeal to his reason even though he might have been involved in shirk or disbelief. For if he decides to follow the right way, he will remain firm and steadfast on it. On the other hand, the man who is the slave of his own lust, is like a ship without an anchor, who wanders about on any path where his lust leads him to. He is least bothered about the distinction between the right and the wrong, the true and the false, and has no desire to choose one against the other. And, if at all, such a person is persuaded to accept the message of guidance, no one can take the responsibility that he will observe any moral laws.

اَمْ تَحْسَبُ اَنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ يَسْمَعُوْنَ اَوْ يَعْقِلُوْنَ ؕ اِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا كَالْاَنْعَامِ ۚ بَلْ هُمْ اَضَلُّ
سَبِيْلًا ع 44

(25:44) Do you think that most of them hear or understand? For they are merely like cattle; nay, even worse than them.[57]

57. They are only like the cattle because they follow their lusts blindly. Just as the sheep and cattle do not know where their driver is taking them, to the meadow or to the slaughter house, so are these people also following their leaders blindly without knowing or judging where they are being led, to success or to destruction. The only difference between the two is that the cattle have no intelligence and will not be accountable as to the place where they are being taken by the driver. But it is a pity that human beings who are endowed with reason, should behave like cattle; therefore their condition is worse than that of cattle.

Incidentally it should be noted that this passage (verses 43, 44) is not meant to dissuade the Prophet (peace be upon him) from conveying the message to such people, but it is an indirect warning to the disbelievers of the consequences if they continued to behave like cattle .

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ كَيۡفَ مَدَّ الظِّلَّ ۚ وَلَوۡ شَآءَ لَجَعَلَهٗ سَاكِنًا ۚ ثُمَّ جَعَلۡنَا الشَّمۡسَ عَلَيۡهِ
دَلِيۡلًا ۙ 45

(25:45) Have you not seen how your Lord spreads the shade? If He will, He could have made it stationary; instead, We have made the sun its pilot.[58]

58. The word dalil has been used in the sense of the pilot, who is a person trained to take ships safely in or out of a harbor, or along a waterway. The sun has been made the pilot of the shadow because the lengthening out of the shadow and its being rolled up depends on the rising, declining and setting of the sun.

ثُمَّ قَبَضۡنٰهُ اِلَيۡنَا قَبۡضًا يَّسِيۡرًا 46

(25:46) So (as the sun rises), We gradually roll up that shade unto Us.[59]

59. We annihilate it or cause it to disappear, for everything which is annihilated returns to Allah, because everything comes from Him and returns to Him.

The Quran has used the phenomenon of the shadow caused by the sun for two purposes. (if it is taken literally, it is meant to warn the disbelievers that they should learn a lesson from this and should not behave like cattle, as if to say: If you had considered the benefits of the shadow in regard to your everyday experience, you would have accepted without any hesitation the doctrine of Tauhid. Had the shadow been constant, there would have been no life on earth, for life depends on the light and heat of the sun. On the other hand, if there had been no shadow at all, the constant heat and light of the sun would have made life impossible. Besides this, if there had been sudden changes in the sun and the shadow, they would not have been able to endure it for long; therefore you should reflect on this phenomenon and understand it well that it has been so ordained by the All-Wise and the All-Powerful Creator so that it always increases or decreases gradually in accordance with

fixed natural laws. Thus it is obvious that it could not have come into existence by itself nor produced by blind mechanisms nor functioned so regularly and continuously under many independent gods.

But if it is taken in the metaphorical sense, there is between the lines a subtle suggestion, and it is this: Just as the shadow does not remain in one and the same state, likewise the shadow of disbelief and shirk, which appears to have spread far and wide, will begin to shorten as the sun of guidance gradually rises; but it requires patience, for Allah never brings about sudden changes.

وَهُوَ الَّذِیْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الَّیْلَ لِبَاسًا وَّالنَّوْمَ سُبَاتًا وَّجَعَلَ النَّهَارَ نُشُوْرًا 47

(25:47) It is Allah Who has made night a garment for you,[60] and sleep the repose (of death), and has made day the time of rising to life.[61]

60. The night is a garment in the sense that it covers and hides things.

61. This verse has three objects:

(1) It provides a proof of Tauhid.

(2) It furnishes a proof of the possibility of life-after-death from everyday human experience.

(3) It bears the good news that the night of ignorance has come to an end and now the bright day of knowledge and guidance has dawned. It is therefore inevitable that those who were sleeping in ignorance, will sooner or later wake up, but those who have slept the sleep of death, will not wake up and will themselves be deprived of life, while the business of the day will go on thriving even without them.

وَهُوَ الَّذِیْۤ اَرْسَلَ الرِّیٰحَ بُشْرًۢا بَیْنَ یَدَیْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ۚ وَاَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً طَهُوْرًا ۙ 48

(25:48) And He it is Who sends forth the winds as glad tidings, heralding His Mercy. Then We send down pure water[62] from the sky

62. That is, such water as is pure and free from all sorts of impurities, germs and poison, which cleanses and washes away filth and becomes a source of life for men, beasts as well as all kinds of plant life.

لِّنُحْیِیَ بِهٖ بَلْدَةً مَّیْتًا وَّنُسْقِیَهٗ مِمَّا خَلَقْنَاۤ اَنْعَامًا وَّاَنَاسِیَّ كَثِیْرًا 49

(25:49) that We may revive through it a dead land and give it for drink to many cattle and human beings from among Our creation.[63]

63. This verse also gives proofs of the doctrine of Tauhid and the Hereafter. Besides, it contains a subtle suggestion that the period of the drought of ignorance has been replaced through Allah's mercy by the blessed rain of Prophethood, which is showering the life giving knowledge of revelation from which many servants of Allah will certainly benefit, if not all.

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنٰهُ بَيْنَهُمْ لِيَذَّكَّرُوْا ۖ فَاَبٰٓى اَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ اِلَّا كُفُوْرًا 50

(25:50) We present this wondrous phenomenon to them over and over again[64] that they may learn a lesson from it. But most people simply decline everything except disbelief and ingratitude.[65]

64. "We have repeated it among them" may have three meanings:

(1) We have cited the phenomenon of rainfall over and over again in the Quran in order to make plain to them the reality.

(2) We are time and again showing them the wonderful phenomenon of the heat and drought, seasonal winds and clouds, rainfall and its life producing effects.

(3) We go on changing the system of the distribution of rainfall throughout the world year after year, so that the same place does not receive the same amount of rainfall every time. Sometimes a place is left completely dry, another has more or less of rainfall than usual, while some other is flooded with rain water. They see all these different phenomena with their countless different results in their daily life.

65. The verse means to impress that the wonderful system of rainfall is by itself a proof of the existence of Allah, of One Lord of the universe, and of His attributes. Its wonderful distribution during the year and over different parts of the earth is a clear proof that there is an All-Wise Designer. But the obdurate disbelievers do not learn any lesson from it, and persist in their ingratitude, though this has been cited in the Quran repeatedly for this purpose.

It is also a proof of the life-after-death, for the disbelievers themselves see that rainfall brings to life dead land year after year. This clearly shows that Allah has the power to bring the dead back to life, but the disbelievers do not learn any lesson from it and persist in their irresponsible ways.

If verse 48 is taken in the metaphorical sense, the pure water of rain will mean the blessings of Prophethood. Human history shows that whenever this blessing has been sent down, ignorance has been replaced by knowledge, injustice by justice and wickedness by righteousness. The coming of Prophets has always proved to be the harbinger of a moral revolution. But only those who accepted their guidance benefited from it. This is the lesson of history, yet the disbelievers reject it because of their ingratitude.

وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَبَعَثْنَا فِيْ كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ نَّذِيْرًا ۙ صلے 51

(25:51) Had We so willed, We would have raised up in every town a warner.[66]

66. That is, if We had willed, We could have sent a separate Prophet to every habitation but We did not do so, because like the sun, Our Last Prophet suffices to enlighten the entire world.

فَلَا تُطِعِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَجَاهِدْهُمْ بِهٖ جِهَادًا كَبِيْرًا 52

(25:52) So, (O Prophet), do not follow the unbelievers but engage in a mighty striving against them with this Qur'an.[67]

67. The Arabic words jihad-i-kabir imply three meanings:

(1) To exert utmost for the cause of Islam.

(2) To dedicate all the resources to this cause.

(3) To fight against the enemies of Islam on all possible fronts with all the resources in order to raise high the "Word of Allah". This will include jihad with the tongue, the pen, wealth, life and every other available weapon.

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ هٰذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ وَّهٰذَا مِلْحٌ اُجَاجٌ ۚ وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخًا وَّحِجْرًا مَّحْجُوْرًا 53

(25:53) And He it is Who has joined the two seas: one sweet and palatable and the other saltish and bitter; and He has set a barrier and an insurmountable obstruction between the two that keeps them apart.[68]

68. This phenomenon has been perceived in many places in the sea and on the land that sweet water and bitter water has existed side by side. Turkish Admiral Syedi Ali Rais, in his book Mirat-al-Mamalik, written in the 16th century, has mentioned a place in the Persian Gulf, where springs of sweet waver exist under the bitter waters of the sea, where he could get drinking water for his fleet. The American Oil company at first obtained water from the same springs in the Persian Gulf, before they dug up wells near Dhahran for the supply of the drinking water. Near Bahrain also there exist springs of sweet water at the sea bed from which people have been taking water until quite recently. Besides this apparent meaning which gives a rational proof of Allah's being the One and the only Lord of the universe, the verse contains a subtle suggestion as well: When Allah wills, He can raise up a righteous community from among a large wicked society just as He can cause springs of palatable and sweet water to gush out from under the salty waters of the sea.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ مِنَ الْمَاءِ بَشَرًا فَجَعَلَهُ نَسَبًا وَصِهْرًا ۗ وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ قَدِيرًا 54

(25:54) And He it is Who has created man from water and then produced from him two sorts of kindred: by descent and by marriage. Your Lord is All-Powerful.[69]

69. Here the miracle of the birth of man from a mere sperm drop and the procreation of his offspring from man and woman have been cited as a proof of Tauhid. Though both man and woman belong to the same genus, they are two species, having important common human characteristics but different physical structures and psychological traits. It is a proof of Tauhid that the All- Powerful Allah has used this difference for making the two as complements and not antagonists. It is also the design of the All-Powerful Creator that He is creating sons and daughters in the world in due proportion Then the sons marry and create blood relationships, and the daughters are married and become means of forming new relationships. This process goes on widening to produce families, tribes and nations belonging to the same race and bound by the same civilization.

The verse has also a subtle suggestion: The entire life is being run on the principle of difference. For example, the difference between the night and the day, the summer and the winter, etc. Therefore, O Muslims, you should patiently endure the differences you are having with your opponents for these are certain to produce good results.

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنفَعُهُمْ وَلَا يَضُرُّهُمْ ۗ وَكَانَ الْكَافِرُ عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِ ظَهِيرًا 55

(25:55) And yet people worship deities other than Allah that can neither benefit them nor hurt them. Besides, the unbeliever is ever prone to come to the support of everyone who rebels against his Lord.[70]

70. This is a characteristic of the typical disbeliever. He is a helper and defender of all those who are rebels against Allah and an enemy of all those who may he striving to raise Allah's Word and enforce His Law in the world. He is associated directly or indirectly with all the works of Allah's disobedience and opposes and resists in one way or the other every effort that is made to bring people to the path of Allah's obedience and service.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا 56

(25:56) We have not sent you, (O Muhammad), except as a bearer of good tidings and a warner.[71]

71. This (verse 56) was meant to comfort the Prophet (peace be upon him) and to warn the disbelievers who opposed him and obstructed his work, as if to say: Your duty is only to convey the message of good news to the people and to warn them of the consequences of disbelief. You are not responsible as to whether they accept your message or reject it, or to reward the believers and punish the disbelievers.

Such words occur in the Quran at other places also and are obviously directed to the disbelievers, as if to say: The message of the Prophet is meant to reform the people without any tinge of selfishness. As he does not force the people to accept his message, there is no reason why you should feel offended. If you accept the message, it will be for your own good, and if you reject it, you will be harming yourselves alone. For after conveying the message, he is relieved of his duty and responsibility; then the matter will be between you and Us.

Although this is a very simple and clear interpretation of (verse 56) (and of similar other verses), yet some people erroneously conclude from it that the only duty and responsibility of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is to convey the message and nothing else. They forget that the Quran has stressed over and over again that the Prophet (peace be upon him) is not only a giver of good news to the believers but he is also their teacher, their lawgiver, judge and guide, a purifier of their morals and a model of life for them, and that every word which he utters is law which they have to obey and follow willingly in all walks of life and for all times to come.

قُلْ مَآ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ اِلَّا مَنْ شَآءَ اَنْ يَّتَّخِذَ اِلٰى رَبِّهٖ سَبِيْلًا 57

(25:57) Say to them: "I ask of you no reward for my work. My only reward is that whoever so wills may follow the way leading to His Lord."[71a]

71a. For explanation, see (E.N. 70 of Surah Al-Mominoon).

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْحَيِّ الَّذِيْ لَا يَمُوْتُ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِهٖ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِهٖ بِذُنُوْبِ عِبَادِهٖ خَبِيْرَا ۚ 58

(25:58) (O Muhammad), put your trust in Him Who is Ever-Living, Who will never die, and glorify Him with His praise. He suffices as the Knower of the sins of His servants,

الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِيْ سِتَّةِ اَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۛ

اَلرَّحْمٰنُ فَسْـَٔلْ بِهٖ خَبِيْرًا 59

(25:59) He Who created the heavens and the earth and all that is in between them in six days, and then ascended the Throne;[72] the Merciful One. Ask concerning Him the one who knows.

72. For explanation of Throne, see (E.Ns 41, 42 of Surah Al- Aaraf); (E.N. 4 of Surah Younus), and (E.N. 7 Surah of Houd). It is difficult to say what exactly is mean by six days. Here a day may mean a period of time or an ordinary day of this world. For explanation of the day, see (E.Ns 11 to 15 of Surah HaMim Sajdah).

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اسْجُدُوا لِلرَّحْمَٰنِ قَالُوا وَمَا الرَّحْمَٰنُ أَنَسْجُدُ لِمَا تَأْمُرُنَا وَزَادَهُمْ نُفُورًا ۩ ع 60

(25:60) When they are told: "Prostrate yourselves before the Merciful One," they say: "What is the Merciful One? Shall we prostrate ourselves before whomsoever you command us to prostrate?"[73] This even further increases their aversion.[74]

73. This they said due to their arrogance and stubbornness just as Pharaoh had said to Prophet Moses: What is the Lord of the universe? For the disbelievers of Makkah were not unaware of the Merciful (Rahman), nor was Pharaoh unaware of the Lord of the universe. The wording of the verse itself shows that their question about the Merciful was not the result of their ignorance of Him but was due to their rebelliousness. Otherwise Allah would not have punished them for this but would have informed them politely that He Himself is Merciful. Besides this, it is well known historically that the word Rahman (Merciful) for Allah had been in common usage in Arabia since the ancient times. Please see also (E.N. 5 of Surah As-Sajdah) and (E.N. 35 of Surah Saba).

74. All scholars agree that here a prostration of recital (Sajdah Talawat) has been enjoined, which means that every reader and every hearer must prostrate himself on reciting or hearing the recital of this verse. According to traditions, the one who hears this verse being recited should say: Zadan Allahu khuduan - aenama - zada liladaai nufura: May Allah increase us in humility - even as - the enemies are increased in their hatred.

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ فِي السَّمَاءِ بُرُوجًا وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا سِرَاجًا وَقَمَرًا مُنِيرًا 61

(25:61) Most blessed is He Who set a constellation in the heavens,[75] and placed in it a great lamp[76] and a shining moon.

75. See (E.Ns 8 to 12 of Surah Al-Hijr).

76. That is, the sun, as mentioned clearly in (Surah Nooh, Ayat 16): And made the sun a lamp.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ خِلْفَةً لِّمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَذَّكَّرَ أَوْ أَرَادَ شُكُورًا 62

(25:62) He it is Who has appointed night and day to succeed one another (as a Sign) for him who desires to take heed, or desires to be thankful.[77]

77. The observation and deep consideration of the wonderful phenomenon of the alternation of the day and night is a proof of Tauhid and His Providence so that man may feel grateful to Him and prostrate himself before Him in all humility.

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمٰنِ الَّذِيْنَ يَمْشُوْنَ عَلَى الْاَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَّاِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجٰهِلُوْنَ قَالُوْا

سَلٰمًا 63

(25:63) The true servants of the Merciful One are those[78] who walk on the earth gently[79] and when the foolish ones address them, they simply say: "Peace to you";[80]

78. That is, though all human beings are by birth the servants of the Merciful before Whom you have been invited to prostrate yourselves, and which you disdain, his true servants are those who adopt the way of His obedience consciously and develop such desirable characteristics. Then the natural consequences of the prostration are those found in the lives of the believers and the evil results of rejecting the invitation, those found in your lives. Here attention is being drawn to the two patterns of character and life. First of those who had accepted the message of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and were following it, and the second of those who persisted in the ways of ignorance. Here only the prominent characteristics of the true believers have been cited, and for contrast, the characteristics of the disbelievers have been left to every discerning eye and mind which could see them all around in the society and make its own decision.

79. That is; they do not walk haughtily and arrogantly like the tyrants and mischief-makers, but their gait is of a gentle, right thinking and good natured person. Walking humbly does not mean walking like a weak or sick person, nor does it imply the gait of a hypocrite who walks ostentatiously to show humility or fear of God. According to traditions, the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself used to walk with firm, quick steps. One day Caliph Umar saw a young man walking slowly like a weak, sick person, and asked him: Are you ill? When the man replied in the negative, the Caliph raised his whip, rebuked him and told him to walk like a healthy man. This shows that the humble gait is the natural gait of a noble and gentle person and not a gait which shows weakness and undue humility.

In this connection, the first characteristic of the true servants of Allah to which attention has been drawn, is their gait. This is because the gait indicates the character of an individual. If a man walks in a humble and dignified way, as opposed to a haughty, vain and proud manner, it shows that he is a noble and gentle person. Thus the different gaits of different types of people show what sort of characters they possess. The verse means to imply that the true servants of the Merciful can be easily recognized by their gait among the people. Their attitude of Allah's worship and obedience has changed them so thoroughly that it can be seen at first sight from their gate that they are noble, humble and good natured people, who cannot be expected to indulge in any mischief. For further explanation, see (E.N.43 of Surah Bani Israil)and (E.N 33 of Surah Luqman).

80. "the ignorant people": Rude and insolent people and not uneducated and illiterate ones. The true servants of the Merciful do not believe in vengeance, even though they may have to deal with the ignorant people who behave rudely and insolently towards them. If they happen to come across such people, they wish them peace and turn away. The same thing has been expressed in (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 55), thus: And when they hear something vain and absurd they turn away from it, saying, our deeds are for us and your deeds are for you,

peace be to you, we have nothing to do with the ignorant. For details see (E.Ns 72 to 78 of Surah Al-Qasas).

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَبِيْتُوْنَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا وَّقِيَامًا 64

(25:64) who spend the night prostrating themselves before their Lord and standing;[81]

81. That is, they neither spend their nights in fun and merry making nor in gossips and telling tales, nor in doing wicked deeds, for these are the ways of the ignorant people. The true servants of Allah pass their nights in worshipping and remembering Him as much as they can. This characteristic of theirs has been brought out clearly at several places in the Quran, thus: Their backs forsake their beds and they invoke their Lord in fear and in hope. (Surah As-Sajdah, Ayat 16). These people (of Paradise) slept but little at night, and prayed for their forgiveness in the hours of the morning. (Surah Az-Zariyat, Ayats 17, 18). And: Can the end of the one, who is obedient to Allah, prostrates himself and stands before Him during the hours of the night, fears the Hereafter and places his hope in the mercy of his Lord, be like that of a mushrik. (Surah Az- Zumar, Ayat 9).

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَا اصْرِفْ عَنَّا عَذَابَ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ صلے ق اِنَّ عَذَابَهَا كَانَ غَرَامًا ۖ صلے ق 65

(25:65) who entreat: "Our Lord! Ward off from us the chastisement of Hell, for its chastisement is one that clings.

اِنَّهَا سَآءَتْ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَّمُقَامًا 66

(25:66) Verily it is a wretched abode and restingplace."[82]

82. That is, their worship has not made them vain and proud to presume that they are the beloved ones of Allah and that the Fire of Hell will not touch them. On the other hand, in spite of all their worship and good deeds, they are so filled with the fear of the torment of Hell that they pray to their Lord to save them from it, for they do not depend upon their own work for success in the Hereafter but upon the mercy of Allah.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اِذَآ اَنْفَقُوْا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوْا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوْا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ قَوَامًا 67

(25:67) (The true servants of the Merciful One are) those who are neither extravagant nor niggardly in their spending but keep the golden mean between the two;[83]

83. The true servants of Allah adopt the golden mean between the two extremes in spending their money. They neither go beyond prudence and necessity in expenditure nor live in wretched circumstances in order to save and hoard money but are frugal. This was the characteristic of the followers of the Prophet (peace be upon him), which distinguished them from the well-to-do people of Arabia, who were either spend thrifts in regard to the gratification of their own lusts or niggardly in spending their money on good works.

According to Islam extravagance is: (1) To spend even the smallest amount of money in unlawful ways. (2) To go beyond one's own resources in expenditure even in lawful ways, or to spend money for one's own pleasure. (3) To spend money in righteous ways not for the sake of Allah but for mere show. On the other hand, one is miserly if one does not spend money for his own needs and requirements and those of his family in accordance with his resources and position, or if one does not spend money for good works. The way taught by Islam is the golden mean between the two extremes. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has said: It is a sign of wisdom to adopt the golden mean in one's living. (Ahmad, Tabarani).

وَالَّذِيْنَ لَا يَدْعُوْنَ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ وَلَا يَقْتُلُوْنَ النَّفْسَ الَّتِيْ حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا يَزْنُوْنَ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ يَلْقَ اَثَامًا ۙ 68

(25:68) who invoke no other deity along with Allah, nor take any life - which Allah has forbidden - save justly; who do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse[84] - and whoso does that shall meet its penalty;

84. The true servants refrain from three great sins: shirk, murder and adultery. The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself warned of their gravity. According to Abdullah bin Masud, when someone asked him about the worst sins, he replied, (1) It is to set up someone as equal in rank with Allah, Who has created you. (2) To kill your own child for fear of its sustenance. (3) To commit adultery with the wife of your neighbor. (Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmizi, Nasai, Ahmad). Obviously this is not a complete list of the heinous sins. But these three instances have been cited because they were most prevalent in the Arab society of those days.

As regards to the inclusion of refraining from shirk among the excellences of the true servants, one may ask why it should be presented as virtue before the disbelievers who did not regard shirk as a vice. It is because the Arabs had doubts about the doctrine of shirk even though they appeared to be deeply involved in it. This is amply supported by their history. For instance, when Abraha invaded Makkah, the Quraish did not invoke their idols to save the Kabah from him, but they begged Allah to save it. Their contemporary poetry bears sufficient evidence that they regarded the destruction of the people of the elephant due to Allah's power and supernatural interference and not due to any help of their idols. The Quraish and the polytheists of Arabia had also come to know that when Abraha reached Taif on his way to Makkah, the people of Taif had offered him their services to destroy the Kabah and had even provided him guides to take him safely to Makkah through the hills, for fear that he might also destroy the temple of Lat, their chief deity. This event so much offended the Arabs that for years after this they continued pelting the grave of the chief guide with stones for retaliation. Moreover, the Quraish and the other Arabs attributed their creed to Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) and looked upon their religious and social customs and their Hajj rites as part of Abraham's religion. They knew that Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) was a worshiper of Allah and not of idols. They also had traditions to show as to when they had started idol worship, and which idol had been brought from where, when and by whom. The fact is that the common Arab did not have

much of reverence for his idols. He would even speak insultingly of it and withheld his offerings when it failed to fulfill his wishes and prayers. For instance, there is the story of an Arab who wanted to avenge the murder of his father. He went to the temple of his idol, Zul-Khalasah, and wanted to take an omen. The response came that he should abandon his intention. At this the Arab became furious and cried out: O Zul-Khalasah! Had you been in my place, and your father was murdered, you would not have said that the murderers should not be punished. Another Arab took his herd of camels to the shrine of his god, named Saad, for seeking its blessings. It was a tall idol which had been smeared with sacrificial blood. On seeing it, the camels became terrified and started running in all directions. The Arab was so filled with rage that he started pelting the idol with stones, shouting: May God destroy you. I had come to you to seek blessings for my camels, but you have deprived me of all of them. There were certain idols about whose origin filthy stories were current. For instance, the story about Asaf and Nailah whose images had been placed at Safa and Marwa, was that they were actually a man and a woman, who had committed adultery inside the Holy Kabah and had been turned into stone by God as a punishment. When the deities had such reputation, no worshiper could cherish any reverence for them in his heart. From this one can easily understand that the Arabs did recognize the value of true God worship deep in their hearts, but, on the one hand, it had been suppressed by ancient customs and ways of ignorance, and on the other, the priestly class among the Quraish had vested interests, who were busy creating prejudices against it among the people. They could not give up idol worship because such a step would have brought to an end to their supremacy in Arabia. That is why, refraining from shirk and worship of One Allah has been mentioned as a mark of superiority of the followers of the Prophet (peace be upon him) without any fear of contradiction by the disbelievers, for even they in their hearts knew that it was a weighty argument against them.

يُضٰعَفۡ لَهُ الۡعَذَابُ يَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ وَيَخۡلُدۡ فِيۡهٖ مُهَانًا ۖ صلے ق 69

(25:69) his torment shall be doubled for him on the Day of Resurrection,[85] and he will abide in it in ignominy -

85. This can have two meanings: (1) His punishment will never come to an end, but it will continue being inflicted relentlessly over and over again. (2) the person who in addition to the sins of disbelief, shirk and atheism, would have committed murders, adultery and other sins, will get separate punishment for rebellion and for each other sin. He will be accountable for each of his major and minor sins none of which will be pardoned. For instance, for each murder and for each act of adultery he will be given a separate punishment, and likewise, there will be a separate punishment for every sin committed by him.

اِلَّا مَنۡ تَابَ وَاٰمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَاُولٰٓئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللّٰهُ سَيِّاٰتِهِمۡ حَسَنٰتٍ ؕ وَكَانَ

اللّٰهُ غَفُوۡرًا رَّحِيۡمًا 70

(25:70) unless he repents and believes and does righteous works. For such, Allah will change their evil deeds into good deeds.[86] Allah is Ever Forgiving, Most Compassionate.

86. This is a good news for those people who repented and reformed themselves, for they will have the benefit of the general amnesty contained in (verse 70). This was regarded as a great blessing by the true servants because very few of those who embraced Islam had been free from those vices during their ignorance, and were terrified by the threat contained in (verses 63-69), but this amnesty not only redeemed them but filled them with hope.

Many instances of such people, who sincerely repented and reformed their lives, have been related in the traditions. For instance, Ibn Jarir and Tabarani have related an incident from Abu Hurairah, who savs: One day when 1 returned home after offering the lsha prayer in the Prophet's (peace be upon him) Mosque, I saw a woman standing at my door. I saluted her and walked into my room, closed the door and busied myself in voluntary worship. After a while she knocked at the door. I opened the door and asked what she wanted. She said that she had come with a problem: She had committed zina, had become pregnant, given birth to a child and then killed it. She wanted to know if there was any chance of her sin being forgiven. I replied in the negative. She went back griefstricken, exclaiming, Ah! this beautiful body was created for the fire! The next morning, after the prayer, when I related the night's incident before the Prophet (peace be upon him), he said: You gave a very wrong answer, Abu Hurairah: Haven't you read the Quranic verse which says: (Those) who do not invoke any deity other than Allah...except the one who may have repented (after those sins) and have believed and done righteous deeds? Hearing this from the Prophet (peace be upon him), I went out in search of the woman, and had her traced again at the Isha time. I gave her the good news and told her what the Prophet (peace be upon him) had said in reply to her question. She immediately fell prostrate on the ground and thanked Allah, Who had opened a way for her forgiveness. Then she offered repentance and set a slave-girl, along with her son, free. A similar incident about an old man has been related in the traditions. He came before the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said: O Messenger of Allah, all my life has passed in sin, there is no sin which I have not committed; so much so that if my sins were to be distributed over the people of the whole world, they would all be doomed. Is there any way out for my forgiveness? The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked him: Have you embraced Islam? He said: I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the Messenger of Allah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Go back, Allah is All-Forgiving and has the power to change your evil deeds into good deeds. He asked: Is it about all my crimes and errors? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Yes, it is about all your crimes and errors. (Ibn Kathir).

وَمَنْ تَابَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَإِنَّهُ يَتُوبُ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَتَابًا 71

(25:71) Whosoever repents[87] and does good, he returns to Allah in the manner that he should.[88]

87. It has two meanings: (1) When he has repented sincerely, he will start a new life of belief and obedience to Allah and by His grace and help will start doing good deeds instead of evil deeds that he used to do in his life of unbelief, and his evil deeds will be replaced by good

deeds. (2) Not only will his evil deeds done in the past be written off, but it will also be recorded in his conduct register that he was the servant who gave up rebellion against his Lord and adopted the way of His obedience. Then, as he will feel more and more sorry for his past sins and offer repentance, more and more good deeds will be credited to him. For repenting of one's wrong doing and seeking forgiveness is in itself a good deed. Thus, good deeds will supersede all his evil deeds in his conduct register, and he will not only escape punishment in the Hereafter but, in addition, he will also be blessed with high favors by Allah.

88. That is, ultimately everyone has to return to Allah for Allah alone is man's last and real refuge. He alone can reward him for his good deeds or punish him for his evil deeds. He alone is All-Merciful and All Compassionate, Who receives the penitent with forgiveness and Who does not rebuke him for his past errors provided that he has repented sincerely, and adopted the right attitude and reformed himself.

وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَشْهَدُونَ الزُّورَ ۙ وَإِذَا مَرُّوا بِاللَّغْوِ مَرُّوا كِرَامًا 72

(25:72) (The true servants of the Merciful One) are those who do not bear witness to any falsehood[89] and who, when they pass by frivolity, pass by it with dignity;[90]

89. This also has two meanings: (1) They do not give evidence (in the court of law etc.) in regard to a false thing in order to prove it right, when in fact it is a falsehood, or at best a doubtful thing. (2) They have no intention to witness anything which is false, evil or wicked as spectators. In this sense, every sin and every indecency, every sham and counterfeit act is a falsehood. A true servant of Allah recognizes it as false and shuns it even if it is presented in the seemingly beautiful forms of art.

90. The Arabic word laghv implies all that is vain, useless and meaningless and it also covers falsehood. The true servants pass by in a dignified manner if they ever come across what is vain, as if it were a heap of filth. They do not stay there to enjoy the filth of moral impurity, obscenity or foul language, nor do they intentionally go anywhere to hear or see or take part in any sort of filth. For further details, see (E.N. 4 of Surah Al-Mominoon).

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِّرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ لَمْ يَخِرُّوا عَلَيْهَا صُمًّا وَعُمْيَانًا 73

(25:73) who, when they are reminded of the revelations of their Lord,[91] do not fall at them deaf and blind;

91. The true servants of Allah do not behave like the blind and the deaf towards the revelations of Allah, when they are recited to them for their admonition. They do not turn a deaf ear to their teachings and message and do not deliberately close their eyes to the signs that they are asked to observe, but are deeply moved by them. They follow and practice what they are enjoined and retrain from what is forbidden.

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ اَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيّٰتِنَا قُرَّةَ اَعْيُنٍ وَّاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ

اِمَامًا 74

(25:74) who are prone to pray: "Our Lord! Grant us that our spouses and our offspring be a joy to our eyes,[92] and do make us the leaders of the God-fearing."[93]

92. The most distinctive characteristic of the true servants is their eagerness for prayer to Allah. In (verse 65) their prayer for their own salvation and in (verse 74)their prayer for their wives and children have been cited: Our Lord, make our wives and children true believers so that they should practice righteousness and become a source of comfort for us. Their prayer shows that the true servants of Allah are more concerned about the salvation of their beloved ones in the Hereafter than the enjoyment of the world.

It should be noted that this characteristic has been cited here to show that the true servants had sincerely believed in the message. That is why they were so concerned about the faith of their beloved ones. It should also be kept in mind that many of the near and dear ones of the believers had not as yet embraced Islam. If a husband had embraced Islam, the wife was still an unbeliever, and if a youth had accepted Islam, his parents and brothers and sisters were still involved in disbelief, and vice versa. Therefore, the true servants wept and prayed for them, whenever the picture of their horrible state in Hell came before their eyes.

93. That is, we should excel in piety, righteousness and good works; nay, we should become the leaders of the pious people so that we may lead them in the propagation of virtue and piety in the world. Incidentally, this characteristic of the true servants was in great contrast to that of the disbelievers, who strove in competition and rivalry with one another for superiority in worldly power and wealth. But it is a pity that some people in our time have misinterpreted this verse as containing sanction for seeking candidature for political leadership. According to them, the verse means: Our Lord, make us rulers over the pious people.

اُولٰٓئِكَ يُجْزَوْنَ الْغُرْفَةَ بِمَا صَبَرُوْا وَيُلَقَّوْنَ فِيْهَا تَحِيَّةً وَّسَلٰمًا ۙ 75

(25:75) They are the ones who will be rewarded for their patience: lofty palaces[94] [95] will be granted to them, and they will be received with greeting and salutation.

94. The word sabr (fortitude) has been used here in its most comprehensive sense. The true servants courageously endured their persecution by the enemies of the truth; they remained firm and steadfast in their struggle to establish Allah's way in the land. They carried out their duties enjoined by Allah sincerely and tearlessly without any concern for the worldly losses and deprivation, and they withstood all temptations held out by Satan and all the lusts of the flesh.

95. Ghurfah is a high mansion and the word is generally used for the upper chamber of a two storey house. But the reality is that the highest buildings made by man in this world,

even the Taj Mahal of India and the skyscrapers of New York, are not true imitation of the excellent abodes in Paradise. They are so magnificent, grand and beautiful that human imagination cannot form any picture of their grandeur.

خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ حَسُنَتْ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَّمُقَامًا 76

(25:76) Therein they shall abide for ever: how good an abode, and how good a resting-place!

قُلْ مَا يَعْبَؤُا بِكُمْ رَبِّيْ لَوْلَا دُعَآؤُكُمْ ۚ فَقَدْ كَذَّبْتُمْ فَسَوْفَ يَكُوْنُ لِزَامًا ۧ 77

(25:77) Say to them (O Muhammad): "My Lord would not care for you were it not for your prayer[96]. But now that you have given the lie to (the Message of Allah), an inextricable punishment shall soon come upon you."

96. This warning to the disbelievers has been given in order to contrast it with the great rewards that have been promised to the true servants of Allah, as if to say: If you do not invoke Allah for help and protection, and do not worship Him, you will have no value and importance in His sight, and He will not care at all for you because He does not stand in need of any help from you. It is indeed for your own sake that He has given you the opportunity to invoke Him so that He may turn in mercy towards you; otherwise there is no difference between you and the rest of creation.

26. Surah Ash Shuaraa (The Poets)

Name

The Surah takes its name from verse 224 in which the word *Ash-Shu`araa'* occurs.

Period of Revelation

The subject matter and the style show, and the traditions confirm, that it was revealed during the middle Makkan period. According to Ibn Abbas, Surah Ta Ha was revealed first, then Surah Al Waqiah, and then Surah Ash-Shu'araa.(*Ruh-ul-Ma'ani*, Vol. xx, p. 64). About Surah Ta Ha it is well known that it had been revealed before Hadrat Umar embraced Islam.

Subject Matter and Topics

The background of the Surah is that the disbelievers of Makkah were persistently refusing, on one pretext or the other, to accept the message of Islam given by the Holy Prophet. Sometimes they would say that he did not show them any sign to convince them of his Prophethood; sometimes they would brand him as a poet or a sorcerer and mock his message; and sometimes they would ridicule his Mission, saying that his followers were either a few foolish youth, or the poor people and slaves - whereas, they argued, if his Mission had really some value for the people, the nobles and the elders would have accepted it first. Thus, while on the one hand, the Holy Prophet was becoming wearied by his efforts to show them rationally the errors of their creeds and prove the truth of the Doctrines of Tauhid and the Hereafter, the disbelievers, on the other, were never tired of adopting one kind of obduracy after the other. This state of affairs was causing great anguish and grief to the Holy Prophet.

Such were the conditions when this Surah was revealed. It begins with words of consolation to the Holy Prophet, implying, "Why do you fret for their sake? If these people have not believed in you, it is not because they have not seen any Sign, but because they are obdurate. They will not listen to reason they want to see a Sign which makes them bow their heads in humility. When this Sign is shown in due course of time, they will themselves realize that what was being presented to them was the Truth."

After this introduction, till verse 191, one and the same theme has been presented continuously, and it is said: "The whole earth abounds in such Signs as can guide a seeker after truth to Reality, but the stubborn and misguided people have never believed even after seeing the Signs, whether these were the Signs of the natural phenomena or the miracles of the Prophets. These wretched people have stubbornly adhered to their erroneous creeds till the Divine scourge actually overtook them." It is to illustrate this that the history of seven of the ancient tribes has been told, who persisted in disbelief just like the disbelievers of Makkah. In this connection, the following points have been stressed:

1. The Signs are of two kinds:(a) Those which are scattered all over the earth, and by seeing which an intelligent person can judge for himself whether what the Prophet is presenting is the Truth or not and (b) those which were seen by Pharaoh and his people, Noah's people, the Ad and the Thamud, Lot's people and the people of

Aiykah. Now it is for the disbelievers to decide which kind of the Signs they are eager to see.

2. The mentality of the disbeliever has been the same throughout the ages; their arguments and their objections, and their excuses and subterfuges for not believing have been similar and ultimately the fates that they met have also been the same. Likewise, the Prophets in every age presented the same teachings, their personal character and their reasoning and arguments against their opponents were the same, and they were all similarly blessed with mercy by Allah Almighty. Both these patterns of behavior and conduct are found in history, and the disbelievers could themselves see as to which respective patterns they and the Holy Prophet belonged.
3. Allah is All Mighty, All Powerful and All Merciful at the same time. History contains instances of His Wrath as well as of His Mercy. Now, therefore, it is for the people to decide whether they would like to deserve Allah's Mercy or His Wrath.
4. Lastly, the discussion has been summed up, saying "O disbelievers, if at all you want to see the Signs, why should you insist on seeing those horrible Signs that visited the doomed communities of the past? Why don't you see the Qur'an which is being presented in your own language? Why don't you see Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and mercy) and his Companions? Can the revelations of the Qur'an be the work of a satan or a jinn? Does the recipient of the Qur'an appear to be a sorcerer? Are Muhammad and his Companions no different from a poet and his admirers? Why don't you give up disbelief and search your hearts for their judgment? When in the heart of your hearts you yourselves believe that the Revelations of the Qur'an have nothing in common with sorcery and poetry, then you should know that you are being cruel and unjust, and will certainly meet the doom meant for the cruel and unjust."

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

طٰسٓمٓ 1

(26:1) Ta'. Sin. Mim.

تِلۡكَ اٰيٰتُ الۡكِتٰبِ الۡمُبِيۡنِ 2

(26:2) These are the verses of the Clear Book.[1]

1. That is, the verses being presented in this Surah are of that Book, which presents and explains its subject-matter clearly and plainly so that every reader and listener may easily understand what it invites to, what it enjoins and what it forbids, and what it regards as true and what as false. To believe or not to believe is a different matter; but no one can have the excuse that he could not understand the teachings of the Book and its injunctions and prohibitions.

Al-Kitab-ul-Mubin also has the meaning that the Quran is, beyond any doubt, a divine Book. Its language, its diction and themes, the facts presented by it and the background of its

revelations, all testify to the fact that this is indeed the Book of the Master of all Creation. In this sense, its every sentence is a sign and a miracle. As such, any person who has common sense has no need of any other sign than the verses of this Book for believing in the Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him).

This brief introductory sentence, which covers both these meanings, has a close connection with the subject-matter of this Surah. The disbelievers of Makkah demanded a miracle from the Prophet (peace be upon him) so as to be convinced that the message he gave was really from Allah. In answer to that, it has been said that if someone really wanted a sign for believing in the Prophet (peace be upon him), he should study the verses of this Book. Then, the disbelievers accused the Prophet (peace be upon him) of being a sorcerer. This charge has been refuted by saying that the Quran has nothing ambiguous or mysterious in it; but it plainly puts forward all of its teachings which cannot be the creation of a poet or a sorcerer's imagination.

لَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَّفْسَكَ اَلَّا يَكُوْنُوْا مُؤْمِنِيْنَ 3

(26:3) (O Muhammad), you will perhaps grieve yourself to death because these people do not believe.[2]

2. The words bakhiun-nafsaka literally mean: You would kill yourself. The verse in fact describes the extreme anguish, anxiety and grief of the Prophet (peace be upon him) over the Makkan disbelievers' ways of deviation, moral degradation, and obduracy and opposition to his message of reform. Sometimes it seemed as if his grief and mental suffering for their sake would cause his death. This state of the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been referred to at other places in the Quran as well, for instance in (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayat 6), thus: Well, O Muhammad, it may be that you will consume your life for their sake out of sorrow if they do not believe in this message. And in (Surah Al-Fatir, Ayat 8), thus: Let not your life be consumed in grief for their sake.

اِنْ نَّشَاْ نُنَزِّلْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ اٰيَةً فَظَلَّتْ اَعْنَاقُهُمْ لَهَا خٰضِعِيْنَ 4

(26:4) If We will, We can send down a Sign to them from heaven, so their necks will be humbled to it.[3]

3. That is, it is not at all difficult for Allah to send down a sign which would make all the disbelievers yield and submit. If, however, He does not send one, it does not mean that such a thing is beyond His powers, but the reason is that the belief under compulsion is not acceptable to Him. Allah wants that people should use their common-sense and recognize the truth through the verses of the divine Book and the signs which are scattered all over the universe and are found even in their own selves. Then, when their hearts are satisfied that the message of the Prophets contains the truth, and the beliefs and the creeds which are opposed to it, are false, they should willingly give up falsehood and adopt the truth. This voluntary belief, acceptance of the truth and rejection of falsehood, is what Allah demands from man. It is for this reason that Allah has bestowed upon man choice and free will, and freedom to follow any way, right or wrong, that he pleases. For the same reason He has

placed in his nature both the tendencies, towards good and towards evil, and opened up before him both the ways, to piety and to sin. For the same purpose He has given Satan the freedom and respite to mislead him and has made arrangements of Prophethood, revelation and invitation to goodness to guide him to the right way, and has placed man on trial to see whether he adopts the way of belief and obedience or of disbelief and sin. On the other hand, if Allah had adopted a method of coercing people to believe and obey, it would have defeated the very purpose of the trial and test. Then there was no need to send down the signs for the purpose, but He would have created man with a pure nature, without any inclination for evil, disbelief and sin, and made him obedient by birth like the angels. This has been referred at several places in the Quran, for instance in (Surah Younus, Ayat 99): Had your Lord willed, all the dwellers of the earth would have believed in Him. And in (Surah Houd, Ayat 118): Your Lord could have made mankind one community had He so willed, but now they will continue to follow different ways, but only those on whom Allah has His mercy (escape wrong ways). It will be so because He has created them for this (very freedom of choice and action). For further explanation, see (E.Ns 101,102 of Surah Younus) and (E.N. 116 of Surah Houd).

وَمَا يَأْتِيهِم مِّن ذِكْرٍ مِّنَ الرَّحْمَٰنِ مُحْدَثٍ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهُ مُعْرِضِينَ 5

(26:5) Never does there come to them an admonition from the Merciful Lord but they turn away from it.

فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوا فَسَيَأْتِيهِمْ أَنبَٰٓؤُا مَا كَانُوا بِهِۦ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ 6

(26:6) They will soon come to know the truth of that which they have been scoffing at.[4]

4. That is, the people who show lack of feeling and interest for every rational attempt made to bring them to the right way, cannot be made to believe forcibly by sending down signs from heaven. They only deserve to be shown their evil end after they have been duly warned and shown guidance, which they not only treated with indifference but rejected scornfully. This evil end can be shown to them in several ways.

(1) The truth which they have bitterly opposed and scoffed at should prevail in the world in front of their very eyes in spite of their antagonism. (2) They should be visited by a painful torment and eliminated from the world. (3) Alter a few years of misguided life they should meet death and see for themselves that what they had been following whole heartedly throughout their lives was nothing but falsehood and what the Prophets had been presenting was the very truth, which they had been scoffing at. Thus the evil end can take place differently for different people as it happened in the past.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ كَمْ أَنبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِن كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيمٍ 7

(26:7) Do they not look at the earth, how We caused a variety of fine vegetation to grow from it (in abundance)?

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً ۖ وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ 8

(26:8) Surely there is a Sign in this,[5] but most of them would not believe.[6]

5. That is, the seeker after truth does not have to look far for a sign. If only he sees with open eyes the phenomena of vegetation around him, he will be able to judge for himself whether the reality about the system of the world (i.e. Tauhid) which was being presented by the Prophets is true or the speculations of the polytheists and atheists. From the variety and abundance of creation found on the earth, the various elements and factors supporting it, the laws of nature causing it to grow and flourish, and the accord and harmony existing between its characteristics and the countless needs and demands of innumerable creatures, only a fool will conclude that all this is happening automatically without the wisdom, knowledge, power and design of an All-Mighty, All-Powerful Creator. Obviously, many masters and gods could not have by any device arranged and produced the perfect harmony and accord between the soil, the sun and the moon, and the animal and plant life produced with their help and the needs of a great variety of creatures living on the earth. A sensible person, unless he is prejudiced and biased, cannot help feeling convinced that these are the clear signs and proofs of the existence of One God, and there is no further need of a miracle to convince him of the reality of Tauhid.

6. That is, He has the power and ability to annihilate completely anyone whom He wills to punish, but it is His mercy that He does not hasten to punish the wrong-doer, but gives him respite for years and centuries to allow him time to think, understand and mend his ways, and is ever ready to forgive the sins of a lifetime if the sinner offers repentance but once.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ۤ 9

(26:9) Verily Your Lord is Infinitely Mighty, Most Compassionate.

وَإِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبُّكَ مُوسَىٰ أَنِ ائْتِ الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ۙ 10

(26:10) (Recount to them about the time) when Your Lord called Moses:[7] "Go to the wrong-doing people,[8]

7. After a brief introduction, historical events have been presented beginning with the story of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and Pharaoh, and attention has been drawn specifically to the following points:

(1) The conditions under which Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had to work were much harsher and more severe than those faced by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Prophet Moses belonged to a slave community very much suppressed by Pharaoh and his people. In contrast to them, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was a member of the clan of Quraish and his family enjoyed an equal status with the other clans. Then Prophet Moses

(peace be upon him) had been bred and brought up in the house of Pharaoh and after remaining a fugitive for ten years due to a charge of murder, he was commanded to go before the same king from whom he had fled for life. The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not have to face any such situation. Then the empire of Pharaoh was the most extensive and powerful empire of the time and the meager power of the Quraish had no comparison with it. In spite of that Pharaoh could not do any harm to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and ultimately perished in the conflict. From this Allaln wanted the Quraish to learn this lesson: None can defeat the one who has Allah to help him? When Pharaoh with all his might became helpless against Moses (peace be upon him), how can you, O poor Quraish, succeed against Muhammad (peace be upon him)?

(2) There could not be clearer and more manifest signs (miracles) than those which were shown to Pharaoh through Moses (peace be upon him). Then in an open contest with the magicians before a gathering of hundreds of thousands of people to meet the challenge of Pharaoh himself, it had been conclusively demonstrated that what was presented by Moses (peace be upon him), was not magic. The skillful magicians who were themselves Egyptians and had been summoned by Pharaoh himself bore witness to the fact that turning of Moses' (peace be upon him) staff into a serpent was a real change of nature, which could only happen through a divine miracle, and not by any trick of magic. Then the magicians' believing in Moses (peace be upon him) immediately, even at the risk of life, proved beyond any doubt that the sign presented by Moses (peace be upon him) was a miracle and not magic. Yet the disbelievers were not inclined to believe in the Prophet (peace be upon him). Now how can you, O Quraish, say that you will believe only when you are shown a perceptible miracle and a physical sign? As a matter of fact, if a person is free from prejudice, false sense of prestige and vested interest, and has an open mind to appreciate the distinction between truth and falsehood, and is prepared to give up falsehood for the truth, he does not stand in need of any other signs than those found in this Book, in the life of the one presenting it and in the vast universe around him. On the contrary, an obstinate person, who is not interested in the truth, and who because of selfish motives is determined not to recognize and accept any such truth as may clash with his interests, will not be prepared to believe after seeing any sign whatsoever, even if the earth and the heaven are turned upside down in front of his eyes.

(3) The tragic end of such obstinacy as met by Pharaoh is not something for which other people should become so impatient. Those who do not believe even after seeing with their own eyes the signs of divine power have inevitably to meet a similar fate. Therefore, instead of learning a lesson why do you insist on seeing such a dreadful sign? For comparison, see (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 103-137); (Surah Younus, Ayats 75-92); (Surah Bani Israil, Ayats 101-104); and (Surah Ta Ha, Ayats 9-79).

8. The epithet of the wicked people describes the extremely wicked character of the people of Pharaoh.

قَوْمَ فِرْعَوْنَ ۭ اَلَا يَتَّقُوْنَ 11

(26:11) the people of Pharaoh: do they have no fear?"[9]

9. That is, O Moses! Just see how these people are perpetrating crime and injustice presuming that they are all-powerful in the land having no fear of God, Who will call them to account in the Hereafter.

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّيٓ أَخَافُ أَن يُكَذِّبُونِ ط 12

(26:12) He said: "My Lord! I fear that they will brand me a liar.

وَيَضِيقُ صَدۡرِي وَلَا يَنطَلِقُ لِسَانِي فَأَرۡسِلۡ إِلَىٰ هَٰرُونَ 13

(26:13) My breast is constricted and my tongue is not fluent, so endow Messengership on Aaron.10

10. The sentence, “My breast straitens”, shows that Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was somewhat hesitant of going alone on such a difficult mission, and also had the feeling that he was not eloquent in speech. That is why he begged Allah to appoint Aaron too, as messenger to assist him who, being more vigorous in speech, could support and strengthen him as and when the need arose. It is just possible that in the beginning, the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) might have begged that Aaron be appointed to Prophethood instead of him, but later when he felt that Allah willed him to be appointed to that position, he might have appealed that Aaron should at least be made his counselor and assistant. We say this because here Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) is not praying for Aaron to be made his counselor, but says: Appoint Aaron to Prophethood. On the other hand, in Surah Ta Ha, he says: Appoint for me a counselor from my family, (let it be) my brother Aaron. Then in Surah Al-Qasas, he says: My brother Aaron is more vigorous in speech than myself, so send him as an assistant with me to confirm (and support) me. From this it appears that these two requests were made later, but originally Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had begged Allah to appoint Aaron to Prophethood instead of himself.

The Bible has a different story to tell. According to it, Prophet Moses, fearing that he would be rejected by the people of Pharaoh, and putting forward the excuse of his faltering speech, had declined to accept his appointment to prophethood on the pretext that he lacked vigor and eloquence in speech: O my, Lord, send, I pray Thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send. (Exodus, 4: 13), Then Allah, of His own will, appointed Aaron to be his assistant and persuaded them: to go together before Pharaoh. (Exodus, 4: 1-13). For further details, see (E.N. 19 of Ta Ha).

وَلَهُمۡ عَلَيَّ ذَنۢبٞ فَأَخَافُ أَن يَقۡتُلُونِ ج 14

(26:14) As for me, they hold the charge of a crime against me. I fear they will put me to death."11

11. The allusion is to the incident of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) giving a blow to an Egyptian, who was fighting with an Israelite, and thus causing his death. Then as soon as Moses came to know that the report had reached Pharaoh and his people and they were

planning to take revenge, he fled the country and took refuge in Midian. See (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 15-21). Now when after a period of almost ten years of hiding he was suddenly called upon and commanded to go before Pharaoh, who had already a charge of murder against him, with the message, Prophet Moses rightly felt apprehensive that he would immediately be involved in the murder case even before he was able to convey the message as commanded by Allah.

قَالَ كَلَّا ۚ فَاذْهَبَا بِآيَاتِنَا ۖ إِنَّا مَعَكُم مُّسْتَمِعُونَ 15

(26:15) He said: "Certainly not! So go both of you with Our Signs.[12] We shall be with you listening to everything.

12. Here the signs meant the miracles of the staff and the shining hand, which were given to Moses. For details see (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 106-117); (Surah Ta Ha, Ayats 17-23); (Surah An-Naml, Ayats 7-14); and (Surah Al-Qasas; Ayats 31-32).

فَأْتِيَا فِرْعَوْنَ فَقُولَا إِنَّا رَسُولُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۖ 16

(26:16) Go, then, to Pharaoh and say to him: 'The Lord of the Universe has sent us

أَنْ أَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ۖ 17

(26:17) that you let the Children of Israel go with us.'"[13]

13. The mission of the Prophets Moses and Aaron (peace be upon them) was twofold: First, to invite Pharaoh to the worship and obedience of Allah which has been the foremost aim of the mission of every Prophet, and secondly, to liberate the Israelites from the bondage of Pharaoh, which was specifically assigned to them. The Quran has mentioned sometimes only the first part of their mission (as in Surah An-Naziat) and sometimes only the second.

قَالَ أَلَمْ نُرَبِّكَ فِينَا وَلِيدًا وَلَبِثْتَ فِينَا مِنْ عُمُرِكَ سِنِينَ ۖ 18

(26:18) Pharaoh said: "Did we not bring you up among us when you were a child?[14]

14. This remark of Pharaoh shows that he was not the same Pharaoh who had brought up Moses in his house, but his son. Had he been the same Pharaoh, he would have said, “I brought you up.” But, on the contrary, he says, “You were brought up among ourselves.” For a detailed discussion, see (E.Ns 85-93 of Surah Al-Aaraf).

وَفَعَلْتَ فَعْلَتَكَ الَّتِي فَعَلْتَ وَأَنْتَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ 19

(26:19) You spent many years of your life among us and then you committed that deed of yours.[15] You are very ungrateful indeed."

15. The allusion is to the incident of murder committed by Moses accidentally.

قَالَ فَعَلْتُهَآ إِذًا وَّأَنَا مِنَ الضَّآلِّيْنَ ۟ 20

(26:20) Moses replied: "I committed that act erringly.[16]

16. The word dalalat does not always mean straying away, but it is also used in the sense of ignorance, folly, error, forgetfulness, inadvertence, etc. As mentioned in Surah Al- Qasas, Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had only given a blow to the Egyptian (Copt) when he saw him beating an Israelite cruelly. A blow does not cause death, nor is it given with the intention of causing death. It was only an accident that the Egyptian died. As such, it was not a case of deliberate murder but of accidental murder. A murder was committed but not intentionally, nor was any weapon used, which is usually employed for murder, or which can cause murder.

فَفَرَرْتُ مِنْكُمْ لَمَّا خِفْتُكُمْ فَوَهَبَ لِيْ رَبِّيْ حُكْمًا وَّجَعَلَنِيْ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ 21

(26:21) Then I fled for fear of you. Then my Lord bestowed wisdom and authority on me[17] and made me one of the Messengers.

17. The word hukm means wisdom, knowledge or authority, which is granted by Allah to a Prophet so that he may speak with confidence and power.

وَتِلْكَ نِعْمَةٌ تَمُنُّهَا عَلَيَّ أَنْ عَبَّدْتَّ بَنِيْٓ إِسْرَآءِيْلَ ۟ 22

(26:22) Now this is the favour that you tauntingly remind me of: that you enslaved the Children of Israel!"[18]

18. That is, if you had not been unjust and cruel to the Israelites. I should not have been brought to your house for upbringing. It was only on account of your barbarism that my mother put me in a basket and cast it into the river. Had it not been so, I should have been happily brought up in my own house. Therefore, it does not behoove you to remind me of your favor of bringing me up in your house.

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَا رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۟ 23

(26:23) Pharaoh said:[19] "And who is this Lord of the Universe?"[20]

19. Here the details that Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) went before Pharaoh as the Messenger of the Lord of the universe and conveyed to him His message, have been omitted, and only the conversation that took place between them has been related.

20. This question of Pharaoh concerned the assertion of Moses (peace be upon him) that he had been sent by the Lord, Master and Ruler of all Creation with the message that he should let the Israelites go with him. This was a political message. It implied that the One, Whom

Moses claimed to represent, possessed authority and sovereign rights over all the people of the world including Pharaoh and that he was not only encroaching upon his sphere of sovereignty as Supreme Ruler, but was also sending him the command that he should hand over a section of his subjects to the representative appointed by Him, so that he should take them out of his kingdom. That is why Pharaoh asked: Who is this Master and Ruler of all Creation who is sending such a command to the king of Egypt through an ordinary subject of his kingdom?

قَالَ رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ؕ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّوْقِنِيْنَ 24

(26:24) Moses answered: "The Lord of the heavens and the earth and of all that is between them, if you were only to believe."[21]

21. That is, I have not been sent by any mortal king ruling in the world, but I come from Him Who is the Owner of the heavens and the earth. If you believe that, there is a Creator and Master and Ruler of this universe, it should not be difficult for you to understand who is the Lord of all Creation.

قَالَ لِمَنْ حَوْلَهٗۤ اَلَا تَسْتَمِعُوْنَ 25

(26:25) Pharaoh said to those around him: "Do you hear (what he says)?"

قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ اٰبَآئِكُمُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ 26

(26:26) Moses said: "(He is) Your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers of yore."[22]

22. These words were addressed to the chiefs of Pharaoh, whom he had asked: Do you hear? Prophet Moses said: I do not believe in the false gods who exist today, but did not exist yesterday, or who existed yesterday but do not exist today. This Pharaoh, whom you worship as your lord today, did not exist yesterday, and the Pharaohs whom your elders worshiped yesterday, do not exist today; whereas I believe in the sovereignty and authority of that Lord Who is both your Lord and Pharaoh's Lord as much today as He was your elders' Lord before this.

قَالَ اِنَّ رَسُوْلَكُمُ الَّذِيْۤ اُرْسِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ لَمَجْنُوْنٌ 27

(26:27) Pharaoh said to the audience: "This Messenger of yours who has been sent to you is simply mad."

قَالَ رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ؕ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ 28

(26:28) Moses continued: "(He is) the Lord of the east and the west, and all between them. If you only had any understanding!"[23]

23. That is, You regard me as a mad person, but if you think you are wise people, you should yourself decide as to who is the real lord: this wretched Pharaoh who is ruling over a small piece of earth, or He Who is the Owner of the east and the west and of everything bounded by the east and the west including the land of Egypt. I believe in His sovereignty alone and have been sent to convey His message to a creature of His.

قَالَ لَئِنِ اتَّخَذْتَ إِلٰهًا غَيْرِي لَأَجْعَلَنَّكَ مِنَ الْمَسْجُونِينَ 29

(26:29) Pharaoh said: "If you take any god other than me, I will certainly make you one of those (who are rotting) in prison."[24]

24. To understated and appreciate this conversation fully, one should bear in mind the fact that as it is today, in the ancient times too, the concept of deity was confined to its religious sense only. The deity was meant to be worshiped and presented offerings and gifts, and because of its supernatural powers and authority the people were to pray to it for help and fulfillment of their desires. But a deity's being supreme legally and politically also and his right to enjoin anything he pleased in the mundane affairs and man's duty to submit to his commands as to superior law, has never been recognized by the so-called worldly rulers. They have always claimed that in the mundane affairs, they alone possess absolute authority and no deity has any right to interfere in the polity and law prescribed by them. This very thing has been the real cause of the conflict between the Prophets and their righteous followers, on the one hand, and the worldly kingdoms and governments on the other. The Prophets have been trying their utmost to make the worldly rulers acknowledge the sovereign and absolute rights of the Lord of the Worlds, but they in return have not only been claiming sovereign powers and rights for themselves, but have been considering every such person as a criminal and rebel, who has held someone else as a deity in the political and legal sphere. With this background one can easily understand the real significance of Pharaoh's words. Had it been a question of mere worship and offerings, he would have least bothered that Moses (peace be upon him), forsaking all gods, regarded only Allah, the Lord of all Creation, as worthy of those rights. If Moses (peace be upon him) had invited him to serve Allah alone, he would not have felt provoked and offended. At the most he would have refused to give up the creed of his forefathers, or would have challenged Moses (peace be upon him) to have a debate with his own religious scholars. But what caused him provocation was that Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was presenting himself as the representative of the Lord of all Creation and was conveying to him a political command as if he was a subordinate ruler and the representative of the superior authority was demanding obedience from him to the command. In this sense, he was not prepared to acknowledge any other political or legal authority, nor allow any of his subjects to acknowledge anybody instead of himself as the supreme ruler. That is why he challenged the term "Lord of all Creation", for the message sent by Him clearly reflected sovereignty in the political and not in the mere religious sense. Then, when Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) explained over and over again what he meant by the Lord of all Creation, Pharaoh threatened that if he held anyone other than him as sovereign in the land of Egypt, he would be cast into prison.

قَالَ أَوَلَوْ جِئْتُكَ بِشَيْءٍ مُّبِينٍ ۚ 30

(26:30) Moses said: "Even if I were to bring a Clear Sign to you?"[25]

25. That is, will you still deny me and send me to prison, even if I present a convincing sign to prove that I am really the Messenger of God, Who is Lord of all Creation , Lord of the heavens and the earth and Lord of the east and the west?

قَالَ فَأْتِ بِهِ إِن كُنتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ 31

(26:31) Pharaoh said: "Then bring it if you are truthful at all."[26]

26. This reply of Pharaoh shows that he was not in any way different from the common polytheists of the ancient and modern times. Like all other polytheists, he believed in Allah's being the highest Deity in the supernatural sense. Who wielded greater power and authority than all other gods and goddesses. That is why Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) said to him: If you do not believe that I have been appointed by Allah, I can present such clear signs as will prove that I have really been sent by Him. And that is why Pharaoh said: If you are true in your claim, come out with your sign, otherwise if he had any doubt about the existence of Allah or His being Master of the universe, he would not have asked for the sign.

فَأَلْقَىٰ عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِينٌ ۖ 32

(26:32) (No sooner had he said this than) Moses threw down his rod and behold, it was a veritable serpent,[27]

27. Thuban means a serpent. At other places, the Quran has used hayyatun (snake) and jaann (a small snake) to describe the snake of the staff. The interpretation given by Imam Razi is that the snake of the staff looked like a serpent from its big size and has been called jaann on account of its swift movement which is characteristic of small snakes.

وَنَزَعَ يَدَهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَاءُ لِلنَّاظِرِينَ ۚ 33

(26:33) and he drew his hand (out of his armpit) and lo! it had become a shining object to the beholders.[28]

28. Some commentators under the influence of the Israelite traditions have translated baida as white and have taken it to mean that the healthy hand when drawn out of the armpit became white as if struck by leprosy. But commentators like Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir, Zamakhshari, Razi, Abul Saud Imadi, Alusi and others agree that baida here means shining and bright. As soon as Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) took his hand out from the armpit, it made the whole place bright as if by the sun. For further explanation, see (E.N. 13 of Ta Ha).

قَالَ لِلۡمَلَاِ حَوۡلَهٗۤ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَسٰحِرٌ عَلِيۡمٌ ۙ 34

(26:34) Pharaoh said to the nobles around him: "Surely this man is a skilled magician

يُّرِيۡدُ اَنۡ يُّخۡرِجَكُمۡ مِّنۡ اَرۡضِكُمۡ بِسِحۡرِهٖ ۖ فَمَاذَا تَاۡمُرُوۡنَ 35

(26:35) who wants to drive you out of your land by his magic.[29] Tell us, what do you advise us?"[30]

29. The impact of the two miracles can be judged from the fact that a moment before this Pharaoh was calling Moses (peace be upon him) a mad man, because he had claimed to be a Prophet and had the boldness to openly demand release of the Israelites. He was also threatening Moses (peace be upon him) that if he took somebody else as Lord instead of him, he would cast him into the prison for life. But, after he had seen the signs, he became so terrorstricken that he felt his kingdom to be at stake, and in his confusion he did not realize that he was talking meaninglessly to his servants in the court. Two men from the oppressed community of the Israelites were standing before the most powerful ruler of the time. They had no military force with them, they belonged to a weak and lifeless community, and there was no sign of any rebellion in any corner of the country, nor did they have the support of any foreign power, yet as soon as the miracles of the snake of the staff and the shining hand were shown, the tyrant desperately cried out: These two men want to seize power and deprive the ruling class of their sovereign rights! His apprehension that Moses (peace be upon him) would do so by force of his magic again reflected a confused state of mind, for nowhere in the world has a political revolution been ever brought about, nor a country taken, nor a war won merely by force of magic. There were many magicians in Egypt, who could perform masterly tricks of magic, but Pharaoh knew it well that they were nonentities because they performed magic only for the sake of rewards.

30. This sentence further shows Pharaoh's perplexed state of mind. A moment before he was the deity of his courtiers and, now, struck by awe, the deity is asking his servants as to what he should do to meet the dangerous situation.

قَالُوۡۤا اَرۡجِهۡ وَاَخَاهُ وَابۡعَثۡ فِى الۡمَدَآئِنِ حٰشِرِيۡنَ ۙ 36

(26:36) They said: "Detain him and his brother for a while and send forth heralds to the cities

يَاۡتُوۡكَ بِكُلِّ سَحَّارٍ عَلِيۡمٍ 37

(26:37) to mobilise all skilled magicians."

فَجُمِعَ السَّحَرَةُ لِمِيۡقَاتِ يَوۡمٍ مَّعۡلُوۡمٍ ۙ 38

(26:38) So the magicians were brought together on a particular day at a set time[31]

31. As already mentioned in Surah TaHa (verse 59), the day fixed for the purpose was the day of the national festivities of the Egyptians so that large crowds of people coming to the festivals from every part of the country should also witness the grand contest which was to be held in the broad daylight so that the spectators could see the performances clearly.

وَّقِيْلَ لِلنَّاسِ هَلْ اَنْتُمْ مُّجْتَمِعُوْنَ ۙ 39

(26:39) and the people were told: "Will you join the assembly?[32]

32. That is, besides proclamation heralds were sent to urge the people to come and see the contest. It appears that the news of the miracle shown by Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) before the packed court had reached the common people also, and Pharaoh fearing that the people at large might be influenced, wanted that they should come together in large numbers so that they could see for themselves that turning a staff into a snake had nothing extraordinary in it because such a trick could be performed by every common magician of their own country as well.

لَعَلَّنَا نَتَّبِعُ السَّحَرَةَ اِنْ كَانُوْا هُمُ الْغٰلِبِيْنَ 40

(26:40) We may perhaps follow the religion of the magicians if they triumph."[33]

33. This sentence confirms the idea that those who had witnessed the miracle of Moses (peace be upon him) in the royal court and those who had heard of it reliably outside were losing faith in their ancestral religion, and now the strength of their faith depended on this that their own magicians also should give a performance similar to that of Moses (peace be upon him). That is why Pharaoh and his chiefs themselves regarded this contest as a decisive one, and their heralds were busy moving about in the land, impressing on the people that if the magicians won the day, they would yet be secured against the risk of being won over to Moses' (peace be upon him) religion, otherwise there was every possibility of their creed being exposed and abandoned forever.

فَلَمَّا جَآءَ السَّحَرَةُ قَالُوْا لِفِرْعَوْنَ اَئِنَّ لَنَا لَاَجْرًا اِنْ كُنَّا نَحْنُ الْغٰلِبِيْنَ 41

(26:41) When the magicians came forth (for the encounter) they said to Pharaoh: "Is there a reward for us if we triumph?"[34]

34. Such was the mentality of the supporters of the polytheistic creed of the land, whose only ambition was to win rewards from the king if they won the day.

قَالَ نَعَمْ وَاِنَّكُمْ اِذًا لَّمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِيْنَ 42

(26:42) He said: "Yes, you will then become those near-stationed to me."[35]

35. This was then the highest honor that the king could confer on those who served the creed best. Thus, at the very outset, Pharaoh and his magicians manifested by their conduct the great moral distinction that exists between a Prophet and a magician. On the one side, there stood that embodiment of courage and confidence, who in spite of belonging to the suppressed community of the Israelites and having remained to hiding for ten long years on account of a charge of murder, had suddenly appeared in Pharaoh's court to proclaim fearlessly that he had been sent by the Lord of all Creation and demanded release of the Israelites.

He did not even feel the least hesitation in starting a discussion face to face with Pharaoh not caring in the least for his threats. On the other side, there were the wretched magicians wholly lacking in moral fiber, who had been summoned by Pharaoh himself to help secure the ancestral religion, and yet they were begging for rewards in return for the services. And when they are told that they will not only be given rewards but will also be included among the royal courtiers, they feel greatly overjoyed. These two types of characters clearly bring out the difference between the grand personality of a Prophet and that of a mere magician. Unless a man loses all senses of modesty and decency, he cannot have the audacity to call a Prophet a magician.

قَالَ لَهُمْ مُّوسَىٰ أَلْقُوا مَا أَنتُم مُّلْقُونَ 43

(26:43) Moses said to them: "Throw down whatever you wish to throw."

فَأَلْقَوْا حِبَالَهُمْ وَعِصِيَّهُمْ وَقَالُوا بِعِزَّةِ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْغَالِبُونَ 44

(26:44) Thereupon they threw down their ropes and their rods, and said: "By the glory of Pharaoh, we shall prevail."[36]

36. As soon as they cast down their cords and staffs, these started moving like so many snakes towards Moses. This has been described in greater detail at other places in the Quran. According to (Surah Al-Araf, Ayat 116): When they threw down their devices, they bewitched the eyes of the people and terrified their hearts: for they had indeed produced a great magic. And according to (Surah TaHa, Ayats 66, 67): Suddenly it so appeared to Moses that their cords and staffs were running about by the power of their magic, and Moses' heart was filled with fear.

فَأَلْقَىٰ مُوسَىٰ عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَأْفِكُونَ صلج 45

(26:45) Thereafter, Moses threw down his rod and behold, it went about swallowing up all the false devices they had contrived.

فَأُلْقِيَ السَّحَرَةُ سَاجِدِينَ لا 46

(26:46) Thereupon the magicians fell down in prostration,

قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۙ 47

(26:47) saying: "We (now) believe in the Lord of the Universe,

رَبِّ مُوْسٰى وَهٰرُوْنَ 48

(26:48) the Lord of Moses and Aaron."[37]

37. This was not merely an acknowledgment of their defeat at the hands of Moses (peace be upon him) as though he was a greater magician, but their falling prostrate in submission to Allah, Lord of the universe, was an open declaration before thousands of Egyptians that what Moses (peace be upon him) had brought about was no magic at all, but a manifestation of the powers of Allah, Almighty.

قَالَ اٰمَنْتُمْ لَهٗ قَبْلَ اَنْ اٰذَنَ لَكُمْ ۚ اِنَّهٗ لَكَبِيْرُكُمُ الَّذِيْ عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ ۚ فَلَسَوْفَ
تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ لَاُقَطِّعَنَّ اَيْدِيَكُمْ وَاَرْجُلَكُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ وَّلَاُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ۚ 49

(26:49) Pharaoh said: "You accepted the word of Moses even before I granted you the leave to do so. Surely he is your chief who has taught you magic.[38] Soon shall you come to know. I shall cut off your hands and feet on opposite sides and shall crucify all of you."[39]

38. This only shows the extreme obstinacy and obduracy of Pharaoh, who even after witnessing a clear miracle and the testimony of the magicians on it, was still insisting that it was magic. But according to (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 123), Pharaoh said: Indeed it was a plot you conspired in the capital to deprive the rightful owners of their power. Thus he tried to make the people believe that the magicians had yielded to Moses (peace be upon him) not because of the miracle but due to a conspiracy with Moses (peace be upon him) before they entered the contest, so that they might seize political power and enjoy its fruits together.

39. This horrible threat was held out by Pharaoh to justify his thinking that the magicians had entered a conspiracy with Moses (peace be upon him). He thought that the magicians, in order to save their lives, would confess the plot and thus the effect produced by their falling prostrate and believing in Moses (peace be upon him) in front of thousands of spectators would be gone.

قَالُوْا لَا ضَيْرَ ۚ اِنَّآ اِلٰى رَبِّنَا مُنْقَلِبُوْنَ ۚ 50

(26:50) They said: "We do not care, for we are bound to return to our Lord,

إِنَّا نَطْمَعُ أَن يَغْفِرَ لَنَا رَبُّنَا خَطَايَانَا أَن كُنَّا أَوَّلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۚ 51

(26:51) and we surely expect that Our Lord will forgive us our sins for we are the first ones to believe."[40]

40. That is, we have to return to our Lord in any case. If you kill us now, we shall present ourselves before Him just today, and we have nothing to worry about this. We rather expect that we shall be forgiven our sins and errors because out of this entire gathering we were the first to believe as soon as reality became known to us.

This reply of the magicians made two things absolutely clear to the people who had been gathered together by Pharaoh heralds.

First, that Pharaoh was a dishonest obdurate and deceitful person. When he saw that Moses had come out successful in the contest which he himself had arranged to be decisive, he concocted a plot and forced the magicians to confess it by coercion and threats. Had there been any truth in it, the magicians would not have readily offered to have their hands and feet cut off on opposite sides and get crucified. The fact that the magicians remained steadfast and firm in their belief, even in the face of such a horrible threat, proves that the accusation of plotting a conspiracy against Pharaoh was baseless. The fact was that the magicians being experts in their art had realized that what Moses (peace be upon him) had displayed was no magic, but surely a manifestation of the powers of Allah, Lord of the universe.

Secondly, thousands of the people who had gathered together from all corners of the land had themselves witnessed the great moral change that had occurred in the magicians as soon as they professed belief in the Lord of the universe. The same magicians who had been summoned to strengthen and secure the ancestral creed by means of their magic and who, a minute before, were humbly begging Pharaoh for rewards had now become so bold and ennobled spiritually that they would not take any notice of Pharaoh's powers and his threats and were even prepared to face death and extreme physical torture for the sake of their faith. Thus psychologically there could not be a better occasion to expose the polytheistic creed of the Egyptians in their own eyes and help impress the truth of Moses' (peace be upon him) religion in the minds of the people.

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي إِنَّكُم مُّتَّبَعُونَ 52

(26:52) We revealed to Moses:[41] "Set forth with My servants by night for you will be pursued."[42]

41. The mention of migration here does not mean that Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and the Israelites were immediately ordered to leave Egypt. The history of the intervening period has been related in (Surah Al-Araf, Ayats 127-135) and (Surah Yunus, Ayats 83-89), and a part of it has been mentioned in (Surah Al-Momin, Ayats 23-46)and (Surah Az-Zukhruf, Ayat 46-56). Here the story is being cut short and only the final phase of the conflict between Pharaoh and Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) is given to show the

tragic end of Pharaoh who had remained obdurate even after witnessing clear signs and the ultimate success of Moses (peace be upon him) who had divine support behind his message.

42. The warning that "you will be pursued" shows the wisdom of the instruction to set off during the night. The idea was that before Pharaoh came out with his hosts to pursue them, they should have gone far enough so as to be out of reach of him. It should be borne in mind that the Israelites were not settled in one place in Egypt but were scattered in cities and habitations all over the country and lived in large numbers especially in the land between Memphis and Rameses called Goshen. It appears that when Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was commanded to leave Egypt, he must have sent instructions to the Israelite habitations telling the people to make necessary preparations for migration and he must have also fixed a night for them to leave their homes for the exodus.

فَأَرۡسَلَ فِرۡعَوۡنُ فِي ٱلۡمَدَآئِنِ حَٰشِرِينَ ۚ 53

(26:53) Then Pharaoh sent heralds to the cities (to mobilise troops)

إِنَّ هَٰٓؤُلَآءِ لَشِرۡذِمَةٞ قَلِيلُونَ ۙ 54

(26:54) saying: "These (Israelites) are only a small band of people

وَإِنَّهُمۡ لَنَا لَغَآئِظُونَ ۙ 55

(26:55) who have certainly provoked our wrath.

وَإِنَّا لَجَمِيعٌ حَٰذِرُونَ ۖ 56

(26:56) But we are a numerous host, ever on guard."[43]

43. All this shows that Pharaoh in fact was terror-stricken, but was trying to hide his fear under cover of fearlessness. On the one hand, he was mobilizing forces to face the situation; and on the other hand, he wanted to show that he was undaunted and undeterred, for a despotic ruler like Pharaoh could have no danger from a suppressed and slave community which had been living in disgrace for centuries. That is why his heralds made the people believe that the Israelites were just a handful of people, who could do them no harm, but had to be punished for the provocation they had caused. As for mobilization it was only a precautionary measure which had been taken to meet any eventuality in time.

فَأَخۡرَجۡنَٰهُم مِّن جَنَّٰتٖ وَعُيُونٖ ۙ 57

(26:57) Thus did We drive them out of their gardens and springs

وَّكُنُوْزٍ وَّمَقَامٍ كَرِيْمٍ ۙ 58

(26:58) and their treasures and excellent dwellings.[44]

44. The general mobilization ordered by Pharaoh was aimed to crush the Israelites completely, but God's device turned the tables on him and drew out all his chiefs and courtiers from their dwelling places and drove them to the place where they and their hosts were to be drowned all together. Had they not pursued the Israelites, nothing would have happened save that a community would have left the country quietly and they would have continued to enjoy life in their fine dwellings as before. But they in fact had cleverly planned not to allow the Israelites go away peacefully, but to attack the migrating caravans suddenly to finish them completely. For this very purpose the princes and the high chiefs and the nobles came out of their palaces and joined Pharaoh in the campaign, but their cleverness did not avail them anything. Not only did the Israelites succeed in escaping from Egypt, but also at the same time the elite of Pharaoh's tyrannical kingdom perished in the sea.

كَذٰلِكَ ؕ وَاَوْرَثْنٰهَا بَنِيْۤ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ؕ 59

(26:59) This happened with them; (but on the other hand), We enabled the Children of Israel to inherit those bounties.[45]

45. Some commentators have interpreted this verse to mean that Allah made the Children of Israel to inherit the gardens, water-springs, treasure-houses and fine dwellings vacated and left behind by Pharaoh and his people. This would inevitably mean that after the drowning of Pharaoh, the Israelites returned to Egypt and took possession of the wealth and properties of Pharaoh's people. This interpretation, however, is neither supported by history nor by other verses of the Quran. The relevant verses of Surahs Al-Baqarah, Al-Maidah, Al-Aaraf and TaHa confirm that after the destruction of Pharaoh in the sea, the Israelites did not return to Egypt but proceeded towards their destination (Palestine) and then, till the time of Prophet David (973-1013 B.C.) all the major events of their history took place in the lands which are now known as the Sinai Peninsula, northern Arabia, Transjordan and Palestine. As such, in our opinion the verses mean this: On the one hand, Allah deprived the people of Pharaoh of their wealth, possessions and grandeur, and on the other hand, He bestowed the same on the Children of Israel in Palestine, and not in Egypt. This same meaning is borne out by(verses 136-137 of Surah A1-Aaraf): Then We took Our vengeance on them and drowned them in the sea because they had treated Our signs as false and grown heedless of them. And after them We gave as heritage to those who had been abased and kept low, the eastern and the western parts of that land, which had been blessed bountifully by Us. The epithet of the blessed land has generally been used for Palestine in the Quran as in (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 1); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 71-81); and (Surah Saba, Ayat 18).

فَاَتْبَعُوْهُمْ مُّشْرِقِيْنَ 60

(26:60) At sunrise they set off in pursuit of them

فَلَمَّا تَرَٰٓءَا الْجَمْعَانِ قَالَ أَصْحَٰبُ مُوسَىٰٓ إِنَّا لَمُدْرَكُونَ ۚ 61

(26:61) and when the groups came face to face, the companions of Moses cried out: "We are overtaken!"

قَالَ كَلَّآ ۚ إِنَّ مَعِىَ رَبِّى سَيَهْدِينِ 62

(26:62) Moses said: "Certainly not. My Lord is with me; He will direct me."[46]

46. That is, He will show me the way out of this calamity

فَأَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰٓ أَنِ ٱضْرِب بِّعَصَاكَ ٱلْبَحْرَ ۖ فَٱنفَلَقَ فَكَانَ كُلُّ فِرْقٍ كَٱلطَّوْدِ ٱلْعَظِيمِ ۚ 63

(26:63) Then We revealed to Moses, (commanding him): "Strike the sea with your rod." Thereupon the sea split up, and then each became like the mass of a huge mount.[47]

47. Literally, tawd is a high mountain. It appears that as soon as Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) struck the sea with his staff, it tore the sea asunder and the waters stood like two mighty mountains on the sides and remained in that condition for so long that, on the one hand, the Israelite caravans consisting of hundreds of thousands of the migrants were able to pass through safely, and on the other, Pharaoh and his hosts stepped in and reached the middle of the sea. In the natural course, a phenomenon like this has never occurred that due to a windstorm, however strong, the sea should have parted and stood like mighty mountains on either side for such a long time. According to (verse 77 of Surah Ta Ha), Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was commanded by Allah to make for them (the Israelites) a dry path across the sea. This shows that the smiting of the sea did not only result in dividing the waters into two parts, which stood like mighty mountains on either side, but it also created a dry path in between without any mud or slush. In this connection, one should also consider (verse 24 of Surah Dukhan), which says that after Moses (peace be upon him) had crossed the sea along with his people, he was commanded by Allah to let the sea remain as it is because Pharaoh is to be drowned in it. This implies that if after crossing the sea, Moses had again struck it with his staff, the two sides would have rejoined, but he was forbidden to do so. Obviously, this was a miracle, and the view of those who try to interpret it as a natural phenomenon, is belied. For explanation, see (E.N. 53 of Surah Ta Ha).

وَأَزْلَفْنَا ثَمَّ ٱلْـَٔاخَرِينَ ۚ 64

(26:64) We also brought the other party close to the same spot,

وَأَنجَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ وَمَن مَّعَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ ۚ 65

(26:65) and We delivered Moses and his companions, all of them,

ثُمَّ أَغْرَقْنَا الْآخَرِينَ ۖ 66

(26:66) then We drowned the others.[48]

48. That is, Pharaoh and his army.

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً ۖ وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ 67

(26:67) Surely there is a Sign in this,[49] but most of them would not believe.

49. That is, the Quraish have this lesson to learn from this: The obdurate people like Pharaoh, his chiefs and followers had not believed even though they had been shown clear miracles for years. They had been so blinded by obduracy that even on the occasion of their drowning in the sea although they had seen the sea parting asunder in front of their very eyes, the waters standing like high mountains on either side, and the dry path in between for the Israelite caravans to pass, yet they failed to understand that Moses(peace be upon him) had divine succor and support with him which they had come out to fight. At last when they came to their senses, it was too late, because they had been overtaken by the wrath of Allah and the sea waters had covered them completely. It was on this occasion that Pharaoh had cried out: I have believed that there is no god but the real God in Whom the Children of Israel have believed and I am of those who surrender. (Surah Yunus, Ayat 90). On the other hand, there is a sign in this for the believers, too. They should understand how Allah by His grace causes the truth to prevail in the long run and the falsehood to vanish even though the forces to evil may appear to be dominant for the time being .

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝ 68

(26:68) Verily your Lord is Immensely Mighty, Ever Compassionate.

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ 69

(26:69) And recount to them the story of Abraham:[50]

50. This part of the life-history of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) relates to the time when after his appointment to Prophethood, a conflict had started between him and his people on the questions of shirk and Tauhid. In this connection, the reader should also see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 258-260); (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayats 75-83); (Surah Maryam, Ayats 41-50); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 51-70); (Surah As-Saffat, Ayats 83-113); and (Surah Al-Mumtahanah, Ayats 4-5).

The Quran has specially repeated this part of Prophet Abraham's life story over and over again because the Arabs in general and the Quraish in particular regarded themselves as his followers and professed his way and creed. Besides them, the Christians and the Jews also claimed that Abraham was their religious leader and guide. That is why the Quran admonishes them over and over again that the creed brought by Abraham was Islam itself, which is now being presented by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and which they are opposing tooth and nail. Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) was not a mushrik, but an antagonist against shirk, and for the same reason he had to leave his home and country and live as a migrant in Syria, Palestine and Hejaz. Thus he was neither a Jew nor a Christian, because Judaism and Christianity appeared centuries after him. This historical argument could neither be refuted by the mushriks, nor by the Jews or the Christians, because the mushriks themselves admitted that idol-worship in Arabia had started several centuries after Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), and the Jews and the Christians also could not deny that Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) had lived long before the beginning of Judaism and Christianity. This obviously meant that the special beliefs and customs which those people thought formed the basis of their religion, were not part of the original religion taught by Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him). True religion was the one which had no tinge of those impurities, but was based on those worship and obedience of One Allah alone. That is why the Quran says:

Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was a Muslim, sound in the faith, and he was not of those who set up partners with Allah. Surely only those people who follow Abraham are entitled to claim a relationship with him. Now this Prophet and the believers are better entitled to this relationship. (Surha Al Anaam, Ayats 67, 68).

اِذۡ قَالَ لِاَبِيۡهِ وَقَوۡمِهٖ مَا تَعۡبُدُوۡنَ 70

(26:70) when he asked his father and his people: "What do you worship?"[51]

51. Obviously the object of this question was to remind the people that the deities which they worshiped were false and absolutely powerless. In Surah Al Anbiya the same question has been posed thus: What are these images to which you are so devoted. (verse 52).

قَالُوۡا نَعۡبُدُ اَصۡنَامًا فَنَظَلُّ لَهَا عٰكِفِيۡنَ 71

(26:71) They answered: "There are some idols that we worship and are devoted to them with constancy."[52]

52. Though everybody knew that they worshiped idols, their answer implied that they were firm in faith and their hearts were satisfied with it, as if to say: We also know that these are idols of stone and wood, which we worship, but our faith demands that we should serve and worship them devotedly.

قَالَ هَلۡ يَسۡمَعُوۡنَكُمۡ اِذۡ تَدۡعُوۡنَ ۙ 72

(26:72) He asked: "Do they hear you when you call them

أَوْ يَنفَعُونَكُمْ أَوْ يَضُرُّونَ 73

(26:73) or do they cause you any benefit or harm?"

قَالُوا بَلْ وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا كَذَٰلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ 74

(26:74) They answered: "No; but we found our forefathers doing so."[53]

53. That is, we do not worship and serve them because they hear our prayers and supplications, or that they can harm and benefit us, but because we have seen our elders worshiping and serving them. Thus, they themselves admitted that the only reason of their worshiping the idols was the blind imitation of their forefathers. In other words, they meant this: There is nothing new in what you are telling us, We know that these are idols of stone and wood, which do not hear anything, nor can harm or do good, but we cannot believe that our elders who have been worshiping them since centuries, generation after generation, were foolish people. They must have had some good reason for worshiping these lifeless images, so we are doing the same as we have full faith in them.

قَالَ أَفَرَأَيْتُم مَّا كُنتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ 75

(26:75) Thereupon, Abraham said: "Have you seen (with your eyes) those whom you have been worshipping,

أَنتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمُ الْأَقْدَمُونَ 76

(26:76) you and your forefathers of yore?[54]

54. That is, is it enough to say that a religion is true only because it has been held as such by their ancestors? Should people, generation after generation, go on following their ancestors in their footsteps blindly without ever caring to see whether the deities they worship possess any divine attribute or not, and whether they have any power to influence their destinies?

فَإِنَّهُمْ عَدُوٌّ لِّي إِلَّا رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ 77

(26:77) They are all enemies to me;[55] all, except the Lord of the Universe[56]

55. That is, when I consider them, I see that if I worship them, I shall ruin myself both in this world and in the Hereafter. As their worship is clearly harmful, worshiping them is worshiping one's enemy. These words of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) bear a close connection with (verses 81, 82 of Surah Maryam), which say: These people have set up gods other than Allah so that they may become their supporters. But they will have no

supporter; all of them will not only disown their worship but also become their opponents (on the Day of Judgment).

It should be noted that Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) did not say: They are enemies to you, but said: They are enemies to me. In the first case, there was every chance that the people would have felt offended and provoked, because it would have been difficult for them to understand how their own gods could be their enemies. As a matter of fact, Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) appealed to the natural feeling of man that he is his own well-wisher and cannot wish ill of himself deliberately. This would inevitably have led the addressees to think whether what they were doing was really for their good and was in no way harmful.

56. That is, of all the deities who are being worshiped in the world, there is only One Allah alone, Lord of the universe, in whose worship I find any good for myself, and Whose worship is the worship of one's own Cherisher and Supporter, and not of one's enemy. Then Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) briefly gives the arguments, which nobody could refute, as to why Allah alone is worthy of man's worship and indirectly suggests that his addressees (the idol-worshipers) had no rational basis for worshiping deities other than Allah except in blind imitation of their forefathers.

الَّذِي خَلَقَنِي فَهُوَ يَهْدِينِ ۙ 78

(26:78) Who created me[57] and Who guides me;

57. This is the first reason for which Allah, and One Allah alone, is worthy of man's worship. The people also knew and believed that Allah alone was their Creator without any partner. Not only they but all the polytheists of the world also have always held the belief that even the deities they worshiped were the creation of Allah, and except for the atheists none have ever denied that Allah is the Creator of the whole universe. This argument of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) implied that being a creature, he could only worship his Creator, Who was alone worthy of his worship, and none else, because none besides Allah had any share in His creation.

وَالَّذِي هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِي وَيَسْقِينِ ۙ 79

(26:79) Who gives me food and drink,

وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ ۙ 80

(26:80) and Who, when I am ill, heals me;[58]

58. The second reason for worshiping Allah and Allah alone is that Allah has not become unconcerned with man after creating him and has not left him alone to seek other supporters for help, but has also taken the responsibility of making arrangements for his guidance, protection and fulfillment of his needs. The moment a human child is born, milk

is produced for it in the breasts of his mother, and some unseen power teaches it the way to suck it and take it down the throat. From the first day of his life till his death, the Creator has provided in the world around him all necessary means required for every stage of his life for his development and guidance, sustenance and survival. He has also endowed him with all those powers and abilities which are needed to use the means with advantage and given him all necessary guidance for every sphere of life. Then for the protection of human life against all sorts of disease, germs and poisons, He has created such effective antidotes that they have not yet been fully encompassed by human knowledge. If these natural arrangements had not been made, even a thorn-prick would have proved fatal. When this all-pervading mercy and providence of the Creator is supporting and sustaining man at all times in every way, there could be no greater folly and ingratitude on the part of man than this that he should bow down before others than Allah and seek their help in need and trouble.

وَالَّذِىْ يُمِيْتُنِىْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيْنِ ۙ 81

(26:81) Who will cause me to die and then will again restore me to life;

وَالَّذِىْٓ اَطْمَعُ اَنْ يَّغْفِرَ لِىْ خَطِيْٓـَٔتِىْ يَوْمَ الدِّيْنِ ؕ 82

(26:82) Who, I hope, will forgive me my sins on the Day of Judgement."[59]

59. The third reason for worshiping none but Allah is that man's relation with his God is not merely confined to this worldly life, which will end at death, but extends to lifeafter- death also. The same God Who brought him into existence, recalls him and there is no power which can stop his return from the world. No remedy, no physician, no god or goddess has ever been able to catch the hand which takes man out of this world. Even all those men who were made deities and worshiped could not ward off their own deaths. Only Allah judges and decides when a particular person is to be recalled from the world, and whenever somebody is recalled by Him, he has to leave this world in any case. Then it is Allah alone Who will decide as to when He should raise back to life all those people who were born in this world and died and buried here, and ask them to account for their worldly lives. Then also nobody will have the power to stop resurrection of himself or others. Every human being will have to rise at the command of Allah and appear in His court. Then Allah alone will be the Judge on that Day, and nobody else will be a partner in his judgment in any degree. To punish or to forgive will be entirely in Allah's hand. Nobody will have the power to get somebody forgiven if Allah would want to punish him, and punished if Allah would want to forgive him. All those who are regarded as intercessors in the world, will themselves be hoping for Allah's mercy and grace for their forgiveness. In view of these facts anybody who worships others than Allah, is in fact preparing for his own doom. There can be no greater misfortune than this that man should turn away from Allah Who controls his life here as well as in the Hereafter, and should turn for help and support to those who are utterly powerless in this regard.

رَبِّ هَبۡ لِيۡ حُكۡمًا وَّاَلۡحِقۡنِيۡ بِالصّٰلِحِيۡنَ ۙ 83

(26:83) (And then Abraham prayed): "My Lord, endow me with knowledge and wisdom[60] and join me with the righteous,[61]

60. Hukm here does not mean Prophethood, because at the time this prayer was made, Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) had already been appointed a Prophet. Even if this prayer was made before that, Prophethood is not bestowed at request, but it is something which Allah Himself bestows on those He wills. That is why hukm has been translated wisdom, knowledge, right understanding and power of judgment. The Prophet (peace be upon him) is also reported to have made a similar prayer. Arinal-ashyaa kama hiya: O Allah, give us the power to see and understand a thing as it really is and to form an opinion about it according to its reality.

61. "Join me with the righteous": Give me a righteous society to live here in this world and raise me along with the righteous in the Hereafter. To be raised back to life with the righteous and to attain one's salvation have one and the same meaning. Therefore, this should be the prayer of every person who believes in the life-after-death and in reward and punishment. Even in this world a pious man cherishes the desire that God should save him from living a life in an immoral and wicked society and should join him with the righteous people. A pious and righteous person will remain ill at ease and restless until either his own society should become clean and pure morally, or he leaves it to join another society which is practicing and following the principles of truth and honesty.

وَاجۡعَلۡ لِّيۡ لِسَانَ صِدۡقٍ فِى الۡاٰخِرِيۡنَ ۙ 84

(26:84) and grant me an honourable reputation among posterity,[62]

62. That is, grant me true renown among posterity. Grant me the grace that posterity should remember me as a good and pious man after my death and not as one of the unjust people, who were not only wicked themselves, but who left nothing but wickedness behind them in the world. Enable me to perform such high deeds that my life should become a source of light for others for all times to come, and I should be counted among the benefactors of humanity. This is not a prayer for worldly greatness and renown, but for true greatness and renown, which can be achieved only as a result of solid and valuable services. A person's achieving such true renown and glory has two good aspects:

(1) The people of the world get a good example to follow, as against bad examples, which inspires them with piety and encourages them to follow the right way; and

(2) The righteous person will not only get the rewards of works done by posterity who were guided aright by the good example left and set by him, but in addition to his own good works, he will have the evidence of the millions of people in his favor that he had left behind him in the world fountains of guidance, which went on benefiting people, generation after generation, till the Day of Resurrection.

وَاجْعَلْنِي مِنْ وَرَثَةِ جَنَّةِ النَّعِيمِ ۙ 85

(26:85) and make me of those who will inherit the Garden of Bliss,

وَاغْفِرْ لِأَبِي إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ ۙ 86

(26:86) and forgive my father for he is among those who strayed,[63]

63. Some commentators have interpreted this prayer of Prophet Abraham for his father's forgiveness to imply that he had prayed to God to grant his father the favor to accept Islam because forgiveness in any case is inter-linked with and dependent upon faith. But this interpretation is not borne out by the other verses of the Quran. The Quran says that when Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) left his home at the tyrannical treatment of his father, he said: I bid farewell to you; I shall pray to my Lord to forgive you for He is very kind to me. (Surah Maryam, Ayat 47). To fulfill this promise, he not only prayed for the forgiveness of his father, but for both his parents: Lord, forgive me and my parents. (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 41). But afterwards he himself realized that an enemy of the truth, even if he be the father of a believer, does not deserve a prayer of forgiveness. Thus according to (verse 114 of Surah At- Taubah): The prayer of Abraham for his father was only to fulfill a promise he had made to him, but when he realized that he was an enemy of Allah, he disowned him.

وَلَا تُخْزِنِي يَوْمَ يُبْعَثُونَ ۙ 87

(26:87) and disgrace me not on the Day when people will be raised to life,[64]

64. That is, do not put me to disgrace on the Day of Judgment by inflicting punishment on my father in front of all mankind, when I myself shall be witnessing his punishment helplessly.

يَوْمَ لَا يَنفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ ۙ 88

(26:88) the Day when nothing will avail, neither wealth nor offspring,

إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ ۖ 89

(26:89) but only he that brings to Allah a sound heart will (attain to success)."[65]

65. It cannot be said with certainty whether verses 88, 89 are a part of Prophet Abraham's (peace be upon him) prayer, or they are an addition by Allah. In the first case, they will mean that Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) while praying for his father had a full realization of these facts. In the second case, they will be a comment by Allah on Abraham's (peace be upon him) prayer, as if to say: On the Day of Judgment, only a sound heart, sound in faith and free from disobedience and sin, will be of any avail to man and not wealth and children, for wealth and children can be useful only if one possesses a sound heart. Wealth

will be useful if one would have spent it sincerely and faithfully for the sake of Allah, otherwise even a millionaire will be a poor man there. Children also will be of help only to the extent that a person might have educated them in faith and good conduct to the best of his ability; otherwise even if the son is a Prophet, his father will not escape punishment if he died in the state of unbelief, because such a father will have no share in the goodness of his children.

وَأُزْلِفَتِ الْجَنَّةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ۙ 90

(26:90) (On that Day)[66]the Garden will be brought near to the God-fearing,

66. (Verses 90-102) do not seem to be a part of Prophet Abraham's (peace be upon him) speech, but they are Allah's words.

وَبُرِّزَتِ الْجَحِيمُ لِلْغَاوِينَ ۙ 91

(26:91) and the Fire will be uncovered for those who strayed,[67]

67. That is, on the one hand, the righteous people will be shown the countless blessings which they will enjoy in Paradise by Allah's grace, and on the other hand, Hell will be set open with all its dreads and horrors before the straying people, when they will still be in the Plain of Resurrection.

وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ أَيْنَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ ۙ 92

(26:92) and they will be asked: "Where are the gods that you worshipped

مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ۖ هَلْ يَنْصُرُونَكُمْ أَوْ يَنْتَصِرُونَ ۖ 93

(26:93) beside Allah? Can they be of any help to you, or even be of any help to themselves?"

فَكُبْكِبُوا فِيهَا هُمْ وَالْغَاوُونَ ۙ 94

(26:94) Then the idols and those who strayed will be hurled into the Fire headlong, one upon another,[68]

68. Kubkibu in the text has two meanings: (1) They will be hurled into Hell one upon the other; and (2) they will go on rolling down into the depths of Hell.

وَجُنُودُ إِبْلِيسَ أَجْمَعُونَ ۖ 95

(26:95) and so too the hosts of Iblis, all of them.

قَالُوْا وَهُمْ فِيْهَا يَخْتَصِمُوْنَ ۙ 96

(26:96) There they will quarrel with one another and the erring ones will say (to their deities):

تَاللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنَّا لَفِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ۙ 97

(26:97) "By Allah, we were surely in clear error

اِذْ نُسَوِّيْكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ 98

(26:98) when we assigned to you a position equal to that of the Lord of the Universe.

وَمَآ اَضَلَّنَآ اِلَّا الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ 99

(26:99) It is none but those steeped in guilt who led us into this error,[69]

69. This is how the followers will treat their religious leaders and guides, whom they served and revered like deities in the world, whose words and patterns of behavior they took as authoritative and before whom they presented all sorts of offerings in the world. In the Hereafter when the people will find that their guides had misled them and caused their ruin as well as their own, they will hold them responsible for it and will curse them. The Quran has presented this horrible scene of the Hereafter at several places so as to admonish the blind followers to see and judge carefully whether their guides in this world were leading them on the right path or not. For instance: As each generation will be entering Hell, it will curse its preceding generation till all generations shall be gathered together there; then each succeeding generation will say regarding the preceding one: O Lord, these were the people who led us astray; therefore give them a double chastisement of the Fire. Allah will reply: There is a double chastisement for everyone but you know it not. (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 38). And the disbelievers will say: Our Lord, bring those jinns and men before us, who led us astray so that we may trample them under our feet and put them to extreme disgrace. (Surah Ha Mim Sajdah, Ayat 29). And they will say: Our Lord, we obeyed our chiefs and our great men and they misled us from the right path; our Lord, give them a double chastisement and curse them with a severe curse. (Surah Al-Ahzab, Ayat 67-68).

فَمَا لَنَا مِنْ شٰفِعِيْنَ ۙ 100

(26:100) and now we have none to intercede on our behalf,[70]

70. That is, those whom we regarded as our intercessors in the world and who, we believed, would take us safely into Paradise, are utterly helpless today and of no avail to us.

وَلَا صَدِيقٍ حَمِيمٍ 101

(26:101) nor do we have a truly sincere friend.[71]

71. That is, we have no sympathizer either who could feel for us and console us. The Quran says that in the Hereafter only the believers will continue to be friends; as for the disbelievers, they will turn enemies of one another even though they had been sworn friends in the world. Each will hold the other as responsible for the doom and try to get him maximum punishment. Friends on that Day will become enemies of one another except the righteous (who will continue to be friends). (Surah Az-Zukhruf, Ayat 67).

فَلَوْ أَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً فَنَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ 102

(26:102) If only we could return we would be among the believers."[72]

72. That Quran has given an answer to this kind of longing and desire as well: Even if they be sent back to the earthly life, they would do all that they had been forbidden to do. (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 28). As for the reasons why they will not be allowed to return to the world, please see (E.Ns 90-92 of Surah Al-Mominoon) above.

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً ۖ وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ 103

(26:103) Surely there is a Sign in this,[73] but most of them would not believe.

73. There are two aspects of the sign in the story of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him). (1) On the one hand, the mushriks of Arabia, especially the Quraish, claimed that they were the followers of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) and were proud of being his descendants, but on the other hand, they were involved in shirk against which Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) had been engaged in a relentless struggle throughout his life. Then these people were opposing and treating the Prophet (peace be upon him) who was inviting them towards the religion brought by Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him). They have been reminded that Abraham (peace be upon him) was an enemy of shirk and an upholder of Tauhid which they themselves admitted, and yet they persisted in their obduracy to follow the creed of shirk. (2) The people of Abraham (peace be upon him) were eliminated from the world. If any of them survived, it was the children of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) and his sons, Ishmael and Isaac (peace be upon them). Though the Quran does not mention the torment that descended on Abraham's people after he had left them, it has included them among the tormented tribes: Has not the story reached them of those who had gone before them: the people of Noah, the tribes of Aad and Thamud, the people of Abraham, and the inhabitants of Midian and of the overturned cities? (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 70).

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ 104

(26:104) Verily Your Lord is Immensely Mighty, Ever Compassionate.

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ نُوحِ ۖ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿105﴾

(26:105) The people of Noah[74] gave the lie to the Messengers.[75]

74. For comparison, see (Surah AI-Aaraf, Ayats 59-64); (Surah Younus, Ayats 71-73); (Surah Houd, Ayats 25-48); (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 3); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 76-77); (Surah Al-Mominoon, Ayats 23-30); and (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayat 37). For the details of the story of Prophet Noah, see (Surah Al-Ankabut, Ayat 15); (Surah As-Saffat, Ayats 75-82); (Surah Al-Qamar, Ayats 9-15) and Surah Nooh itself.

75. Though they had rejected only one Messenger, it amounted to rejecting all the messengers because all of them had brought one and the same message from Allah. This is an important fact which the Quran has mentioned over and over again in different ways. Thus, even those people who rejected just one Prophet have been regarded as unbelievers though they believed in all other Prophets, for the simple reason that the believer in the truth of one Messenger cannot deny the same truth in other cases unless he does so on account of racial prejudice, imitation of elders, etc.

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ نُوحٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ۚ ﴿106﴾

(26:106) Recall when their brother Noah said to them: "Do you have no fear?[76]

76. The initial address of Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) to his people, as mentioned at other places in the Quran, was as follows: O my people, worship Allah alone, you have no deity other than Him. Are you not afraid (of Him)? (Surah Al-Mominoon, Ayat 23); and Worship Allah and fear Him and obey me. (Surah Nooh, Ayat 3). That is, are you not afraid of the consequences of adopting an attitude of rebellion against Allah and worshiping others than Him?

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ۙ ﴿107﴾

(26:107) I am a trustworthy Messenger to you;[77]

77. It has two meanings. (1) I present before you nothing but what Allah reveals to me. (2) I am a Messenger whom you have already known to be a trustworthy and honest and righteous man. When I have been honest and true in my dealings with you, how can I be dishonest and untrustworthy in conveying the message of God? Therefore, you should rest assured that whatever I am presenting is the truth.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ ۚ ﴿108﴾

(26:108) so fear Allah and obey me.[78]

78. That is, when I am a truthful and trustworthy Messenger, you are duty-bound to obey me alone as against all other patrons, and carry out my commands and instructions, because I represent the will of God. Obedience to me is in fact obedience to God and disobedience to me is disobedience to Him. In other words, the people are not only required to accept a Messenger as a true Messenger sent by Allah, but it inevitably implies that they have to obey him and follow his Law against all other laws. To reject a Prophet, or to disobey him after accepting him as a Prophet, is tantamount to rebellion against God, which inevitably leads to His wrath. The words "fear Allah" are, therefore, a warning that every hearer should clearly understand the consequences of rejecting the message of a Messenger or of disobeying his commands.

وَمَآ اَسۡـَٔلُكُمۡ عَلَيۡهِ مِنۡ اَجۡرٍ ۚ اِنۡ اَجۡرِىَ اِلَّا عَلٰى رَبِّ الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ۚ 109

(26:109) I seek of you no reward for this: my reward is with none except the Lord of the Universe.[79]

79. This is the second of the two arguments of Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) about the truth of his message, the first being that they had known him as a trustworthy man during his earlier life, which he had lived among them. This second argument implies this: I do not have any selfish motive or personal interest in conveying the message which I am propagating day and night in spite of all sorts of opposition and antagonism from you. At least you should understand this that 1 am sincere in my invitation, and am presenting honestly only that which I believe to be the truth and in following which I see the true success and well-being of humanity at large. I have no personal motive in this that I should fabricate falsehood to fool the people.

These two arguments are among the most important arguments which the Quran has advanced repeatedly as proofs of the truthfulness of the Prophets, and which it presents as criterion for judging Prophethood. A man who before Prophethood has lived a life in a society and has always been found to be honest, truthful and righteous, cannot be doubted even by a prejudiced person that he would suddenly start fabricating falsehood in the name of Allah and making people believe that he has been appointed a Prophet by Him, whereas he has not been. More important than that, such a lie cannot be fabricated with a good intention unless somebody has a selfish motive attached to this kind of fraud. And even when a person indulges in this sort of fraud, he cannot hide it completely from the people. The foul means and devices adopted by him to promote his business become known and all the various selfish interests and gains become all too apparent. Contrary to this, the personal life of a Prophet is full of moral excellencies. It has no trace of the employment of foul means and devices. Not to speak of any personal interest, he expends whatever he has for the cause of a mission which to all appearances is fruitless. No person who possesses any common sense and also has a sense of justice, can ever imagine that a sensible man who was leading a perfectly peaceful life, would come out all of a sudden with a false claim, when such a false claim does not do him any good, but on the contrary, demands all his money, time and energy and earns him nothing in return but the antagonism and hostility of the whole world. Sacrifice of personal interests is the foremost proof of a man's sincerity; therefore, doubting the intentions and sincerity of a person who has been sacrificing his personal interests for

years and years can only be the pastime of the one who himself is selfish and insincere. See (E.N. 70 of Surah Al-Mominoon).

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ ۝١١٠

(26:110) So fear Allah and obey me."[80]

80. Repetition of this sentence is not without reason. In the first case (verse 108), it implied this: You should fear Allah if you treat as false a true and trustworthy Messenger from Him, whom you yourselves have been regarding as a true and trustworthy man in the past. Here it means: You should fear Allah if you doubt the intention of a person who is working sincerely only for the reformation of the people without any personal interest. This thing has been stressed because the chiefs of Prophet Noah's (peace be upon him) people, in order to find fault with his message of truth, accused him of struggling merely for his personal superiority: He merely intends to obtain superiority over you. (Surah Al-Mominoon, Ayat 24).

قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ لَكَ وَاتَّبَعَكَ الْأَرْذَلُونَ ۝١١١

(26:111) They answered: "Shall we accept you even though it is the meanest of people who follow you?"[81]

81. This answer to Prophet Noah's (peace be upon him) message of truth was given by the chiefs, elders and nobles of his people as mentioned in (Surah Houd, Ayat 27). In answer to this, those chiefs of his people, who had rejected his message: said, We see that you are no more than a mere man like ourselves, and we also see that only the meanest from among us have become your followers without due consideration, and we find nothing in you that might give you superiority over us. This shows that those who believed in Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) were mostly the poor people, and ordinary workmen, or some youth who enjoyed no position in society. As for the influential and rich people, they had become his bitter opponents, and were trying by every trick and allurement to keep the common man behind them. One of the arguments they advanced against Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) was this: Had there been some weight and substance in Noah's message, the rich people, scholars, religious divines, nobles and wise people of the community should have accepted it, but none of them has believed in him; the only people to follow him are the foolish people belonging to the lowest stratum of society, who have no common-sense. Now how can the noble and high ranking people like us join the company of the common people?

Precisely the same thing was being said by the unbelieving Quraish about the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his followers. Abu Sufyan in reply to the questions asked by Heraclius had said: Muhammad (peace be upon him) has been followed by the poor and weak of our people. What they seemed to be thinking was that truth was that which was considered as truth by the chiefs and elders of the community, for only they had the necessary common-sense and power of judgment. As for the common people, their being common was a proof that they lacked sense and judgment. As such, if a thing was accepted by them but rejected by the chiefs, it meant that the thing itself was without worth and value.

The disbelievers of Makkah even went further. They argued that a Prophet could not be a common man. If God had to appoint a Prophet, He would have appointed a great chief to be a Prophet. They say: why has not the Quran been sent down to a prominent man of our two cities (Makkah and Taif)? (Surah Az-Zukhruf, Ayat 31).

قَالَ وَمَا عِلْمِي بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ۚ 112

(26:112) Noah said: "What knowledge do I have about their deeds?

إِنْ حِسَابُهُمْ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ رَبِّي لَوْ تَشْعُرُونَ ۚ 113

(26:113) It is only for my Lord to take account of them. Would that you made use of your understanding![82]

82. This is the first answer to their objection, which was based on the assumption that the poor people belonging to the working classes and lower social strata who performed humble duties, did not possess any mental maturity and were without intelligence and common sense. Therefore, their belief was without any rational basis, and so unreliable, and their deeds were of no value at all. To this Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) replies: I have no means of judging the motives and assessing the worth of the deeds of the people who accept my message and act accordingly. This is not my concern but the responsibility of God.

وَمَا أَنَا بِطَارِدِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۚ 114

(26:114) It is not for me to repel those who choose to believe.

إِنْ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ ۖ 115

(26:115) I am none but a plain warner."[83]

83. This is the second answer to their objection, which implied that since those who were gathering around Noah (peace be upon him) as believers, belonged to the lowest social strata, none of the nobles would like to join them, as if to say: O Noah, should we believe in you in order to be counted among the low-ranking people like the slaves and servants and workmen? To this Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) answers: How can I adopt this irrational attitude that I should attend earnestly to those who do not like to listen to me, but drive away those who have believed and followed me? I am simply, a warner, who has declared openly that the way you are following is wrong and will lead you to ruin, and the way that I am inviting to is the way of salvation far all. Now it is up to you whether you heed my warning and adopt the right path, or go on following blindly the way to your ruin. It does not behoove me that I should start inquiring into the castes and ancestry and trades of the people who have heeded my warning and adopted the right path. They might be mean in your sight, but I cannot drive them away and wait to see when the nobles will give up the path of destruction and adopt the way of salvation and success instead.

Precisely the same thing was going on between the Holy Prophet and the disbelievers of Makkah when these verses were revealed, and one can fully understand why the dialogue between Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) and the chiefs of his people, has been related here. The chiefs of the disbelievers of Makkah thought exactly the same way. They said how they could sit side by side with the slaves like Bilal, Ammar and Suhaib and other men of the working class, as if to say: Unless these poor people are turned out, there can be no possibility that the nobles may consider to become believers; it is impossible that the master and the slave should stand shoulder to shoulder with each other. In answer to this the Prophet (peace be upon him) was commanded by Allah to tell the vain and arrogant disbelievers plainly that the poor believers could not be driven out of Islam just for their sake: O Muhammad, you attend earnestly to him who has shown indifference (to your message), whereas you have no responsibility if he does not reform himself; and the one who comes to you earnestly, fearing Allah, to him you pay no attention. Nay, this indeed is an admonition, so let him, who wills, accept it. (Surah Abasa, Ayats 5-12).

And do not drive away those who invoke their Lord morning and evening and are engaged in seeking His favor. You are not in any way accountable for them, nor are they in any way accountable for you: so, if you should drive them away, you shall be counted among the unjust. As a matter of fact, in this way We have made some of them a means of test for others, so that, seeing them, they should say: Are these the people from among us upon whom Allah has showered His blessings? Yes, does Allah not know His grateful servants better than they? (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayats 52-53).

قَالُوْا لَئِنْ لَّمْ تَنْتَهِ يٰنُوْحُ لَتَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمَرْجُوْمِيْنَ ؕ 116

(26:116) They said: "O Noah! If you do not desist, you will certainly become one of the accursed."[84]

84. The words in the text may have two meanings. (1) You will be stoned to death. (2) You will be showered with abuses from all sides, and cursed and reviled wherever you go.

قَالَ رَبِّ اِنَّ قَوْمِيْ كَذَّبُوْنِ ۖ 117

(26:117) He said: "My Lord! My people have branded me a liar.[85]

85. That is, they have rejected me completely and absolutely and now there is no hope of their becoming believers. Here nobody should have the misunderstanding that just after this conversation between Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) and the chiefs of his people, and the rejection of his message by them, the Prophet submitted a report to Allah that his people had rejected him and now He should settle the accounts between them. The Quran has mentioned at different places the details of the long struggle that went on for centuries between Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) and his people, who persisted in unbelief. According to (verse 14 of Surah Al-Ankabut), the struggle continued for 950 years: He (Noah) remained among them for a thousand years save fifty years. Prophet Noah during this long period studied their collective behavior, generation after generation, and came to the conclusion that they had no inclination to accept the truth, and formed the opinion that

in their future generations also there was no hope of anybody becoming a believer and adopting the righteous attitude: My Lord, if You should leave them, they will lead Your servants astray, and they will bear as children none but sinners and disbelievers. (Surah Nooh, Ayat 27). Allah Himself confirmed this opinion of Noah, saying: No more of your people will believe in you now than those who have already believed. So do not grieve at their misdeeds. (Sura Houd, Ayat 36).

فَافْتَحْ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهُمْ فَتْحًا وَّنَجِّنِي وَمَنْ مَّعِيَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ 118

(26:118) So pass a clear judgement between me and them and rescue me and the believers with me."[86]

86. You should not only give Your judgment as to who is in the right and who is in the wrong, but deliver Your Judgment in such a manner that the followers of the truth are saved and the followers of falsehood are completely annihilated from the earth.

فَاَنْجَيْنٰهُ وَمَنْ مَّعَهٗ فِي الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُوْنِ ۚ 119

(26:119) Thereafter We rescued him and those who were with him in the laden Ark[87]

87. Laden ship: because the ship became loaded with the believers and the pairs of animals from every species. For further details, see Surah Houd, Ayat 40.

ثُمَّ اَغْرَقْنَا بَعْدُ الْبٰقِيْنَ ؕ 120

(26:120) and drowned the rest.

اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ 121

(26:121) Surely there is a Sign in this, but most of them would not believe.

وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ۧ 122

(26:122) Verily Your Lord is Immensely Mighty, Ever Compassionate.

كَذَّبَتْ عَادُ ِۨالْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ۖۚ 123

(26:123) The Ad gave the lie to the Messengers.[88]

88. For comparison, see (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 65-72); (Surah Houd, Ayats 50-60); and for further details of this story, see (Surah HaMim Sajdah, Ayats 13-16); (Surah Al- Ahqaf, Ayats 21-26); (Surah Az-Zariyat, Ayats 41,45); (Surah Al-Qamar, Ayats 18-22); (Surah Al-Haqqah, Ayats 4-8); and (Surah AI-Fajr, Ayats 6-8).

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ هُودٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ۚ 124

(26:124) Recall, when their brother Hud said to them:[89] "Have you no fear?

89. In order to understand this discourse of Prophet Houd fully, we should keep in mind the various details about the people of Aad which the Quran has given at different places: For instance, it says:

(1) After the destruction of the people of Noah (Peace be upon him), the Aad were given power and prominence in the world: Do not forget that after Noah's people your Lord made you the successors. (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 69).

(2) Physically they were very robust and powerful people: And made you very robust. (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 69).

(3)They had no parallel as a nation in the world: The like of which was not created in the lands. (Surah Al-Fajr, Ayat 8).

(4) They were civilized and were well-known in the world for their great skill and art in erecting lofty buildings with tall columns: Have you not seen what your Lord did with Aad Iram, of lofty columns? (Surah Al-Fajr, Ayat 6, 7).

(5) This material progress and physical power had made them arrogant and vain: As for Aad, they deviated from the right path and adopted an arrogant attitude in the land and said: Who is mightier than us in power? (Surah Ha Mim Sajdah, Ayat 15) .

(6) Their political power was in the hands of a few tyrants before whom none could dare raise his voice: And they followed and obeyed every tyrannous enemy of the Truth. (Surah Houd, Ayat 59).

(7) They were not disbelievers in the existence of Allah, but were involved in shirk; they only denied that Allah alone should be worshiped and none else: They said (to Houd), Have you come to us (with the demand) that we should worship Allah alone and discard those whom our elders have been worshiping? (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 70).

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ۙ 125

(26:125) I am a trustworthy Messenger to you.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ ۚ 126

(26:126) So fear Allah and obey me.

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ ۖ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۖ 127

(26:127) I seek of you no reward for this; my reward is with none but the Lord of the Universe.

أَتَبْنُونَ بِكُلِّ رِيعٍ آيَةً تَعْبَثُونَ ۝128

(26:128) What, you build a monument on every hill merely for fun[90]

90. That is, you build grand buildings merely to show off your wealth and power, whereas they have no use and purpose except that they stand as monuments to your grandeur and glory.

وَتَتَّخِذُونَ مَصَانِعَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَخْلُدُونَ ۝129

(26:129) and erect huge palaces as though you will live for ever,[91]

91. That is, though you have built other buildings also for dwelling purposes, in order to make them grand, beautiful and strong, you expend your wealth and mental and physical abilities in a manner as if you were going to live forever, and there was no purpose of life except seeking of comfort and pleasure and nothing beyond this worldly life which might deserve your attention.

In this connection, one should bear in mind the fact that extravagance in architecture is not a solitary vice in a people. This happens as a result of a people's becoming affluent and then crazy for selfish gains and materialistic pursuits. When a people reach such a stage, their whole social system becomes corrupted and polluted. Prophet Houd's (peace be upon him) criticism of his people's extravagant and luxurious architecture was not simply aimed at the high castles and monuments, but he was actually criticizing their corrupt civilization and social system, whose glaring symptoms could be seen everywhere in the land in the shape of castles and monuments.

وَإِذَا بَطَشْتُمْ بَطَشْتُمْ جَبَّارِينَ ۝130

(26:130) and when you strike you strike like tyrants?[92]

92. That is, in order to meet the demands of your ever rising standards of life, you do not rest content with small living quarters but you build castles and fortresses, and yet being unsatisfied you erect lofty edifices unnecessarily just for ostentation. But as human beings you have become so depraved that there is no mercy in your hearts for the weak, no justice for the poor, and all people of lower social strata, living inside or around your land, are being oppressed tyrannically and none is safe from your barbarities.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ ۝131

(26:131) So fear Allah and obey me.

وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِيٓ اَمَدَّكُمۡ بِمَا تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ۚ 132

(26:132) Have fear of Him Who has provided you with all the (good) things you know;

اَمَدَّكُمۡ بِاَنۡعَامٍ وَّبَنِيۡنَ ۙ 133

(26:133) Who has provided you with flocks and children

وَجَنّٰتٍ وَّعُيُوۡنٍ ۚ 134

(26:134) and with gardens and springs.

اِنِّيۡٓ اَخَافُ عَلَيۡكُمۡ عَذَابَ يَوۡمٍ عَظِيۡمٍ ؕ 135

(26:135) I fear for you the chastisement of an Awesome Day."

قَالُوۡا سَوَآءٌ عَلَيۡنَآ اَوَعَظۡتَ اَمۡ لَمۡ تَكُنۡ مِّنَ الۡوٰعِظِيۡنَ ۙ 136

(26:136) They replied: "It is all the same for us whether you admonish us or not.

اِنۡ هٰذَاۤ اِلَّا خُلُقُ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ ۙ 137

(26:137) This has been happening all along.[93]

93. This can have two meanings. (1) Whatever we are doing is not new but has been happening from the time of our elders since centuries: they had the same creed, the same way of life, the same morality and the same kind of dealings and yet they remained unharmed and safe from every calamity. If there was any evil in this way of life, we should have met the doom with which you are threatening us. (2) The things you are preaching have also been preached and said before by religious maniacs and so-called moralists, but they could not change the ways of the world. It has never happened that the world suffered a disaster only because people refused to listen to preachers like you.

وَمَا نَحۡنُ بِمُعَذَّبِيۡنَ ۚ 138

(26:138) We will not be subjected to any chastisement."

فَكَذَّبُوۡهُ فَاَهۡلَكۡنٰهُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ فِيۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ اَكۡثَرُهُمۡ مُّؤۡمِنِيۡنَ 139

(26:139) Eventually they gave the lie to him and We destroyed them.[94] Surely there is a Sign in this, but most of them would not believe.

94. According to the Quran, the people of Aad were destroyed by a violent windstorm. When they saw it advancing towards their valleys, they rejoiced with the hope that those were dense clouds which would bring much rain for them, but in reality it was Allah's scourge. The windstorm continued to rage for eight days and seven nights and destroyed everything. The people were swept away like straw and everything on which the hot, dry wind blew was left rotting. The storm did not abate until the last man of the wicked tribe had met his doom. Only ruins of their habitations remained to tell the tale of their terrible fate, and today even the ruins have become extinct. The whole territory of Ahqaf has turned into dreadful desert dunes. For details, see (E.N. 25 of Surah Al-Ahqaf).

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝140

(26:140) Verily your Lord is Immensely Mighty, Most Compassionate.

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ۝141

(26:141) The Thamud gave the lie to the Messengers.[95]

95. For comparison, see (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 73-79); (Surah Hud, Ayats 61-68); (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 80-84); (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 59); and for further details, see (Surah An-Naml, Ayats 45-53); (Surah Az-Zariyat, Ayats 43- 45); (Surah Al-Qamar, Ayats 23-31); (Surah AI-Haqqah, Ayats 4-5); (Surah Al-Fajr, Ayat 9); and (Surah Ash-Shams, Ayat 11).

Thamud achieved power and glory after the destruction of Aad and as far as progress in civilization is concerned, they followed in the footsteps of their predecessors. In their case, too, the standards of living went on rising higher and higher and the standards of humanity continued to fall lower and lower, suffering one deterioration after the other. On the one hand, they erected large edifices on the plains and hewed beautiful houses out of the hills like those in the caves of Ellora and Ajanta in India, and on the other hand, they became addicted to idol-worship and the land was filled with tyranny and oppression. The worst men became leaders and rulers in the land. As such, Prophet Salih's (peace be upon him) message of truth only appealed to the weak people belonging to the lower social strata and the people of the upper classes refused to believe in him.

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ صَالِحٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ۝142

(26:142) Recall when their brother Salih said to them: "Have you no fear?"

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ۝143

(26:143) "I am a trustworthy Messenger to you.[96]

96. According to the Quran, the people of Prophet Salih (peace be upon him) themselves admitted that he was a man of great integrity and extraordinary caliber: They said, O Salih, till now you were such a person among us of whom we had great expectations. (Surah Houd, Ayat 62).

فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ ۚ 144

(26:144) So fear Allah and obey me.

وَمَآ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ ۚ اِنْ اَجْرِيَ اِلَّا عَلٰى رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۭ 145

(26:145) I ask of you no reward. My reward is with none but the Lord of the Universe.

اَتُتْرَكُوْنَ فِيْ مَا هٰهُنَآ اٰمِنِيْنَ ۙ 146

(26:146) Do you believe that you will be left here to live securely in the present state[97]

97. That is, do you consider that your life of indulgence and pleasure is everlasting, and you will never be asked to account for Allah's favors to you and for your own misdeeds?

فِيْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّعُيُوْنٍ ۙ 147

(26:147) amidst gardens and springs

وَّزُرُوْعٍ وَّنَخْلٍ طَلْعُهَا هَضِيْمٌ ۚ 148

(26:148) and cornfields and date-palms laden with juicy fruits?[98]

98. Hadim: heavy bunches of ripe, juicy and soft date-palm fruit hanging from trees.

وَتَنْحِتُوْنَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوْتًا فٰرِهِيْنَ ۚ 149

(26:149) You hew dwellings in mountains and exult in that.[99]

99. Just as the most prominent feature of the Aad civilization was that they built large edifices with high pillars, so the most prominent feature of the Thamud civilization for which they were known among the ancient peoples was that they carved out dwellings in the hills. That is why in Surah Al-Fajr, the Aad have been referred to as (people) of the pillars, and the Thamud as those who hewed rocks in the valley. These people also built castles on the plains, the purpose and object of which was nothing but display of wealth and power and architectural skill as there was no real necessity for them. These are, in fact, the ways of the perverted people: the poor among them do not have proper shelters, and the

wealthy members not only have sufficient fine dwellings but over and above those they raise monuments for ostentation and display.

Some of these Thamudic works exist even today, which I have seen in December, 1959. This place is situated between Al-Madinah and Tabuk, a few miles to the north of Al-Ula (Wad-il-Qura of the Prophet's time) in Hejaz. The local inhabitants call it Al-Hijr and Madain Salih even today. Al- Ula is still a green and fertile valley abounding in water springs and gardens, but Al-Hijr appears to be an abandoned place. It has thin population, little greenery and a few wells, one of which is said to be the one at which Prophet Salih's (peace be upon him) she camel used to drink water. This well is now dry and located within a deserted military post of the time of the Turks. When we entered this territory and approached Al-Ula, we found hills which seemed to have been shattered to pieces from top to bottom as if by a violent earthquake. We saw the same kind of hills while travelling to the east, from Al-Ula to Khaibar, for about 50 miles, and towards the north inside Jordan, for about 30 to 40 miles. This indicated that an area, stretching well over 300 to 400 miles in length and 100 miles in width, had been devastated by the terrible earthquake.

A few of the Thamudic type monuments that we saw at Al- Hijr were also found at Madyan along the Gulf of Aqabah and at Petra in Jordan. At Petra, specially, the Thamudic and Nabataean works stand side by side, and their styles and architectural designs are so different that anyone who examines them will find that they were neither built in the same age nor by the same nation. Doughty, the British orientalist, in his attempt to prove the Quran as false, has claimed that the works found at Al-Hijr were not carved out by Thamud but by the Nabataeans. I am of the view that the art of carving houses out of the rocks started with the Thamud, and thousands of years later, in the second and first centuries B.C., it was considerably developed by the Nabataeans and it reached perfection in the works of the caves of Ellora, which were carved out about 700 years after Petra.

فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ ۚ 150

(26:150) Fear Allah and obey me

وَلَا تُطِيْعُوْٓا اَمْرَ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ۙ 151

(26:151) and do not follow the biddings of those that go to excesses

الَّذِيْنَ يُفْسِدُوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُوْنَ 152

(26:152) and spread mischief in the land rather than set things right."[100]

100. That is, you should give up obedience to your chiefs, guides and rulers under whose leadership you are following an evil way of life. These people have transgressed all bounds of morality: they cannot bring about any reforms and they will corrupt every system of life that they adopt. The only way for you towards success and well-being is that you should inculcate fear of God, give up obedience to the misguided and obey me, because I am God's

Messenger. You are fully aware of my honesty and integrity. I have no personal interest and motive for undertaking the work of reform. This was in short the manifesto which Prophet Salih (peace be upon him) presented before his people. It not only contained the religious message but invitation to cultural, moral and political revolution as well.

قَالُوْٓا اِنَّمَآ اَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُسَحَّرِيْنَ ۙ 153

(26:153) They replied: "You are nothing but one of those who are bewitched;[101]

101. Enchanted person, mad and insane person who has lost reasoning power. According to the ancient conceptions, madness was either due to the influence of a jinn or magic. That is why a mad person was either called majnun (one under the influence of a jinn) or one enchanted by magic.

مَآ اَنْتَ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا ۙ فَاْتِ بِاٰيَةٍ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ 154

(26:154) you are no different from a mortal like us. So produce a sign if you are truthful."[102]

102. That is, we cannot believe you to be a Messenger from God because you are just like us and we see no distinction in you. However, if you are true in your claim that God has appointed you as His Messenger, you should present such a clear miracle as should make us believe that you have really been sent by the Creator and Master of the universe.

قَالَ هٰذِهٖ نَاقَةٌ لَّهَا شِرْبٌ وَّلَكُمْ شِرْبُ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُوْمٍ ۚ 155

(26:155) Salih said: "This is a she-camel.[103] There is a day set for her to drink and there is a day set for you to drink.[104]

103. From the context it appears that it was not a common she-camel, but it was brought about in a supernatural manner because it was presented in response to the demand for a miracle. Prophet Salih (peace be upon him) could not have produced before the people an ordinary she-camel as a proof of his Prophethood because that would not have satisfied them. At other places in the Quran it has been clearly referred to as a miracle. In Surahs Al-Aaraf and Houd it has been said: Here is Allah's she camel, a sign for you. (Surahs Al-Aaraf, Ayat 73). In Surah Bani Israil the same thing has been stated more emphatically: And nothing has hindered Us from sending signs except that the former people refused to acknowledge them as such. (For example) We sent the she-camel as an open sign to Thamud but they treated her with cruelty; whereas We send signs only by way of warning. (verse 59). Moreover, the challenge given to the wicked people of Thamud, after presenting the she-camel before them, was such that it could only be given after presenting a miracle.

104. That is, one day the she-camel will drink water all alone at your wells and springs, and one day you and your animals will take water, and this arrangement will not be violated in any way. There could hardly be a greater challenge for the people of Arabia, for taking of

water had been the foremost cause of feuds and fights among them, which mostly resulted in bloodshed, even loss of life. As such, the challenge given by Prophet Salih (peace be upon him) was indeed a challenge to the whole nation, which could not be acceptable unless the people were sure that the challenger had a great power at his back. But Prophet Salih (peace be upon him) threw this challenge all by himself without any worldly power behind him, and the whole nation not only received it quietly, but also abided by it submissively for quite some days.

In Surahs Al-Aaraf and Houd there is an addition to this: Here is Allah's she-camel, a sign for you. So let her graze at will in Allah's land, and do not touch her with an evil intention. (Surah Houd, Ayat 64). That is, the challenge was not only this that the she-camel would drink water all alone every alternate day, but, in addition, she would freely move about and graze at will in their fields and gardens and palm groves and pastures and was not to be touched with an evil intention.

وَلَا تَمَسُّوهَا بِسُوٓءٍ فَيَأۡخُذَكُمۡ عَذَابُ يَوۡمٍ عَظِيمٖ 156

(26:156) Do not molest her lest the chastisement of an Awesome Day should seize you."

فَعَقَرُوهَا فَأَصۡبَحُواْ نَٰدِمِينَ 157

(26:157) But they hamstrung her[105] and then regretted it.

105. This does not mean that as soon as they heard the challenge, they attacked the she-camel at once and hamstrung her. Actually, when the she-camel became a problem for the whole nation, the hearts of the people were filled with rage, and they began to hold lengthy consultations as to how to get rid of her. At last, a haughty chief undertook the task of putting an end to her, as mentioned in Surah Ash-Shams thus: When arose the most villainous of the people (verse 12), and in Surah Al-Qamar thus: They appealed to their companion; so he took up the responsibility and hamstrung her. (verse 29).

فَأَخَذَهُمُ ٱلۡعَذَابُۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَأٓيَةٗۖ وَمَا كَانَ أَكۡثَرُهُم مُّؤۡمِنِينَ 158

(26:158) So the chastisement seized them.[106] Surely there is a Sign in this, but most of them would not believe.

106. As stated at other places in the Quran, when the shecamel was killed, Prophet Salih (peace be upon him) declared: You have only three more days to enjoy yourselves in your houses. (Surah Houd, Ayat 65). When this time limit came to an end, a shocking explosion took place in the night at about dawn, followed by a violent earthquake, which destroyed the whole nation completely. In the morning their dead bodies lay scattered here and there like dry pieces of bush trampled down by animals around an enclosure. Neither their stony castles nor their rock-hewn caves could protect them against the calamity. We sent against them a single blast and they became as the trampled twigs of the fence of a fold-builder.

(Surah Al- Qamar, Ayat 31). Consequently a shocking catastrophe overtook them and they lay lifeless in their dwellings. (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 78). At last a violent blast overtook them with the approach of the morning, and all that they had achieved proved of no avail to them. (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayat 83, 84).

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝159

(26:159) Verily Your Lord is Immensely Mighty, Most Compassionate.

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوطٍ ۖ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ۝160

(26:160) The people of Lot rejected the Messengers,[107] branding them liars.

107. For comparison, see (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 80-84); (Surah Houd, Ayats 74-83); (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 57-77); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 71-75); (Surah An-Naml, Ayats 54- 58); (Surah Al-Ankabut, Ayats 28-35); (Surah As-Saffat, Ayats 133-138); and (Surah Al-Qamar; Ayats 33-39).

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ لُوطٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ۝161

(26:161) Recall, when their brother Lot said to them: "Have you no fear?

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ۝162

(26:162) I am a trustworthy Messenger to you.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ ۝163

(26:163) So fear Allah and obey me.

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ ۖ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝164

(26:164) I seek of you no reward. My reward is with none but the Lord of the Universe.

أَتَأْتُونَ الذُّكْرَانَ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝165

(26:165) What, of all creation will you go to (fornicate with) the males,[108]

108. This can have two meanings. (1) Of all the creatures you have chosen males only for the purpose of gratifying your sex desires, whereas there are plenty of women in the world. (2) You alone are the people in the whole world, who go to men to satisfy the sex desires; even the animals do not resort to this. This second meaning has been explained in Surahs Al-

Aaraf and Al-Ankabut thus: Have you become so shameless that you commit such indecent acts as no one committed before you in the world? (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 80).

وَتَذَرُوْنَ مَا خَلَقَ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ مِّنْ اَزْوَاجِكُمْ ؕ بَلْ اَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ عٰدُوْنَ 166

(26:166) leaving aside those whom Allah has created for you as your mates.[109] Nay, you are a people that has transgressed all limits."[110]

109. This can also have two meanings. (1) You leave your wives whom God has created for you to satisfy your sex desire and adopt unnatural ways with the males for the purpose. (2) Even with respect to your wives you do not follow the natural way but adopt unnatural ways for the gratification of your lust? This they might have been doing with the intention of family planning.

110. That is, this is not the only vice in you; your whole lives have become corrupted and perverted, as stated in (Surah An-Naml, Ayat 54) thus: Do you commit indecent acts openly and publicly? And in (Surah Al-Ankabut, Ayat 29)thus: Have you become so perverted that you gratify your lust with the males, you rob travelers, and you commit wicked deeds publicly in your assemblies? For further details, see (E.N. 39 of Surah Al-Hijr).

قَالُوْا لَئِنْ لَّمْ تَنْتَهِ يٰلُوْطُ لَتَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُخْرَجِيْنَ 167

(26:167) They said: "O Lot! If you do not desist, you will be one of those expelled (from our towns)."[111]

111. That is, you know that whosoever has spoken against us, or protested against our doings, or opposed us in any way, he has been turned out of our habitations. If you also behave like that, you too will be treated likewise. It has been stated in Surahs Al-Aaraf and An-Naml that before giving this warning to Prophet Lot (peace be upon him), the wicked people had decided to “turn out these people of your habitations for they pose to be very pious.” (Surah Al- Aaraf, Ayat 82).

قَالَ اِنِّيْ لِعَمَلِكُمْ مِّنَ الْقَالِيْنَ ؕ 168

(26:168) He said: "I am one of those who abhor your practice.

رَبِّ نَجِّنِيْ وَاَهْلِيْ مِمَّا يَعْمَلُوْنَ 169

(26:169) My Lord, deliver me and my family from their wicked deeds."[112]

112. This may also mean: My Lord, deliver us from the evil consequences of their misdeeds, and also this: Protect the children of the believers from the evil effects of the immoral acts of the wicked people.

فَنَجَّيْنٰهُ وَاَهْلَهٗٓ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ۙ 170

(26:170) Then We delivered him and all his family

اِلَّا عَجُوْزًا فِى الْغٰبِرِيْنَ ۚ 171

(26:171) except an old woman who was among those that stayed behind.[113]

113. This refers to the Prophet Lot's (peace be upon him) wife as stated in (verse 10 of Surah At-Tahrim) about the wives of Prophets Noah and Lot (peace be upon them): These two women were in the houses of Our two pious servants but they acted treacherously towards them. That is, they did not believe, and sided with the unbelievers instead of their righteous husbands. Therefore, when Allah decreed to send a torment on the people of Prophet Lot (peace be upon him), He commanded the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) to leave the place along with his people but to leave his wife behind: So depart from here with the people of your household in the last hours of the night. And look here: none of you should turn round to look behind; but your wife (who will not accompany you) shall meet the same doom as they. (Surah Houd, Ayat 81).

ثُمَّ دَمَّرْنَا الْاٰخَرِيْنَ ۚ 172

(26:172) Thereafter, We utterly destroyed the rest,

وَاَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَّطَرًا ۚ فَسَآءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنْذَرِيْنَ 173

(26:173) and We sent upon them a rain, an evil rain that fell on those who had been warned.[114]

114. This was not a rain of water but a rain of stones. According to the details given at other places in the Quran, when Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) had left the place along with the people of his household in the last hours of the night, there occurred a terrible explosion at dawn and a violent earthquake, which turned all their habitations upside down and rained on them stones of baked clay as a result of a volcanic eruption and a strong blast of wind.

Below we give a resume of the Biblical account and of ancient Greek and Latin writings and modern geological researches and archaeological observations about the torment and the place where it occurred:

The hundreds of ruins found in the waste and uninhabited land lying to the south and east of the Dead Sea indicate that this must have been a prosperous and thickly populated area in the past. The archaeologists have estimated that the age of prosperity of this land lasted between 2300 and 1900 B.C. According to historians, Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) lived about 2000 B.C. Thus the archaeological evidence confirms that this land was

destroyed in the time of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) and his nephew Prophet Lot (peace be upon him).

The most populous and fertile part of the area was the vale of Siddim as mentioned in the Bible: And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt (Gen. 13: 10). The present day scholars are of the opinion that valley is now under the Dead Sea and this opinion is supported by firm archaeological evidence. In the ancient times, the Dead Sea did not so much extend to the south as it does today. Opposite and to the west of the present Jordanian city of Al-Karak, there is a small peninsula called Al-Lisan. This was the end of the sea in ancient days. The area to the south of it, which is now under sea water was a fertile valley, the vale of Siddim, in which were situated Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, Zoar, the famous cities of the people of Lot. In about 2000 B.C. this valley sank as a result of a violent earthquake and was submerged in sea water. Even today this is the most shallow part of the Sea. In the Roman period it was more so and was fordable from Al-Lisan to the western coast. One can still see submerged jungles along the southern coast and there might as well be submerged buildings.

According to the Bible and the ancient Greek and Latin writings, the region abounded in pits of petroleum and asphalt and at places inflammable gas also existed. It appears from the geological observations that with the violent earthquake shocks, petroleum, gases and asphalt were thrown up and ignited, and the whole region exploded like a bomb. The Bible says that when Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) got the news and went from Hebron to see the affected valley, he saw that the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace. (Gen. 19: 28).

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً ۖ وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ 174

(26:174) Surely there is a Sign in this, but most of them would not believe.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝ 175

(26:175) Verily Your Lord is Immensely Mighty, Most Compassionate.

كَذَّبَ أَصْحَابُ لْئَيْكَةِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ۝ 176

(26:176) The people of Aykah also gave the lie to the Messengers.[115]

115. The people of Aiykah have been briefly mentioned in verses 78-84 of Surah Al-Hijr. More about them here. There is a difference of opinion among the commentators as to whether the Midianites and the people of Aiykah were two different tribes or one and the same people. One group holds that they were different tribes and gives the argument that in Surah Al-Aaraf Prophet Shuaib (peace be upon him) has been brother of the Midianites (verse 85), whereas here, with regard to the people of Aiykah, he has not been called so. The other group holds that they were one and the same people on the ground that the moral

diseases and characteristics mentioned of the Midianites in Surahs Al-Aaraf and Houd are the same as of the people of Aiykah mentioned here. Then the message and admonition of Prophet Shuaib (peace be upon him) to both the tribes was the same, and the two tribes also met the same end.

Research in this regard has shown that both the views are correct. The Midianites and the people of Aiykah were doubtless two different tribes but branches of the same stock. The progeny of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) from his wife (or slave girl) Keturah, is well known in Arabia and in the history of the Israelites as the children of Keturah. Their most prominent branch was the one which became famous as the Midianites, after their ancestor, Midian, son of Abraham. They had settled in the territory between northern Arabia and southern Palestine, and along the coasts of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aqabah. Their capital city was Madyan, which was situated, according to Abul Fida, on the western coast of the Gulf of Aqabah at five days' journey from Aiykah (present day Aqabah). The rest of the children of Keturah, among whom the Dedanites are comparatively better known, settled in the territory between Taima and Tabuk and Al-Ula in northern Arabia, their main city being Tabuk, the Aiykah of the ancient times. (Yaqut in his Mujam al-Buldan, under Aiykah, writes that this is the old name of Tabuk, and the natives of Tabuk confirm this).

The reason why one and the same Prophet was sent to the Midianites and the people of Aiykah was probably that both the tribes were descendants of the same ancestors, spoke the same language and had settled in the adjoining areas. It is just possible that they lived side by side in the same areas and had marriages and other social relations between them. Then, these two branches were traders by profession and had developed similar evil practices and social and moral weaknesses. According to the early books of the Bible, these people worshiped Baal-peor. When the Children of Israel came out of Egypt and entered their territory, they also became infected with the evils of idolatry and adultery. (Numbers, 25: 1-5, 31: 16-17). Then those people had settled on the two main international trade routes, the one joining Yaman with Syria and the other the Persian Gulf with Egypt. Due to their advantageous position they had started big scale highway robbery and would not let any caravan pass till it had paid heavy taxes. They had thus rendered these trade routes highly unsafe. Their characteristic of highway robbery has been mentioned in the Quran, for which they were admonished through Prophet Shuaib (peace be upon him), thus: And do not lie in ambush by every path (of life) as robbers in order to frighten the people (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 86). These were the reasons why Allah sent to both the tribes the same Prophet, who conveyed to them the same teachings and message. For the details of the story of Prophet Shuaib (peace be upon him) and the Midianites, see (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 85-93); (Surah Houd, Ayats 84-95); and (Surah Al-Ankabut, Ayats 36-37).

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ شُعَيْبٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ۚ 177

(26:177) Recall, when Shuayb said to them: "Have you no fear?

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ۙ 178

(26:178) I am a trustworthy Messenger to you.

فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ ۚ 179

(26:179) So fear Allah and obey me.

وَمَآ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ ۚ اِنْ اَجْرِيَ اِلَّا عَلٰى رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۭ 180

(26:180) I ask of you no reward for this. My reward is with none but the Lord of the Universe.

اَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا مِنَ الْمُخْسِرِيْنَ ۚ 181

(26:181) Fill up the measure and do not diminish the goods of people,

وَزِنُوْا بِالْقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيْمِ ۚ 182

(26:182) weigh with an even balance

وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ اَشْيَاۗءَهُمْ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ مُفْسِدِيْنَ ۚ 183

(26:183) and do not deliver short, and do not go about creating mischief in the land,

وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِيْ خَلَقَكُمْ وَالْجِبِلَّةَ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ۭ 184

(26:184) and have fear of Him Who created you and the earlier generations."

قَالُوْٓا اِنَّمَآ اَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُسَحَّرِيْنَ ۙ 185

(26:185) They said: "You are no more than one of those who have been bewitched,

وَمَآ اَنْتَ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا وَاِنْ نَّظُنُّكَ لَمِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ۚ 186

(26:186) you are only a mortal like us. Indeed we believe that you are an utter liar.

فَاَسْقِطْ عَلَيْنَا كِسَفًا مِّنَ السَّمَاۗءِ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ۭ 187

(26:187) So cause a piece of the sky to fall upon us if you are truthful."

قَالَ رَبِّيٓ أَعۡلَمُ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُونَ 188

(26:188) Shuayb said: "My Lord knows well all what you do."[116]

116. That is, it is not in my power to bring down the torment; it is in Allah's power, and He is fully aware of your misdeeds. He will send down the torment as and when He wills. In this demand of the people of Aiykah and the answer of Prophet Shuaib (peace be upon him) to them there was an admonition for the Quraish as well. They also demanded from the Prophet (peace be upon him) to bring down the torment on them: Or.... you cause the sky to fall down on us in fragments, as you threaten us. (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 92). As such the Quraish are being told that the people of Aiykah had also demanded a similar thing from their Prophet, and the answer that they got from their Prophet is the answer of Muhammad (peace be on him) to you.

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَهُمۡ عَذَابُ يَوۡمِ ٱلظُّلَّةِۚ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ عَذَابَ يَوۡمٍ عَظِيمٍ 189

(26:189) Then they branded him a liar, whereupon the chastisement of the Day of Canopy overtook them.[117] It was the chastisement of a very awesome day.

117. The details of this torment are neither found in the Quran nor in any authentic tradition. What one can learn from the text is this: As these people had demanded a torment from the sky, Allah sent upon them a cloud which hung over them like a canopy and kept hanging until they were completely destroyed by the torment of continuous rain. The Quran clearly points out that the nature of the torment sent upon the Midianites was different from that sent upon the people of Aiykah. The people of Aiykah, as mentioned here, were destroyed by the torment of the canopy, while the torment visiting the Midianites was in the form of a terrible earthquake: It so happened that a shocking catastrophe overtook them and they remained lying prostrate in their dwellings. (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 91). And: A dreadful shock overtook them and they lay lifeless and prostrate in their homes. (Surah Houd, Ayat 94). Therefore, it is wrong to regard the two torments as identical. Some commentators have given a few explanations of the torment of the Day of canopy, but we do not know the source of their information. Ibn Jarir has quoted Abdullah bin Abbas as saying: If somebody from among the scholars gives you an explanation of the torment of the Day of canopy, do not consider it as correct.

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَأٓيَةٗۖ وَمَا كَانَ أَكۡثَرُهُم مُّؤۡمِنِينَ 190

(26:190) Surely there is a Sign in this, but most of them would not believe.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ ٱلۡعَزِيزُ ٱلرَّحِيمُ ١٩١

(26:191) Verily Your Lord is Immensely Mighty, Most Compassionate.

وَإِنَّهُۥ لَتَنزِيلُ رَبِّ ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ ۝192

(26:192) Indeed this[118] is a revelation from the Lord of the Universe;[119]

118. At the end of the historical account, the same theme, with which the Surah began, is resumed. For reference, see (verses 1-9).

119. That is, this lucid Book whose verses are being recited to you, and this admonition from which the people are turning away, is not the product of the whims of a man. It has not been written and compiled by Muhammad (peace be upon him) himself, but it consists of the revelations of the Lord of this universe.

نَزَلَ بِهِ ٱلرُّوحُ ٱلْأَمِينُ ۝193

(26:193) which the truthful spirit[120] has carried down

120. That is, Angel Gabriel, as mentioned in (Surah Al- Baqarah, Ayat 97): Say to them: Whosoever is the enemy to Gabriel, he should understand that he has, by Allah's command, revealed to your heart the Quran. Here the object of using the title of the trustworthy Spirit for Gabriel implies that the Quran is not being sent down by Allah through some material agency, which is subject to change and vacillation; but through a pure Spirit, having no tinge of materialism, and who is perfectly trustworthy. This Spirit conveys the messages of Allah precisely in the same form and with the same content as they are entrusted to him. It is not possible for him to tamper with the messages, or to make his own additions to them in any way.

عَلَىٰ قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ ٱلْمُنذِرِينَ ۝194

(26:194) to your heart that you might become one of those who warn (others on behalf of Allah),

بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُّبِينٍ ۝195

(26:195) (a revelation) in clear Arabic language,[121]

121. This sentence may be related to "the trustworthy Spirit has come down" and also to: "who are (appointed by God) to warn." In the first case, it will mean that the trustworthy Spirit has brought it down in plain Arabic language, and in the second case, it will mean that the Prophet (peace be upon him) is included among those Prophets who were appointed to warn the people in the Arabic language, i.e. Houd, Salih, Ishmael and Shuaib (peace be upon them all). In both cases the object is the same: the divine message has not been sent down in a dead or mysterious language, or in a language of riddles and enigmas, but in such clear and lucid Arabic, which can be understood easily by every Arab and every non Arab who has learned Arabic. As such, the people who are turning away from it, they

cannot have the excuse that they could not understand the message of the Quran. The only reason of their denial and aversion is that they are afflicted with the same disease with which Pharaoh, the people of Abraham the people of Noah, the people of Lot, the Aad and the Thamud, and the people of Aiykah were afflicted.

وَإِنَّهُۥ لَفِى زُبُرِ ٱلْأَوَّلِينَ 196

(26:196) (a revelation embodied) in the scriptures of the ancients.[122]

122. That is, this very admonition and divine message and teachings are contained in the former Scriptures also. The same message of submission to One God, the same belief in the Hereafter and the same invitation to follow the Prophets has been given in all those Books. All the Books sent down by God condemn shirk and the materialistic philosophy of life and invite people to accept the true and sound philosophy of life, which is based on the concept of man's accountability before God, and demands that man should give up his independence in deference to divine commands brought and preached by the Prophets. None of these things is new, which the Quran may be presenting for the first time, and none can blame the Prophet (peace be upon him) of saying something which had never been said before by the former Prophets.

Among other arguments this verse also is quoted in support of Imam Abu Hanifah's early opinion that if a person recites the translation of the Quran in the prayer, his prayer will be in order and valid, whether he is able to recite the Quran in Arabic or not. According to Allama Abu Bakr al-Jassas, the basis of this argument is: Allah says that the Quran was contained in the former Scriptures also; obviously this could not be in Arabic words, As such, if translated and presented in another language, it will still be the Quran. (Ahkam-ul-Quran, Vol. III, p. 429). But the weakness of this argument is obvious. The Quran, or any other divine Book, was never revealed in a manner that Allah inspired to the Prophet with its meaning and then he presented it before the people in his own words. The fact is that every Book, in whatever language it came, was revealed in divine words and meanings together. As such, the teachings of the Quran were contained in the former Scriptures in divine words and not in human, and none of their translations could be considered as the divine Book or its representation. As regards the Quran, it has been stated over and over again that it was literally revealed in the Arabic language: We have sent it down as Quran in Arabic. (Surah Yusuf, Ayat 2). We have sent this command in Arabic to you. (Surah Ar-Raad, Ayat 37). An Arabic Quran without any crookedness. (Surah Az-Zumar, Ayat 28). Then just before this verse, it has been said that the trustworthy Spirit has brought it down in Arabic. Now how can it be said that the translation of the Quran made into another language will also be the Quran and its words will represent the words of Allah? It appears that later the Imam himself felt this weakness in the argument and, according to authentic traditions, gave up his earlier opinion, and adopted the opinion of Imams Abu Yusuf and Muhammad, who held that a person who could not recite Arabic words, could recite the translation of the Quran in his prayer till he was able to pronounce Arabic words. However, the prayer of a person, who was able to recite the Quran in Arabic, would not be valid if he recited its translation. The fact is that the two Imams had proposed this concession only for those non Arab converts who were not able to offer their prayer in Arabic immediately after embracing Islam. In this the basis of their argument was not that the translation of the

Quran was the Quran itself, but that just as a person unable to perform Ruku and Sajdah was allowed to offer his prayer by making signs, so a person unable to pronounce Arabic words could recite the translation. Then just as the prayer of a person who offered it by making signs could not be valid as soon as the cause of inability was removed, so the prayer of a person who recited the translation would not be valid as soon as he became able to pronounce Arabic words. (For a detailed discussion, see Al-Mabsut by Sarkhasi,Vol. I, p. 37; Fath ul- Qadir and Sharh Inaya alal-Hedaya, Vol. I. pp. 190-201).

أَوَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُمْ اٰيَةً اَنْ يَّعْلَمَهٗ عُلَمٰٓؤُا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ؕ 197

(26:197) Is it not a Sign to them (to wit, the Makkans) that the learned men of the Children of Israel know that?[123]

123. That is, the learned men of the Israelites know that the teachings of the Quran are the same as of the former Scriptures. Though the people of Makkah themselves were un-initiated in the knowledge of the Book, there were many scholars among the Israelites living in the surrounding areas, who fully understood that the Quran did not bring a novel message, which was being presented by Muhammad bin Abdullah for the first time, but it was the same message which had been brought and preached by Prophets of Allah one after the other since thousands of years. Is it not then a convincing proof of the fact that the Quran has been sent down by the same Lord of the universe Who sent down the former Books.

According to Ibn Hisham's Life of the Holy Prophet, a little before the revelation of these verses a deputation of 20 men, who had been influenced by the preaching of Jaafar, came to Makkah from Habash. They met the Prophet (peace be upon him) in Masjid al-Haram and asked him in the presence of the unbelieving Quraish what his teachings were. In response, the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited a few verses of the Quran, whereupon tears came down from their eyes and they believed in him there and then to be a true Messenger of Allah. When they took leave of the Prophet (peace be upon him), Abu Jahl met them along with a few other men of the Quraish and rebuked them, saying: Never has a more stupid company come here before: O foolish men, you were sent here by your people with a view to inquiring about this man, but no sooner did you meet him than you gave up your own faith. Those gentle people did not like to have a dispute with Abu Jahl, so they left him, saying: We have no wish to enter an argument with you. You are responsible for your faith and we are for ours. We adopted something in which we saw some good for ourselves. (Vol II, p. 32). This same incident has been mentioned in Surah Al-Qasas, thus: Those to whom We had given the Book before this, believe in the Quran and when it is recited to them, they say: We have believed in it. This is the very truth from our Lord. We were even before this followers of Islam. And when they heard vain and meaningless talk, they refrained from entering an argument, saying: For us are our deeds and for you yours, peace be to you, we do not like the ways of the ignorant. (verse 52-55).

وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنٰهُ عَلٰى بَعْضِ الْاَعْجَمِيْنَ ۙ 198

(26:198) (But such is their adamance) that had We revealed it to one of the non-Arabs and even if he had recited(this clear Arabic discourse) to them

فَقَرَأَهُ عَلَيْهِم مَّا كَانُوا بِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ ۖ 199

(26:199) they would still not have believed in it.[124]

124. That is, now when a man from among themselves is reciting to them this divine revelation in lucid Arabic, they say that he himself has composed it, and therefore it cannot be from Allah. But if the same revelation in eloquent Arabic had been sent down by Allah to a non Arab as a miracle, and he had recited it before them in perfect Arabic accent, they would have invented some other excuse for not believing in him. They would have said that he is under the power and influence of a jinn, who speaks Arabic through a non Arab. As a matter of fact, a lover of the truth considers the thing presented before him coolly and forms an opinion about it after due thought. But an obdurate person who is unwilling to believe, pays no attention to it at all, but instead seeks all sorts of excuses to reject it, and will, in any case, invent an excuse for his denial. This obduracy of the unbelieving Quraish has been exposed over and over again in the Quran, and they have been clearly told that even if a miracle were shown to them, they would certainly have found an excuse to deny it because they are not inclined to believe: O Messenger, even if We had sent down to you a Book written on paper, and even if they had touched it with their own hands, the disbelievers would have said: This is nothing but manifest sorcery. (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 7). Even if We had opened a gate for them in heaven, and they had begun to ascend through it, they would have said: Our eyes have been dazzled; nay, we have been bewitched. (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 14-15).

كَذَٰلِكَ سَلَكْنَٰهُ فِى قُلُوبِ ٱلْمُجْرِمِينَ ۖ 200

(26:200) Thus have We caused this (Admonition) to penetrate the hearts of the culprits (like a hot rod).[125]

125. That is, unlike the truth loving people to whom the Quran brings peace of the mind and heart, it passes like a hot iron rod through the hearts of the disbelievers, which sets them ill at ease, and they, instead of pondering over its themes, start looking for subterfuges to deny it.

لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِۦ حَتَّىٰ يَرَوُا۟ ٱلْعَذَابَ ٱلْأَلِيمَ ۙ 201

(26:201) They will not believe in it until they clearly see the grievous chastisement.[126]

126. The kind of torment with which the tribes and communities mentioned above were punished.

فَيَأْتِيَهُم بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ۙ 202

(26:202) But when it comes upon them suddenly, taking them unawares,

فَيَقُولُوا هَلْ نَحْنُ مُنظَرُونَ ﴿203﴾

(26:203) they say: "Can we be granted some respite?"[127]

127. That is, until the criminals are actually overtaken by the torment, they do not believe in the Prophet. Then they feel remorse and desire to be given some respite when it is too late.

أَفَبِعَذَابِنَا يَسْتَعْجِلُونَ ﴿204﴾

(26:204) Do they really want Our chastisement to be expedited?

أَفَرَءَيْتَ إِن مَّتَّعْنَٰهُمْ سِنِينَ ﴿205﴾

(26:205) Did you consider that if We were to let them enjoy life for many years

ثُمَّ جَآءَهُم مَّا كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ ﴿206﴾

(26:206) and then the chastisement of which they were being warned were to come upon them,

مَآ أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا يُمَتَّعُونَ ﴿207﴾

(26:207) of what avail will be the provisions of life which they have been granted to enjoy?[128]

128. There is a subtle gap between this and the preceding sentence, which the reader himself can fill with a little thinking. They were asking for the torment to be hastened because they were not sure that it would ever come. They were confident that they would continue living a life of ease and indulgence as they had been living till then. On account of the same confidence they challenged the Prophet (peace be upon him), as if to say: If you are a Messenger of Allah, and we deserve to be chastised by Allah because we have treated you as a liar, then you should hasten that torment on us, with which you threaten us. At this it is being said: Well, even if they be right in their confidence, and the torment is not sent upon them immediately, and they are allowed a long respite to enjoy life as they expect, the question is: What will these few years of worldly pleasure and comfort avail them when the inevitable scourge from Allah overtakes them suddenly as it overtook the Aad and the Thamud, or the people of Lot and of Aiykah, or if they are visited by death which nobody can escape.

وَمَآ أَهۡلَكۡنَا مِن قَرۡيَةٍ إِلَّا لَهَا مُنذِرُونَ صٰٓئ ق 208

(26:208) We never destroyed any habitation but that it had warners

ذِكۡرَىٰ ثۛ قف وَمَا كُنَّا ظَٰلِمِينَ 209

(26:209) to admonish them. We have never been unjust.[129]

129. That is, We could not be blamed for any injustice when they did not heed the warning and admonition of the warners and were destroyed. It would have been injustice if no effort had been made to admonish them and guide them aright prior to their destruction.

وَمَا تَنَزَّلَتۡ بِهِ ٱلشَّيَٰطِينُ 210

(26:210) The satans[130] did not bring down this (Clear Book),

130. After the positive aspect as stated in (verses 192-193), the negative aspect is being stated that the Quran has not been brought down by satans as the enemies of the truth allege. The unbelieving Quraish in their campaign to spread lies and slander against the Prophet (peace be upon him) were facing a real difficulty. They did not know how to account for the wonderful discourses which were being presented before the people in the form of the Quran and which were moving their hearts deeply. They could not stop the Quran from reaching the people. The only thing they could do to counteract its effect and influence was to create doubts and suspicions about it in their minds and hearts. Therefore, in their desperation they charged that Muhammad (peace be upon him) was a sorcerer, who was being inspired by the satans, and they considered this charge of theirs to be the most effective because it could neither be easily verified nor refuted.

وَمَا يَنۢبَغِي لَهُمۡ وَمَا يَسۡتَطِيعُونَ ط 211

(26:211) nor does it behove them,[131] nor does it lie in their power.[132]

131. That is, these revelations and themes do not at all suit the satans. Any person who has a little common sense can well understand that the sublime discourses being presented in the Quran cannot be inspired by the satans. Never has it happened that the satans might have taught the people through the sorcerers to worship God and fear Him, or forbidden them from shirk and idol-worship, or warned them of the accountability of the Hereafter, or prohibited them from tyranny and sexual and moral evils, and exhorted them instead to act righteously and do good to others. Such works cannot behoove the satans. Their only pastime can be to sow the seeds of discord among the people and to arouse them to mischief and vice. The common observation is that people visit the sorcerers to find out whether they will succeed in their love affairs or not, what move would suit them in gambling, what trick and stratagem would be helpful against the enemy, or who had stolen the camel of so and so. Apart from such affairs and problems, the sorcerers and their patron-saints cannot be

expected to worry themselves about matters like reforming the people, teaching them morals and cleansing their lives of vice and evil.

132. That is, even if the satans wanted they could not impart truth and goodness to the people like a true teacher and reformer as the Quran does. Even if to deceive the people, they came out under the guise of a benefactor, their work would not be tree from blemishes, which would betray their ignorance and their hidden satanic nature. Similarly the life and the teachings of a person who poses to be a religious guide, under the influence and inspiration of satans, would inevitably reflect the wickedness of intention and design. Thus the satans can neither inspire others with piety and goodness, nor can those, who have any relation with the satans, become pious and righteous themselves. Then in addition to its high and noble teachings, the Quran is a lucid and eloquent Book, which contains the knowledge of reality. That is why it has over and over again put forward the challenge that human beings and jinns would never be able to produce a book like the Quran even if they collaborated with all their energies and capacities. Declare this: Even if human beings and jinns should cooperate with one another to bring forth a book like the Quran, they will never be able to bring anything like it, even though all of them help one another (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 88).

Tell them: if what you say be true, then produce one Surah like this, and you may call to your assistance anyone you can other than Allah. (Surah Yunus, Ayat 38).

إِنَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّمْعِ لَمَعْزُولُونَ ۝212

(26:212) Indeed they are debarred from even hearing it.[133]

133. That is, not to speak of interfering with the revelation of the Quran, the satans are not even given a chance to hear the Quran any moment from the time Angel Gabriel receives it from Allah till he reveals it to the heart of the Prophet. They are so kept out of its hearing that they cannot get any hint as to its words and contents so as to tell their friends that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was going to give such and such a message to his followers, or that his address would contain such and such a thing that day. For further details see (E.Ns 8-12 of Surah Al-Hijr), (E.Ns 5-7 of Surah As-Saffat)and (Surah Jinn, Ayats 8-9,27).

فَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَٰهًا آخَرَ فَتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُعَذَّبِينَ ۝213

(26:213) So do not call any other god beside Allah lest you become of those who will be punished,[134]

134. This does not mean that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was going to be involved in shirk from which he was to be admonished to desist. The object was to warn the disbelievers and polytheists to the effect: As the message of the Quran is based on pure truth revealed by the Almighty Ruler of the universe, and there is no tinge of any satanic impurity in it, there could be no question of showing a favor to somebody in regard to the truth. Even if the Messenger (peace be upon him) himself, who is nearest to Allah and His most beloved servant, deviated a little from the path of His obedience and invoked any other deity than

Allah, he could not escape the punishment. When it was so in the case of the Prophet, who else could have the hope that after committing shirk with regard to Allah, he would be able to escape the punishment or help others to escape it.

وَأَنذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ ۝214

(26:214) and warn your nearest kinsmen;[135]

135. Just as there could be no concession or favor for the person of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in a matter concerning Allah's religion, so there could be no question of a favor being shown to the Prophet's (peace be upon him) family or his nearest kinsfolk. Here the case of everybody will be judged on merit, and nobody will be shown any favor on account of his ancestry or relation with somebody else. The accountability of the Hereafter and punishment for deviation and misdeeds are the same for everybody and even the Prophet's (peace be upon him) nearest kinsfolk are no exception. Therefore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was commanded to warn his relatives and kindred to attain the right belief and to act righteously because they would not escape punishment only by virtue of being his relations.

There are authentic traditions to show that after the revelation of this verse, the Prophet (peace be upon him) first of all addressed the sons and daughters of his grandfather. Calling each one of them by name, he said: O children of Abdul Muttalib, O Abbas, O Safiah, paternal aunt of Allah's Messenger, O Fatimah, daughter of Muhammad! You are warned to beware and save yourselves from the torment of the Hell-Fire. I cannot protect you from Allah's punishment. You may, however, demand whatever you like from my worldly property. Then as was the custom in Arabia, to warn the people of an impending calamity, he stood on top of Mount Safa one morning and called out: O people of Quraish, O children of Kaab bin Luayy, O children of Murrah, O children of Qasayy, O children of Abd Manaf, O children of Abd Shams, O children of Hashim, O children of Abdul Muttalib, and in this way he called out each branch and clan of the Quraish by name. When all the people had come together, he said: O People, if I tell you that on the other side of this hill, there is a huge army ready to attack you, will you believe my word? With one voice they replied in the affirmative, saying that they had never heard a lie from him in the past. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Well, I warn you of the impending scourge of Allah. Save yourselves from His punishment. I cannot be of any help to you against Him. On the Day of Resurrection, the only righteous will be nearest to me. Let it not happen that others should come forth with good deeds and you should appear with the burden of sins on your heads. Then you will call me for help, but I shall be constrained to turn my face away from you. Of course, here in this world, I am bound to you by blood relations, and I shall treat you with all possible politeness as a good relation should. (Several traditions on this subject have been reported in Bukhari, Muslim, Musnad Ahmad, Tirmizi, Ibn Jarir on the authority of Aishah, Abu Hurairah, Abdullah bin Abbas, Zubair bin Amr and Qabisah bin Makhariq).

The matter was not simply this that on receipt of the command to warn your nearest kinsfolk, the Prophet (peace be upon him) called together all his relatives and complied with it. In fact, the principle it meant to stress was that in the matter of religion the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his relations enjoyed no special privilege of which the other people

might be deprived. What was harmful for one man was harmful for everybody. The Prophet (peace be upon him) was supposed to first protect himself from this and then warn his nearest kinsfolk and the common people of its fatal consequences. On the other hand, what was good and beneficial for one man was good and beneficial for all. As such, the Prophet (peace be upon him) should first adopt it himself and then exhort his relatives also to adopt it, so that everybody may see that the Prophet does not only preach his message to others but also practices it himself sincerely. The Prophet (peace be upon him) followed this principle throughout his life. On the conquest of Makkah, when he entered the city, he declared: Every kind of interest payable from the people during the age of ignorance, is trampled under my feet, and first of all, I remit the interest payable to my uncle Abbas." (It should be noted that before the prohibition of interest, Abbas traded money on interest, and a substantial amount of interest payable to him at that time was outstanding against the people). Once the Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered cutting off of the hand of a Quraishite woman, named Fatimah, on the charge of theft, Usamah bin Zaid came to intercede for her, whereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: By God, even if Fatimah, daughter of Muhammad, had committed the theft, I would have ordered amputation of her hand, too.

وَاخۡفِضۡ جَنَاحَكَ لِمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ۚ 215

(26:215) and be meek to the believers who follow you.

فَاِنۡ عَصَوۡكَ فَقُلۡ اِنِّىۡ بَرِىۡٓءٌ مِّمَّا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ۚ 216

(26:216) Then if they disobey you say to them: "I am quit of what you do."[136]

136. This can have two meanings.

(1) Treat those of your relatives with kindness, who have believed in you and followed your teachings practically; as for those who have not accepted your message, you may declare that you are not responsible for what they do.

(2) You should treat with kindness every such person, who believes in and obeys you, and you should warn every unbeliever that you take no responsibility for his actions.

This verse shows that at that time there were some people among the Quraish and the neighboring Arabs, who had believed in the truth of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) message; but they had not as yet started obeying his teachings practically. They were still, as usual, living the same life of unbelief among their people as were the other unbelievers. Allah set apart such believers from those true believers who after belief had adopted total obedience of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The Command to treat with kindness was meant only for the latter group. As for those who had turned away from his obedience, and who included both those who believed in the truth of his message and those who rejected it, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was instructed to disown them, and tell them plainly that they themselves were responsible for their deeds, and that after giving them the warning he was not at all responsible for what they did.

وَتَوَكَّلۡ عَلَى الۡعَزِيۡزِ الرَّحِيۡمِ ۙ 217

(26:217) And put your trust in Him Who is Immensely Mighty, Most Compassionate,[137]

137. That is, you should not care at all for any worldly power, howsoever big and strong, but should continue to perform your mission with complete trust in that Being Who is Mighty as well as Merciful. He is Mighty and, therefore, anybody enjoying His support, cannot be overcome by any other power; He is Merciful and, therefore, He will not let go waste the sacrifices and efforts of the one who struggles for the sake of raising His Word in the world.

الَّذِىۡ يَرٰٮكَ حِيۡنَ تَقُوۡمُ ۙ 218

(26:218) Who observes you when you rise (to pray)[138]

138. "Stand up" may mean getting up for the Prayers during the night, or coming out for the purpose of performing the Prophetic mission.

وَتَقَلُّبَكَ فِى السّٰجِدِيۡنَ 219

(26:219) and observes your movements among those who prostrate themselves.[139]

139. This can have several meanings.

(1) Allah watches you when in the congregational Prayers you stand and sit and perform Ruku and Sajdah with your followers behind you.

(2) He watches you when you get up in the night to see what your companions (whose mark of distinction is that they prostrate themselves in worship) are doing for their own well-being in the Hereafter.

(3) He is fully aware of how you and your companions are endeavoring to reform the people.

(4) He is fully aware of all your efforts to revolutionize the lives of the people who prostrate themselves in worship; He knows what sort of training you are giving them to reform them; how have you purified their lives and transformed them into the best people.

These characteristics of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions have a special significance in the context here. In the first place, the Prophet (peace be upon him) deserves Allah's mercy and His support for Allah, being All-Hearing and All-Knowing, is fully aware of the struggle he is waging for His cause and of the efforts he is making to reform his companions. Secondly, when a person is living such a noble life as Muhammad (peace be upon him) is actually living, and the characteristics of his followers are those which Muhammad's (peace be upon him) companions have, only an ignorant person can have the

boldness to say that he is inspired by the satans, or that he is a poet. People are fully aware of the lives of the sorcerers who are inspired by the satans and also of the poets and their admirers living among them. Can anybody honestly say that there is no difference whatsoever between the noble life being led by Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions and the sort of life being led by the poets and the sorcerers. Then, what is it if not sheer impudence that the former are openly being branded as poets and sorcerers without any shame.

إِنَّهُۥ هُوَ ٱلسَّمِيعُ ٱلْعَلِيمُ 220

(26:220) He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

هَلْ أُنَبِّئُكُمْ عَلَىٰ مَن تَنَزَّلُ ٱلشَّيَٰطِينُ ۝ 221

(26:221) O people, shall I tell you on whom it is that satans descend?

تَنَزَّلُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ أَفَّاكٍ أَثِيمٍ ۙ 222

(26:222) They descend on every forgerer steeped in sin,[140]

140. This implies the sorcerers, astrologers, fortune-tellers and conjurers who pose as knower of the unseen and tell the people their future, or as wise men who have control over jinns and spirits and can make the destinies of the people through them.

يُلْقُونَ ٱلسَّمْعَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ كَٰذِبُونَ ۝ 223

(26:223) on those who whisper hearsay in the ears of people; and most of them are liars.[141]

141. This may have two meanings. (1) The satans somehow get a little hint of the truth and inspire their agents with it, mixing it with all kinds of falsehood. (2) The deceitful, unscrupulous sorcerers hear something from the satans and then mixing it with falsehood, whisper it into the people's ears. This has been explained in a tradition which Bukhari has quoted on the authority of Aishah. She says that when some people asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) about sorcerers, he replied that they were nothing. They said: O Messenger of Allah, they, sometimes, tell the right thing. The Prophet (peace be upon him) answered: That right thing is overheard by the jinns who whisper it into their friend's ear, who concocts a story by mixing a lot of falsehood in it.

وَٱلشُّعَرَآءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ ٱلْغَاوُۥنَ ۝ 224

(26:224) As for poets, only the wayward follow them.[142]

142. That is, the people who follow and accompany the poets, are wholly different in their characteristics, habits and temper from those who follow and accompany Muhammad (peace be upon him). The difference between the two groups is so obvious that one group can be easily distinguished from the other. On the one side, there are the people who are characterized by the high seriousness, civilized and gentle behavior, righteousness and fear of God, sense of responsibility and a high regard for the rights of others. People who are fair and just in their dealings, who do not utter a word except in the cause of goodness, who have a high and pure ideal before them, which they pursue with single-minded devotion and for whose attainment they expend all their energies and capabilities. On the other side, there are the people whose only pastime is to portray erotic scenes of love and wine-drinking, mocking and jesting, satirizing and eulogizing, or to arouse feelings of hatred and enmity and vengeance against others, or to describe charms of unchaste women to the brothel or of chaste ladies in the houses, only for the sake of pleasing the people and winning their applause. From the crowds who throng the poetic sessions and follow the famous poets, one cannot help forming the impression that those people are free from every moral restriction, who have no object in life except to gratify the lusts of the flesh like animals, and who have no idea whatever of the higher and nobler ideals and ends of life. The person who cannot see the obvious difference between the two types is indeed blind. But if in spite of seeing and knowing the difference, only for the purpose of suppressing the truth, he says that Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions are no different from the poets and their followers, he is not only a liar but has also transgressed all bounds of modesty and decency.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اَنَّهُمۡ فِىۡ كُلِّ وَادٍ يَّهِيۡمُوۡنَ ۙ 225

(26:225) Do you not see that they wander about in every valley[143]

143. That is, they follow no fixed pattern for their thought and speech but wander aimlessly in every valley. Every new impulse makes them take up a new theme regardless as to whether it has any truth in it or not. Under one momentary impulse they would start uttering wise things; under another they would give expression to filthy and base feelings. If they felt pleased with somebody, they would exaggerate his praises, and if they felt offended by him, they would condemn him and run him down to hell. If they had a selfish motive, attached with somebody, they would feel no hesitation in giving preference to a miserly person over a generous person and to a cowardly person over a gallant person. On the contrary, if they felt displeased with somebody, they would not feel any shame in blotting his character and ridiculing him and his ancestors. That is why, one can find God-worship and atheism, materialism and spiritualism, morality and immorality, piety and filthiness, seriousness and jesting, eulogy and satire expressed side by side in the poetry of one and the same poet. A person who is aware of these well known characteristics of the poets cannot reconcile himself to charging the recipient of the Quran with poetry, whose every discourse and word is clear and precise, whose objective is clearly defined, and who has never in his life uttered a word deviating in any way from the path of truth, righteousness and virtue.

At another place in the Quran, it has been stated that poetry is not suited to the temperament of the Prophet: (peace be upon him). We have not taught him poetry, nor does

it suit him. (Surah Ya Sin, Ayat 69). And this fact was well known to the people who had any personal acquaintance with the Prophet (peace be upon him). Authentic traditions show that he could not recite a complete verse from memory. If ever during conversation he remembered of a good verse of some poet, he would recite it without much care and regard for its meter and order of words.

Once Aishah was asked whether the Prophet (peace be upon him) ever made use of poetic verses in his discourses. She replied that he hated poetic verses the most, though sometimes he would recite a verse of a poet of Bani Quais, but in so doing he would unconsciously change the order of its words. When Abu Bakr corrected him, he would say: Brother, I am not a poet, nor composing poetry is my object. Arabic poetry abounded in themes of sex and love romances, wine drinking, tribal hatreds and feuds, ancestry pride and vanity and made little or no mention of pure and noble themes. It was so saturated with falsehood, exaggeration, false accusations, undue praise, vanity, satiric invectives, jesting and polytheistic obscenities that the Prophet (peace be upon him) once remarked: It is better that the interior of one of you be filled with pus than with poetic verses. However, if there was something good in a verse, he would appreciate it, and say: Some verses are based on wisdom. When he heard the verses of Umayyah bin Abi-Salt, he said: His verse is a believer but his heart a disbeliever. Once a companion recited a hundred or so good verses before him, and he went on urging him to recite more.

وَاَنَّهُمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ مَا لَا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ۙ 226

(26:226) and say things which they do not act upon,[144]

144. This characteristic of the poets was just the antithesis of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) conduct and practice. Everybody knew that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said what he practiced and practiced what he said. The fact that there was complete conformity between his word and deed could not be denied by anybody. On the contrary, everyone was well aware that the poets said one thing and practiced just the opposite of it. For instance, they would express noble themes of generosity, indifference to worldly wealth, contentment and self-respect in their poetry, but, in practical life, they would turn out to be extremely stingy and cowardly, avaricious and selfish. They would find fault with others on trifles, but would themselves be involved in grave moral weaknesses.

اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَذَكَرُوا اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا وَّانْتَصَرُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا ظُلِمُوْا ؕ

وَسَيَعْلَمُ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْٓا اَيَّ مُنْقَلَبٍ يَّنْقَلِبُوْنَ ع 227

(26:227) except those who believed and acted righteously and remembered Allah much, and when they themselves were subjected to wrong, they exacted retribution no more than to the extent of the wrong?[145] Soon will the wrong-doers know the end that they shall reach.[146]

145. Here those poets have made an exception from the general reproach, who possess the following four characteristics:

(1) They should be believers in Allah, His Prophets, His Books and the Hereafter.

(2) They should be pious in practical life and not sinners, nor free from moral restrictions to say whatever they like.

(3) They should be remembering Allah much in their day to day lives as well as in their literary work. It should not be so that their personal lives reflect God consciousness and piety, but their poetry is replete with themes of debauchery and lusts of the flesh, or that their poetry is full of serious themes of wisdom and God consciousness, but their personal lives are devoid of any trace of the remembrance of Allah. As a matter of fact, both these states are equally despicable. A good poet is he who is God conscious in his personal life and whose poetic talent and skills also are devoted to the advancement of the way of life followed by the God conscious, God fearing and God worshiping people.

(4) They should not satirize others for personal reasons, nor take vengeance on others on account of personal, racial and national prejudices, but when they are required to support the truth, they should use their literary powers like weapons of war against the unjust and treacherous people. It does not behoove the believers to adopt a humble, supplicating attitude against injustice and oppression. Traditions show that when the unbelieving and mushrik poets raised a storm of false accusations against Islam and the Prophet (peace be upon him) and spread the poison of hatred against the Muslims, the Prophet (peace be upon him) urged and encouraged the poets of Islam to counter attack them. Once he said to Kaab bin Malik: Satirize them, for, I swear by God in Whose hand is my soul, your verse will be more effective and damaging for them than the arrow. Likewise he said to Hassan bin Thabit: Deal with them and Gabriel is with you. And: Say and the Holy Spirit is with you. (This statement should be taken as when Hassan bin Thabit would say his poetry to refute the poetry of the disbelievers, Allah's help will be with him and an angel (Gabriel) will stand next to him and refute along with him). Once he said: The believer fights with the sword as well as with the tongue.

146. "Those who do wrong": The people who out of sheer obduracy calumniated the Prophet (peace be upon him) of being a sorcerer, poet and a mad and enchanted man, in order to defeat Islam, and to confuse the other people and distract them from his message and invitation.

27. Surah An Naml (The Ant)

Name

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

Period of Revelation

The subject matter and the style bear full resemblance with the Surahs of the middle Makkan period and this is supported by traditions as well. According to Ibn Abbas and Jabir bin Zaid, "First the Surah Ash-Shu`araa' was sent down, then the Surah An Naml and then Al-Qasas."

Theme and Topics

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

The theme of the first discourse is that only those people can benefit from the guidance of the Quran and become worthy of the good promises made in it, who accept the realities which this Book presents as the basic realities of the universe, and then follow up their belief with obedience and submission in their practical lives as well. But the greatest hindrance for man to follow this way is the denial of the Hereafter. For it makes him irresponsible, selfish and given to worldly life, which in turn makes it impossible for him to submit himself before God and to accept the moral restrictions on his lusts and desires. After this introduction three types of character have been presented.

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

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

The third type is of the queen of Sheba, who ruled over a most wealthy and well known people in the history of Arabia. She possessed all those means of life, which could cause a person to become vain and conceited. Her wealth and possessions far exceeded the wealth and possessions of the Quraish. Then she professed *shirk*, which was not only an ancestral way of life with her, but she had to follow it in order to maintain her position as a ruler. Therefore, it was much more difficult for her to give up *shirk* and adopt the way

of *Tauhid* than it could be for a common *mushrik*. But when the Truth became evident to her, nothing could stop her from accepting it. Her deviation was, in fact, due to her being born and brought up in a polytheistic environment and not because of her being a slave to her lusts and desires. Her conscience was not devoid of the sense of accountability before God.

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

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

In conclusion, the real invitation of the Quran that is, the invitation to serve One Allah alone, has been presented in a concise but forceful manner, and the people warned that accepting it would be to their own advantage and rejecting it to their own disadvantage. For if they deferred their faith until they saw those Signs of God after the appearance of which they would be left with no choice but to believe and submit, they should bear in mind the fact that that would be the time of judgment and believing then would be of no avail.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

طٰسٓ ۚ تِلۡكَ اٰيٰتُ الۡقُرۡاٰنِ وَكِتَابٍ مُّبِيۡنٍ ۙ 1

(27:1) Ta'. Sin. These are the verses of the Qur'an and a Clear Book;[1]

1. Kitabim-mubin has three meanings: (1) This book presents its teachings and instructions and injunctions plainly; (2) It distinguishes between the truth and falsehood clearly; and (3) Its being a divine Book is obvious. Whoever studies it with open eyes will realize that it has not been composed and forged by the Prophet (peace be upon him).

هُدًى وَّبُشۡرٰى لِلۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ۙ 2

(27:2) a guidance and good tidings[2] for the believers

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

الَّذِيْنَ يُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَهُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوْقِنُوْنَ 3

(27:3) who establish Prayer and give Zakah,[3] and have firm faith in the Hereafter.[4]

3. That is, these verses of the Quran give guidance and convey the good news of a good end only to those people who possess these two qualities: (1) They should affirm faith, that is, accept the invitation of the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), believe in One God as their only Deity and Lord, accept the Quran as the Book of Allah, acknowledge the Prophet (peace be upon him) as a true prophet and their leader, and also adopt the belief that after this life there is another life, in which man has to render his full account of deeds and be rewarded or punished accordingly. (2) They should not only profess faith verbally, but should also be inclined to follow and obey the divine commands practically, and the first indication of this inclination is that they should establish the Salat and pay the Zakat. The verses of the Quran will show the right way of life only to those people who fulfill these two conditions; they will explain to them the difference between the right and the wrong at every stage on the way, protect them against the wrong ways at every turn of the way, and bless them with the satisfaction that whatever be the consequences of following the right way in the world. In the Hereafter, they will certainly attain the eternal and everlasting success and the good will of Allah only through it. For, in order to derive full benefit from the teaching of a teacher, one has first to have faith in him, then accept to be his student, and then work according to his instructions. Similarly, a patient who wants to be benefited by a doctor has first to accept him as a physician, and then follow his instructions with regard to medical dosage, prevention, etc. Then only he can assure the patient of the desired results.

Some people have interpreted the words yutun-az-zakat in this verse to mean that they should adopt moral purity. But, wherever in the Quran the word ita-i-zakat has occurred along with the word iqamat-i-salat, it means payment of the Zakat, which is the second pillar of Islam after the Salat. Moreover, the Quran has used the word tazakka for adopting piety and purity and not ita which is specifically used for the payment of the Zakat. In fact, what is meant to be impressed here is this: In order to benefit fully by the guidance of the Quran, it is imperative that one should adopt the attitude of submission and obedience in practical life, as well after the affirmation of the faith, and the establishment of the Salat and the payment of the Zakat is the first indication that one has actually adopted such an attitude. If there is no such indication, it will become obvious that one is rebellious: he might have acknowledged a ruler as such, but he is not inclined to carry out his commands.

4. Although belief in the Hereafter is an article of the faith, and a believer will also believe in it along with believing in Tauhid and the prophethood, here it has been specially mentioned separately in order to bring out its unique importance. The object is to impress that for those people who do not believe in the Hereafter, it is impossible to follow, even tread, the way taught by the Quran. For the people of this way of thinking naturally determine their criterion of good and evil by the results that appear, in this world. For them it is not possible to accept any admonition or guidance which seeks to determine the good and evil by the

criterion of the gain and loss in the Hereafter. Such people in the first instance do not at all heed the teachings of the prophets, but if for some reason, they also get included among the believers, they find it difficult to take even the initial steps on the way of the faith and Islam because of the lack of faith in the Hereafter. For, as soon as they will encounter the first situation where the demands of the worldly gains and the losses of the Hereafter will pull them in opposite directions, they will freely allow themselves to be pulled towards the worldly gains without caring in the least for the losses of the Hereafter, even though they may be making all sort of claims to be the believers.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ زَيَّنَّا لَهُمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَهُمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ۖ 4

(27:4) As for those who do not believe in the Hereafter, We have made their deeds seem attractive to them so they stumble around in perplexity.[5]

5. That is, this is God's law of nature and the natural logic of human psychology that when man thinks that the results of his life's struggle are confined to this world only when he does not believe in the existence of any court where his life's work has to be scrutinized and judged finally for good and evil, and when he does not believe in any life in Hereafter when he will be requited strictly in accordance with the real worth of his life's deeds, he will inevitably develop in himself a material outlook on life, and every kind of conflict between the truth and falsehood, good and evil, morality and immorality, will appear utterly meaningless to him. Then, whatever earns him pleasure and enjoyment, material progress and prosperity, power and authority, will be the good for him, no matter it be any philosophy of life, any way of life and any system of morality. He will have no concern for truth and reality. His real ambition will be to win successes and earn adornments only of this worldly life, and their pursuit will lead him astray into every valley. Then, whatever he does with this object in view will be a thing of beauty for him, and he will regard all those others as foolish, who are not absorbed like him in seeking the world, and doing anything and everything without any moral qualm and inhibition.

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ الْعَذَابِ وَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمُ الْأَخْسَرُونَ 5

(27:5) It is they for whom a grievous chastisement lies in store;[6] it is they who shall be the greatest losers in the Hereafter.

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

وَإِنَّكَ لَتُلَقَّى الْقُرْآنَ مِن لَّدُنْ حَكِيمٍ عَلِيمٍ 6

(27:6) As for you, (O Muhammad), you are receiving the Qur'an from the Most Wise, the All-Knowing.[7]

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

إِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِأَهْلِهِ إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا ۖ سَآتِيكُم مِّنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ أَوْ آتِيكُم بِشِهَابٍ قَبَسٍ لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُونَ 7

(27:7) (Recount to them) when Moses said to his family:[8] "I perceive something like fire: soon will I bring to you some information from there, or I will bring you a burning brand that you may warm yourselves."[9]

8. This happened at the foot of Mount Tur when the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was traveling along with his family in search of a suitable place for settlement, after passing eight to ten years in Madyan (Midian). From Madyan, whose territory lay on both sides of the Gulf of Aqabah, on the sea-shores of Arabia and the Sinai Peninsula, he reached the place called Mt. Sinai and Jabal Musa in the southern part of the Peninsula, which at the time of the revelation of the Quran was well known as Tur. See (Ash-Shuara, E.N. 115). The details of this story have been given in (Surah Ta Ha: Ayats 9-24), and in (Surah Al- Qasas: Ayats 29-36).

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

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

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهَا نُودِيَ أَن بُورِكَ مَن فِي النَّارِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا ۖ وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ 8

(27:8) But when Moses came to the fire, a call was sounded:[10] "Blessed is He Who is in the fire and whatever is around it. Glory be to Allah, the Sustainer of all in the Universe.[11]

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

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

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

يٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنَّهٗٓ اَنَا اللّٰهُ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ۙ 9

(27:9) O Moses, verily this is Me, Allah, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise!

وَاَلْقِ عَصَاكَ ؕ فَلَمَّا رَاٰهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَاَنَّهَا جَآنٌّ وَّلّٰى مُدْبِرًا وَّلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ ؕ يٰمُوْسٰى لَا تَخَفْ قف
اِنِّىْ لَا يَخَافُ لَدَىَّ الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ ۖ صلے ق 10

(27:10) Now cast your rod!" But when he saw the rod writhing as though it were a serpent,[12] he turned his back in retreat and did not even look behind. "O Moses, have no fear. Messengers have no fear in My presence,[13]

12. In Surahs Al-Aaraf and Ash-Shuara, the snake has been called thuban (a large serpent) but here jaann, a small snake. The reason is that in physical size it was a serpent but in movement it was swift like a small snake. The same thing has been expressed by hayyatun tasaa (a running snake) in (Surah Ta Ha: Ayat 20).

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

إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ ثُمَّ بَدَّلَ حُسْنًۢا بَعْدَ سُوْٓءٍ فَاِنِّيْ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ 11

(27:11) except he who has committed some wrong.[14] But if he substitutes good in place of evil, I am Most Forgiving, Most Compassionate.[15]

14. This exception can be contiguous as well as remote. In the first case it will imply that there can be a genuine cause of fear if the messenger has committed an offense; in the second case it will mean: "None should have any cause of fear in My presence, unless, of course, someone has committed an offense."

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

وَاَدْخِلْ يَدَكَ فِيْ جَيْبِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيْضَآءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوْٓءٍ ۭ فِيْ تِسْعِ اٰيٰتٍ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَقَوْمِهٖ ۭ

اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمًا فٰسِقِيْنَ 12

(27:12) Now put your hand into your bosom, and it will come forth shining without any blemish. (These are two of the) nine Signs[16] to be carried to Pharaoh and his people. They are surely a wicked people."

16. According to (Surah Bani-Israil: Ayat 101), the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had been granted nine clearly visible signs, which according to the details given in Surah Al-Aaraf were the following: (1) The staff's turning into a serpent, (2) the shining hand when it was drawn out of the armpit, (3) public triumph over the magicians, (4) occurrence of a widespread famine in the land as foretold by the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), (5) the storm, (6) the locusts, (7) the incidence of weevils in the grain stores and of lice among human beings and animals, (8) the frogs, and (9) the rain of blood. (See (E.N. 43 of Surah Az-Zukhruf).

فَلَمَّا جَآءَتْهُمْ اٰيٰتُنَا مُبْصِرَةً قَالُوْا هٰذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ۚ 13

(27:13) But when Our Clear Signs came to them, they said: "This is plain magic."

وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَآ أَنفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا ۚ فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ
الْمُفْسِدِينَ ع 14

(27:14) They denied those Signs out of iniquity and arrogance although their hearts were convinced[17] of their truth. So see how evil was the end of those mischief-makers!

17. As mentioned at other places in the Quran, whenever a plague befell Egypt as foretold by the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), Pharaoh would say, "O Moses, pray to your Lord to remove this plague; then we shall submit to what you say." But as soon as the plague was removed, Pharaoh would break his promise. (Surah Al-Aaraf: Ayat 134), (Az-Zukhruf: Ayats 49-50). The Bible also has mentioned it (Exodus. 8 to 10). It could not be imagined that the occurrence of a famine throughout the country, and the coming of a violent storm, and the incidence of the locusts and the frogs and the weevils in such abundance could be due to any trick of magic. The miracles were so manifest that even a simple minded person could not help but realize that the occurrence of the plagues on such a large scale and their removal at the Prophet's prayer could be only due to Allah, Lord of all Creation's Power and Authority. That is why the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had told Pharaoh plainly: "You know it full well that none but the Lord of the heavens and the earth has sent down these signs." (Surah Bani-Israil: Ayat 102). But the reason why Pharaoh and his chiefs rejected Moses (peace be upon him) knowingly was: "What! should we believe in these two men who are human beings like ourselves and whose people are our bondsmen?" (Surah Al-Muminun: Ayat 47).

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُودَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ عِلْمًا ۚ وَقَالَا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي فَضَّلَنَا عَلَىٰ كَثِيرٍ مِّنْ عِبَادِهِ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ 15

(27:15) (On the other hand), We granted knowledge to David and Solomon[18] and they said: "All praise be to Allah Who has exalted us above many of His believing servants!"[19]

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

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

وَوَرِثَ سُلَيْمٰنُ دَاوٗدَ وَقَالَ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ عُلِّمْنَا مَنْطِقَ الطَّيْرِ وَاُوْتِيْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ؕ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَهُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْمُبِيْنُ 16

(27:16) And Solomon succeeded David[20] and said: "O people, we have been taught the speech of birds[21] and we have been endowed with all kinds of things.[22] Surely this is a conspicuous favour (from Allah)."

20. Succession here does not mean inheritance of wealth and properties, but the succession to the Prophet David (peace be upon him) in the prophethood and vicegerency. For the wealth and possessions, if at all transferred, could not be transferred to the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) only, because Prophet David (peace be upon him) had other children also. Therefore, this verse cannot be cited to refute the Hadith reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him), saying, “The inheritance left by us, the Prophets, is not divided as such. Whatever we leave behind is charity.” (Bukhari). And, “There is no heir to a Prophet. Whatever he leaves behind is divided among the needy and the indigent of the Muslims.” (Musnad Ahmad).

The Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) was the youngest son of the Prophet David (peace be upon him). His Hebrew name Solomon is a synonym of Salim (rightminded, affable). He succeeded the Prophet David (peace be upon him) in 965 B.C. and ruled his kingdom for forty years, till 926 B.C. (For other details of his life and works, see(E.N. 74-75 of Surah Al-Anbiyaa). Our commentators have greatly exaggerated the vastness of his kingdom, and have held that he ruled over a large part of the world. The fact, however, is that his kingdom comprised only the present Palestine and Transjordan and a part of Syria.

21. There is no mention in the Bible that the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) had been taught speech of the birds and animals, though the Israelite traditions contain a reference to it.

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

وَحُشِرَ لِسُلَيْمٰنَ جُنُوْدُهٗ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ وَالطَّيْرِ فَهُمْ يُوْزَعُوْنَ 17

(27:17) Hosts of jinn and humans and birds[23] were marshalled for Solomon and were kept under full control.

23. The Bible does not either make any mention that there were jinns in the Prophet Solomon's (peace be upon him) armies, and he took service from them; but the Talmud and the rabbinical traditions contain details of this. Some of the present-day writers have strained every nerve to prove that the words jinn and tair do not refer to the jinns and birds but to men who performed different duties in the Prophet Solomon's (peace be upon him) army. They say that the Jinn were the people of the mountain tribes whom Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) had subdued and who performed tasks of great strength and skill under him; and tair implies cavalry which could move much faster than the infantry. But these are indeed the worst examples of misinterpreting the Quran. The Quran here mentions three distinct kinds of the army consisting of the men, the jinns and the birds, and all the three have been qualified by the prefix al (alif-lam) to denote a class. Therefore, al-jinn and al-tair could not be included in al-ins (the men), but could be two separate and different classes from the men. Moreover, a person who has a little acquaintance with Arabic cannot imagine that in this language the mere word al-Jinn could ever imply a group of the men, or al-tair as troops mounted on horses, nor could any Arab understand these meanings from these words. Calling a man a jinn because of some supernatural feat of his, or a woman a fairy because of her beauty, or a fast moving person a bird, does not mean that the words jinn and fairy and bird will henceforth be taken to mean a powerful man and a beautiful woman and a fast moving person respectively. These are only the metaphoric and not the real meanings of these words. In a discourse, a word is used in its figurative instead of its real meaning, and the listeners also will take it in that meaning, only when there exists in the context a clear pointer to its being figurative. What, after all, is the pointer in the context here from which one may understand that the words jinn and tair have been used not in their real and lexical meaning but in their figurative meaning? Contrary to this, the work and the state of a member each of the two groups that have been mentioned in the following verses, fall entirely against the purport of this interpretation. If a person does not want to believe in something stated in the Quran, he should frankly say that he does not believe in it. But it would be moral cowardice and intellectual dishonesty if one should force the clear words of the Quran to give the meaning that he wants them to give, and tells the world that he believes in what the Quran says, whereas he does not, in fact, believe in it but believes in his own distorted meaning.

حَتّٰٓى اِذَآ اَتَوْا عَلٰى وَادِ النَّمْلِ ۙ قَالَتْ نَمْلَةٌ يّٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّمْلُ ادْخُلُوْا مَسٰكِنَكُمْ ۚ لَا يَحْطِمَنَّكُمْ
سُلَيْمٰنُ وَجُنُوْدُهٗ ۙ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ 18

(27:18) (Solomon was once on the move with them) until when they reached a valley of ants one of the ants said: "O ants, get into your holes, lest Solomon and his hosts crush you (under their feet) without even knowing."[24]

24. This verse also has been greatly misconstrued by some commentators of the present day. They say that wad-in naml does not mean "valley of the ants", but it is the name of a valley that was in Syria, and namlah does not mean an ant but it is the name of a tribe. Thus, according to them, the verse means this: "When the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) reached the valley of the ants, a Namilite said, O people of the Naml tribe ....." But this also

is an interpretation which is not supported by the words of the Quran. Even if we took wad-in-naml to be the name of a valley and supposed that it was inhabited by the tribe of Bani an-Naml, it would be against the Arabic idiom and usage to speak of a member of the tribe as namlah. Although there are many Arab tribes which have been named after the animals, e.g. Kalb (dog), Asad (lion), etc. Yet no Arab would ever say in respect of a member of the Kalb or the Asad tribe: "A dog said, or a lion said, etc." Therefore, it would be against the Arabic idiom to say in respect of a member of the Naml tribe: "An ant (namlah) said this." Then a member of the Naml tribe's warning the people of his tribe, saying, "O Namilites, get into your houses lest Solomon's hosts should trample you down without even knowing it," becomes meaningless, It has never happened that an army of men should have trampled down a group of men without knowing it. If the army has come with the intention of an attack, it would be useless for the other side to get into their houses, for in that case the invaders would follow them into their houses, and trample them more ruthlessly. And if the army is only on the routine march, it is just enough to clear off the way for it. Human beings may be harmed by the marching columns, but it can never happen that the soldiers on the march would trample down other men without knowing it. Therefore, if Bani an-Naml were a tribe of human beings, and one of its members were to warn his people, then in case of an attack, he would have said, "O Namilites, flee your houses and take refuge in the mountains lest Solomon's armies should destroy you." And in case there was no danger of an attack, he would have said, "O Namilites, clear off the way lest one of you should be harmed by the marching columns of Solomon's armies."

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

This story is also found in the Israelite traditions but its latter portion falls against the Quran as well as against the real dignity of the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him). According to it, when the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) was passing through a valley which abounded in ants, he heard an ant calling out to the other ants to say, "Get into your holes, otherwise you will be trampled down by Solomon's hosts." At this, Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) displayed great vanity before the ant to which the ant said, "What are you? - the product of a mere sperm drop!" Hearing this the Prophet Solomon felt greatly ashamed. This shows how the Quran corrects the wrong traditions of the Israelites, and cleanses the filthy spots with which they had themselves branded the characters of their prophets. It is these traditions about which the Western orientalists shamelessly claim that the Quran has plagiarized them for its narratives.

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

فَتَبَسَّمَ ضَاحِكًا مِّنْ قَوْلِهَا وَقَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِيٓ أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِيٓ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلٰى

وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضٰىهُ وَأَدْخِلْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِي عِبَادِكَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ 19

(27:19) Smiling at the ant's utterance, Solomon burst into laughter and said: "My Lord! Hold me under (Your) control[25] that I may render thanks for the favour which You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may act righteously in a manner that would please You. Include me, out of Your Mercy, among Your righteous servants."[26]

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

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

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

وَتَفَقَّدَ الطَّيْرَ فَقَالَ مَا لِيَ لَآ أَرَى الْهُدْهُدَ ۖ أَمْ كَانَ مِنَ الْغَآئِبِيْنَ 20

(27:20) (On another occasion) Solomon inspected the birds[27] and said: "Why is it that I do not see the hoopoe? Is he among the absentees?

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

لَأُعَذِّبَنَّهُۥ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا أَوْ لَأَاْذْبَحَنَّهُۥٓ أَوْ لَيَأْتِيَنِّى بِسُلْطَٰنٍ مُّبِينٍ 21

(27:21) I will inflict a severe punishment on him or maybe even slaughter him unless he comes forth with a convincing reason (for his absence)."[28]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

فَمَكَثَ غَيْرَ بَعِيدٍ فَقَالَ أَحَطْتُ بِمَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ وَجِئْتُكَ مِنْ سَبَإٍ بِنَبَإٍ يَقِينٍ 22

(27:22) Not before long the hoopoe came up and said: "I have obtained a knowledge which you could not. I have brought for you sure news about Sheba.[29]

29. Sheba were a well-known commercial people of southern Arabia, whose capital city of Marib lay about 55 miles to the north east of Sana, the present capital of Yaman. They rose to power after the decline of the Minaean Kingdom in about 1100 B.C. and flourished for a thousand years in Arabia. Then in 115 B.C. they were replaced by the Himyarites, the other well-known people of southern Arabia, who ruled Yaman and Hadramaut in Arabia and Habash in Africa. The Sabaeans controlled the whole trade that passed between eastern Africa, India, the Far East and Arabia, as well as Egypt, Syria, Greece and Rome. That is why they were famous for their wealth in the ancient times; so much so that according to the Greek historians they were the richest people of the world. Besides trade and commerce, another great reason for their prosperity was that they had built dams here and there in

their country to store rainwater for irrigation purposes, which had turned their whole land into a veritable garden. The Greek historians have made mention of the unusual greenery of their country; and the Quran also refers to it in (Surah Saba: Ayat 15). The statement of the hud-hud, "I have obtained knowledge of things of which you have no knowledge", does not imply that the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) was wholly unaware of Saba. Obviously, the ruler of Syria and Palestine whose kingdom extended to the northern shores of the Red Sea (Gulf of Aqabah), could not be unaware of a people who ruled the southern shores (Yaman) of the same Red Sea, and who also controlled an important pan of the international trade. Moreover, according to Psalms, Solomon's father, Prophet David (peace be upon them), knew Saba. We find the following words of his prayer in Psalms.

"Give the king thy judgment, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son (i.e. Solomon). The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba (i.e. of Yaman's and Habash's branches) shall offer gifts."

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

إِنِّي وَجَدتُّ امْرَأَةً تَمْلِكُهُمْ وَأُوتِيَتْ مِن كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَلَهَا عَرْشٌ عَظِيمٌ 23

(27:23) I found there a woman ruling over them, one who has been endowed with all things and has a mighty throne.

وَجَدتُّهَا وَقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُونَ لِلشَّمْسِ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ فَهُمْ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ 24

(27:24) I found that she and her people prostrate themselves before the sun rather than Allah.[30]" Satan[31] has made their deeds appear attractive to them[32] and has, thus, debarred them from the Right Path so they do not find true guidance

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

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

mushriks of Makkah, for whose admonition this story has been related. From among the commentators, Allamah Alusi, the author of Ruh-al-Maani, also has preferred the same opinion.

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

أَلَّا يَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي يُخْرِجُ الْخَبْءَ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُخْفُونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ 25

(27:25) that they would prostrate themselves before Allah Who brings to light all that is hidden in the heavens and the earth[33] and knows all that you conceal and all that you reveal.[34]

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

34. That is, His knowledge embraces everything, the open and hidden are alike for Him. He is aware of everything. By citing these two attributes of Allah the object is to impress that if they had not been deluded by Satan, they could have seen the right way clearly. They could have perceived that the hot burning sphere of the sun which has no sense of its own existence, did not deserve to be worshiped but worship was due to Him alone who is the All-Knowing and the All-Wise Being, and whose power is bringing into existence new and ever new phenomena every moment.

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ۩ 26

(27:26) Allah - none is worthy of worship save He; He is the Lord of the Mighty Throne.[35]

35. This is one of the verses of the Quran, where its recital makes it obligatory to perform a Sajdah (prostration), and there is a consensus on this of the Muslim jurists. The object of performing a Sajdah here is that a believer should set himself apart from the sun-worshipers

and should declare by his action that he does not regard the sun but Allah Almighty alone as his Deity and Lord.

قَالَ سَنَنظُرُ أَصَدَقْتَ أَمْ كُنتَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ 27

(27:27) Solomon said: "Soon shall we see whether you have spoken the truth or are one of those that lie.

اذْهَب بِّكِتَابِي هَٰذَا فَأَلْقِهْ إِلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ فَانظُرْ مَاذَا يَرْجِعُونَ 28

(27:28) Take this letter of mine, deliver it to them, and then draw back from them, and observe what they do."[36]

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

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَؤُا إِنِّي أُلْقِيَ إِلَيَّ كِتَابٌ كَرِيمٌ 29

(27:29) The Queen said:" Know my nobles that a gracious letter has been delivered to me.

اِنَّهٗ مِنۡ سُلَيۡمٰنَ وَاِنَّهٗ بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ ۙ 30

(27:30) It is from Solomon, and it is: "In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate."

اَلَّا تَعۡلُوۡا عَلَىَّ وَاۡتُوۡنِىۡ مُسۡلِمِيۡنَ ؕ 31

(27:31) (It says): "Do not act towards me with defiance, but come to me in submission."[37]

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

“Present yourselves in submission”; and (2) “present yourselves as Muslims (after embracing Islam).” The first meaning is in accordance with the Prophet Solomon’s (peace be upon him) position as a ruler, and the second with his position as a prophet. Probably this comprehensive word was used in order to convey both the meanings through the letter. The same sort of invitation has always been extended by Islam to independent nations and governments that they should either accept Islam and become equal partners in the Islamic system of life, or surrender political independence and submit to the system of Islam and pay Jizyah.

قَالَتۡ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الۡمَلَؤُا اَفۡتُوۡنِىۡ فِىۡۤ اَمۡرِىۡ ۚ مَا كُنۡتُ قَاطِعَةً اَمۡرًا حَتّٰى تَشۡهَدُوۡنِ 32

(27:32) (After reading the letter) the Queen said: "Nobles, let me have your counsel in this matter for I make no firm decision without you."[38]

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

قَالُوۡا نَحۡنُ اُولُوۡا قُوَّةٍ وَّاُولُوۡا بَاۡسٍ شَدِيۡدٍ ۙ وَّالۡاَمۡرُ اِلَيۡكِ فَانۡظُرِىۡ مَاذَا تَاۡمُرِيۡنَ 33

(27:33) They said: "We are strong and are given to vehement fighting. But the decision is yours. Therefore, consider what you would like to command."

قَالَتْ إِنَّ الْمُلُوكَ إِذَا دَخَلُوا قَرْيَةً أَفْسَدُوهَا وَجَعَلُوا أَعِزَّةَ أَهْلِهَا أَذِلَّةً ۚ وَكَذَٰلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ 34

(27:34) The Queen said: "When the kings enter a country they cause corruption in it and abase those of its people who are held in honour.[39] This is what they are wont to do.[40]

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

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

وَإِنِّي مُرْسِلَةٌ إِلَيْهِم بِهَدِيَّةٍ فَنَاظِرَةٌ بِمَ يَرْجِعُ الْمُرْسَلُونَ 35

(27:35) I will send them a gift and then see with what answer my envoys return."

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ سُلَيْمَانَ قَالَ أَتُمِدُّونَنِ بِمَالٍ فَمَا آتَانِيَ اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا آتَاكُم بَلْ أَنتُم بِهَدِيَّتِكُمْ تَفْرَحُونَ 36

(27:36) Now, when (the envoy of the Queen) came to Solomon, he said: "Do you want to aid me with wealth? Whatever Allah has granted me is much more than what He has given you.[41] (Keep for yourselves) your gift in which you are exulting.

41. This sentence is not meant to express pride and vanity. What it means to say is this: "I have no desire for your wealth; I only desire that you should believe, or at least submit to a

righteous system. If you agree to neither of these alternatives, it is not possible for me to accept the bribes of wealth and leave you free in the matter of a polytheistic and wicked system of life. What my Lord has given me is enough for me to cherish any desire for your wealth.

اِرۡجِعۡ اِلَيۡهِمۡ فَلَنَاۡتِيَنَّهُمۡ بِجُنُوۡدٍ لَّا قِبَلَ لَهُمۡ بِهَا وَلَنُخۡرِجَنَّهُمۡ مِّنۡهَاۤ اَذِلَّةً وَّهُمۡ صٰغِرُوۡنَ 37

(27:37) Envoy, go back to those who sent you and we shall certainly come upon them with hosts[42] whom they will be unable to resist. We shall drive them out from there, and they will suffer humiliation and disgrace."

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

قَالَ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الۡمَلَؤُا اَيُّكُمۡ يَاۡتِيۡنِىۡ بِعَرۡشِهَا قَبۡلَ اَنۡ يَّاۡتُوۡنِىۡ مُسۡلِمِيۡنَ 38

(27:38) Solomon said:[43] "My nobles, which of you can bring me her throne before they come to me in submission?"[44]

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

44. That is, the same throne about which the hoopoe (hudhud) had reported, “She has a splendid throne.” Some commentators have given a strange interpretation here. They say that the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) wanted to have the throne before him before the queen’s arrival because he wanted to take possession of it. For, he feared that if the queen became a Muslim. It would be unlawful to take possession of her property without her approval: therefore, he made haste to have the queen’s throne with him even before her arrival in Jerusalem, because at that time it was lawful to take it into his possession. May Allah pardon us! This is a strange concept about the intention of a prophet. Why should one not understand the verse in the light that Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) wanted to show a miracle also to the queen and her courtiers besides preaching his message so that she might know what extraordinary powers Allah, Lord of the worlds, had granted His prophet so that she might be convinced that Solomon (peace be upon him) was surely a prophet of Allah? Some modern commentators have put an even more strange meaning on this verse.

They translate the verse thus: “Which of you can bring me a throne for the queen:” whereas the Quran has used the word bi-arshi-ha which means “her throne”, and not biarshil- laha, “a throne for her”. They mistranslate the verse in order to get rid of what the Quran has stated that the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) wanted the queen’s own throne to be brought froth Yaman to Jerusalem and that too before the queen’s arrival.

قَالَ عِفْرِيتٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ اَنَا اٰتِيْكَ بِهٖ قَبْلَ اَنْ تَقُوْمَ مِنْ مَّقَامِكَ ۚ وَاِنِّيْ عَلَيْهِ لَقَوِيٌّ اَمِيْنٌ 39

(27:39) A stalwart of the jinn said: "I will bring it to you before you rise from your council.[45] Surely I have the power to do so and I am trustworthy."[46]

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

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

قَالَ الَّذِيْ عِنْدَهٗ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ اَنَا اٰتِيْكَ بِهٖ قَبْلَ اَنْ يَّرْتَدَّ اِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ ۭ فَلَمَّا رَاٰهُ مُسْتَقِرًّا عِنْدَهٗ قَالَ هٰذَا مِنْ فَضْلِ رَبِّيْ ۡ لِيَبْلُوَنِيْٓ ءَاَشْكُرُ اَمْ اَكْفُرُ ۭ وَمَنْ شَكَرَ فَاِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَاِنَّ رَبِّيْ غَنِيٌّ كَرِيْمٌ 40

(27:40) And he who had some knowledge of the Book said: "I will bring it before the twinkling of your eye."[47] When Solomon saw the throne placed firmly beside him, he cried out: "This is by the grace of my Lord so that He may test me whether I give thanks for (His Bounty) or act with ingratitude.[48] Whoever is grateful is so to his own

good; and whoever is ungrateful, let him know that my Lord is Immensely Resourceful, Most Bountiful."[49]

47. Nothing is known with certainty as to who this person was, what special knowledge he had and what book is referred to here, the knowledge of which he had. No explanation of these things has been given either in the Quran or in any authentic Hadith. Some of the commentators say that it was an angel, others say that it was a man. Then they differ as to the identity of the man. Someone mentions the name of Asaf bin Barchiah, who, according to the rabbinical traditions, was the Prince of Men. Someone says that he was Khidr, someone mentions some other name, and Imam Razi insists that it was the Prophet Solomon himself. But none of these has any reliable source for this information, and Imam Razi's opinion does not even fit in with the Quranic context. Likewise, about the book also the commentators differ. Someone says that it refers to Lauh-i-Mahfuz (the Preserved Tablet) and some other takes it for the Book of Law. But all this is mere guess work. Similar guesses have been made about the knowledge the man had from the book. We only know and believe what has been said in the Quran, or what becomes evident from its words. In any case the person was not from among the jinns, and possibly he was a man. He possessed some extraordinary knowledge, which had been derived from some Divine Book (al-Kitab). The jinn had claimed to fetch the throne within a few hours by means of his physical strength; this man fetched it in a moment by the power of his knowledge.

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

"I will bring it to you before that your gaze returns to you. Then when he saw it placed before him."

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

As for the question as to how a royal throne was fetched over a distance of 1,500 miles in the twinkling of an eye, it can be briefly answered thus: "The concepts of time and space, and matter and movement, that we have formed on the basis of our experiments and observations, are only applicable to us. These concepts are not correct in respect to God, nor is He bound by these. Not to speak of an ordinary throne, His power can make the sun; and

even much larger stars, travel millions of millions of miles in the matter of moments. The God who by His one command brought this huge universe into being, has the power to have moved the throne of the queen of Sheba at a speed greater than the speed of light. In this very Quran it has been stated that Allah, by His powers, took his servant Muhammad (peace be upon him) from Makkah to Jerusalem and also brought him back in the same night.

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

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

قَالَ نَكِّرُوْا لَهَا عَرْشَهَا نَنْظُرْ اَتَهْتَدِيْٓ اَمْ تَكُوْنُ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَهْتَدُوْنَ 41

(27:41) Solomon said:[50]" Set the throne before her casually, and let us see whether she gets to the Truth or is one of those who are not guided to what is right."[51]

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

51. This is a meaningful sentence, which means: (1) "Whether she understands or not that it is her own throne which has been fetched in no time from her capital to distant place like Jerusalem;" and also (2) "whether she is guided aright after seeing this wonderful miracle, or persists in her error." This refutes the wrong idea of the people who say that the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) intended to take possession of the throne. Here he himself clearly says that he had done this in order to help the queen see guidance.

فَلَمَّا جَآءَتْ قِيْلَ اَهٰكَذَا عَرْشُكِ ۭ قَالَتْ كَاَنَّهٗ هُوَ ۚ وَاُوْتِيْنَا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهَا وَكُنَّا

مُسْلِمِيْنَ 42

(27:42) When the Queen arrived, she was asked: "Is your throne like this one?" She said: "It seems as if it is the same.[52]We had already come to know this and we had submitted ourselves."[53]

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

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

وَصَدَّهَا مَا كَانَتْ تَّعْبُدُ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّهَا كَانَتْ مِنْ قَوْمٍ كٰفِرِيْنَ 43

(27:43) What prevented her (from accepting the True Faith) was her worshipping deities other than Allah, for she belonged to an unbelieving people.[54]

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

قِيْلَ لَهَا ادْخُلِي الصَّرْحَ ۚ فَلَمَّا رَاَتْهُ حَسِبَتْهُ لُجَّةً وَّكَشَفَتْ عَنْ سَاقَيْهَا ؕ قَالَ اِنَّهٗ
صَرْحٌ مُّمَرَّدٌ مِّنْ قَوَارِيْرَ ؕ قَالَتْ رَبِّ اِنِّيْ ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِيْ وَاَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ سُلَيْمٰنَ لِلّٰهِ
رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ع 44

(27:44) She was told: "Enter the palace." But when she saw it, she thought it was a pool of water and she bared both her calves (to enter into it). Solomon said: "This is a slippery floor of crystal."[55] Thereupon she cried out: "My Lord, I have been inflicting much wrong on myself. Now I submit myself with Solomon to Allah, the Lord of the whole Universe."[56]

55. This was the last thing that opened queen's eyes. The first thing was Solomon's (peace be upon him) letter that began with the name of the All-Compassionate, the All- Merciful Allah, a way different front the common custom prevalent among the kings. The second was his rejection of her gifts, which made the queen understand that he was a different kind of king. The third was the report made by the queen's envoys from which she came to know about Solomon's pious life, his wisdom and his message of the truth. This very thing had induced her to travel to Jerusalem to personally meet the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him), and to this she had referred when she said: "and we had surrendered (to Allah)". The fourth thing was the removal of her throne from Marib to Jerusalem in no time, from which the queen realized that he had Allah's power with him. Now this was the last thing that removed every doubt from her mind regarding the unique and great personality of the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him). When she saw that in spite of possessing every means of comfort and ease and a grand palace for a dwelling, he was so free from every conceit, so God-fearing and righteous and so grateful to God that he bowed before Him for every small favor and his life was so different from the life of those who were enamored of the world, she exclaimed the words that follow.

56. This story of the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) and the queen of Sheba has been related in the Old and the New Testaments and the Israelite traditions in different ways, but the Quranic narration differs from all others. A resume of the story as given in the Old Testament is as follows:

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

In the New Testament, the following sentence only has been reported from a discourse of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) about the queen of Sheba.

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

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

45 وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَآ اِلٰى ثَمُوْدَ اَخَاهُمْ صٰلِحًا اَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ فَاِذَا هُمْ فَرِيْقٰنِ يَخْتَصِمُوْنَ

(27:45) And[57] We sent to Thamud their brother Salih (with the Message): "Serve Allah," but all of a sudden they became split into two quarrelling factions.[58]

57. For comparison, see (Surah Al-Aaraf: Ayats 73-79), (Surah Hud: Ayats 61-68), (Surah Ash-Shuara: Ayats 141- 159), (Surah Al-Qamar: Ayats 23-32), (Surah Ash-Shams: Ayats 11-15).

58. That is, as soon as the Prophet Salih (peace be upon him) embarked on his mission, his people were divined into two groups, the believers and the disbelievers, and a conflict started between them as stated elsewhere in the Quran. The chiefs of his tribe, who were full of pride, said to those who had believed from among the oppressed people, "Do you know it for certain that Salih is a Messenger from his Lord?" They replied, "Indeed, we believe in the message with which he has been sent." But those who had arrogant assumption of

superiority, said, “We deny that which you believe”. (Surah Al-Aaraf: Ayats 75-76). One should note that precisely the same situation arose in Makkah at the advent of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The nation was divided into two factions and a conflict started between them. Therefore, this story fully applies to the conditions in which these verses were revealed.

قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ لِمَ تَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ ۚ لَوْلَا تَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ 46

(27:46) Salih said: "My people, why do you wish to hasten that evil rather than good[59] should come upon you? Why should you not seek pardon from Allah so that mercy be shown to you?"

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

قَالُوا اطَّيَّرْنَا بِكَ وَبِمَنْ مَّعَكَ ۭ قَالَ طٰۗىِٕرُكُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ بَلْ اَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ تُفْتَنُوْنَ 47

(27:47) They said: "We augur ill of you and those who are with you."[60] Salih replied: "Your augury is with Allah. The truth is that you are a people who are being tried."[61]

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

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

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

61. That is, "The truth is not that which you understand it to be. The fact which you have not yet realized is that my advent has put you to the test. Until my arrival you were following a beaten track in your ignorance. You could not recognize the truth from the falsehood; you had no criterion for judging the genuine from the counterfeit; your worst people were lording over your best people, who were rolling in the dust. But now a criterion has come against which you will all be judged and assessed. Now a balance has been set up publicly, which will weigh everybody according to his true worth. Now both the truth and the falsehood have been made manifest. Whoever accepts the truth will weigh heavy whether he was not being held even worth a farthing so far; and whoever persists in falsehood will not weigh a gram even though he was being esteemed as the chief of the chiefs before this. Now the judgment will not be based on the nobility or otherwise of the family one came of, or the abundance of the means and resources that one possessed, or one's physical strength, but on this whether one accepted the truth gracefully or preferred to remain attached to falsehood."

وَكَانَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ تِسْعَةُ رَهْطٍ يُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ 48

(27:48) Now there were nine ring-leaders[62] in the city who created corruption in the land and never worked to set things right.

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

قَالُوا تَقَاسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ لَنُبَيِّتَنَّهُ وَأَهْلَهُ ثُمَّ لَنَقُولَنَّ لِوَلِيِّهِ مَا شَهِدْنَا مَهْلِكَ أَهْلِهِ وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ 49

(27:49) They said: "Swear to one another in the name of Allah that we shall make a sudden night swoop on Salih and his family and will then tell their heirs[63] that we did not witness the destruction of his family. We are indeed truthful."[64]

63. "The guardian": the chief of the Prophet Salih's (peace be upon him) tribe, who, according to the ancient tribal tradition and custom, could make a claim to blood vengeance. The same was the position in Makkah of the Prophet's uncle (peace be upon him), Abu Talib. The Quraish were hesitant that if they attacked and killed the Prophet (peace be upon him), Abu Talib, the chief of Bani Hashim, would come out with a claim to blood vengeance on behalf of his clan.

64. This precisely was the kind of plot which the Makkan chiefs of the clans were devising against the Prophet (peace be upon him), and they devised the same ultimately on the

occasion of migration (Hijrah) to kill him. They decided that men from all the clans would attack him in a body so that the Bani Hashim could not hold any one of the clans as responsible for the murder, and, therefore, would find it impossible to fight all of them at one and the same time.

وَمَكَرُوْا مَكْرًا وَّمَكَرْنَا مَكْرًا وَّهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ 50

(27:50) Thus they planned and We too planned, the while they did not know.[65]

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

فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ مَكْرِهِمْ ۙ اَنَّا دَمَّرْنٰهُمْ وَقَوْمَهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ 51

(27:51) So see what was the outcome of the plan they made: We utterly destroyed them and their people, all of them.

فَتِلْكَ بُيُوْتُهُمْ خَاوِيَةً ۢ بِمَا ظَلَمُوْا ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ 52

(27:52) Now behold their houses that lie in utter ruins because of their wrong-doing. Verily there is a Sign in this for the people who know.[66]

66. That is, the ignorant people will say, "There is no link between the Prophet Salih (peace be upon him) and his shecamel and the earthquake which struck the people of Thamud. These things have their natural causes. Their occurrence or otherwise has nothing to do with the piety and wickedness of the people of a place, with their highhandedness or their show of mercy. It is meaningless merely to say that such and such a city or land was filled with sin and wickedness, and therefore, it was overwhelmed by flood, or its habitation turned upside down by an earthquake, or it was ruined by a sudden disaster." But the people who possess knowledge know that this universe is being ruled by an All-Wise, All-Knowing One Who is deciding the destinies. His decisions are not subject to physical causes, but the physical causes are subject to His will. His decisions to debase or exalt nations are not taken blindly but with wisdom and justice. In His Book of Law there is also included the principle of retribution, according to which the wicked are made to suffer for their evil deeds even in this world, on moral grounds. The people who are aware of these realities, cannot explain away the occurrence of an earthquake by citing physical and natural causes; they will rather

look upon them as the scourge of warning for themselves, and they will learn lessons from it. They will try to understand those moral causes because of which the Creator annihilated a flourishing nation, which He Himself had created. They will divert their conduct and attitude from the track that brings Allah's wrath to the way that joins them to His mercy.

وَأَنجَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ 53

(27:53) And We delivered those who believed and were wont to avoid disobeying (Allah).

وَلُوطًا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ وَأَنتُمْ تُبْصِرُونَ 54

(27:54) We also sent Lot,[67] and recall when he told his people: "Do you commit shameless acts with your eyes open?[68]

67. For comparison, see (Surah Al-Aaraf: Ayats 80-84); (Surah Hud: Ayats 74-83); (Surah Al-Hijr: Ayats 57-77); (Surah Al-Anbiya: Ayats 71-75); (Surah Ash-Shuara: Ayats 160-174); (Surah Al-Ankabut: Ayats 28-75); (Surah As-Saffat: Ayats 133-138); (Surah Al-Qamar: Ayats 33-39).

68. This can have several meanings and probably all are implied: (1) “That you are not unaware of this act’s being wicked, but you commit it knowing it to be so”. (2) “You are also not unaware that the man has not been created for the man’s sexual desire, but the intimate relationship is between man and woman, and the distinction between them (man and woman) is not such as you cannot perceive, yet with open eyes you commit this abominable act.” (3) “You indulge in this indecency publicly when there are people watching you”, as stated in (Surah Al-Ankabut: Ayat 29), thus: “And you indulge in indecencies in your assemblies.”

أَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِّن دُونِ النِّسَاءِ ۚ بَلْ أَنتُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُونَ 55

(27:55) Do you lustfully approach men instead of women? Nay, you engage in acts of sheer ignorance."[69]

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

فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهٖٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوْٓا اَخْرِجُوْٓا اٰلَ لُوْطٍ مِّنْ قَرْيَتِكُمْ ۚ اِنَّهُمْ اُنَاسٌ

يَّتَطَهَّرُوْنَ 56

(27:56) But this had only one answer from his people. They said: "Expel Lot's folk from your city. They pretend to be absolutely clean."

فَاَنْجَيْنٰهُ وَاَهْلَهٗٓ اِلَّا امْرَاَتَهٗ ۖ قَدَّرْنٰهَا مِنَ الْغٰبِرِيْنَ 57

(27:57) Eventually We saved (Lot) and his family, except his wife. We had decreed that she should be among those who would remain behind.[70]

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

وَاَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَّطَرًا ۚ فَسَآءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنْذَرِيْنَ ع 58

(27:58) And We rained down upon them a rain. It was an evil rain for those who had already been warned.

قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ وَسَلٰمٌ عَلٰى عِبَادِهِ الَّذِيْنَ اصْطَفٰى ۭ ءٰٓاللّٰهُ خَيْرٌ اَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ۭ 59

(27:59) Say, (O Muhammad):[71] "All praise be to Allah, and peace be on those of His servants whom He has chosen." (Ask them): "Who is better: Allah or the false gods that they associate with Him as His partners?[72]

71. From here starts the second discourse, and this is its introductory sentence. This introduction teaches how the Muslims should begin a speech. That is why the truly Islamic-minded people have always been starting their speeches and discourses with the praise of Allah and salutation on His righteous servants. But now this is looked upon as characteristic of bigotry, and the present-day Muslim speakers have no idea of starting their speech with these words, or feel shy of doing so.

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

not venture to say that their deities were better. But if they acknowledged that Allah is better it would demolish their whole creed, for then it would be unreasonable to adopt the inferior against the superior creed. The Quran at the very outset made the opponents helpless. After this, pointed questions have been asked, one after the other, about the manifestations of the power and creation of Allah to the effect: "Whose works are these? Is there besides Allah any other god also associated with these works? If not, why have you then set up these others as your deities?"

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

اَمَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَاَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً ۚ فَاَنْۢبَتْنَا بِهٖ حَدَآئِقَ
ذَاتَ بَهْجَةٍ ۚ مَا كَانَ لَكُمْ اَنْ تُنْۢبِتُوْا شَجَرَهَا ۗ ءَاِلٰهٌ مَّعَ اللّٰهِ ۗ بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ
يَّعْدِلُوْنَ ۗ 60

(27:60) Who is it that has created the heavens and the earth and sent down for you water from the sky and then We caused to grow therewith orchards full of beauty whose trees you could never grow. Is there any god associated with Allah (in these tasks)?"[73] Nay, they are a people who are veering away from the Right Path.

73. No one from among the mushriks could answer that someone other than Allah had done these works, or someone else was Allah's associate in doing these. The Quran at other places says with respect to the pagans of Makkah and the Arab mushrikin: "If you ask them, who has created the heavens and the earth?" they will surely say: "The All-Mighty, the All-Knowing One has created them." (Surah Az-Zukhruf: Ayat 9). "And if you ask them, who has created them?" they will surely say, 'Allah'. (Surah Az-Zukhruf: Ayat 87), "If you ask them, who sent down rain water from the sky and thereby raised the dead earth back to life?" they will surely say, 'Allah'. (Surah Al- Ankabut: Ayat 63). "Ask them, who provides for you from the heavens and the earth? who has power over these faculties of hearing and sight? who brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living? who controls and directs the system of the universe?" they will surely say, 'Allah'." (Surah Yunus: Ayat 31). Not only the polytheists of Arabia but of the whole world generally acknowledged, and acknowledge even today, that Allah is the Creator of the universe and He alone controls and directs its system. Therefore, none of them could answer this question even obstinately for the sake of the argument that their deities were Allah's associates in those works, for if he had done so, thousands of his own people would have belied him saying that, that was not their belief.

This and the other questions that follow not only contain a refutation of the creed of shirk (polytheism) but of atheism as well. For example, in this first very question, it has been asked, "Who has sent down rainwater and caused to spring up by it beautiful gardens?"

Just consider whether the presence of the substances essential for the growth of countless kinds of plant life, in the soil or near the soil, and the existence in water of those very qualities which are in accordance with the requirements of animal and vegetable life, and the evaporation of this water again and again from the seas, and its condensation and raining regularly in different parts of the earth from time to time, and the coordination between the soil and the air, the water, the temperature; etc, conducive to proper growth of plant life and fulfillment of the countless requirements of every sort of animal life, could be just accidental, or the result of the wise scheming and planning the supreme power and will of an All-Wise Designer. And is it possible that this accident should continue to recur constantly for millions and millions of years? Only an obstinate person who has been blinded by prejudice will regard it as accidental, for no truth loving, sensible person can make such a senseless claim or accept it.

أَمَّنْ جَعَلَ الْأَرْضَ قَرَارًا وَّجَعَلَ خِلٰلَهَآ أَنْهٰرًا وَّجَعَلَ لَهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ
حَاجِزًا ۗ ءَإِلٰهٌ مَّعَ اللّٰهِ ۚ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۗ 61

(27:61) Who is it Who has made the earth a place of resort,[74] and has caused rivers to flow in its midst, and has placed upon it firm mountains, and has placed a barrier between two masses of water?[75] Is there any god associated with Allah (in these tasks)? Nay; but most of them do not know.

74. It is not a simple thing for the earth to be a place of rest for the countless kinds of different creations living on it. If man looks into the wise harmony and coordination with which this sphere of the earth has been established, he is simply amazed and starts feeling that these harmonies and concordances and relations could not be brought about without the grand design of an All-Wise, All Knowing and All-Powerful God. This sphere of the earth is floating in space and is not resting on anything, yet there is no commotion and no vibration in its movement. Had there been any vibration in it, such as we experience during an earthquake, life could not exist here. This sphere comes before the sun and hides from it regularly, which causes the alternation of the day and night. Had it turned the same face perpetually towards the sun and kept the other side always hidden, no life could be possible here, for on the bright side all life would have been shriveled up, and on the dark side all life would have been frozen to death. The sphere is enveloped by a five hundred mile thick atmosphere, which protects it against the continual bombardment of meteors, otherwise the twenty million meteors on the average, which dart towards the earth daily at 30 miles per second, would have caused such destruction as would not have allowed any man animal or tree to survive. The same atmosphere controls the temperature, raises clouds from the oceans, carries water to different parts of the earth and provides the required gases that sustain the human, animal and plant life. Without it the earth could not become a fit place of rest for any kind of animal life. Just under the earth's surface all those minerals and chemicals which are essential to the survival of vegetable and animal life have been provided in abundance. Wherever these natural resources do not exist, the land there cannot sustain any kind of life. A great store of water has been arranged on the earth in the form of oceans, rivers, lakes, springs and underground channels and snow on the mountains which

melts and flows down in the form of rivers. Without such an arrangement there could be no life. Then the earth has been endowed with an appropriate gravitational pull by which it keeps the water and the air and all other things found on it attracted to it. If this pull had been a little less strong, it could not have stopped the air and the water from escaping. It would also have so much increased the temperature that life here would have become difficult. On the other hand, if the gravitational pull had been a little stronger, the atmosphere would have been denser, its pressure would have increased, evaporation would have become difficult and rains impossible; the cold would have increased and less areas on earth would have been inhabitable; men and animals would have been shorter in size but heavier in weight, which would have made movement difficult. Besides, this sphere has been located at a suitable distance from the sun, which is most appropriate for the population here. If the distance had been longer, the earth would have received less of heat, the climate would have been much colder, the seasons much longer and the earth would be hardly inhabitable. On the other hand, if the distance had been shorter, the intensity of the heat along with other factors would have rendered it unfit for the kind of life man is living here.

These are a few of those harmonies and concordances due to which earth has become a place of rest for its population. A man with a little common sense who is aware of these facts cannot imagine for a moment that these concordances have come into existence without the design of an All-Wise Creator, as a mere accident, nor can he ever conceive that a god or goddess, jinn or prophet, saint or angel, could have had any hand in the creation and bringing into operation of this grand design.

75. That is, the bodies of sweet and saline waters that exist on the earth but do not intermingle. Underground water channels mostly flow separately with sweet water and saline water side by side. Even in the middle of the bitter seas there exist at some places springs of sweet water; their current remains separate from the sea water and the sea passengers obtain their drinking water from it. See, (E.N. 68 of Surah Al-Furqan).

أَمَّن يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ الْأَرْضِ ۗ أَإِلَٰهٌ مَّعَ اللَّهِ ۚ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ ۚ 62

(27:62) Who is it Who heeds the prayers of the distressed when he calls out to Him and Who removes his affliction?[76] And who is it Who makes you vicegerents of the earth?[77] Is there any god associated with Allah (in this task)? How little do you reflect!

76. The Arab polytheists themselves knew and acknowledged that Allah alone could avert a disaster. Therefore, the Quran reminds them again and again that they implore Allah alone for help when they are confronted by a calamity. But when the calamity is removed, they start invoking others besides Allah. (See (E.Ns. 29 to 41 of Surah Al-Anaam); (Surah Yunus: Ayats 21-22); (E.N. 46 of Surah An-Nahl); and (E.N. 84 of Surah Bani-Israil). And this is not only true of the Arab polytheists but of all polytheists; so much so that even the Russian atheists who are regularly campaigning against God-worship, had to invoke God when in the Second World War they were tightly encircled by the German forces.

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

أَمَّنْ يَّهْدِيكُمْ فِي ظُلُمٰتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَنْ يُّرْسِلُ الرِّيٰحَ بُشْرًۢا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ؕ
ءَاِلٰهٌ مَّعَ اللّٰهِ ؕ تَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ؕ 63

(27:63) Who is it Who guides you through the darkness on land and sea?[78] And Who sends winds as heralds of good tidings ahead of His Mercy?[79] Is there any god associated with Allah (in this task)? Exalted be Allah above whatever they associate with Him in His Divinity!

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

79. "His mercy" the rain whose coming is promptly foretold by the winds.

أَمَّنْ يَّبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ وَمَنْ يَّرْزُقُكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ ءَاِلٰهٌ مَّعَ اللّٰهِ ؕ قُلْ
هَاتُوْا بُرْهَانَكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ 64

(27:64) Who is it Who creates in the first instance and then repeats it?[80] Who is it Who provides you with sustenance from the heavens and the earth?[81] Is there any god associated with Allah (in these tasks)? Say: "Bring forth your evidence, if you are truthful."[82]

80. The simple fact that has been expressed in this one sentence is so vast in meaning and detail that as one considers it more and more deeply, one goes on getting new and ever new proofs of Allah's existence and His unity. To the first place, take the question of the creation itself. Man by his knowledge has not been able to discover what life is, and how and where it comes from. So far the admitted scientific fact is that the mere arrangement of inanimate matter by itself cannot bring about life. Though the atheists assume, unscientifically, that life comes into existence automatically when all the elements essential for its creation combine together accidentally in the right proportion, yet if the mathematical law of chance is applied to it, the possibility of its occurrence comes to naught. All attempts made so far to produce animate matter out of inanimate matter experimentally in the laboratory have met with utter failure in spite of employing every possible care. At the most what has been created is DNA, which is the basic constituent of the living cell. This is the essence of life but

not life itself. Life in itself even now is a miracle which cannot be explained scientifically except by saying that it is the result of a Creator's will and command and design.

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

This was about the beginning of the creation. Now let us consider its reproduction. The Creator has placed in the constitution and make-up of every animal and vegetable species such a wonderful mechanism, which goes on producing through its countless members an endless race exactly with its own distinctive form and nature and characteristics, and it never has happened even by mistake that in these millions and millions of tiny sex workshops a certain workshop of a species may have turned out a specimen of a different species. The observations of modern Genetics in this connection present wonderful facts. Every plant has been so endowed with the capability of procreating its species that the new generation should possess all the distinctive characteristics of its own species and its every member should be distinguished in its special features from the members of all other species. This element for the survival of the species and its procreation is contained in a part of a cell of every plant, which can be seen with effort only through a most powerful microscope. This tiny engineer directs the whole development the plant precisely and definitely on the way which is the way of its own distinctive species. That is why all the plants that have emerged from a grain of wheat anywhere in the world have in turn produced only wheat. In no climate and in no region has it ever happened that from the whole race of a grain of wheat even a single grain of barley might have emerged. The same is the case with animals and men. None of them has been created just for once, but on an inconceivably high scale a huge factory of reproduction is functioning every where, which is constantly bringing into existence, from the members of every species, countless other members of the same species. If one considers the microscopic germ of procreation which along with all the distinctive features and hereditary characteristics of its species is found in a small portion of its tiny self and then looks at the extremely delicate and complex physiological system and the subtle, intricate processes by which the procreative seed of every member of every species produces a member of the same species, one cannot conceive for a moment that such a tine and subtle system could come into being by itself, and then keeps on functioning by itself in millions and millions of the members of different species. This thing stands in need of an

All-Wise Designer not only for its beginning but for its proper and perpetual functioning. It also needs an Administrator Who is at once Wise and Ever-Living and Self-Subsistent, who is ever watching and guiding the work of these workshops.

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

81. The question of the provision of sustenance also is not so simple as a person may feel it to be from a cursory study of this brief sentence. There exist on this earth millions of animal and vegetable species, each comprising billions of members having different food requirements. The Creator has arranged the means of sustenance for each species in such abundance and so within easy reach that members of no species ever go without food. Then the agencies of the earth and sky which combine and work together in this system are varied and countless. Unless there is the right kind of coordination and harmony between the heat, light, air, water and the diverse substances of the earth, not a single particle of food can be produced. Can anyone conceive that this wise system could come about just accidentally without the intelligent planning and design of an All-Wise Creator? And can anybody in his senses imagine that in this system there could be any hand of a jinn or an angel or the spirit of a pious man?

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

قُلْ لَّا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ ؕ وَمَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ اَيَّانَ

يُبْعَثُوْنَ 65

(27:65) Say: "None in the heavens or on the earth[83] has knowledge of the Unseen save Allah. They do not know when they will be raised to life."[84]

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

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

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

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

one else with his limited self have this vast and all-embracing knowledge and what has he to do with the functions of creation and sustenance that he should know these things?

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

That is why it is a fundamental article of Islam that none other than Allah is the Knower of the hidden and unseen things. Allah may disclose whatever of His information He wills to whomsoever of His servants He pleases and blesses him with the knowledge of one or more of the hidden things as a whole. Being the Knower of all hidden and unseen things is the attribute only of Allah, Who is the Lord of all creation "He alone has the keys of the 'unseen' of which none has the knowledge but He." (Surah Al-Anaam: Ayat 59). "Allah alone has the knowledge of the Hour: He alone sends down the rain and He alone knows what is (taking shape) in the wombs of the mothers. No living being knows what he will earn the next day, nor does anybody know in what land he will die." (Surah Luqman: Ayat 34). "He knows what is before the people and also what is hidden from them; and they cannot comprehend anything of His knowledge save whatever He Himself may please to reveal." (Al Baqarah: Ayat 255).

The Quran does not rest content with this general and absolute negation of the knowledge of the hidden and unseen for the different forms of creation. But about the Prophets in particular, and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), it clearly says that they do not possess the knowledge of the hidden and unseen, and that they were given only that much knowledge of the hidden by Allah as was necessary to enable them to carry out the duties of prophethood. (Surah Al-Anaam: Ayat 50); (Surah Al-Aaraf: Ayat 187); (Surah At-Taubah: Ayat 101); (Surah Hud: Ayat 31); (Surah Al-Ahzab: Ayat 63); (Surah Al-Ahqaf: Ayat 9); (Surah At-Tahrim: Ayat 3): and (Sutah Al-Jinn: Ayats 26-28) do not leave any room for doubt in this regard.

All these elucidations of the Quran support and explain the verse under discussion after which there remains no doubt that looking upon another than Allah as the knower of the hidden and unseen and believing that someone else also possesses the knowledge of all the past and future events, is an absolutely un-Islamic belief. Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Nasai,

Imam Ahmad, Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abu Hatim have cited this saying of Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) through authentic reporters: "Whoever claimed that the Prophet (peace be upon him) knew what was going to happen the next day, accused Allah of lying, for Allah says: O Prophet, say, None in the heavens and the earth has the knowledge of the hidden and unseen but Allah." Ibn al- Mundhir has reported this on the authority of Ikrimah, the well-known pupil of Abdullah bin Abbas: A person asked the Prophet (peace be upon him), O Muhammad, when will Resurrection be? And our territory is suffering from famine: when will it rain? And my wife is pregnant: what will she deliver, a boy or a girl? And I know what I have earned today; but what shall I earn tomorrow? And I know where I was born, but where shall I die? In reply, the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited (verse 34 of Surah Luqman)as cited above. Then the well-known tradition as reported in Bukhari; and Muslim and other works of Hadith also supports the same. According to it one of the questions asked by Angel Gabriel from the Prophet (peace be upon him) when he sat among the companions in human shape before him, was: "When will Resurrection be?" The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: "The one being questioned knows no better than the one questioning." Then added, "This is one of those five things whose knowledge is possessed by none but Allah," and then he recited the above-cited verse of Surah Luqman .

84. That is "Those others about whom it is thought that they possess the knowledge of the hidden and, therefore, are regarded as partners in Divinity, are themselves unaware of their future. They do not know when will Resurrection be, and when will Allah raise them up again."

بَلِ ادّٰرَكَ عِلْمُهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ قف بَلْ هُمْ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهَا ۫ قف بَلْ هُمْ مِّنْهَا عَمُوْنَ ع 66

(27:66) Nay, but they have lost their knowledge of the Hereafter. They are steeped in doubt and uncertainty about it: rather they are blind to it.[85]

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

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

authenticity; and (3) they never bothered to consider with due thought and seriousness the arguments that were advanced about the coming of the Hereafter, but they preferred to remain blind to it.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَإِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا وَآبَاؤُنَا أَئِنَّا لَمُخْرَجُونَ 67

(27:67) The unbelievers say: "When we become dust, we and our forefathers, shall we really be brought out (from our graves)?

لَقَدْ وُعِدْنَا هَٰذَا نَحْنُ وَآبَاؤُنَا مِن قَبْلُ إِنْ هَٰذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ 68

(27:68) We were told about this and so were our forefathers before us. But these are no more than fairy tales that have been recounted from ancient times."

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ 69

(27:69) Say: "Go about through the earth and see what has been the end of the evil-doers."[86]

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

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

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

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

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

وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُنْ فِي ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُونَ 70

(27:70) (O Prophet), do not grieve over them, nor be distressed at their designs.[87]

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

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَىٰ هَٰذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ 71

(27:71) They also say: "Tell us when this threat will come to pass, if you are truthful."[88]

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

قُلْ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونَ رَدِفَ لَكُم بَعْضُ الَّذِي تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ 72

(27:72) Say: "The chastisement whose hastening you have been asking for, maybe a part of it has drawn quite near to you."[89]

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

thing and it should not happen. Therefore, when He says, “No wonder it may well be so”, it means, “It will certainly be so if you do not mend your ways.”

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ 73

(27:73) Indeed Your Lord is exceedingly bountiful to mankind. Yet most of them do not give thanks.[90]

90. That is, “It is Allah's mercy that He does not seize the culprit immediately after his commission of a crime but gives him respite to reform himself. But most people are not grateful for this, and do not utilize the period of respite for their reformation. On the contrary, when they see that they have not been taken to task immediately, they form the idea that there is none to call them to account. Therefore, they are free to do whatever they like and they should not listen to any word of admonition”.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ 74

(27:74) Verily your Lord knows all that their hearts conceal as well as all that they reveal.[91]

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

وَمَا مِنْ غَائِبَةٍ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ 75

(27:75) There is nothing that is hidden - be it in the heaven or the earth - but is recorded in a Clear Book.[92]

92. Here by “Record” is not meant the Quran, but the Divine Record in which everything has been registered.

إِنَّ هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَقُصُّ عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَكْثَرَ الَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ 76

(27:76) Surely this Qur'an explains to the Children of Israel most of the matters concerning which they have disagreements[93]

93. This sentence is connected with the foregoing theme as well as with what follows. In the first case, it means that it is a manifestation of the knowledge of the All-Knowing God that He is explaining through a gentile (non-Jew) in this Quran the reality of those events which are a part of the Israelite history, and which are being disputed by the learned men of the Israelites themselves. In the second case, it means that just as Allah has decided those disputes, so He will decide this dispute also which is going on between the Prophet

Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his opponents as to who is following the truth and who the falsehood. So, a few years after the revelation of these verses the decision came before the whole world. In the same land of Arabia and in the same clan of the Quraish there was no single person left who was not convinced that it was Muhammad (peace be upon him) who was following the truth and not Abu Jahl and Abu Lahab. Even the children of these people admitted that their fathers were wrong.

وَاِنَّهٗ لَهُدًى وَّرَحۡمَةٌ لِّلۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ 77

(27:77) and it is a guidance and mercy for the believers.[94]

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

اِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقۡضِىۡ بَيۡنَهُمۡ بِحُكۡمِهٖ ۚ وَهُوَ الۡعَزِيۡزُ الۡعَلِيۡمُ ۙ 78

(27:78) Indeed your Lord will decide between them[95] by His judgement. He is All-Mighty, All-Knowing.

95. "Between them": Between the disbelievers of the Quraish and the believers.

فَتَوَكَّلۡ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّكَ عَلَى الۡحَـقِّ الۡمُبِيۡنِ 79

(27:79) So[96] put your trust in Allah for you are on the manifest truth.

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

اِنَّكَ لَا تُسۡمِعُ الۡمَوۡتٰى وَلَا تُسۡمِعُ الصُّمَّ الدُّعَآءَ اِذَا وَلَّوۡا مُدۡبِرِيۡنَ 80

(27:80) Surely you cannot make the dead hear you,[97] nor can you make the deaf hear your call if they turn back in flight,[98]

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

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

وَمَآ أَنتَ بِهَٰدِى ٱلْعُمْىِ عَن ضَلَٰلَتِهِمْ ۖ إِن تُسْمِعُ إِلَّا مَن يُؤْمِنُ بِـَٔايَٰتِنَا فَهُم مُّسْلِمُونَ 81

(27:81) nor can you direct the blind to the Right Way,[99] preventing them from falling into error. You can make only those who believe in Our verses to hear the call and then submit.

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

وَإِذَا وَقَعَ ٱلْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَخْرَجْنَا لَهُمْ دَآبَّةً مِّنَ ٱلْأَرْضِ تُكَلِّمُهُمْ أَنَّ ٱلنَّاسَ كَانُوا۟ بِـَٔايَٰتِنَا لَا يُوقِنُونَ ۝ 82

(27:82) And when the time for the fulfilment of Our Word against them will come,[100] We shall bring forth for them a beast from the earth who will speak to them because people did not believe in Our Signs.[101]

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

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

As to the time and occasion of the appearance of this beast, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has said: "The sun will rise in the west and the beast will suddenly appear in the open

daylight. Whichever of these signs appears first, it will be closely followed by the other." (Sahih-Muslim). In the other traditions related in Sahih-Muslim, Ibn-Majah, Tirmidhi, Musnad Ahmad, etc. the Prophet (peace be upon him) foretold that the signs of Resurrection as emergence of the Anti-Christ (Dajjal), appearance of the beast, smoke and the rising of the sun in the west will appear one after the other.

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

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

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ فَوْجًا مِّمَّن يُكَذِّبُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ 83

(27:83) Just imagine the Day when We shall muster from every nation a large group of those who gave the lie to Our Signs, and they shall be duly arranged in ranks

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءُوا قَالَ أَكَذَّبْتُم بِآيَاتِي وَلَمْ تُحِيطُوا بِهَا عِلْمًا أَمَّاذَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ 84

(27:84) until, when all of them have arrived, Allah will say: "Did you give the lie to My Signs even without encompassing them with your knowledge?[102] If that is not so, what did you do?"[103]

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

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

وَوَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِم بِمَا ظَلَمُوا فَهُمْ لَا يَنطِقُونَ 85

(27:85) And the Word will come to pass against them because of their wrong-doing: they will then be able to utter nothing.

أَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ لِيَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ

يُؤْمِنُونَ 86

(27:86) Did they not perceive that We had made the night so that they may repose in it and made the day clear and shining.[104] Surely there are Signs in this for those who believe.[105]

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

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

وَيَوْمَ يُنفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَفَزِعَ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَن شَاءَ اللَّهُ ۚ وَكُلٌّ

أَتَوْهُ دَاخِرِينَ 87

(27:87) The Day when the Trumpet will be blown all those who are in the heavens and on the earth shall be terror stricken[106] - all except those whom Allah wills - and everyone shall come to Him utterly abject.

106. For a detailed discussion of the blowing of the Trumpet, see (E.N. 47 of Al-Anaam), (E.N. 57 of Ibrahim), (E.N. 78 of Ta Ha), (E.N. 1 of Al-Hajj), (E.Ns. 46, 47 of Ya Sin) and (E.N. 79 of Az-Zumar).

وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَّهِيَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ السَّحَابِ ؕ صُنْعَ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْٓ اَتْقَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ؕ
اِنَّهٗ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَفْعَلُوْنَ 88

(27:88) You now see the mountains and consider them firmly fixed, but then they shall pass away even as clouds pass away. That will be the handiwork of Allah Who has created everything with perfect wisdom. He is well aware of what you do.[107]

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

مَنْ جَآءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهٗ خَيْرٌ مِّنْهَا ۚ وَهُمْ مِّنْ فَزَعٍ يَّوْمَئِذٍ اٰمِنُوْنَ 89

(27:89) Whosoever comes with good will receive a reward better than his deed,[108] and they will be made secure from the terror of that Day.[109]

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

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

وَمَنْ جَآءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَكُبَّتْ وُجُوْهُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ ؕ هَلْ تُجْزَوْنَ اِلَّا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ 90

(27:90) And whosoever comes with evil, they will be flung upon their faces into the Fire. Will you be recompensed for aught other than what you do?[109a]

109a. At several places in the Quran it has been stated clearly that an evil will be punished in the Hereafter only to the extent of the evil committed, but a good act will be rewarded much

more generously by Allah than what the doer will actually deserve for it. For more examples of this, see (Surah Yunus: Ayats 26-27); (Surah Al-Qasas: Ayat 84); (Surah Al-Ankabut: Ayat 7); (Surah Saba: Ayats 37-38); (Surah Al-Mumin: Ayat 40).

إِنَّمَآ أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ رَبَّ هٰذِهِ الْبَلْدَةِ الَّذِي حَرَّمَهَا وَلَهُ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ ۖ وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ
مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ۙ 91

(27:91) (Tell them, O Muhammad): "I have been commanded only to serve the Lord of this city that He has made inviolable, to serve Him to Whom all things belong.[110]

I have been commanded to be of those that submit to Allah,

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

وَأَنْ أَتْلُوَا الْقُرْآنَ ۚ فَمَنِ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَقُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مِنَ
الْمُنْذِرِينَ 92

(27:92) and to recite the Qur'an." So, whosoever is guided, his guidance will be to his own good. As for those who stray, tell them: "I am none but a warner."

وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ سَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ فَتَعْرِفُونَهَا ۚ وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ۝ 93

(27:93) And say: "All praise be to Allah, Who will soon show you His Signs that you will recognize." Your Lord is not unaware of what you do.

28. Surah Al Qasas (The Story)

Name

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

Period of Revelation

As already mentioned in the introduction to Surah An Naml, according to Ibn Abbas and Jabir bin Zaid, Surahs Ash-Shu`araa', An-Naml and Al- Qasas were sent down one after the other. The language, the style and the theme also show that the period of the revelation of these three Surahs is nearly the same. Another reason for their lose resemblance is that the different parts of the Prophet Moses story as mentioned in these surahs together make up a complete story. In Surah Ash Shu`araa', excusing himself for not accepting the office of Prophethood the Prophet Moses submits, "The people of Pharaoh have the charge of a crime against me; therefore, I fear that they will put me to death." Then, when lie goes before Pharaoh, the latter says, "Did we not bring you up as a child in our house? You lived quite a few years of your life among us, and then you did what you did." Nothing more of this has been mentioned there, but in this Surah the other details have been supplied. Similarly, in Surah An-Naml the story starts abruptly from the time when the Prophet Moses was journeying with his family and suddenly saw a fire at a distance. In that Surah nothing has been said about the nature of his journey, or the place he was coming from, or his destination, but this Surah supplies all the necessary details. Thus, the three Surahs read together complete the story of the Prophet Moses (Allah's peace be upon him).

Theme and Topics

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

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

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

Secondly, Prophethood is not granted to a person amid festivities by issuing a proclamation from the earth and heavens. You wonder how Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) has been blessed with Prophethood unexpectedly, all of a sudden, but Moses whom you yourselves acknowledge as a Prophet (v. 48) had also become a Prophet unexpectedly, while on a journey, and nobody had known what event had occurred in the desolation at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Even Moses himself did not know a moment before what he was going to be

blessed with. He, in fact, had gone to bring a piece of the fire but had returned with the gift of Prophethood.

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

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

These were the things which were automatically impressed in the mind of every listener who heard this story in the pagan environment of Makkah, for a similar conflict was going on at that time between the Holy Prophet and disbelievers of Makkah as had already taken place between the Prophet Moses and Pharaoh before. This was the background against which the story of the Prophet Moses was narrated so that a perfect analogy was established automatically in every detail between the conditions prevailing then in Makkah and those existing in the time of the Prophet Moses. Then, from verse 43 onward the discourse turns to the real theme.

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

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

In conclusion, the excuse that the disbelievers put forward for not believing in the Holy Prophet has been dealt with. What they feared was this: “If we give up the polytheistic creed of the Arabs and accept the doctrine of Tauhid instead, this will put an end to our supremacy in the religious, political and economic fields, which, in turn, will destroy our position of the most influential tribe of Arabia and we shall be left with no refuge anywhere in the land." As this was the real motive of the chiefs of the Quraish for their antagonism towards the Truth, and their doubts and objections were only the pretenses, which they

invented to deceive the common people, Allah has dealt with these fully till the end of the Surah, considered each aspect of these in a wise manner and offered the remedy for their basic ailment due to which those people judged the Truth and falsehood only from the viewpoint of their worldly interests.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

طٰسٓمٓ 1

(28:1) Ta'. Sin. Mim

تِلۡکَ اٰیٰتُ الۡکِتٰبِ الۡمُبِیۡنِ 2

(28:2) These are the verses of the Clear Book.

نَتۡلُوۡا عَلَیۡکَ مِنۡ نَّبَاِ مُوۡسٰی وَ فِرۡعَوۡنَ بِالۡحَقِّ لِقَوۡمٍ یُّؤۡمِنُوۡنَ 3

(28:3) We recount to you with truth some parts of the story of Moses and Pharaoh[1] for the benefit of those who believe.[2]

1. For comparison, see (Surah Al-Baqarah: Ayats 47-59); (Surah Al-Aaraf: Ayats 100-141); (Surah Yunus: Ayats 75-92); (Surah Hud: Ayats 96-109); (Surah Bani Israil: Ayats 101- 111); (Surah Maryam: Ayats 51-53); (Surah Ta-Ha: Ayats 1- 89); (Surah Al-Muminun: Ayats 45-49); (Surah Ash-Shuara: Ayats 10-68); (Surah An-Naml: Ayats 7-14); (Surah Al- Ankabut: Ayats 39-40); (Surah Al-Mumin: Ayats 23-50); (Surah Az-Zukhruf: Ayats 46-56); (Surah Ad-Dukhan: Ayats 17-33); (Surah Adh-Dhariyat: Ayats 38-40); (Surah An- Naziyat: Ayats 15-26).

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

اِنَّ فِرۡعَوۡنَ عَلَا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ وَ جَعَلَ اَہۡلَہَا شِیَعًا یَّسۡتَضۡعِفُ طَآئِفَۃً مِّنۡہُمۡ یُذَبِّحُ اَبۡنَآءَہُمۡ وَ یَسۡتَحۡیٖ نِسَآءَہُمۡ ؕ اِنَّہٗ کَانَ مِنَ الۡمُفۡسِدِیۡنَ 4

(28:4) Indeed Pharaoh transgressed in the land[3] and divided its people into sections.[4] One group of them he humiliated, and slew their sons and spared their daughters.[5] Truly he was among the mischief-makers.

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

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

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

5. The Bible elucidates this as follows:

"Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with them: lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land. Therefore they did set over them task masters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Ramses. And the Egyptians trade the children of Israel to serve with rigor; And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigor. And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives. And he said, when ye do the office of a midwife to Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live." (Exod. 1: 8-16).

This shows that after the passing away of the Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him), a nationalist revolution took place in Egypt, and when the Copts regained power, the new nationalist government employed every means to subdue the Israelites. They did not only humiliate and disgrace them and took mean services from them, but, over and above this, they adopted the policy of reducing their population, by killing their sons and allowing their daughters to live so that their women should gradually pass into the Copts' hands and produce the Coptic instead of the Israelite race. The Talmud adds that this revolution had taken place a little over a hundred years after the death of the Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him). According to it, the new government, in the first instance, deprived the Israelites of their fertile lands and houses and possessions, and then removed them from the government jobs and offices. Even after this, whenever the Coptic rulers felt that the

Israelites and their Egyptian coreligionists were becoming formidable they would disgrace them and employ them in rigorous jobs on little or no wages at all. This is the explanation of the Quranic verse: "He debased a section of the Egyptian population", and of (verse 49 of Surah Al- Baqarah): "They had inflicted a dreadful torment on you."

However, neither the Bible nor the Quran mentions that the Pharaoh was told by an astrologer that a boy would be born among the Israelites, who would become a cause of his deposition from power. And to meet this danger he had issued orders to kill the male children born in the Israelite homes. Or that Pharaoh himself had seen a dreadful dream and the explanation given was that a son would be born among the Israelites, who would cause his downfall. Our commentators have taken this legend from the Talmud and other Israelite traditions.

وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَّمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَّنَجْعَلَهُمُ
الْوَارِثِينَ 5

(28:5) We wanted to bestow favour on those who were oppressed in the land. We wanted to make them leaders and heirs[6]

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

وَنُمَكِّنَ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنُرِيَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا مِنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوا يَحْذَرُونَ 6

(28:6) and to grant them power in the land,[7] and make Pharaoh and Haman[8] and their hosts see what they had feared.

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

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

وَأَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَىٰٓ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰٓ أَنْ أَرْضِعِيهِ فَإِذَا خِفْتِ عَلَيْهِ فَأَلْقِيهِ فِى ٱلْيَمِّ وَلَا تَخَافِى وَلَا تَحْزَنِىٓ ۖ إِنَّا رَآدُّوهُ إِلَيْكِ وَجَاعِلُوهُ مِنَ ٱلْمُرْسَلِينَ ۝٧

(28:7) We[9] suggested to the mother of Moses: "Suckle your child, but when you fear for his life cast him into the river and be not fearful nor grieve, for We shall restore him to you and make him one of the Messengers."[10]

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

10. That is, she was not commanded to cast the child into the river immediately after birth, but to suckle it till she felt a real danger for it. For instance, if she felt that the secret had been exposed and the enemies had come to know of the child's birth through some means, or through some wretched informer from among the Israelites themselves, she should place the child in a box and cast it into the river, without any hesitation. According to the Bible, the Prophet Moses' (peace be upon him) mother kept him hidden for three months after his birth. The Talmud adds that the Pharaoh's government had appointed Egyptian women who carried infants into the Israelite homes, and would make these babies cry, so as to make any hidden Israelite infants also cry and be thus discovered. This new method of spying worried Moses' mother and in order to save her child's life, she cast him into the river three months after his birth. Up to this point the version given by these Books is the same as the Quran's, and the event of casting the box into the river has also been described just as the Quran has described it. In Surah Ta-Ha it has been said: Put this child in a box and place the box in the river. (Ayat 39). The same has been said by the Bible and the Talmud. According to these, the Prophet Moses' mother made a basket of reeds and covered it with slime (tar) and with pitch to make it watertight. Then she laid the child in it and placed it in the river Nile. But the most important thing, which the Quran mentions, has found no mention anywhere in the Israelite traditions, that is, that the Prophet Moses' mother had done all this according to an inspiration from Allah, and Allah had already assured her that by following that device not only would her child remain safe and secure but the child would ultimately be restored to her, and that her child would become Allah's Messenger in the future.

فَالْتَقَطَهٗٓ اٰلُ فِرْعَوْنَ لِيَكُوْنَ لَهُمْ عَدُوًّا وَّحَزَنًا ؕ اِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامٰنَ وَجُنُوْدَهُمَا كَانُوْا

خٰطِـِٕيْنَ 8

(28:8) Then Pharaoh's household picked him up (from the river) that he may be their adversary and be a cause of sorrow to them.[11] Surely Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts erred (in their scheming).

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

وَقَالَتِ امْرَاَتُ فِرْعَوْنَ قُرَّتُ عَيْنٍ لِّيْ وَلَكَ ؕ لَا تَقْتُلُوْهُ ۖ صلے ق عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّنْفَعَنَآ اَوْ نَتَّخِذَهٗ

وَلَدًا وَّهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ 9

(28:9) The wife of Pharaoh said: "Here is a delight of the eye to me and to you. Do not kill him. Maybe he will prove useful for us, or we may adopt him as a son."[12] They were unaware of the end of it all.

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

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

وَاَصۡبَحَ فُؤَادُ اُمِّ مُوۡسٰى فٰرِغًا ؕ اِنۡ كَادَتۡ لَتُبۡدِىۡ بِهٖ لَوۡلَاۤ اَنۡ رَّبَطۡنَا عَلٰى قَلۡبِهَا لِتَكُوۡنَ

مِنَ الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ 10

(28:10) On the other hand, the heart of Moses' mother was sorely distressed. Had We not strengthened her heart that she might have full faith (in Our promise), she would have disclosed the secret.

وَقَالَتۡ لِاُخۡتِهٖ قُصِّيۡهِ ۚ فَبَصُرَتۡ بِهٖ عَنۡ جُنُبٍ وَّهُمۡ لَا يَشۡعُرُوۡنَ ۙ 11

(28:11) She told the sister of Moses: "Follow him." So she kept watch over him unperceived (by the enemies).[13]

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

وَحَرَّمۡنَا عَلَيۡهِ الۡمَرَاضِعَ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ فَقَالَتۡ هَلۡ اَدُلُّكُمۡ عَلٰۤى اَهۡلِ بَيۡتٍ يَّكۡفُلُوۡنَهٗ لَكُمۡ

وَهُمۡ لَهٗ نٰصِحُوۡنَ 12

(28:12) And We had already forbidden the breasts of the nurses for the child.[14] (So seeing the girl) said: "Shall I direct you to the people of a household that will rear him with utter sincerity?"[15]

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

15. This shows that the sister did not go and sit back at home when she found that her brother had reached Pharaoh's palace, but cleverly hung about the palace to watch every new development. Then, when she found that the child was not taking to any nurse, and the queen was anxious to get a nurse who would suit it, the intelligent girl went straight into the palace, and said, "I can tell you the whereabouts of a nurse, who will bring him up with great affection." Here it should be borne in mind that in old days the well-to-do and noble families of these countries generally used to entrust their children to nurses for bringing up. We know that in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) nurses from the suburbs also used to visit Makkah from time to time in order to get infants from the well-to-do families for suckling and nursing on rich wages. The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself was brought up by Halimah Sadiyah in the desert. The same custom was prevalent in Egypt, that is why the Prophet Moses' (peace be upon him) sister did not say that she would bring

a suitable nurse, but said that she would tell them of a house whose people would take up the responsibility of bringing him up with care and affection.

فَرَدَدْنٰهُ اِلٰٓى اُمِّهٖ كَىْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ وَلِتَعْلَمَ اَنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ وَّلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ع 13

(28:13) Thus did We restore Moses[16] to his mother that her eyes might be comforted and she might not grieve, and realise that the promise of Allah was true.[17] But most people are unaware of this.

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

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

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

وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ اَشُدَّهٗ وَاسْتَوٰٓى اٰتَيْنٰهُ حُكْمًا وَّعِلْمًا ؕ وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ 14

(28:14) When Moses reached the age of full youth and grew to maturity,[18] We bestowed upon him wisdom and knowledge.[19] Thus do We reward those who do good.

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

19. Hukum implies wisdom, understanding, and power of judgment. Ilm is both religious and worldly knowledge. The Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) became familiar with the teachings of his forefathers, Prophets Joseph, Jacob, Isaac and Abraham (peace be upon all

of them) through his contact with his parents, and with the sciences prevalent in Egypt by virtue of his training as a prince in the king's palace. Here the gift of Hukm (wisdom) and Ilm (knowledge) does not refer to the gift of prophethood, because prophethood was bestowed on Moses several years afterwards, as is mentioned below, and has already been mentioned in (Surah Ash-Shuaraa: Ayat 21).

Regarding his education and training while as a prince, the New Testament says: "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds." The Talmud says: Moses grew up, a handsome lad, in the palace of the king: he dressed royally, was honored by the people, and seemed in all things of royal lineage. He visited the land of Goshen daily, observing the rigor with which his brethren were treated. Moses urged the king of Egypt to grant the men of Goshen one day of rest from the labor, in each week, and the king acceded to his request. Moses said, "If you compel them to labor steadily their strength will fail them; for your benefit and profit allow them at least one day in the week for rest and renewal of strength", And the Lord was with Moses, and his fame extended through all the land.

وَدَخَلَ الْمَدِينَةَ عَلَىٰ حِينِ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا فَوَجَدَ فِيهَا رَجُلَيْنِ يَقْتَتِلَانِ ۖ هَٰذَا مِن
شِيعَتِهِ وَهَٰذَا مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ ۚ فَاسْتَغَاثَهُ الَّذِي مِن شِيعَتِهِ عَلَى الَّذِي مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ فَوَكَزَهُ مُوسَىٰ
فَقَضَىٰ عَلَيْهِ ۖ قَالَ هَٰذَا مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ ۖ إِنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ مُّضِلٌّ مُّبِينٌ 15

(28:15) Once he entered the city at a time when its people were heedless,[20] and he encountered two men fighting, one of whom belonged to his own people and the other to his foes. Now the man belonging to Moses' own people cried out to him for help against the man from the foes, and Moses struck him with his fist[21] and finished him. Moses said: "This is an act of Satan. Surely he is an enemy who openly misleads."[22]

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

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

22. One can imagine the state of utter remorse and confusion in which the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) uttered these words when he saw the Egyptian fall down after receiving the blow and breathe his last. He had no intention to murder, nor is a blow struck to kill, nor can one expect that a healthy person would die on receiving a blow. That is why the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) exclaimed: "This is the work of Satan! He has made

me do this in order to work some great mischief, so that I am accused of killing an Egyptian while defending an Israelite, and a violent storm of anger and indignation is aroused in the whole of Egypt not only against me but the whole Israelite community." In this connection, the Bible gives a different version from the Quran. It declares the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) to be guilty of willful murder. It says that when Moses saw an Egyptian and an Israelite fighting, "He (Moses) looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, He slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand." (Exodus 2: 12). The same is the version of the Talmud also. Now anybody can see how the Israelites brand the characters of their elders with infamy and how the Quran exonerates them. The verdict of common sense also is that a wise and discreet person, who was to become a great Prophet in the future, and who had to give man a great code of law and justice, could not be such a blind nationalist that seeing a member of his own community fighting with a man of the other community, he would be so infuriated that he would kill the other person willfully. Evidently, it could not be lawful to kill the Egyptian only for the sake of rescuing an Israelite from his tyranny.

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي فَاغْفِرْ لِي فَغَفَرَ لَهُ ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ 16

(28:16) Then he prayed:[23] "My Lord! I have indeed inflicted wrong on myself, so do forgive me," wherefore Allah forgave him for He is Ever Forgiving, Most Merciful.[24]

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

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

قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ فَلَنْ أَكُونَ ظَهِيرًا لِّلْمُجْرِمِينَ 17

(28:17) Thereupon Moses vowed: "My Lord, because of the favour that You have done me[25] I shall never support the guilty."[26]

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

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

The Muslim scholars in general have deduced from this pledge of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) that a believer should completely refrain from helping a tyrant, whether the tyrant is an individual, or a group, or a government, or a kingdom. Somebody asked Ata bin Abi Rabah (may Allah be pleased with him), the well-known follower of the companions, "My brother is secretary to the governor of Kufah, under the Umayyids. Though he does not decide the disputes of the people, the decisions, however, are issued through his pen. He has to continue in this service because this is his only source of income." Ata recited this verse, and said, "Your brother should throw away his pen: the Provider is Allah."

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

Abdur Rehman bin Muslim had only asked Dahhak to go to Bukhara and distribute the salaries of the officials there, but he declined even this. When his friends said there was nothing wrong in it, he replied, "I do not want to be a helper of the unjust in any way." All of Imam Abu Hanifah's authentic biographers including Al-Muwaffaq al-Makki, lbn al-Bazzaz al- Karvari, Mulla Ali Qari, etc. have related that Hasan bin Qahtubah, the commander-in-chief of Mansur, had tendered his resignation only on his instruction, saying, "Whatever I have done to support your kingdom until today, is enough for me if it was in the cause of Allah, but if it was for injustice and tyranny, then I do not want to add to my crimes in my book of conduct."

فَاَصۡبَحَ فِی الۡمَدِیۡنَۃِ خَآئِفًا یَّتَرَقَّبُ فَاِذَا الَّذِی اسۡتَنۡصَرَہٗ بِالۡاَمۡسِ یَسۡتَصۡرِخُہٗ ؕ قَالَ لَہٗ مُوۡسٰۤی اِنَّکَ لَغَوِیٌّ مُّبِیۡنٌ 18

(28:18) The next morning he proceeded to the city in fear and looking around as one apprehensive of danger when all of a sudden, the man who had sought his help the day before again called out to him for his help. Moses said to him: "Clearly, you are a very misguided fellow."[27]

27. That is, "You seem to be a quarrelsome man: you have a new quarrel daily with one or the other person."

فَلَمَّآ اَنۡ اَرَادَ اَنۡ يَّبۡطِشَ بِالَّذِىۡ هُوَ عَدُوٌّ لَّهُمَا ۙ قَالَ يٰمُوۡسٰٓى اَتُرِيۡدُ اَنۡ تَقۡتُلَنِىۡ كَمَا
قَتَلۡتَ نَفۡسًۢا بِالۡاَمۡسِ ۖ اِنۡ تُرِيۡدُ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ تَكُوۡنَ جَبَّارًا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ وَمَا تُرِيۡدُ اَنۡ تَكُوۡنَ
مِنَ الۡمُصۡلِحِيۡنَ 19

(28:19) And when Moses decided to lay his violent hands on the man belonging to the enemy,[28] he cried out:[29]"Moses, do you intend to kill me as you killed a person yesterday?" You simply want to live in the land as a tyrant, and do not wish to set things right."

28. Here, the Biblical version is different from the Quranic. The Bible says that the fight on the next day was between two Israelites, but according to the Quran this fight also was between an Israelite and an Egyptian. This second version seems to be credible, for the manner in which the secret of the murder of the first day became known, as is being mentioned below, could be possible only if a member of the Coptic community had come to know of the matter. An Israelite's knowledge of it could not be so treacherous: he could not have gone to inform the Pharaonic government of such a heinous crime committed by the prince, who was a great supporter of his own community.

29. The one who cried out was the same Israelite whom the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) wanted to help against the enemy. When after scolding and rebuking him, he turned to assault the Egyptian, the Israelite thought that Moses (peace be upon him) was going to strike him; therefore, he raised a hue and cry and disclosed the secret of the previous day's murder by this own folly.

وَجَآءَ رَجُلٌ مِّنۡ اَقۡصَا الۡمَدِيۡنَةِ يَسۡعٰى ۙ قَالَ يٰمُوۡسٰٓى اِنَّ الۡمَلَاَ يَاۡتَمِرُوۡنَ بِكَ لِيَقۡتُلُوۡكَ
فَاخۡرُجۡ اِنِّىۡ لَكَ مِنَ النّٰصِحِيۡنَ 20

(28:20) Then a man came running from the farther end of the city[30] and said: "O Moses, the nobles are deliberating about you that they may put you to death. So do be gone. I am one of your well-wishers."

30. This happened when in the second day's fight, the secret of the murder became known and the Egyptian informed the authorities about the case accordingly.

فَخَرَجَ مِنۡهَا خَآئِفًا يَّتَرَقَّبُ ۖ قَالَ رَبِّ نَجِّنِىۡ مِنَ الۡقَوۡمِ الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ ع 21

(28:21) Soon after hearing this Moses departed in a state of fear, looking around as one in apprehension and prayed: "My Lord, deliver me from these unjust people."

وَلَمَّا تَوَجَّهَ تِلْقَآءَ مَدْيَنَ قَالَ عَسٰى رَبِّيْٓ اَنْ يَّهْدِيَنِيْ سَوَآءَ السَّبِيْلِ 22

(28:22) When (after his departure from Egypt) Moses headed towards Midian,[31] he said: "I hope my Lord will show me the right Path."[32]

31. Both the Bible and the Quran agree that after leaving Egypt, the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had gone to live in Madyan (Midian). But the Talmud tells the absurd story that Moses fled to Ethiopia and became a great favorite with the king there. After the king's death the people made Moses their king and leader and gave him the widow of the king for a wife, but during the 40 years of his reign there he never had intercourse with his African wife. Then the queen of Ethiopia, who was a wife to Moses (peace be upon him) in name only, said to the people, "Why should this stranger continue to rule over you? He has never worshiped the gods of Ethiopia." At this the people of Ethiopia deposed him and made him many rich presents and dismissed him with great honors. Then he came to Midian and met with the events being mentioned below. At this time he was 67 years old.

A clear proof of this story's being absurd is that according to it Assyria (northern Iraq) in those days was under Ethiopia, and the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and the Ethiopian king, his predecessor, had led military campaigns to crush the Assyrian revolts. Now anybody who has a little acquaintance with the history and geography can have a look at the map and see things for himself. Assyria could be under Ethiopian domination and have been attacked by the Ethiopian army only in case Egypt and Palestine and Syria had been under its subjugation, or the whole of Arabia under its sway, or, at least the Ethiopian navy so powerful as to have conquered Iraq across the Indian ocean and the Persian Gulf. History, however, does not support the view that the Ethiopians ever held sway over these countries, or their naval force was ever so powerful. This indicates how imperfect was the Israelites' knowledge of their own history, and how the Quran corrects their errors and presents the true facts in their pure form. Nevertheless, the Christian and the Jewish orientalists are never ashamed of asserting that the Quran has plagiarized the Israelite traditions for its narratives.

32. The right path: The path that may take me to Midian safely." It should be borne in mind that Midian in those days was outside Pharaoh's empire. Egypt did not have control over the whole of the Sinai Peninsula but only on its western and southern parts. The Midianites who inhabited the eastern and western coasts of the Gulf of Aqabah were free from Egyptian influence and authority. That is why the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had headed for Midian after leaving Egypt, because that was the nearest free and inhabited land. But to reach Midian he had to pass through Egyptian territories; avoiding the Egyptian police and military posts on the way. That is why he prayed to God to put him on the right track which should take him to Midian safely.

وَلَمَّا وَرَدَ مَآءَ مَدْيَنَ وَجَدَ عَلَيْهِ اُمَّةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ يَسْقُوْنَ ۡ وَوَجَدَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِمُ امْرَاَتَيْنِ
تَذُوْدٰنِ ۚ قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُمَا ۭ قَالَتَا لَا نَسْقِيْ حَتّٰى يُصْدِرَ الرِّعَآءُ ۭ وَاَبُوْنَا شَيْخٌ كَبِيْرٌ 23

(28:23) When he arrived at the spring of Midian,[33] he found there a crowd of people watering their flocks, and he found apart from them two women holding their flocks back. He asked the women: "What is it that troubles you?" They said: "We cannot water our flocks until the shepherds take their flocks away, and our father is a very old man."[34]

33. This place where the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had arrived was situated, according to the Arab tradition, on the western coast of the Gulf of Aqabah, a few miles to the north of Magna. Today it is called Al-Bid, and is a small habitation. I visited this place in December, 1952, when I was traveling from Tabuk to Aqabah. The natives told me that, as they had heard from their elders, Midian was situated there. From Josephus to Burton, all ancient and modern explorers and geographers, have generally confirmed this very place as the location of ancient Midian. Nearby there is the place now called Maghair-Shuaib or Magharat Shuaib. There are some Thamudic monuments here. A mile or so away, There are some ancient ruins, where we saw two dry wells, one of which was said to be the well where the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had watered the goats. The same has been related by Abu Fida in Taqvim al-Buldan and Yaqut in Mujam al-Buldan, on the authority of Abu Zaid Ansari; that the natives point to the same well there as the well of Moses (peace be upon him). This indicates that the tradition is being handed down since centuries among the people, and therefore, it can be confidently asserted that this is the same place which has been mentioned in the Quran.

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

About the father of these ladies, traditions that have become current among the Muslims are that he was the Prophet Shuaib (peace be upon him), but the Quran makes no allusion to this, although Prophet Shuaib (peace be upon him) is a prominent character of the Quran. If he were really the father of the ladies, it would have been clearly mentioned here. No doubt there are some traditions in which his name has been mentioned, but both Allama Ibn Jarir and Ibn Kathir concur that none of them has been authentically reported. That is why great commentators like Ibn Abbas, Hasan Basri, Abu Ubaidah and Said bin Jubair have relied on the Israelite traditions and mentioned the same names of this personage which appear in the Talmud etc. Evidently, if the name of Shuaib had actually been reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him), these scholars would not have mentioned any other name.

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

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

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

فَسَقٰى لَهُمَا ثُمَّ تَوَلّٰٓى اِلَى الظِّلِّ فَقَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّيْ لِمَآ اَنْزَلْتَ اِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيْرٌ 24

(28:24) On hearing this Moses watered their flocks for them, and then returned in a shaded place and said: "My Lord, I am truly in great need of any good that You might send down to me."

فَجَآءَتْهُ اِحْدٰىهُمَا تَمْشِيْ عَلَى اسْتِحْيَآءٍ ۖ قَالَتْ اِنَّ اَبِيْ يَدْعُوْكَ لِيَجْزِيَكَ اَجْرَ مَا سَقَيْتَ لَنَا ۭ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهٗ وَقَصَّ عَلَيْهِ الْقَصَصَ ۙ قَالَ لَا تَخَفْ ۡ وقفة قف نَجَوْتَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ 25

(28:25) Soon thereafter one of the two women came to him, walking bashfully,[35] and said: "My father invites you that he may reward you for your having watered our flocks for us.[36]" When Moses came to him and narrated to him the whole of his story, he said: "Have no fear. You are now safe from the iniquitous people."

35. Umar (may Allah be pleases with him) has explained this sentence, thus: "She came walking modestly, with her face covered with a part of her outer garment, unlike those immodest women, who go about wherever they like, and enter wherever they like without any hesitation." Several traditions bearing on this subject have been reported by Said bin Mansur, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim and Ibn al- Mundhir from Umar (may Allah be pleases with him) through authentic chains of authorities. This shows that the Islamic concept of

modesty, which the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) had understood from the Quran and the teaching and training of the Prophet (peace be upon him), was absolutely opposed to keeping the face exposed to others and moving about immodestly outside the house. Umar (may Allah be pleases with him) has clearly regarded covering of the face as a symbol of modesty and exposing it to other men as an immodesty and shamelessness.

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

قَالَتۡ إِحۡدَىٰهُمَا يَٰٓأَبَتِ ٱسۡتَـٔۡجِرۡهُۖ إِنَّ خَيۡرَ مَنِ ٱسۡتَـٔۡجَرۡتَ ٱلۡقَوِيُّ ٱلۡأَمِينُ 26

(28:26) One of the two women said: "Father, employ this man in your service. The best whom you might employ is he who is strong and trustworthy."[37]

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

قَالَ إِنِّيٓ أُرِيدُ أَنۡ أُنكِحَكَ إِحۡدَى ٱبۡنَتَيَّ هَٰتَيۡنِ عَلَىٰٓ أَن تَأۡجُرَنِي ثَمَٰنِيَ حِجَجٖۖ فَإِنۡ أَتۡمَمۡتَ عَشۡرٗا فَمِنۡ عِندِكَۖ وَمَآ أُرِيدُ أَنۡ أَشُقَّ عَلَيۡكَۚ سَتَجِدُنِيٓ إِن شَآءَ ٱللَّهُ مِنَ ٱلصَّٰلِحِينَ 27

(28:27) Her father said to Moses:[38] "I want to marry one of these two daughters of mine to you if you serve me for eight years. But if you complete ten years, that will be

of your own accord (but not an obligation). I do not intend to treat you harshly. If Allah wills, you will find me an upright man."

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

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

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

قَالَ ذٰلِكَ بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنَكَ ؕ اَيَّمَا الْاَجَلَيْنِ قَضَيْتُ فَلَا عُدْوَانَ عَلَيَّ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى مَا نَقُوْلُ وَكِيْلٌ ۚ 28

(28:28) Moses replied: "So that is agreed between me and you. Whichever of the two terms I fulfil, I trust that I shall not be wronged. Allah is a witness over the covenant we are committing ourselves to."[39]

39. Some people have taken this conversation between the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and the girl's father for a contract of marriage, and have started the dispute whether service under the father can be looked upon as a dower of the daughters marriage, and whether such external conditions can be laid down for the marriage contract; whereas the words of the verses under discussion themselves indicate this was not the contract of marriage but the initial proposal that is generally made before the execution of the marriage contract itself. After all, how can this be taken for a contract of marriage when it had not yet

been decided which of the girls was to be given away in marriage. The purport of the conversation was that the girl's father said, "I am prepared to marry one of my daughters to you provided that you promise that you will stay in my house for eight to ten years and help me in performing household chores, for I am old and have no son either, who could manage my properties. I have only daughters whom I have to send to perform outdoor duties. I want you to strengthen me as my would be son in law. If you are willing to accept this responsibility, and do not intend to take away your wife soon after marriage, I will marry one of my daughters to you." The Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was himself in search of a shelter at that time, so he accepted the proposal. Evidently, it was a sort of contract that had been agreed upon between the two parties before the marriage. After this the actual marriage must have taken place according to the law and the dower also settled. There could be no question of including the condition of service in the marriage bond itself.

فَلَمَّا قَضٰى مُوْسَى الْاَجَلَ وَسَارَ بِاَهْلِهٖٓ اٰنَسَ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّوْرِ نَارًا ۚ قَالَ لِاَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوْٓا
اِنِّيْٓ اٰنَسْتُ نَارًا لَّعَلِّيْٓ اٰتِيْكُمْ مِّنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ اَوْ جَذْوَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُوْنَ 29

(28:29) When Moses had fulfilled the term[40] and was journeying with his family, he perceived a fire in the direction of the Mount (Sinai).[41] He said to his family: "Wait here; I have observed a fire. Maybe I will bring to you some news or a brand of fire from there that you may warm yourselves."

40. According to Hasan bin Ali bin Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with them), the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had completed the ten years term instead of the eight years. According to Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him), this has been related on the authority of the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself. He has said, "Moses (peace be upon him) completed the term which was more perfect and more agreeable to his father in law, i.e. ten years."

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

The Biblical version of the sequence of events is different from the Quran's. It says that the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) led the flocks (of his father in law) to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God. There God spoke to him, and appointed him to prophethood and commanded him to go to Egypt. Then Moses went back to Jethro, his father in law, took his permission and went to Egypt with his family. Contrary to this, the Quran says that the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) left Midian with his family after completing the term and during this journey Allah spoke to him and appointed him to prophethood.

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

فَلَمَّآ اَتٰىهَا نُوْدِىَ مِنْ شَاطِئِ الْوَادِ الْاَيْمَنِ فِى الْبُقْعَةِ الْمُبٰرَكَةِ مِنَ الشَّجَرَةِ اَنْ يّٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنِّىْٓ
اَنَا اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۙ 30

(28:30) But when he came to the fire, a cry was heard from the right bank[42] of the valley, from a tree in the hallowed ground:[43] "O Moses, verily I am Allah, the Lord of all creatures of the Universe."

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

43. That is, on that side of the valley which lay to the right of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him).

وَاَنْ اَلْقِ عَصَاكَ ؕ فَلَمَّا رَاٰهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَاَنَّهَا جَآنٌّ وَّلّٰى مُدْبِرًا وَّلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ ؕ يٰمُوْسٰٓى اَقْبِلْ
وَلَا تَخَفْ ۫ اِنَّكَ مِنَ الْاٰمِنِيْنَ 31

(28:31) He received the command: "Throw away your rod!" But when he saw the rod writhing as though it were a serpent, he turned back in retreat, and did not even look behind. (He was told): "O Moses, go ahead and have no fear. You are perfectly secure.

اُسْلُكْ يَدَكَ فِىْ جَيْبِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيْضَآءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوْٓءٍ وَّاضْمُمْ اِلَيْكَ جَنَاحَكَ مِنَ
الرَّهْبِ فَذٰنِكَ بُرْهَانٰنِ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَا۟ئِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمًا
فٰسِقِيْنَ 32

(28:32) Put your hand into your bosom, and it will come out shining without any blemish;[44] and draw your hand close to your body to still your fear.[45] Those are the two clear Signs from your Lord for Pharaoh and his chiefs, for truly they are a disobedient people."[46]

44. These two miracles were shown to the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) at that time so that, firstly, he himself is fully convinced that the same Being Who is speaking to him is, in fact, the Creator and Master and Ruler of the whole system of the universe and secondly, he should have full satisfaction that he was not going unarmed before Pharaoh, to perform

the dangerous mission assigned to him, but would go well armed with the two powerful weapons.

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

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

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

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

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي قَتَلْتُ مِنْهُمْ نَفْسًا فَأَخَافُ أَنْ يَقْتُلُونِ 33

(28:33) Moses said: "My Lord, I have killed one person from among them, and I fear that they will kill me.[47]

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

وَأَخِي هَارُونُ هُوَ أَفْصَحُ مِنِّي لِسَانًا فَأَرْسِلْهُ مَعِيَ رِدْءًا يُصَدِّقُنِي إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُكَذِّبُونِ 34

(28:34) My brother Aaron is more eloquent in speech than I: so send him with me as a helper to confirm my truthfulness for I fear that they will reject me as a liar."

قَالَ سَنَشُدُّ عَضُدَكَ بِأَخِيكَ وَنَجْعَلُ لَكُمَا سُلْطَانًا فَلَا يَصِلُونَ إِلَيْكُمَا ۚ بِآيَاتِنَا ۚ
أَنْتُمَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكُمَا الْغَالِبُونَ 35

(28:35) He said: "We will certainly strengthen you through your brother and will invest both of you with such power that they shall not be able to hurt you. With the help of Our Signs the two of you and your followers will prevail."[48]

48. This meeting of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) with Allah and the mutual conversation has been described in much greater detail in (Surah Ta-Ha Ayats 9- 48). Anyone who compares this Quranic version with the story given in the Bible will himself be able to judge which of the two is a divine revelation and which one is the result of human story telling. Besides, he will also be able to judge whether the Quranic version is, God forbid, a plagiarism of the Bible and Israelite traditions, or that God Himself is describing the actual event, Who had honored Moses (peace be upon him) by calling him up into His Presence. See (E.N. 19 of Surah Ta-Ha).

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالُوا مَا هَٰذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُفْتَرًى وَمَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَٰذَا فِي
آبَائِنَا الْأَوَّلِينَ 36

(28:36) But when Moses came to them with Our Clear Signs, they said: "This is nothing but a magic[49] that has been contrived. We never heard anything like it from our ancestors of yore."[50]

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

50. The reference is to the teachings which the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had presented while conveying this message of Tauhid. The details have been given at other places in the Quran. For example, according to (Surah An-Naziyat: Ayats 18-19), he said to Pharaoh: “Will you mind to purify yourself, that I may guide you to your Lord so that you may have fear (of Him)?” And in (Surah Ta Ha: Ayats 47-48), “We have come to you with signs from your Lord; peace is for him who follows the right way. We have been informed by revelation that there is punishment for him who rejects it and turns away.” And: “We are Messengers from your Lord: so let the Israelites go with us.” It was about these things that Pharaoh said, “Even our forefathers had never heard that there was a Being more powerful

than Pharaoh of Egypt, Who was authorized to command him, to punish him, to send a man to his court to convey His instructions to him, and to warn the king of Egypt to fear Him. These are strange things which we are hearing today from a man like you."

وَقَالَ مُوسٰى رَبِّيْٓ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ جَآءَ بِالْهُدٰى مِنْ عِنْدِهٖ وَمَنْ تَكُوْنُ لَهٗ عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ 37

(28:37) Moses replied: "My Lord knows best who comes with guidance from Him, and also whose end will be the best in the Hereafter. As for the wrongdoers, they shall not prosper."[51]

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

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْمَلَاُ مَا عَلِمْتُ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرِيْ ۚ فَاَوْقِدْ لِيْ يٰهَامٰنُ عَلَى الطِّيْنِ فَاجْعَلْ لِّيْ صَرْحًا لَّعَلِّيْٓ اَطَّلِعُ اِلٰٓى اِلٰهِ مُوْسٰى ۙ وَاِنِّيْ لَاَظُنُّهٗ مِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ 38

(28:38) Pharaoh said: "O nobles, I do not know that you have any god beside myself.[52] Haman, bake bricks out of clay and build a lofty palace for me so that I may mount up and be able to observe the god of Moses, even though I believe that Moses is a liar."[53]

52. By this Pharaoh did not, and could not, mean that he was the creator of his people and the earth and the heavens, for such a thing be uttered only by a madman. Likewise; he also did not mean that they had no other deity besides him for the Egyptians worshiped many gods, and the Pharaoh himself had been made the incarnation of the sun god. The Quran testifies that the Pharaoh himself worshiped many gods: "The chiefs of Pharaoh's people said, Will you leave Moses and his followers free to spread disorder in the land, and to discard you and your deities?" (Surah Al-Aaraf: Ayat 127) Therefore, inevitably, the Pharaoh had not used the word "god" here for himself as a creator and deity, but as an absolute and supreme sovereign. What he meant was this: "I am the owner of this land of Egypt: I alone will rule here: My law will be the law of the land; I alone shall be accepted as the fountainhead of all commands and prohibitions here. None else is entitled to give commands in this country. Who is this Moses, who has appeared as the delegate of the Lord of the universe and is conveying orders to me as though he is the ruler and I am his

subordinate?" That is why he addressed his courtiers, thus: "O people: Is not the kingdom of Egypt mine? And are not these canals flowing beneath me?" (Surah Az-Zukhruf: Ayat 51). And that is why he said to Moses (peace be upon him) again and again, "Have you come to turn us away from the faith of our forefathers so that you too may dominate over the land?" (Surah Yunus: Ayat 78). "O Moses, have you come to drive us out of our land by the power of your sorcery?" (Surah Ta-Ha: Ayat 57) "I fear he will change your religion, or cause mischief to appear in the land." (Surah Al-Mumin: Ayat 26).

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

53. This was the same kind of mentality as the communists of today are displaying. They launch rockets and tell the world that they have not found God anywhere above. Pharaoh wanted to see God from the top of a tower. This shows that the extent of the imagination of the straying people during the past 3,500 years has remained where it was. They have not advanced even an inch. It is not known who has told them that the Being, Whom the God-worshipers acknowledge as the Lord of the universe, resided somewhere above according to their belief. And if they do not see Him a few thousand feet or a few thousand miles above the earth's surface in this limitless universe, it will be a proof that He exists nowhere.

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

This also is not clear whether Pharaoh was, in fact, a disbeliever in the Being of the Lord of the universe, or talked atheism only due to stubbornness. In this regard his sayings point to the same mental confusion which one finds in the statements of the communists. Sometimes he wanted to climb into the sky and come back to tell the world that he had nowhere seen the God of Moses (peace be upon him), yet another time he would say, "Why were not bracelets of gold sent down on him, or a company of angels as attendants?" (Sura Az-Zukhruf: Ayat 53). We are of the opinion that after the passage of the period of the Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him) and his successors when Egypt was dominated by the Coptic nationalism, and a political revolution took place in the country owing to the racial and nationalistic prejudice. The new leaders, in their nationalistic enthusiasm, also revolted against the God towards Whom the Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him) and his followers, the Israelites and the Egyptian Muslims, had been calling the people. They thought that if they believed in God, they would never be able to shed the influence and impact of the civilization brought about by the Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him). For if that civilization remained, they would never be able to consolidate their political influence. For them belief

in God and Muslim sovereignty were inseparable and interdependent. Therefore, to get rid of the one it was necessary to reject the other, although they could not root out belief in One God from the depths of their hearts.

وَاسْتَكْبَرَ هُوَ وَجُنُودُهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا يُرْجَعُونَ 39

(28:39) And he and his hosts waxed arrogant in the land without any right,[54] believing that they will never have to return to Us![55]

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

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

فَأَخَذْنَاهُ وَجُنُودَهُ فَنَبَذْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ ۚ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظَّالِمِينَ 40

(28:40) Eventually We seized him and his hosts and We flung them into the sea.[56] So do see the end of the wrong-doers!

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

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ ۖ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا يُنْصَرُونَ 41

(28:41) And We made them leaders who invite people to the Fire.[57] On the Day of Judgement they shall not find help from any quarter.

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

وَأَتْبَعْنَاهُمْ فِي هَٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً ۖ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ هُمْ مِنَ الْمَقْبُوحِينَ ع 42

(28:42) We have made a curse to pursue them in this world, and on the Day of Judgement they shall be among the despised.[58]

58. The words in the text mean: "On the Day of Resurrection they will be among the maqbuhin", which has several meanings: (l) They will stand rejected and repulsed; (2) they will be wholly deprived of Allah's mercy; and (3) they will be severely beaten up and their faces will become distorted.

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَآ اَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُوْنَ الْاُوْلٰى بَصَآئِرَ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى
وَّرَحْمَةً لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ 43

(28:43) After We had destroyed the earlier generations We bestowed the Book on Moses - a source of enlightenment for people and a guidance and mercy - that they may take heed.[59]

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

وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الْغَرْبِيِّ اِذْ قَضَيْنَآ اِلٰى مُوْسَى الْاَمْرَ وَمَا كُنْتَ مِنَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ ۙ 44

(28:44) (O Muhammad), you were then not on the western side[60] when We bestowed this commandment (of Law), and you were not among its witnesses.[61]

60. "Western side": Mount Sinai, which lies to the west of the Hijaz and on which the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was given the Divine Law.

61. "The witnesses": the seventy of the elders of Israel who had been summoned along with Moses for the covenant to follow the Law. See (Surah Al-Aaraf: Ayat 155).

وَلٰكِنَّآ اَنْشَاْنَا قُرُوْنًا فَتَطَاوَلَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ ۚ وَمَا كُنْتَ ثَاوِيًا فِيْٓ اَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ تَتْلُوْا
عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِنَا ۙ وَلٰكِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِيْنَ 45

(28:45) Thereafter We raised up many a generation and a long time passed.[62] You were then not even present among the people of Midian to rehearse Our verses to them.[63] But it is We Who are sending news about that.

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

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

وَمَا كُنتَ بِجَانِبِ الطُّورِ إِذْ نَادَيْنَا وَلَٰكِن رَّحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَتَاهُم مِّن نَّذِيرٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ 46

(28:46) Nor were you on the side of the Mount (Sinai) when We called out to Moses (in the first instance). But it is out of Mercy from your Lord (that you are being informed of all this)[64] so that you may warn a people to whom no warner came before you.[65] Maybe they will take heed.

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

could prove that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had some other means than revelation for obtaining that information.

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

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

وَلَوْلَآ أَن تُصِيبَهُم مُّصِيبَةٌۢ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُوا۟ رَبَّنَا لَوْلَآ أَرْسَلْتَ إِلَيْنَا رَسُولًا فَنَتَّبِعَ ءَايَٰتِكَ وَنَكُونَ مِنَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ 47

(28:47) (We did so) lest a calamity might seize them because of the misdeeds they committed whereafter they would say: "Our Lord, why did you not send a Messenger to us that we follow Your revelation and become among those who believe?"[66]

66. This very thing has been presented at several places in the Quran as the reason for sending the messengers, but it will not be correct to conclude from this that a messenger should be sent on every occasion at every place for this purpose. As long as the message of a prophet remains intact in the world and the means of conveying it to others exist, there is no

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

فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا قَالُوْا لَوْلَآ اُوْتِيَ مِثْلَ مَآ اُوْتِيَ مُوْسٰى ؕ اَوَلَمْ يَكْفُرُوْا بِمَآ
اُوْتِيَ مُوْسٰى مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ قَالُوْا سِحْرٰنِ تَظَاهَرَا ۫ وَقَالُوْٓا اِنَّا بِكُلٍّ كٰفِرُوْنَ 48

(28:48) But when the Truth reached them from Us, they said: "Why was he not given that which was given to Moses?"[67] But did they not reject before what had been given to Moses?[68] They said: "Both are magic,[69] each supporting the other!" And they said: "We deny each of these."

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

68. This is a reply to their objection, which implies: “The disbelievers of Makkah had not believed in Moses (peace be upon him) either, nor followed his teachings. Therefore they had no right to say: Why has the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) not been given the same miracles that were given to the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him)?” In (Surah Saba: Ayat 31), this saying of the disbelievers of Makkah has been related: “We shall never believe in this Quran, nor in any other Book which came before it.”

69. That is, the Quran and the Torah both.

قُلْ فَاْتُوْا بِكِتٰبٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ هُوَ اَهْدٰى مِنْهُمَآ اَتَّبِعْهُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ 49

(28:49) Tell them, (O Prophet): "Then do bring a Book from Allah which is a better guide than either of them, and I will follow it![70] Do so if you are truthful!"

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

فَاِنۡ لَّمۡ يَسۡتَجِيۡبُوۡا لَكَ فَاعۡلَمۡ اَنَّمَا يَتَّبِعُوۡنَ اَهۡوَآءَهُمۡ ؕ وَمَنۡ اَضَلُّ مِمَّنِ اتَّبَعَ هَوٰىهُ
بِغَيۡرِ هُدًى مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهۡدِى الۡقَوۡمَ الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ ۚ 50

(28:50) But if they do not hearken to this, know well that they only follow their lusts and who is in greater error than he who follows his lusts without any guidance from Allah? Allah does not guide those given to wrong-doing.

وَلَقَدۡ وَصَّلۡنَا لَهُمُ الۡقَوۡلَ لَعَلَّهُمۡ يَتَذَكَّرُوۡنَ ؕ 51

(28:51) We have constantly conveyed them the word (of admonition) that they may take heed.[71]

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

اَلَّذِيۡنَ اٰتَيۡنٰهُمُ الۡكِتٰبَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِهٖ هُمۡ بِهٖ يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ 52

(28:52) Those on whom We bestowed the Book before do believe in this (to wit, the Qur'an).[72]

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

This event has been related by lbn Hisham, Baihaqi and others on the authority of Ibn Ishaq, thus: "After the migration to Habash when the news about the Prophet's (peace be upon him) advent and message spread in that land, a deputation of about twenty Christians came to Makkah to find out the truth, and they met the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the Masjid-al-Haram A crowd of the Quraish also gathered around them to watch what happened. The members of the deputation asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) some questions, which he answered. Then he invited them to accept Islam and recited some verses of the Quran before them. When they heard the Quran, tears came down from their eyes and they confirmed its being Allah's Word and believed in the Prophet (peace be upon him). When the meeting was over and the people left, Abu Jahl and some of his men overtook them on the way, and rebuked them severely, saying, "Never has a more stupid company come here before: O foolish men you were sent here by your people with a view to inquiring about this man, but no sooner did you meet him, you gave up your own faith!" Those gentle people answered, "Peace be to you! We have no wish to enter an argument

with you: you are responsible for your faith and we are for ours: we cannot afford to deprive ourselves knowingly of goodness." See (E.N. 123: Surah Ash-Shuara).

وَإِذَا يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ قَالُوٓا۟ ءَامَنَّا بِهِۦٓ إِنَّهُ ٱلْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّنَآ إِنَّا كُنَّا مِن قَبْلِهِۦ مُسْلِمِينَ 53

(28:53) When it is recited to them they say: "We believe in it for it is the Truth from our Lord. Indeed we were already Muslims."[73]

73. That is, "Even before this we were believers in the Prophets and the divine Books. Therefore, we had no other faith than Islam and we have believed in that Book too, which this Prophet has brought from Allah. Thus, no change has occurred in our religion: we were Muslims before even as we are Muslims now."

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

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

The fact is that the Quran has expressed this fundamental principle not only here, but also at scores of other places that the real way of life is only Islam (submission to Allah), and in God's universe there can be no other way of life than this for His creatures. Since the beginning of the creation every Prophet who came for the guidance of mankind brought this very way of life: the Prophets themselves have always been Muslims, and they impressed upon their followers also to live as Muslims, and all their followers who submitted to the

divine command brought by the Prophets, were also Muslims in every age. Consider the following few verses for instance:

(1) Indeed, Islam is the only right way of life in the sight of Allah. (Surah Aal-Imran: Ayat 19).

(2) Whoever adopts any other than this way of submission (Islam), it will not be accepted from him. (Surah Aal- Imran: Ayat 85).

(3) My reward is with Allah, and I have been commanded to believe like a Muslim. (Surah Yunus: Ayat 72). About Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) and his descendants it has been said:

(4) When his Lord said to him, "Surrender", he promptly responded, "I have surrendered to the Lord of the universe (and become a Muslim)". He also enjoined on his children to follow the same way. Jacob (peace be upon him) also did the same and his last will to his sons was: "O my children, Allah has chosen the same way of life for you. Hence, remain Muslims up to your last breath." Were you present at the time when Jacob (peace be upon him) was on the point of death? He asked his children, "Whom will you worship after me?" They all answered, "We will worship the same One Allah Whom you, your forefathers Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac (peace be upon them) acknowledged as their Allah and to Him we all surrender as Muslims." (Surah Al-Baqarah: Ayat 133).

(5) Abraham (peace be upon him) was neither a Jew, nor a Christian, but he was a Muslim, sound in the Faith." (Surah Aal-Imran: Ayat 67). Prophets Abraham and Ishmael (peace be upon them) prayed:

(6) Lord, make us Thy Muslims and raise from our offspring a community which should also be Muslim (submissive to Thy will). (Surah Al-Baqarah: Ayat 128). In connection with the story of the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) it has been said:

(7) "We did not find in it any house of the Muslims except one." (Surah Adh-Dhariyat: Ayat 36). The Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him) prayed to Allah:

(8) Let me die as a Muslim, and join me with the righteous in the end. (Surah Yusuf: Ayat 101). Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) said to his people:

(9) O my people, if you sincerely believe in Allah, put your trust in Him, if you are Muslims. (Surah Yunus: Ayat 84). The real religion of the Israelites was not Judaism but Islam as was known to their friends and foes alike. That is why the last words that Pharaoh said while drowning were:

(10) I have believed that there is no god but the real God in Whom the children of Israel have believed, and I am of the Muslims." (Surah Yunus: Ayat 90). Islam was the Way of life of all the Israelite prophets:

(11) Indeed, We sent down the Torah wherein was uigdance and light: thereby all the prophets, who were Muslims, judged the cases of those who had become Jews." (Surah Al-

Maidah: Ayat 44). The same was the Prophet Solomon's (peace be upon him) way of life. So when the queen of Sheba believed in him, she said.

(12) I submit myself (as a Muslim) with Solomon (peace be upon him) to Allah, Lord of the worlds." (Surah An-Naml: Ayat 44). And the same was the religion of the disciples of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him):

(13) And when I inspired the disciples to believe in Me and My Messenger, they said: We believe and bear witness that we are Muslims." (Sura Al-Maidah: Ayat 111).

In this connection, if somebody expresses the doubt that the Arabic words "lslam" and "Muslims" could not have been used in different languages and countries, it would not obviously be a justified objection. For the real thing is not the Arabic words but the meaning in which they are used in Arabic. In fact, what has been stressed in the above cited verses is that the real way of life sent by God was neither Christianity, nor Mosaicism, nor Muhammadanism, but to surrender to the divine commands taught by the prophets and the scriptures, and whoever adopted this way anywhere and at any time in the world, is the follower of the same universal, eternal and everlasting true way of life. For those who have adopted this way consciously and sincerely, it is no change of the faith to believe in Jesus after Moses and in Muhammad after Jesus(peace be upon them), but a natural and logical demand following the same real way of life (Islam). Contrary to this, those people who got into the Prophets' communities without due understanding or were born in them, and for whom nationalistic and racial and tribal prejudices were the religion, became mere Jews or Christians, and on the advent of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) their ignorance was exposed. For by refusing to believe in the last Prophet of Allah, they not only refused to remain Muslims in the future but also proved that they were not "Muslims" even before: they had been charmed by the personality of a Prophet or Prophets, or had taken blind conformity to their forefathers for religion.

أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْتَوْنَ أَجْرَهُم مَّرَّتَيْنِ بِمَا صَبَرُوا وَيَدْرَءُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ 54

(28:54) These will be granted their reward twice[74] over because they remained steadfast;[75] they repel evil with good,[76]and spend (in alms) out of the sustenance We provided them,[77]

74. That is, one reward for affirming faith in the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) and the second for affirming faith in Muhammad (peace be upon him). The same thing has been expressed in the Hadith which Bukhari and Muslim have related on the authority of Abu Musa Ashari. He says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "One of the three persons who will get a double reward is he who belonged to the people of the Book, had full faith in his Prophet and then affirmed faith in Muhammad (peace be upon him)."

75. That is, "They will get a double reward for the reason that they avoided nationalistic, racial and tribal prejudices and remained steadfast on the way of true faith. When, on the

advent of the new prophet, they were confronted by a hard test, they proved by their conduct that they were not Christ worshipers but God worshipers: they were not charmed by Christ's personality but were followers of "Islam". That is why when the new Prophet after Christ brought the same Islam that Christ had brought, they adopted the way of Islam under his leadership; without any hesitation, and gave up the way of those who remained stuck to Christianity."

76. That is, "They answer evil and falsehood with what is good and right: they repel injustice and mischief with what is just and noble; and they do not pay the other man back in the same coin."

77. That is, "They also make monetary sacrifices in the way of the truth. There might also be in it an allusion to this that those people had traveled from Habash to Makkah in search of the truth: they had no material gain in view when they undertook a toilsome journey involving a lot of expenses. When they heard that a man in Makkah had made a claim to be a Prophet, they thought it necessary to go and find out the truth, so that if a prophet had really been sent by God, they should not be deprived of affirming faith in him and being guided aright."

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغْوَ أَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوا لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ ۖ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ۖ لَا نَبْتَغِي الْجَاهِلِينَ 55

(28:55) and when they hear any vain talk,[78] they turn away from it, saying: "We have our deeds and you have your deeds. Peace be to you. We do not desire to act like the ignorant."

78. The reference is to the "vain talk" that Abu Jahl and his men had with the Christians from Habash, as mentioned in (E.N. 72) above.

إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ 56

(28:56) (O Prophet), you cannot grant guidance to whom you please. It is Allah Who guides those whom He will.[79] He knows best who are amenable to guidance.

79. The context shows that the object of addressing this sentence to the Prophet (peace be upon him), after mentioning the affirmation of the faith by this Christians from Habash, was to put the disbelievers of Makkah to shame, as if to say. "O unfortunate people, what wretches you are! People from far off places are coming to benefit from the fountainhead of blessings that has been made available in your own city, but you are willfully depriving yourselves of it." But the same thing has been said like this: "O Muhammad, you wish that your clansmen and your kinsfolk; and your near and dear ones should benefit from this life-giving nectar, but your willing alone cannot avail. To give guidance is in the power of Allah: He favors with it only those whom He finds inclined to accept guidance. If your kinsfolk lack this inclination, how can they be favored with this blessing?"

According to Bukhari and Muslim, this verse was sent down with regard to the Prophet's (peace be upon him) uncle, Abu Talib. When he was about to breathe his last, the Prophet (peace be upon him) tried his utmost that he should affirm faith in La ilaha illallah, so that he might die as a Muslim, but he preferred to die on the creed of Abdul Muttalib; that is why Allah said: "You cannot give guidance to whom you please." But this is a well known method of the traditionalists and commentators that when they find that a particular verse applies to an event of the Prophet's time, they regard it as the occasion of the verse's revelation. Therefore, it cannot be necessarily concluded from this and the other similar traditions that have been related in Tirmidhi, Musnad Ahmad, etc. on the authority of Abu Hurairah, Ibn Abbas, Ibn Umar, etc. that this verse of Surah Al-Qasas was revealed on the occasion of Abu Talib's death. This only shows that the truth of its meaning became most evident only on that occasion. Though the Prophet (peace be upon him) sincerely wished that every man should be blessed with guidance, the person whose dying on disbelief could cause him the greatest anguish and of whose guidance he was most desirous on account of personal bonds of love and affection, was Abu Talib. But when he was helpless in affording guidance even to him, it became evident that it did not lie in the power of the Prophet to give guidance to one or withhold it from another, but it lay wholly in the power of Allah. And Allah bestows this favor on whomever He wills not on account of a family or tribal relationship, but on the basis of one's sincerity, capability and inclination of the heart.

وَقَالُوْٓا اِنْ نَّتَّبِعِ الْهُدٰى مَعَكَ نُتَخَطَّفْ مِنْ اَرْضِنَا ؕ اَوَلَمْ نُمَكِّنْ لَّهُمْ حَرَمًا اٰمِنًا يُّجْبٰٓى
اِلَيْهِ ثَمَرٰتُ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ رِّزْقًا مِّنْ لَّدُنَّا وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ 57

(28:57) They say: "If we were to follow this guidance with you, we should be snatched away from our land."[80] Have We not established for them a secure sanctuary to which fruits of all kinds are brought as a provision from Us? But most of them do not know.[81]

80. This was the most important excuse which the unbelieving Quraish made for not accepting Islam. To understand fully we shall have to see what was the position of the Quraish historically which they feared would be affected if they accepted Islam.

The importance that the Quraish gained initially in Arabia was due to them being genealogically the descendants of the Prophet Ishmael (peace be upon him), and therefore, the Arabs looked upon them as the children of the Prophets. Then, when they became the custodians of the Kaabah through Qusayy bin Kilab's sagacity, and Makkah became their home, their importance grew, because they were the attendants of the most, sacred shrine of Arabia, and its priests too. Therefore, every Arab tribe had to have relations with them on account of the annual pilgrimage. Taking advantage of this central position the Quraish started gaining prominence as a commercial people, and to their great good fortune, the political conflict between the Eastern Roman Empire and Iran helped them to gain an important place in the international trade. Iran in those days had blocked entrance to all the trade routes between Rome, Greece, Egypt, and Syria in the north, and China, India, Indonesia and eastern Africa in the southeast. The only exception was the Red Sea route.

This also was blocked when Yemen fell to Iran. After this, no way of the transit of trade goods remained except that the Arab merchants should transport merchandise of the Roman territories to the harbors of the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf, and then lift trade goods of the eastern countries from these harbors and transport them to the Roman territories. This sort of arrangement made Makkah an important center of the international trade, and the Quraish were its monopolists. But the chaotic conditions prevailing in Arabia did not allow smooth transit of the trade goods unless the Quraish had pleasant relations with the tribes through whose territories the trade caravans passed. For this the religious influence of the Quraish was not enough; they had to enter into treaties with the tribes concerned, pay them dividends from their profits, and make gifts to the tribal chiefs and other influential people. Besides, they also traded in money lending on a vast scale, which had ensnared the merchants and the chiefs of almost all the neighboring tribes.

Such were the conditions when the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave his message of Tauhid. More than the prejudice of ancestral religion what caused the Quraish the greatest provocation against it was that in it they saw their own interests in jeopardy. They thought that even if polytheism and idol worship were proved wrong and Tauhid right by rational arguments and reasoning, it was ruinous for them to accept Tauhid. For as soon as they did so the whole of Arabia would rise in revolt against them. Then, they would be ousted from the custodianship of the Kaabah, and all their bonds and pacts of friendship with the polytheistic tribes would be severed, which alone guaranteed the safe transit of their trade caravans through their territories. Thus, the new faith would not only put an end to their religious influence but also to their economic prosperity, and they might even be forced by the Arabs to quit Makkah.

This presents a strange phenomenon of the lack of insight on the part of the world worshipers. The Prophet (peace be upon him) tried his best to make them believe that if they accepted his Message, the whole world would yield and submit to them. But they saw their death in it. They thought that the change of the faith would not only deprive them of their wealth and prosperity and influence but would render them so completely helpless in the land. They could not foresee the time when a few years afterwards the whole of Arabia was going to be ruled by a central government under the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself. Then even during the lifetime of their own generation Iran and Iraq and Syria and Egypt were going to fall, one after the other, to the same central authority and within a century of this utterance by them Caliphs from the clan of the Quraish itself were to rule over vast territories, from Sind to Spain and from Caucasus to the coasts of Yemen.

81. This is the first reply to their excuse by Allah. It means this: It is all due to the sacredness and the central position of this Sanctuary that the merchandise of the entire world is being drawn and attracted to this barren and uncultivated valley, for your benefit and use. You should know that you are in no way responsible for giving it the central position it enjoys and for the state of security that prevails in the areas around it. 2,500 years ago a servant of Allah came to this barren valley in the bare mountains with his wife and suckling child. Here he built a small room with stone and mud, proclaimed that Allah had made it a Sanctuary, and that the people should come to visit it and go round it in worship and adoration. Now this is only due to Allah's blessing that this Sanctuary has been the center of Arabia for the past 25 centuries. Peace reigns here even when there is chaos all around. It is held in the highest esteem by every Arab, and thousands of people are drawn to it every

year for going round it in worship. It is only by virtue of this blessing that you are looked upon as the spiritual leaders of Arabia and a large part of the international trade is under your control. Now, do you think; that if you turned and revolted against that God Who has favored you with this blessing, you will prosper, but as soon as you followed His faith you would he ruined?

وَكَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍۢ بَطِرَتْ مَعِيْشَتَهَا ۚ فَتِلْكَ مَسٰكِنُهُمْ لَمْ تُسْكَنْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ۭ وَكُنَّا نَحْنُ الْوٰرِثِيْنَ 58

(28:58) And how many a town did We destroy whose inhabitants exulted on account of their affluence. These are their dwellings in which very few dwelt after them. Eventually it is We Who inherited them.[82]

82. This is the second answer to their excuse. It means to imply this: The worldly wealth and prosperity of which you are so proud and whose probable danger of loss makes you stick to falsehood and turn away from the truth. This was also possessed once by Aad and Thamud and Saba and the people of Lot. Then, did it save them from destruction? After all, a high standard of living is not the only aim in life that man should endeavor to pursue it regardless of every consideration for truth and falsehood, and refuse to accept the right way only because there was a risk of losing it if one did so. Do you have any guarantee that if you persisted in the errors and evils that ruined the prosperous peoples of the past, you would remain safe and never meet the doom that they met?

وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرٰى حَتّٰى يَبْعَثَ فِيْٓ اُمِّهَا رَسُوْلًا يَّتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِنَا ۚ وَمَا كُنَّا مُهْلِكِي الْقُرٰٓى اِلَّا وَاَهْلُهَا ظٰلِمُوْنَ 59

(28:59) Your Lord would not destroy a town until He had sent to its centre a Messenger who would recite to them Our verses. Nor would We destroy any town unless its inhabitants were iniquitous.[83]

83. This is the third answer to their excuse. It means: The nations which were destroyed before you had become wicked. To warn them Allah sent His messengers, but when they took no notice of their warnings and persisted in their evil ways, they were destroyed. The same is the case with you now. You have also become wicked, and a Messenger has come to you to warn you. Now if you persist in your disbelief and denial, you will not be safeguarding your prosperity and comforts of life but endangering them. The destruction that you are afraid of will overtake you not because of believing but on account of refusal to believe.

وَمَآ أُوْتِيْتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَزِيْنَتُهَا ۚ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ وَّأَبْقٰى ۭ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ۝ 60

(28:60) Whatever you have been given is a provision for the life of this world and its glitter. But that which is with Allah is better and more enduring. Do you not use your intellect?

أَفَمَنْ وَّعَدْنٰهُ وَعْدًا حَسَنًا فَهُوَ لَاقِيْهِ كَمَنْ مَّتَّعْنٰهُ مَتَاعَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ هُوَ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِيْنَ ۝ 61

(28:61) Now, he to whom We have promised a good which he is going to obtain can he be like him whom We have given the good things of this life, but who will be brought up for punishment[84] on the Day of Judgement?

84. This is the fourth answer to their excuse. To understand it fully one should bear in mind two things: First, the present life which is no more than a few years for anyone is only the temporary phase of a journey. The real life which will be everlasting is yet to come. In this life man may amass as much provision as he may please and live the few years at his disposal as comfortably as he can, it will in any case come to an end, and man will depart from the world empty handed. No sensible person will like to make the bad bargain of suffering the everlasting distress and affliction in the Hereafter in exchange for the pleasures and comforts of his brief sojourn in the world. As against this, he would rather prefer to face a few years of hardships here and earn the goodness that may earn him everlasting bliss and comfort in the eternal life of the next world.

Secondly, Allah's religion does not demand that man should totally refrain from seeking and enjoying the good things of life and discard its adornments in any case. Its only demand is that he should prefer the Hereafter to the world, for the world is perishable and the Hereafter everlasting; and the pleasures of the world are inferior and of the Hereafter superior. Therefore, man must try to attain those provisions and adornments of the world that may enable him to fare well in the everlasting life of the next world, or at least protect him from the eternal loss there. But in case there is a question of a comparison between the two, and the success of the world and of the Hereafter oppose and contradict each other, the faith demands, and this is the demand of man's good sense too, that he should sacrifice the world to the Hereafter, and should never adopt the way of only seeking the transitory provisions and adornments of this world, which inevitably lead to his ruin in the Hereafter forever.

Keeping these two things in view let us see what Allah says to the disbelievers of Makkah in the foregoing sentences. He does not tell them to wind up their business, stop their trade and follow His Prophets and become mendicants. What He says is that the worldly wealth

of which they are so enamored, is very meager and they can utilize it only for a few days in this worldly life. Contrary to this, that which is with Allah is much better both in quality and in quantity and is also everlasting. Therefore, they would be foolish if for the sake of benefiting by the limited blessings of this transitory life, they adopted the way whose evil results they will have to suffer in the form of everlasting loss in the next world. They should judge for themselves as to who is successful: He who exerts himself in the service of his Lord and then is blessed with His favors for ever, or he who will be produced as a culprit in His court, only after having had an opportunity of enjoying unlawful wealth for a few days in the world.

وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَآءِيَ الَّذِينَ كُنتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ 62

(28:62) (Let them not forget) that the Day when Allah will call unto them, and say: "Where are those whom you imagined to be My associates?"[85]

85. This discourse is in continuation of the fourth answer, and is linked with the last sentence of the preceding verse. It means to imply this: Those who persist in the evil of shirk and idol worship and refuse to believe in the Prophet only for the sake of their worldly interests, will meet with such and such evil consequences in the eternal life of the Hereafter. They should, therefore, carefully judge for themselves whether it would be a good bargain if they were to be doomed to such an end, after they had enjoyed fully the provisions and adornments of the short worldly life, even if no calamity befell them in the world.

قَالَ الَّذِينَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ رَبَّنَا هَؤُلَآءِ الَّذِينَ أَغْوَيْنَا ۚ أَغْوَيْنَاهُمْ كَمَا غَوَيْنَا ۚ تَبَرَّأْنَآ إِلَيْكَ ۖ مَا كَانُوٓا إِيَّانَا يَعْبُدُونَ 63

(28:63) Those against whom the Word will be realised[86] will say: "Our Lord, these are the ones whom we led astray just as we ourselves strayed. We absolve ourselves before You of all blame.[87] It was not us that they worshipped."[88]

86. This implies those satans from among jinns and men, who had been set up as associates of God in the world, whose teachings had been followed in preference to divine commandments, and dependence on whom had made the people give up the right way and adopt the wrong ways of life. Such persons may not have been called gods and lords as such, but since they were worshiped and obeyed as one should worship and obey only God, they were inevitably made partners in Godhead.

87. That is, “We did not lead them astray forcibly. We neither deprived them of their powers of seeing and hearing nor of their powers of thinking, nor there ever arose a situation when they wanted to follow the right way but we might have forcibly pulled them to the wrong way. But just as we ourselves had gone astray of our own free will, so they also of their own free will accepted the wrong way when we presented it before them. Therefore, we are not responsible for what they did: we are responsible for our acts and they are responsible for theirs.”

There is a subtle point to be noted here. Allah, in fact, will question those who had set up others as associates with Him, but before they make an answer, those who had been set up as associates will speak up. The reason is: When the common polytheists will be questioned thus, their leaders and guides will feel that their doomsday had come, for their followers will certainly blame them for their deviation. Therefore, even before the followers say something in response, the leaders will forestall them and start pleading their innocence.

88. That is, "They did not serve us but served their own selves alone."

وَقِيلَ ادْعُوا شُرَكَاءَكُمْ فَدَعَوْهُمْ فَلَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُمْ وَرَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ ۚ لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَهْتَدُونَ 64

(28:64) They will then be told: "Call upon those for help whom you declared to be Our associates."[89] They will then call upon them but they will not answer them. They will have observed the chastisement in front of them. Would that they were guided!

89. That is, "Invoke them for help. In the world you had relied on them and rejected Our commandments. So invoke them to come to your rescue here also and save you from the punishment."

وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ مَاذَا أَجَبْتُمُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ 65

(28:65) (Let them not disregard) that the Day when Allah will call out to them saying: "What was the answer you gave to the Messengers?"

فَعَمِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَنبَاءُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَهُمْ لَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ 66

(28:66) Then they will not be able to think of any reply, nor will they be able to ask one another.

فَأَمَّا مَن تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَعَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُفْلِحِينَ 67

(28:67) But those who repented and believed and acted righteously, they will perhaps be among those who will prosper there.

وَرَبُّكَ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيَخْتَارُ ۗ مَا كَانَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ ۚ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ 68

(28:68) Your Lord creates what He will and chooses (for His tasks) whomsoever He will. It is not for them to make the choice.[90] Glory be to Allah. He is exalted far above their associating others in His Divinity.

90. This, in fact, is a refutation of shirk. Allah objects to the setting up of countless gods from among His creatures by the mushriks and assigning to them from themselves of attributes and ranks and offices, and says: "We Ourselves bless with whatever attributes, capabilities and powers whomever We like from among the men, angels, jinns and other servants whom We have created, and employ whomever We will for whatever service We will. But, how and where from have the mushriks gotten the authority that they should make whomever they like from among My servants remover of hardships, bestower of treasures and answerer of prayers? That they should make someone the lord of rain, another the giver of jobs and children, still another bestower of health and ill-health? That they should look upon whomever they please as the ruler of a part of My Kingdom and assign to him whichever of My powers they like? Whether it is an angel or a jinn, or a prophet, or saint, or anybody else, he has been created by Us. Whatever excellences he has, have been granted by Us, and whatever service We willed to take from him, We have taken. Therefore, the selection of someone for a particular service does not mean that he should be raised from the position of a servant to godhead and be worshipped instead of God, invoked for help, prayed to for fulfillment of needs, taken as maker or destroyer of destinies and possessor of divine attributes and powers.

وَرَبُّكَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ 69

(28:69) Your Lord knows all that their hearts conceal and all that they reveal.[91]

91. The object for which this thing has been said in this context is: A person can make a claim before the people in this world that he is fully satisfied on rational grounds that the deviation he has adopted is sound and right. And the arguments that are given against it are not convincing; that he has adopted the deviation not due to any evil motive but with the sincerest and purest intentions; that he has never been confronted by anything that might have proved him to be in the wrong. But he cannot advance such an argument before Allah, for Allah is not only aware of the open, but also of the hidden secrets of the mind and heart. He knows directly what kind of knowledge and feelings and sentiments and desires and intentions and conscience a certain person has. He is aware of the occasions and the means and the ways through which a person was warned, through which the truth reached him, through which falsehood was proved to be false to him, and also the real motives for which he preferred his deviation to the right way.

وَهُوَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ لَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي الْأُولَىٰ وَالْآخِرَةِ ۖ وَلَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ 70

(28:70) He is Allah; there is no god but He. His is the praise in this world and in the Hereafter. His is the command and to Him will all of you be returned.

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكُمُ الَّيْلَ سَرْمَدًا اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ مَنْ اِلٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللّٰهِ
يَاْتِيْكُمْ بِضِيَآءٍ ؕ اَفَلَا تَسْمَعُوْنَ 71

(28:71) (O Prophet), tell them: "Did you consider: if Allah were to make the night perpetual over you till the Day of Judgement, is there a god other than Allah who can bring forth light for you? Do you not hear?"

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكُمُ النَّهَارَ سَرْمَدًا اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ مَنْ اِلٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللّٰهِ
يَاْتِيْكُمْ بِلَيْلٍ تَسْكُنُوْنَ فِيْهِ ؕ اَفَلَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ 72

(28:72) Say: "Did you consider: if Allah were to make the day become perpetual over you till the Day of Judgement, is there a god other than Allah who can bring in night for you that you may repose in it? Will you not see?"

وَمِنْ رَّحْمَتِهٖ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لِتَسْكُنُوْا فِيْهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوْا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ
تَشْكُرُوْنَ 73

(28:73) It is out of His Mercy that He has made for you night and day that you may repose (during the night) and seek His Bounty (during the day) that you might be grateful.

وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيْهِمْ فَيَقُوْلُ اَيْنَ شُرَكَآءِىَ الَّذِيْنَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُوْنَ 74

(28:74) (Let them bear in mind) that on that Day when He will call out to them saying: "Where are My associates, those whom you imagined to be so?"

وَنَزَعْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ اُمَّةٍ شَهِيْدًا فَقُلْنَا هَاتُوْا بُرْهَانَكُمْ فَعَلِمُوْٓا اَنَّ الْحَقَّ لِلّٰهِ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ
مَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ع 75

(28:75) And from each people We shall draw a witness,[92] and shall say to them: "Do produce your evidence now."[93]Then they shall know that the Truth is with Allah alone, and the lies which they had invented will forsake them.

92. "A witness": the prophet who had warned that community, or a rightly guided person from among the followers of the prophets, who had performed the duty of preaching the truth in the community, or a means through which the message of the truth had reached the community.

93. That is, "Present a cogent argument in your defense so that you are pardoned. You should either prove that the shirk and the denial of the Hereafter and prophethood in which you persisted were the correct creed. And you had adopted it on rational grounds. Or, if you cannot do that, you should at least prove that no arrangement had been made by God to warn you of this error and guide you to the right path."

إِنَّ قَارُونَ كَانَ مِن قَوْمِ مُوسَىٰ فَبَغَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْكُنُوزِ مَا إِنَّ مَفَاتِحَهُ لَتَنُوءُ
بِالْعُصْبَةِ أُولِي الْقُوَّةِ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ قَوْمُهُ لَا تَفْرَحْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِينَ 76

(28:76) To be sure,[94] Qarun (Korah) was one of Moses' people; then he transgressed against them.[95] We had bestowed on him such treasure that their very keys would have been raised with difficulty by a whole group of strong people.[96] Once when his people said to him: "Do not exult, for Allah does not love those who exult (in their riches).

94. This fact also is being related in continuation of the answer to the excuse which has been the theme of the discourse from (verse 57) onward. In this regard, one should bear in mind the fact that the people who feared that the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) message would affect the overall national interests adversely were, in fact, the big money owners, money lenders, and capitalists of Makkah, who by virtue of their international trade and money lending business had become the Korahs of their time. These were the people who thought that the real truth was to earn and amass maximum wealth. Anything that seemed to vitiate this object was an untruth which could not be accepted in any case. On the other hand, there were the common people who looked with longing eyes at these magnates and earnestly desired that they should also attain the same heights as those people had attained. In an atmosphere charged with the love of money, as it was, people considered it to be a weighty argument that if the invitation of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) towards Tauhid and the Hereafter and the moral code was accepted, it would spell ruin for the Quraish not only commercially but economically too.

95. Qarun who has been called Korah in the Bible and the Talmud was a first cousin of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). According to the account of descent given in Exodus, the fathers of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and Korah were real brothers. At another place in the Quran it has been stated that this man had joined with Pharaoh in spite of being an Israelite and become one of his favorites; so much so that one of the two ring leaders of opposition to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) after Pharaoh was this same Korah: "We sent Moses to Pharaoh and Haman and Korah with Our signs and a clear authority of appointment, but they said: He is a sorcerer, a liar." (Surah Al-Mumin: Ayats 23-24).

From this it follows that Korah had rebelled against his own people and become a supporter of the hostile forces which were bent upon wiping out the Israelites. On account of this rebellion against his own people he had attained a high place with Pharaoh. The two persons, besides Pharaoh, to whom the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had been sent were Pharaoh's minister Haman, and this Israelite capitalist, Korah. All other chiefs and couriers were of inferior status, who were not worth mentioning. The same position of Korah has been alluded to in (Surah Al-Ankabut: Ayat 39).

96. In the story related of him in the Bible, there is no mention of this man's wealth. But according to the Jewish traditions, he possessed immense wealth, so much so that three hundred mules were required to carry the keys of his treasures. Though greatly exaggerated, this statement shows that even according to the Israelite traditions, Korah was a very wealthy man of his time.

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَآ اٰتٰىكَ اللّٰهُ الدَّارَ الْاٰخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيْبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَاَحْسِنْ كَمَآ
اَحْسَنَ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفَسَادَ فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ 77

(28:77) Seek by means of the wealth that Allah has granted you the Abode of the Hereafter, but forget not your share in this world and do good as Allah has been good to you and do not strive to create mischief in the land, for Allah loves not those who create mischief."

قَالَ اِنَّمَآ اُوْتِيْتُهٗ عَلٰى عِلْمٍ عِنْدِيْ ؕ اَوَلَمْ يَعْلَمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ اَهْلَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ مِنَ الْقُرُوْنِ
مَنْ هُوَ اَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً وَّاَكْثَرُ جَمْعًا ؕ وَلَا يُسْـَٔلُ عَنْ ذُنُوْبِهِمُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ 78

(28:78) He replied: "All this has been given to me on account of a certain knowledge that I have."[97] Did he not know that Allah had destroyed before him those who were stronger in might[98] than he and were more numerous in multitude? The wicked are not asked about their acts of sin.[99]

97. The words of the text can have two meanings: (1) "Whatever I have obtained is by virtue of my own ability. It is not a bounty which somebody else might have given me as a favor without my deserving it as a right, and now I may have to render thanks for it by giving a portion of it to those who have not been given anything, as a favor, or give some of it in charity so that the bounty is not withdrawn from me." (2) "I think God has given me this wealth in view of my qualities and excellences. Had I not been a likable person, He would not have given me all this. That He has bestowed on me all kinds of blessings is a proof that I am His favorite and he approves of the way of life that I am following."

98. That is, "Did this person who was proud of being so knowledgeable and wise and well informed and capable never know that people with greater wealth and grandeur and power

and might than him had lived before him in the world, and Allah at last, had annihilated them completely? If capability and skill and competence are the only factors conducive to worldly progress, then why didn't these virtues avail them when they were destroyed? And if the worldly progress of a person is a sure proof that Allah is pleased with him and approves of his deeds and qualities, then why were those people doomed to destruction at all?"

99. That is, "The criminals have always been claiming to be the best people, who are free from every evil, but their punishment is not dependent on their own confessions. Whenever they are seized; they are not seized on the basis of their own confessions of sins, etc."

فَخَرَجَ عَلٰى قَوْمِهٖ فِيْ زِيْنَتِهٖ ؕ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ يُرِيْدُوْنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا يٰلَيْتَ لَنَا مِثْلَ مَاۤ اُوْتِيَ قَارُوْنُ ۙ اِنَّهٗ لَذُوْ حَظٍّ عَظِيْمٍ 79

(28:79) Once Korah went forth among his people in full glitter. Those seeking the life of this world said: "Would that we had the like of what Korah has! He truly has a great fortune."

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَيْلَكُمْ ثَوَابُ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ لِّمَنْ اٰمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ۚ وَلَا يُلَقّٰىهَاۤ اِلَّا الصّٰبِرُوْنَ 80

(28:80) But those endowed with true knowledge said: "Woe to you. The reward of Allah is best for those who believe and act righteously. But none except those who are patient shall attain to this."[100]

100. That is, "This kind of character and the way of thinking and the bounty of Allah's reward falls to the lot of only those who stick firmly and steadfastly and patiently to the lawful ways in life, whether by so doing they are able to earn only a bare living, or are enabled to become millionaires, but are never inclined to follow the unlawful ways even if they are promised all the benefits and wealth of the world. In this verse, "Allah's reward" means the bounteous provision that is gained by man in the world and the Hereafter as a result of labor and toil undertaken within the bounds set by Allah; and "patience" means to have control over one's emotions and desires, to stick to honesty and righteousness as against greed and lust, to bear the losses that one may have to incur on account of the truth and justice, to spurn the gains that might accrue from employing unlawful devices, to remain content and satisfied with the lawful earning even if it is meager and insufficient, to eschew feelings of envy and jealousy at the splendor of the corrupt people and avoid, even casting a glance at it, and to be satisfied with the thought that for an honest man the colorless purity that Allah has granted him by His grace is better than the lustrous filth of evil and corruption. As for "fortune", it implies Allah's reward as well as the pure mentality by virtue of which a believing and righteous person finds it easier to suffer hunger and

starvation than become a multi millionaire by adopting dishonest and corrupt ways and means."

فَخَسَفْنَا بِهٖ وَبِدَارِهِ الْاَرْضَ ۟ فَمَا كَانَ لَهٗ مِنْ فِئَةٍ يَّنْصُرُوْنَهٗ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ۫ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُنْتَصِرِيْنَ 81

(28:81) At last We caused the earth to swallow him and his house. Thereafter there was no group of people that could come to his aid against Allah; nor was he able to come to his own aid.

وَاَصْبَحَ الَّذِيْنَ تَمَنَّوْا مَكَانَهٗ بِالْاَمْسِ يَقُوْلُوْنَ وَيْكَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ وَيَقْدِرُ ۚ لَوْلَاۤ اَنْ مَّنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْنَا لَخَسَفَ بِنَا ؕ وَيْكَاَنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ۧ 82

(28:82) And those who had envied his position the day before began to say on the morrow: "Alas, we had forgotten that it is Allah Who increases the provision of those of His servants whom He will and grants in sparing measure to those whom He will.[101] But for Allah's favour upon us, He could have made us to be swallowed too. Alas, we had forgotten that the unbelievers do not prosper."[102]

101. That is "The extension or the restriction of provisions is always according to the will of Allah, and Allah's will is determined by His own reasons and considerations. His favoring somebody with generous provisions does not necessarily mean that Allah is well pleased with him and is honoring him with gifts. Mostly it so happens that a person is under Allah's wrath, but He goes on favoring him with more and more wealth till, at last, the same wealth causes Allah's torment to descend on him. Contrary to this, if somebody is being given restricted provisions, it does not necessarily mean that Allah is displeased with him and is punishing him. Mostly the righteous live in hardship although they are Allah's favorites, and in many cases the same hardship becomes a cause of Allah's mercy for them. Consequently, a person who does not understand this reality looks with envious eyes at the prosperity of those who actually deserve Allah's wrath."

102. That is, "We had the misconception, that worldly prosperity and wealth by themselves constituted real success. Therefore, we thought that Korah was highly successful, but now we have come to know that real success is an entirely different thing, and it is never attained by the disbelievers."

This moral of the story of Korah has been mentioned only in the Quran. The Bible and the Talmud are without it. However, according to the details given in these books, when the Israelites left Egypt, Korah also accompanied them along with his men, and then conspired against the Prophets Moses and Aaron (peace be upon them) and was joined in this by 250

of his followers. At last, Allah's wrath descended on him, and the earth opened up and swallowed him and his followers together with their possessions."

تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْاٰخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِيْنَ لَا يُرِيْدُوْنَ عُلُوًّا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا ؕ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ 83

(28:83) As for the Abode of the Hereafter,[103] We shall assign it exclusively for those who do not seek glory on earth[104]nor want to cause mischief.[105] The God-fearing shall have the best end.[106]

103. That is, Paradise which is the abode of real success.

104. "Who do not seek exaltedness": who are not desirous of establishing their own glory in God's earth: who do not live like rebels and tyrants and arrogant people but like humble servants: who do not seek to make God's servants their personal servants.

105. "Mischief" implies the chaos that inevitably appears in human life in consequence of violating the truth. Whatever man does when he disobeys Allah and turns away from His service is nothing but mischief. Partly this mischief occurs when wealth is amassed through unlawful means and expended in unlawful ways.

106. "The God fearing": those who refrain from His disobedience.

مَنْ جَآءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهٗ خَيْرٌ مِّنْهَا ۚ وَمَنْ جَآءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى الَّذِيْنَ عَمِلُوا السَّيِّاٰتِ اِلَّا مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ 84

(28:84) He who shall bring a good deed shall be rewarded with what is better. But those who bring evil deeds shall not be requited more than their deeds.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْ فَرَضَ عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْاٰنَ لَرَآدُّكَ اِلٰى مَعَادٍ ؕ قُلْ رَّبِّيْٓ اَعْلَمُ مَنْ جَآءَ بِالْهُدٰى وَمَنْ هُوَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ 85

(28:85) (O Prophet), surely He Who has ordained the Qur'an on you[107] will bring you to the best end.[108] Say to them: "My Lord knows best who has brought true guidance and who is in clear error."

107. That is, "He has placed on you the responsibility of conveying the Quran and teaching it to the people, and reforming the world according to the guidance contained in it."

108. The word maad in the original means the place to which one has to return ultimately. Its use as a common noun implies that it is a place of eminence and glory. Some commentators think it refers to Paradise. But there is no reason why it should be restricted only to Paradise. Let it remain indefinite as Allah Himself has put it so that the promise become applicable both in this world and to the next world. The context also requires that it should be looked upon as a promise to bestow the highest glory and eminence on the Prophet (peace be upon him) not only in the Hereafter, but in this world also. In the saying of the disbelievers of Makkah, which has been the theme of the discourse from (verse 57) until now, they had said, "O Muhammad (peace be upon him), do you want us also to be doomed with you? If we join you and adopt this faith, it will become hard for us to live in Arabia." In response to this, Allah tells His Prophet: "O Muhammad, that God Who has placed the burden of conveying the message of the Quran on you, will not destroy you: rather He will exalt you to the rank which these people cannot even imagine today." And, in fact, in a few years after this, even in this world, Allah granted the Prophet (peace be upon him) complete authority over the whole of Arabia, and there was no power to resist him, and no religion to stand its ground. There had been no precedent in the history of Arabia that the whole peninsula might have come under the sway of one man so completely that no opponent might be there to challenge him and no soul to dare disobey his orders. Then it was not only a political domination but religious too, for the whole population had been won over to Islam.

Some commentators opine that this verse of Surah Al- Qasas was sent down on the way during the Prophet's (peace be upon him) migration from Makkah to Madinah, and in this Allah had promised His Prophet that He would again bring him back to Makkah. But, firstly, the words of the verse do not allow that "maad" be taken to mean "Makkah". Secondly, this Surah, both according to the traditions and the internal evidence of its theme, was revealed sometime during the time of the migration to Habash, and one cannot understand that if this verse was revealed after several years on the way during the migration to Madinah, why was it inserted in this context without any relevance? Thirdly, in this context, the mention of the Holy Prophet's (peace be upon him) return to Makkah seems quite irrelevant. For if the verse is taken to mean this, Muhammad will be expelled from this city, but he will not remain an exile forever, but eventually We will bring him back to this very place. Though this tradition has been reported by Bukhari, Nasai, Ibn Jarir and other traditionalists on the authority of Ibn Abbas, it is, in fact, Ibn Abbas's own opinion; it is not a tradition that might have been received direct from the Prophet (peace be upon him) that one may have to accept it.

وَمَا كُنتَ تَرْجُوٓا۟ أَن يُلْقَىٰٓ إِلَيْكَ ٱلْكِتَٰبُ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ ظَهِيرًا لِّلْكَٰفِرِينَ ۖ 86

(28:86) (O Prophet), you never looked forward for the Book to be revealed to you. It is out of sheer Mercy of your Lord that it was (revealed to you).[109] So do not lend any support to the unbelievers.[110]

109. This thing is being presented as a proof of the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) prophethood. Just as the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was unaware that he was going to be appointed a Prophet, and sent on a grand mission, when he had never even expected or wished for such a thing, but had been suddenly called upon while on a journey and made a Prophet and assigned a mission which had no relevance with his previous life. So was precisely the case with the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The people of Makkah knew well what kind of life he was leading till a day when he came down from the cave of Hira with the message of prophethood. They were fully aware of his occupations, of the topics of his conversation, of the nature of his interests and activities. No doubt it was a life which was an embodiment of truth, honesty and righteousness, a model of nobility, peacefulness, fulfillment of obligations and rights of others and of the service to humanity, but there was nothing in it which could give somebody any idea that the righteous man was going to make a claim to prophethood the next day. There was no one among his most intimate friends and relations and neighbors, who could say that he had already been preparing to become a Prophet. No one had ever heard a word on the themes and problems and topics from him, which became the subject of his daily conversation all of a sudden after the revolutionary moment in the cave of Hira. No one had heard him employing the kind of diction and words and terms, which the people started hearing from him in the shape of the Quran. He had never stood up for preaching, had never given a message or started a movement, and none of his activities had ever indicated that he was anxious to undertake a program for the solution of the social problems or for religious or moral reformation. Until the day before this revolutionary moment, he was leading the life of a trader, who earns his living by fair and lawful means. Who lives a happy life with his family, receives his guests, helps the poor and treats his relatives well, and at times retires from society into seclusion for the sake of worship. For such a person it would be a great change if he started making, all of a sudden, world moving orations, preaching a revolutionary message, producing a sublime literature and propounding an enduring philosophy of life and a profound system of thought and morality and social life. For psychologically too, such a change is not possible through any kind of preparation and conscious effort. Any such effort and preparation, in any case, has to pass through certain evolutionary stages, which cannot remain hidden from the people among whom a person is passing his life. Had the Prophet's (peace be upon him) life passed through any such stages of gradual development, hundreds of the people in Makkah would have come out to say, "Did we not tell you beforehand that this man would one day make a tall claim?" But history bears evidence that no one in Makkah ever made such an objection although the disbelievers of Makkah raised all sorts of other objections against the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Then another thing: the Prophet (peace be upon him) never wished for or expected or awaited his appointment to prophethood, but he came across this experience all of a sudden quite unexpectedly. This is supported by the event that has been reported in the traditions in connection with the beginning of revelation. After his first meeting with the Angel Gabriel and the revelation of the initial verses of Surah Al-Alaq he rushes back home from Hira trembling with fear, and says to his wife, "Cover me with a cloak! Cover me with a cloak!" After a while when he recovers a little from the state of anxiety, he relates what he had experienced to his wife and says, "I feel there is danger to my life!" She responds, "No, never! Allah will never bring you to grief: you render the rights of your kindred, you support the indigent, help the poor, treat your guests well, and are ever ready to contribute

to a good cause." Then she takes him to Waraqa bin Naufal, who was her cousin and a righteous and knowledgeable person from among the people of the Book. Hearing from him what had happened, Waraqa says without any hesitation, "The one who came to you is the same Namus (the specially appointed divine messenger), who used to come to Moses (peace be upon him). I wish I were a young man and could live till the time when your people will expel you." The Prophet (peace be upon him) asks, "Will my people expel me?" He replies, "Yes; no one has passed before, who brought same thing that you have brought, and his people did not turn hostile to him."

This whole event depicts the state which a simple man will naturally undergo when he is confronted unexpectedly by a most extraordinary experience all of a sudden. If the Prophet (peace be upon him) had already been anxious to become a prophet and thinking that a man like him ought to be a prophet, and had been meditating and straining his mind and awaiting the arrival of an angel with a message, he would have been filled with delight at the experience in the cave, and descending from the mountain would have gone straight before his people and proclaimed Prophethood. But, quite to the contrary, he is confounded at what he had seen, reaches home trembling and lies in bed fully covered up. When he is composed a little, he tells his wife quietly what had happened in the solitude of the cave, and expresses feelings of anxiety and insecurity. How different is this state from the state of a candidate for prophethood! Then, who can be better aware of the husband's life, his ambitions and thoughts, than the wife? If she had perceived before-hand that the husband was a candidate for prophethood and had been anxiously awaiting the arrival of the angel, her reply would have been different from what Khadijah (may Allah be pleased with her) said. She would have answered, "Dear husband! Why are you so agitated? You have got what you have been longing for long. Now, flourish as a saint: I too shall get ready for collecting gifts and offerings." But on the basis of what she had seen of her husband during her 15 years long companionship, she did not take more than a moment to understand that Satan could not have come to a righteous and selfless man like him, nor could Allah have put him to a severe test. Therefore, whatever he had seen was the very truth and reality.

The same is also true in the case of Waraqa bin Naufal. He was not an outsider, but a member of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) own clan and a brother in law by a close relationship. Then being a knowledgeable Christian he could discriminate the prophethood and book and revelation from fabrication and fraud. Being the Prophet's (peace be upon him) senior by many years his whole life since childhood had been spent before him. Therefore, when he heard what the Prophet (peace be upon him) had to say about his experience in the cave, he at once said that it was most surely the same Angel who used to bring divine messages to the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). For in this case also precisely the same thing had happened as in the case of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). He also was a pure and righteous person, simple in thought and without any preconceived notions about prophethood, he also had experienced the same thing unexpectedly in full consciousness. Therefore, without the least hesitation, he was led to the firm conclusion that there was no self deception or satanic insinuation involved, but whatever the honest man had seen, without any will or desire on his own part, was in fact, an experience of the reality.

This is such a clear proof of the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) prophethood that a realistic person can hardly deny it. That is why it has been presented as a proof of prophethood at several places in the Quran. For example, in Surah Yunus it has been said:

"O Prophet, say to them: Had Allah willed so, I would never have recited this Quran to you, nor would He have told you anything (about its existence). I have already lived a lifetime among you before its revelation. Do you not use common sense?" (Ayat 16). And in Surah Ash-Shura it has been said: "O Prophet, you did not know at all what was the Book and what was the faith but We made that revelation a light by which We show the way to any of Our servants We will." (Ayat 52). For further explanation, see (E.N. 21 of Surah Yunus), (E.Ns 88 to 92 of Surah Al-Ankabut), and (E.N. 84 of Surah Ash-Shuara).

110. That is, "When Allah has granted you this blessing without your asking for it, you are under an obligation to exercise all your energies and spend all your efforts in upholding it conveying it to others and promoting its cause. Any slackness in this regard would mean that you helped the disbelievers. This does not mean that, God forbid, there was any chance of such slackness on the part of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Allah, in fact, is exhorting the Prophet (peace be upon him), as if to say, you should go on doing your mission in spite of the disbelievers' opposition and their uproar, and do not at all mind what fears the enemies of the truth express regarding your message's being harmful to their national interests."

وَلَا يَصُدُّنَّكَ عَنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ بَعْدَ اِذْ اُنْزِلَتْ اِلَيْكَ وَادْعُ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ۚ 87

(28:87) And let it never happen that the unbelievers might turn you away[111] from the revelations of Allah after they have been revealed to you. Call people to your Lord and never become one of the unbelievers,

111. Divert you: divert you from conveying them to others and acting in accordance with them in practical life.

وَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ ۘ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۭ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ اِلَّا وَجْهَهٗ ۭ لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ۧ 88

(28:88) and do not invoke any god beside Allah. There is no god but He. All will perish but He. To Him belongs the command.[112] And to Him shall all of you return.

112. Another meaning can be: "Sovereignty is for Him, for He alone is entitled to it by right."

29. Surah Al Ankabut (The Spider)

Name

The Surah takes its name from verse 41 in which the word Ankabut (Spider) has occurred.

Period of Revelation

Verses 56 to 60 clearly show that this Surah was sent down a little before the migration to Habash, and this is supported by the internal evidence of the subject matter as well. Some commentators have opined that since it mentions the hypocrites, and hypocrisy appeared in Madinah, the first ten verses of this Surah were revealed at Madinah and the rest of it at Makkah; whereas the people whose hypocrisy has been mentioned here are those who had adopted a hypocritical way of life because they were afraid of the oppression and extreme physical torture to which the Muslims were being subjected by the disbelievers. Evidently, this kind of hypocrisy could be there only at Makkah and not at Madinah. Similarly, some other commentators, seeing that in this Surah the Muslims have been exhorted to migrate, have regarded it as the last Surah to be revealed at Makkah, whereas the Muslims had migrated to Habash even before their migration to Madinah. These opinions are not based on any tradition but on the internal evidence of the subject matter, and this internal evidence, when considered against the subject matter of the Surah as a whole, points to the conditions prevailing in the time of the migration to Habash and not to the last stage at Makkah.

Theme and Subject matter

A perusal of the Surah shows that the period of its revelation was the period of extreme persecution of the Muslims at Makkah. The disbelievers were opposing and fighting Islam tooth and nail and the new converts were being subjected to the severest oppression. Such were the conditions when Allah sent down this Surah to strengthen and encourage the sincere Muslims as well as to put to shame those who were showing weakness of the faith. Besides, the disbelievers of Makkah have been threatened and warned not to invite for themselves the fate that the antagonists of the Truth have been experiencing in every age.

In this connection, the questions that some young men answered. For instance, their parents were urging them to abandon Muhammad (may Allah's peace be upon him), and return to their ancestral religion, for they argued: "The Qur'an in which you have put your faith, regards the rights of the parents as the uppermost; therefore, listen to what we say; otherwise you will be working against the dictates of your own Faith." This has been answered in verse 8.

Similarly, the people of some clans said to the new converts to Islam, "Leave the question of punishments, etc., to us. Listen to us and abandon this man. If God seizes you in the Hereafter, we will come forward and say, 'Lord, these people are innocent: we had forced them to give up the Faith; therefore, seize us'." This has been dealt with, in vv. 12-13.

The stories mentioned in this Surah also impress the same point mostly, as if to say, "Look at the Prophets of the past: they were made to suffer great hardships and were treated cruelly for long periods. Then, at last they were helped by Allah. Therefore, take heart: Allah's succor will certainly come. But a period of trial and tribulation has to be undergone."

Besides teaching this lesson to the Muslims, the disbelievers also have been warned, as if to say, "If you are not being immediately seized by Allah, you should not form the wrong impression that you will never be seized. The signs of the doomed nations of the past are before you. Just see how they met their doom and how Allah succored the Prophets."

Then the Muslims have been instructed to the effect: "If you feel that the persecution has become unbearable for you, you should give up your homes, instead of giving up your Faith: Allah's earth is vast: seek a new place where you can worship Allah with the full peace of mind." Besides all this, the disbelievers also have been urged to understand Islam. The realities of Tauhid and the Hereafter have been impressed with rational arguments, shirk have been refuted, and drawing their attention towards the signs in the universe, they have been told that all these Signs confirm the teachings that the Prophet is presenting before them.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

الٓمّٓ ۚ 1

(29:1) Alif. Lam. Mim.

اَحَسِبَ النَّاسُ اَنۡ یُّتۡرَکُوۡۤا اَنۡ یَّقُوۡلُوۡۤا اٰمَنَّا وَہُمۡ لَا یُفۡتَنُوۡنَ 2

(29:2) Do people think that they will be let go merely by saying: “We believe,” and that they will not be tested,[1]

1. When this thing was said, the conditions prevailing in Makkah were extremely trying. Whoever accepted Islam was made a target of tyranny and humiliation and persecution. If he was a slave or a poor person, he was beaten and subjected to unbearable tortures. If he was a shopkeeper or artisan, he was made to suffer economic hardships, even starvation. If he was a member of an influential family, his own people would tease and harass him in different ways and make life difficult for him. This had created an atmosphere of fear and fright in Makkah, due to which most people were afraid of believing in the Prophet (peace be upon him) although they acknowledged him to be a true Prophet (peace be upon him) in their hearts; and some others who believed would lose heart soon afterwards and would submit and yield to the disbelievers when they confronted dreadful persecutions. Though these trying circumstances could not shake the determination of the strong willed companions, naturally they also were sometimes overwhelmed by an intense feeling of anxiety and distraction. An instance of this is found in the tradition of Khabbab bin Arat (may Allah be pleased with him), which has been related by Bukhari, Abu Daud and Nasai. He says, “During the time when we had become tired of our persecution by the mushriks, one day I saw the Prophet (peace be upon him) sitting in the shade of the wall of the Kabah. I went up to him and said, O Messenger of Allah, don’t you pray for us. Hearing this, his face became red with feeling and emotion, and he said, The believers who have gone before you had been subjected to even greater persecutions. Some one of them was made to sit in a ditch in the earth and was sawed into two pieces from head to foot. Someone’s joints were

rubbed with iron combs so as to withhold him from the faith. By God, this mission will be accomplished and the time is not far when a person will travel without apprehension from Sana to Hadramaut and there will be none but Allah Whom he will fear."

In order to change this state of agitation into forbearance, Allah tells the believers, "No one can become worthy of Our promises of success in the world and the Hereafter merely by verbal profession of the faith, but every claimant to the faith will have to pass through trials and tribulations so as to furnish proof of the truth of his claim. Our Paradise is not so cheap, neither are Our special favors in the world so low priced that We should bless you with all these as soon as you proclaim verbal faith in Us. The trial is a prerequisite for them. You will have to undergo hardships for Our sake, suffer losses of life and property, face dangers, misfortunes and difficulties; you will be tried both with fear and with greed; you will have to sacrifice everything that you hold dear for Our pleasure, and bear every discomfort in Our way. Then only will it become manifest whether your claim to faith in Us was true or false. This thing has been said at every such place in the Quran where the Muslims have been found placed in hardships and difficulties and obsessed by fear and consternation. In the initial stage of life at Al-Madinah, after the migration, when the Muslims were in great trouble on account of economic hardships, external dangers and internal villainy of the Jews and the hypocrites, Allah said:

"Do you think that you will enter Paradise without undergoing such trials as were experienced by the believers before you? They met with adversity and affliction and were so shaken by trials that the Prophet of the time and his followers cried out, when will Allah's help come? (Then only they were comforted with the good tidings:) "Yes, Allah's help is near!" (Surah Al-Baqarah: Ayat 214).

Likewise, when after the battle of Uhud, the Muslims again confronted a period of afflictions, it was said: "Do you think that you will enter Paradise without undergoing any trial, whereas Allah has not yet tried you to see who among you are ready to lay down their lives in His way and who will show fortitude for His sake." (Surah Aal-Imran: Ayat 142).

Almost the same thing has been said in (Surah Aal- Imran: Ayat 179), (Surah At-Taubah: Ayat 16) and (Surah Muhammad: Ayat 31). Allah in these verses has impressed on the Muslims that trial is the touchstone by which the pure and the impure are judged. The impure is turned aside by Allah and the pure is selected so that Allah may honor them with His favors which the only sincere believers deserve.

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ صَدَقُوْا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ 3

(29:3) for We indeed tested those who went before them?[2] Allah will most certainly ascertain[3] those who spoke the truth and those who lied.

2. That is, this is not a new thing which you alone may be experiencing. The same has also been happening before you. Whoever made a claim to the faith, he was made to pass through trials and tribulations. And when the others were not given anything without the trial, you are in no way any special people that you should be favored and rewarded merely on verbal profession of the faith.

3. Literally, "It is necessary that Allah should find out." A question may be asked: "When Allah already knows the truth of the truthful and the untruth of the liar, why should He put the people to the test for the sake of these" The answer is: Until a person has manifested his potential and capability to do a thing in practical terms, justice requires that he neither deserves any rewards nor any punishment. One man, for example, is capable of being trustworthy and another man of being un-trustworthy. Unless both are tried and one manifests trustworthiness and the other the lack of it practically, it will not be justice on the part of Allah that He should reward one for trustworthiness and punish the other for the lack of it only on the basis of His knowledge of the unseen. Therefore the knowledge Allah already possesses about the capabilities of the people and about their conduct in the future is not enough to satisfy the requirements of justice until the people have manifested their potentialities in practical ways. Justice with Allah is not based on the knowledge that a person possesses a tendency to steal and will commit a theft, but on the knowledge that he has actually committed a theft. Likewise, Allah does not bestow favors and rewards on the basis of the knowledge that a person has the potential and capability to become a great believer and fighter in His way, but on the basis of the knowledge that the person concerned has practically proved by deed and action that he is a sincere believer and a brave fighter in His way. That is why we have translated the words of the verse as: "Allah will surely make evident."

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ السَّيِّاٰتِ اَنْ يَّسْبِقُوْنَا ؕ سَآءَ مَا يَحْكُمُوْنَ 4

(29:4) Do the evil-doers[4] suppose that they will get the better of Us?[5] How evil is their judgement!

4. This may refer to all those people who disobey Allah's commands but here particularly it implies those wicked chiefs of the Quraish, who were in the forefront in their antagonism to Islam and persecution of the converts to Islam, e.g. Walid bin Mughirah, Abu Jahl, Utbah, Shaibah, Uqbah bin Abi Muait, Hanzalah bin Wail, etc. Here the context itself requires that after exhorting the Muslims to patience and fortitude against the trials and tests, those people also should be chided and scolded, who were persecuting the believers.

5. It may also mean: "that they will escape Our grasp." The words yasbiquna in the original may have two meanings: (1) "Whatever we will (i.e. the success of the mission of Our Messenger) should meet with failure, and whatever they wish (i.e. to frustrate the mission of Our Messenger) should be accomplished;" and (2) "We may want to seize them for their excesses and they should be able to escape and get out of Our reach."

مَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوْا لِقَآءَ اللّٰهِ فَاِنَّ اَجَلَ اللّٰهِ لَاٰتٍ ؕ وَهُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ 5

(29:5) Let him who looks forward to meeting Allah know that Allah's appointed term will surely come to pass.[6] He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.[7]

6. That is, the case of the one who does not believe in the life Hereafter and thinks he is answerable to none for his deeds and there is no accountability whatever, is different. He may remain heedless and act as he likes, for he will himself see the consequences when they

appear against his expectations. But those who expect that they have to meet their Lord one day and will be rewarded or punished according to their deeds, should not have the misunderstanding that the time of death is yet far off. They should rather think that it is near at hand and the respite for action is about to come to an end. Therefore, whatever they can do for their well being in the Hereafter, they should do. They should not delay self reform on account of the baseless belief that they have yet to live a long life.

7. That is, that God before Whom they will appear to render their accounts is not uninformed. He hears everything and knows every thing, and nothing about them is hidden from Him.

وَمَنْ جَاهَدَ فَاِنَّمَا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفْسِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَغَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ 6

(29:6) Whosoever strives(in the cause of Allah) does so to his own good.[8] Surely Allah stands in no need of anyone in the whole Universe.[9]

8. The word mujahadah means to struggle and exert one's utmost against an opponent, and when the particular opponent force is not pointed out, the word implies an allout, many sided struggle. The struggle that a believer has to make in the world is of this very nature. He has to fight against Satan, who frightens him every moment of the possible losses that they have to incur for the sake of good and allures him with the benefits and pleasures of the evil. He has to fight his own self also, which exerts to make him the slave of its lusts. He has also to fight all those men, from home to the world outside, whose ideology, trends, morality, customs, way of life and social and economic principles may be in conflict with his faith. And he has to fight that state too, which enforces its laws independent of obedience to Allah, and employs its forces to promote evil instead of the good. This struggle is not of a day or two, but of a lifetime, of every moment of the day and night. And it is not a struggle in one field only but on every front of life. It is about this that Hasan Basri has said: "Man exerts in the way of Allah, even though he may not strike one sword at any time."

9. That is, Allah is not asking you to exert your utmost because he stands in need of any help from you to establish His Godhead and keep it established and sustained. But He instructs you to enter this conflict because this opens the way to your own progress. Through this way only, you can get rid of the evil and follow the way of truth. Through this way alone you can develop the ability and power to rise as the standard bearers of goodness in the world and become worthy of Allah's Paradise in the Hereafter. By waging this war you will not do any favor to Allah but will only be helping your own selves.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَنُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّاٰتِهِمْ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ اَحْسَنَ الَّذِيْ كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ 7

(29:7) Those who believe and do good deeds, We shall cleanse them of their evil deeds and reward them according to the best of their deeds.[10]

10. Iman means to believe in and accept sincerely all those things to which the Messenger of Allah and this Book invite; and As-salihat are those righteous deeds which are performed in accordance with the guidance of Allah and His Messenger. The righteous deed of the heart and mind is that man's thinking and his ideas and his intentions should be right and pure. The righteous deed of the tongue is that man should refrain from talking evil things, and whatever he says should be just and right and true. And the righteous deed of the limbs is that man''s entire life should be spent in Allah's worship and in obedience to His commands and law. Two results of the belief and righteous deeds have been mentioned: (1) That man's evils will be wiped off; and (2) that he will be rewarded for the best of his deeds better than what he will actually deserve.

Wiping off of evils means several things: (1) All kinds of sins that man might have committed before his affirmation of the faith will be pardoned as soon as he believes; (2) the errors that man might have committed after the affirmation of the faith due to human weakness, but not because of a rebellious attitude, will be overlooked in view of his good deeds; (3) man's self reform will automatically take place when he adopts a life of belief and righteousness, and most of his weaknesses will be removed from him.

The sentence, "We shall reward them for the best of what they used to do" has two meanings: (1) Man will be given his rewards on the basis of the best of his deeds; and (2) he will be rewarded better and more handsomely than what he will actually deserve for his deeds. This thing has been stated at other places also in the Quran. For instance, in (Surah Al-Anaam: Ayat 160), it has been said: "He who will bring a good deed before Allah, will receive a tenfold reward for it", and in (Surah Al-Qasas: Ayat 4): "Whoever brings a good deed, shall have a better reward than that", and in (Surah An-Nisa: Ayat 40): "Indeed Allah does not wrong anyone even by a jot: if one does a good deed, He increases it manifold."

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا ؕ وَاِنْ جَاهَدٰكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِیْ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ
فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا ؕ اِلَیَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَاُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ 8

(29:8) We have enjoined upon man kindness to his parents, but if they exert pressure on you to associate with Me in My Divinity any that you do not know (to be My associate), do not obey them.[11] To Me is your return, and I shall let you know all that you have done.[12]

11. According to Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ahmad, Abu Daud and Nasai, this verse was sent down in respect of Saad bin Abi Waqqas. He was 18 or 19 years old when he embraced Islam. When his mother, Hamnah, daughter of Sufyan bin Umayyah (neice of Abu Sufyan), came to know that her son had become a Muslim, she said, "I will neither eat nor drink nor sit in shade unless you disown Muhammad. The rights of the mother are superior even according to Allah's command. Therefore if you disobey me, you will be disobeying Allah too." Saad was perplexed and came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and told this entire story. At that, this verse was revealed. Possibly other young men who embraced Islam in the initial stage at Makkah were also confronted with similar situations. Therefore, the same theme has been repeated forcefully in (Surah Luqman: Ayat 15) also.

What the verse means to impress is this: The rights of the parents, among the creation of Allah, are to be held as the supreme, but even if the parents force a person to adopt shirk, they should not be obeyed. The words, "And if they strive with you to make you join with Me" imply that a lesser pressure, or a pressure by either of them, deserves to be set aside much more promptly. The next sentence, "Of which you have no knowledge (as such)" is also noteworthy. This gives a sound reason for not obeying the parents in this regard. The parents certainly have the right that the children should serve them, respect them, and obey them in lawful things. But they do not have the right that one should obey them blindly against one's knowledge of the reality. Therefore, there is no reason why a person should go on following his parents' religion just because it is their religion. If the children come to know that their parents are following a false religion, they should give it up and adopt the right religion, and should not follow the wrong way whose falsehood has become clear to them even if the parents use every kind of pressure for it. When this is so in the case of even the parents, it should be so with every other person, too. No one deserves to be followed and obeyed unless one is sure that the person being followed is on the right path.

12. That is, the relationships of this world and their obligations are confined to the world. At last, the parents as well as the children have to return to their Creator, and before Him everybody will be held answerable only on the basis of his personal responsibility. If the parents have misled the children, they will be called to account. If the children have accepted deviation for the sake of the parents, they will be punished. And if the children adopted the right way, and showed no slackness in rendering the parents' lawful rights either, but the parents ill treated them only for the reason that they did not join them in their deviation, they will not be able to escape Allah's punishment.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَنُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ فِي الصّٰلِحِيْنَ 9

(29:9) As for those who believed and acted righteously, We shall certainly admit them among the righteous.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّقُوْلُ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ فَاِذَآ اُوْذِيَ فِي اللّٰهِ جَعَلَ فِتْنَةَ النَّاسِ كَعَذَابِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَلَئِنْ جَآءَ نَصْرٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اِنَّا كُنَّا مَعَكُمْ ؕ اَوَلَيْسَ اللّٰهُ بِاَعْلَمَ بِمَا فِيْ صُدُوْرِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ 10

(29:10) Among people there are some who say:13 "We believe in Allah." But when such a person is made to endure suffering in Allah's cause, he reckons the persecution he suffers at the hands of people as though it is a chastisement from Allah.14 But if victory comes from your Lord, the same person will say "We were with you."15 Does Allah not know whatever is in the hearts of the people of the world?

13. Though the speaker is a single person, he uses the plural pronoun and says, "We have believed," Imam Razi has pointed out a subtle point in it. He says that the hypocrite always tries to be counted among the believers and mentions his faith as though he is also a true believer like others. His case is like that of a cowardly soldier who accompanies an army to the battlefield where the soldiers have fought well and put the enemy to rout. This cowardly person might have made no contribution at all, but when he returns home, he will say, "We put up a good fight and routed the enemy," as if he was one of the heroes of the battlefield.

14. That is, just as one should desist from disbelief and sin due to fear of Allah's punishment, so did this man desist from faith and goodness due to fear of persecution by the people. When after belief he was confronted with threats and imprisonment and harsh treatment from the disbelievers, he thought that Allah's punishment in Hell which he will have to suffer after death in consequence of his disbelief, will be no severer than that. Therefore, he decided that he would suffer the torment of the next world at its own time, but should give up faith and rejoin the disbelievers so that he might save himself from the torment of this world and pass an easy life.

15. That is, today he has joined the disbelievers in order to save his skin, and has abandoned the believers for he is not prepared even to suffer a thorn prick in the cause of promoting Allah's religion. But when Allah will favor with success and victory those who are struggling in His cause with their lives and wealth, this person will come forward to have his share of the fruits of the victory and will tell the Muslims, "Our hearts were with you, we used to pray for your success, we thought very highly of your devotion to duty and your sacrifices."

Here, one should understand that in case of an unbearable persecution and loss and extreme fear, one is permitted to disown Islam and save one's life, provided that he remains firm in his faith with a sincere heart. But there is a big difference between the sincere Muslim who disowns Islam under compulsion in order to save his life and the opportunist who ideologically believes in Islam as a true religion but joins the disbelievers when he sees the dangers and risks. Apparently, they do not seem to be much different from each other, but the thing which sets them apart is this: The sincere Muslim who utters disbelief under compulsion not only remains attached to Islam ideologically, but practically, his sympathies remain with Islam and the Muslims; he feels happy over their successes and unhappy at their defeat. Even under compulsion he tries to avail himself of every opportunity to cooperate with the Muslims, and remains on the lookout for a chance to join his brethren in faith as soon as the grip of the enemies loosens a little. Contrary to this, when the opportunist finds that the way of the faith is difficult to follow and calculates carefully that the disadvantages of siding with Islam outweigh the advantages of rejoining the disbelievers, he turns away from Islam and the Muslims for the sake of personal safety and worldly gains, establishes friendship with the disbelievers and is prepared to carry out for his own interests any service for them, which may be utterly opposed to the faith and harmful to the Muslims. But at the same time, he does not close his eyes to the possibility that Islam also might prosper some time in the future. Therefore, whenever he gets an opportunity to talk to the Muslims, he acknowledges their ideology and admits his faith and pays homage to their sacrifices most generously, so that his verbal admissions might be helpful as and when required. In(Surah An-Nisa: Ayat 141), this same bargaining mentality of the hypocrites has been described, thus: The hypocrites are watching you closely to see

(how the wind blows). If victory comes to you from Allah, they will say to you, "Were we not with you?" And if the disbelievers gain the upper hand, they will say to them, "Were we not strong enough to fight against you? Yet we defended you from the Muslims."

وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ 11

(29:11) Allah will surely ascertain who are the believers and who are the hypocrites.[16]

16. That is, Allah provides occasions for the trial again and again so that the faith of the believers and the hypocrisy of the hypocrites become manifest, and whatever is hidden in the hearts becomes exposed. The same thing has been said in (Surah Aal-Imran: Ayat 179): "Allah will not leave the believers in the state in which you happen to be at present: He will surely separate the pure from the impure people."

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّبِعُوْا سَبِيْلَنَا وَلْنَحْمِلْ خَطٰيٰكُمْ وَمَا هُمْ بِحٰمِلِيْنَ مِنْ خَطٰيٰهُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ ۭ اِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ 12

(29:12) The unbelievers say to the believers: "Follow our way and we will carry the burden of your sins."[17] (They say so even though) they are not going to carry any part of their sins.[18] Surely they are lying.

17. What they meant to say was: "In the first place, the talk about life hereafter and Resurrection and accountability is all meaningless. But supposing there is another life in which the people will be called to account for their deeds, we take the responsibility that we shall take the punishment, etc. on our own selves. You should, therefore, listen to us and give up this new faith and return to your ancestral religion. According to the traditions several chiefs of the Quraish used to counsel thus the people who embraced Islam in the beginning. So, when Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) accepted Islam, Abu Sufyan and Harab bin Umayyah bin Khalaf met him and said these very things.

18. That is, it is not at all possible that a person should take the responsibility for another before Allah, and thus enable the actual sinner to escape the punishment of his sin, for every person will be responsible for his own deeds there. No bearer of a burden shall bear the burden of another (Sura An-Najm: Ayat 38). But if at all it be so, none will have the nerve, while the blazing Hell is ready to punish the disbelievers, to say to Allah, only for the sake of honoring his pledge in the world, "Lord, forgive this person and send him to Paradise, he had turned apostate on my counseling: I offer myself to suffer the punishment for my own disbelief as well as for his in Hell."

وَلَيَحْمِلُنَّ أَثْقَالَهُمْ وَأَثْقَالًا مَّعَ أَثْقَالِهِمْ ۖ وَلَيُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿13﴾

(29:13) They will certainly carry their own burdens and other burdens besides their own.[19] They will assuredly be called to account on the Day of Resurrection concerning the fabrications which they contrived.[20]

19. That is, though they will not bear the burdens of others, they will neither escape bearing a double burden: one burden of their own selves going astray, and the burden of leading the others astray. This can be understood by an example. A person commits theft and also asks another person to join him. Now if the other person also commits theft, no judge will let him off only because he had committed the offense on someone else's prompting. He will in any case be punished for the theft and it will not be fair according to any law of justice to let him off and punish instead of him the first thief who had prompted him to commit the theft. However, the first thief will suffer punishment for two offenses: the offense of committing theft himself and the offense of turning another person into a thief along with himself. This principle has been stated at another place in the Quran thus "So that they should bear the full brunt of their own burdens on the Day of Resurrection together with some of the burdens of those whom they are leading astray in their ignorance." (Surah An-Nahl: Ayat 25) The same principle has been elucidated by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in this Hadith: "Whoever invited others to the right path will be granted a reward equal to the rewards of all those who listened to him and adopted the right path, without diminishing their rewards in any way. And whoever invited others to deviation will earn a sin equal to the sins of all those who followed him, without diminishing their sins in any way."

20. "They used to invent" implies all those untruths which were hidden in this saying of the disbelievers: "Follow our way and we will bear the burden of your sins." In fact, they said this on the basis of two presumptions: (1) The creed of shirk they are following is based on the truth and the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) doctrine of Tauhid is false; therefore, there is nothing wrong if it is rejected; and (2) there is going to be no Resurrection, and the doctrine of the Hereafter which deters a Muslim from unbelief is baseless. With these presumptions they would counsel a Muslim, saying, "Well, if you think that disbelief is really a sin, and there is going to be Resurrection when you will be called to account for this sin, then we are ready to take this sin of yours on our selves. You leave it to us and give up the religion of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and return to your ancestral religion." In this two other false things were also included: (a) Their belief that a person who commits an offense on someone else's prompting can be exempted from its responsibility, and the whole responsibility can be assumed by the one who had prompted the commission of the offense; and (b) their false promise that on the Day of Resurrection they will certainly assume the responsibility for those who might have turned apostates on their counseling. For, when Resurrection will actually be established, and they will see Hell against their expectations, they will never be prepared to receive the punishment of their own disbelief as well as bear the whole burden of the sins of those others whom they had deceived and misled in the world.

وَلَقَدۡ اَرۡسَلۡنَا نُوۡحًا اِلٰى قَوۡمِهٖ فَلَبِثَ فِيۡهِمۡ اَلۡفَ سَنَةٍ اِلَّا خَمۡسِيۡنَ عَامًا ؕ فَاَخَذَهُمُ الطُّوۡفَانُ وَهُمۡ ظٰلِمُوۡنَ 14

(29:14) We did indeed send Noah to his people[21] and he lived among them a thousand years save fifty.[22] Eventually the Flood overtook them while they were engaged in wrongdoing.[23]

21. For comparison, see (Surah Aal-Imran: Ayats 33-34), (Surah An-Nisa: Ayat 163), (Surah Al-Anaam: Ayat 84), (Surah Al-Aaraf: Ayats 59-64), (Surah Yuuns: Ayats 71-73), (Surah Hud: Ayats 25-48), (Surah Al-Anbiyaa: Ayats 76-77), (Surah Al-Muminun: Ayats 23-30), (Surah Al-Furqan: Ayat 37), (Surah Ash-Shuara: Ayats 105-123), (Surah As-Saffat: Ayats 75-82), (Surah Al-Qamar: Ayats 9-15), (Surah Al- Haqqah: Ayats 11-12), Surah Nuh: Entire Surah. One should keep the initial verses of this Surah in view in order to understand the relevancy of these stories in this context. There, on the one hand, it has been said to the believers, "We have put to the test all those believers who have passed before you", and, on the other, the wicked disbelievers have been warned to the effect: "You should not have the misunderstanding that you will outstrip Us and escape Our grasp." It is to impress these two things that these historical events are being related here.

22. This does not mean that the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) lived for 950 years, but it means that after his appointment to prophethood till the coming of the flood, he went on making efforts for 950 years for the reformation of his wicked people, and he did not lose heart even though he suffered persecutions for such a long time. The same is the aim of the discourse here. The believers are being told: "You have been suffering persecutions and experiencing stubbornness of your wicked opponents hardly for six years or so. Just imagine the patience and resolution and firmness of Our servant who braved such afflictions and hardships continuously for nine and a half centuries."

The Quran and the Bible differ about the age of the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him). The Bible says that he lived for 950 years. He was 600 years old when the flood came, and lived for another 350 years after the flood. But according to the Quran, he must have lived for at least a thousand years, because 950 years is the time that he spent in preaching his mission after his appointment to prophethood till the coming of the flood. Evidently, he must have been appointed to prophethood after he had attained his maturity, and must have lived some life after the flood also.

For some people such a long life is inconceivable. But in this world of God strange happenings are not rare. Wherever one may look one will see extraordinary manifestations of His power. The occurrence of certain events and things in a usual form and manner is no proof that the event or thing cannot happen in an unusual and extraordinary way. To break these assumptions there exists a long list of unusual events and things that have taken place in every kind of creation in every part of the universe. In particular, the person who has a clear concept of God's being All- Powerful, cannot be involved in the misunderstanding that it is not possible for God, Who is the Creator of life and death, to grant a life of a thousand

years or so to any man. The fact is that man of his own will and wish cannot live even for a moment, but if Allah wills, He can make him live for as long as He pleases.

23. That is, the flood came when they still persisted in their wickedness. Had they desisted from it before the coming of the flood, Allah would not have sent this torment on them.

فَأَنجَيْنَٰهُ وَأَصْحَٰبَ ٱلسَّفِينَةِ وَجَعَلْنَٰهَآ ءَايَةً لِّلْعَٰلَمِينَ 15

(29:15) Then We rescued Noah together with the people in the Ark[24] and made it (that is, the Ark) a lesson for all people.[25]

24. That is, the people who had believed in Noah (peace be upon him), and who had been permitted by Allah to board the Ark. This has been elucidated in Surah Hud: Ayat 40, thus: "Until when Our command came to pass and at- Tannur began to boil up, We said, (O Noah), take into Ark a pair from every species, and embark your own people save those who have already been specifically marked, and also those who have believed; and those who had believed with Noah (peace be upon him) were only a few."

25. It can also mean this: "We made this dreadful punishment or this great event a sign of warning for the later generations." But from the way this has been mentioned here and in Surah Al-Qamar, it appears that the object of warning was the Ark itself, which remained on the top of the mountain for centuries and continued to remind the later generations that a flood of such magnitude had once come in that land because of which the Ark had risen up to rest on the mountain. In (Surah Al-Qamar: Ayats 13- 15), it has been said: "And We bore Noah upon a thing (Ark) made of planks and nails, which floated under Our care. This was a vengeance for the sake of him who had been slighted. And We left that Ark as a sign. Then, is there any who would take admonition?"

In his commentary on this verse of Surah Al-Qamar, Ibn Jarir says on the authority of Qatadah that during the period of the companions when the Muslims went to the land of al-Jazirah, they saw the Ark on mount Judi (according to another tradition, near the habitation of Baqirwa). In the modern times also news appear from time to time in the media that expeditions are being sent to search out the boat, because something resembling a boat has been sighted many time from airplanes during flights over Mount Ararat. See (E.N. 47 of Surah Al-Aaraf)and (E.N. 46 of Surah Hud).

وَإِبْرَٰهِيمَ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ ٱعْبُدُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ وَٱتَّقُوهُ ۖ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ

تَعْلَمُونَ 16

(29:16) We sent Abraham[26] and he said to his people: "Serve Allah and fear Him.[27]This is better for you if you only knew.

26. For comparison, see (Surah Al-Baqarah: Ayats 122-141, 258-260); (Surah Aal-Imran: Ayats 64-71); (Surah Al-Anaam: Ayats 71-82); (Surah Hud: Ayats 69-83); (Surah Ibrahim:

Ayats 35-41); (Surah Al-Hijr: Ayats 45-60); (Surah Maryam: Ayats 41-50); (Surah Al-Anbiyaa: Ayats 51-75); (Surah Ash- Shuaraa: Ayats 69-104); (Surah As-Safftat: Ayats 75-113); (Surah Az-Zukhruf: Ayats 26-35); (Surah Az-Zariyat: Ayats 24-46).

27. That is, "Fear disobeying Him and associating others with Him."

إِنَّمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا وَتَخْلُقُونَ إِفْكًا ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا
يَمْلِكُونَ لَكُمْ رِزْقًا فَابْتَغُوا عِندَ اللَّهِ الرِّزْقَ وَاعْبُدُوهُ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ ۖ إِلَيْهِ
تُرْجَعُونَ 17

(29:17) Those that you worship instead of Allah are merely idols, and you are simply inventing lies (about them).[28]Indeed those whom you worship beside Allah have no power to provide you with any sustenance. So seek your sustenance from Allah and serve only Him and give thanks to Him alone. It is to Him that you will be sent back.[29]

28. That is, "You are not forging idols but a lie. These idols are in themselves a lie. Then your beliefs that they are gods and goddesses, or they are incarnation of God, or His offspring, or His favorites, or intercessors with Him, or that someone of them is bestower of health, or giver of children or jobs, are all lies, which you have invented from your own whims and conjecture. The fact is that they are in no way more than idols, lifeless, powerless and impotent."

29. In these few sentences the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) has put together all rational arguments against idol worship. There must necessarily be some reason for making somebody or something a deity. One such reason can be that somebody should be entitled to being a deity due to some personal excellence. Another, that he should be the creator of man, and man should be indebted to him for his existence. Third, that he should be responsible for man's sustenance, his food and other means of life. Fourth, that man's future should be linked up with his support and bounty, and man may be afraid that annoying him would mean bringing about his own ruin. The Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) said that none of these four things favored idol worship, but they all favored and demanded pure God worship. Saying that "You worship other than Allah only idols", he demolished the first argument, for a mere idol could have no excellence to entitle it to be a deity. Then, by saying that "And you invent a falsehood", he refuted the second argument, and "They have no power to give you provision" destroyed the third reason. Lastly, he said, "To Him you will be brought back" and not to the idols; therefore, it was not in their power to make or mar your destiny, but in the power of God alone. Thus, after a complete refutation of shirk, the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) made it clear to them that all the reasons for which man could regard somebody as a deity only applied to Allah, Who alone should be worshiped without associating anyone else with him.

وَاِنۡ تُكَذِّبُوۡا فَقَدۡ كَذَّبَ اُمَمٌ مِّنۡ قَبۡلِكُمۡ ؕ وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُوۡلِ اِلَّا الۡبَلٰغُ الۡمُبِيۡنُ 18

(29:18) And if you give the lie (to the Messenger), then many nations before you also gave the lie[30] (to their Messengers). The Messenger is charged with no other duty than to deliver the Message in clear terms."

30. That is, if you reject my invitation to Tauhid and deny my message that you have to return to your Lord and render an account of your deeds, it will not be a new thing. In the history of mankind many Prophets like Noah, Hud, Salih (peace be upon them) have also brought the same teachings, and their peoples denied them likewise. Now you may judge for yourselves as to whether they harmed the Prophets or only themselves.

اَوَلَمۡ يَرَوۡا كَيۡفَ يُبۡدِئُ اللّٰهُ الۡخَلۡقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيۡدُهٗ ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيۡرٌ 19

(29:19) Have[31] they never observed how Allah creates for the first time and then repeats it? Indeed (to repeat the creation of a thing) is even easier for Allah[32] (than creating it for the first time).

31. From here to the end of (Ayat 23)is a parenthesis, which has been interposed in the story of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) and addressed to the disbelievers of Makkah. The relevance of this interposition in the story, which is being related for the admonition of the disbelievers, is that they were basically involved in two kinds of deviation: shirk and idol worship, and the denial of the Hereafter. The first of these has been refuted in the Prophet Abraham's (peace be upon him) speech as related above. Now the second is being refuted in these few sentences by Allah Himself.

32. That is, On the one hand, countless new things come into existence from non existence, and on the other, similar new members continue coming into existence to take the place of the dying members of every species. The polytheists acknowledged that that was all due to Allah's power of creation and invention. They never denied Allah being a Creator, just as the polytheists of today do not do. Therefore, the argument has been based upon what they themselves acknowledged as a reality, as if to say, "How do you think that God, Who, according to your own belief, brings things into existence from non existence, and does not create things just once, but goes on bringing into existence similar things in place of the dying things repeatedly in front of your very eyes, will not be able to raise you back to life after death?" see (E.N. 80 of Surah An-Naml).

قُلۡ سِيۡرُوۡا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ فَانۡظُرُوۡا كَيۡفَ بَدَاَ الۡخَلۡقَ ثُمَّ اللّٰهُ يُنۡشِئُ النَّشۡاَةَ الۡاٰخِرَةَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرٌ ۚ 20

(29:20) Say: "Go about the earth and see how He created for the first time, and then Allah will recreate life." Surely, Allah has power over everything.[33]

33. That is, “When you yourselves are witnessing things being created in the first instance by God’s competence and skill, you should understand it well that re-creation shall also take place by the same competence and skill. Such a thing is not beyond His power nor can it be.”

يُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَرْحَمُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۚ وَاِلَيْهِ تُقْلَبُوْنَ 21

(29:21) He chastises whom He will and forgives whom He will. To Him all of you will be sent back.

وَمَآ اَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِيْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فِى السَّمَآءِ ۫ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيْرٍ ع 22

(29:22) You cannot overpower Allah, neither on the earth nor in the heaven.[34] None can protect you from Allah[35] nor come to your aid against Him.

34. That is, you cannot escape Allah’s grasp wherever you may flee. Whether you descend into the depths of the earth or climb into the heights of the sky, you will be apprehended in any case and brought before your Lord. The same thing has been said in Surah Ar-Rahman as a challenge to the jinns and mankind: “O company of jinns and men! If you have the power to escape across the bounds of the earth and heavens, then do escape! You shall not escape, for it requires a great power,” (Ayat 33).

35. That is, neither you yourselves have the power that you should escape Allah’s grasp, nor are any of your guardians or patrons or supporters so powerful that they should give you refuge against Allah and save you from His punishment. None in the entire universe can dare rise as a supporter of those who have committed shirk and disbelief, or who have refused to submit before divine commands, or who have dared disobey Allah impudently, and raised storms of wickedness and mischief on His earth. And withhold enforcement of the divine decree of torment, or have the nerve to say in God’s court: They are my followers, therefore, whatever they might have done should be forgiven.

وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَلِقَآئِهٖٓ اُولٰٓئِكَ يَئِسُوْا مِنْ رَّحْمَتِىْ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ 23

(29:23) Those who disbelieved in Allah's signs and in meeting Him, it is they who have despaired of My Mercy;[36] it is they for whom a painful chastisement lies ahead.

36. That is, they have no share in My mercy, and they should entertain no hope whatsoever of getting any share of My mercy. When they denied the revelations of Allah, they themselves gave up their right to benefit by the promises Allah has made to the believers. Then, when they have denied the Hereafter and do not at all believe that one day they will

have to stand before their God, it only means that they cherish no hope at all of Allah's pardon and forgiveness. After this when they will open their eyes in the- Hereafter, against their expectations, and will also see the truth of those signs of Allah, which they had denied, there is no reason why they should expect to receive any share from Allah's mercy.

فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهٖٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوا اقْتُلُوْهُ اَوْ حَرِّقُوْهُ فَاَنْجٰىهُ اللّٰهُ مِنَ النَّارِ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ 24

(29:24) The people[37] (of Abraham) had no other answer than to say: "Kill him or burn him."[38] But Allah delivered him from the fire.[39] There are many Signs in this for those who believe.[40]

37. From here the discourse again turns to the story of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him).

38. That is, they had no answer to the Prophet Abraham's (peace be upon him) rational arguments. The only answer they gave was: "Cut off the tongue that talks the truth and let not the person live who points out our error and tells us to give it up." The words, "Kill him or burn him", indicate that the whole crowd was unanimous that the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) should be put to death. However, they differed about the method. Some said that he should be killed, and others said that he should be burnt alive, so that no one in future should dare say the sort of the thing he said.

39. This sentence by itself shows that they had at last decided to burn the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) and he was cast into the fire. Here it has only been said that Allah saved him from the fire; but in Surah Al-Anbiyaa it has been elucidated that Allah commanded: "O fire! Be cool and become safe for Abraham!" (Ayat 69). Evidently, if he was not at all cast into the fire, the command to the fire to become cool and safe would be meaningless. This proves that properties of all things are dependent on Allah's command and whenever He pleases He can change the property of anything He likes. Normally fire burns and every combustible thing catches fire. But this property of the fire is not of its own acquisition but given by God. And this property has in no way tied up God that He may give no command against it. He is the Master of this fire. He can command it at any time to give up the property of burning. At any time, He can turn a furnace into a bed of roses. But events contrary to the course of nature occur only rarely to serve some great purpose or cause. However, the usual phenomena to which we are accustomed in our daily lives cannot be made an argument to say that Allah's power has been tied up with these, and nothing unusual can take place even by Allah's command.

40. "Indeed, in that are sure signs for a people who believe". Signs for the believers in this that the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) did not follow the religion of his family, community and country but followed the true knowledge through which he came to know that shirk is falsehood and Tauhid is the reality. And that he went on exhorting his people to accept the truth and to desist from falsehood in spite of their stubbornness and prejudices. And that he was even prepared to suffer the horrible punishment by the fire, but was not

prepared to give up the truth. And that Allah did not even spare the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), His friend, from the trials and tests. And that when the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) got successfully through the tests set by Allah, then did come Allah's succor, and in such a miraculous way that the bonfire was turned cool for him.

وَقَالَ إِنَّمَا اتَّخَذْتُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا ۙ مَّوَدَّةَ بَيْنِكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ
يَكْفُرُ بَعْضُكُم بِبَعْضٍ وَيَلْعَنُ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا ۖ وَمَأْوَاكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُم مِّن
نَّاصِرِينَ ۝ 25

(29:25) He said:[41] "You have taken up idols instead of Allah as a bond of love among yourselves[42] in the present life, but on the Day of Resurrection you will disown and curse one another.[43] Your refuge shall be the Fire, and none will come to your aid."

41. The Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) must have said this after his safe deliverance from the fire.

42. That is, you have built up your collective life on the foundation of idol worship instead of God worship. This can keep you bound together as a nation only to the extent of mundane life. For here in this world people can get together around any creed, true or false. Any kind of agreement and concord on any belief, however wrong and ill conceived, can become a means of the establishment of mutual friendships, kinships, brotherhoods, and all other religious, social, cultural, economic and political relationships.

43. That is, the collective life that you have built on the false creed in the world cannot endure in the Hereafter. Only those relationships of love and friendship and cooperation and kinship and mutual regard and esteem will endure there, which have been based on the worship of One God and virtue and piety in the world. All relationships founded on disbelief and shirk and deviation will be severed, and all kinds of love will change into enmity and hatred. The son and the father, the husband and the wife, the saint and the disciple, all will curse each other, and each will blame his deviation on the other, and will say, "This wicked person led me astray: he should be given a double punishment." This thing has been stated at several places in the Quran. For example, in Surah Az-Zukhruf, it has been said: "Friends on that Day shall become enemies of one another, except the righteous," (Ayat 67). In Surah Al- Aaraf: "As each generation will be entering Hell, it will curse its preceding generation till all generations shall be gathered together there: then each succeeding generation will say regarding the preceding one; O Lord, these were the people who led us astray; therefore, give them a double chastisement of the Fire," (Ayat 38). And in Surah Al- Ahzab: "And they will say; Our Lord, we obeyed our chiefs and our great men, and they led us astray from the right path. Lord, give them a doable chastisement and curse them severely," (Ayats. 67-68).

فَاٰمَنَ لَهٗ لُوْطٌ ۘ وَقَالَ اِنِّیْ مُهَاجِرٌ اِلٰی رَبِّیْ ۭ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْعَزِیْزُ الْحَكِیْمُ 26

(29:26) Then did Lot believe him,[44] and Abraham said: "I am emigrating unto my Lord.[45] He is All-Powerful, All-Wise,"[46]

44. The context shows that when the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) came out of the fire and spoke the preceding sentences, only Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) from the entire crowd came forward to proclaim his belief and adopt his obedience. It is just possible that many other people also on this occasion might have been convinced of the Prophet Abraham's (peace be upon him) being a true prophet, but in view of the violent reaction that had been shown openly by the entire community and the government against Abraham's faith, no one else could muster up courage to affirm faith in such a dangerous truth and follow it. This good fortune fell to the lot of only one man, the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him), the nephew of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), who at last accompanied his uncle and aunt Sarah in their migration also.

Here, the question may arise: Was the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) a disbeliever and a mushrik before this, and did he believe only after witnessing the miracle of the Prophet Abraham's (peace be upon him) emerging safe and sound from the fire? If it is so, can a person who has been a mushrik be appointed to prophethood? The answer is this: Here the Quran has used the words fa-amana la-hu Lut, which do not necessarily imply that the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) disbelieved in God before this, or associated other deities with Him. They only show that after this he confirmed the Prophethood of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), and adopted his obedience. Possibly the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) was a young boy then and this might be the first very occasion when he became acquainted with the teachings of his uncle and his prophethood.

45. That is, "I shall leave my country for the sake of my Lord and go wherever my Lord may take me."

46. That is, "He possesses the power to help and protect me, and whatever He decides for me will be based on wisdom."

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهٗٓ اِسْحٰقَ وَیَعْقُوْبَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِیْ ذُرِّیَّتِهِ النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتٰبَ وَاٰتَیْنٰهُ اَجْرَهٗ فِی الدُّنْیَا ۚ
وَاِنَّهٗ فِی الْاٰخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصّٰلِحِیْنَ 27

(29:27) and We bestowed upon him (offspring like) Isaac and Jacob,[47] and bestowed prophethood and the Book[48] on his descendants and granted him his reward in this world; he will certainly be among the righteous[49] in the Hereafter.

47. The Prophet Isaac (peace be upon him) was his son and the Prophet Jacob (peace be upon him) was the grandson. The other sons of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) have not been mentioned here, because from his Midianite descendants only the Prophet Shuaib (peace be upon him) was appointed a Prophet, and no Prophet was born among his

Ishmaelite descendants for 2500 years or so till our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Contrary to this, the descendants of the Prophet Isaac (peace be upon him) continued to be blessed with the prophethood and the Book till the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him).

48. This covers all the Prophets who were raised from all the branches of the Prophet Abraham's (peace be upon him) progeny.

49. What is meant to be said is this: The rulers and the learned men and the priests of Babylon who tried to defeat the mission of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) and the polytheistic people who had followed their wicked chiefs blindly, have since been blotted out and no trace of them is to be found anywhere in the world, but the person whom they had wanted to annihilate by burning in the fire only because he had proclaimed the word of Allah, and who eventually had to leave his country empty handed, was so blessed by Allah that his name has been well known in the world since the past 4,000 years and will remain so till the Last Day. All the Muslims and the Christians and the Jews unanimously recognize that friend of the Lord of the worlds as their spiritual leader. Whatever guidance mankind has received during the past 40 centuries has been received through this one man and his righteous descendants. The unique reward that he will get in the Hereafter is assured, but the place of honor that he has gained even in this world has not been gained so far by any of those who have exerted themselves in pursuit of the worldly benefits and advantages.

وَلُوطًا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّنَ
الْعَالَمِينَ 28

(29:28) We sent Lot[50] and he said to his people: "You commit the abomination that none in the world ever committed before you.

50. For comparison, see (Surah Al-Aaraf: Ayats 80-84); (Surah Hud: Ayats 69-83); (Surah Al-Hijr: Ayats 57-79); (Surah Al-Anbiyaa: Ayats 71-75); (Surah Ash-Shuaraa: Ayats 160-175); (Surah An-Naml: Ayats 54 59); (Surah As-Saffat: Ayats 133-138); (Surah Al-Qamar: Ayats 33-40).

أَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ وَتَقْطَعُونَ السَّبِيلَ ۖ وَتَأْتُونَ فِي نَادِيكُمُ الْمُنكَرَ ۖ فَمَا كَانَ
جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَن قَالُوا ائْتِنَا بِعَذَابِ اللَّهِ إِن كُنتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ 29

(29:29) What! Do you go to men[51] (to satisfy your lust), engage in highway robbery, and commit evil deeds in your gatherings?"[52] Then they had no answer to offer other than to say: "Bring Allah's chastisement upon us if you are truthful."

51. That is, "You satisfy your sex desire with the males." As stated in (Surah Al-Aaraf: Ayat 81), "you gratify your lust with men instead of women."

52. That is, “You do not even hide yourself when you commit this filthy act, but commit it openly in your assemblies, in front of others.” The same has been stated in (Surah An-Naml: Ayat 54), thus: “Do you commit the indecency while you see it?”

قَالَ رَبِّ انْصُرْنِيْ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْمُفْسِدِيْنَ ع 30

(29:30) Lot said: “My Lord, aid me against these mischievous people.”

وَلَمَّا جَآءَتْ رُسُلُنَآ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ بِالْبُشْرٰى ۙ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا مُهْلِكُوْٓا اَهْلِ هٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ ۚ اِنَّ اَهْلَهَا كَانُوْا ظٰلِمِيْنَ ۖ 31

(29:31) When Our emissaries brought the good news[53] to Abraham, and said (to him): “We are surely going to destroy the inhabitants[54] of this city; its inhabitants are immersed in wrong-doing.”

53. According to the details given of this in Surah Hud and Surah A1-Hijr, the angels who had been sent to bring the torment on the people of the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him), first came to the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) and gave him the good news of the birth of the Prophet Isaac (peace be upon him) and after him of the Prophet Jacob (peace be upon him). Then they told him that they had been sent to destroy the people of Lot (peace be upon him).

54. “This habitation” refers to the territory of the people of Lot (peace be upon him). The Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) at that time resided in the Palestinian city of Hebron, now called Al-Khalil. A few miles to the southeast of this city lies that part of the Dead Sea, which was once inhabited by the people of Lot (peace be upon him) and which is now under sea water. It is a low lying area and is clearly visible from the hill country of Hebron. That is why the angels, pointing towards it, had said "We are going to destroy this habitation." See(E.N. 114 of Surah Ash- Shuara).

قَالَ اِنَّ فِيْهَا لُوْطًا ۭ قَالُوْا نَحْنُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ فِيْهَا ۡ لَنُنَجِّيَنَّهٗ وَاَهْلَهٗٓ اِلَّا امْرَاَتَهٗ ۡ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغٰبِرِيْنَ 32

(29:32) Abraham said: “But Lot is there.”[55] They replied: “We are well aware of those who are there. We shall save him and all his household except his wife.” His wife is among those who will stay behind.[56]

55. According to the initial part of this story as related in Surah Hud, the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) at first was perturbed to see the angels in human shape, for he knew that the coming of the angels in human shape was always a prelude to some dangerous mission. Then, when they gave him the good news, his fear was allayed and he came to

know that they had been sent to the people of Lot (peace be upon him). Then he began making entreaties of mercy for those people (Surah Hud: Ayats 74-75), but his entreaties were not granted, and it was said: "Do not plead for them any more: your Lord's decree has been issued, and the punishment now cannot be averted," (Ayat 76). After this answer, when the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) lost all hopes of any increase in the respite of Lot's (peace be upon him) people, he became anxious about the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) himself, and said, what has been related here: "Lot (peace be upon him) is there." That is, "If the torment comes down when Lot (peace be upon him) is there, how will he and his household remain safe from it?"

56. According to (Surah Tahrim: Ayat 10), this woman was not faithful to the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him). That is why it was decreed that she too, would be afflicted with the torment in spite of being a Prophet's wife. Most probably when the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) had come to Jordan after the migration and settled there, he might have married among the people living there. But the woman did not believe even after spending a lifetime with him, and her sympathies remained with her own people. As Allah has no consideration for relationships and brotherhoods and every person's case is decided on the basis of his own faith and morality, even being a Prophet's wife did not profit her in any way and she met her doom along with her own people with whom she had remained attached in faith and morality.

وَلَمَّآ اَنۡ جَآءَتۡ رُسُلُنَا لُوۡطًا سِیۡٓءَ بِهِمۡ وَضَاقَ بِهِمۡ ذَرۡعًا وَّقَالُوۡا لَا تَخَفۡ وَلَا تَحۡزَنۡ ۫ اِنَّا
مُنَجُّوۡكَ وَاَهۡلَكَ اِلَّا امۡرَاَتَكَ كَانَتۡ مِنَ الۡغٰبِرِيۡنَ 33

(29:33) When Our emissaries came to Lot he was distressed and embarrassed on their account.[57] They said: "Do not fear nor be distressed.[58] We shall save you and all your household except your wife who is among those that will stay behind.

57. The reason for this anxiety and distress was that the angels had come in the shape of handsome, young boys. The Prophet Lot was aware of his people's morals. Therefore, he became perturbed at their arrival. He was thinking, "If I receive these guests in my house, it will be difficult to save them from the immoral people; if I do not receive them, it will be highly uncivil and unbecoming of the noble people. Moreover, if I do not provide shelter to these travelers, they will stay the night elsewhere, which would mean that I have myself given them away to the wicked people." What happened after this has not been related here. But according to the details given in Surahs Hud, AI-Hijr and AI-Qamar, the people of the city thronged to the Prophet Lot's house and insisted that the guests be handed over to them for immorality.

58. That is, "As for us, you should neither fear that they will in any way he able to harm us, nor be anxious about how you will protect us from them." This was the time when the angels revealed their identity to the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him), and said that they were not men but angels, who had been sent to bring the scourge on his people. According to the elucidation in Surah Hud, when the people were rushing into Lot's (peace be upon him) house and he felt that he could in no way save his guests from them, he cried out: "I

wish I had the power to set you right, or I could find some strong support for refuge," (Ayat 80). At this time the angels said: "O Lot, we are messengers sent by your Lord; they will not be able to harm you at all," (Ayat 81).

إِنَّا مُنزِلُونَ عَلَىٰٓ أَهْلِ هَٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ 34

(29:34) We shall bring down upon the people of this city a scourge from the heaven because of their evildoing."

وَلَقَد تَّرَكْنَا مِنْهَا آيَةًۢ بَيِّنَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ 35

(29:35) And We have left a vestige of it in that city as a Clear Sign[59] for a people who use their reason.[60]

59. "A clear Sign": the Dead Sea, which is also called Sea of Lot. The Qur'an at several places has addressed the disbelievers of Makkah, saying, "A Sign of the torment that visited this wicked people on account of their misdeeds still exists on the highway, which you see night and day during your trade journeys to Syria." (AI-Hijr: 76) (As-Saffat: 137). Today it is being admitted with near certainty that the southern end of the Dead Sea came into being as a result of a violent earthquake when the area in which Sodom, the central city of the people of Lot, was located sank underground. In this part there are still signs of some submerged habitations. Exploratory attempts are being made with the modern diving apparatus but the results are still awaited. For further explanation, see (E. N. 114 of Surah Ash-Shu`araa).

60. For the Islamic punishment of sodomy, see (E.N. 68 of Surah Al Aaraf).

وَإِلَىٰ مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا فَقَالَ يَٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَارْجُوا الْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ 36

(29:36) And We sent to Midian their brother Shuayb.[61] He said: "My people, serve Allah and look forward to the Last Day[62] and do not go about the earth committing mischief."

61. For comparison, see (Surah Al-Aaraf: Ayats 85-93), (Surah Hud: Ayats 84-96), (Surah Ash-Shuara: Ayats 177- 191).

62. This can have two meanings: (1) "Look forward to the life of Hereafter, and do not think that there is no life after this worldly life, when you will have to render an account of your deeds and be rewarded or punished accordingly." (2) "Work righteously so as to meet a good end in the Hereafter."

فَكَذَّبُوْهُ فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَاَصْبَحُوْا فِيْ دَارِهِمْ جٰثِمِيْنَ ۙ 37

(29:37) But they denounced him as a liar.[63] So a mighty earthquake overtook them, and by the morning they lay overturned in their houses.[64]

63. That is, "They did not believe that the Prophet Shuaib (peace be upon him) was a Messenger of Allah and the teachings he gave were from Allah and that if they rejected him they would be punished by a torment from Allah."

64. "Dwelling places": the whole area and country inhabited by them.

وَعَادًا وَّثَمُوْدَا۠ وَقَدْ تَّبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ مَّسٰكِنِهِمْ ۫ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ
فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيْلِ وَكَانُوْا مُسْتَبْصِرِيْنَ ۙ 38

(29:38) And We destroyed Ad and Thamud, whose dwellings you have observed.[65] Satan had embellished their deeds for them and had turned them away from the Right Path although they were a people of clear perception.[66]

65. Every Arab was acquainted with the lands where these two nations had lived. The whole of southern Arabia now known as Ahqaf, Yaman and Hadramaut, was the land of Aad in the ancient times, and the Arabs knew it. The whole area in the north of the Hijaz, from Rabigh to Aqabah and from Madinah and Khaiber to Taima and Tabuk. still abounds with Thamudic monuments, which must have been more prominent than they are today in the time when the Quran was being revealed.

66. That is, "They were not ignorant and foolish people, but were the most civilized people of their own times. They performed and carried out their worldly duties and chores very carefully and intelligently. Therefore, it cannot be said that Satan deluded them and pulled them on to his way by artifice and deception. Nay, they adopted the way shown by Satan with open eyes and with full understanding because it promised great pleasures and advantages; and they abandoned the way presented by the prophets because it appeared to be colorless, tasteless and troublesome due to moral restrictions."

وَقَارُوْنَ وَفِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامٰنَ ۫ وَلَقَدْ جَآءَهُمْ مُّوْسٰى بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَمَا
كَانُوْا سٰبِقِيْنَ ۚ 39

(29:39) And We destroyed Qarun (Korah) and Pharaoh and Haman. Moses came to them with Clear Signs but they waxed arrogant in the land although they could not have outstripped[67] (Us).

67. That is, “They could not have gotten away and escaped Allah’s grasp: they had no power to frustrate and defeat Allah’s plans and schemes.”

فَكُلًّا اَخَذْنَا بِذَنْۢبِهٖ ۚ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ اَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِ حَاصِبًا ۚ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ اَخَذَتْهُ الصَّيْحَةُ ۚ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ خَسَفْنَا بِهِ الْاَرْضَ ۚ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ اَغْرَقْنَا ۚ وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ 40

(29:40) So We seized each for their sin. We let loose upon some a violent tornado with showers of stones;[68] some were overtaken by a mighty Cry;[69] some were caused to be swallowed up by the earth,[70] and some We drowned.[71] Allah would not wrong them, but it is they who wronged themselves.[72]

68. That is, Aad who were subjected to a furious windstorm which blew on them for seven nights and eight days continuously.

69. That is, Thamud.

70. That is, Korah.

71. That is, Pharaoh and Haman.

72. The stories that have been related in the foregoing verses, have been addressed and directed both to the believers and to the disbelievers. To the believers they have been addressed so that they do not feel discouraged and distressed at heart, and keep aloft the banner of the truth firmly and patiently even in the face of the severe persecutions and hardships, and should have full faith in Allah that His succor shall ultimately come, and He will frustrate the designs of the wicked people and make the word of the truth to prevail. On the other hand, these have been addressed to those wicked people also, who in their arrogance were bent upon exterminating the Islamic movement. They have been warned to the effect: “You have formed a wrong opinion about Allah’s forbearance and clemency. You think; that His is a lawless Kingdom. If you have not been seized so far for your rebellion and your tyrannies and wicked deeds and have been granted a long respite so that you may reform yourselves, you have inferred that there exists no power whatsoever which can call you to account, and that one can go on doing whatever one likes endlessly on this earth. This misconception will ultimately lead you to the same doom that has already been met by the peoples of Noah and Lot and Shuaib, (peace be upon them) and experienced by Aad and Thamud, and seen by Korah and Pharaoh.

مَثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اَوْلِيَآءَ كَمَثَلِ الْعَنْكَبُوْتِ ۚ اِتَّخَذَتْ بَيْتًا ؕ وَ اِنَّ اَوْهَنَ

الْبُيُوْتِ لَبَيْتُ الْعَنْكَبُوْتِ ۘ لَوْ كَانُوْا يَعْلَمُوْنَ 41

(29:41) The case of those who took others than Allah as their protectors is that of a spider who builds a house; but the frailest of all houses is the spider's house; if they only knew.[73]

73. All the above mentioned nations were involved in shirk, and their belief about their deities was that they were their supporters and helpers and guardians, and had the power to make or mar their destinies. So when they will have won their goodwill by worship and presentation of offerings, they will succor them in need and protect them against calamities and afflictions. But, as shown by the historical events cited above, all their beliefs and superstitions proved to be baseless when their destruction was decreed by Allah. Then no god, and no god incarnate, and no saint or spirit, and no jinn or angel, whom they worshiped came to their rescue, and they met their destruction with the realization that their expectations and beliefs had been false and futile. After relating these events, Allah is now warning the mushriks to the effect: The reality of the toy-house of expectations that you have built on your faith in the powerless servants and imaginary deities, apart from the real Master and Ruler of the universe, is no more than the cobweb of a spider. Just as a cobweb cannot stand the slightest interference by a finger, so will the toy-house of your expectations collapse in its first clash with the scheme of Allah. It is nothing but ignorance that you are involved in the web of superstition. If you had any knowledge of the reality, you would not have built your system of life on baseless props. The fact is that none other than the One Lord of the worlds in this universe is the Owner of power and authority, and His support is the only support which is reliable. “Now whoever rejects taghut and believes in Allah has taken a firm support that never gives way. And Allah hears everything and knows everything,” (Surah Al- Baqarah: Ayat 256).

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ؕ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ 42

(29:42) Surely Allah knows fully what they call upon apart from Him. He is the Most Powerful, the Most Wise.[74]

74. That is, Allah knows fully the reality of those beings and things which they have taken as their deities and which they invoke for help. They are absolutely powerless. The Owner of power is only Allah, Who is controlling the system of this universe according to His own wisdom and design. Another translation of this verse can be: "Allah knows well that of those whom they invoke, apart from Him, are nonentities, and He alone is the All Mighty, the All-Wise.”

وَتِلْكَ الْاَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ ۚ وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَآ اِلَّا الْعٰلِمُوْنَ 43

(29:43) These are the parables that We set forth to make people understand. But only those endowed with knowledge will comprehend them.

خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضَ بِالۡحَقِّ ؕ اِنَّ فِیۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰیَةً لِّلۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ ؕ 44

(29:44) Allah has created the heavens and the earth in Truth.[75] Certainly there is a Sign in this for those who believe.[76]

75. That is, the system of the universe is based on the truth and not on falsehood. Whoever ponders over this system with an unbiased mind will realize that the earth and the heavens owe their existence to reality and fact and not to superstition and fancy. Here there is no possibility that whatever a person may conceive in his mind and whatever philosophy he may invent out of his personal whim and conjecture should fit in with the system. Here only such a thing can succeed and endure, which is in harmony with the reality and actual fact. A structure that is raised on unreal presumptions and hypotheses will ultimately collapse when it clashes with the reality. The system of the universe clearly testifies that its Creator is One God, and One God alone is its Master and Disposer. If a person works against this basic reality on the presumption that this world has no God, or that it has many gods, who devour the offerings of their devotees and in return give them a license to do whatever they please and a guarantee to live in peace and happiness, the reality will not change due to his presumptions, but, on the contrary, he himself will some time meet with a grave disaster.

76. That is, a clear evidence exists in the creation of the earth and the heavens about the truth of Tauhid and the refutation of polytheism and atheism, but this evidence is found only by those who accept the teachings of the Prophets of Allah. Those who deny them do not find it even though they see everything.

اُتۡلُ مَاۤ اُوۡحِیَ اِلَیۡكَ مِنَ الۡكِتٰبِ وَاَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ ؕ اِنَّ الصَّلٰوةَ تَنۡهٰی عَنِ الۡفَحۡشَآءِ وَالۡمُنۡكَرِ ؕ وَلَذِكۡرُ اللّٰهِ اَكۡبَرُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ یَعۡلَمُ مَا تَصۡنَعُوۡنَ 45

(29:45) (O Prophet), recite the Book that has been revealed to you and establish Prayer.[77] Surely Prayer forbids indecency and evil.[78] And Allah's remembrance is of even greater merit.[79] Allah knows all that you do.

77. The address apparently is directed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) but, in fact, it is meant for all the believers. Until now they were being counseled patience and reliance on Allah to brave the extreme trying conditions in which they found themselves, and the persecutions they were being subjected to on account of their faith. Now they are being told to recite the Quran and establish the Salat as a practical device, for these are the two things which endow a believer with a strong character and a wonderful capacity by which he can not only brave successfully the most violent storms of evil and falsehood but can even subdue them. But man can acquire this power from the recitation of the Quran and the prayer only when he does not remain content with the mere recital of the words but also understands well the Quranic teachings and absorbs them in his soul. And his prayer does

not remain confined to physical movements but becomes the very function of his heart and the motive force for his morals and character. The desired quality of the prayer is being mentioned by the Quran itself in the next sentence. As for its recitation, one should know that the recitation which does not reach the heart beyond the throat, cannot even give man enough power to remain steadfast to his faith, not to speak of enabling him to withstand the furies of unbelief. About such people, a Hadith says: "They will recite the Quran, but the Quran will not go beyond their throats; they will leave the faith just as the arrow leaves the bow." (Bukhari, Muslim, Muatta). As a matter of fact, the recitation which does not effect any change in a man's way of thinking, and his morals and character, and he goes on doing what the Quran forbids, is not the recitation of a believer at all. About such a one the Prophet (peace be upon him) has said: "He who makes lawful what the Quran has declared unlawful, has not believed in the Quran at all." (Tirmidhi). Such a recitation does not reform and strengthen a man's self and spirit, but makes him even more stubborn against Allah and impudent before his own conscience, and destroys his character altogether. For the case of the person who believes in the Quran as a divine Book, reads it and comes to know what his God has enjoined, and then goes on violating His injunctions, is of the culprit, who commits a crime not due to ignorance but after full knowledge of the law. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has elucidated this point in a brief sentence, thus: "The Quran is a testimony in your favor as well as against you," (Muslim). That is, "If you follow the Quran rightly, it is a testimony in your favor. Whenever you are called to account for your deeds, here or in the Hereafter, you can produce the Quran as a testimony in your defense, saying that whatever you did was in accordance with this Book. If what you did was precisely according to it, no jurist in the world will be able to punish you, nor will God in the Hereafter hold you accountable for it. But if this Book has reached you, and you have read it and found out what your Lord demands from you, what He enjoins and what He forbids, and then you adopt an attitude opposed to it, then this Book will be a testimony against you. It will further strengthen the criminal case against you in the court of God. Then it will in no way be possible for you to escape the punishment, or receive a light punishment, by making the excuse of ignorance.

78. This is an important characteristic out of the many characteristics of the prayer, which has been presented here prominently in view of its relevance to the context. To counter the severe storm of opposition and resistance that the Muslims were experiencing in Makkah, they stood in need of a moral force rather than any material power. To bring about the moral force and develop it suitably two practical devices were pointed out in the first instance, the recitation of the Quran and the establishment of the Salat. Now they are being told that the establishment of the Salat is the means through which they can get rid of those evils in which they themselves had been involved before they embraced Islam and in which the non-Muslim Arabs and the non Arab world around them were involved at that time.

With a little thinking one can easily understand why this special advantage of the prayer has been particularly mentioned here. Evidently, getting rid of the moral evils is not only useful insofar as it is beneficial for those who attain the moral purity, both here and in the Hereafter, but its inevitable advantage is that it gives them unique superiority over those who might be involved in diverse moral evils, and who might be exerting their utmost to sustain the impure system of ignorance, which nourishes those evils, against the efforts of the morally pure people. Indecent and evil acts are those which man by nature abhors, and

which have always been held as evil in principle by the people of every community and society, however depraved and perverted practically. The Arab society in the days of the revelation of the Quran was no exception to this. Those people also were aware of the moral virtues and the evils: they valued the good above the evil and there might be none among them, who regarded the evil as identical with the good, or depreciated goodness. Under such conditions, in a perverted society like that, the emergence of a movement which revolutionized morally members of the same society itself as soon as they came into contact with it, and raised them in character high above their contemporaries, inevitably had widespread effects. The common Arabs could not possibly fail to feel the moral impact of the movement, which eradicated evils and promoted goodness. And could not go on following those who were morally corrupt and were fighting to sustain a system of ignorance which had been nourishing those evils since centuries. That is why the Quran at that time exhorted the Muslims to establish Salat instead of urging them to collect material resources and force and strength that could win over the people's hearts and defeat the enemy without any material force.

The virtue of the prayer that has been mentioned here has two aspects: Its essential and inseparable quality that it restrains from evil and indecent acts, and its desired quality that the one who performs it should, in fact, refrain from evil and indecent acts. As for the first quality the prayer does restrain people from the evils. Anyone who ponders a little over the nature of the prayer will admit that of all the checks and brakes that can be put on man to restrain him from the evils, the prayer can be the most effective. After all, what check could be more effective than this that man should be called upon five times a day for the remembrance of Allah and made to remind himself again and again that he is not wholly free and independent in this world but is the servant of One God, and his God is He Who is aware of his open as well as hidden acts, even of the most secret aims and intentions of his heart, and a time will surely come when he will have to account for all his deeds before his God. Then he is not only reminded of this but is given practical training at every prayer time that he should not disobey any of his God's commands even secretly. From the time that he stands up for the prayer till its completion man has to perform continuously certain acts in which there is no third person, besides him and his God, who can know whether he has obeyed God's law or, disobeyed it. For instance, if the man's wudu (state of ablutions) has become void and he stands up for the prayer, there can be no one, besides him and God, who will know that he is no longer in the state of wudu. If the man has expressed no intention of the prayer but just goes on performing all the required movements and recites poetry, for instance, instead of the prescribed texts quietly, there is none, besides him and his God who can be aware of the secret that he has not, in fact, performed his prayer at all. Not with standing this, if a person offers the prayer five times a day, fulfilling faithfully all the conditions of the divine law in respect of the cleanliness of the body and dress, and the essentials of the prayer and its recitation, etc. it means that through this prayer his conscience is being awakened to life several times a day, he is being helped to become a responsible and dutiful person, and he is being practically trained that he should, under his own urge of obedience, abide by the law which he has believed in openly as well as secretly, regardless whether there is any external force to make him abide by it or not, and whether the people of the world have any knowledge of his intentions and deeds or not.

Thus considered, one cannot help admitting that the prayer not only restrains man from the evils and indecencies but, in fact, there is no other method of training in the world which may be so effective as the prayer is in restraining man from the evils. As for the question whether or not man in actual fact refrains from the evils even after attendance at the prayer, this depends upon the man himself, who is undergoing training for self reform. If he has the intention to benefit from it, and endeavors for it, the reformatory effects of the prayer will certainly have their impact on him. Otherwise, evidently, no reformatory device in the world can be effective with a person, who is not prepared to receive any impact of it, or tries to avoid its impact intentionally. This can be explained by an example. The essential quality of food is to nourish the body and develop it. But this advantage can be had only when food is allowed to be assimilated. If a person vomits what he eats after every meal, his food cannot profit him in any way. Just as, keeping such a person in view, one cannot say that food is not nutritious for the body, because so and so is becoming a skeleton in spite of eating food. So, one cannot present the example of an unrighteous performer of the prayer and say that the prayer does not restrain from the evils, because so and so is unrighteous in spite of his prayer. Just as about such a person it will be apt to say that he does not offer the prayer at all, so about the person who vomits everything he eats, it will be apt to say that he does not eat his food at all.

Precisely the same thing has been reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him) and some great companions and their followers. Imran bin Husain reports that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "He whose prayer did not restrain him from the evil and indecent acts, offered no prayer at all," (Ibn Abi Hatim). Ibn Abbas has reported the Prophet (peace be upon him) as saying: "The prayer which did not restrain a person from the evil and indecent acts, led him further away from Allah." (Ibn Abi Hatim, Tabarani). A Hadith containing the same theme has been reported by Hasan Basri directly from the Prophet (peace be upon him). Another Hadith reported on the authority of Ibn Masud is to the effect: "He who did not obey the prayer, offered no prayer at all, and obedience to the prayer is that one should refrain from the evil and indecent acts." (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim). Several sayings to the same effect have been reported on the authority of Abdullah bin Masud, Abdullah bin Abbas, Hasan Basri, Qatadah and Aamash, etc. Imam Jafar Sadiq has said: He who wants to know whether his prayer has been accepted or not, should see how far his prayer has restrained him from the evil and indecent acts. If he has been restrained from the evils, his prayer has been accepted, (Ruh-al Maani).

79. This can have several meanings: (1) That the remembrance of Allah (i.e. prayer) is a thing of much higher value: it not only restrains from the evils but, over and above that, it induces people to act righteously and urges them to excel one another in good acts. (2) That Allah's remembrance in itself is a great thing: it is the best of acts: no act of man is greater in value than this. (3) That Allah's remembrance of you is a greater thing than your remembrance of Him. Allah has said in the Quran: "So remember Me: I will remember you." (Surah Al-Baqarah: Ayat 156). Thus, when the servant remembers Allah in the prayer, inevitably Allah also will remember him, and the merit of Allah's remembering his servant is certainly greater than the servant's remembering Allah. Besides these three meanings, there is another subtle meaning also, which the wife of Abud Darda has explained. She says, "Allah's remembrance is not restricted to the prayer, but, its sphere is much vaster. When a man observes a fast, or pays the Zakat or performs a righteous act, he inevitably remembers

Allah. That is why the righteous act emanates from him. Likewise, when a man refrains from an evil act when an opportunity exists for it, even this also is the result of Allah's remembrance. Thus, the remembrance of Allah pervades the entire life of a believer.

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوٓا۟ أَهْلَ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ إِلَّا بِٱلَّتِى هِىَ أَحْسَنُ ۖ إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا۟ مِنْهُمْ ۖ وَقُولُوٓا۟ ءَامَنَّا
بِٱلَّذِىٓ أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَإِلَٰهُنَا وَإِلَٰهُكُمْ وَٰحِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُۥ مُسْلِمُونَ 46

(29:46) Argue not[80] with the People of the Book except in the fairest manner,[81] unless it be those of them that are utterly unjust.[82] Say to them: "We believe in what was revealed to us and what was revealed to you. One is our God and your God; and we are those who submit[83] ourselves to Him."

80. It should be noted that a little below in this Surah the people are being exhorted to migrate. At that time Habash was the only place of safety to which the Muslims could migrate, and Habash in those days was under the domination of the Christians. Therefore, in these verses the Muslims are being instructed as to how they should argue and discuss matters concerning religion with the people of the Book when such an occasion arises.

81. That is, the discussion should be conducted rationally, in a civilized and decent language, so that the ideas of the other person may be reformed. The preacher's main aim should be to appeal to the addressee's heart, convey the truth to him and bring him to the right path. He should not fight like a wrestler whose only object is to defeat his opponent. He should rather conduct himself like a physician who is ever cautious not to cause the patient's ailment to worsen by any of his own mistakes, and tries to cure him with the least possible trouble. This instruction bas been given here especially in connection with the conduct of a discussion with the people of the Book, but is a general instruction pertaining to the preaching of the religion and it has been given at several places in the Quran. For example, "O Prophet, invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and excellent admonition and discuss things with the people in the best manner." (Surah AnNahl: Ayat 125). "O Prophet, goodness and evil are not alike, repel evil with what is best. You will see that he, with whom you had enmity, has become your closest friend." (Surah Ha Mim As-Sajdah: Ayat 34). "O Prophet, repel evil with what is best: We are fully aware of what they utter against you." (Surah Al-Muminun: Ayat 96). "O Prophet, adopt the way of leniency and forbearance; enjoin what is good and avoid useless discussions with the ignorant people. If Satan ever excites you to anger, seek refuge in Allah." (Surah Al-Aaraf: Ayat 199-200).

82. That is, with those who adopt an attitude of wickedness a different attitude may also be adopted according to the nature and extent of their wickedness. In other words, one cannot, and should not adopt a soft and gentle attitude towards all sorts of the people under all circumstances at all time, which might be mistaken for the weakness and meekness of the inviter to the truth. Islam does teach its followers to be polite, gentle and reasonable, but it does not teach them to be unduly humble and meek so that they are not taken for granted by every cruel and wicked person.

83. In these sentences Allah has provided guidance to the best method of discussion, which the inviters to the truth should adopt. The method is this: "Do not make the error or deviation of the other person the basis and starting point of the discussion, but begin the discussion with those points of truth and justice which are common between you and your opponent. That is, the discussion should start from the points of agreement and not from the points of difference. Then, arguing from the agreed points, the addressee should be made to understand that, in the matter of the things in which you differ, your stand is in conformity with the agreed points whereas his stand is contradictory to them.

In this connection, one should bear in mind the fact that the people of the Book did not deny revelation, prophethood and Tauhid, like the polytheists of Arabia, but believed in these realities just like the Muslims. After agreement on these basic things, the main thing that could become the basis of difference between them could be that the Muslim would not believe in the divine scriptures sent down to them and would invite them to believe in the divine Book sent down to themselves, and would declare them disbelievers if they did not believe in it. This would have been a strong basis of their conflict. But the Muslims had a different stand. They believed as true all those Books that were with the people of the Book, and then also had believed in the revelation that had been sent down to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). After this it was for the people of the Book to tell the rational ground for which they believed in one Book sent by Allah and rejected the other. That is why Allah here has instructed the Muslims that whenever they have to deal with the people of the Book, they should first of all present before them this very point of view in a positive manner. Say to them: "We believe in the same God in Whom you believe and we are obedient to Him. We have submitted ourselves to all those commands and injunctions and teachings that have come from Him, whether they were sent down to you, or to us. We are obedient servants of God and not of a country or a community or a race, that we should submit to God's command when it is sent down in one place and reject it when it is sent down in another place. This thing has been repeated at several places in the Quran and particularly in relation to the people of the Book, it has been presented forcefully. For this, see (Surah Al-Baqarah: Ayats 4, 136, 177, 285); (Surah Aal-Imran: Ayat 84); (Surah An-Nisa: Ayats 136), 150 to 152, 162 to 164); (Surah Ash Shuaraa: Ayat 13).

وَكَذٰلِكَ اَنۡزَلۡنَاۤ اِلَيۡكَ الۡكِتٰبَ ؕ فَالَّذِيۡنَ اٰتَيۡنٰهُمُ الۡكِتٰبَ يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِهٖ ۚ وَمِنۡ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ مَنۡ
يُّؤۡمِنُ بِهٖ ؕ وَمَا يَجۡحَدُ بِاٰيٰتِنَاۤ اِلَّا الۡكٰفِرُوۡنَ 47

(29:47) (O Prophet), thus have We bestowed the Book on you.[84] So those on whom We had bestowed the Book before believe in it,[85] and of these (Arabs) too a good many believe in it.[86] It is none but the utter unbelievers who deny Our Signs.[87]

84. This can have two meanings:

(1) Just as We had sent down the Books to the former Prophets, so We have sent down this Book to you; and

(2) We have sent down this Book with the teaching that it should be believed in not by rejecting Our former Books but by affirming faith in all of them.

85. The context itself shows that this does not imply all the people of the Book but only those who were blessed with the right understanding and the knowledge of the divine scriptures, and were the people of the Book in the true sense. When this last Book of Allah came before them, confirming His earlier Books, they did not show any stubbornness or obstinacy but accepted it sincerely as they had accepted the previous Books.

86. "These people": the people of Arabia. What it means to say is: The truth loving people, whether they already possess a divine Book or do not possess any, are affirming faith in it everywhere.

87. Here, "the disbelievers" imply those people who are not prepared to give up their prejudices and accept the truth, or those who reject the truth because they do not want their lusts and their unbridled freedom to be subjected to restrictions.

وَمَا كُنتَ تَتْلُوا مِن قَبْلِهِ مِن كِتَٰبٍ وَّلَا تَخُطُّهُۥ بِيَمِينِكَ إِذًا لَّارْتَابَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ 48

(29:48) (O Prophet), you did not recite any Book before, nor did you write it down with your hand; for then the votaries of falsehood would have had a cause for doubt.[88]

88. This is the same argument that has already been given in Surahs Yunus and Al-Qasas as a proof of the Prophet's Prophethood. See (E.N. 21 of Surah Yunus) and (E.N.'s 64 and 109 of Surah Al-Qasas). For further explanation, see (E.N. 107 of Surah An-Nahl), (E.N. 105 of Surah Bani Israil), (E.N. 66 of Surah Al-Muminun), (E.N. 12 of Surah Al- Furqan), and (E.N. 84 of Surah Ash-Shuara).

The basis of the argument in this verse is that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was unlettered. His compatriots and his kinsmen among whom he had spent his whole life, from birth to old age, knew fully that he had never read a book nor ever handled a pen. Presenting this actual fact Allah says: This is a proof of the fact that the vast and deep knowledge of the teachings of the Divine Books, of the stories of the former Prophets, of the beliefs of the various religions and creeds, of the histories of the ancient nations, and the questions of social and moral and economic life, which is being presented through this unlettered man could not have been attained by him through any means but revelation. If he had been able to read and write and the people had seen him reading books and undertaking serious studies, the worshipers of falsehood could have had some basis for their doubts, that he had acquired the knowledge not through revelation but through study and reading. But the fact of his being absolutely unlettered has left no basis whatsoever for any such doubt. Therefore, there can be no ground, except sheer stubbornness, which can be regarded as rational in any degree for denying his Prophethood.

بَلْ هُوَ ءَايَٰتٌۢ بَيِّنَٰتٌ فِى صُدُورِ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ ۚ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِـَٔايَٰتِنَآ إِلَّا الظَّٰلِمُونَ 49

(29:49) But it is a set of Clear Signs in the hearts of those who have been endowed with knowledge.[89] None except the utterly unjust will deny Our Signs.

89. That is, the presentation of a Book like the Quran by an unlettered person, and the manifestation by him, all of a sudden, of extraordinary qualities of character while nobody ever noticed him making any preparation for these previously, are in fact the clearest signs which serve as pointers to his prophethood for those who are possessed of knowledge and wisdom." If one reviews the life-story of any great historical personage, one can always discover the factors in his environment, which molded his personality and prepared him for the excellences and qualities that emanated from him in life. There always exists a clear relationship between his environment and the component aspects of his personality. But no source whatever can be discovered in his environment of the wonderful qualities and excellences that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) displayed. In his case, neither in the contemporary Arab society nor in the society of the neighboring countries with which Arabia had any relations can one discover those factors which could have any remote relationship with the component aspects of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) personality. This is the reality on the basis of which it has been asserted here that the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) personality is not one sign but a collection of many clear signs. An ignorant person may not see any of these signs but those who are possessed of knowledge have become convinced in their hearts by seeing these signs that he is most certainly a true Prophet of Allah.

وَقَالُوْا لَوْلَآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ اٰيٰتٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّمَا الْاٰيٰتُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاِنَّمَآ اَنَا نَذِيْرٌ

مُّبِيْنٌ 50

(29:50) They say: "Why were Signs[90] from his Lord not sent down upon him?" Say: "The Signs are only with Allah. As for me, I am no more than a plain warner."

90. That is, miracles by seeing which one may be convinced that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is really a Prophet of Allah.

اَوَلَمْ يَكْفِهِمْ اَنَّآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ يُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَرَحْمَةً وَّذِكْرٰى لِقَوْمٍ

يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ع 51

(29:51) Does it not suffice for them (as a Sign) that We revealed to you the Book that is recited to them?[91] Surely there is mercy and good counsel in it for those who believe.[92]

91. That is, "A Book like the Quran has been sent down to you in spite of your being unlettered. Is it not by itself a great miracle which should convince the people of your Prophethood? Do they yet need another miracle after this? The other miracles were the miracles for those who witnessed them. But this miracle is ever present in front of them. It is being recited before them almost daily; they can witness it as and when they like." Even

after such an assertion and argument by the Quran the audacity of those who try to prove that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was literate is astonishing. The fact, however, is that the Quran here has presented in clear terms the Prophet's (peace be upon him) being illiterate as a strong proof of his prophethood. The traditions which lend support to the claim that the Prophet (peace be upon him) could read and write, or had learned reading and writing later in life, stand rejected at first glance, for no tradition opposed to the Quran can be acceptable. Then these traditions in themselves are too weak to become the basis for an argument. One of these is a tradition from Bukhari that when the peace treaty of Hudaibiya was being written down, the representative of the disbelievers of Makkah objected to the word Rasul-Allah being added to the name of the Prophet (peace be upon him). At this the Prophet ordered the writer (Ali, may Allah be pleased with him) to cross out the word Rasul-Allah and write Muhammad bin Abdullah instead. Ali refused to cross out Rasul-Allah. Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) took it in his own hand, struck out the word himself and wrote Muhammad bin Abdullah.

But this tradition from Bara bin Azib appears at four places in Bukhari and at two places in Muslim and everywhere in different words:

(1) At one place in Bukhari's Kitab-us-Sulh. The words of this tradition are to the effect: "The Prophet (peace be upon him) told Ali to strike out the words. He submitted that he could not do that. At last, the Prophet (peace be upon him) crossed them out with his own hand."

(2) In the same book the second tradition is to the effect: "Then he, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to Ali: Cross out Rasul-Allah. He said: By God, I shall never cross out your name. At last, the Prophet (peace be upon him) took the document and wrote: This is the treaty concluded by Muhammad bin Abdullah."

(3) The third tradition, again from Bara bin Azib is found in Kitab-ul-Jizia in Bukhari to the effect: "The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself could not write. He said to Ali: Cross out Rasul-Allah. He submitted: By God, I shall never cross out these words. At this, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Show me the place where these words are written. He showed him the place, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) crossed out the words with his own hand."

(4) The fourth tradition is in Bukhari's Kitab-ul-Maghazi to the effect: "So the Prophet (peace be upon him) took the document although he did not know writing, and he wrote: This is the treaty concluded by Muhammad bin Abdullah."

(5) Again from Bara bin Azib there is a tradition in Muslim (Kitab-ul-Jihad) saying that on Ali's refusal the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself wiped off the words Rasul- Allah.

(6) The second tradition from him in the same book says, "The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to Ali: Show me where the word Rasul-Allah is written. Ali showed him the place, and he wiped it off and wrote Ibn Abdullah.

The disparity in the traditions clearly indicates that the intermediary reporters have not reported the words of Bara bin Azib (may Allah be pleased with him) accurately. Therefore,

none of these reports can be held as perfectly reliable so that it could be said with certainty that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had written the words "Muhammad bin Abdullah" with his own hand. Probably when Ali, refused to wipe off the word Rasul-Allah, the Prophet might have himself wiped it off after finding out the place where it was written, and then might have gotten the word Ibn Abdullah substituted by him or by some other writer. Other traditions show that there were two writers who were writing down the peace treaty; Ali and Muhammad bin Maslamah (Fath al-Bari). Therefore, it is not impossible that what one writer did not do was done by the other writer. However, if the Prophet (peace be upon him) actually wrote his name with his own hand, there are plenty instances of this in the world. The illiterate people learn to write their own name although they cannot read or write anything else.

The other tradition on whose basis it has been claimed that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was literate, has been reported by Ibn Abi Shaibah and Umar bin Shabbah from Mujahid. It says: "The Prophet (peace be upon him) had learned reading and writing before his death." But in the first place, it is a weak tradition on account of its links as said by Hafiz Ibn Kathir: "It is weak: it has no basis." Secondly, it is weak otherwise also, for if the Prophet (peace be upon him) had really learned reading and writing later in life, it would have become a well known fact. Many of the companions would have reported it, and it would also have been known from which person (or persons) he had learned this. But no one except one man, Aun bin Abdullah, from whom Mujahid heard this, has reported it. And this Aun was not even a companion, but a follower of the companions, who does not at all tell from which companion (or companions) he got this information. Evidently, on the basis of such weak traditions nothing which contradicts well known facts can become acceptable.

92. That is, "The revelation of this Book is, without any doubt, a great bounty of Allah, and it contains great admonitions for the people. But only those people can benefit by it are those who believe in it."

قُلْ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنَكُمْ شَهِيْدًا ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِالْبَاطِلِ وَكَفَرُوْا بِاللّٰهِ ۙ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ 52

(29:52) Say (O Prophet): "Allah suffices as a witness between me and you. He knows whatever is in the heavens and the earth. As for those who believe in falsehood and are engaged in infidelity with Allah, it is they who will be the losers."

وَيَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ ۭ وَلَوْلَآ اَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى لَّجَاۗءَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ ۭ وَلَيَاْتِيَنَّهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَّهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ 53

(29:53) They ask you to hasten in bringing chastisement[93] upon them. Had there not been an appointed term for it, the chastisement would have already visited them; in

fact it will come down upon them all of a sudden (at its appointed time) while they will not be aware of it.

93. That is, "They are challenging you again and again that If you are a true messenger and they are really denying the truth, then you should not delay the torment with which you threaten them."

يَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ ؕ وَاِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمُحِيْطَةٌ ۢ بِالْكٰفِرِيْنَ ۙ 54

(29:54) They ask you to hasten the chastisement upon them although Hell encompasses the unbelievers.

يَوْمَ يَغْشٰىهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِنْ تَحْتِ اَرْجُلِهِمْ وَيَقُوْلُ ذُوْقُوْا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ 55

(29:55) (They will become aware of it) the Day when the chastisement will overwhelm them from above and from under their feet, and He will say to them: "Taste now the consequence of the deeds that you used to commit."

يٰعِبَادِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنَّ اَرْضِيْ وَاسِعَةٌ فَاِيَّايَ فَاعْبُدُوْنِ 56

(29:56) O My servants who believe, verily My earth is vast; so serve Me alone.[94]

94. This is an allusion to the Hijrah, which implies this: if you feel that it is becoming difficult to worship God in Makkah, you may leave it and move to another place where you can live as the true servants of God, for God's earth is vast. You should serve Allah and not your nation and country. This shows that the real thing is not the nation and the home and the country but the worship of Allah. If at any time the demands of the nation and country's love clash with the demands of Allah's worship, it is the time of trial for the believer's faith. The true believer will worship Allah and spurn the nation and the country and home. The false claimant to the faith will abandon the faith and remain clinging to his nation and his country and home. This verse is clearly indicative of the fact that a true worshiper of God can be a patriot but he cannot be a worshiper of the nation and the country. For him the worship of God is the dearest thing in life for the sake of which he will sacrifice everything else, but with never be prepared to sacrifice it for anything else.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَآئِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ۫ ثُمَّ اِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُوْنَ 57

(29:57) Every being shall taste death, then it is to Us that you shall be sent back.[95]

95. That is, "Do not be anxious for your life: one has to die sooner or later. No one has come to live forever in this world. Therefore, your real problem is not how to save life, but your real problem is how to save your faith, and fulfill the requirements of God worship. You

have ultimately to return to Us. If you lost your faith for the sake of saving your life, the result in the Hereafter will be different. But if you lost your life for the sake of saving your faith, the result will be just the opposite. Therefore, you should be anxious only about what you will bring when you return to Us. Will you come with a faith sacrificed for the sake of life, or a life sacrificed for the sake of the faith?"

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُمْ مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ غُرَفًا تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ نِعْمَ اَجْرُ الْعٰمِلِيْنَ ۙ صلے 58

(29:58) We shall house those who believed and acted righteously in the lofty mansions of Paradise beneath which rivers flow. There they shall remain for ever. How excellent a reward it is for those who acted (in obedience to Allah),[96]

96. That is, "Even if you remained deprived of all the worldly blessings because of your faith and righteousness and ended up as a total failure from the worldly point of view, you should rest assured that you will be compensated for it; and not only compensated but rewarded excellently."

الَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوْا وَعَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُوْنَ 59

(29:59) who remained steadfast[97] and put their trust in their Lord![98]

97. "Who are patient: who remained steadfast in faith in the face of hardships and afflictions and losses and persecutions; who have endured the consequences of the faith and have not turned away; who have seen the advantages and benefits of abandoning the faith and have not been lured away by them; who have seen the disbelievers and the wrongdoers prosper in the world and have not cast even a stray glance at their wealth and splendor."

98. "In their Lord put their trust: who did not put their trust in their possessions and their business and their clans and tribes but in their Lord; who were prepared to fight every power and endure every danger for the sake of their faith only on the basis of their trust in their Lord irrespective of the worldly means, and left their homes if their faith so demanded; who trusted their Lord that He would not let go waste the rewards of their faith and good works, and were sure that He would succor His believers and righteous servants even in this world and bless them with the best rewards in the Hereafter as well."

وَكَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ دَآبَّةٍ لَّا تَحْمِلُ رِزْقَهَا ۖ اللّٰهُ يَرْزُقُهَا وَاِيَّاكُمْ ۚ صلے وَهُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ 60

(29:60) How many an animal there is that does not carry about its sustenance. Allah provides sustenance to them and to you. He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.[99]

99. That is, "While migrating you should not be worried about your means of livelihood as you should not worry about your life's safety. For none of the birds and the animals of the

land and the sea that you find around yourself carries its provision with it. Allah is providing for all of them; wherever they go they get their provision through Allah's bounty. Therefore, do not be disheartened by the thought that if you left your homes for the sake of your faith, you would have nothing to eat. Allah will provide for you as well from the sources from which He is providing for the countless of His other creatures."

Precisely the same thing was taught by the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) to his disciples when he had said:

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than treat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matthew. 6: 2434).

The background of these discourses of the Quran and the Gospel is the same. There always comes a stage in the way of the propagation of the truth when the follower of the truth is left with no alternative but to stake his very life only with trust in Allah, regardless of the support and means of the material world. In these conditions, those who are too calculating about the possibilities of the future and seeking guarantees of the safety of life and assurance of provisions cannot do anything. Indeed, such conditions are changed only by the efforts and power of those who rise fearlessly in face of every danger and are even prepared to risk their very lives. It is all due to their sacrifices that ultimately the Word of Allah is raised high and all other words and creeds stand humbled and subdued before it.

وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اللّٰهُ ۚ
فَاَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ 61

(29:61) If you were to ask them:[100] "Who created the heavens and the earth and Who has kept the sun and the moon in subjection?" they will certainly say: "Allah." How come, then, they are being deluded from the Truth?

100. From here the discourse is again directed to the disbelievers of Makkah.

اَللّٰهُ يَبۡسُطُ الرِّزۡقَ لِمَنۡ يَّشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهٖ وَيَقۡدِرُ لَهٗ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَىۡءٍ عَلِيۡمٌ 62

(29:62) Allah enlarges the sustenance of any of His servants whom He will, and straitens the sustenance of whom He will. Surely Allah has knowledge of everything.

وَلَئِنۡ سَاَلۡتَهُمۡ مَّنۡ نَّزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَحۡيَا بِهِ الۡاَرۡضَ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَوۡتِهَا لَيَقُوۡلُنَّ اللّٰهُ ؕ قُلِ الۡحَمۡدُ لِلّٰهِ ؕ بَلۡ اَكۡثَرُهُمۡ لَا يَعۡقِلُوۡنَ ۘ 63

(29:63) If you were to ask them: "Who sent down water from the sky and therewith revived the earth after its death?" they will certainly say: "Allah." Say: "To Allah alone be praise and thanks."[101] But most people do not understand.

101. Here the word al-hamdu-lillah (Praise be to Allah) gives two meanings: (1) "When all this is done by Allah, then He alone is worthy of all praise, and none else", and (2) "Thank God that you yourselves also admit this."

وَمَا هٰذِهِ الۡحَيٰوةُ الدُّنۡيَاۤ اِلَّا لَهۡوٌ وَّلَعِبٌ ؕ وَاِنَّ الدَّارَ الۡاٰخِرَةَ لَهِىَ الۡحَيَوَانُ ۘ لَوۡ كَانُوۡا يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ 64

(29:64) The present life is nothing but sport and amusement.[102] The true life is in the Abode of the Hereafter; if only they knew.[103]

102. That is "The reality of it is no more than the children's engaging in a sport and pastime for a while, and then returning home. The one has become a king here, has not become a king in reality but is only playing the king. A time comes when his play ends, and he leaves the royal throne as empty-handed as he was when he had entered the world. Similarly, no phase of life here is enduring and lasting. Every one is playing his part only temporarily for a limited time. Those who are charmed by the short-lived triumphs of this life and are able to collect some means of enjoyment and pleasure and of glory and grandeur by losing their conscience and faith, are only engaged in a pastime. What will these toys profit them when after amusing themselves with these for some years in the world, they will enter through the gate of death empty handed into the next world of eternal life and find their same allurements to have caused them an everlasting affliction?"

103. That is, "If these people had known the reality that the life of this world is only a period of preparation for the test, and the real life for man, which is everlasting, is the life Hereafter, they would not have wasted this preparatory period in sport and merry making, but would instead have utilized each moment of it in works conducive to better results in the eternal life of the Hereafter."

فَاِذَا رَكِبُوْا فِى الْفُلْكِ دَعَوُا اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ ۚ فَلَمَّا نَجّٰىهُمْ اِلَى الْبَرِّ اِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُوْنَ ۙ 65

(29:65) When they embark in the ships they call upon Allah, consecrating their faith to Him. But when He rescues them and brings them to land, they suddenly begin to associate others with Allah in His Divinity

لِيَكْفُرُوْا بِمَآ اٰتَيْنٰهُمْ ۙ وَلِيَتَمَتَّعُوْا ۟ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ 66

(29:66) that they may be ungrateful for the rescue that We granted them, and that they may revel in the pleasures (of the present life).[104] Soon they shall come to know.

104. For explanation, see (E.Ns 29 and 41 of Surah AlAnaam); (E.Ns 29 and 31 of Surah Yunus) and (E.N. 84 of Surah Bani Israil).

اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّا جَعَلْنَا حَرَمًا اٰمِنًا وَّيُتَخَطَّفُ النَّاسُ مِنْ حَوْلِهِمْ ۭ اَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ۠ وَبِنِعْمَةِ اللّٰهِ يَكْفُرُوْنَ 67

(29:67) Do they not see that We have given them a sanctuary of safety whereas people around them are being snatched away?[105] So, do they believe in falsehood and ungratefully deny Allah's bounties?

105. That is, if the city of Makkah, in whose surroundings they enjoy perfect safety and security, had been made a sacred place by some Lat or Hubal, was it possible for a god or goddess to have secured this place against all sorts of mischief and violence for 2,500 years or so, in a striferidden land like Arabia? Who could then keep and maintain its sacredness and sanctity except Us?

وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اَوْ كَذَّبَ بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاۗءَهٗ ۭ اَلَيْسَ فِيْ جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْكٰفِرِيْنَ 68

(29:68) Who can be more unjust than he who foists a lie on Allah or gives the lie to the Truth after it has come to him?[106] Is Hell not the resort of the unbelievers?

106. That is, “The Prophet (peace be upon him) has made a claim to prophethood, and you have denied him. Now there can be only two alternatives: If the Prophet (peace be upon him) has made a false claim in the name of Allah, there can be no one more wicked than him, and

if you have belied a true Prophet (peace be upon him), there can be no one more wicked than you."

وَالَّذِيْنَ جَاهَدُوْا فِيْنَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا ؕ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ۧ 69

(29:69) As for those who strive in Our cause, We shall surely guide them to Our Ways.[107] Indeed Allah is with those who do good.

107. The word mujahadah has already been explained in (E.N: 8) above. There it was said that a person who exerts will exert for his own good (Ayat 6). Here it is being reassured that Allah does not leave alone those who strive in His cause sincerely, even at the risk of a conflict with the entire world, but He helps and guides them and opens for them ways towards Himself. He teaches them at every step the way of winning His approval and goodwill and He shows them the light at every turning point to discriminate between the right way and the wrong ways of life. In short, Allah helps and succors and guides them according to their sincerity and intensity of desire for goodness.

30. Surah Ar Rum (The Romans)

Name

The Surah takes its name Ar-Rum from the second verse in which the words ghulibat-ir-Rum have occurred.

Period of Revelation

The period of the revelation of this Surah is determined absolutely by the historical event that has been mentioned at the outset. It says: "The Romans have been vanquished in the neighboring land. “In those days the Byzantine occupied territories adjacent to Arabia were Jordan, Syria and Palestine, and in these territories the Romans were completely overpowered by the Iranians in 615 A. D. Therefore, it can be said with absolute certainty that this Surah was sent down in the same year, and this was the year in which the migration to Habash took place.

Historical Background

The prediction made in the initial verses of this Surah is one of the most outstanding evidences of the Quran's being the Word of Allah and the Holy Prophet Muhammad's being a true Messenger of Allah. Let us have a look at the historical background relevant to the verses.

Eight years before the Holy Prophet's advent as a Prophet the Byzantine Emperor Maurice was overthrown by Phocus, who captured the throne and became king. Phocus first got the Emperor's five sons executed in front of him, and then got the Emperor also killed and hung their heads in a thoroughfare in Constantinople. A few days after this he had the empress and her three daughters also put to death. The event provided Khusrau Parvez, the Sassanid king of Iran; a good moral excuse to attack Byzantium. For Emperor Maurice had been his benefactor; with his help he had got the throne of Iran. Therefore, he declared that he would avenge his godfather's and his children's murder upon Phocus, the usurper. So, he started war against Byzantium in 603 A. D. and within a few years, putting the Phocus armies to rout in succession, he reached Edessa (modern, Urfa) in Asia Minor, on the one hand, and Aleppo and Antioch in Syria, on the other. When the Byzantine ministers saw that Phocus could not save the country, they sought the African governor's help, who sent his son, Heraclius, to Constantinople with a strong fleet. Phocus was immediately deposed and Heraclius made emperor. He treated Phocus as he had treated Maurice. This happened in 610 A. D., the year the Holy Prophet was appointed to Prophethood.

The moral excuse for which Khusrau Parvez had started the war was no more valid after the deposition and death of Phocus. Had the object of his war really been to avenge the murder of his ally on Phocus for his cruelty, he would have come to terms with the new Emperor after the death of Phocus. But he continued the war, and gave it the color of a crusade between Zoroastrianism and Christianity. The sympathies of the Christian sects (i. e. Nestorians and Jacobians, etc.) which had been excommunicated by the Roman ecclesiastical authority and tyrannized for years also went with the Magian (Zoroastrian) invaders, and

the Jews also joined hands with them; so much so that the number of the Jews who enlisted in Khusrau's army rose up to 26,000.

Heraclius could not stop this storm. The very first news that he received from the East after ascending the throne was that of the Iranian occupation of Antioch. After this Damascus fell in 613 A. D. Then in 614 A.D. the Iranians occupying Jerusalem played havoc with the Christian world. Ninety thousand Christians were massacred and the Holy Sepulcher was desecrated. The Original Cross on which, according to the Christian belief, Jesus had died was seized and carried to Mada'in. The chief priest Zacharia was taken prisoner and all the important churches of the city were destroyed. How puffed up was Khusrau Parvez at this victory can be judged from the letter that he wrote to Heraclius from Jerusalem. He wrote: "From Khusrau, the greatest of all gods, the master of the whole world: To Heraclius, his most wretched and most stupid servant: You say that you have trust in your Lord. why didn't then your Lord save Jerusalem from me?"

Within a year after this victory the Iranian armies over-ran Jordan, Palestine and the whole of the Sinai Peninsula, and reached the frontiers of Egypt. In those very days another conflict of a far greater historical consequence was going on in Makkah. The believers in One God, under the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad (may Allah's peace be upon him), were fighting for their existence against the followers of shirk under the command of the chiefs of the Quraish, and the conflict had reached such a stage that in 615 A. D., a substantial number of the Muslims had to leave their homes and take refuge with the Christian kingdom of Habash, which was an ally of the Byzantine Empire. In those days the Sassanid victories against Byzantium were the talk of the town, and the pagans of Makkah were delighted and were taunting the Muslims to the effect: "Look the fire worshipers of Iran are winning victories and the Christian believers in Revelation and Prophethood are being routed everywhere. Likewise, we, the idol worshipers of Arabia, will exterminate you and your religion."

These were the conditions when this Surah of the Quran was sent down, and in it a prediction was made, saying: “The Romans have been vanquished in the neighboring land and within a few years after their defeat, they shall be victorious. And it will be the day when the believers will rejoice in the victory granted by Allah." It contained not one but two predictions: First, the Romans shall be victorious; and second, the Muslims also shall win a victory at the same time. Apparently, there was not a remote chance of the fulfillment of the either prediction in the next few years. On the one hand, there were a handful of the Muslims, who were being beaten and tortured in Makkah, and even till eight years after this prediction there appeared no chance of their victory and domination. On the other, the Romans were losing more and more ground every next day. By 619 A. D. the whole of Egypt had passed into Sassanid hands and the Magian armies had reached as far as Tripoli. In Asia Minor they beat and pushed back the Romans to Bosporus, and in 617 A. D. they captured Chalcedon (modern, Kadikoy) just opposite Constantinople. The Emperor sent an envoy to Khusrau, praying that he was ready to have peace on any terms, but he replied, "I shall not give protection to the emperor until he is brought in chains before me and gives up obedience to his crucified god and adopts submission to the fire god." At last, the Emperor became so depressed by defeat that he decided to leave Constantinople and shift to Carthage (modern, Tunis). In short, as the British historian Gibbon says, even seven to eight years after this prediction of the Quran, the conditions were such that no one could even

imagine that the Byzantine Empire would ever gain an upper hand over Iran. Not to speak of gaining domination, no one could hope that the Empire, under the circumstances, would even survive.

bid`i sinin, and the word bid` in Arabic applies to a number up to ten. Therefore, make the bet for ten years and increase the number of camels to a hundred." So, Hadrat Abu Bakr spoke to Ubayy again and bet a hundred camels for ten years.

In 622 A. D. as the Holy Prophet migrated to Madinah, the Emperor Heraclius set off quietly for Trabzon from Constantinople via the Black Sea and started preparations to attack Iran from rear. For this he asked the Church for money, and Pope Sergius lent him the Church collections on interest, in a bid to save Christianity from Zoroastrianism. Heraclius started his counter attack in 623 A. D. from Armenia. Next year, in 624 A. D., he entered Azerbaijan and destroyed Clorumia, the birthplace of Zoroaster, and ravaged the principal fire temple of Iran. Great are the powers of Allah, this was the very year when the Muslims achieved a decisive victory at Badr for the first time against the mushriks. Thus both the predictions made in Surah Rum were fulfilled simultaneously within the stipulated period of ten years.

The Byzantine forces continued to press the Iranians hard and in the decisive battle at Nineveh (627 A.D.) they dealt them the hardest blow. They captured the royal residence of Dastagerd, and then pressing forward reached right opposite to Ctesiphon, capital of Iran in those days. In 628 A. D. in an internal revolt, Khusrau Parvez was imprisoned and 18 of his sons were executed in front of him and a few days later he himself died in the prison. This was the year when the peace treaty of Hudaibiya was concluded, which the Quran has termed as "the supreme victory", and in this very year Khusrau's son, Qubad II, gave up all the occupied Roman territories, restored the True Cross and made peace with Byzantium. In 628 A. D., the Emperor himself went to Jerusalem to install the "Holy Cross" in its place, and in the same year the Holy Prophet entered Makkah for the first time after the Hijrah to perform the `Umra-tul-Qada'.

After this no one could have any doubt about the truth of the prophecy of the Quran, with the result that most of the Arab polytheists accepted Islam. The heirs of Ubayy bin Khalaf lost their bet and had to give a hundred camels to Hadrat Abu Bakr Siddiq. He took them before the Holy Prophet, who ordered that they be given away in charity, because the bet had been made at a time when gambling had not yet been forbidden by the Shari`ah; now it was forbidden. Therefore, the bet was allowed to be accepted from the belligerent disbelievers, but instruction given that it should be given away in charity and should not be brought in personal use.

Theme and Subject matter

The discourse begins with the theme that the Romans have been overcome and the people the world over think that the empire is about to collapse, but the fact is that within a few years the tables will be turned and the vanquished will again become victorious.

This introductory theme contains the great truth that man is accustomed to seeing only what is apparent and superficial. That which is behind the apparent and superficial he does not know. When in the petty matters of life, this habit to see only the apparent and superficial

can lead man to misunderstandings and miscalculations, and when he is liable to make wrong estimates only due to lack of knowledge about "what will happen tomorrow", how stupendous will be his error if he risks his whole life-activity by placing reliance only upon what is visible and apparent with respect to his worldly life as a whole.

In this connection, the Signs of the universe which have been presented as evidence to prove the doctrine of the Hereafter arc precisely the same which support the doctrine of Tauhid. Therefore from verse 28 onward, the discourse turns to the affirmation of Tauhid and the refutation of shirk, and it is stressed that the natural way of life for man is none else but to serve One God exclusively. Shirk is opposed to the nature of the universe as to the nature of man. Therefore, whenever man has adopted this deviation, chaos has resulted. Again here, an allusion has been made to the great chaos that had gripped the world on account of the war between the two major powers of the time, and it has been indicated that this chaos too, is the result of shirk, and all the nations who were ever involved in mischief and chaos in the history of mankind were also mushriks.

In conclusion, a parable has been presented to make the people understand that just as dead earth comes to life, all of a sudden, by a shower of rain sent by God and swells with vegetation and plant life, so is the case with the dead humanity. When God sends a shower of His mercy in the form of Revelation and Prophethood, it also gives a new life to mankind and causes it to grow and develop and flourish. Therefore: "If you take full advantage of this opportunity, the barren land of Arabia will bloom by Allah's mercy and the whole advantage will be your. But if you do not take advantage of it, you will harm only your selves. Then no regret will avail and no opportunity will be provided to make amends."

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

الٓمّٓ ۚ 1

(30:1) Alif. Lam. Mim.

غُلِبَتِ الرُّوۡمُ ۙ 2

(30:2) The Romans have been defeated

فِىۡۤ اَدۡنَى الۡاَرۡضِ وَهُمۡ مِّنۡۢ بَعۡدِ غَلَبِهِمۡ سَيَغۡلِبُوۡنَ ۙ 3

(30:3) in the neighbouring land;[1] but after their defeat they shall gain victory in a few years.

1. From what lbn Abbas and the other companions and their followers have said, it appears that the Muslims' sympathies in this war between Byzantium and Iran were with Byzantium, and of the disbelievers of Makkah were with Iran. This had several reasons. First, the Iranians had given it the color of a crusade between Magianism and Christianity,

and, apart from the object of political conquest, they were making it a means of spreading Magianism. In the letter that Khusrau Parvez wrote to the Emperor Heraclius after the conquest of Jerusalem, he had clearly mentioned his victory as a proof of the truth of Magianism. In principle, the Magian creed resembled the polytheistic creed of the people of Makkah, because the Magis too, were disbelievers of Tauhid. They believed in two gods and worshiped the fire. That is why the mushriks of Makkah were in sympathy with them. Contrary to them, the Christians, however corrupted their monotheism might be, still regarded belief in One God as the basis of religion, believed in the Hereafter and admitted revelation and prophethood as the source of guidance. Thus, their religion in principle resembled Islam, and therefore, the Muslims were naturally in sympathy with them, and could not like that a polytheistic people should dominate them. Secondly, the people who believe in a previous prophet before the advent of a new prophet are naturally regarded and counted as Muslims until the message of the new prophet reaches them and they clearly discard it. (see E.N. 73 of Surah Al-Qasas). At that time only five to six years had passed since the Prophet's (peace be upon him) advent as a Prophet and his message had not yet reached outside Arabia. Therefore, the Muslims did not look upon the Christians as disbelievers, but they certainly regarded the Jews as disbelievers because they had rejected the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) to be a Prophet. Thirdly, the Christians from the very beginning had been treating the Muslims with sympathy as already mentioned above in (Surah Al-Qasas: Ayats 52-55), and in (Surah Al-Maidah: Ayats 82-85), and many of them were even accepting the message of the truth with an open heart. Then, the way the Christian king of Habash had given refuge to the Muslims on their migration there and turned down the demand of the disbelievers of Makkah to return these new Muslims.

فِيْ بِضْعِ سِنِيْنَ ؕ لِلّٰهِ الْاَمْرُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْۢ بَعْدُ ؕ وَيَوْمَئِذٍ يَّفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ۙ 4

(30:4) All power belongs to Allah both before and after.[2] On that day will the believers rejoice

2. That is, "When the Iranians became victorious first, it did not mean that the Lord of the worlds, God forbid, had been humbled and when the Romans will gain victory afterwards, it will not mean that Allah's lost kingdom will be restored to Him. Sovereignty in any case belongs to Allah. Allah gave victory to the side that became victorious first, and Allah will give victory to the side that will gain victory after wards. For no one in his Kingdom can achieve domination solely by his own power. He whom He raises, rises and he whom He causes to fall, falls."

بِنَصْرِ اللّٰهِ ؕ يَنْصُرُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ۙ 5

(30:5) at the victory granted by Allah.[3] He grants victory to whomsoever He pleases. He is the Most Mighty, the Most Compassionate.

3. Ibn Abbas, Abu Said Khudri, Sufyan Thauri, Suddi and others have stated that the Romans' victory against the Iranians and the Muslims' victory at Badr against the polytheists took place almost at the same time. The Muslims, therefore, were doubly pleased. The same is supported by the histories of Byzantium and Iran. 624 A.D. is the year in which

the Battle of Badr was fought and the same is the year in which the Byzantine Emperor destroyed the birth place of Zoroaster and ravaged the principal fire temple of Iran.

وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ لَا يُخْلِفُ اللّٰهُ وَعْدَهٗ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ 6

(30:6) This is Allah's promise and He does not go back on His promise. But most people do not know.

يَعْلَمُوْنَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَهُمْ عَنِ الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ 7

(30:7) People simply know the outward aspect of the worldly life but are utterly heedless[4] of the Hereafter.

4. That is, "Although there are plenty of signs and evidences which point to the Hereafter, and there is no reason why one should be heedless of it, yet the people are being heedless of it due to their own short sightedness. They only see the apparent and the outward aspect of the worldly life and are unaware of what is hidden behind it; otherwise there has been no slackness on the part of God to warn them of it."

اَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْا فِيْۤ اَنْفُسِهِمْ ؕ مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَاۤ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَاَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ؕ وَاِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ بِلِقَآئِ رَبِّهِمْ لَكٰفِرُوْنَ 8

(30:8) Do they not reflect on themselves?[5] Allah created the heavens and the earth and whatever lies between them in Truth and for an appointed term.[6] Yet many people deny that they will meet their Lord.[7]

5. This in itself is a strong argument for the Hereafter. It means this: "If these people had reflected over their own selves, apart from the external phenomena, they would have found in themselves the arguments which prove the necessity of a second life after the present life. There are three special characteristics of man which distinguish him from the other creations on the earth:"

(1) The earth and the countless things around it have been subjected for him, and he has been granted vast powers to exploit them.

(2) He has been life free to choose a way of life for himself. He can follow the way of belief or disbelief, obedience or sin, virtue or vice, as he likes. Any way of life, right or wrong, that he chooses, he is helped to follow it and allowed to use and exploit all the means and resources provided by God, whether the way chosen is of God's obedience or of His disobedience.

(3) An innate moral sense has been placed in him, by which he discriminates between the voluntary and the involuntary actions; he judges the voluntary acts as good and bad, and

decides spontaneously that a good act ought to he rewarded and an evil act ought to be punished.

These three characteristics which are found in man's own self serve as a pointer to the fact that there must be a time when man should he called to account for his deeds, when he should be asked how he used the powers delegated to him over what he had been given in the world, when it should be seen whether he had adopted the right way or the wrong way by use of the freedom of choice given to him, when his voluntary acts should be judged, and good acts be rewarded and evil acts punished. This time inevitably can come only after man's life-activity has ceased and the account book of his actions closed, and not before it. And this time should necessarily come only when the account book of not one man or of one nation but of all mankind has closed. For on the passing away of one man or of one nation, the influence that he or it has generated by his or its acts does not cease to operate. The good or bad influence left by him should also be credited to his account. How can accountability be carried out and full rewards and punishments given with justice unless the influences are allowed to run their full course. Thus, man's own self testifies that the position he occupies in the world by itself demands that after his present life there should be another life when a court should be established, his life-record examined justly and every person rewarded or punished according to his deeds.

6. In this sentence, two more arguments have been given for the Hereafter. It says that if man makes a deep observation of the system of the universe, he will see two things very outstanding about it: First, that the universe has been created with the truth. It is not a plaything of a child, which he might have made to amuse himself, and whose making and un-making might be meaningless. But it is a serious system whose every particle testifies that it has been created with great wisdom, its each component has a law underlying it, and everything in it has a purpose behind it. Man's whole social and economic life and all his sciences and arts are a witness that whatever man has done in the world became possible only because he was able to discover the laws working behind everything and the purpose for which it was made. Had he been placed as a puppet in a lawless and purposeless toy-house, no science and no civilization and social life could be conceived. Now, how does it stand to reason that the Wise Being Who has created this world with such wisdom and design and Who has placed in it a creation like man, who is endowed with great mental and physical capabilities, powers and authority, freedom of action and choice, moral sense and entrusted with unlimited means and resources of the world, would have created him without a purpose and design? That man would live a full life involving both goodness and evil, justice and injustice, virtue and vice, and end up in the dust, and his good and evil acts will not bear any fruit? That each act of man will influence his own life as well as the lives of thousands of other men like himself and countless other things in the world, for good or for evil, and the whole record of his life-activity will be just set aside after his death, without accountability?

The other thing that becomes apparent after a deep observation of the system of the universe is that nothing here is immortal. Everything has an age appointed for it after attaining which, it dies and expires, and the same is the case with the universe as a whole. All the forces that are working here are limited. They can work only till an appointed term and they have inevitably to run out in time, and this system has to end. In the ancient days the philosophers and scientists who said that the world was eternal and everlasting could

have their way, due mainly to lack of knowledge. But modern science almost definitely has cast its vote in favor of the God worshipers in the debate that had been going on since centuries between them and the atheists regarding the eternal and the temporal nature of the world. Now the atheists are left with no leg to stand on. They cannot claim on the basis of reason and knowledge that the world has existed since eternity and will exist forever and there is going to be no resurrection. The ancient materialistic creed rested on the belief that matter was indestructible, only its form could be changed, but after every change matter remained matter and no increase or decrease occurred in its quantity. Therefore, it was inferred that this material world had neither a beginning nor an end. But now the discovery of the atomic energy has demolished the entire materialistic edifice. Now it has come to light that energy changes into matter, and matter changes back into energy with the result that nothing persists, neither form nor appearance. The second law of Thermodynamics has proved that this material world has neither existed since eternity nor will last till eternity. It certainly began in time and has to end in time. Therefore, it is no longer possible to deny the Hereafter even according to science. And obviously, when science has surrendered, how will philosophy stand to deny the Hereafter?

7. "Disbelievers in the meeting with their Lord": disbelieve that they have to appear before their Lord after death. 9

أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ ۖ كَانُوا أَشَدَّ
مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَأَثَارُوا الْأَرْضَ وَعَمَرُوهَا أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا عَمَرُوهَا وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ۖ
فَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَٰكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ۖ 9

(30:9) Have they not travelled through the earth that they may observe what was the end of their predecessors[8] who were far mightier and tilled the land[9] and built upon it more than these have ever built?[10] And Allah's Messengers came to them with Clear Signs.[11] It was not Allah Who wronged them, but it is they who wronged themselves.[12]

8. This is a historical argument for the Hereafter. It means this: The Hereafter has not been denied only by a couple of the people in the world, but a large number of them have been involved in this disbelief in human history. Even there have been entire nations which either denied it altogether or lived heedless of it, or invented such false beliefs about life after death as rendered the concept of the Hereafter meaningless. Then the continuous experience of history reveals that in whatever form the Hereafter has been denied, its inevitable result has been that the people became corrupted morally, they lived irresponsible lives, they transgressed all limits of tyranny and wickedness, which became the cause of the destruction of one nation after the other. Does not this experience of thousands of years of history, which has been traced by human generations successively, prove that the Hereafter is a reality whose denial is fatal to man? Man has come to believe in gravitation only because he has always experienced and seen material things falling to the ground. He has recognized poison to be poison only because whoever took poison died. Similarly, when the

denial of the Hereafter has always led to the corruption of morals for man, is not this experience enough to teach the lesson that the Hereafter is a reality, and to live one's life heedless of it is dangerous?

9. The words athar-ul-ard in the original may either mean to plough the land for cultivation, or to dig the earth for taking out canals, underground water channels, minerals, etc.

10. This contains an answer to the argument of those who regard mere material progress as the sign of a nation's being righteous. They argue like this: How is it possible that Allah will make fuel of Hell those people who have exploited the resources of the earth on such a large scale, who have constructed wonderful works on the earth and given birth to a grand civilizations? The Quran refutes this argument. Thus, such works of construction have also been built before by many nations on a large scale. Then, have you not seen that those nations have perished along with their civilization and their grand and magnificent works. There is no reason why the Law of God that has so treated in the world the mere material progress of a people lacking the right belief and conduct, will not treat them likewise in the next world and make them fuel of Hell.

11. That is, they came with such signs as were sufficient for anyone to be convinced of their being the true prophets. The mention of the coming of the prophets in this context implies this: On the one hand, there are evidences in man's own self, and in the universe around him, and in the continuous experience of human history, and, on the other, there also came such prophets, one after the other, who showed clear signs of their being true prophets and warned (the people) that the Hereafter is sure to come.

12. That is, the destruction that overtook those nations afterwards, was not due to Allah's being unjust to them but due to the injustice they had done to themselves. The person (or persons) who neither thinks rightly, nor adopts the right attitude by listening to others, will be responsible for his evil end if he meets destruction. God cannot be blamed for this, for God has not only made arrangements for conveying to man the knowledge of the reality through His Books and His Prophets, but also blessed man with the intellectual resources and powers by exploiting which he can always judge the authenticity of the knowledge brought by the Prophets and the Divine Books. Had God deprived man of this guidance and these resources and he had to meet with the consequences of following a wrong way then doubtlessly could God have been blamed for injustice.

ثُمَّ كَانَ عَاقِبَةَ الَّذِيْنَ اَسَآءُوا السُّوْٓآٰى اَنْ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَكَانُوْا بِهَا

يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ۧ 10

(30:10) Evil was the end of those evil-doers, for they gave the lie to Allah's Signs and scoffed at them.

اَللّٰهُ يَبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ 11

(30:11) Allah creates in the first instance and will later repeat it.[13] Thereafter it is to Him that you shall be sent back.

13. Though this thing has been put forward as a claim, it contains the basis of the claim too. Common sense testifies that the One Who can originate creation, can reproduce the same creation far more easily. The origination of the creation is an actuality which exists before everybody, and the disbelievers and the mushriks also admit that this is the work of Allah alone: "Now it will be clearly absurd on their part to think that God Who has originated this creation, cannot reproduce it."

وَيَوْمَ تَقُوْمُ السَّاعَةُ يُبْلِسُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ 12

(30:12) On that Day when the Hour will come to pass,[14] the criminals shall be dumbfounded.[15]

14. "The Hour": the Hour of returning to Allah and appearing before Him.

15. The word ubliso in the text means to be dumbfounded on account of a sudden shock and despair, to be confounded on finding oneself in a hopeless situation, to stand aghast on finding no means of help and support. When this word is used for a culprit, it depicts a person who is caught red handed, who then finds no way to escape, nor expects to save himself by offering a plea in self defense; therefore, he stands dumb and dejected and depressed.

One should also understand that "the criminals" here does not only imply those people, who have committed murders and thefts and robberies, etc. in the world, but all those who have rebelled against God, refused to accept the guidance and teachings of His Messengers, denied the accountability of the Hereafter, or lived heedless of it, and have been worshiping others than God in the world, or their own selves, whether or not, besides this basic deviation, they also committed those acts, which are commonly called crimes. Besides, it includes those people also, who in spite of believing in God and His Messengers and the Hereafter, have knowingly disobeyed their Lord and persisted in their rebellious conduct till the end. When these people will suddenly come back to life in the Hereafter, against their expectations, and will find that they are confronted with the second life, which they had denied, or ignored, in their life activity in the world, they will stand dumbfounded as has been depicted in the words: yublisulmujrimun.

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُمْ مِّنْ شُرَكَآئِهِمْ شُفَعٰٓؤُا وَكَانُوْا بِشُرَكَآئِهِمْ كٰفِرِيْنَ 13

(30:13) None whom they had associated with Allah in His Divinity will intercede on their behalf;[16] rather, they will disown those whom they had set up as Allah's associates in His Divinity.[17]

16. "Associates" (shuraka) includes three kinds of beings:

(1) The angels, prophets, saints, martyrs and the righteous men, to whom the polytheists assigned divine attributes and powers in different ages and whom they worshiped as gods.

On Resurrection Day, they will say to their worshipers, "You did whatever you did without our consent, rather against our teachings and guidance. Therefore, we have nothing to do with you. Do not place any hope in us that we will intercede for you before Allah Almighty."

(2) Inanimate things like the moon, the sun, the planets, trees, stones, animals, etc. The polytheists worshiped them as gods, prayed to them, but the poor things themselves were unaware that the vicegerent of Allah was worshiping them so humbly and devotedly. Evidently, none of these also will come forward to intercede for him.

(3) The arch-criminals, who by deception and fraud, or by use of force, compelled the servants of God to worship others, e.g. Satan, false religious guides, and tyrants and despots. They themselves will be in trouble there. Not to speak of interceding for others, they will rather try to prove before God that their worshipers and followers were themselves responsible for their crimes, and therefore, they should not be made to bear the burden of their deviation. Thus, the polytheists there will not get any intercession from anywhere.

17. That is, the polytheists will themselves admit that they had wrongly held them associates of God. They will realize that none of them really had any share in Godhood. Therefore, in the Hereafter they will disown the shirk on which they insist in the world.

وَيَوْمَ تَقُوْمُ السَّاعَةُ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّتَفَرَّقُوْنَ 14

(30:14) On that Day when the Hour will come to pass, people will be split into groups.[18]

18. That is, all communities and groups that have been formed in the world on the basis of race, country, language, tribe and clan, and economic and political interests, will break, and the people will be regrouped on the basis of true belief, morality and character. On the one hand, all the believing and righteous people will be separated from all the nations of mankind and put in one group. And on the other hand, people professing every false ideology and committing every kind of crime in the world will be sorted out from the multitudes of mankind and put into separate groups. In other words, the thing which Islam regards as the real basis of separation and union in the world and which the worshipers of ignorance refuse to accept, will become the basis of separation and union in the Hereafter. Islam says that the real thing which joins men together or divides them is the belief and morality. Those who believe and build the system of life on divine guidance are one community, whether they belong to any race, any country and any region. The two cannot belong to one nation. They can neither walk together on a common path of life in the world, nor can meet with the same end in the Hereafter. From the world to the Hereafter they tread separate paths and have separate destinations. Contrary to this, the worshipers of falsehood have been insisting in every age, and still insist, that mankind should be classified and grouped on the bases of race and country and language. The people who have a common race and country and language should constitute a separate nation, regardless of their religion and belief, and should offer a common front against the other similar nations. And this nation should have such a system of life which should bind the followers of Tauhid and the polytheists and the atheists together. The same was the concept of Abu Jahl and Abu Lahab and the chiefs of the Quraish. That is why they accused the Prophet Muhammad

(peace he upon him) again and again of having stirred up divisions in their nation. That is why the Quran is warning that the groups made in the world on wrong basis will ultimately break and mankind will be permanently divided on the basis of the belief and the philosophy of life and morality and character on which Islam wants to build it in the world. The people who do not have a common destination cannot follow a common way of life.

فَاَمَّا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَهُمۡ فِىۡ رَوۡضَةٍ يُّحۡبَرُوۡنَ 15

(30:15) Then those who believed and acted righteously will be placed in a Garden[19] and will be happy and jubilant.[20]

19. "A Garden": A garden of bliss and perfect happiness as a reward and source of everlasting joy.

20. The word yuhbarun in the original implies this: "They will be lodged in it with honor, will remain happy and be provided with every kind of pleasure."

وَاَمَّا الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا وَكَذَّبُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَلِقَآئِ الۡاٰخِرَةِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ فِى الۡعَذَابِ مُحۡضَرُوۡنَ 16

(30:16) As for those who disbelieved[21] and gave the lie to Our Signs and to the encounter of the Hereafter, they will be arraigned for chastisement.

21. One thing here is noteworthy. Good works have been mentioned as a necessary adjunct of the faith, which will earn one the blissful Garden. But no mention has been made of the evil acts while mentioning the evil end of disbelief. This clearly indicates that disbelief by itself is enough to mar the destiny of a person, whether it is accompanied by the evil act or not.

فَسُبۡحٰنَ اللّٰهِ حِيۡنَ تُمۡسُوۡنَ وَحِيۡنَ تُصۡبِحُوۡنَ 17

(30:17) So[22] glorify Allah[23] in the evening and the morning.

22. "So", here, implies, when you have come to know the good results of belief and righteous acts and the evil consequences of disbelief and denial of the truth, you should adopt the following conduct. It also means: By holding the life Hereafter to be impossible, the polytheists and disbelievers are, in fact, holding Allah to be helpless. Therefore, as against them, you should glorify Allah, and proclaim that He is free from this weakness. This command has been addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and through him to all the believers.

23. "To glorify Allah" means to proclaim Allah's being free from and exalted above the defects and faults and weaknesses, which the mushriks ascribe to Him due to their shirk and denial of the Hereafter. The best form of this proclamation and expression is the Prayer. That is why Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, Qatadah, lbn Zaid and other commentators say that here "to glorify" means to offer the prescribed Prayer. A clear indication in favor of this

commentary is contained in the verse itself. It lays down certain definite times for the glorification of Allah. Evidently, if it was meant to instill the belief that Allah is free from all defects and weaknesses, there should be no question of the restriction of the times of the morning and evening, and the early and late afternoon, for a Muslim should always have this belief. Similarly, if it was meant to teach glorifying Allah merely verbally, it should be meaningless to specify the times, for a Muslim should express Allah's glory at all times. Therefore, inevitably the command to glorify Allah with the restriction of the times points to its particular practical form which is none other than the Prayer.

وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَعَشِيًّا وَّحِيْنَ تُظْهِرُوْنَ 18

(30:18) His is all praise in the heavens and in the earth; (and glorify Him) in the afternoon and when the sun begins to decline.[24]

24. This verse clearly points to the times of the Fajr (morning), Maghrib (evening), Asr (late afternoon) and the Zuhr (early afternoon) Prayers. Besides this, the other allusions made to the times of the Prayer in the Quran are as follows:

"Establish the Salat from the declining of the sun to the darkness of the night, and be particular about the recital of the Quran at dawn." (Surah Bani-Israil: Ayat 78).

"Establish the Salat at the two ends of the day and in the early part of the night." (Surah Hud: Ayat 114).

"And glorify your Lord with His praise before the rising of the sun and before its setting, and glorify Him again during the hours of the night and at the extremes of the day." (Surah Ta Ha: Ayat 130).

The first of these verses tells that the times of the Prayer are from the declining of the sun to the darkness of the night (Isha) after which is the time of the morning Prayer (Fajr). In the second verse, the "two ends of the day" imply the times of the morning (Fajr) and the evening (Maghrib) Prayers, and "in the early part of the night" implies the time of Isha. In the third verse, "before the rising of the sun" implies the Fajr time and "before its setting" the Asr tune, and "during the hours of the night" implies the times of both the Maghrib and the Isha Prayers; and the "extremes of the day" are three: the morning, the declining of the sun and the evening. Thus, the Quran at different places has pointed to the five Prayer times at which the Muslims the world over offer their Prayers. But, obviously, no one by merely reading these verses could have determined the Prayer times unless the divinely appointed teacher of the Quran, the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself had given guidance to these by his word and deed.

Let us pause a while here and consider the boldness of the deniers of Hadith. They make fun of "offering the Prayer", and say that the Prayer that the Muslims offer today is not at all the thing prescribed by the Quran. They assert that the Quranic injunction to establish the Salat does not mean the offering of the Prayer but establishing the Nizami- Rububiyat (Order of Providence). Ask them: "What is that order of providence which can either be established before the rising of the sun or after the declining of the sun till the early hours of the night"?

And what is that order of providence which is required to be established especially on Fridays? "O believers when you hear the call to the Friday Prayer, hasten to the remembrance of Allah" (Surah Al- Juma: Ayat 9). And what is that special kind of the order of providence for establishing which one has first to wash his face and the hands up to the elbows and the feet up to the ankles and rub his head with wet hands, otherwise he will not establish it? ("O believers, when you stand up to offer the Salat, you must wash your faces and your hands and arms up to the elbows, and rub your heads with wet hands (Surah Al-Maidah: Ayat 6). And what is this peculiarity of this order of providence that one cannot establish it unless he has completely washed himself after sexual intercourse? "O believers, do not offer the Prayer, if you are unclean until you take your bath, except when passing on the way" (Surah An-Nisa: Ayat 43). And what is this odd thing that if he has touched the women, he will have to strike his hands on pure dust and rub thereby his face and hands in case he does not find water, for the purpose of establishing this strange order of providence? ("or if you have touched women and you can find no water, then cleanse yourselves with pure dust: strike your palms on it and rub your hands and faces with it" (Surah An-Nisa: Ayat 43). And what is this amazing order of providence that while on a journey one should establish only half of it? "When you go on a journey, there is no harm if you shorten the Salat" (Surah An-Nisa: Ayat 101). Then, what an odd thing that during a war half of the soldiers should fall down, carrying their weapons, in order to establish the order of providence behind the Imam, and the other half should stick to their positions and continue fighting the enemy; when the first group has performed one sajdah behind the Imam in its effort to establish the "order of providence" it should go to relieve the other group, which should fall down and start establishing the "order of providence" behind the Imam? "And when you, O Prophet, are among the Muslims and are going to lead them in Salat (in a state of war), let a party of them stand behind you, carrying their weapons with them. When they have made their prostrations, they should fall back, and let another party of them, who have not yet offered their Salat say it with you" (Surah An-Nisa Ayat 102).

All these verses of the Quran clearly indicate that to establish the Salat implies the Prayer that the Muslims offer everywhere in the world today. But the deniers of Hadith seem to be bent upon changing the Quran instead of changing themselves. The fact is that unless a person becomes wholly fearless of Allah, he cannot dare play with His Word as these people do. Or, only such a person can engage in a pastime like this with respect to the Quran who believes it is not Allah's Word, but intends to mislead the Muslims in the name of the Quran. See (E.N. 50) below.

يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَيُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ۚ وَكَذَٰلِكَ تُخْرَجُونَ ﴿19﴾

(30:19) He brings forth the living from the dead and brings forth the dead from the living, and revives the earth after it is dead.[25] Likewise will you be raised to life (after you die).

25. That is, how can that God Who is doing all this perpetually in front of your eyes, be helpless in raising man to life after death? He is causing absolutely dead matter to be discharged from living man and animals. He is ever bringing into existence countless animals and human beings by breathing life into dead matter, whereas the substances themselves which make up the bodies of the living beings are absolutely without life. He is making you witness the phenomenon that wherever water becomes available, lands previously lying barren start blooming and blossoming with animal and vegetable life. In spite of witnessing all this if a person thinks that the God Who is sustaining the universe will be helpless to raise man back to life after death, he is fully devoid of the common sense. His heart does not see the clear realities gleaming from the manifestations which his eyes see.

وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖۤ اَنْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ اِذَاۤ اَنْتُمْ بَشَرٌ تَنْتَشِرُوْنَ 20

(30:20) And of His[26] Signs is that He created you from dust and behold, you became human beings, and are multiplying around (the earth).[27]

26. It should be noted that from here to the end of (verse 27), the signs of Allah that are being mentioned, on the one hand, point to the possibility and occurrence of the life Hereafter, in the context of the foregoing discourse. And on the other hand, the same sings also point to the reality that this universe is neither Godless nor under many gods, but One God alone is its Creator, Disposer, Master and Ruler. Thus, this section (Ayats 20-27)is fully connected with the discourse preceding it and the discourse following it.

27. That is, the stuff from which man has been created is nothing but a few dead substances which are found in the earth, like carbon, calcium, sodium and a few other elements like them. With their combination a wonderful being, called man, has been raised up, and in him have been placed great powers of sentiments, consciousness, and imagination. None of which can be traced back to any of the constituent substances of his physical being. Then, not only has just one man so risen up by a mere accident, but in him has also been placed that wonderful procreative power by which millions and billions of human beings are coming continuously into being bearing the same physical structure and capabilities and possessing countless hereditary and personal characteristics. Therefore, O man! Does your intellect approve that this extremely wise creation has come into being of itself without the creative power of a Wise Creator? Can you say, being in your senses, that making a wonderful design of the creation of man and bringing it into effect and rendering the countless powers of the earth and heavens favorable and subservient to human life could be the result of the thinking and design of many gods? And will you be in your right senses when you think that the God, Who has brought man into being from absolute nothingness, will not be able to raise the same man back to life after giving him death?

وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖۤ اَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَزْوَاجًا لِّتَسْكُنُوْۤا اِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَّوَدَّةً وَّرَحْمَةً ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ 21

(30:21) And of His Signs is that He has created mates for you from your own kind[28] that you may find peace in them[29]and He has set between you love and mercy.[30] Surely there are Signs in this for those who reflect.

28. That is, the Creator's perfect wisdom is such that He has not created man in one sex only but in two sexes, which are identical in humanity, which have the same basic formula of their figure and form, but the two have been created with different physical structures, different mental and psychological qualities, and different emotions and desires. And then there has been created such a wonderful harmony between the two that each is a perfect counterpart of the other. The physical and psychological demands of the one match squarely with the physical and psychological demands of the other. Moreover, the Wise Creator is continuously creating the members of the two sexes in such a proportion since the dawn of the creation that in no nation and in no region has it ever happened that only boys or only girls may have been born. This is one thing in which human intelligence has absolutely no part to play. Man cannot at all influence the course of nature according to which girls continue to be born with the feminine qualities and the boys with the masculine qualities, which are perfectly complimentary to each other, nor has he any means by which he may change the proportion in which men and women continue to be born everywhere in the world. The working of this system and arrangement so harmoniously and perpetually in the birth of millions and billions of human beings since thousands of years cannot be accidental either, nor the result of the common will of many gods. This is a clear indication of the reality that One Wise Creator and One only, in the beginning made a most appropriate design of a man and a woman by His infinite Wisdom and Power and then made arrangements that precisely in accordance with that design countless men and countless women should be born along with their separate individual qualities in the right proportion.

29. That is, this system has not come about by chance, but the Creator has brought it about deliberately with the object that the man should find fulfillment of the demands of his nature with the woman, and the woman with the man, and the two should find peace and satisfaction in association and attachment with each other. This is the wise arrangement which the Creator has made the means of the survival of the human race on the one hand, and of bringing the human civilization into existence on the other hand. If the two sexes had been created on different patterns and designs, and the state of agitation which changes into peace and tranquility only through union and attachment between the two had not been placed in each, the human race might have survived like sheep and goats, but there was no possibility of the birth of a civilization. Contrary to all other species of animal life; the fundamental factor that has helped create human civilization is that the Creator by His wisdom has placed a desire and a thirst and a lodging in the two sexes for each other, which remains unsatisfied unless the two live in complete attachment and association with each other. This same desire for peace and satisfaction compelled them to make a home together. This same desire brought families and clans into being, and this same desire made social life possible for man. In the development of social life man's mental capabilities have certainly been helpful, but they were not its real motives. The real motivating force was the same longing with which man and woman were endowed and which compelled them to establish the "home". Can anyone, possessed of common sense, say that this masterpiece of wisdom has come about by chance through the blind forces of nature? Or, that it has been arranged so by many gods, and countless men and women have been continuously coming into being with the same natural longing since thousands of years? This is a sign of the wisdom of One

Wise Being, and of One only, which the people devoid of common sense only can refuse to acknowledge.

30. "Love" here means sexual love, which becomes the initial motive for attraction between man and woman, and then keeps them attached to each other. "Mercy" implies the spiritual relationship which gradually develops in the matrimonial life, by virtue of which they become kind, affectionate and sympathetic towards each other; so much so that in old age, sexual love falls into the background and the two partners in life prove to be even more compassionate towards each other than they were when young. These two are the positive forces which the Creator has created in man to support the initial longing of his nature. That longing and restlessness only seeks peace and satisfaction and brings the man and the woman into contact with each other. After that these two forces emerge and bind the two strangers brought up in different environments so intimately together that the two remain attached to each other through every thick and thin of life. Evidently, this love and mercy which is being experienced by millions and millions of people in their lives, is not anything material, which may be weighed and measured, nor can it be traced back to any of the constituent element of human body, nor the cause of it birth and growth found out in a laboratory. The only explanation of this can be that the human self has been endowed with it by a Wise Creator, Who has done so of His own will to serve a special purpose.

وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ خَلْقُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافُ اَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَاَلْوَانِكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ
لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّلْعٰلِمِيْنَ 22

(30:22) And of His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth[31] and the diversity of your tongues and colours.[32]Indeed there are Signs in this for the wise.

31. That is, their coming into existence from nothingness and their being established an eternal law, and the functioning in them of innumerable forces in great harmony and equilibrium, contain many signs of the reality that One and One only Creator has brought the entire universe into existence, and He alone is running this grand system. On the one hand, by reflecting over the origin of the initial energy that assumed the form of matter, then the transformation of the matter into so many elements, then the combination of the elements in a wonderful and wise proportion and coming into being of an awe-inspiring system of the universe, and then the functioning of this system since billions of centuries with such regularity and discipline, every unbiased mind will come to the conclusion that all this could not happen by mere chance, without the all-embracing will of an All-Knowing, All-Wise Creator. Then, on the other hand, if one sees that every thing from the earth to the farthest stars in the universe is made up of the same basic elements and the same law of nature is working in it, every intellect, which is not stubborn, will certainly admit that this cannot be the result of the godhead of many gods but there is One God Who is the Creator and Sustainer of this whole universe.

32. That is, "Although your vocal chords are similar, and there is no difference in the structure of the mouth, the tongue and the brains, yet people speak different languages in different regions of the world. Even in the regions where the same language is spoken,

different dialects are spoken from city to city and from town to town. Moreover, the accent and pronunciation and the style of speech of every person is different from the other. Similarly, although the semen and the formula of your physical structure is the same, yet your colors are so different that, nations apart, even the colors of the two sons of the same parents are not exactly the same. In this verse, attention has been drawn only to two aspects, but if one looks around he will notice an infinite variety everywhere in the world. One will find countless differences in the species of man, animal, plants and other things in spite of the basic uniformity in their different members; so much so that no member of the species is exactly identical with the other. Even the two leaves of a tree are not exactly alike. This shows that the world is not a factory in which automatic machines might be working and turning out things in mass production bearing the stamp of their own separate species. But in this factory there is a Master-Artist at work, Who gives individual attention to everything and produces it on a new design with new embellishments and proportions and qualities, and everything thus produced is unique in its own way. His inventive genius is turning out a new model of everything every moment, and His creative power abhors repeating the same design the second time. Anyone who sees this wonderful phenomenon with open eyes can never be involved in the foolish misconception that the Maker of the universe has gone to sleep after having made it go. This is, on the contrary, a clear proof of the fact that He is ever engaged in His creative activity, and is giving individual attention to each and everything in His creation.

وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ مَنَامُكُمْ بِالَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَابْتِغَآؤُكُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّسْمَعُوْنَ 23

(30:23) And of His Signs is your sleeping at night and your seeking His Bounty[33] during the day. Indeed there are Signs in this for those who hearken.

33. "To seek bounty" is to seek the livelihood. Though man generally sleeps at night and works for his living in the day, this is not a law. Many people also sleep in the day and work for their livelihood at night. That is why the night and the day both have been mentioned and it has been said: "In both day and night you sleep as well as work for your livelihood.

This also is a sign which points to the design of the Wise Creator. Furthermore, it also points to the fact that He is not merely a Creator but also extremely Compassionate and Merciful to His creations, and is more anxious than the creation to meet its needs and requirements. Man cannot constantly labor but needs to have a rest of a few hours after every few hours of hard work so as to rebuild energy to take up work again. For this purpose, the Wise and Merciful Creator has not rested content with creating a feeling of fatigue and a desire for rest in man, but has placed in his nature a powerful urge for the sleep, which without his will, even in spite of resistance from him, overpowers him automatically after every few hours of work and wakefulness, and compels him to have a few hours of rest, and leaves him as soon as the need has been fulfilled. Man has so far been unable to understand the nature and real causes of the sleep. This is something fully innate, which has been placed in the nature and structure of man. Its being precisely according to the requirements of man is enough to testify that it is not anything accidental, but has been provided by a Wise Being in

accordance with a purpose and plan. It is based on a clear wisdom and reason and purposefulness. Moreover, the sleep itself testifies that the One Who has placed this compulsive urge in man is a greater well wisher of man than man himself, otherwise man would have deliberately resisted the sleep and endeavored to keep constantly awake and worked continuously hard and thus exhaust not only his workpower but also his vital powers.

Then, by using the word "seeking Allah's bounty" for the seeking of livelihood, allusion has been made to another series of the signs. How could have man sought and found his livelihood if the innumerable and unlimited forces of the earth and heavens had not been put to work to provide means of the livelihood and supply countless resources for man to seek it in the earth? Not only this. Man could not have exploited these means and resources had he not been given appropriate limbs and suitable physical and mental capabilities for the purpose. Thus the ability in man to seek the livelihood and the presence of the resources of the livelihood outside of him, clearly indicate the existence of a Merciful and Beneficent God. An intellect which is not sick can never presume that all this has happened by chance, or is the manifestation of the godhead of many gods, or some merciless, blind force is responsible for these bounties and blessings.

وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ يُرِيْكُمُ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَّطَمَعًا وَّيُنَزِّلُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَيُحْيٖ بِهِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ 24

(30:24) And of His Signs is that He shows you lightning, arousing both fear and hope,[34] and sends down water from the sky and revives the earth after it is dead.[35] Indeed there are Signs in this for those who use their reason.

34. That is, its thunder and lightning give hope that rain will come and help the crops, but at the same time they cause a fear that the lightning may strike somewhere, or heavy rain may fall, which may wash away everything.

35. This thing, on the one hand, points to the life Hereafter, and on the other, proves that God exists, and there is One God alone, Who is controlling the earth and the heavens. Innumerable creatures of the earth live on the products that come out from the earth. These products depend on the productivity of the earth. The productivity depends on the rain, whether it directly falls on the earth, or its water gathers together on the surface of the earth, or takes the form of underground water channels or springs or wells, or freezes on the mountains and then flows down in the form of rivers. Then the rain depends on the heat of the sun, the change of seasons, atmospheric changes in temperature, circulation of the winds, and on the lightning, which causes the rain to fall as well as mixes a kind of natural manure in the rainwater. The establishment of a harmony and proportion between different things existing from the earth to the sky, their becoming favorable and subservient to a variety of aims and objects, and their remaining continuously and constantly favorable in perfect harmony for millions of million years cannot be the product of mere chance. Has it all happened without the all-embracing will and plan and wisdom of a Fashioner and Designer?

And is it not a proof of the fact that the Creator and Lord of the earth, the sun, the water, the heat and coolness is One and only One?

وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖۤ اَنْ تَقُوْمَ السَّمَآءُ وَالْاَرْضُ بِاَمْرِهٖ ؕ ثُمَّ اِذَا دَعَاكُمْ دَعْوَةً ۖ صلے ق مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ ۖ صلے ق
اِذَاۤ اَنْتُمْ تَخْرُجُوْنَ 25

(30:25) And of His Signs is that the sky and the earth stand firm by His command.[36] Then no sooner than He summons you out of the earth you will come forth.[37]

36. That is, not only have they come into being by His command, but their continuous existence and the functioning in them of a grand workshop of life constantly is also due to His command. If His command does not sustain them even for a moment, the entire system should break down at once.

37. That is, it is not at all difficult for the Creator and Controller of the universe to raise you back to life; for this He will have to make no preparation. His one call will be enough to raise and muster together from every corner of the earth all human beings who have been born since the beginning of creation and will be born in the future.

وَلَهٗ مَنْ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ كُلٌّ لَّهٗ قٰنِتُوْنَ 26

(30:26) To Him belong all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth. All are in obedience to Him.

وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ يَبْدَؤُا الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُهٗ وَهُوَ اَهْوَنُ عَلَيْهِ ؕ وَلَهُ الْمَثَلُ الْاَعْلٰى فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ع 27

(30:27) It is He Who creates in the first instance and it is He Who will repeat the creation, and that is easier for Him.[38]His is the loftiest attribute in the heavens and the earth. He is the Most Mighty, the Most Wise.

38. That is, if it was not difficult for Him to create you in the first instance, how can it be difficult for Him to recreate you? Your first creation was not difficult for Him because your present existence is a living proof of that. Now it is simple commonsense that the re-making of a thing should be relatively easier for the one who made it the first time.

ضَرَبَ لَكُمْ مَّثَلًا مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ ؕ هَلْ لَّكُمْ مِّنْ مَّا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ شُرَكَآءَ فِيْ مَا
رَزَقْنٰكُمْ فَاَنْتُمْ فِيْهِ سَوَآءٌ تَخَافُوْنَهُمْ كَخِيْفَتِكُمْ اَنْفُسَكُمْ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ
لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ 28

(30:28) He sets forth[39] for you a parable from your own lives. Do you have among your slaves some who share with you the sustenance that We have bestowed on you so that you become equals in it, all being alike, and then you would hold them in fear as you fear each other?[40] Thus do We make plain the Signs for those who use reason.

39. In the forgoing section, arguments have been given both for Tauhid and for the Hereafter; now the discourse turns to only Tauhid.

40. The mushriks, even after admitting that Allah is the Creator and Master of the earth and heavens and all that they contain, held some of His creatures as associates in His attributes and powers, and prayed to them, presented offerings and performed rites of worship before them. Their belief regarding their self-made associates is found in the words of the Talbih that they used to pronounce while going round the Kabah. They said: "Here I am, O Allah, here I am in Thy presence! Thou hast no partner except the partner who is Thy own. Thou art his owner as well as owner of what he owns." (Tabarani on the authority of Ibn Abbas). Allah has refuted this kind of shirk in this verse. The argument is to this effect: "When you do not make your own slaves partners in your wealth, how do you think and believe that Allah will make His creatures partners in His Godhead?" (See (E.N. 62 of Surah An-Nahl).

بَلِ اتَّبَعَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْٓا اَهْوَآءَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۚ فَمَنْ يَّهْدِيْ مَنْ اَضَلَّ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ
نّٰصِرِيْنَ 29

(30:29) But the wrong-doers follow their desires without any knowledge. Who, then, can show the way to him whom Allah lets go astray?[41] Such shall have no helpers.

41. That is, when a person neither thinks on the right way by himself, nor is prepared to listen to a well-wisher, his intellect comes under the curse of Allah. After this everything that can help reasonable person to reach the truth, only helps this stubborn and ignorant person to be involved more and more deeply in further deviation and error. This is what has been conveyed in the word "sending astray". When a truth-loving person invokes Allah for the grace of guidance, Allah creates for him maximum means of the guidance according to the sincerity of his invocation. And when a strayed person insists on his deviation, Allah creates for him the means which mislead him further and further away from the truth."

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا ۚ فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا ۚ لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ
اللَّهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ ۙ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۙ 30

(30:30) (O Prophet and his followers),[42] turn your face singlemindedly[43] to the true Faith[44] and adhere to the true nature on which Allah has created human beings.[45] The mould fashioned by Allah cannot be altered.[46] That is the True, Straight Faith,[47] although most people do not know.

42. This "so" implies that when the reality has become clear to you, and you have come to know that none but Allah is the Creator and Master and Sovereign of this universe and of man himself, then inevitably your conduct should be such as indicated in this verse.

43. "Set your face...truth": Do not turn your face to any other direction after you have adopted this way of life. Then you should think like a Muslim and your likes and dislikes should be of a Muslim. Your values and standards should be the ones set by Islam and your character and conduct should bear the stamp of Islam, and the affairs of your individual and collective life should be ordered according to the way taught by Islam.

44. "This faith": The faith that the Quran presents, in which none but Allah is worthy of worship and obedience, in which none can be held as an associate of Allah in His Divinity, in His attributes and His powers and rights, in which man by his own free will chooses to order his life in accordance with the guidance and law of Allah.

45. That is, all human beings have been created on the nature that none but One Allah is their Creator and Lord and Deity. You should be steadfast on this nature. If you adopt the attitude of independence, you will be following a way opposed to your nature, and if you serve and worship another besides Allah, then you will be working against your nature."

This subject has been explained by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in a number of Ahadith. According to Bukhari and Muslim, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Every child who is born, is born on the human nature; it is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian, etc. afterwards. Its example is that of an animal which gives birth to complete and sound young ones, none is born with torn and cut off ears, but the mushriks tear their ears afterwards on account of their superstitions of ignorance."

According to another Hadith reported in Musnad Ahmad and Nasai, the Muslims in a war killed the children of the enemy. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) came to know of it, he became very angry, and said: "What has happened to the people that they have transgressed the limits and killed even the children?" A man said, "Were they not the children of the Mushriks?" The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: "Even the best of your people are the children of the mushriks!" Then he said: "Every living being is born on the nature: then when he becomes able to speak, his parents turn him into a Jew or a Christian."

In another Hadith which has been reported by lmam Ahmad on the authority of Ayad bin Himar-ul-Mujashii, it has been related that one day the Prophet (peace be upon him) said

during an address: “My Lord says: I had created all My servants on true faith; then the satans came and led them astray from their faith, and made unlawful what I had made lawful for them, and commanded them to associate with Me those for whom I have sent down no authority.”

46. That is, God has made man His servant and created him only for his own service. This natural disposition of man cannot be altered, however hard one may try. Neither can man effect a change in his position of a servant, nor can anything other than God become his God in the real sense. Man may make for himself as many gods as he may please, but the fact remains that he is the servant of none but One God alone. Man by his own folly and ignorance may regard anyone as holder of divine attributes and powers and take any one as the maker and un-maker of his destiny, but the fact of the matter is that neither does anyone other than Allah possess divine attributes nor His authority, nor has anyone else the power to make or mar the destiny of man.

Another translation of this verse can be: “Do not affect any alteration in the nature made by Allah.” That is, it is not right to corrupt and spoil the nature on which Allah has created man.

47. “Right religion”: To remain steadfast on one's true Nature.

مُنِيبِينَ إِلَيْهِ وَاتَّقُوهُ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَلَا تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ۝31

(30:31) (Adhere to the True Faith and) turn to Him,[48] and hold Him in awe,[49] and establish Prayer,[50] and do not be of those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity,

48. That is, whoever has adopted an attitude of independence and freedom and turned away from his true Lord, and whoever has adopted service of another than Allah and proved to be disloyal to his real and true Lord, should desist from this, and return to the service of the One God Whose real servant is he by birth.

49. That is, you should have the fear that if in spite of being a servant of Allah by birth, you adopted the way of living independent of Him, or served another beside Him, you will have to suffer a severe punishment for rebellion and ingratitude. Therefore, you should avoid every such way of life which earns you the wrath of God.

50. Both turning to Allah and having fear of His wrath are the acts of the heart. This state of the heart, for its manifestation and stability, inevitably needs a physical act, which they make it known to others in society that so and so has really returned to the service of One Allah alone, and which, at the same time, may go on nourishing and developing the state of piety and devotion in his own self by means of practical experience and discipline. That is why immediately after giving the command for a mental change Allah has given the command for this physical act, i.e. establishment of the Salat. As long as an idea is only an idea in the mind of man, it can neither be stable nor enduring. It may fade away or even change. But when he starts practicing it, the idea takes root in him and goes on increasing in stability and strength with more and more practice; so much so that when it has become a belief it can neither change nor fade away easily. Considered from this viewpoint, no act can

be more effective than the offering of the Prayer regularly five times a day for strengthening piety and fear of God in oneself. The other act, whatever it be, is carried out at intervals, or in different forms on different occasions, but the Prayer is an act, which is performed every few hours in one and the same specific form permanently, in which man has to rehearse over and over again the whole lesson taught him by the Quran about Islam, so that he does not forget it. Furthermore, both the believers and the disbelievers have to know who among the people has given up the way of rebellion and adopted the way of obedience to the Lord. The believers have to know this so that they can form into a community and society and can cooperate with one another in the way of Allah; then as soon as the relationship of any one of them starts showing signs of laxity with respect to the faith and Islam, this should become known to all of them at once. The disbelievers have to know this so that the dormant nature in them wakens up when they see the people from their own kith and kin turning humbly to their real God over and over again, and till their nature wakes up they continue to be awe-stricken when they see the practical enthusiasm of the obedient servants of God. For these two objectives the establishment of the Prayer is the most effective means.

Here, it should be noted that the command for the establishment of the Prayer was given at Makkah at a time when a handful of the Muslims were being severely persecuted by the disbelieving Quraish, and went on being persecuted for another nine years after this. At that time there was no sign of the Islamic government yet in sight. If the offering of the Prayer was meaningless without the Islamic government, as some ignorant people think, or if the establishment of the Salat did not mean the offering of the Prayer at all but the establishment of Nizami- Rububiyat (order of providence), as the deniers of Hadith claim, the Quranic injunction at that stage would have been meaningless. The question is: How did the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Muslims carry out this command for nine years after it had been enjoined?

مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ فَرَّقُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ وَكَانُوْا شِيَعًا ؕ كُلُّ حِزْبٍۢ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُوْنَ 32

(30:32) those who have split up their religion and have become divided into sects, each party exulting in what they have.[51]

51. This is an allusion to the fact that the real way of life for mankind is the same way of nature as elucidated above. This way of life has not evolved from a polytheistic creed to Tauhid as thought by those who invent a philosophy of religion on the basis of speculation. But, contrary to this, all the religions found in the world today have appeared because of the corruption of the original way of life. This corruption occurred because different people added their different self made creeds to the natural realities and created separate sects and everyone became a devotee of the additional thing, which was the basis of the separate sect, and gave up the original way of life. Now the only way of attaining true guidance is that one should return to the original reality which was the basis of the true faith, and rid oneself of all the later additions and excrescences and their devotees. If he still keeps any kind of contact with them, he will only be harming the true faith.

وَإِذَا مَسَّ النَّاسَ ضُرٌّ دَعَوْا رَبَّهُمْ مُّنِيبِينَ إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا أَذَاقَهُمْ مِّنْهُ رَحْمَةً إِذَا فَرِيقٌ
مِّنْهُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُونَ ۙ 33

(30:33) (Such are human beings) that when any misfortune befalls them, they cry to their Lord, penitently turning to Him.[52] But no sooner that He lets them have a taste of His Mercy than some of them begin associating others with their Lord in His Divinity[53]

52. This is a clear proof of the fact that in the depths of their heart there still exists an evidence of Tauhid. Whenever the hopes start crumbling, their hearts cry out from within that the real Ruler of the universe is its Master and His help alone can improve their lot.

53. That is, they again start presenting offerings before other deities, and claiming that their misfortune has been removed through the help and grace of such and such a saint and shrine.

لِيَكْفُرُوا بِمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ ۚ فَتَمَتَّعُوا ۖ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ 34

(30:34) so that they may show ingratitude to Us for the favours We had bestowed upon them. So, enjoy yourselves a while; but then you shall soon come to know.

أَمْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانًا فَهُوَ يَتَكَلَّمُ بِمَا كَانُوا بِهِ يُشْرِكُونَ 35

(30:35) Have We sent down any sanction which provides support to their associating others with Allah in His Divinity?[54]

54. That is, what authority have do they have to say that the calamities are not averted by God but by the so called saint? Does common sense approve of it? Or, is there any divine Book which says that Allah has delegated His powers to such and such saints, and that they should now be invoked by the people to help them out of difficulties?

وَإِذَا أَذَقْنَا النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً فَرِحُوا بِهَا ۖ وَإِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ إِذَا هُمْ
يَقْنَطُونَ 36

(30:36) When We make people have a taste of Our Mercy, they exult in it; and when any misfortune befalls them in consequence of their deeds, then lo and behold, they despair.[55]

55. In the preceding verse the man has been censured for his ignorance, folly and ingratitude. In this verse, he has been censured for puerility and meanness. When a person attains a little

wealth and power and respect, and he sees that his business has started flourishing, he forgets that he has been given all this by Allah. He exults at his success and is so puffed up and conceited that he has neither any regard left for Allah nor for the people. But as soon as good luck deserts him, he loses heart and a single stroke of ill-luck so disheartens and frustrates him that he is prepared to do any mean thing, even commit suicide.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ 37

(30:37) Do they not see that Allah enlarges and straitens the sustenance of those whom He pleases? There are Signs in this for those who believe.[56]

56. That is, the believers can learn how disbelief and shirk affect man's morality and what is the impact of belief in Allah on his morals. The person who sincerely believes in Allah and looks upon Him as the Master of the treasure houses of provisions, can never be involved in meanness, in which those forgetful ones of God are involved. If he is given abundantly he will not be puffed up; he will rather be grateful to Allah, will treat his fellowmen generously and benevolently, and will spend his God given wealth for His sake. On the other hand, he will exercise patience; he will never gamble away his honesty and self respect, but will have hope of Allah's bounty till the last. Such a moral excellence can neither fall to the lot of an atheist nor of a polytheist."

فَآتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ 38

(30:38) So give his due to the near of kin, and to the needy, and to the wayfarer.[57] That is better for those who desire to please Allah. It is they who will prosper.[58]

57. It has not been said: "Give charity to the relative, the needy and the wayfarer, but their due because this is their right (due to them from you), which you must give them in any case. You should remember it well that if the real owner of the wealth has given you more than others, your extra wealth is, in fact, the right of others, which has been given to you for your trial so that your Lord may see whether you recognize the rights of others and render their rights to them or not.

Anyone who reflects over this divine command and its real spirit will feel that the way proposed by the Quran for man's moral and spiritual development inevitably envisages the existence of a free society and economy. This development is not possible in a social environment in which the people's rights of ownership are set aside and stifled. The system in which the state assumes ownership of all resources and the government machinery and the entire responsibility of distributing provisions among the people, so much so that neither can an individual recognize the right of the other and render it, nor a person develop

a feeling of goodwill for the other after he has received help, is a purely communist system. Such an economic and social system, which is being advocated in our country today under the deceptive name of the "Quranic Order of Providence" (Nizami Rububiyat), is entirely opposed to the Quranic scheme itself, for it suppresses the development of individual morality and formation of character altogether. The Quranic scheme can operate and function only in a society where the individuals own some resources of wealth, possess rights to expend it freely, and then render willingly and sincerely the rights of God and His servants. In such a society alone there can arise the possibility that, on the one hand, the people may develop individually the virtues of sympathy, kindliness and affection, sacrifice, recognition of the rights of others and rendering those rights in the right spirit, and on the other hand, the beneficiaries may develop in their hearts pure feelings of well-wishing, gratitude and thankfulness for the donors. This system only can produce the ideal conditions in which the elimination of evil and the promotion of goodness does not depend on the intervention of a law-enforcing authority but the people's own purity of the self and their own good intentions take up this responsibility.

58. This does not mean that true success can be attained just by rendering the rights of the needy and the wayfarer and the relative and nothing else is needed to be done for this. But it means that those who do not recognize these rights of others nor render them, will not attain true success. It will be attained by those who render the rights sincerely only for the sake of Allah's goodwill and pleasure.

وَمَآ اٰتَيْتُمْ مِّنْ رِّبًا لِّيَرْبُوَا۟ فِيْٓ اَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ فَلَا يَرْبُوْا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَمَآ اٰتَيْتُمْ مِّنْ زَكٰوةٍ تُرِيْدُوْنَ وَجْهَ اللّٰهِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُضْعِفُوْنَ 39

(30:39) Whatever you pay as interest so that it may increase the wealth of people does not increase in the sight of Allah.[59] As for the Zakah that you give, seeking with it Allah's good pleasure, that is multiplied manifold.[60]

59. This is the first verse revealed in the Quran that condemned interest. It only says this: "You pay interest thinking that it will cause an increase in the wealth of the money-lender. But actually, in the sight of Allah, interest does not increase the wealth, but the wealth is increased by the payment of the Zakat." Afterwards, when the commandment prohibiting interest was sent down at Al- Madinah, it was said: "Allah deprives interest of all blessing and develops charity." (For the later commands, see (Surah Aal-Imran: Ayat 130), and (Surah Al-Baqarah: Ayats 275 to 281). This verse has been given two interpretations by the commentators. One section of them says: Here riba does not mean the interest which is forbidden by the Shariah, but it means the gift or the present which is given with the intention that the recipient will return it redoubled, or will perform some useful service for the donor, or his becoming prosperous will be beneficial for the donor himself. "This is the view of Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, Dahhak, Qatadah, Ikrimah, Muhammad bin Kaab al-Qurzi and Shabi. Probably this comment has been made by these scholars for the reason that in this verse the only consequence mentioned of the act is that in the sight of Allah such wealth will

not increase at all; if, however, it had meant the interest forbidden by the Shariah, it would have been positively said that it will be severely punished by Allah.

The other group differs from this and says that it means the same well known riba which has been forbidden by the Shariah. This is the opinion of Hasan Basri and Suddi, and Allama Alusi also has opined that the apparent meaning of the verse is the same, for riba, in Arabic is used in the same meaning. This interpretation has been adopted by the commentator Nisaburi also.

In our opinion also this second interpretation is correct, for the argument given in favor of the first interpretation is not enough for discarding the well known meaning of the word riba. In the period when Surah Ar-Rum was sent down, interest had not been forbidden yet. The prohibition was made several years afterwards. The way of the Quran is that it first prepares the minds for the thing that it has to prohibit at a later stage. About wine the only thing said in the beginning was that it is not pure food. (Surah An-Nahl: Ayat 67). Then in (Surah Al-Baqarah: Ayat 219), it was said that the harm of its sin is greater than its benefit. Then it was enjoined that the Prayer should not be offered in the state of intoxication. (Surah An-Nisa: Ayat 43). Then, finally, it was prohibited totally. Similarly, about interest here it has been only said that it does not increase the wealth, but the real increase is caused by the Zakat. After this, the compound interest was forbidden (Surah Aal- Imran: Ayat 130); and finally, interest itself was made absolutely unlawful. (Surah Al-Baqarah: Ayat 275).

60. There is no limit to this increase. The greater the sincerity of intention, the deeper will be the sense of sacrifice. The greater the intensity of desire for Allah's pleasure with which a person spends his wealth in His way, the greater and more handsome will be the rewards that Allah will give to him. According to an authentic Hadith, even if a person gives a fig in the way of Allah, Allah will increase it to the size of Mount Uhud.

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ رَزَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ یُمِیْتُكُمْ ثُمَّ یُحْیِیْكُمْ ؕ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَآىِٕكُمْ مَّنْ
یَّفْعَلُ مِنْ ذٰلِكُمْ مِّنْ شَیْءٍ ؕ سُبْحٰنَهٗ وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا یُشْرِكُوْنَ ۧ 40

(30:40) It is Allah[61] Who created you, then bestowed upon you your sustenance,[62] and He will cause you to die and then will bring you back to life. Can any of those whom you associate with Allah in His Divinity! do any such thing?[63] Glory be to Him and exalted be He above whatever they associate with Allah in His Divinity.

61. From here again the discourse turns to the theme of Tauhid and the Hereafter for the admonition of the disbelievers and the mushriks.

62. That is, "He provided all the various means in the earth for your sustenance and made such arrangements that everyone should receive something from the circulation of the provision."

63. That is, “If those whom you have set up as deities can neither create, nor provide sustenance, nor have power over life and death, nor can raise you back to life after death, then what for have you set them up as your deities?”

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ 41

(30:41) Evil has become rife on the land and at sea because of men's deeds; this in order that He may cause them to have a taste of some of their deeds; perhaps they will turn back (from evil).64

64. This is again an allusion to the war that was going on between Byzantium and Iran, which was telling on the whole of the Middle East. “What the hands of people have earned” means the wickedness and oppression and tyranny, which inevitably appear in human conduct and character as a result of adopting shirk and atheism and ignoring the Hereafter. “Perhaps they may return” means that Allah shows the evil consequences of some of the acts of men in this world before the punishment of the Hereafter so that they understand the reality, feel the error of their conjectures and turn to the righteous belief, which the Prophets of Allah have been presenting before man since the earliest times, and besides adopting which there is no other way of ordering human conduct on sound foundations. This subject has been presented at several places in the Quran, e.g. in (Surah At-Taubah: Ayat 126), (Surah Ar-Raad: Ayat 31), (Surah As-Sajdah: Ayat 21), (Surah At-Tur: Ayat 47).

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُشْرِكِينَ 42

(30:42) (O Prophet), say: “Traverse in the earth and see what was the end of those who went before you: most of them associated others with Allah in His Divinity.”65

65. That is, “The disastrous war between Byzantium and Iran is not a new thing of its kind. The past history of mankind is full of the accounts of the destruction of great nations. The root cause of the evils that caused the destruction of those nations was shirk which you are today being admonished to avoid.”

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ الْقَيِّمِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصَّدَّعُونَ 43

(30:43) So turn your face exclusively towards the True Faith before there comes the Day whose coming from Allah cannot be averted,[66] the Day when people will split into groups.

66. That is, "The Day which neither Allah Himself will avert nor has He given power to anyone else to avert it."

مَنْ كَفَرَ فَعَلَيْهِ كُفْرُهٗ ۚ وَمَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِاَنْفُسِهِمْ يَمْهَدُوْنَ ۙ 44

(30:44) He who disbelieves will suffer the consequence of it[67] and he who acts righteously, they will pave the way for their own good

67. This is a comprehensive sentence which encompasses all those harms which can afflict a disbeliever on account of his disbelief. No list of the harms could be so comprehensive as this.

لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۭ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ 45

(30:45) so that Allah may, out of His Bounty, reward those who believe and act righteously. Verily He does not love the unbelievers.

وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖٓ اَنْ يُّرْسِلَ الرِّيَاحَ مُبَشِّرٰتٍ وَّلِيُذِيْقَكُمْ مِّنْ رَّحْمَتِهٖ وَلِتَجْرِيَ الْفُلْكُ بِاَمْرِهٖ

وَلِتَبْتَغُوْا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ 46

(30:46) And of His Signs is that He sends winds to herald good tidings[68] and that He may give you a taste of His Mercy, and that ships may sail at His bidding,[69] and you may seek His Bounty[70] and give thanks to Him.

68. That is, to give good news of the rain.

69. This refers to winds, which are helpful in sailing. In ancient times, sailing boats and ships mostly depended on favorable winds and adverse winds were disastrous for them. Therefore, the mention of these winds after the rain bringing winds has been made as a special favor of Allah.

70. "Seek of His bounty": To perform trade journeys.

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ رُسُلًا اِلٰى قَوْمِهِمْ فَجَاۗءُوْهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ

اَجْرَمُوْا ۭ وَكَانَ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نَصْرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ 47

(30:47) We sent Messengers before you to their respective nations, and they brought Clear Signs[71] to them. Then We took vengeance upon those who acted wickedly.[72] It was incumbent on Us to come to the aid of the believers.

71. That is, "One kind of the signs are those which are scattered in the world around man, which he comes across at every moment of his life, one of which is the system of the circulation of winds, as mentioned in the preceding verse. The other kinds of the signs are those which the Prophets of Allah brought in the form of the miracles and divine revelations and the extraordinary pure characters and their healthy and life-giving influence on human society. Both kinds of the signs point to the same reality, which is this: The Tauhid which the prophets teach is based on the truth. Each of these signs supports the other. The signs of the universe testify to the truth of what the Prophets say, and the signs brought by the Prophets explain the reality being pointed out by the signs of the universe."

72. "Who committed crimes": those who remained blind to these two kinds of the signs and persisted in their denial of Tauhid and their rebellion against God.

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ یُرْسِلُ الرِّیٰحَ فَتُثِیْرُ سَحَابًا فَیَبْسُطُهٗ فِی السَّمَآءِ كَیْفَ یَشَآءُ وَیَجْعَلُهٗ كِسَفًا
ج
فَتَرَى الْوَدْقَ یَخْرُجُ مِنْ خِلٰلِهٖ فَاِذَاۤ اَصَابَ بِهٖ مَنْ یَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖۤ اِذَا هُمْ
ج
یَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ 48

(30:48) Allah sends the winds that stir up clouds and then He spreads them in the sky as He pleases and splits them into different fragments, whereafter you see drops of rain pouring down from them. He then causes the rain to fall on whomsoever of His servants He pleases, and lo, they rejoice at it,

وَاِنْ كَانُوْا مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ یُّنَزَّلَ عَلَیْهِمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِهٖ لَمُبْلِسِیْنَ 49

(30:49) although before that they were given to despair.

فَانْظُرْ اِلٰۤى اٰثٰرِ رَحْمَتِ اللّٰهِ كَیْفَ یُحْیِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ؕ
ط
اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ لَمُحْیِ الْمَوْتٰى ۚ
ج
وَهُوَ عَلٰى
كُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِیْرٌ 50

(30:50) See, then, the tokens of Allah's Mercy: how He revives the earth after it is dead.[73] Verily He is the One Who will revive the dead. He has power over everything.

73. There is a subtle allusion in the mention of the Prophethood and the rain, one after the other, to the reality that the advent of a Prophet is a blessing for man's moral life even as the coming of the rain proves to be a blessing for his material life. Just as the dead earth

awakens to life by a shower of the rain from the sky and starts blooming and swelling with vegetation, so is the morally and spiritually desolate human world quickened to life at the coming down of divine revelation and starts blossoming with moral excellences and virtues. This is the disbelievers' own misfortune that they show ingratitude, and regard the blessing of Prophethood as a portent of death for themselves instead of a good news of life.

وَلَئِنْ أَرْسَلْنَا رِيحًا فَرَأَوْهُ مُصْفَرًّا لَّظَلُّوا مِنۢ بَعْدِهِۦ يَكْفُرُونَ 51

(30:51) But if We were to send a wind and then their tilth has become yellow,[74] they would never cease to disbelieve.[75]

74. That is, a frosty wind or a heat wave which ruins their crops after they started flourishing by the shower of rain.

75. That is, they start cursing God and blaming Him for all their misfortunes and troubles, whereas when God had showered His blessings on them, they had shown ingratitude instead of being grateful to Him. Here again there is a subtle allusion to the theme that when the Messengers of Allah bring the messages of mercy to the people, they do not listen to them and reject the blessing; then when God imposes tyrants and despots upon them in consequence of their disbelief, who persecute them severely, and destroy their humanity, the same people start abusing and blaming God for creating a world full of tyranny and cruelty.

فَإِنَّكَ لَا تُسْمِعُ الْمَوْتَىٰ وَلَا تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ الدُّعَاءَ إِذَا وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِينَ 52

(30:52) (O Prophet), you cannot make the dead hear,[76] nor can you make the deaf hear your call when they turn back in retreat,[77]

76. That is, those whose consciences have become dead, whose moral selves have become devoid of life, whose selfworship and stubbornness and obstinacy have destroyed their capacity to understand and accept the truth.

77. "The deaf": those who have put locks on their minds and hearts so that they do not understand anything although they hear everything; then, when such people also try that the message of the truth should not at all enter their ears, and they should avoid and keep away from the inviter, nobody can make them hear and understand anything.

وَمَا أَنتَ بِهَادِ الْعُمْيِ عَن ضَلَالَتِهِمْ ۖ إِن تُسْمِعُ إِلَّا مَن يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُم مُّسْلِمُونَ ع 53

(30:53) nor can you guide the blind out of their error.[78] You can make none hear (your call) except those who believe in Our Signs and have surrendered themselves (to Him).

78. That is, “It is not for the Prophet that he should help and guide the blind by the hand to the right way all through the life. He can only show guidance to the right path. But guiding those whose hearts have been blinded and who do not at all see the way that the Prophet tries to show them, is not within the power of the Prophets.”

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ ضُعْفٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ضُعْفٍ قُوَّةً ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ
ضُعْفًا وَّشَیْبَةً ؕ یَخْلُقُ مَا یَشَآءُ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِیْمُ الْقَدِیْرُ 54

(30:54) It is Allah Who created you in a state of weakness; then after weakness He gave you strength, then after strength He made you weak and old. He creates what He pleases.[79] He is All-Knowing, All-Powerful.

79. That is, “The states of childhood and youth and old age have all been created by Him. It is dependent upon His will that He may create whomsoever He pleases weak and whomever He pleases strong. He may give death to whomsoever He pleases before attaining manhood and whomsoever He pleases in the prime of youth. He may grant a long life and yet keep in sound health whomsoever He pleases and bring to a wretched, agonizing old age after a brimful youth whomever He likes. Man may live in selfconceit and arrogance if he so likes, but he is so helpless in God’s powerful grip that he cannot change by any artifice the state that He may place him in.”

وَیَوْمَ تَقُوْمُ السَّاعَةُ یُقْسِمُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ۙ مَا لَبِثُوْا غَیْرَ سَاعَةٍ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ كَانُوْا
یُؤْفَكُوْنَ 55

(30:55) On that Day when the Hour will come to pass[80] the wicked shall swear that they had stayed (in the world) no more than an hour.[81] Thus they used to be deceived in the life of the world.[82]

80. That is, Resurrection, which is being foretold here.

81. That is, from the time of death till Resurrection. Even if thousands of years might have elapsed since their death they will feel that they had gone to sleep a few hours earlier and then a sudden calamity had roused them from sleep.

82. That is, “They used to make similar wrong estimates in the world. There also they lacked the realization of reality, and therefore, used to assert that there was going to be no Resurrection, no life-after-death, and no accountability before God.”

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَالْاِيْمَانَ لَقَدْ لَبِثْتُمْ فِيْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْبَعْثِ ۚ فَهٰذَا يَوْمُ
الْبَعْثِ وَلٰكِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ 56

(30:56) But those who had been endowed with knowledge and faith shall say: "According to Allah's Record you have stayed till the Day of Resurrection. Now, this is the Day of Resurrection. But you did not know."

فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَّا يَنْفَعُ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مَعْذِرَتُهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُوْنَ 57

(30:57) So that will be the Day when the excuses of the wrong-doers will not avail them, nor will they be asked to make amends.[83]

83. Another translation can be: "nor it will be required of them to please their Lord", because they will have lost all opportunity for recourse to repentance and faith and righteous acts, and wasted the time allotted for the test and reached the eve of the announcement of the result.

وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِيْ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ ؕ وَلَئِنْ جِئْتَهُمْ بِاٰيَةٍ لَّيَقُوْلَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْٓا اِنْ اَنْتُمْ اِلَّا مُبْطِلُوْنَ 58

(30:58) In the Qur'an We have explained things to people in myriad ways. But no matter what Sign you bring to them, those who are resolved upon denying the Truth will say: "You are given to falsehood."

كَذٰلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ 59

(30:59) Thus does Allah seal the hearts of those who have no knowledge.

فَاصْبِرْ اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ وَّلَا يَسْتَخِفَّنَّكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُوْقِنُوْنَ ع 60

(30:60) Therefore, (O Prophet), have patience. Surely Allah's promise is true.[84] Let those who lack certainty not cause you to be unsteady.[85]

84. The allusion is to the promise made in (verse 47) above. There, Allah has mentioned His way of taking vengeance on those criminals who denied and resisted and ridiculed stubbornly the clear signs brought by the Messengers of Allah, and of helping the believers.

85. That is, "Let not the enemies find you so weak as to suppress you by their uproar, nor to subdue you by their campaign of slander-mongering, nor to dishearten you by their jesting,

taunts and derision, nor frighten you by their threats, show of power and persecution, nor allure you by offering baits, nor make you effect a compromise with them on the basis of their appeals in the name of national interests. Instead of this, they should find you so sagacious in the awareness of your objective, so firm in faith and conviction, so resolute in determination, and so strong in character that they should neither be able to subdue you by threats, nor purchase you, nor lure you away by temptation, nor strike any bargain with you in the matter of the faith. This whole theme has been compressed in a short sentence by Allah, saying: "Let not those who lack faith find you light." Now this is borne out by the firm evidence of history that the Prophet (peace be upon him) proved to be as invincible and indomitable as Allah wanted His last Prophet to be. Anyone who tried his strength with him in any field and sphere was routed, and eventually the Prophet (peace be upon him) succeeded in bringing about the desired revolution in spite of every kind of opposition and resistance put up by the whole of polytheistic and unbelieving Arabia."

31. Surah Luqman

Name

The Surah has been named Luqman after Luqman the Sage, whose admonitions to his son have been related in vv. 12-19 of this Surah.

Period of Revelation

A perusal of the subject matter shows that it was sent down in the period when persecution to suppress and thwart the invitation to Islam had begun and every sort of machination had started being employed for the purpose. This is borne out by vv. 14-15, in which the young converts to Islam have been told that although the rights of the parents are the uppermost after God, they should not listen to them if they prevented them from accepting Islam, or compelled them to revert to the creed of shirk and polytheism. The same thing has been said in Surah Al-Ankabut, which indicates that both these Surahs were sent down in the same period. A study of the style and subject matter of the two Surahs on the whole, however, shows that Surah Luqman was sent down earlier, for one does not see any sign of the antagonism in its background though, contrary to this, while studying Surah Al-Ankabut one can clearly feel that the Muslims were being severely persecuted during the period of its revelation.

Theme and Subject matter

In this Surah the people have been made to understand the meaninglessness and absurdity of shirk and the truth and reasonableness of Tauhid, and they have been invited to give up blind imitation of their forefathers, consider with a cool mind the teachings which the Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) is presenting from the Lord of the worlds, and see with open eyes the manifest Signs found in the universe around them and in their own selves, which bear evidence to its truth.

In this connection, it has also been pointed out that this is not a new teaching which might have been, presented in the world, or in the land of Arabia, for the first time, and with which the people might be unfamiliar. The learned and wise people of the past ages said and taught the same thing which Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) is teaching today. It is as if to say, "O people! In your own country there has lived a wise man, named Luqman, whose wisdom has been well known among you, whose proverbs and wise sayings are cited in your daily conversation and who is often quoted by your poets and orators. Now you should see for yourselves what creed and what morals he used to teach."

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

الٓمّٓ ۚ 1

(31:1) Alif. Lam. Mim.

تِلۡكَ اٰيٰتُ الۡكِتٰبِ الۡحَكِيۡمِ ۙ 2

(31:2) These are the verses of the Wise Book,[1]

1. That is, verses of the Book which is full of wisdom and whose every teaching is based on wisdom.

هُدًى وَّرَحۡمَةً لِّلۡمُحۡسِنِيۡنَ ۙ 3

(31:3) a guidance and mercy for the doers of good,[2]

2. That is, these verses give guidance to the right way and have been sent down as a mercy from God. But the people who can profit by this mercy and guidance are only those who adopt a righteous attitude, who wish to become good, who crave for their own well being, whose quality is that they avoid the evil when they are warned of it, and follow the good when they are shown the ways to it. As for the wicked and mischievous people, they will neither profit by this guidance nor receive any share from this mercy.

الَّذِيۡنَ يُقِيۡمُوۡنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُؤۡتُوۡنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَهُمۡ بِالۡاٰخِرَةِ هُمۡ يُوۡقِنُوۡنَ ؕ 4

(31:4) who establish Prayer and pay Zakah, and have firm faith in the Hereafter.[3]

3. It does not mean that the righteous people bear only these three qualities. By using the common epithet of righteous for them, it has been pointed out that they refrain from all those evils which this Book forbids and practice all those good things which this Book enjoins. Then, the three qualities of the righteous person have been especially mentioned in order to show that all other good acts depend on these three things. They establish the Salat which engenders God worship and piety as a permanent habit with them. They pay the Zakat which strengthens the spirit of sacrifice in them, subdues the love of the world and arouses a desire for the goodwill of Allah. And they believe in the Hereafter, which instills the sense of responsibility and answerability. This does not allow them to live like an animal which is free to graze at will in the pasture, but allows a man who is fully conscious of the fact that he is not independent but the slave of a Master before Whom he is answerable for all his activities of life. Owing to these three qualities, these righteous people are not the kind of the righteous persons who happen to do good just by chance, who may commit evil as often and as freely as they would do good. Contrary to this, these qualities inculcate in them an enduring system of thought and morality owing to which goodness issues forth from them in a regulated and systematic manner, and the evil, if at all committed, is committed just by chance. They do not have any deeprooted motives, which might be arising from their own system of thought and morality and leading them on to the evil way under their own nature impulse.

اُولٰٓئِكَ عَلٰى هُدًى مِّنۡ رَّبِّهِمۡ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الۡمُفۡلِحُوۡنَ 5

(31:5) It is they who are on true guidance from their Lord, and it is they who shall prosper.[4]

4. At the time when these verses were sent down, the disbelieves of Makkah thought, and said so openly, that Muhammad (peace be upon him) and those who accepted his message were wasting and ruining their lives. Therefore, it was stated with full force and emphasis: "Those are the ones who will be successful." That is, they will not ruin themselves as you seem to think in your ignorance, but they in fact are the ones who alone will attain true success, and the utter failures will be those who have refused to adopt this way. Here the one who regards true success as confined to the world, in the sense of material prosperity, will be fully missing the Quranic concept of it. To understand the real concept of the true success one should study the following verses of the Quran along with the relevant E.Ns: (Surah Al- Baqarah: Ayats 2-5), (Surah Aal-Imran: Ayats 102, 130, 200), (Surah Al-Maidah: Ayats 35, 90), (Surah Al-Anaam: Ayat 21), (Surah Al-Aaraf; Ayats 7, 8,157), (Surah At-Taubah: Ayat 88), (Surah Yunus: Ayat 17), (Surah An-Nahl: Ayat 116), (Surah Al-Hajj: Ayat 77), (Surah Al-Muminun: Ayat 117), (Surah An-Nur: Ayat 51), (Surah Ar-Rum: Ayat 38).

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَّشْتَرِيْ لَهْوَ الْحَدِيْثِ لِيُضِلَّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۖ وَّيَتَّخِذَهَا هُزُوًا ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ 6

(31:6) There are some human beings[5] who purchase an enchanting diversion[6] in order to lead people away from the way of Allah without having any knowledge,[7] who hold the call to the Way of Allah to ridicule.[8] A humiliating chastisement awaits them.[9]

5. That is, on the one hand, there is this mercy and guidance sent down by Allah, of which some people are taking full advantage, and on the other hand, there are also some unfortunate people living side by side with the fortunate ones, who are adopting this sort of attitude as against the revelations of Allah.

6. The words lahv al-hadith in the text imply such a thing as may allure and absorb a listener completely and make him heedless of everything else around him. Lexically, there is nothing derogatory in these words, but in custom and usage they apply to evil and useless and vain things, such as gossip, nonsensical talk, joking and jesting, legends and tales, singing and merry making, etc.

"Purchases" alluring tales may also mean that the person concerned adopts falsehood instead of the truth, turns away from the guidance and turns to those things which can neither benefit him in the world nor in the Hereafter. But this is the metaphorical meaning. The real meaning of the sentence is that a person should purchase an absurd and useless thing for his money, and this is supported by many traditions. Ibn Hisham has related on the authority of Ibn Ishaq that when the disbelievers of Makkah could not stop the message of the Prophet (peace be upon him) from spreading in spite of their best efforts, Nadr bin Harith said to the people of Quraish: "The way you are counteracting this man will avail you nothing. He has lived a lifetime among you. Until now he was the best of your men morally: he was the most truthful and the most trustworthy person among you. Now you

say that he is a sorcerer and enchanter and a poet and a madman. Who will believe all this? Don't the people know the way the sorcerers talk? Don't they know the enchanters and the way they conduct their business? Are they unaware of poetry and of the states of madness? Which of these accusations sticks to Muhammad (peace be upon him) by exploiting which you would turn the people's attention away from him? Look! I will tell you how to deal with him." Then he left Makkah for Iraq and managed to get from there legends and tales about the kings of Iran and Rustam and Isfandyar and started to arrange tale telling parties to distract the people from the Quran and to absorb them in the tales. The same tradition has been cited by Vahidi in Asbab un Nazul on the authority of Kalbi and Muqatil. And according to Ibn Abbas, Nadr had bough singing girls also for the purpose. Whenever he heard that someone was coming under the Prophet's (peace be upon him) influence, he would impose a singing girl on him with the instruction: "Feed him and entertain him with your songs so that he is absorbed in you and distracted from the other side." This was the same device which the arch criminals of the nations have been employing in every age. They try to get the common people so absorbed in fun and sport and musical entertainments in the name of culture that they are left with no time and sense to attend to the serious problems of life, and in their heedlessness they do not even feel what destruction they are being driven to.

The same commentary of lahv al-hadith has been reported from a large number of the companions and their immediate followers. Abdullah bin Masud was asked, "What does lahv al-hadith mean in this verse?" He said thrice emphatically: "By God! it means singing." (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Shaibah. Hakim, Baihaqi). Similar traditions have been reported from scholars like Abdullah bin Abbas, Jabir bin Abdullah, Mujahid, Ikrimah, Said bin Jubair, Hasan Basri, and Makhul. Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim and Tirmidhi have related on the authority of Abu Umamah Baheli that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "It is not lawful to buy and sell and trade in singing girls nor is it lawful to take their price." In another tradition, the last sentence is to the effect: "It is unlawful to eat their price". Yet another tradition from Abu Umamah is to the effect: To teach music to slave girls and to trade in them is not lawful and their price is forbidden. All these Ahadith also elucidate that the verse containing lahv al-hadith was sent down in this very connection. Qadi Abu Bakr Ibn alArabi has related in the Ahkam alQuran a Hadith from Abdullah bin Mubarak and Imam Malik on the authority of Anas, saying, that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "He who hears the song of a singing girl in a musical concert, will have molten lead poured into his ear on the Day of Judgment" (In this connection, one should also note that the culture of music in those days flourished almost entirely through the slave girls: Free women had not yet become "artists". That is why the Prophet (peace be upon him) spoke about trading in slave girls, and described their wages and earnings as their price, and used the word qaynah for the singing girl, which is specifically used for a slave girl in Arabic).

7. "Without knowledge" may be connected with "buys" and also "lead astray". In the first case, it would mean: The ignorant foolish person buys this alluring thing and does not know that he is buying a ruinous thing at the cost of a highly valuable thing. On the one hand, there are the divine verses which are full of wisdom and guidance, which he can obtain without any cost, but he turns away from them. On the other hand, there are these absurd things, which are disastrous for his morals and he is expending his wealth to obtain them. In the second case, it would mean: He has come out to guide the people without any

knowledge: he does not know what burden of sin he is taking on himself by trying to lead the people astray from Allah's Way.

8. That is, this person wants to make fun of the divine revelations by alluring and absorbing the people in legends and tales and music. He intends that the invitation of the Quran should be derided and ridiculed and laughed away. He plans to fight the religion of God with the strategy that as soon as Muhammad (peace be upon him) should come out to recite revelations of God to the people, there should be a charming, sweet-voiced damsel giving her performance in a musical concert. On the one hand, a glibtongued story teller telling tales and legends of Iran, on the other hand, the people should become so absorbed in these cultural activities that they may not be in a mood to hear anything about God and the morals and the Hereafter.

9. This punishment will be in accordance with their crime. They want to debase and disgrace God's religion, His revelations and His Messenger; God will take His vengeance on them by giving them a disgraceful torment.

وَإِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِ اٰيٰتُنَا وَلّٰى مُسْتَكْبِرًا كَاَنْ لَّمْ يَسْمَعْهَا كَاَنَّ فِيْٓ اُذُنَيْهِ وَقْرًا ۚ فَبَشِّرْهُ بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ 7

(31:7) When Our verses are recited to such a person, he arrogantly turns away, as though he had not heard them, or as though there was a deafness in his ears. So announce to him the tidings of a grievous chastisement.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتُ النَّعِيْمِ ۙ 8

(31:8) Surely those who believe and do good deeds shall have Gardens of Bliss. [10]

10. Instead of saying "There are blessings of Paradise (Gardens) for them," it has been said, there "are blissful Gardens for them." In the first case, it would have meant this: "They will enjoy the blessings but the Gardens will not belong to them." In the second case, "it automatically becomes evident that the whole Gardens will be handed over to them, and they will take advantage of their blessings as an owner does of his own possession, and not like the one who is allowed to use something without giving him ownership rights over it."

خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۭ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقًّا ۭ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ 9

(31:9) They shall abide in them forever. This is Allah's promise that shall come true. He is the Most Powerful, the Most Wise.[11]

11. That is, "Nothing can withhold Him from fulfilling His promise, and whatever He does is strictly according to the demands of wisdom and justice. The object of mentioning these two attributes of Allah after saying: "This is a true promise of Allah", is to stress that Allah

neither violates His promise willfully nor is there in this universe any such power as can prevent Him from fulfilling His promise. Therefore, there can be no chance that one may not receive what Allah has promised to give as a reward for faith and righteous deeds. Moreover, Allah's open promise to bestow this reward is entirely based on His wisdom and His justice. He does not misjudge: it cannot be that He may deprive a deserving person of his reward, and reward a nondeserving one instead. The people characterized by true faith and righteous deeds indeed deserve this reward and Allah will bestow this on them only."

خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا وَاَلْقٰى فِى الْاَرْضِ رَوَاسِىَ اَنْ تَمِيْدَ بِكُمْ وَبَثَّ فِيْهَا
مِنْ كُلِّ دَآبَّةٍ ؕ وَاَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَنْۢبَتْنَا فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيْمٍ 10

(31:10) He[12] created the heavens without any pillars visible to you[13] and He placed mountains in the earth as pegs lest it should turn topsy turvy with you,[14] and He dispersed all kinds of animals over the earth, and sent down water from the sky causing all kinds of excellent plants to grow on it.

12. After the above introductory sentence, the discourse now turns to the real theme, i.e. the refutation of shirk and the invitation to Tauhid.

13. The actual words bi-ghair i amad-in tarauna-ha in the text may have two meanings:

(1) "You can see for yourself that they stand without pillar"; and

(2) "They stand on the pillars which you cannot see"

Ibn Abbas and Mujahid have favored the second meaning, and many other commentators take the first meaning. If the meaning is expressed in terms of the natural sciences of the present day, it can be said that the countless stars and planets in the heaven have been established in their positions and orbits without any visible support and prop: there are no strings and wires which might have tied them together; there are no iron bars which might be withholding them from falling on one another. It is the law of gravitation which is supporting the system. This interpretation is according to the present-day knowledge. It may be that tomorrow some new addition to our knowledge enables us to interpret the reality better.

14. For explanation, see (E. N. 12 of Surah An-Nahl).

هٰذَا خَلْقُ اللّٰهِ فَاَرُوْنِىْ مَاذَا خَلَقَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ ؕ بَلِ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ فِىْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ع 11

(31:11) Such is Allah's creation. Show me, then, what any others, apart from Allah, have created.[15] Nay, the fact is that the wrong-doers are in manifest error.[16]

15. “Those other than” “the beings whom you have set up as your deities, whom you regard as makers and un-makers of your destinies, whom you have been worshiping as such persistently.”

16. That is, “When they do not point out in this universe any creation of anyone else than Allah, and obviously they cannot, their setting up the non creators as associates in Godhead and bowing before them in worship and invoking them for help, is nothing but mere stupidity, because their foolish conduct cannot be explained in any other way. Unless a person has taken leave of his senses, he cannot commit the folly that he should himself admit before you that his deities are non-creators and that Allah alone is the Creator, and yet insist on their being the deities. If somebody has a little of the common sense, he will inevitably think how the one who has no power to create anything, and who has no share whatever in the creation of anything in the earth and heavens, can be our deity. Why should man bow before it and adore it as a deity? Does it possess any power that it could fulfill one’s needs and requirements? Even if it hears one’s prayers, what could it do to answer them when it did not have any power to create anything? For, evidently, afflictions can be removed only by him who can create something and not by him who can create nothing.”

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا لُقْمٰنَ الْحِكْمَةَ اَنِ اشْكُرْ لِلّٰهِ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّشْكُرْ فَاِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيْدٌ 12

(31:12) We[17] bestowed wisdom upon Luqman, (enjoining): “Give thanks to Allah.”[18] Whoso gives thanks to Allah, does so to his own good. And whoso disbelieves (let him know that) Allah is All-Sufficient, Immensely Praiseworthy.[19]

17. After presenting a rational argument to refute shirk, the Arabs are being told that this rational point of view is not being presented before them for the first time, but the wise and learned people before them also have been saying the same thing, including their own famous sage, Luqman. Therefore, they cannot refute the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) message, saying, “If shirk was an irrational creed, why didn’t it strike so to somebody else before?”

Luqman was well known as a wise and learned man in Arabia. He has been mentioned in the poetry of the pre- Islamic poets like Imraul-Qais, Labid, Aasha, Tarafa and others. Some educated Arabs also possessed a collection of the wise sayings of Luqman. According to traditions, three years before the Hijrah the very first person of Al-Madinah to be influenced by the Prophet (peace be upon him) was Suwaid bin Samit. He went to Makkah for Hajj. There the Prophet (peace be upon him) was as usual preaching Islam to the pilgrims coming from different places, at their residences. When Suwaid heard his speech, he submitted, “I have also gotten a thing similar to what you preach,” When the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked what it was, he said, “The roll of Luqman.” Then on the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) insisting, he read out a portion of it, whereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “This discourse is fine, but that which I have is better still.” Then he recited the Quran to him, and Suwaid admitted that that was certainly better than the wisdom of Luqman. According to the historians, this person, Suwaid bin Samit, was known by the title of kamil (perfect) in Al-

Madinah on account of his ability, bravery, nobility and poetry. But after his meeting with the Prophet (peace be upon him), when he returned to Al-Madinah. He was killed in the battle of Buath, which was fought some time afterwards. His tribesmen were of the opinion that he had become a Muslim after his meeting with the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Historically, Luqman is a disputed personage. In the dark centuries of ignorance there was no compiled history. The only source of information were the traditions that were being handed down since centuries. According to these, some people thought that Luqman belonged to the people of Aad and was a king of Yaman. Relying on these traditions, Maulana Sayyid Suleman Nadvi has expressed the opinion in the Ard al-Qaran that Luqman was a descendent of the believers who remained safe with the Prophet Hud (peace be upon him) after the destruction of the people of Aad by a divine torment, and he was one of the kings of Yaman when it was ruled by the Aad. But other traditions which have been reported from some learned companions and their immediate followers do not support this view. Ibn Abbas says Luqman was a negro slave, and the same is the opinion of Abu Hurairah, Mujahid, Ikrimah and Khalid ar-Rabi. According to Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari, he belonged to Nirbah. Said bin al- Musayyib says that he was an Egyptian negro. These three sayings closely resemble one another. The Arabs generally called the black people negroes (Habashis) in those days, and Nirbah is the country south of Egypt and north of Sudan. Therefore, calling the same person an Egyptian and a Nubian and a negro, in spite of the difference in words. is one and the same thing. Then the elucidations made by Suhayli in Raud al-Unuf nd Masudi in Muruj adh-Dhahab also throw some light on the question as to how the wisdom of this Sudanese slave spread in Arabia. They both agree that this person, though originally a Nubian, was an inhabitant of Madyan and Aylah (modern, Aqabah). That is why he spoke Arabic and his wisdom spread in Arabia. Besides, Suhayli also elucidates that Luqman the Sage and Luqman bin Aad were two different persons, and it is not correct to regard them as one and the same man.

Another thing may also be made clear here. The Arabic manuscript from the Library of Paris, which the orientalist Derenbourg has published under the title Amthal Luqman Hakim (Fables De Luqman Le Sage) is a fabricated thing which has nothing to do with the Roll of Luqman. These fables were compiled by somebody in the 13th century A.D. Its Arabic is poor, and a perusal shows that it is, in fact, a translation of some other book in a different language, which the author or translator has himself ascribed to Luqman the Sage. The orientalists make such researches with a special object in view. They bang out such forged and fake things in order to prove that the narratives of the Quran are unhistorical legends and therefore unreliable. Anyone who reads B. Helle's article on Luqman in the Encyclopedia of Islam will not fail to understand the real motive of these people.

18. That is, "The very first demand of the wisdom and knowledge, insight and sagacity, granted by Allah was that man should have adopted the attitude of gratefulness and obedience before his Lord, and not of ingratitude and thanklessness. And this gratefulness should not have merely been lip-service but expressed and translated in thought and word and deed. One should have the conviction in the depths of his heart and mind that whatever he has gotten, has been given by God. One's tongue should always be acknowledging the favors of God; and also practically, one should be trying to prove by carrying out His commands, by avoiding sins, by striving to achieve His good-will, by conveying His

blessings and favors to His servants and by fighting those who have rebelled against Him that he is really a grateful servant of his God."

19. That is, "The one who is ungrateful and unbelieving, his unbelief is harmful to his own self. Allah does not lose anything. He is Independent and does not stand in need of anyone's gratitude. The gratitude of someone does not add anything to His Godhead, nor does anyone's ingratitude and disbelief change the reality that whatever the servants have gotten, has been granted by Him. He is self- Praiseworthy whether someone praises Him or not. Every particle in the universe bears testimony to His Perfection and Beauty, His Creativity and Providence, and every creature is paying homage to His glory perpetually."

13 وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمٰنُ لِابْنِهٖ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهٗ يٰبُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيْمٌ

(31:13) And call to mind when Luqman said to his son while exhorting him: "My son, do not associate others with Allah in His Divinity.[20] Surely, associating others with Allah in His Divinity is a mighty wrong."[21]

20. This particular admonition from the wisdom of Luqman has been cited here for two reasons: (1) He gave this admonition to his son, and obviously, no one can be insincere to his own children. A person may deceive others, may behave hypocritically towards them, but no one, not even a most depraved person, will try to deceive and defraud his own children. Therefore, Luqman's admonishing his son thus is a clear proof of the fact that in his sight shirk was indeed the most heinous sin, and for that very reason he first admonished his dear son to refrain from this iniquity. (2) The second reason for this narration is that many parents from among the disbelievers of Makkah were compelling their children to turn away from the message of Tauhid being preached by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and remain steadfast on the creed of shirk, as is being stated in the following verses. Therefore, those foolish people are being told, as if to say, The well-known sage of your own land had wished his children well by admonishing them to avoid shirk, now you should judge it for yourself whether you are wishing your children well or ill when you compel them to follow the same creed of shirk."

21. Zulm means to deprive someone of his right and to act unjustly. Shirk is a grave iniquity because man sets up such beings as equals with his Creator and Provider and Benefactor as have no share whatever in creating him, nor in providing for him, nor in bestowing the blessings on him, which he is enjoying in the world. There could be no greater injustice than this. The Creator's right on man is that he should worship Him alone, but he worships others and so deprives Him of His right. Then, in whatever he does in connection with the worship of others than Allah, he exploits many things, from his own mind and body to the earth and heavens, whereas, all these things have been created by Allah, the One. And man has no right to use any of them in the worship of any other than Allah. Then, the right of man's own self on him is that he should not debase and involve it in punishment. But when he worships others than his Creator, he debases his self as well as makes it deserving of the punishment. Thus, the entire life of a mushrik becomes zulm in every aspect and at all times and his every breath becomes an expression of injustice and iniquity.

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْاِنْسٰنَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ ۚ حَمَلَتْهُ اُمُّهٗ وَهْنًا عَلٰى وَهْنٍ وَّفِصٰلُهٗ فِيْ عَامَيْنِ اَنِ اشْكُرْ لِيْ
وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ ؕ اِلَيَّ الْمَصِيْرُ 14

(31:14) We[22] enjoined upon man to be dutiful to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning lasted two years.[23] (We, therefore, enjoined upon him): "Give thanks to Me and to your parents. To Me is your ultimate return.

22. The whole passage from We to the end of the paragraph is a parenthesis, which Allah has inserted as a further explanation of the saying of Luqman.

23. From these words, Imam Shafei, Imam Ahmad, Imam Abu Yusuf and Imam Muhammad have drawn the conclusion that the suckling period of the child is two years. If a child has been suckled by the a woman within this period, they will be forbidden for each other for marriage, but if outside and beyond this period, they will not be so. A saying of Imam Malik also supports this. But Imam Abu Hanifah has proposed the period of two and a half years as a precaution, and has added that the child has been weaned after two years, or even earlier, and it is no longer dependent upon suckling for its food, no woman would be forbidden for him, if she gave him suck after that period. However, if the real food of the child is still milk, suckling during the period will render him and her forbidden for each other in spite of his eating the other food in a more or less quantity. For, the verse does not mean that the child should be suckled necessarily for two years. In Surah Al- Baqarah it has been said: "The mothers shall suckle their children for two whole years, if the fathers desire the suckling to be completed." (Ayat 233). Ibn Abbas from these words has concluded, and other scholars have agreed with him in this, that the shortest period of pregnancy is six months, for the Quran at another place says: "His bearing (in the womb) and his weaning took thirty months." (Surah Al-Ahqaf: Ayat 15).

وَاِنْ جَاهَدٰكَ عَلٰٓى اَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِيْ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ ۙ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبْهُمَا فِي
الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوْفًا ۖ وَّاتَّبِعْ سَبِيْلَ مَنْ اَنَابَ اِلَيَّ ۚ ثُمَّ اِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَاُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ
تَعْمَلُوْنَ 15

(31:15) But if they press you to associate others with Me in My Divinity, (to associate) those regarding whom you have no knowledge[24] (that they are My associates), do not obey them. And yet treat them well in this world, and follow the way of him who turns to Me in devotion. Eventually it is to Me that all of you shall return,[25] and I shall then tell you all that you did."[26]

24. That is, "About whom you have no knowledge that he is My associate."

25. "All of you": the children as well as the parents.

26. For explanation, see (E.Ns 11 and 12 of Surah Al- Ankabut).

يٰبُنَيَّ اِنَّهَآ اِنْ تَكُ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ فَتَكُنْ فِيْ صَخْرَةٍ اَوْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ اَوْ فِي الْاَرْضِ
يَاْتِ بِهَا اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَطِيْفٌ خَبِيْرٌ 16

(31:16) (Luqman said):[27] "Son, Allah will bring forth[28] everything even if it be as small as the grain of a mustard seed even though it be hidden inside a rock or (anywhere) in the heavens or earth. Allah is Most Subtle, All-Aware.

27. The other admonitions of Luqman are being narrated here to imply that like the basic beliefs, the teachings pertaining to morals that the Prophet (peace be upon him) is presenting, are not anything new in Arabia.

28. That is, nothing can escape Allah's knowledge and His grasp. A seed in the rock may be hidden for you, but it is known to Allah. A particle in the heavens may be very distant for you, but for Allah it is very near. A thing lying in the layers of the earth may be lying in darkness for you but for him it is in full light. Therefore, you cannot do anything good or bad, anywhere or any time, which may remain hidden from Allah. He is not only aware of it, but when the time for accountability comes, He will place before you a full record of each act of yours.

يٰبُنَيَّ اَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَاصْبِرْ عَلٰى مَآ اَصَابَكَ ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ
مِنْ عَزْمِ الْاُمُوْرِ ۚ 17

(31:17) Son, establish Prayer, enjoin all that is good and forbid all that is evil, and endure with patience whatever affliction befalls you.[29] Surely these have been emphatically enjoined.[30]

29. In this there is a subtle allusion to this that whoever will enjoin good and forbid evil, will inevitably have to face and undergo afflictions and hardships in the world.

30. Another meaning can be: "These are things which require courage and resolution. To rise for the reformation of the people and to brave the hardships of the way cannot be the job of a mean-spirited and cowardly person."

وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ ۚ 18

(31:18) Do not (contemptuously) turn your face away from people,[31] nor tread haughtily upon earth. Allah does not love the arrogant and the vainglorious.[32]

31. Tusair in the original is from sear, a disease in the camel's neck clue to which it keeps its face turned to one side. The idiom implies the attitude of a person who shows arrogance and vanity, turns his face away and treats others with scant respect.

32. Mukhtal in the original implies a person who has a very high opinion of himself, and fakhur is the one who boasts of his superiority over others. A man becomes haughty and arrogant and vain in his gait only when he is puffed up with pride, and wants that others should feel his superiority.

وَاقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَاغْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ ۚ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ ۖ 19

(31:19) Be moderate in your stride[33] and lower your voice. Verily the most disgusting of all voices is the braying of the donkey."[34]

33. According to some commentators it means this: "Walk neither fast nor slow but at a moderate pace", but the context shows that here the pace or the rate of walking is not the question. There is nothing morally wrong with a fast or a slow pace in itself, nor can there be a rule made for it. When a man is in a hurry, he has to walk fast, and there is nothing wrong if one walks slow when walking for pleasure. Even if there is a standard for the moderate pace, it cannot be made a law for every person at all times. What is actually meant by this is to reform the state of the self under which a person walks haughtily. The haughtiness and arrogance of a person inevitably manifests itself in his gait and style of walking, which shows the state of his mind and also the cause of his pride and haughtiness. Wealth, authority, beauty, knowledge, power and such other things cause a man to become proud and vain, and each of these gives him a special style of gait. Contrary to this, manifestation of humility in the gait is also the result of one or the other morbid mental state. Sometimes the hidden conceit of the self of a man takes on the form of ostentatious humility, piety and godliness and this is shown by his gait; and sometimes man really feels so embittered by the frustrations of the world that he adopts a sick man's gait. What Luqman meant to say is this: "Avoid these states of the mind and self and walk the gait of a simple, honest and noble person, which neither shows any vanity and haughtiness nor weakness nor ostentatious piety and humility."

The taste of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) great companions in this regard can be judged from a few instances. When Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) once saw a man walking with his head hung down, he shouted out to him, saying, "Walk with your head raised up. Islam is not sick." He saw another person walking like a weak, sick man, and said, "Wretch! Do not sully our religion" Both these incidents show that in the sight of Umar

religious piety did not at all require that one should walk cautiously, like the sick man and show undue humility by one's gait. Whenever he saw a Muslim walking such a gait, he would have the apprehension that it would misrepresent Islam and would depress the other Muslims. A similar incident was once met with by Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her). She saw a person walking as if run down and exhausted. She asked what was the matter with him. It was said, "He is one of the reciters of the Quran (i.e. a person who remains engaged in reciting and teaching the Quran and in worship)." At this she said, "Umar was the chief of the reciters of the Quran, but as it was he would walk with a firm foot, and he would speak with force and strength, and he would give a good beating if he had to." (See E.N. 43 of Surah Bani Israil) and (E.N. 79 of Surah Al- Furqan).

34. This does not mean that one should always speak in a low voice and should never raise one's voice. By citing the braying of the donkeys, it has been clearly indicated what some of the tone and voice in speech is meant to be discouraged. One kind of lowness and loudness, roughness and softness, of the tone and voice is that which is needed under natural and genuine requirements. For example, when speaking to a man close at hand, or to a small group of the people, one would speak in a low voice, and when speaking to a man at a distance or to a large number of the people, one would inevitably have to speak loudly. Similar is inevitably the difference in tones depending on the occasion and situation. The tone of praise has to be different from the tone of condemnation, and of the expression of goodwill from that of indignation. This thing is in no way objectionable. Nor does the admonition of Luqman imply that one should always speak in a soft and low voice and tone regardless of the occasion and requirement. What is objectionable is that one should shout oneself hoarse and produce a voice like the donkeys's braying in order to bully and debase and browbeat the other person.

أَلَمْ تَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَأَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعَمَهٗ ظَاهِرَةً وَّبَاطِنَةً ۭ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّجَادِلُ فِي اللّٰهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَّلَا هُدًى وَّلَا كِتٰبٍ مُّنِيْرٍ 20

(31:20) Have you not seen that Allah has subjected to your service all that is in the heavens[35] and on the earth and has abundantly bestowed upon you all His bounties, both visible and invisible?[36] Yet some persons dispute regarding Allah[37] without having any knowledge or guidance or any illuminating Book.[38]

35. A thing can be subjected to somebody in two ways:

(1) The thing may be made subordinate to him and he may be authorized to use and exploit it as he likes, and

(2) The thing may be subjected to a law and system so that it becomes useful for him and serves his interests accordingly. Allah has not subjected everything in the earth and heavens to man in one and the same sense, but has subjected certain things in the first sense and

certain others in the second sense. For example, He has subjected the air, water, earth, fire, vegetation, minerals, cattle and many other things in the first sense, and the sun, the moon, etc. in the second sense.

36. "Apparent favors" imply those favors which are perceived by man in one way or the other, or are known to him. And the "hidden favors" are those which are neither perceived by him nor are known to him. There are countless things in man's own body and in the world outside him, which are working in his interest, but man is utterly unaware of the means which his Creator has provided for his protection and safety, for his development and provision of sustenance to him, and for his well-being and happiness. Research of man in the different branches of science is revealing many such favors of God as were hidden from him before. And the favors and blessings which have so far been revealed are insignificant as against those which are still hidden from man.

37. "Who disputes about Allah": Who wrangle and dispute about questions such as these: Does Allah exist or not? Is He One God alone, or are there other gods also? What are His attributes and what is their nature? What is the nature of His relationship with His creations etc.?

38. That is, they neither have any means of knowledge by which they might themselves have observed or experienced the reality directly, nor do they have the guidance of a guide available to them, who might have guided them after observing the reality, nor do they possess a divine Book, which might be the basis of their belief.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا ۗ أَوَلَوْ كَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ يَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ 21

(31:21) When they are told: "Follow what Allah has revealed," they say: "We will rather follow that which we have found our forefathers following." (Will they follow that) even though Satan might invite them to the chastisement of the Blazing Fire?[39]

39. That is, it is not at all necessary that the forefathers of every person and every family and nation should have been on the right path. The mere argument that a particular way of life had been bequeathed by the elders cannot be a proof of its being right also. No sane person can commit the folly that he should blindly go on following the way of his forefathers even if they were not rightly guided, and should never bother to find out where the way is leading him.

وَمَن يُسْلِمْ وَجْهَهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ ۗ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ 22

(31:22) Whoever surrenders himself to Allah[40] and lives righteously[41] grasps the most firm handle.[42] The ultimate decision of all matters rests with Allah.

40. "Whoever surrenders his face to Allah": Who submits himself wholly to the service of Allah, entrusts all his affairs to Him and makes His guidance the law of his entire life.

41. That is, practically also he should adopt the attitude of an obedient servant of Allah.

42. That is, he will neither have the apprehension that he will be misguided, nor the fear that he will meet an evil end after having served Allah.

وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَلَا يَحْزُنْكَ كُفْرُهٗ ؕ اِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَنُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوْا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ

الصُّدُوْرِ 23

(31:23) So let the unbelief of the unbeliever not grieve you.[43] To Us is their return and then We shall inform them of all that they did. Surely Allah knows well even the secrets that are hidden in the breasts (of people).

43. This means to say, "O Prophet, the one who refuses to listen to you, thinks that by rejecting Islam and insisting on unbelief he has harmed you, but in fact he has not harmed you but harmed only himself. If he does not listen to you, you need not bother yourself about him at all."

نُمَتِّعُهُمْ قَلِيْلًا ثُمَّ نَضْطَرُّهُمْ اِلٰى عَذَابٍ غَلِيْظٍ 24

(31:24) We allow them to enjoy themselves a while in the world and then We shall drive them in utter helplessness to a harsh chastisement.

وَلَئِنْ سَاَلْتَهُمْ مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اللّٰهُ ؕ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ ؕ بَلْ

اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ 25

(31:25) If you were to ask them: "Who created the heavens and the earth?" they will certainly reply: "Allah." Say: "All praise and thanks be to Allah."[44] Yet most of them do not know.[45]

44. That is, "Thank God that you at least know this and believe in this. But if this be the reality, all praise should then belong to Allah alone. How can any other being deserve praise when it has no share whatever in the creation of the universe?"

45. That, is, "Most of the people do not know what are the inevitable results and demands of accepting Allah as the Creator of the universe, and what contradicts it. When a person acknowledges Allah as the Creator of the earth and the heavens. He should also

acknowledge that Allah alone is the Deity and Lord: that He alone is worthy of worship and obedience: that He alone can be invoked for needs, and no one other than Him can be the Law-Giver and Ruler of His creation. To acknowledge one as the Creator and another as the deity is contrary to reason and a contradiction in terms, which can be upheld only by an ignorant person. Likewise, it would be a contradiction in terms to believe in one Being as the Creator and to regard another from among the creation as remover of hardships or as a deity and possessor of power and authority and sovereignty, which no reasonable person will acknowledge and accept."

لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيْدُ 26

(31:26) All that is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah.[46] Verily He is All-Sufficient, Immensely Praiseworthy.[47]

46. That is, "The reality is not merely this that Allah is the Creator of the earth and the heavens, but in fact He alone is the Master of all things found in the earth and heavens. Allah has not created his universe and left it to others to become masters of the whole or a part of it, but He Himself is Master of His creation and everything that exists in this universe is His. Here, He alone possesses divine rights and powers and no one else."

47. This has been explained in (E. N. 19)above.

وَلَوْ اَنَّ مَا فِي الْاَرْضِ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ اَقْلَامٌ وَّالْبَحْرُ يَمُدُّهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ سَبْعَةُ اَبْحُرٍ مَّا نَفِدَتْ كَلِمٰتُ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ 27

(31:27) If all the trees on earth become pens, and the sea replenished by seven more seas were to supply them with ink, the Words of Allah would not be exhausted.[48]Verily Allah is Most Mighty, Most Wise.

48. "Words of Allah": Allah's creative works and the manifestations of His power and wisdom. This very theme has been presented in Surah Al-Kahf: Ayat 109 a little differently. A person might think there is exaggeration in this, but if one considers the matter a little deeply, one will feel that there is in tact no exaggeration whatsoever in it. All the pens that can be made from the trees of the world and all the ink that can be provided by the oceans of the world, which are replenished by seven more oceans, cannot perhaps help prepare a complete list of all the creations in the universe, not to speak of all the manifestations of Allah's power and wisdom and creative works. When it is impossible even to count all the things found on the earth only, how can one bring into writing all the creations found in this limitless universe?

Here, the object is to make man realize that no creature can become a deity and an associate in the works of Allah, Who has brought into being such a vast Universe, Who is administering its affairs and Whose powers and resources are limitless. Not to speak of becoming an associate in the administration of this vast Kingdom, it is not within the power

of any creation to obtain a mere nodding acquaintance with the minutest portion of it. How can then one imagine that one or the other creation can have any share in the divine powers and authority on the basis of which it may answer prayers and make or un-make destinies?

مَا خَلْقُكُمْ وَلَا بَعْثُكُمْ إِلَّا كَنَفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ ۭ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌۢ بَصِيْرٌ 28

(31:28) To create all of you or to resurrect all of you is to Him like (creating or resurrecting) a single person. Verily Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.[49]

49. That is, "He is hearing every sound in the universe distinctly at one and the same time, and no sound can absorb his hearing so completely that He may hear no other sound. Likewise, He is seeing the whole universe in each of its details as to thing and event at one and the same time and nothing can absorb His sight so completely that He may see nothing else. The same precisely is the case concerning the creation of men and their re-creation also. He can re-create instantaneously all the men who have been born since the beginning of the creation and will be born till the end of time, His creative power is not absorbed so completely in the creation of one man that He may be unable to create other men at the same time. For Him the creation of one man and of the billions of men, therefore, is equal and one and the same thing."

اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُوْلِجُ الَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُوْلِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي الَّيْلِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ۚ كُلٌّ يَّجْرِيْٓ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ 29

(31:29) Do you not see that Allah makes the night phase into the day and makes the day phase into the night and has subjected the sun and the moon[50] to His will so that each of them is pursuing its course till an appointed time? (Do you not know that)[51] Allah is well aware of all that you do?

50. That is, the appearance and alternation of the day and night consistently and regularly by itself shows that the sun and the moon have been subjected to a system. The sun and the moon have been mentioned here in particular because both these are the most prominent bodies of the heaven, which man has been worshiping as deities since the earliest times, and which many people worship as gods even today. The fact, however, is that Allah has bound all the stars and planets of the universe including the earth into an unalterable system from which they cannot deviate even by an inch.

51. That is, nothing in the world, whether the sun or the moon, or any other star or planet, in the universe, is eternal and ever-lasting. Everything has a term for it and can function only till its expiry. Everything has a beginning in time before which it was not there and an end in time after which it will not be there. This means to imply that such temporal and powerless things cannot become the deities of men.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الۡحَقُّ وَاَنَّ مَا يَدۡعُوۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِهِ الۡبَاطِلُ ۙ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الۡعَلِىُّ

الۡكَبِيۡرُ ع 30

(31:30) All this is because Allah, He alone, is the Truth[52] and all that which they call upon beside Him is false.[53] Surely Allah, He alone, is All-High, Incomparably Great.[54]

52. That is, "The real Sovereign is Allah. He alone is the real Owner of power and authority over the creation and its disposal."

53. That is, "They are figments of your own imagination. You have yourselves presumed that so-and-so has got a share in Godhead, and so-and-so has been given the powers to remove hardships and fulfill needs, whereas in fact none of them has any power to make or un-make anything."

54. That is, "He is the Highest of all before Whom everything is low, and He is the Greatest of all before Whom everything is small."

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اَنَّ الۡفُلۡكَ تَجۡرِىۡ فِى الۡبَحۡرِ بِنِعۡمَتِ اللّٰهِ لِيُرِيَكُمۡ مِّنۡ اٰيٰتِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّكُلِّ

صَبَّارٍ شَكُوۡرٍ 31

(31:31) Do you not see that ships sail in the sea by Allah's Grace that He may show you some of His Signs?[55] Surely there are Signs in this for everyone who is steadfast, thankful.[56]

55. That is, such signs show that all powers rest only with Allah. Man may make as strong and suitable ships for his sea journeys as he likes, and may achieve whatever perfection in marine science and in the related knowledge and experience, these by themselves cannot avail him anything to perform safe voyages especially when confronted by the terrible forces at the sea, unless he is succored by the grace of Allah. As soon as Allah's grace is withdrawn, man immediately realizes how meager and insufficient are the means and resources and knowledge of the sciences. Similarly, man in the state of peace and security may be a hardened atheist or polytheist, but when his boat loses balance in the storm at sea, even the atheist comes to realize that there is God and the polytheist that there is only One God.

56. That is, when the people who possess these two qualities, recognize the reality by these signs, they come to understand Tauhid clearly and stick to it firmly. The first quality is that they should be patient: they should not be fickle but fine and persistent: they should remain steadfast on the righteous belief under all circumstances, pleasant or unpleasant, difficult or easy, favorable or unfavorable. They should not have the weakness that when the hard times come they Stan imploring God humbly, and when they change into good times, they forget God altogether. Or that, to the contrary, they should worship God in good times and

start cursing Him when touched by afflictions and misfortunes. The other quality is that they should be grateful: they should not prove ungrateful and thankless: but appreciative of favor and should remain perpetually disposed from within to render thanks to the one who conferred the favor.

وَإِذَا غَشِيَهُمْ مَّوْجٌ كَالظُّلَلِ دَعَوُا اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ ۚ فَلَمَّا نَجّٰىهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ
فَمِنْهُمْ مُّقْتَصِدٌ ۚ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِاٰيٰتِنَآ إِلَّا كُلُّ خَتَّارٍ كَفُوْرٍ 32

(31:32) When waves engulf them (in the sea) like canopies, they call upon Allah, consecrating their faith solely to Him. But when He delivers them safely to the land, some of them become lukewarm.[57] None denies Our Signs except the perfidious, the ungrateful.[58]

57. "Iqtisad" in the original may mean uprightness or moderateness. In the first case, the verse would mean: "A few of them only remain steadfast on Tauhid, which they had promised to follow when overwhelmed by the storm, and this makes them adhere to uprightness ever afterwards." If it is taken to mean moderateness, it would mean: Some of them become moderate and less rigid in their creed of atheism and polytheism, or they lose some of their fervor and enthusiasm that had been caused by the incident of calamity. Most probably Allah has used this meaningful sentence here in order to allude to all the three states simultaneously. The object probably is to point out the fact that during the storm at sea the mind of everybody is automatically set right, and everybody gives up atheism and polytheism and starts invoking One Allah for help. But as soon as they safely land on the shore, only a few of them seem to have learned any enduring lesson from their experience. Then, this small number also is divided into three groups: those who adopt uprightness ever afterwards, and those who become moderate in their disbelief, and Those who retain some of the spirit of enthusiasm caused temporarily by the calamity.

58. These two qualities are the antithesis of the two qualities mentioned in the preceding verse. A treacherous person is he who is utterly disloyal and who has no regard for his promise and pledge, and the ungrateful he who does not acknowledge the good and the gains and the benefits received by him, and even behaves rebelliously towards his benefactor. The people having these qualities return to their disbelief, their atheism and their polytheism without any hesitation as soon as the danger has been averted. They do not admit that they had perceived some signs in their own selves as well as outside themselves of Allah's existence and of His being only One when overwhelmed by the storm, and their invoking Allah was in fact the result of their recognition of the same reality. The atheists among them explain away their act, saying, "It was a weakness which we manifested in the state of confusion and bewilderment, whereas there exists no God, Who might have saved us from the storm: we in fact succeeded in escaping by virtue of such and such a device and means and resources." As for the mushriks, they generally say, "We had the succor and protection of such and such a saint or god and goddess available to us by virtue of which we escaped." Therefore, as soon as they land on the shore, they start giving thanks to these false gods and presenting offerings at their shrines. They do not bother to think that when they

had lost hope, there was none beside Allah, the One, whom they might have implored and invoked for help.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ ٱتَّقُوا۟ رَبَّكُمْ وَٱخْشَوْا۟ يَوْمًا لَّا يَجْزِى وَالِدٌ عَن وَلَدِهِۦ وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ هُوَ جَازٍ
عَن وَالِدِهِۦ شَيْـًٔا ۚ إِنَّ وَعْدَ ٱللَّهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ ٱلْحَيَوٰةُ ٱلدُّنْيَا وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُم بِٱللَّهِ
ٱلْغَرُورُ 33

(31:33) O people, fear (the wrath) of your Lord, and dread the Day when no father will stand for his child, nor any child stand for his father.[59] Surely Allah's promise is true.[60] So let the life of this world not beguile you,[61] nor let the Deluder delude you about Allah.[62]

59. That is, "The relationship of a person with his friend, or his leader, or his spiritual guide, etc. is not that close and intimate as the relationship that exists between the children and their parents. But on the Day of Resurrection even the son and the father will not be able to help each other. The father will not have the courage to come forward and say that he may be seized instead of the son for his sins, nor will the son have the nerve to say that he may be sent to Hell instead of the father. How can then a person expect that one will be able to avail something for the other there? Therefore, foolish is the person who spoils his Hereafter in the world for the sake of another, or adopts the way of sin and deviation by dependence on others. Here, one should keep in view the theme of verse 15, in which the children have been admonished not to accept deviation in the matter of the faith and religion on behest of the parents, though in affairs of mundane life they are duty bound to serve them as best as they can."

60. "Allah's promise": the promise of Resurrection, when the court of Allah will be established and everyone will be called to render an account of his deeds.

61. The life of the world involves the people, who only see the superficial, in different kinds of misunderstandings. Someone thinks that life and death only belong to this world, and there is no life after this; therefore, whatever one has to do, one should do it here and now. Another one who is lost in his wealth and power and prosperity, forgets his death and gets involved in the foolish idea that his grandees and his power are everlasting. Another one overlooking the moral and spiritual objectives regards the material gains and pleasures in themselves as the only objectives and does not give anything any importance but the standard of living, no matter whether his standard of humanity goes on falling lower and lower as a result thereof. Someone thinks that worldly prosperity is the real criterion of truth and falsehood: every way of life that ensures this is the truth and everything contradictory to it is falsehood. Someone regards this very prosperity as a sign of being Allah's favorite and assumes the law that whoever is leading a prosperous life here is Allah's beloved no matter by what means he might have achieved this prosperity, and whoever is leading a miserable life in the world, even if it be so due to his love of the truth and his uprightness,

will live a miserable life in the Hereafter, too. These and other such misunderstandings have been called deceptions of the worldly life by Allah.

62. Al-gharur (the deceiver) may be Satan or a man or a group of them, or even man's own self, or something else. The reason for using this comprehensive and meaningful word in its absolute form without identifying a particular person or thing is that for different people there are different means that cause them deception. Any particular means or cause that deceived a person to be misled and misguided from the right way to the wrong way, will be algharur in his particular case.

"To deceive about Allah" are also comprehensive words, which include countless kinds of deceptions. The deceiver deceives one man with the idea that there is no God at all, and another man with the idea that God after making the world has handed over its control and administration to the men and is no more concerned with it; he misleads another one, saying, "There are some favorite ones of God: if you attain nearness to them, you will surely win your forgiveness whatever you may do, or may have done, in the world;" he deceives another one, saying, "God is All- Forgiving and All-Merciful: you may go on committing sins freely, and He will go on forgiving each sin of yours." He gives another person the idea of determinism and misguides him, saying, "Everything that you do is pre-ordained: if you commit evil, it is God Who makes you commit it: if you avoid goodness, it is God Who makes you avoid it." Thus, there are countless types of such deceptions with which man is being deceived concerning God. When analyzed, it comes to light that the basic cause of all errors and sins and crimes is that man has been deceived concerning God in one way or the other, and that is how he has been misled to some ideological deviation or moral error.

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ عِنْدَهٗ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ ۚ وَيُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ ۚ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْاَرْحَامِ ۭ وَمَا تَدْرِيْ نَفْسٌ
مَّاذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا ۭ وَمَا تَدْرِيْ نَفْسٌۢ بِاَيِّ اَرْضٍ تَمُوْتُ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ خَبِيْرٌ ۝ 34

(31:34) Surely Allah alone has the knowledge of the Hour. It is He Who sends down the rain and knows what is in the wombs, although no person knows what he will earn tomorrow, nor does he know in which land he will die. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.[63]

63. This verse is, in fact an answer to the disbelievers' question as to when the Hour of Resurrection will come, which they asked when they heard the Prophet (peace be upon him) mention it and the promise of the Hereafter, again and again. The Quran has answered this sometimes by citing the question and sometimes without citing it, because the addressees knew what they were asking. This is one of those verses which answer the question without citing the question itself.

The first sentence: "Allah, with Him is the knowledge of the Hour", is the real answer to the question. The four sentences that follow constitute the argument to support it. The argument means this: "O man, you do not have the knowledge even about those things with which you are most closely and intimately concerned in life. How then can it be possible for you to know as to when will the whole world come to an end? Your prosperity and adversity

mainly depend on the rain. But its control and regulation is entirely in the hand of Allah. He sends down the rain whenever and wherever and in whatever measure He pleases and withholds it whenever he pleases. You do not at all know how much of the rain will fall at a particular place at a particular time and which land will remain without it, and which land will be adversely affected in spite of it. Your wives conceive by your own sperm-drop, which perpetuates your race in the future, but you do not know what is taking shape in their wombs, and in what form and with what good or evil it will emerge. You do not even know what you are going to meet with the next day. A sudden accident can change your destiny; but you are unaware of it even a minute before its occurrence. You do not know where your present life will eventually come to an end. Allah has kept all this information within Himself alone; and has not given you any knowledge of any of these. You actually desire that you should have the knowledge of each of these things so that you may make necessary preparations beforehand, but you have no other course open to you than to depend only on Allah's decree and disposal in these matters. Likewise, about the end of the world also there is no alternative but to rely on Allah's decree and decision. The knowledge of this also has neither been given to anybody, nor can it be given. Here, another thing also should be understood well, and that is: This verse does not give a list of the unseen and hidden things, which are known to no one but Allah. Here only some of the most apparent things have been pointed out only to serve as an illustration. These are the things with which man is most deeply and intimately concerned, yet he is unaware of them. From this it would be wrong to conclude that these are the only five unseen and hidden things which are known to no one but Allah. As a matter of fact, ghaib applies to every such thing which is hidden from the creation but is in the knowledge of Allah, and such things are countless and limitless. (For a detailed discussion of this, see (Surah An-Naml: Ayat 65 and its E.Ns.).

32. Surah As Sajdah (The Prostration)

Name

The Surah has been entitled As-Sajdah after the theme of Sajdah (prostration) as expressed in verse 15.

Period of Revelation

From the style of the Surah it appears that it was sent down during the middle Makkah period, more particularly in its initial stage, for one does not find in its background that severity of the persecution and tyranny which one finds in the Surahs sent down in the later stages.

Theme and Topics

The main theme of the Surah is to remove the doubts of the people concerning Tauhid, the Hereafter and the Prophethood, and to invite them to all these three realities. The disbelievers of Makkah, when they talked of the Holy Prophet in private, said to one another, "This person is forging strange things sometimes he gives news of what will happen after death. He says: when you have become dust, you will be called to render your accounts, and there will be Hell and Heaven. Sometimes he says: these gods and goddesses and saints are nonentities: One God alone is the Deity. And sometimes he says: the discourses which I recite are not my own but Allah's Word. All these are strange things which he presents. “The answer to these doubts and misgivings forms the theme and subject matter of this Surah.

In this connection, the disbelievers have been told: "Most certainly it is Allah's Word, which has been sent down in order to arouse a people who are sunk in heedlessness, being deprived of the bounties and blessings of Prophethood. How can you call it a fabrication when its having been sent dawn from Allah is manifest and self evident?"

Then, they have been asked, "Use your common sense and judge for yourselves which of the things presented by the Quran is strange and novel? Look at the administration of the heavens and the earth: consider your own creation and structure. Don't these things testify to the teaching which this Prophet is presenting before you in the Quran? Does the system of the universe point to Tauhid or to shirk? When you consider this whole system and your own creation, does your intellect testify that the One Who has given you your present existence, will not be able to create you once again?"

Then a scene of the Hereafter has been depicted, the fruits of belief and the evil consequences of disbelief have been mentioned and the people exhorted to give up disbelief even before they meet their doom and accept the teaching of the Quran, which will be to their own advantage in the Hereafter.

Then they have been told: It is Allah's supreme Mercy that He does not seize man immediately for his errors to punish him finally and decisively but warns him beforehand by afflicting him with small troubles and hardships and calamities and losses and strokes of misfortune so that he may wake up and take admonition.

Then it is said: "This is not the first and novel event of its kind that a Book has been sent down upon a man from God. Before this the Book had been sent upon Moses also, which you all know. There is nothing strange in this at which you should marvel. Be assured that this Book has come down from God, and note it well that the same will happen now as has already happened in the time of Moses. Leadership now will be bestowed only on those who will accept this Divine Book. Those who reject it shall be doomed to failure."

Then the disbelievers of Makkah have been admonished to the effect: “See the end of the doomed communities of the past by whose ruined habitations you pass during your trade journeys. Will you like to meet the same doom yourself? Do not be deluded by the apparent and superficial. Today you see that no one is listening to Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) except a few young men and some slaves and poor men, and he is being made the target of curses and ugly remarks from every side. From this you have formed the wrong impression that his mission will fail. But this is only a deception of your eyes. Don't you see the phenomenon in your daily life that a land previously lying absolutely barren starts swelling with vegetation and plant life everywhere just by a single shower of the rain though before this no one could ever imagine that under the layers of its soil there lay hidden such treasures of greenery and herbage?"

In conclusion, the Holy Prophet has been addressed to the effect: "These people mock at what you say and ask as to when you will attain this decisive victory. Tell them: when the time comes for the final judgment regarding you and us, believing then will not profit you at all. If you have to believe, believe now. But if you intend to await the final judgment, then await it as you please."

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

الٓمّٓ 1

(32:1) Alif. Lam. Mim.

تَنۡزِيۡلُ الۡكِتٰبِ لَا رَيۡبَ فِيۡهِ مِنۡ رَّبِّ الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ؕ 2

(32:2) This Book, beyond all doubt, was revealed by the Lord of the Universe.[1]

1. Several Surahs of the Quran begin with one or the other such introductory sentence, which is meant to declare at the outset where from this discourse is being issued. This is apparently the same sort of an introductory sentence as an announcer speaks in the beginning of a radio program to tell which radio station he is speaking from. But unlike the ordinary announcement from a radio station, when the extraordinary declaration at the beginning of a Surah is made to the effect that this message is being issued by the Ruler of the Universe, it is not merely meant to specify the origin of the discourse, but, besides, it also puts forward a big claim, a great challenge and a severe warning, for at the very outset it gives the big news that this is not human but the Lord of the Worlds’ Word. This declaration at once brings man face to face with the grave question: Should I or should I not accept this

claim? If I accept it, I shall have to bow my head in submission before it forever. Then, I shall be left with no freedom concerning it. On the other hand, if I do not accept it, I shall have to take the great risk that, if it be really the Lord of the Worlds' Word, I shall have to meet with eternal misery and misfortune in consequence of rejecting it. That is why this introductory sentence solely on account of its extraordinary nature compels man to listen to this Word with full attention and seriousness, and then take the decision whether he would accept it as divine Word or not.

Here, what has been said is not merely that this Book has been sent down by the Lord of the Worlds, but, besides, it also asserts most forcefully: "It is without any doubt the Book of God: there is absolutely no room for doubt about its having been revealed by Allah." If this assertive sentence is studied in the actual context itself, it will be seen that it contains the argument also along with the assertion, and this argument was not hidden from the people of Makkah before whom the assertion was being made. The whole life of the person presenting it had been spent before them. They had known him before he presented the Book as well as after he had presented it. They knew that the person presenting the Book with that assertion was the most righteous, the most serious and the most pious and virtuous man of their society. They also knew that until a day before he made the claim to prophethood, no one had ever heard from him those things which he had started presenting suddenly just after his claim to prophethood. They found a marked difference between the diction and style used in the Book and the diction and style used by Muhammad (peace be upon him) himself, in his daily life. They also recognized naturally that one and the same person could not have two styles so different from each other. They were also experiencing the highly miraculous literature being presented in the Book and, being the Arabic speaking people themselves, knew that all their literary men and poets were feeling utterly helpless in producing anything the like of it. They were also not unaware that there was a world of difference between the literary productions and orations of their poets and sorcerers and orators, and the divine discourses being recited before them and the sublimity of the pure themes being presented in them. They did not see in the Book and in the message of the one presenting it any trace whatever of selfishness, which is always present in the work and message of a false claimant to prophethood. They could not find out, however, hard they might have tried, that Muhammad (peace be upon him) by laying claim to Prophethood was trying to secure a certain benefit for himself or his family or his clan and tribe, or that he had any vested interest in the message he gave. Then, they could also see what sort of the people of their society were being drawn to his message and what great revolution was taking place in them as soon as they came in contact with his invitation. All these things together supported and proved the assertion and claim. That is why in that background it was enough to say that it is, beyond any doubt, a Book that has been sent down by the Lord of the Worlds. No further argument was needed to substantiate the claim.

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ ۚ بَلْ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكَ لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَتَاهُم مِّن نَّذِيرٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ 3

(32:3) Or do[2] they say: "He has fabricated it?"[3] Nay, it is the Truth from your Lord so that you may warn a people to whom no warner came before you;[4] perhaps they will be guided to the Right Way.[5]

2. After the above introductory sentence, the first objection of the polytheists of Makkah, which they raised concerning the Prophethood of the Prophet (peace be upon him), is being dealt with.

3. This is not merely a question but also an expression of great surprise and astonishment. It means to imply this: In spite of all those things on account of which this Book is, without any doubt, a revelation from Allah, do those people yet say stubbornly that Muhammad (peace be upon him) has himself forged it and is falsely attributing it to Allah? Don't they feel any shame in uttering such a senseless and baseless accusation? Don't they at all realize what opinion will those people form who are aware of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his work and his discourses and also understand the Book, when they hear their absurd accusation?

4. Just as in the first verse it was considered sufficient to say, "It is without any doubt the Book of God," and no further argument was needed to be advanced to prove the Quran to be divine word, so in this verse also the only thing being said to refine the disbelievers' charge that the Quran was being forged is: "It is the truth from your Lord." The reason for it is the same as we have given in(E.N. 1) above. The listeners were well aware of the person who was presenting the Quran, of the environment in which he was presenting it and the confidence and grace with which he was presenting it; they also knew the Book, its diction and literary excellence and its themes; they were also feeling the influence and impact it was having on contemporary society of Makkah. Under those conditions the Book's being the truth sent down by the Lord of the Worlds, was such an evident factual reality that the mere mention of it in clear and definite terms was enough to refute the accusation of the disbelievers. Any attempt to strengthen this assertion by resort to reasoning would have caused it to be weakened instead. The case would be like this. Supposing it is day and the sun is shining bright, and a stubborn person calls it a dark night. To refute him it would be enough to say: "Do you call it a night when the bright day is clearly visible all around." If after this, one tried to bring logical arguments to prove the day to be day. it would not in any way strengthen the reply but would rather weaken it instead.

5. That is; "Just, as its being the truth and a revelation from Allah is absolutely certain, so is its being based on wisdom and Allah's mercy for you also evident. You yourselves know that for the past many centuries no prophet has been raised among you, and you also know that your entire nation has been involved in ignorance and moral degeneration and sheer backwardness. In a state like this if a Prophet (peace be upon him) has been raised among you to awaken you and show you the right way, you should not be surprised. This was a great need which Allah has fulfilled for the sake of your own welfare and wellbeing."

One should note that in Arabia the light of the true faith was first of all spread by the Prophets Hud and Salih (peace be upon them), who lived in the pre-historic age. They were followed by the Prophets Abraham and Ishmael, who lived 2,500 years before the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). After them the last Prophet to be raised in Arabia before the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was the Prophet Shuaib (peace be upon him),

who had passed about 2,000 years earlier. This is a very long period. That is why it has been said, and rightly so, that no warner had come to those people. This did not mean that no warner had ever come to them, but it meant that the people had long stood in need of a warner.

Here, another question may arise in the minds, which should be answered straightaway. One may ask: When no Prophet had come to the Arabs for hundreds of years before the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), what would be the basis of accountability of the people who had lived in that age of ignorance? They could not tell guidance from deviation and error. Then, if they had gone astray, how could they be held responsible for their deviation? The answer is this: The detailed knowledge of the true faith might have been lost to those people, but even in that age of ignorance the people were not unaware that the true faith was based on Tauhid, and the Prophets had never taught idol-worship to their followers. This truth was also contained in those traditions which the Arabs had received from the Prophets born in their own land, and they were also aware of this through the teachings of the Prophets Moses, David, Solomon and Jesus (peace be upon them) who had been born in the land adjoining their own. In the traditions of Arabia, it was also well known that in the earliest times the Arabs' real religion was the religion of Abraham and that idol-worship had been introduced among them by a person named Amr bin Luhay. In spite of the prevalence of shirk and idol-worship, there were living in different parts of Arabia many such people, who rejected shirk, professed Tauhid and openly condemned offering of sacrifices at the shrines of idols. In the age close to the Prophet's own, there had passed people who were known as Hunafa. These people publicly professed Tauhid as the basis of the faith and declared their dissociation from the religion of the mushriks. Obviously they had received this concept from whatever had remained behind from the influence of the teaching of the Prophets. Moreover, the inscriptions belonging to the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. which have been discovered in Yaman as a result of modern archaeological research and investigation, reveal that a monotheistic religion existed there in that age, whose followers acknowledged ar-Rahman (the All-Merciful) and Rabb-us-sama walard (Lord of the heavens and earth) alone as the One and only deity. An inscription. dated 378 A.D. has been found from the ruins of a house of worship, which says that this house of worship has been built for the worship of "God of heavens" or "Lord of heavens". In an inscription of 465 A.D. there are words which clearly point to the doctrine of Tauhid. Similarly, an inscription of 512 A.D. has been discovered at Zabad, a place between the river Euphrates and Qinnasrin, in northern Arabia, bearing the words: Bismilahu, laizza illa lahu, la shukra, illa lahv. All this shows that before the advent of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the teachings of the former Prophets had not altogether been forgotten, and there still existed many means which at least reminded man of the truth: "Your God is only One God." (For further explanation, see (E.N. 84 of Surah Al-Furqan).

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَیْنَهُمَا فِیْ سِتَّةِ اَیَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰی عَلَی الْعَرْشِ ؕ
مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِنْ وَّلِیٍّ وَّلَا شَفِیْعٍ ؕ اَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ 4

(32:4) It is Allah[6] Who created the heavens and the earth and all that is between the two, in six days, and then He established Himself on the Throne.[7] You have no guardian or intercessor other than He. Will you, then, not take heed?[8]

6. Now the second objection of the mushriks which they raised against the Prophet's (peace be upon him) message of Tauhid, is being dealt with: They were severely critical of him because he rejected their gods and saints and openly invited the people to the creed that there is no helper, no fulfiller of needs except Allah, and no answerer of prayers, no remover of ills and no sovereign other than Him.

7. For explanation, see (E.N. 41 of Surah Al-Aaraf), (E.N. 4 of Surah Yunus) and (E.N. 3 of Surah Ar-Raad).

8. That is, "Your real God is the Creator of the heavens and earth. But you in your folly have set up others than Him as your helpers and supporters in the vast kingdom of this universe. The Creator of this whole universe and whatever it contains is Allah. Here, everything except His own self is created, and Allah has not gone to sleep after having created and made the world go. But He Himself is the Ruler and Sovereign and Sustainer of His kingdom. Then, how senseless are you that you have set up a few of His creatures as the masters of your destinies! If Allah does not help you, none of them has the power to help you. If Allah should seize you, none of them has the power to secure your liberty. If Allah does not permit, none of them has the power to intercede for you before Him."

يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ يَعْرُجُ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُۥٓ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا تَعُدُّونَ 5

(32:5) He governs from the heaven to the earth and then the record (of this governance) goes up to Him in a day whose measure is a thousand years in your reckoning.[9]

9. That is, "The events of a thousand years of your history are a day's work for Allah." He entrusts His scheme of work to the "angels of destiny", who submit their report of work before Him and receive orders for the scheme of the next day (whose length according to your calculation would be a thousand years). This thing has also been expressed at two other places in the Quran, the study of which can help understand it. The disbelievers of Arabia said, "Muhammad (peace be upon him) claimed to be a Prophet many years ago. He has warned us again and again that if we did not accept his message and rejected his invitation, we would be seized by Allah's torment. He has been repeating this threat since many years, but the torment has not overtaken us, although we have denied and rejected him clearly over and over again. Had his threats any substance in them, we would have been seized in the torment long ago." In this connection, in Surah Al-Hajj Allah says: "These people are demanding of you to hasten the chastisement. Allah will never fail to fulfill His threat, but a day with your Lord is equal to a thousand years as you reckon." (Ayat 47).

In Surah Al-Maarij (Ayats 1-7), it has been said: "An asker has asked for a torment, (the torment) which must befall the disbelievers. There is none to avert it. It is from that God Who is the Owner of the Steps of Ascent. The angels and the Spirit ascend to His Presence in a day whose measure is fifty thousand years. So, have patience, O Prophet, a graceful patience! They think it is far off, but We see it near at hand."

What is meant to be impressed in these verses is this: Allah's decrees are not passed and enforced in the history of mankind according to the earthly watches and calendars. When a nation is warned that if it adopted such and such an attitude in life, it would meet with such and such an end, the people would be foolish if from this they understood that the predicted consequences would follow their evil acts and deeds immediately. Not to speak of days and months and years, the occurrence of the results may even take centuries.

ذٰلِكَ عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ۙ 6

(32:6) He knows[10] all that is beyond as well as all that is within a creature's sense-perception. He is the Most Mighty,[11]the Most Compassionate,[12]

10. That is, "For others one thing may be open and known but countless other things are hidden. Whether angels or jinns, prophets or saints, or other pious people, none of them has the knowledge of everything. It is Allah alone Who knows everything. He knows all that has passed, all that is present, and all that will happen in the future."

11. "The All Mighty": The One Who is dominant over everything: no power in the universe can hinder Him in His design and will and obstruct His command from being enforced. Everything is subdued to Him and nothing can resist Him.

12. That is, He is not tyrannous to His creatures but is Gracious and Merciful in spite of being overwhelmingly dominant and possessor of all power and authority.

الَّذِيْٓ اَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهٗ وَبَدَاَ خَلْقَ الْاِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِيْنٍ ۚ 7

(32:7) He Who excelled in the creation of all that He created.[13] He originated the creation of man from clay,

13. That is, "In this limitless universe, He has created countless numbers of things, but none of them is ugly and ill-shaped: everything has its own special beauty: everything is proportionate and symmetrical in its own way. Whatever He has made for a particular purpose, He has given it the most appropriate form and invested it with the most suitable qualities for it. No better and more appropriate structure could be conceived, for example, for the eye and the ear which have been made for seeing and hearing. The air has precisely the same qualities which it should have for the purpose for which it has been made, and the water precisely the same qualities for the purpose for which it has been made. No one can point out any defect or flaw in the design of anything made by God; nor can anyone offer an alteration or modification in it."

ثُمَّ جَعَلَ نَسۡلَهٗ مِنۡ سُلٰلَةٍ مِّنۡ مَّآءٍ مَّهِيۡنٍ ۚ 8

(32:8) then made his progeny from the extract of a mean fluid,[14]

14. That is, "In the beginning He created man directly by His own act of creation, and then placed in man himself such a procreative ability that similar men continue being produced by his sperm-drop. By one excellent act He gave life and consciousness and intellect to a combination of earthly elements by His creative command so that a wonderful creation like man came into being; by another excellent act He placed in man's own organism such a wonderful machinery for the production of similar more men in the future, whose mode of functioning is highly astonishing and amazing."

This is one of those verses of the Quran, which points to the direct creation of the first man. The scientists since the time of Darwin have felt greatly critical of this concept and have rejected it with contempt as unscientific. But the fact is that they cannot get rid of the concept of the direct creation of the first germ, if not of the first man, or of the first species of animals. If creationism is not accepted, then one will have to accept the utterly absurd idea that life originated merely accidentally; whereas even the simplest form of life as found in the single cell organism is so full of complexities and subtleties that regarding it as the result of an accident would be a million times more unscientific an idea than what the evolutionists think of creationism. And if once it is accepted that the first germ came into being by an act of direct creation, it would be no longer difficult to accept that the first member of every species of animal life was created by the Creator's own act of creation, and then its race started through different forms of procreation. If accepted, this concept would explain away all those riddles and complexities which have remained unsolved in their theory of evolution in spite of all the scientific theorizing by the upholders of Darwinism. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 1 of Surah An-Nisa), (E.N. 10 and146 of Surah Al-Aaraf), and (E.N. 17 of Surah Al-Hijr).

ثُمَّ سَوّٰىهُ وَنَفَخَ فِيۡهِ مِنۡ رُّوۡحِهٖ وَجَعَلَ لَـكُمُ السَّمۡعَ وَالۡاَبۡصَارَ وَالۡاَفۡـِٕدَةَ ؕ قَلِيۡلًا مَّا تَشۡكُرُوۡنَ 9

(32:9) then He duly proportioned him,[15] and breathed into him of His spirit,[16] and bestowed upon you ears and eyes and hearts.[17] And yet, little thanks do you give.[18]

15. "Fashioned him": developed him from a microscopic organism into a full-fledged human being and perfected him with limbs and other organs of the body.

16. "Spirit" does not merely imply the life because of which a living thing moves, but the essential human characteristic which imbues man with consciousness and thought, discretion and judgment, discernment, and discrimination, by virtue of which he is distinguished from all other earthly creations and becomes possessor of a personality and self and worthy of Allah's vicegerency. Allah has called this "Spirit" His own either because it belongs to Him alone, and its being attributed to Himself is just like a thing's being

attributed to its master, or because the attributes of knowledge, thought, consciousness, will, judgment, discretion, etc. with which man has been characterized are a reflection to the attributes of Allah. They have not arisen from any combination of matter, but from Allah Himself. Man has received knowledge from Allah's Knowledge, wisdom from Allah's Wisdom, and discretion and authority from Allah's Authority. He has not received these from a source which is without knowledge, without wisdom and without discretion and authority. (For further explanation, see(E.N. 19 of Surah Al-Hijr).

17. This is a fine way of saying something. Before the mention of "breathing into him of His spirit", man has been referred to in the third person: "He created him, spread his progeny, shaped him, breathed into him His spirit," for till then he was not even worthy of being addressed. Then, when the spirit had been breathed into him, he became worthy of the honor and it was said: "He gave you the ears, gave you the eyes, gave you the hearts," for after having been blessed with the Spirit, man became worthy of being addressed.

The ears and the eyes imply the instruments by which man obtains knowledge. Although the senses of taste and touch and smell are also instruments of obtaining knowledge, hearing and sight are the major and by far the more important senses. Therefore, the Quran has mentioned only these two at different places as the most important gifts of God to man. "The Heart" implies the mind which arranges the information obtained through the senses and draws inferences from it, and selects a possible way of action and decides to follow it.

18. That is, "The wonderful human spirit with such excellent qualities has not been given to you so that you may live like the animals in the world and plan life for yourselves as an animal would. You were given the eyes so that you may see things with insight and not that you should live like the blind people; you were given the ears so that you may hear things with attention and not that you should live like the deaf people; you were given the hearts so that you may understand the reality and adopt the right way in thought and action and not that you should spend all your capabilities for collecting the means of nourishing and sustaining your animality, or that you may devise philosophies and programs of rebellion against your Creator. After having received these invaluable blessings from God, when you adopt polytheism and atheism, when you assume godhead yourself or become servants of other gods, when you lose yourself in sensual pleasure by serving your lusts, you in fact tell your God: "We were not worthy of these blessings: You should have made us a monkey, or a wolf, or an alligator, or a crow, instead of man."

وَقَالُوٓا۟ ءَإِذَا ضَلَلْنَا فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ ءَإِنَّا لَفِى خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ۚ بَلْ هُم بِلِقَآئِ رَبِّهِمْ كَٰفِرُونَ 10

(32:10) They say:19 "Shall we be created afresh after we have become lost in the earth?" Nay, the fact is that they deny that they will meet their Lord.20

19. After answering the disbelievers' objections about the prophethood and Tauhid, now their objection about the Hereafter, which is the third basic belief of Islam, is being dealt with. The conjunction waw (and) in the beginning of the verse connects this paragraph with

the foregoing theme, as if the sequence were like this: “They say: Muhammad is not Allah’s Messenger,” They say: “Allah is not One and the only Deity,” and They say: “We shall not be raised back to life after death.”

20. The gap between the preceding and this sentence has been left for the listener to fill. The objection of the disbelievers as cited in the first sentence is so absurd that no need has been felt to refute it. Only its citation was regarded as enough to show its absurdity. For the two parts which make up the objection are both unreasonable. Their saying: “When we have become dust” is meaningless for that which is “we” can never become dust. Dust is the destiny of the body after it has become devoid of the “we”. The body itself is not the “we”. When alive, limbs and other parts of the body may be cut off one by one, but the “we” remains intact. No part of it is cut off with the cut off limb. And when the “we” has vacated a body, the “we” remains no longer applicable even in its remotest sense although the body still remains intact. That is why a sincere lover goes and buries the body of his beloved, because the beloved is no more in the body. He buries not the beloved but the empty body, which was once the home of his beloved. Thus, the very first premise of the disbelievers’ objection is baseless. As for its second part, “Shall we be recreated?” this question containing surprise and denial would not have arisen, had the objectors considered and taken into account the meaning of the “we” and its creation. The present existence of this “we” is nothing more than that a little of coal and iron and lime and some other earthly substances got together from here and there to combine themselves into a body, which became the home of the “we”. Then what happens when it dies? When the "we" has left the body, the constituent substances of its abode which had been gathered together from different parts of the earth go back to the same earth. The question is: He who had made this home for the “we”, can He not make the same home from the same substances once again and settle the “we” in it? When this was possible before and has in actual fact existed, what can hinder its possibility and its existing as an actual fact once again? These are such things as can be understood by the application of a little of the common sense. But why doesn’t man allow his mind to think on these lines? Why does he raise the meaningless objections about the life of Hereafter? Leaving out all these details, Allah has answered this question in the second sentence, saying: “The fact is that they disbelieve in the meeting with their Lord.” That is, “The real thing is not this that the recreation of man is something odd and remote in possibility, which they cannot understand, but in fact, what prevents them from understanding this is their desire to live freely and independently in the world and commit any sin, any excess that they please and then escape free from here: they should not be held accountable for anything, nor answerable for any of their misdeeds.”

قُلْ يَتَوَفّٰىكُمْ مَّلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِيْ وُكِّلَ بِكُمْ ثُمَّ اِلٰى رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ع 11

(32:11) Tell them: “The angel of death who has been charged with your souls shall gather you, and then you shall be brought back to your Lord.”[21]

21. That is, “Your ego will not mix in the dust, but as soon as its term of action comes to an end, God’s angel of death will come and will take it out of the body and seize it completely. No part of it will be allowed to become dust with the body. It will be taken intact into custody and produced before its Lord.”

Let us consider in some detail the facts which have been presented in this brief verse:

(1) It says that death does not occur as a matter of course, like the stopping of a watch suddenly when it needs rewinding, but for this purpose Allah has appointed a special angel, who comes to receive the soul precisely in the manner as an official receiver takes something into his custody. From the details which have been mentioned at other places in the Quran, it becomes apparent that the chief angel of death has a whole staff of the angels under him, who perform a variety of duties in connection with causing the death, seizing the soul and taking it into custody. Moreover, their treatment of a guilty soul is different from their treatment of a believing, righteous soul. (For details, see (Surah An-Nisa: Ayat 97), (Surah Al-Anaam: Ayat 93), (Surah An-Nahl: Ayat 28), (Surah Al-Waqiah: Ayats 83-94).

(2) It also shows that man does not cease to exist after death, but his soul survives the body. The words of the Quran: "The angel of death shall seize you completely," point out the same reality. For something which does not exist cannot be seized. Seizing something and taking it into custody implies that the seized thing should be in possession of the seizer.

(3) It also shows that at the time of death that which is seized is not the biological life of man but his self, his ego, which is connoted by the words like "I" and "we" and "you". Whatever personality this ego may have developed during its life-activity in the world, the same is taken out intact as a whole, without effecting any increase or decrease in its characteristics, and the same is made to return to its Lord after death. The same personality will be given a new birth and a new body in the Hereafter; the same will be subjected to trial; the same will be called to account; and the same will have to experience rewards or punishments.

وَلَوْ تَرٰٓى اِذِ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ نَاكِسُوْا رُءُوْسِهِمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ رَبَّنَآ اَبْصَرْنَا وَسَمِعْنَا فَارْجِعْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا اِنَّا مُوْقِنُوْنَ 12

(32:12) Would[22] that you could see the guilty standing before their Lord with their heads downcast, (saying to Him): "Our Lord, we have now seen and heard, so send us back (to the world) that we might act righteously. For now we have come to have firm faith."

22. This will be the scene when after returning to its Lord the human 'ego' will be standing before Him to render an account of its deeds.

وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَاٰتَيْنَا كُلَّ نَفْسٍ هُدٰىهَا وَلٰكِنْ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ مِنِّيْ لَاَمْلَئَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ اَجْمَعِيْنَ 13

(32:13) (They will be told): "If We had so willed, We could have bestowed guidance on every person.[23] But the Word from Me that I will fill Hell with men and jinn,[24] all together, has been fulfilled.

23. That is, "Had it been Our will to give guidance to the people after having made them observe and experience the reality, We would not have brought you here after making you undergo this hard test in the world. We could have given you such guidance even before. But We had a different scheme for you from the very beginning. We wanted to test you by keeping the reality hidden from your eyes and senses in order to see whether you could recognize it by your intellect after perceiving its signs in the universe and in your own selves or not, whether you could take advantage of the help that We provided to you through Our Prophets and Our Books to recognize the reality or not, and whether after knowing the reality, you could attain such control over your self or not that you should free yourselves from the service of your desires and lusts and believe in the reality and mend your ways and attitudes accordingly. You have failed in this test. Now setting the same test once again will be useless. If the second test is set in a condition when you remember everything that you have seen and heard here, it will be no test at all. And if, like before, you are given re-birth in the world, while you do not remember anything and the reality is kept hidden from you, and you are set the test once again as before the result will not be, any different." (For further explanation, see (Surah Al-Baqarah: Ayat 210), (Surah Al-Anaam: Ayats 7-9, 27-28, 158), (Surah Yunus: Ayat 19), (Surah Al-Muminun: Ayats 99-100).

24. The allusion is to what Allah had said, addressing Satan, at the creation of Adam: In (Ayats 69-88 of Surah Suad) the whole story of that time has been related. When Satan refused to prostrate himself before Adam and asked for respite till Resurrection in order to seduce mankind, Allah had replied: "The truth is this, and the truth only I speak, that I shall fill Hell with you and all those who follow you from among mankind."

The word ajmain (all together) here does not mean that all jinns and all men will be cast into Hell, but it means that the satans and the men who follow them, will be cast into Hell all together.

فَذُوْقُوْا بِمَا نَسِيْتُمْ لِقَآءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هٰذَا ۚ اِنَّا نَسِيْنٰكُمْ وَذُوْقُوْا عَذَابَ الْخُلْدِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ 14

(32:14) So taste the chastisement on account of your forgetting the encounter of this Day.[25] We, too, have forgotten you. Taste the eternal chastisement as a requital for your misdeeds."

25. That is, "You became so absorbed in pleasure-seeking in the world that you totally forgot that you had to meet your Lord on this Day."

إِنَّمَا يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهَا خَرُّوا سُجَّدًا وَسَبَّحُوا بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَهُمْ لَا
يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ۩ 15

(32:15) None believes in Our Signs except those who, when they are given good counsel through Our verses, fall down prostrate and celebrate the praise of their Lord and do not wax proud.[26]

26. In other words, they do not regard it as below their dignity to give up their false notions and believe in Allah's revelations and adopt His service and obedience. Their conceit does not hinder them from accepting the truth and obeying their Lord.

تَتَجَافَىٰ جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا ۖ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ
يُنفِقُونَ 16

(32:16) Their sides forsake their beds, and they call upon their Lord in fear and hope,[27] and expend (in charity) out of the sustenance We have granted them.[28]

27. That is, they worship their Lord instead of enjoying sensuous pleasures at night. They are not like the worldworshipers, who seek entertainments in music and dancing, drinking and merry-making, in the night in order to get relief from the day's fatigue and labor and toil. Instead, when they are free from their day's work and duties, they devote themselves to the adoration of their Lord, spend their nights in His remembrance, tremble out of fear of Him, and pin all their hopes on Him. "Who forsake their beds" does not mean that they do not sleep at all at night, but that they spend a part of the night in Allah's worship.

28. In the original, rizq means lawful provisions. Unlawful provisions have nowhere been called rizq by Allah. The verse therefore means: They spend from whatever little or much of pure provisions We have given to them; they do not overspend and do not grab unlawful wealth in order to meet their expenses.

فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُم مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ ۚ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ 17

(32:17) No one knows what delights of the eyes are kept hidden for them as a reward for their deeds.[29]

29. Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi and Imam Ahmad have in different ways cited on the authority of Abu Hurairah that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Allah says: I have made ready for My righteous servants that which has neither been seen by the eye, nor heard by the ear, nor ever conceived by any man." The same thing has been reported with a little difference in wording by Abu Said Khudri, Mughirah bin Shubah and Sahl bin Saad

asSaidi from the Prophet (peace be upon him) and related with authentic links by Muslim. Ahmed, Ibn Jarir and Tirmidhi.

أَفَمَنْ كَانَ مُؤْمِنًا كَمَنْ كَانَ فَاسِقًا ۚ لَا يَسْتَوُۥنَ 18

(32:18) Would a true believer be like him who was an evil-doer?[30] Surely they are not equal.[31]

30. Here mumin (believer) and fasiq (sinner) have been used as two contrasting terms. Mumin is he who believes in Allah as his Lord and the One and only deity and adopts obedience of the law which Allah has sent down through His Prophets. Contrary to this, fasiq is he who adopts the attitude of fisq (disobedience, rebellion, independence and obedience to others than Allah).

31. That is, "They can neither have the same way of thinking and life in the world nor can they be treated alike by God in the Hereafter."

أَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَعَمِلُوا۟ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ فَلَهُمْ جَنَّٰتُ ٱلْمَأْوَىٰ نُزُلًۢا بِمَا كَانُوا۟ يَعْمَلُونَ 19

(32:19) As for those who believe and act righteously, theirs shall be Gardens to dwell in,[32] a hospitality to reward them for their deeds.

32. That is, "The Gardens will not merely be a means of entertainment for them, but the same will be their dwellingplaces in which they will live for ever."

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فَسَقُوا۟ فَمَأْوَىٰهُمُ ٱلنَّارُ ۖ كُلَّمَآ أَرَادُوٓا۟ أَن يَخْرُجُوا۟ مِنْهَآ أُعِيدُوا۟ فِيهَا وَ

قِيلَ لَهُمْ ذُوقُوا۟ عَذَابَ ٱلنَّارِ ٱلَّذِى كُنتُم بِهِۦ تُكَذِّبُونَ 20

(32:20) As for the evil-doers, their refuge shall be the Fire. Every time they want to escape from it they shall be driven back and shall be told: "Taste the chastisement of the Fire which you used to reject as a lie."

وَلَنُذِيقَنَّهُم مِّنَ ٱلْعَذَابِ ٱلْأَدْنَىٰ دُونَ ٱلْعَذَابِ ٱلْأَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ 21

(32:21) We shall certainly have them taste some chastisement in this world in addition to the greater chastisement (of the Hereafter); perhaps they will retract (from their transgression).[33]

33. "The greater punishment" is the torment of the Hereafter, which will be imposed on the guilty ones in consequence of disbelief and disobedience. "Nearer punishment", in contrast, implies those calamities which afflict man even in this world, e.g., diseases in the life of individuals, deaths of the near and dear ones, serious accidents, losses, failures, etc. and

storms, earthquakes, floods, epidemics, famines, riots, wars and many other disasters, in collective life, which affect hundreds of thousands of the people simultaneously. The reason given for sending these calamities is that the people should take heed even before they are involved in the "greater torment" and give up the attitude and way of life in consequence of which they will have to suffer the greater torment ultimately. In other words, it means this: Allah has not kept man in perfect security in the world so that he may live in full peace, and become involved in the misunderstanding that there is no power above him, which can cause him harm. But Allah has so arranged things that He sends disasters and calamities on individuals as well as on nations and countries from time to time, which give man the feeling that he is helpless and that there is about him an All- Powerful Sovereign Who is ruling His universal kingdom. These calamities remind each individual and groups and nation that there is another Power above them Who is controlling their destinies. Everything has not been placed at man's disposal. The real Power is in the hand of the Sovereign. When a calamity from Him descends on man, you can neither avert it by any artifice, nor can escape from it by invoking a jinn, or a spirit, or a god or goddess, or a prophet or saint. Considered in this light, these calamities are not mere calamities but warnings of God, which are sent to make man conscious of the reality and to remove his misunderstandings. If man learns a lesson from these and corrects his belief and conduct here in the world, he will not have to face the greater torment of God in the Hereafter.

وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذُكِّرَ بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهٖ ثُمَّ اَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا ؕ اِنَّا مِنَ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ مُنْتَقِمُوْنَ ع 22

(32:22) And who is more unjust than he who is given good counsel through the Signs of his Lord and yet he turns away from them?[34] Surely We will exact full retribution from such criminals.

34. "The signs of his Lord" include all kinds of the signs. A perusal of all the Quranic verses in this regard shows that these signs are of the following six kinds:

(1) The signs which are found in everything from the earth to the heavens.

(2) The sign which are found in man's own creation and in his constitution and body.

(3) The signs which are found in man's intuition, his unconscious and subconscious mind and in his moral concepts.

(4) The signs which are found in the continuous experience of human history.

(5) The signs which are found in the coming down of the earthly and heavenly calamities on man.

(6) And, over and above all these, the revelations which Allah sent through His Prophets so that man may be made conscious in a rational way of those realities, which are pointed out by all the above-mentioned signs.

All these signs proclaim consistently and clearly: "O man, you are neither without God, nor the servant of many gods, but your God is only One God: no other way of life is correct for you except the way of His service and obedience. You have not been left to live a free and

independent and irresponsible life in this world, but you have to appear before yow God and render an account of your deeds after your life-activity here has come to an end, and be rewarded or punished accordingly. Therefore, it is in yow own interest that you should follow the guidance which your God has sent through His Prophets and His Books for your instruction and desist from an independent way of lift." Now, obviously, the man who has been warned in so many different ways, for whose admonition countless different signs have been provided, and who has been blessed with the eyes to see and the ears to hear and the mind to think, and yet he closes his eyes to all these signs, and closes his ears to the admonitions of his well-wishers, and uses his mind for inventing stupid and blind philosophies only can be a wretched and wicked person. He only deserves to be given full punishment for rebellion when he appears before his God after the expiry of the period of test in the world.

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ فَلَا تَكُنْ فِيْ مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْ لِّقَآئِهٖ وَجَعَلْنٰهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِيْٓ
اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ۚ 23

(32:23) Verily We bestowed the Book upon Moses. So entertain no doubt if (the Prophet Muhammad) received the same.[35] We had made that Book a guidance for the Children of Israel,[36]

35. The address apparently is to the Prophet (peace be upon him), but the real addressees are the people who doubted his prophethood and the revelation of the divine Book to him. From here the discourse turns to the same theme that was mentioned in the beginning of the Surah (Ayats 2-3). The disbelievers of Makkah were saying: "No book has come down to Muhammad (peace be upon him) from Allah. He has himself forged it, but claims that it has been sent down by Allah." The first answer to this was given in the initial verses. This is the second answer. The first thing said in this regard is: "O Prophet, these ignorant people regard it as impossible that a Book should be sent down to you, and want that every other person also should at least be involved in suspicion about it even if he does not reject it altogether. But the revelation of a Book to a servant from Allah is not a novel and new event, which might have occurred for the first time today in human history. Before this, Books have been sent down to several Prophets, the most well-known among these being the Book which was sent down to the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). A Book of the same nature has been sent down to you now. Therefore, there is nothing odd and strange in this, which may cause doubts in the minds of the people."

36. That is, "That Book was made a means of guidance for the children of Israel, and this Book, likewise, has been sent down for your guidance." As has already been elucidated in (Ayat 3), the full meaning of this verse can be understood only if one keeps in view the historical background. History bears evidence, and the disbelievers of Makkah also were not unaware, that the children of Israel had been passing miserable lives for centuries in Egypt. At such a Juncture, Allah raised the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) among them, and delivered them from bondage. Then He sent down the Book to them, because of which the same very suppressed and subdued nation received guidance and became a prominent

nation in the world. Alluding to this historical background, the Arabs are being told: "Just as that Book was sent for the guidance of the Israelites, so has this Book been sent for your guidance."

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ اَئِمَّةً يَّهْدُوْنَ بِاَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوْا ؕ قف وَكَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يُوْقِنُوْنَ 24

(32:24) and when they remained steadfast and firmly believed in Our Signs, We created among them leaders who guided people by Our command.[37]

37. That is, "Whatever progress the children of Israel made and whatever heights they attained by that Book, was not simply due to the reason that a Book had been sent among them. It was not an amulet that they might have hung around their necks and they might have started ascending the steps of glory under its good and protective influence. But the glory was the direct result of their firm faith in the revelations of Allah, and of the patience and perseverance that they showed in following the divine commandments. Among the Israelites, the leadership also belonged to only those who were true believers of the Book of Allah and were not tempted at all by the greed of worldly gains and enjoyments. When in their love of the truth they stood firm against every danger, endured every loss and affliction, and exerted their utmost against every hostile force, from the lusts of their own selves to the external enemies of the true faith, then only did they become the leaders of the world. The object is to warn the disbelievers of Arabia that just as the coming of the Book of Allah had decided the destinies of the children of Israel, so will this Book decide the destinies among you. Now only those people will become the leaders, who will believe in it and follow the truth presented by it patiently and resolutely. Those who turn away from it are destined to end up in failure and wretchedness.

اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فِيْمَا كَانُوْا فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ 25

(32:25) Surely your Lord will judge among them on the Day of Resurrection concerning the matters about which the Children of Israel used to differ.[38]

38. The allusion is to the differences and schisms in which the children of Israel were involved after they became deprived of the faith and belief and gave up obedience of their righteous leaders and were given to the worship of the world. One result of this is obvious and before the whole world: they suffer from disgrace and infamy and misfortune; the other result is that which is not known, to the world: it will appear on the Day of Resurrection.

اَوَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنَ الْقُرُوْنِ يَمْشُوْنَ فِيْ مَسٰكِنِهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ
لَاٰيٰتٍ ؕ اَفَلَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ 26

(32:26) Did (these historical events) not make them realise that We destroyed many nations before them amidst whose dwellings they now move about?[39] Surely there are many Signs in this. Are they unable to hear?

39. That is, "Have they not learned any lesson from this continuous experience of history that to whichever nation a messenger came, the decision of its destiny became dependent upon the attitude it adopted with regard to him? If it rejected its messenger, it could not escape its doom. The only people to escape were those who believed in the messenger. Those who disbelieved became an object of warning for ever and ever."

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا نَسُوقُ الْمَاءَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الْجُرُزِ فَنُخْرِجُ بِهِ زَرْعًا تَأْكُلُ مِنْهُ أَنْعَامُهُمْ
وَأَنْفُسُهُمْ ۖ أَفَلَا يُبْصِرُونَ 27

(32:27) Have they not seen that We drive water to the parched land, thereby bringing forth crops which they and their cattle eat? Are they unable to see?[40]

40. Keeping the context in view it becomes obvious that this thing has not been mentioned here for the sake of providing an argument for the life-after-death, as generally found in the Quran, but in this context its object is different. This, in fact, contains a subtle allusion to this effect: "Just as a person seeing a barren land cannot imagine that it will ever bloom and swell with vegetation, but a single shower of the rain sent by God changes its color altogether, so is the case with the message of Islam at this juncture. People think that it is not going to gain ground, but a single manifestation of Allah's power and grace will cause it to gain such glory that people will be amazed at its progress."

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَىٰ هَٰذَا الْفَتْحُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ 28

(32:28) They say: "If you are truthful, (tell us) when will the Judgement come?"[41]

41. That is, "You say that Allah's succor will at last reach you and your rejectors will be struck down by His wrath. Then, tell us: When will this happen? When will judgment be passed between you and us?"

قُلْ يَوْمَ الْفَتْحِ لَا يَنفَعُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِيمَانُهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ 29

(32:29) Tell them: "If the unbelievers were to believe on the Day of Judgement that will not avail them. For then they will be granted no respite."[42]

42. That is, "It is not a thing for which you should feel so impatient and restless. When the torment of Allah comes, you will get no time to mend your ways. Make the best of the time which is available before the coming of the torment. If you will believe only when you see the torment, it will not avail you anything then."

فَاَعۡرِضۡ عَنۡهُمۡ وَانۡتَظِرۡ اِنَّهُمۡ مُّنۡتَظِرُوۡنَ ع 30

(32:30) So (leave them to themselves and) turn away from them and wait; they too are waiting.

33. Surah Al Ahzab (The Clans)

Name

The Surah derives its name Al-Ahzab from verse 20.

Period of Revelation

The Surah discusses three important events which are: the Battle of the Trench (or Al-Ahzab: the Clans), which took place in Shawwal, A. H. 5; the raid on Bani Quraizah, which was made in Dhil-Qa'dah, A. H. 5; and the Holy Prophet's marriage with Hadrat Zainab, which also was contracted in Dhil-Qa'dah, A. H. 5. These historical events accurately determine the period of the revelation of this Surah.

Historical Background

The Islamic army's setback in the Battle of Uhud (A. H. 3) that resulted from the error of the archers appointed by the Holy Prophet so boosted up the morale of the Arab pagans and the Jews and the hypocrites that they started entertaining the hope that they would soon be able to exterminate Islam and the Muslims completely. Their high state of morale can be judged from the events that occurred in the first year after Uhud. Hardly two months had passed then the tribe of Bani Asad of Najd began to make preparations for a raid on Madinah, and the Holy Prophet had to dispatch an expedition under Abu Salamah to counteract them. In Safar A. H. 4 some people of the tribes of Adal and Qarah asked the Holy Prophet to send some men to instruct them in Islam. Accordingly six of the Companions were allowed to accompany them for the purpose. But when they reached Raji (a place between Rabigh and Jeddah), they summoned Hudhail against them, who killed four of the Companions, and took the other two (Hadrat Khubaib bin Adi and Hadrat Zaid bin ad-Dathinnah) to Makkah and sold them to the enemy. Then in the same month of Safar, on the request of a chief of Bani Amir, the Holy Prophet sent another deputation of 40 (according to others, 70) preachers, consisting of the Ansar young men, to Najd. But they were also betrayed. The people of Usayyah and Ri'l and Dhakwan, tribes of Bani Sulaim, surrounded them suddenly at Bir Maunah and slew all of them. Meanwhile the Jewish tribe of Bani an-Nadir of Madinah, getting encouragement, continued to commit breaches of the treaties; so much so that in Rabi'ul Awwal, A.H. 4, they plotted against the life of the Holy Prophet himself. Then in Jamadi al-Ula, A. H. 4, Bani Thalbah and Bani Muharib, the two tribes of Bani Ghatafan, started making preparations to attack Madinah and the Holy Prophet had to go to punish them. Thus, after their setback at Uhud, the Muslims went on encountering repercussions continuously for seven to eight months.

However, it was the Holy Prophet's determination and wisdom and his great Companions' spirit of sacrifice that changed these adverse conditions completely within a short span of time. The economic boycott by the Arabs had made life hard for the people of Madinah. All the polytheistic tribes around Madinah were becoming rebellious. Inside Madinah itself the Jews and the hypocrites were beat upon mischief. But the successive steps taken by a handful of the sincere Muslims, under the leadership of the Holy Prophet, not only restored the image of strength of Islam in Arabia but also increased it manifold.

Raids Preceding the Battle of the Trench

The first such step was taken immediately after the Battle of Uhud. The very next day when quite a large number of Muslims lay wounded and the martyrdom of the near and dear ones was being mourned in many houses, and the Holy Prophet himself was injured and sad at the martyrdom of his uncle, Hadrat Hamzah, he called out to the devoted servants of Islam to accompany him in pursuit of the pagans so as to deter them from returning and attacking Madinah again. The Holy Prophet's assessment was absolutely correct. He knew that, although the Quraish had retreated without taking any advantage of their almost complete victory, they would certainly regret their folly when they would halt and consider the whole matter coolly on the way, and would return to attack Madinah again. Therefore, he decided to go in pursuit of them, and 630 of the Muslims at once volunteered to accompany him. When they reached Hamra al-Asad on the way to Makkah and camped there for three days, the Holy Prophet came to know through a sympathetic non- Muslim that Abu Sufyan had stayed at Ar-Rauha, 36 miles short of Madinah, with an army 2,978 strong: they were regretting their error and were, in fact, planning to return and attack Madinah once again. But when they heard that the Holy Prophet was coming in pursuit of them with an army, they lost heart and gave up their plan. Thus, not only were the Quraish deterred by this action but the other enemies living around Madinah also realized that the Muslims were being led by a person, who was highly well informed, wise and resolute, and that the Muslims were ever ready to lay down their lives at his command.(For further details, see Introduction to Surah Al-i-`Imran and E.N. 122 thereof).

Then as soon as the Bani Asad started making Preparations for a raid on Madinah, the Holy Prophet's secret agents gave him timely information about their intention. Thus, before they could come in force to attack Madinah, he sent an army 150 strong, under Hadrat Abu Salamah (the first husband of Hadrat Umm Salamah) to punish them. They took Bani Asad by surprise, who fled in panic leaving all their possessions behind, which fell into the Muslim hands.

After this came the turn of the Bani an-Nadir. The day they plotted against the life of the Holy Prophet, and the secret was disclosed, the Holy Prophet ordered them to leave Madinah within ten days and warned that anyone who remained behind after that would be put to death. Abdullah bin Ubayy, the chief of the hypocrites of Madinah, encouraged them to defy the order and refuse to leave Madinah. He even promised to help them with 2,000 men, and assured them that the Bani Ghatafan from Najd also would come to their aid. Accordingly, the Bani an- Nadir sent word that they would not leave no matter what the Holy Prophet might do.

As soon as the time limit of ten days come to an end, the Holy Prophet laid siege to their quarters, but none of their supporters had the courage to come to their rescue. At last, they surrendered on condition that every three of them would be allowed to load a camel with whatever they could carry and go away leaving the rest of their possessions behind. Thus, the whole suburbs of the city which were inhabited by the Bani an-Nadir, and their gardens and their fortresses and other properties fell to the Muslims, and the people of this treacherous tribe became scattered in Khyber, Wad il Qura and Syria.

Then the Holy Prophet turned his attention to the Bani Ghatafan, who were preparing for a war against Madinah. He took 400 of the Muslims and overtook them at Dhat ar-Riqa. They were so taken by surprise that they fled their houses without a struggle and took refuge in the mountains.

After this in Shaban A. H. 4, the Holy Prophet went forth to Badr to fight Abu Sufyan. At the end of the Battle of Uhud, he had challenged the Holy Prophet and the Muslims, saying, "We shall again meet you in combat at Badr next year." In reply the Holy Prophet announced through a Companion: "All right: we accept your challenge." Accordingly, at the appointed time he reached Badr with 1,500 of the Muslims. From the other side, Abu Sufyan left Makkah with an army of 2,000 men, but could not have the courage to march beyond Marr-az-Zahran (modern, Wadi Fatimah). The Holy Prophet waited for him at Badr for eight days; the Muslims during these days did profitable business with a trading party. This incident helped more than restored the image of strength of the Muslims that had been tarnished at Uhud. It also made the whole of Arabia realize that the Quraish alone could no longer resist Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings). (Please also refer to E.N. 124 of Al-i-`Imran).

This image and position of the Muslims was further strengthened by another event. Dumat al-Jandal (modern, Al-Jauf) was an important place at the border between Arabia and Syria. When the caravans of the Arabs, trading between Iraq in the south and Syria and Egypt in the north, passed that way, they were harassed and looted by the natives. In Rabi al- Awwal, A. H. 5, the Holy Prophet himself went to punish them with an army of 1,000 men. They could not muster up courage to come out and fight him and, therefore, fled the place. This caused the whole of northern Arabia to dread the power of Islam, and the tribes began to realize that the great power emerging from Al-Madinah was formidable and could no longer be resisted by one or a few of the tribes.

The Battle of the Trench

Such were the conditions when the Battle of the Trench took place. It was in fact a combined raid by many of the Arab tribes, who wanted to crush the power of Madinah. It had been instigated by the leaders of the Bani an-Nadir, who had settled in Khyber after their banishment from Madinah. They went round to the Quraish and Ghatafan and Hudhail and many other tribes and induced them to gather all their forces together and attack Madinah jointly. Thus, in Shawwal, A. H. 5, an unprecedentedly large army of the Arab tribes marched against the small city of Madinah. From the north came Jews of Bani an-Nadir and Bani Qainuqa who after their banishment from Madinah, had settled in Khaiber and Wad il Qura. From the east advanced the tribes of Ghatafan, Bani Sulaim, Fazarah, Murrah, Ashja, Sad, Asad, etc. and from the south the Quraish, along with a large force of their allies. Together they numbered from ten to twelve thousand men.

Had it been a sudden attack, it would have been disastrous. But the Holy Prophet was not unaware of this in Madinah. His intelligence men and the sympathizers of the Islamic movement and the people influenced by it were present in every tribe, who kept him informed of the enemy's movements. Even before the enemy could reach his city, he got a trench dug out on the north-west of Madinah in six days, and having the Mount Salat their back, took up a defensive position with 3,000 men in the protection of the Trench. To the

south of Madinah there were many gardens (even now there are) so that it could not be attacked from that side. To the east there are lava rocks which are impassable for a large army. The same is the case with the south western side. The attack, therefore, could be made only from the eastern and western sides of the Uhud, which the Holy Prophet had secured by digging a trench. The disbelievers were not at all aware that they would have to counter the trench outside Madinah. This kind of a defensive stratagem was unknown to the Arabs. Thus, they had to lay a long siege in winter for which they had not come prepared.

After this, only one alternative remained with the disbelievers: to incite the Jewish tribe of Bani Quraizah, who inhabited the south eastern part of the city, to rebellion. As the Muslims had entered a treaty with them that in case of an attack on Madinah they would defend the city along with them, the Muslims had made no defensive arrangement there and had even sent their families to take shelter in the forts situated on that side. The invaders perceived this weakness of the Islamic defenses. They sent Huyayy bin Akhtab, the Jewish leader of the Bani an-Nadir, to the Bani Quraizah so as to induce them to break the treaty and join the war. In the beginning, they refused to oblige and said that they had a treaty with Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) who had faithfully abided by it and given them no cause for complaint. But when Ibn Akhtab said to them, "Look, I have summoned the united force of entire Arabia against him: this is a perfect opportunity to get rid of him. If you lose it, you will never have another opportunity," the anti Islamic Jewish mind prevailed over every moral consideration and the Bani Quraizah were persuaded to break the treaty.

The Holy Prophet received news of this. He at once told Sad bin Ubadah, Sad bin Muadh, Abdullah bin Rawahah and Khawwat bin Jubair, chiefs of the Ansar, to go and find out the truth. He advised them that if they found Bani Quraizah still loyal to the treaty, they should return and say so openly before the Muslim army; however, if they found that they were bent upon treachery they should only inform him so that the common Muslims would not be disheartened. On reaching there the Companions found the Bani Quraizah fully bent on mischief They told the Companions openly, "There is no agreement and no treaty between us and Muhammad." At this they returned to the Islamic army and submitted their report to the Holy Prophet, saying, "'Adal and Qarah." That is, "The Quraizah are bent upon doing what the Adal and Qarah had done with the preachers of Islam at Raji."

This news spread among the Muslims and caused great consternation among them, for they had been encircled and their city had been endangered on the side where there existed no defensive arrangement and where they had also sent their families to take shelter in the forts. This further increased the activities of the hypocrites and they started making psychological attacks to break the morale of the Muslims. One said, "How strange! We were being foretold that the lands of Caesar and Chosroes would fall to us, but here we are that not one of us can go out even to relieve himself." Another one asked for permission to leave his post at the Trench so that he could go and protect his own house which was in danger. Another one started making secret propaganda to the effect: "Settle your affair with the invaders yourselves and hand over Muhammad to them." This was a highly critical hour of trial, which exposed every person who harbored any hypocrisy in his heart. Only the true and sincere Muslims remained firm and steadfast in their resolve and devotion.

In the meantime Nuaim bin Masud, a member of the Ashja branch of the Ghatafan tribe, became a Muslim and came before the Holy Prophet and submitted: "No one as yet knows that I have embraced Islam: You can take from me whatever service you please." The Holy Prophet replied: "Go and sow the seeds of discord among the enemy."' So, first of all, Nu'aim went to the Quraizah with whom he was on friendly terms, and said to them, "The Quraish and the Ghatafan can become wearied of the siege and go back, and they will lose nothing, but you have to live here with the Muslims. Just consider what will be your position if the matter turns that way. Therefore, I would advise you not to join the enemy until the outsiders should send some of their prominent men as hostages to you." This had the desired effect upon the Bani Quraizah and they decided to demand hostages from the united front of the tribes. Then he went to the chiefs of the Quraish and the Ghatafan and said to them, "The Bani Quraizah seem to be slack and irresolute. May be they demand some men as hostage from you, and then hand them over to Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) to settle their affair with him. Therefore, be very firm and cautious in your dealing with them." This made the leaders of the united front suspicious of Bani Quraizah. and they sent them a message, saying, "We are tired of the long siege; let there be a decisive battle; let us, therefore, make a general assault simultaneously from both the sides." The Bani Quraizah sent back the word, saying, "We cannot afford to join the war unless you hand over some of your prominent men to us as hostages." The leaders of the united front became convinced that what Nuaim had said was true. They refused to send hostages. And the Bani Quraizah, on the other side, also felt that Nuaim had given them the correct counsel. Thus, the strategy worked: it divided the enemy against itself.

The siege was prolonged for more than 25 days. It was winter. The supply of food and water and forage was becoming more and more scarce everyday and division in the camp was also a great strain on the state of morale of the besiegers. Then, suddenly one night a severe windstorm accompanied by thunder and lightning hit the camp. It added to the cold and darkness. The wind overthrew the tents and put the enemy in disarray. They could not stand this severe blow of nature. They left the battleground even during the night and returned to their homes. When the Muslims awoke in the morning, there was not a single enemy soldier to be seen on the battlefield. The Holy Prophet, finding the battlefield completely empty, said: "The Quraish will never be able to attack you after this: now you will take the offensive." This was a correct assessment of the situation. Not only the Quraish but the united front of all the enemy tribes had made their final assault against Islam and had failed. Now they could no longer dare invade Madinah; now the Muslims were on the offensive.

Raid on Bani Quraizah

When the Holy Prophet returned from the Trench, Gabriel came to him in the early afternoon with the Divine Command the Muslims should not lay aside the arms yet but should deal with the Bani Quraizah as well. On receipt of this Command, the Holy Prophet got announced: "Everyone who is steadfast in obedience should not offer his Asr Prayer till he reaches the locality of the Bani Quraizah." Immediately after this, he dispatched Hadrat Ali with a contingent of soldiers as vanguard towards the Quraizah. When they reached there, the Jews climbed on to their roof tops and started hurling abuses on the Holy Prophet and the Muslims, but their invectives could not save them from the consequences of their treachery. They had committed breach of the treaty right at the most critical moment of the

war, joined hands with the invaders and endangered the entire population of Madinah. When they saw the contingent of Hadrat Ali, they thought that they had come only to overawe them. But when the whole Islamic army arrived under the command of the Holy Prophet himself and laid siege to their quarters, they were very frightened. They could not stand the severity of the siege for more than two or three weeks. At last, they surrendered themselves to the Holy Prophet on the condition that they would accept whatever decision Hadrat Sad bin Muadh, the chief of the Aus, would give. They had accepted Hadrat Sad as their judge because in the pre-Islamic days the Aus and the Quraizah had been confederates and they hoped that in view of the past ties he would help them quit Madinah as had happened in the case of the Bani Qainuqa and the Bani an-Nadir before. The people of the Aus themselves wished that Hadrat Sad treat their previous allies leniently. But Hadrat Sad had just experienced and seen how the two Jewish tribes who had been allowed to leave Madinah previously had instigated the other tribes living around Madinah and summoned the united front of ten to twelve thousand men against the Muslims. He was also aware how treacherously this last Jewish tribe had behaved right on the occasion when the city was under attack from outside and threatened the safety of the whole of its population. Therefore, he decreed that all the male members of the Quraizah should be put to death, their women and children taken prisoners, and their properties distributed among the Muslims. The sentence was carried out duly. When the Muslims entered their strongholds they found that the treacherous people had collected 1,500 swords, 300 coats of mail, 2,000 spears and 1,500 shields in order to join the war. If Allah's succor had not reached the Muslims, all this military equipment would have been used to attack Madinah from the rear right at the time when the polytheists were making preparations for a general assault on the Muslims after crossing the Trench. After this disclosure there remained no doubt that the decision of Hadrat Sad concerning those people was absolutely correct.

Social Reforms

Though the period of two years between the Battles of Uhud and the Trench was a period of disturbance and turmoil and the Holy Prophet and his Companions could hardly relax in peace and security even for a day, the work of reform as a whole and the reconstruction of the Muslim society continued uninterrupted. This was the time when the Islamic laws pertaining to marriage and divorce were complemented; the law of inheritance was introduced, drinking and gambling were prohibited, and the new laws and regulations concerning many other aspects of the economic and social life were enforced.

In this connection, an important thing that needed to be reformed was the question of the adoption of a son. Whoever was adopted by the Arabs as a son was regarded as one of their own offspring: he got share in inheritance; he was treated like a real son and real brother by the adopted mother and the adopted sister; he could not marry the daughter of his adopted father and his widow after his death. And the same was the case if the adopted son died or divorced a wife. The adopted father regarded the woman as his real daughter-in-law. This custom clashed in every detail with the laws of marriage and divorce and inheritance enjoined by Allah in Surahs Al-Baqarah and An-Nisa. It made a person who could get no share in inheritance entitled to it at the expense of those who were really entitled to it. It prohibited marriage between the men and the women who could contract marriage perfectly lawfully. And, above all, it helped spread the immoralities which the Islamic Law wanted to eradicate. For a real mother and a real sister and a real daughter cannot be like

the adopted mother and the adopted sister and the adopted daughter, however one may try to sanctify the adopted relations as a custom. When the artificial relations endued with customary sanctity are allowed to mix freely like the real relations, it cannot but produce evil results. That is why the Islamic law of marriage and divorce, the law of inheritance and the law of the prohibition of adultery required that the concept and custom of regarding the adopted son as the real son should be eradicated completely.

This concept, however, could not be rooted out by merely passing a legal order, saying, The adopted son is not the real son. The centuries old prejudices and superstitions cannot be changed by mere word of mouth. Even if the people had accepted the command that these relations were not the real relations, they would still have looked upon marriage between the adopted mother and the adopted son, the adopted brother and the sister, the adopted father and the daughter, and the adopted father- in-law and the daughter-in- law odious and detestable. Moreover, there would still exist some freedom of mixing together freely. Therefore, it was inevitable that the custom should be eradicated practically, and through the Holy Prophet himself. For no Muslim could ever conceive that a thing done by the Holy Prophet himself, and done by him under Allah's Command, could be detestable. Therefore, a little before the Battle of the Trench, the Holy Prophet was inspired by Allah that he should marry the divorced wife of his adopted son, Zaid bin Harithah (may Allah be pleased with him), and he acted on this Command during the siege of the Bani Quraizah. (The delay probably was caused for the reason that the prescribed waiting period had not yet ended, and in the meantime the Holy Prophet had to become busy in the preparation for war).

Storm of Propaganda at the Marriage of Hadrat Zainab

As soon as the marriage was contracted, there arose a storm of propaganda against the Holy Prophet. The polytheists, the hypocrites and the Jews, all were burning with jealousy at his triumphs which followed one after the other. The way they had been humbled within two years after Uhud, in the Battle of the Trench, and in the affair of the Quraizah, had made them sore at heart. They had also lost hope that they could ever subdue him on the battlefield. Therefore, they seized the question of this marriage as a god send for themselves and thought they would put an end to his moral superiority, which was the real secret of his power and success. Therefore, stories were concocted that Muhammad, God forbid, had fallen in love with his daughter-in-law, and when the son had come to know of this, he divorced his wife, and the father married his daughter-in-law. The propaganda, however, was absurd on the face of it. Hadrat Zainab was the Holy Prophet's first cousin. He had known her from childhood to youth. So, there could be no question of his falling in love with her at first sight. Then he himself had arranged her marriage with Hadrat Zaid under his personal influence, although her whole family had opposed it. They did not like that a daughter of the noble Quraish should be given in marriage to a freed slave. Hadrat Zainab herself was not happy at this arrangement. But everyone had to submit to the Holy Prophet's command. The marriage was solemnized and a precedent was set in Arabia that Islam had raised a freed slave to the status of the Quraishite nobility. If the Holy Prophet had in reality any desire for Hadrat Zainab, there was no need of marrying her to Hadrat Zaid; he himself could have married her. But in spite of all this, the shameless opponents invented stories of love, spread them with great exaggeration and publicized them so vehemently that even some Muslims also began to accept them as true.

Preliminary Commandments of Purdah

The fact that the tales invented by the enemies also became topics of conversation among the Muslims was a clear sign that the element of sensuality in society had crossed all limits. If this malady had not been there, it was not possible that minds would have paid any attention whatever to such absurd and disgusting stories about a righteous and pure person like the Holy Prophet. This was precisely the occasion when the reformative Commandments pertaining to the law of Hijab or Purdah were first enforced in the Islamic society. These reforms were introduced in this Surah and complemented a year later in Surah An-Nur, when a slander was made on the honor of Hadrat Aishah.(For further details, see Introduction to Surah An-Nur).

Domestic Affairs of the Holy Prophet

There were two other problems which needed attention at that time. Though apparently they pertained to the Holy Prophet's domestic life, it was necessary to resolve them for the domestic and mental peace of the person, who was exerting every effort to promote the cause of Allah's Religion and was day and night absorbed in this great mission. Therefore, Allah took these two problems also officially in His own hand.

The first problem was that economically the Holy Prophet at that time was in straitened circumstances. During the first four years he had no source of income whatever. In 4 A. H. after the banishment of the Bani an-Nadir, a portion of their evacuated lands was reserved for his use by the Command of Allah, but it was not enough for his family requirements. On the other hand, the duties of the office of Prophethood were so onerous that they were absorbing all his energies of the mind and body and heart and every moment of his time, and he could not make any effort at all for earning his livelihood. In conditions such as these when his wives happened to disturb his mental peace because of economic hardships he would feel doubly strained and taxed.

The other problem was that before marrying Hadrat Zainab, he had four wives already in the houses: Hadrat Saudah, Hadrat Aishah, Hadrat Hafsah, and Hadrat Umm Salamah. Hadrat Zainab was his fifth wife. At this the opponents raised the objection, and the Muslims also started entertaining doubts, that as for others it had been forbidden to keep more than four wives at a time, but how the Holy Prophet himself had taken a fifth wife also.

Subject Matter and Topics

These were the questions that were engaging the attention of the Holy Prophet and the Muslims at the time Surah Al-Ahzab was revealed, and replies to the same form the subject matter of this Surah.

A perusal of the theme and the background shows that the Surah is not a single discourse which was sent down in one piece but it consists of several injunctions and commandments and discourses, which were sent down, one after the other, in connection with the important events of the time, and then were put together in one Surah. Its following parts stand out clearly distinguished from one another:

1. Verses 1-8 seem to have been sent down before the Battle of the Trench. Their perusal, keeping the historical background in view, shows that at the time of their revelation Hadrat Zaid had already divorced Hadrat Zainab. The Holy Prophet was feeling the necessity that the concepts and customs and superstitions of ignorance concerning the adoption of the son should be eradicated, and he was also feeling that the delicate and deep sentiments the people cherished about the adopted relations merely on emotional grounds would not be rooted out until he himself took the initiative to eradicate the custom practically. But at the same time he was hesitant and considering seriously that if he married the divorced wife of Hadrat Zaid then, the hypocrites and the Jews and the mushriks who were already bent on mischief would get a fresh excuse to start a propaganda campaign against Islam. This was the occasion of the revelation of vv. 1-8.
2. In verses 9-27 an appraisal has been made of the Battle of the Trench and the raid against the Bani Quraizah. This is a clear proof that these verses were sent down after these events.
3. The discourse contained in vv. 28-35 consists of two parts. In the first part, Allah has given a notice to the wives of the Holy Prophet, who were being impatient of the straitened circumstances, to the effect: "Choose between the world and its adornments, and Allah, His Prophet and the Hereafter. If you seek the former, you should say so openly: you will not be kept back in hardship even for a day, but will be sent off gracefully. And if you seek the latter, you should cooperate with Allah and His messenger and bear patiently." In the second part, initial steps were taken towards the social reforms whose need was being felt by the minds moulded in the Islamic pattern themselves. In this regard, reform was started from the house of the Holy Prophet himself and his wives were commanded to avoid behaving and conducting themselves in the ways of the pre Islamic days of ignorance, ,to remain in their houses with dignity, and to exercise great caution in their conversation with the other men. This was the beginning of the Commandments of Purdah.
4. Verses 36-48 deal with the Holy Prophet's marriage with Hadrat Zainab. In this section the opponents' objection about this marriage have been answered; the doubts that were being created in the minds of the Muslims have been removed; the Muslims have been acquainted with the Holy Prophet's position and status; and the Holy Prophet himself has been counseled to exercise patience on the false propaganda of the disbelievers and the hypocrites.
5. In verse 49 a clause of the law of divorce has been laid down. This is a unique verse which was sent down on some occasion probably in connection with the same events.
6. In verses 50-52 a special regulation of marriage has been laid down for the Holy Prophet, which points out that he is an exception to the several restrictions that have been imposed on the other Muslims in regard to marital life.
7. In verses 53-55 the second step was taken towards social reform. It consists of the following injunctions: Restriction on the other men to visit the houses of the Holy Prophet's wives; Islamic etiquette concerning visits and invitations; the law that only the near relatives could visit the holy wives in their houses; as for the other men, they could speak to or ask them a thing from behind a curtain; the injunction that the Holy Prophet's wives were forbidden for the Muslims like their mothers; and none could marry any of them after him.

8. In verses 56-57 warning was given to stop criticizing the Holy Prophet's marriage and his domestic life, and the believers instructed not to indulge in fault finding like the enemies of Islam, but to invoke the blessings of Allah for their Prophet; moreover, they were instructed that they should avoid falsely accusing one another even among themselves, not to speak of the person of the Prophet.
9. In verse 59 the third step for social reform was taken. All the Muslim women were commanded that they should come out well covered with the outer garments and covering their faces whenever they came out of their houses for a genuine need.

After this till the end of the Surah the hypocrites and other foolish and mean people have been rebuked for the propaganda that they were carrying on at that time against Islam and the Muslims.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

یٰۤاَیُّہَا النَّبِیُّ اتَّقِ اللّٰہَ وَلَا تُطِعِ الۡکٰفِرِیۡنَ وَالۡمُنٰفِقِیۡنَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ کَانَ عَلِیۡمًا حَکِیۡمًا ۙ 1

(33:1) O Prophet,[1] fear Allah and do not obey the unbelievers and the hypocrites. Verily Allah is All-Knowing, Most Wise.[2]

1. As we have mentioned in the introduction to the Surah, these verses were sent down at a time when Zaid had already divorced Zainab. The Prophet (peace be upon him) was himself feeling, and Allah had also inspired him with this, that it was the right time for striking at the root of the tradition and customs of ignorance regarding the adopted relations, and that he should take the initiative and marry the divorced wife of his adopted son (Zaid) so that the custom was completely eradicated. But the reason why he was hesitant in this regard was the fear that this would provide a strong excuse to the disbelievers and the hypocrites; who were already burning with jealousy at his successive victories, to start a propaganda campaign against him. This fear was not due to any apprehension for personal defamation, but for the reason that it would harm Islam; it would cause mistrust of Islam among the people who were inclined towards it; it would make the neutral people to join the enemy; and it would cause the weak minded people among the Muslims to be involved in doubts and suspicions. Therefore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) thought it was unwise to take a step for the eradication of a custom of ignorance, which would harm the greater interests and objectives of Islam.

2. In the very first sentence, in the beginning of the discourse, Allah removed all the apprehensions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), as if to say: “We know better what is useful and beneficial for our religion and what is not. We know what would be wise and what unwise in this regard. Therefore, you should not behave in a manner which would suit the disbelievers and the hypocrites, but you should behave in a manner which is according to Our Will. You should fear Us and not the disbelievers and the hypocrites.”

وَّاتَّبِعۡ مَا یُوۡحٰۤی اِلَیۡکَ مِنۡ رَّبِّکَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ کَانَ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ خَبِیۡرًا ۙ 2

(33:2) Follow that which is revealed to you from your Lord. Verily Allah is fully aware of all that you do.[3]

3. This sentence is addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) as well as to the Muslims and the opponents of Islam. It means: "If the Prophet (peace be upon him) earns defamation by acting according to the command of Allah, and bears patiently the attacks of the enemy on his honor, his devoted and sincere services will not remain hidden from Allah. The state of the Muslims who remain steadfast in their loyalty to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and of those who are involved in doubts and suspicions will be known to Allah. And Allah will also not remain unaware of the attempts of the disbelievers and the hypocrites who try to defame the Prophet (peace be upon him)."

وَّتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا 3

(33:3) Put your trust in Allah: Allah is sufficient as Guardian.[4]

4. The addressee of this sentence is again the Prophet (peace be upon him). He is being instructed to the effect: "Carry out the duty that is being entrusted to you with full confidence in Allah, and do not care at all even if the whole world turns hostile against you." When a man comes to know with certainty that a certain command has been given by Allah, he should have the satisfaction that his whole well being and his good lies in its compliance. Then, it is not for him to see and understand its wisdom, but he should carry it out with full confidence in Allah. Allah is enough for him that the servant should entrust all his affairs to Him. He is enough for his guidance as well as help, and He alone is also responsible that the one working under His guidance should never meet with evil consequences.

مَا جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِّنْ قَلْبَيْنِ فِيْ جَوْفِهٖ ۚ وَمَا جَعَلَ اَزْوَاجَكُمُ الّٰٓـِٔيْ تُظٰهِرُوْنَ مِنْهُنَّ
اُمَّهٰتِكُمْ ۚ وَمَا جَعَلَ اَدْعِيَآءَكُمْ اَبْنَآءَكُمْ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ قَوْلُكُمْ بِاَفْوَاهِكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَقُوْلُ
الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ يَهْدِى السَّبِيْلَ 4

(33:4) Allah has never put two hearts within one person's body;[5] nor has He made your wives, whom you compare to your mothers' backs (to divorce them),[6] your true mothers; nor has He made those whom you adopt as sons your own sons.[7] These are only words that you utter with your mouths. But Allah proclaims the Truth and directs you to the Right Path.

5. That is, one and the same person cannot be a believer and a hypocrite, truthful and false, wicked and righteous, at one and the same time. He does not have two hearts in this chest that one should have sincerity in it and the other fearlessness of God. Therefore, a man can have only one kind of character at a time: either he will be a believer or a hypocrite, a disbeliever or a Muslim. Now if you call a believer a hypocrite, or a hypocrite a believer, it will not change the reality. The true character of the person will inevitably remain the same.

6. Zihar is a term in Arabic. In old days when an Arab; in the heat of a domestic quarrel, would say to his wife: "Your back for me is as the back of my mother," it was thought that the woman was no longer lawful for him because he had compared her to his mother. About this Allah says: "A woman does not become a man's mother just because he has called her his mother or compared her to his mother. His mother is the woman who bore him. Only his calling his wife his mother cannot change the reality." See (Surah Al- Mujadilah: Ayats 2-4).

7. This is what is intended to be said. The two preceding sentences are meant to support and emphasize this same point.

ادْعُوهُمْ لِآبَائِهِمْ هُوَ أَقْسَطُ عِندَ اللَّهِ ۚ فَإِن لَّمْ تَعْلَمُوا آبَاءَهُمْ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ
وَمَوَالِيكُمْ ۚ وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا أَخْطَأْتُم بِهِ وَلَٰكِن مَّا تَعَمَّدَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ ۚ
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا 5

(33:5) Call your adopted sons after their true fathers; that is more equitable in the sight of Allah.[8] But if you do not know their true fathers, then regard them as your brethren in faith and as allies.[9] You will not be taken to task for your mistaken utterances, but you will be taken to task for what you say deliberately.[10] Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Compassionate.[11]

8. The first reform introduced in connection with the implementation of this command was that Zaid, the adopted son of the Prophet (peace be upon him), began to be called Zaid bin Harithah, after his real father, instead of Zaid bin Muhammad. Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi and Nasai have related this tradition from Abdullah bin Umar that in the beginning the people called him Zaid bin Muhammad. After the revelation of this verse they began calling him Zaid bin Harithah. Moreover, after this revelation it was forbidden that a person should assign his parentage to any other man than his own real father. Bukhari, Muslim and Abu Daud have related on the authority of Saad bin Abi Waqqas that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Paradise is forbidden for the one who called himself son of another person than his own father." Other traditions bearing on the subject have been related in Ahadith, which have regarded this as a heinous sin.

9. That is, even in such a case it will not be right to ascribe the parentage of a person to someone else.

10. It means: there is no harm if a person is called a son out of love. Likewise, there is no sin if someone calls another one a mother, or a daughter, or sister or brother, etc. out of affection and regard, but if such a thing is said with the intention that the one being called so will be accorded the same status and position and rights and privileges as actually belong to these relations, it would certainly be objectionable and one will be held answerable for it."

11. That is, Allah has forgiven the errors already committed in this regard; no one will be called to account for them. Another meaning is: Allah does not call a people to account for

actions done unintentionally. He will not punish a person for doing something which he did not do intentionally, although apparently it resembled a forbidden act.

اَلنَّبِیُّ اَوۡلٰی بِالۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ مِنۡ اَنۡفُسِہِمۡ وَ اَزۡوَاجُہٗۤ اُمَّہٰتُہُمۡ ؕ وَ اُولُوا الۡاَرۡحَامِ بَعۡضُہُمۡ اَوۡلٰی
بِبَعۡضٍ فِیۡ کِتٰبِ اللّٰہِ مِنَ الۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ وَ الۡمُہٰجِرِیۡنَ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ تَفۡعَلُوۡۤا اِلٰۤی اَوۡلِیٰٓئِکُمۡ مَّعۡرُوۡفًا ؕ
کَانَ ذٰلِکَ فِی الۡکِتٰبِ مَسۡطُوۡرًا 6

(33:6) Surely the Prophet has a greater claim over the believers than they have over each other,[12] and his wives are their mothers.[13] According to the Book of Allah, blood relatives have greater claim over each other than the rest of the believers and the Emigrants (in the cause of Allah), except that you may do some good to your allies (if you so wish).[14] This is inscribed in the Book of Allah.

12. That is, the relationship of the Prophet (peace be upon him) with the Muslims and of the Muslims with the Prophet (peace be upon him) is of a superior nature, over and above all human relationships. No other relationship is in any way comparable with the relationship that exists between the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the believers. The Prophet (peace be upon him) is more compassionate and affectionate and a greater well-wisher of the Muslims than their own parents, even their own selves. Their parents and their wives and children can harm them, can treat them in a selfish manner and mislead them, can make them commit errors and mistakes, can push them into Hell, but the Prophet's (peace be upon him) case is different: he will do for them only that which results in and leads to their eternal well-being and enduring happiness. They can commit follies resulting in their own ruin and disaster, but the Prophet (peace be upon him) will wish for them only that which is beneficial and useful for them. And when it is so, the Prophet (peace be upon him) also has a right on the Muslims that they should regard him dearer than their own parents, their own children, even their own selves. They should love him more than anything and anybody else in the world; should prefer his judgment and opinion to their own and should submit to every command that he gives.

The same thing has been said by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in a Hadith, which Bukhari and Muslim and others have related with a little difference in wording: "No one of you can be a believer until I become dearer to him than his own father and his own children and all mankind."

13. On the basis of the special relationship mentioned above, another characteristic of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is that his wives are forbidden to the Muslims just like their own real mothers although their adopted mothers are in no sense their real mothers. This thing is peculiar only to the person of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and of no other man in the world.

In this connection, one should also know that the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) are mothers of the believers only in the sense that the Muslims are under obligation to have

reverence and respect for them, and no Muslim could marry them. As for other matters they are not like the mothers. For example, apart from their real relatives, all other Muslims were non-mahram for them from whom they had to observe hijab; their daughters were not like real sisters for the Muslims, so that no Muslim could marry them; their brothers and sisters were not like the maternal uncles and aunts for the Muslims; they could not be inherited by a Muslim, unless a close relative, as a mother is inherited by her son.

Another noteworthy point in this connection is that according to the Quran, this status accrues to all the wives (may Allah be pleased with them all) of the Prophet (peace be upon him), among whom Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) is also included. But, when a section (of the Muslims) made Ali and Fatimah and their children (may Allah be pleased with them all) the center of their faith and made the whole system of religion revolve around them, and made Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her), along with many other companions, the target of curse and abuse, this verse became a hindrance for them, for according to it every person who claims to be a believer has to acknowledge her as his mother. Consequently, to overcome this difficulty a strange claim was made to the effect: The Prophet (peace be upon him) had given Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) the authority that after his death he could allow any of his wives he liked to retain her position of the wife and divorce any other on his behalf. Abu Mansur Ahmad bin Abu Talib Tabrasi has written this in Kitab al-Ihtijaj and Suleman bin Abdullah al-Bahrani has related that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) "O Abul Hasan: this honor will last till the time that we remain steadfast on obedience to Allah. Therefore, you may divorce any of my wives, who after me disobeys Allah by revolting against you, and deprive her of the honor that belongs to the mothers of the faithful."

This is a false-tradition even according to the principles of reporting Hadith. But if one studies (Ayats 28-29 and 51-52 of this very Surah Al-Ahzab), one finds that this tradition goes against the Quran as well. For after the revelation of the "verse of the option" (Ayat 29), the Prophet's (peace be upon him) right of divorce against those of his wives who chose to remain with him through every difficulty had been curtailed. For further explanation, see(E.Ns 42 and 93)below.

Moreover, if an unbiased person only uses his common sense and considers this tradition carefully, he will find that it is utterly absurd and highly derogatory in respect to the Prophet (peace be upon him). The rank and position of the Messenger of Allah is very high and exalted. It cannot even be expected of an ordinary man that he would think of divorcing his wife after his death, and on leaving the world, would authorize his son-in-law to divorce her on his behalf if there arose a dispute between him and her in the future. This shows what regard these sectarians have for the honor and reverence of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and even for the divine law.

14. The verse means this: "As for the Prophet (peace be upon him) the nature of the Muslims' relationship with him is unique. But as far as the common Muslims are concerned, their mutual relationship will be based on the principle that the rights of the relatives on one another are given priority over the rights of others. No charity is right if a person overlooks the needs and requirements of his own parents and children and brothers and sisters, and gives away charities to others. The Zakat money also will be used first of all to help one's own poor relatives and then the other needy people. The inheritance will necessarily be

divided among those who are nearest in relation to the deceased. As for others, the dying person may give them a part of his wealth as a gift or by trust and will. But in no case is he allowed to deprive his rightful heirs and give away everything to others. After this divine command the system of "Brotherhood" that had been established between the Muhajirin and the Ansar after the Hijrah also became abolished, for according to it the Muhajirin and the Ansar became heirs to one another only on the basis of their relationship of being the brethren in faith. Allah enjoined the law that inheritance will be divided only on the basis of blood relationship; however, a person could help his brother-in-faith by making him a gift or through a will if he so liked.

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِيثَاقَهُمْ وَمِنكَ وَمِن نُّوحٍ وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ ۖ وَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُم مِّيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا ۙ 7

(33:7) And call to mind, (O Prophet), when We took the covenant from all Prophets; and also from you and Noah and Abraham, Moses, and Jesus the son of Mary. We took from them a solemn covenant[15]

15. Allah in this verse has reminded the Prophet (peace be upon him) that, like all other Prophets, He has taken from him too a solemn covenant which he should abide by strictly. A study of the preceding verse shows that the covenant implies: "The Prophet will first himself obey and follow every command received from Allah, and then make others also to obey and follow it: he will convey Allah's commands intact to others and will show no laxity in the struggle to enforce them practically." This covenant has been mentioned at several other places in the Quran, e.g.

(1) He has appointed for you the same way of life which he appointed for Noah and which (O Muhammad) We have now revealed to you, and which We had already enjoined on Abraham and Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them), stressing : Establish this Way and be not divided in it. (Surah Ash-Shura: Ayat 13).

(2) And remember that Allah had made the covenant with the people who had been given the scripture, and enjoined: You shall spread the teachings of the Book among the people and shall not conceal them." (Surah Aal-Imran: Ayat 187).

(3) Remember that We made a solemn covenant with the children of Israel to the effect: Worship (and submit to) none save Allah. (Surah Al-Baqarah: Ayat 83).

(4) Has not the covenant of the Book been taken from them: Hold fast the Book that We have given to you, and keep in mind what it contains: it is expected that you will refrain from wrong ways. (Surah Al-Aaraf: Ayats 169- 171).

(5) Keep in mind the blessing Allah has bestowed on you and do not forget the solemn covenant which He made with you, when you said, We have heard and submitted." (Surah A1-Maidah: Ayat 7)

The reason why Allah is reminding of this covenant in this context is that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was feeling hesitant to break the custom of ignorance in respect of the adopted relations due to the apprehension that the enemies of Islam would put him to a disadvantage. He was feeling shy time and again at the thought: The question is of marrying a woman. I may take this initiative with the purest intention only for the sake of a social reform, but the enemies will certainly say that I have done so for the purpose of satisfying my desires, and I am in fact trying to deceive others under the guise of a reformer. That is why Allah assures him, saying: "You arc a Prophet appointed by Us. Like all other Prophets, you are also bound in the covenant that you will carry out whatever command We give and instruct others to follow it. Therefore, you should not bother at all about taunts and derision by others, do not be afraid and feel shy of others, and carry out without hesitation the service that We want to take from you."

A section of the people think that this covenant is the covenant that was taken from all the Prophets and their communities, who came before the Prophet (peace be upon him), to the effect that they would believe in the Prophet who came afterwards and cooperate with him. On the basis of this interpretation they claim that the door to Prophethood is still open after the Prophet (peace be upon him). And this covenant has also been taken from the Prophet (peace be upon him), that his followers will believe in the prophet who will come after him. But the context in which the verse occurs is explicit that this interpretation is absolutely wrong, There is no occasion whatever in the context to indicate that other prophets will also come after the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his followers should believe in them. If the verse is read in this sense, it becomes irrelevant and incoherent. Moreover, there is no indication in the words of the verse to show which covenant is implied here. Therefore, to find out the nature of the covenant, we shall have to turn to other verses of the Quran in which mention has been made of the covenants taken from the Prophets. Now, if only one sort of the covenants had been mentioned in the entire Quran, i.e., the covenant that the people shall believe in the prophets coming afterwards, it would be correct to think that here also the covenant implied the same covenant. But anyone who has studied the Quran with an open mind knows that it has mentioned many covenants, which were taken from the Prophets and their followers. Therefore, only that covenant from among the different covenant would be implied here, which fitted in with the context here, and not the one which was altogether irrelevant. Such wrong interpretations reveal the mentality of the people who wish to draw no guidance from the Quran but want to reinterpret it instead.

لِّيَسْـَٔلَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ عَنْ صِدْقِهِمْ ۚ وَاَعَدَّ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ۧ 8

(33:8) so that (their Lord) may question the truthful about their truthfulness.[16] As for the unbelievers, He has kept a painful chastisement in store for them.[17]

16. That is, Allah has not just taken the covenant but will also question as to how far it has been kept. Then only those who will have kept Allah's covenant faithfully, will be declared to be the truthful.

17. To understand the theme of (Ayats 1-8) fully, these should be read together with (Ayats 36-41 of this Surah).

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ جَآءَتْكُمْ جُنُوْدٌ فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيْحًا وَّجُنُوْدًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرًا ۚ 9

(33:9) Believers,[18] call to mind Allah's favour to you when enemy hosts invaded you. Then We sent against them a wind and hosts that you did not see although[19] Allah was observing all that you were then doing.

18. In(Ayats 9-27), an appraisal has been made of the battle of the Trench and the raid against the Bani Quraizah. These were revealed at the end of the raid. One should keep the details of these events in view as given in the introduction above.

19. The windstorm did not lash the enemy forces immediately on their arrival but it occurred while the siege of Al-Madinah had lasted about a month. "Armies whom you did not see" implies the hidden powers which operate in the affairs of men under Allah's command and of which men are totally unaware. Man regards the occurrence of events and incidents as resulting from apparent causes and does not take into account the hidden forces at work, whereas in most cases these very hidden forces play the decisive role. As these forces function under the command of Allah's angels, the "armies" may imply the angels as well though there is no indication here of sending the armies of the angels.

اِذْ جَآءُوْكُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ اَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ وَاِذْ زَاغَتِ الْاَبْصَارُ وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوْبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ الظُّنُوْنَا ۭ 10

(33:10) When they came upon you from above you and from below you,[20] when your eyes were stupefied with horror and your hearts leapt to your throats, and you began to entertain diverse thoughts about Allah.

20. It may mean: The enemies came upon you from every side, and also that those coming from Najd and Khaiber came from above and those coming from Makkah from below you."

هُنَالِكَ ابْتُلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَزُلْزِلُوْا زِلْزَالًا شَدِيْدًا 11

(33:11) The believers were then put to a severe test and were most violently convulsed.[21]

21. "The believers": All those who accepted the Prophet (peace be upon him) as Allah's Messenger and became included among his followers, which comprised both the true believers and the hypocrites. In this paragraph Allah has made mention of the Muslim community as a whole. In the following three paragraphs the attitude of the hypocrites has been commented upon, and the next two deal with the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the true believers.

وَإِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنٰفِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ مَّا وَعَدَنَا اللّٰهُ وَرَسُولُهٗٓ إِلَّا غُرُورًا 12

(33:12) And call to mind when the hypocrites and all those with diseased hearts said: "All that Allah and His Messenger had promised us[22] was nothing but deceit."

22. That is, "Promises to the effect that the believers will get Allah's support and succor and will be helped to attain victory in the end."

وَإِذْ قَالَتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ يٰٓأَهْلَ يَثْرِبَ لَا مُقَامَ لَكُمْ فَارْجِعُوا ۚ وَيَسْتَأْذِنُ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمُ
النَّبِيَّ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّ بُيُوتَنَا عَوْرَةٌ ۛ وَمَا هِيَ بِعَوْرَةٍ ۚ إِنْ يُّرِيدُونَ إِلَّا فِرَارًا 13

(33:13) And when a section of them said: "(O people of Yathrib), now there is no place for you to stay, so turn back."[23] (And call to mind) when a section of them was seeking permission from the Prophet to leave, saying: "Our houses are exposed (to attack),"[24] although they were not exposed (to attack); [25] they only wished to flee (from the battle-front).

23. This sentence has two meanings: The apparent meaning is that there is no chance for them to stay at the Trench against the polytheists; therefore, they should return to the city. And the hidden meaning is that there is no chance for them to remain in Islam; therefore, they should return to their ancestral religion, so that they might escape the danger in which they had involved themselves by earning the hostility of the whole of Arabia. The hypocrites uttered such mischievous things so that they could make the one who would listen to them understand the intended hidden meaning, but in case someone took exception to their words, they could say they had been misunderstood.

24. That is, when the Bani Quraizah also joined the invaders, the hypocrites had a good excuse for defection and they started asking the Prophet (peace be upon him) for leave to go and protect their houses and families, which, they said, had been endangered, whereas at that time the Prophet (peace be upon him) was responsible for the defense and protection of all the people of Al-Madinah. After the treachery of the Quraizah it was for the Prophet (peace be upon him) to devise plans for the protection of the city and its people and not of the soldiers of the army individually.

25. That is, the Prophet (peace be upon him) had already made arrangements for protection against the danger, which were a part of the collective scheme of defense being implemented by him as commander of the Islamic forces. Therefore, there was no immediate danger in the face of which these people could justifiably make such an excuse.

وَلَوْ دُخِلَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ اَقْطَارِهَا ثُمَّ سُئِلُوا الْفِتْنَةَ لَاٰتَوْهَا وَمَا تَلَبَّثُوْا بِهَآ اِلَّا يَسِيْرًا 14

(33:14) If the enemy were to enter the town from various directions, and they were summoned to act treacherously,[26] they would have succumbed to it and would have shown little reluctance in doing so.

26. "Exhorted to treachery": Urged by the disbelievers to join them to vanquish the Muslims after entering the city as conquerors.

وَلَقَدْ كَانُوْا عَاهَدُوا اللّٰهَ مِنْ قَبْلُ لَا يُوَلُّوْنَ الْاَدْبَارَ ؕ وَكَانَ عَهْدُ اللّٰهِ مَسْئُوْلًا 15

(33:15) They had earlier covenanted with Allah that they would not turn their backs in flight. And a covenant made with Allah must needs be answered for.[27]

27. That is, they had felt regret at the weakness they had shown on the occasion of the battle of Uhud and pledged to Allah that they would compensate for their error in any trial that they would confront in the future. But Allah cannot be deceived by empty words. He puts to one or the other test everyone who makes a pledge with Him so that his sincerity of intention or otherwise is found out. Therefore, just after two years of the battle of Uhud, He made them confront an even more serious danger and discovered how far they were sincere in their pledge.

قُلْ لَّنْ يَّنْفَعَكُمُ الْفِرَارُ اِنْ فَرَرْتُمْ مِّنَ الْمَوْتِ اَوِ الْقَتْلِ وَاِذًا لَّا تُمَتَّعُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا 16

(33:16) (O Prophet), tell them: "If you run away from death or slaying, this flight will not avail you. You will have little time after that to enjoy[28] (the pleasures of life)."

28. That is, this flight of yours will not add anything to your life. In no case will you live forever and gain the whole wealth of the world. Hardly a few years will you live after your flight and enjoy life only as long as it is destined for you.

قُلْ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِيْ يَعْصِمُكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ اِنْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ سُوْٓءًا اَوْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ رَحْمَةً ؕ وَلَا يَجِدُوْنَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا 17

(33:17) Say (to them): "Who can protect you from Allah if He desires an evil for you? And who can prevent Him if He desires to show mercy to you?" They shall find none other than Allah to be their protector or helper.

قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللّٰهُ الْمُعَوِّقِيْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَالْقَآئِلِيْنَ لِاِخْوَانِهِمْ هَلُمَّ اِلَيْنَا ۚ وَلَا يَاْتُوْنَ الْبَاْسَ اِلَّا
قَلِيْلًا ۙ 18

(33:18) Allah knows well those of you who create obstructions (in war efforts) and say to their brethren: "Come and join us."[29] They hardly take any part in battle.

29. That is, abandon this Prophet (peace be upon him) and do not become involved in dangers and afflictions only for the sake of the faith and truth. Live a life of ease and comfort as we do.

اَشِحَّةً عَلَيْكُمْ ۚ فَاِذَا جَآءَ الْخَوْفُ رَاَيْتَهُمْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَيْكَ تَدُوْرُ اَعْيُنُهُمْ كَالَّذِيْ يُغْشٰى
عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ ۚ فَاِذَا ذَهَبَ الْخَوْفُ سَلَقُوْكُمْ بِاَلْسِنَةٍ حِدَادٍ اَشِحَّةً عَلَى الْخَيْرِ ؕ
اُولٰٓئِكَ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوْا فَاَحْبَطَ اللّٰهُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ ؕ وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرًا 19

(33:19) They are utterly niggardly[30] (in coming to your aid). Whenever there is danger, you will see them looking at you, their eyes rolling as though they were on the verge of fainting at the approach of death. But when the danger passes away, their greed for wealth prompts them to greet you with their sharp, scissor-like tongues.[31] These are the ones who never truly believed, and so Allah has caused their deeds to be reduced to naught.[32] That is easy enough for Allah.[33]

30. "Being miserly": Those who are not at all willing to spend their energies, their time, their wealth, etc. in any way in which the true believers are spending whatever they have. Not to speak of exerting themselves and braving the dangers, they do not want to cooperate with the believers in anything with an open heart.

31. Lexically, this verse has two meanings:

(1) When you return victorious from a war, they receive you warmly, and try to impress you with a sweet tongue that they too are sincere believers and they too have made their contribution to promote the cause of Islam, and therefore, they deserve a share from the booty.

(2) If victory is attained, these people show great powers of the tongue at the time of the division of the spoils and make great demands for their shares, recounting their services for the cause of Islam.

32. That is, Allah will make null and void all the prayers that they offered, all the fasts that they observed, the zakat that they paid, and other good works that they did after embracing Islam, and will give them no reward for these. For Allah does not judge actions and deeds

according to their external form but on the basis of the faith and sincerity underlying them. When the actions are altogether devoid of this quality, there will be mere show and, therefore, meaningless. Here, one thing is especially noteworthy. A clear verdict has been given about the people who professed to believe in Allah and His Messenger, offered the Prayers, observed the fast, gave the Zakat and cooperated with the Muslims in other good works, to the effect that they did not believe at all. This verdict has been given because when they were put to the test during the conflict between Islam and un-Islam, they showed double standard, preferred selfish interests above the interests of the faith, and shirked offering their selves and their wealth and their energies for the protection of Islam. This shows that the real criterion of the judgment are not the apparent deeds but the loyalties of man. If a person is not loyal to God and His way, his profession of the faith and his worship and other good deeds are worthless.

33. That is, as their deeds and actions do not carry any value, Allah renders them fruitless without the slightest hesitation; and as they do not have any power to resist. Allah has no difficulty in destroying their deeds altogether.

يَحْسَبُوْنَ الْاَحْزَابَ لَمْ يَذْهَبُوْا ۚ وَاِنْ يَّاْتِ الْاَحْزَابُ يَوَدُّوْا لَوْ اَنَّهُمْ بَادُوْنَ فِى
الْاَعْرَابِ يَسْاَلُوْنَ عَنْ اَنْۢبَآئِكُمْ ؕ وَلَوْ كَانُوْا فِيْكُمْ مَّا قٰتَلُوْٓا اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ۚ 20

(33:20) They think that the invading confederates have not yet gone. But if the confederates were to mount another assault, they would wish to be in the desert among the bedouins and keep themselves informed about you from there. But even if they remained in your midst, hardly would they fight.

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِىْ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ اُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللّٰهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْاٰخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللّٰهَ
كَثِيْرًا ؕ 21

(33:21) Surely there was a good example for you in the Messenger of Allah,[34] for all those who look forward to Allah and the Last Day and remember Allah much.[35]

34. In view of the context in which this verse occurs, the object of presenting the Prophet's (peace be upon him) conduct and way of life as a model was to teach a lesson to the people, who had been motivated by considerations of selfish interests and personal safety on the occasion of the battle of the Trench. They are being addressed, as if to say: "You claimed to be the believers and Muslims and followers of the Messenger (peace be upon him). You should have seen how the Messenger (peace be upon him), whose followers you claimed to be, conducted himself on the occasion. If the leader of a group is himself a seeker of personal security, is lazy and indolent, gives preference to personal interests to everything else, and is ever ready to flee danger, it would be reasonable to expect manifestation of such weakness from his followers. But here the case was different. The Prophet (peace be upon him)

endured along with others every toil and labor that he asked others to endure, and endured more than others; there was no trouble which others might have experienced and he himself did. not. He was among those who dug the trench, and endured hunger and other afflictions just as the common Muslims did. He did not leave the battlefront even for a moment during the siege nor retreated an inch. After the betrayal of the Bani Quraizah his own family had also been exposed to danger even as the families of the other Muslims were. He did not make any special arrangement for his own and his family's protection, which did not exist for others. He was always in the forefront to offer maximum sacrifices for the great objectives for which he was constantly asking others to make sacrifices. Therefore, whoever made a claim of being his follower should have followed the practical example set by the leader.

This is the meaning of the verse in the context here. But its words are general and there is no reason why it should be confined to these meanings only. Allah does not say that only in this respect His Messenger's (peace be upon him) life is a model for the Muslims to follow, but has regarded it as a model absolutely. Therefore, the verse demands that the Muslims should take the Prophet's (peace be upon him) life as a model for themselves in every affair of life and should mold their character and personality according to it.

35. That is, the Prophet's (peace be upon him) life is no model for the person who is forgetful of God, but it certainly is a model for him who remembers Allah much and consistently and not only occasionally just by chance. Likewise, this life is no model for him who has no hope from Allah and does not expect resurrection to take place, but it is most surely a model for the person who is hopeful of Allah's grace and His favors, and who is also mindful that the Day of Judgment will come when his well-being will wholly depend on how closely his conduct resembled the conduct and character of the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah in this world.

وَلَمَّا رَاَ الۡمُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ الۡاَحۡزَابَ ۙ قَالُوۡا هٰذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوۡلُهٗ وَصَدَقَ اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوۡلُهٗ ۫
وَمَا زَادَهُمۡ اِلَّاۤ اِيۡمَانًا وَّتَسۡلِيۡمًا ۞ 22

(33:22) As for the true believers,[36] when they saw the invading confederates, they cried out: "This is what Allah and His Messenger had promised us, and what Allah and His Messenger said was absolutely true."[37] This only increased their faith and submission. [38]

36. After drawing attention to the model of the Prophet (peace be upon him), Allah now presents the model of his companions so that the character of the false claimants to faith and of the sincere followers of the Messenger (peace be upon him) is clearly contrasted.

Although both were alike apparently in the affirmation of the faith, both were counted as Muslims, and both attended at the Prayers, they were separated from each other as soon as the time of the trial approached, and it became clear who were loyal to Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) and who were Muslims only in name.

37. Here, one should keep(verse 12) in view. There it was said that when the hypocrites and the people with diseased hearts found themselves surrounded by a huge force of ten to twelve thousand men from the front and by the Bani Quraizah from behind, they openly started saying: "The promises that Allah and His Messenger had made with us were nothing but a delusion. We were promised that if we believed in Allah's religion, His succor would be at our back and we would rule Arabia and the world outside and all the wealth of Caesar and Chosroes will be ours, but here we are that the whole of Arabia is bent upon exterminating us, and there is no sign yet of the armies of the angels in sight, who would save us and protect us against this grave calamity." Now they are being told: "One meaning of the promise of Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) was that which was understood by these false claimants to faith. The other meaning is that which is understood by the sincere and true Muslims. When they saw the storms of danger gathering, they too remembered the promises of Allah, but these promises did not mean that as soon as they affirmed the faith they would overwhelm and subdue the whole world without the slightest effort, and the angels would come to perform their coronation, but the promises actually meant that they would have to pass through severe trials, endure extreme hardships and afflictions, offer supreme sacrifices; then only will Allah bless them with His grace and they will be granted successes of the world and the Hereafter, which Allah has promised to His believing servants.

"Do you think that you will enter Paradise without undergoing such trials as were experienced by the believers before you? They met with adversity and afflictions and were so shaken by trials that the Prophet of the time and his followers cried out: When will Allah's help come?" "Yes, Allah's help is near." (Surah Al-Baqarah: Ayat 214).

"Do the people think that they will be left alone after they have once said, We have believed, and they will not be tested? The fact is that We have put to the test all those who have gone before them. Surely, Allah has to see who are the truthful and who the liars." (Surah Al-Ankabut: Ayats 2-3).

38. That is, "On seeing the hard times of affliction approaching, they did not waver in their faith but were strengthened in it all the more, and instead of giving up Allah's obedience, they became ready to resign and surrender to Him whatever they had with complete conviction and satisfaction of the heart."

Here, one should fully understand that faith and resignation is indeed a quality of the self which is put to trial and test at every command and demand of the faith. At every step in life man comes across situations where the faith either enjoins something or forbids something, or requires one to make sacrifices of life and wealth and time and desires of the self. At every such occasion the faith and conviction of the person who deviates from obedience will suffer decline and the faith and conviction of him who submits to the command and demand will be strengthened and enhanced. Although in the beginning a man becomes a believer and Muslim only by embracing the fundamental creed (Kalimah) of Islam, yet his state of faith does not remain static but is open to both deterioration and development. Decline in sincerity and the spirit of obedience causes it to deteriorate; so much so that constant retrogression may cause the person to reach the last limits of the faith where the slightest move backward may turn him from a believer to a hypocrite. Contrary to this, the more sincere a person is, the more perfect his obedience and the greater his

devotion and dedication to the cause of the true faith, the stronger and more sound will he grow in faith and may even attain the supreme rank of the truthful. But this increase and decrease in the faith has only the moral significance which can be judged and reckoned by none but Allah. As for the man, faith is simply the act of affirmation by which a Muslim enters Islam and is regarded as a Muslim as long as he remains steadfast to it. In this regard, we cannot say that so and so is half a Muslim, or one third a Muslim, and another one a double Muslim or a triple Muslim. Likewise, in legal rights the Muslims are equal and alike. It cannot be that one is regarded a greater believer and given more rights and another one a lesser believer and given less rights. In these aspects there can be no question of the increase and decrease in the faith, and in fact, in this very sense has Imam Abu Hanifah said: "faith in Islam neither increases nor decreases."

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوْا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللّٰهَ عَلَيْهِ ۚ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَضٰى نَحْبَهٗ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّنْتَظِرُ ۖ وَمَا بَدَّلُوْا تَبْدِيْلًا ۙ 23

(33:23) Among the believers there are those who have remained true to the covenant they made with Allah. Among those some of them have fulfilled their vow and others await the appointed time.[39] They have not changed in the least.

39. That is, "Someone has already offered his life in the way of Allah, and someone is awaiting the time when he will offer it for the sake of his faith."

لِّيَجْزِيَ اللّٰهُ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ بِصِدْقِهِمْ وَيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ اِنْ شَآءَ اَوْ يَتُوْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ۚ 24

(33:24) (All this is) in order that Allah may reward the truthful for their truthfulness, and either punish the hypocrites or, if He so wills, accept their repentance. Verily Allah is Most Pardoning, Most Compassionate.

وَرَدَّ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِغَيْظِهِمْ لَمْ يَنَالُوْا خَيْرًا ۭ وَكَفَى اللّٰهُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الْقِتَالَ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ قَوِيًّا عَزِيْزًا ۚ 25

(33:25) Allah sent back the unbelievers empty-handed, their hearts seething with rage. Allah sufficed the believers in their fight. Allah is Most Powerful, Most Mighty.

وَاَنْزَلَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَاهَرُوْهُمْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ مِنْ صَيَاصِيْهِمْ وَقَذَفَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمُ
الرُّعْبَ فَرِيْقًا تَقْتُلُوْنَ وَتَاْسِرُوْنَ فَرِيْقًا ۚ 26

(33:26) Allah brought down from their fortresses those People of the Book who had supported the invading confederates[40] and cast such terror into their hearts that some of them you kill and some of them you take captive.

40. That is, Jews of the Bani Quraizah.

وَاَوْرَثَكُمْ اَرْضَهُمْ وَدِيَارَهُمْ وَاَمْوَالَهُمْ وَاَرْضًا لَّمْ تَطَئُوْهَا ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
قَدِيْرًا ۧ 27

(33:27) Allah made you inherit their land, their dwellings, and their goods, and a piece of land on which you had not yet trodden. Verily Allah has power over all things.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّاَزْوَاجِكَ اِنْ كُنْتُنَّ تُرِدْنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِيْنَتَهَا فَتَعَالَيْنَ اُمَتِّعْكُنَّ
وَاُسَرِّحْكُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيْلًا 28

(33:28) O Prophet,[41] tell your wives: "If you seek the world and its embellishments, then come and I will make some provision for you and release you in an honourable way.

41. The verses from here to 35 were revealed in the period contiguous to the battle of the Trench and the raid on Bani Quraizah, whose background we have touched upon in the Introduction to this Surah. According to a tradition related in Muslim on the authority of Jabir bin Abdullah, "One day when Abu Bakr and Umar (may Allah be pleased with them) visited the Prophet (peace be upon him), they saw that his wives were sitting around him and he was quiet. Addressing Umar, he said: They are sitting around me as you see: they are asking for money for household expenditure." At this both the companions rebuked their daughters and said, "Why do you embarrass the Prophet (peace be upon him) and demand from him that which he does not have." This event shows how economically hard pressed the Prophet (peace be upon him) was at that time, and how distressed and embarrassed he was feeling at his wives' demand for domestic expenditure during the period when a bitter conflict was going on between Islam and paganism.

وَإِنْ كُنتُنَّ تُرِدْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعَدَّ لِلْمُحْسِنَاتِ مِنكُنَّ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا 29

(33:29) But if you seek Allah and His Messenger and the Abode of the Hereafter, then surely Allah has prepared a great reward for those of you who do good."[42]

42. At the time when this verse was revealed, the Prophct (peace be with him) had four wives with him: Saudah, Aishah, Hafsah and Umm Salamah. He had not yet married Zainab. (may Allah be pleased with them all). (Ibn Arabia Ahkam ai-Quran. Egyptian Edition, 1958, vol. III, pp. 512-13). When this verse was revealed, he first spoke to Aishah, and said: "I ask you a thing; do not be hasty in answering; consult your parents, then decide." Then he told her of Allah's command and recited this verse. She replied: "Should I consult my parents about this?" I seek Allah and His Messenger and the Hereafter. After this he went to each of his wives and asked the same thing and each one gave the same reply as had been given by Aishah. (Musnad Ahmad, Muslim, Nasai).

This is termed takhyir, i.e. to give the wife the option to decide for herself whether she would stay in wedlock or would separate from the husband. This was obligatory for the Prophet (peace be with him) because he had been commanded by Allah to offer such an option to his wives. If a lady from among the wives had opted to separate, she would not have separated automatically but would have been separated by the Prophet (peace be with him), as is clear from the words in the previous verse: "I will make a provision for you and send you off (by divorce), a graceful sending." But the Prophet (peace be with him) would certainly have separated her because as a Prophet it would not behoove him not to honor the word. After divorce apparently the lady would have stood excluded from the category of the wives, and she would not be forbidden to any other Muslim; for she would have chosen divorce from the Prophet (peace be with him) only for the sake of the world and its adornments of which she had been given the choice, and obviously the option could not be exercised in case she was forbidden to re-marry. On the other hand, the intention of the verse also seems that the Prophet (peace be with him) was not left with any authority to divorce the wives who chose Allah and His Messenger and the Hereafter in preference to the world. For, takhyir had only two sides: if a wife opted for the world, she would be divorced; if she opted for Allah and His Messenger and the Hereafter, she would not be divorced. Obviously, if a lady chose one alternative, the other would become forbidden in her case by itself.

In Islamic law takhyir, in fact, amounts to delegation of the right to obtain divorce. The husband himself gives the wife the choice to stay in wedlock with him or be separated. Here are briefly the injunctions which the jurists have derived from the Quran and Sunnah in this regard:

(1) Once a husband has given this choice to a wife, he can neither withdraw it nor stop her from exercising it. However, it is not necessary that the woman must exercise it. She may choose to remain in wedlock with the husband, or may prefer to separate, or may opt nothing and let the right of divorce be annulled.

(2) There are two conditions of this choice being transferred to the woman: (a) The husband should have given her the right of divorce in clear words, or if there was no clear mention of the divorce, he should have had the intention of giving this right; e.g. if he says, “You have the choice” or “your business is in your own hand,” such indirect words will not transfer the right of divorce to the woman without the intention of the husband. If the woman claims it and the husband states on oath that he had no intention of giving the right of divorce, his statement will be admitted, unless the woman produces evidence to the effect that those words were said during a dispute, or in connection with divorce, because in that context delegation of the right would mean that the husband had the intention of giving the right of divorce. (b) The woman knows that she has been given the right of divorce. If she was absent, she should receive information of this, and if she is present, she should hear the words. Unless she hears the words, or receives the news, the right will not be transferred to her.

(3) As to the time limit within which the wife has to exercise her right if the husband gives it her absolutely without specifying any limit, there is a difference of opinion among the jurists. Some jurists have expressed the opinion that the woman can exercise the right at the same sitting at which the husband gave it her; if she leaves the place without making a response, or turns her attention to something else which indicates that she does not want to make a response, she forfeits the right invested in her and her choice no longer remains. This is the opinion of Umar, Uthman, Ibn Masud, Jabir bin Abdullah, Atta, Jabir bin Zaid, Mujahid, Shabi, Nakhai, Imam Malik, Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Shafei, Imam Auzai, Sufyan Thauri and Abu Thaur. The other opinion is that her exercise of the choice is not confined to that sitting but she can exercise it even afterwards. This opinion is held by Hasan Basri, Qatadah and Zuhri (may Allah be pleased with them all).

(4) If the husband specifies a time limit and says, for instance, “You have the option for a month or a year, or your business is in your own hand for so long,” the wife would enjoy the option only for that long. However, if he says, “You can exercise this option as and when you like,” her option would be unlimited.

(5) If the woman intends to obtain separation, she should express her intention clearly and definitely. Vague words which do not express the intention clearly will have no effect.

(6) Legally, the husband can give the option to the wife in three forms: (a) He may say, “Your business is in your own hand;” or (b) he may say: “You have the option;” or (c) “You are divorced if you so please.” The legal consequences of each are separate as explained below:

(a) If the husband has said: “Your business is in your own hand," and the woman responds clearly to the effect that she would opt for separation, it would amount to an irreversible divorce according to the Hanafites. That is, after this the husband will forfeit his right to have her back as his wife. However, they can remarry if they so like after the expiry of the waiting period. And if the husband said, “Your affair is in your own hand to the extent of one divorce,” this will be regarded as the first reversible divorce. That is, the husband can take her back as his wife within the waiting-period. But if the husband had the intention of all the three divorces at the time of delegating to the woman the right of divorce, or mentioned this specifically, the woman’s exercise of the option in such a case would amount

to divorce no matter whether she pronounces divorce thrice on herself or says only once that she has chosen separation or divorced herself.

(b) If the husband gives the woman the option to separate with the words: "You have the option," and the woman opts for separation in clear words, it will amount to one reversible divorce according to the Hanafites even if the husband had the intention of giving option for three divorces. However, if the husband has clearly given option for three divorces, the three divorces will take place only on the woman's exercise of the option for divorce. According to Imam Shafei, if at the time of giving the option, the husband had the intention of divorce, and the woman opts for separation, it will amount to one reversible divorce. According to Imam Malik, it will amount to three divorces in case the wife had been enjoyed; in case she had not been enjoyed, the husband's claim to have intended only one divorce will be admitted.

(c) In case the words "You are divorced if you so please" have been used and the woman has opted for divorce, it will be a reversible divorce and not an irreversible one.

(7) If after the husband has given the option for separation, the woman chooses to remain in wedlock, no divorce will take place at all. This is the opinion of Umar, Abdullah bin Masud, Aishah, Abu ad-Darda, Ibn Abbas and Ibn Umar, and the same has been adopted by majority of the jurists. When Masruq asked Aishah about this, she replied: "The Prophet (peace be with him) had given his wives the option and they chose to continue to live as his wives. Then, was it deemed to be a divorce?" The opinion of Ali and Zaid bin Thabit that has been reported in this regard is that one reversible divorce will take place. But according to another tradition these two great companions also held the opinion that no divorce will take place at all. (May Allah be pleased with them all).

يٰنِسَآءَ النَّبِيِّ مَنْ يَّاْتِ مِنْكُنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ يُّضٰعَفْ لَهَا الْعَذَابُ ضِعْفَيْنِ ؕ وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرًا 30

(33:30) Wives of the Prophet, if any of you commit flagrant indecency, her chastisement shall be doubled.[43] That is easy for Allah.[44]

43. This does not mean that there was, God forbid, any chance of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) wives committing an indecency, but this was meant to make them realize that they were the mothers of the Muslims; therefore, their responsibilities were accordingly very high, and so their moral conduct should be the purest. This is just like Allah's addressing the Prophet (peace be upon him) to the effect: "If you committed shirk, all your deeds would be rendered vain." (Surah Az-Zumar: Ayat 65). This also does not mean that there was, God forbid, any chance of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) committing shirk, but this is meant to make the Prophet (peace be upon him) realize, and through him the common Muslims, that shirk, is a most heinous crime which must be guarded against most judiciously.

44. That is, "You should not be under the delusion that your being the Prophet's (peace be upon him) wives will protect you from Allah's punishment, or that it will be difficult for Allah to call you to account on account of your high rank and position in the world."

وَمَنْ يَّقْنُتْ مِنْكُنَّ لِلّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَتَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا نُّؤْتِهَآ اَجْرَهَا مَرَّتَيْنِ ۙ وَاَعْتَدْنَا لَهَا رِزْقًا كَرِيْمًا 31

(33:31) But whoever of you is obedient to Allah and His Messenger and does good deeds, Allah will double her reward.[45] We have prepared for her a generous provision.

45. The reason for giving a double punishment for a sin and a double reward for a good work is that those whom Allah honors with a high rank in society generally become the leaders of men and the majority of the people follow them for good or for evil. Thus, their evil does not remain their own evil but becomes the cause of a people's degeneration, and their goodness does not remain their own goodness but becomes the cause of the true success of many other people also. Therefore, when they commit evil they are punished for their own as well as for others degeneration, and when they do good they are not only rewarded for their own good works but also for this that they also guided others to do good.

This verse also gives the principle that the greater the degree of prohibition and trust in respect of somebody and something the greater and more serious will be the crime of violating that prohibition and trust and the greater will be the punishment for it. For example, drinking in the mosque is a much more serious crime than drinking privately in the house, and therefore, it will entail a severer punishment. Likewise, committing adultery with the prohibited relations is a far more serious crime than committing it with another woman, and therefore, will call for a severer punishment.

يٰنِسَآءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَاَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ اِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِيْ فِيْ قَلْبِهٖ مَرَضٌ وَّقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا ۚ 32

(33:32) Wives of the Prophet, you are not like other women.[46] If you fear Allah, do not be too complaisant in your speech lest those with diseased hearts should covet you; but speak in a straight forward manner.[47]

46. The verses from here to the end of the paragraph are those with which the commandments of hijab were introduced in Islam. In these verses, though, only the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) have been addressed, the intention is to enforce reforms in all the Muslim houses. The object of addressing the Prophet's (peace be upon him) wives in particular is that when a pure way of life will start from his house, it will be followed by the women of all other Muslim houses as well, because this house was looked upon by the Muslims as a model to follow. Some people, when they see that these verses have been addressed only to the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him), assert that these

commandments were only meant for them. But when one reads what follows in these verses, he feels that there is nothing which might have been meant particularly for the wives and not for the other Muslim women. Could Allah have intended only this that the wives alone should be free from un-cleanliness and they alone should obey Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him) and they alone should offer the Salat and pay the Zakat? If this could not be the intention, then how could the command for them to stay in their houses and avoid displaying the fineries and abstain from talking to the other men in an alluring voice be meant particularly for them to the exclusion of all other Muslim women? Is there any rational proof on the basis of which some commands in one and the same context and series be regarded as general and some others as particular and special?

As for the sentence, "You are not like any other women," it also does not mean that the other women should come out in full makeup and should talk to the other men coquettishly and flirt with them, but "as for you, you should not adopt such a conduct." The style, to the contrary, is such as if a gentleman would tell his child, "You are not like the common children of the street: you should not use abusive language." From this no sensible person would ever conclude that the speaker regarded only his own child using abusive language as bad; as for others he would not mind if they used abusive language.

47. That is, "There is no harm if the other man is spoken to in case of a genuine need, but on such an occasion the woman's tone and manner of speech should be such as does not let the other man think that he could cherish any false hope from her. There should be no undue softness in her tone, no allurement in her conversation, no consciously affected mellowness in her voice, which should excite the male hearer's emotions and encourage him to make advances."

About such a manner of speech Allah clearly says that this does not behoove a woman who has any fear of God in her heart and desire to avoid evil. In other words, this is the way and manner of the wicked and unchaste woman's speech and not of the believing pious woman's speech: If this verse is read together with verse 31 of Surah An-Nur, in which Allah says: "They should not stamp the ground in walking lest their hidden decoration is revealed," the intention of the Lord clearly seems to be that the women should not attract other men by their voice or the jingle of their ornaments unnecessarily, and if at all they have to speak to the other men, they should speak to them in an unaffected tone and manner. That is why it is forbidden for the woman to pronounce the call to the Prayer. Moreover, if a woman is attending a congregational Prayer and the Imam commits a mistake, she is not permitted to say Subhan-Allah like the males but should only tap her hands to call the imam's attention to the error.

Now just consider this: When Islam disallows the woman to talk to other men in a soft and sweet tone and even forbids her to produce her voice before the other men without a genuine need, will it approve her to appear on the stage and sing, dance, flirt and behave coquettishly? Will it permit her to sing love songs over the radio and excite the people's emotions by presenting sweet melodies full of obscene themes? Will it permit that she should play the roles of the wives and sweethearts of others in dramas? Or that the women should be made the air hostesses and be especially trained to charm and allure the passengers? Or that they should visit clubs and attend social functions and gatherings in full makeup and mix freely with men and have fun and a good time with them? From which

Quran has this culture been derived? For, the Quran that was sent down by God there is to be found no hint as to the admissibility of this sort of culture.

وَقَرْنَ فِيْ بُيُوْتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْاُوْلٰى وَاَقِمْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتِيْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَاَطِعْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ؕ اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ اَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيْرًا ۚ 33

(33:33) And stay in your homes[48] and do not go about displaying your allurements as in the former Time of Ignorance.[49] Establish Prayer, give Zakah, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah only wishes to remove uncleanness from you, O members of the (Prophet's) household, and to purify you completely.[50]

48. The word qarna in the original is derived from qarar according to some lexicographers and from waqar according to others. In the first sense, it will mean: "settle down, stick firmly" and in the second sense: "live peacefully, sit with dignity." In both the cases the verse means to impress that the woman's real sphere of activity is her home; she should carry out her functions within that sphere peacefully, and she should come out of the house only in case of a genuine need. This meaning is clear from the words of the verse itself and the Prophet's (peace be upon him) Ahadith also impress it even more forcefully. Hafiz Abu Bakr Bazzar has related on the authority of Anas that the women made a submission to the Prophet (peace be upon him), saying: "All kinds of virtues have been secured by the men: they fight and accomplish great deeds in the way of Allah. What should we do that we may also get a reward equal to that of the warriors?" The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: "The one who sits in her house from among you; will attain the reward of the warriors." What he meant was: The warrior can fight confidently and with full peace of the mind in the way of Allah only when he is sure that all is well at home. His wife is there to look after the house and the children, and there is no cause for him to worry that she will betray him in his absence. The woman who will provide him this satisfaction and peace of the mind will be an equal partner with him in his fighting though she will be sitting back at home. According to another tradition that Bazzar and Tirmidhi have related on the authority of Abdullah bin Masud, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "The woman must remain veiled and concealed. When she comes out of her house, Satan stares at her. And she is closer to Allah's mercy when she is inside her house." See (E.N. 49 of Surah An-Nur).

In the presence of such a clear and express command of the Quran, it is not at all permissible that the Muslim women should seek membership of the councils and parliaments; that they should run after social activities outside the house; that they should work side by side with men in the government offices, should get education along with boys in the colleges, serve as nurses in the male wards of hospitals, should be employed as hostesses in the airplanes and rail cars, and should be sent abroad for education and training. The greatest argument that is given in support of the permissibility of the women's outdoor activities is that Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) had taken part in the battle of the Jamul. But the people

who present this argument perhaps do not know what was Aishah's own opinion in this regard. Abdullah bin Ahmad bin Hanbal has related in his Zawa id az-Zuhd and Ibn Mundhir, Ibn Abi Shaibah and Ibn Saad in their own books the tradition from Masruq, saying that when Aishah during her recitation of the Quran would reach this verse (wa qarna fi buyut-i kunna), she would start crying involuntarily; so much so that her head-wrapper would become wet, for this reminded her of the error that she had committed in the battle of the Jamul.

49. In this verse two important words have been used, which must be understood for the proper understanding of its intention. They are tabarruj and jahiliyyat al-ula.

The word tabarruj in Arabic means to become manifest and appear openly before others. The Arabs use the word baraj for every conspicuous and elevated object. A burj (tower) is so called because of its prominence and elevation. A sailingboat is called barijah, because its sails become visible from a distance. The word tabarruj when used in respect of a woman will have three meanings: (1) that she should show the charms of her face and body before the people. (2) That she should display the adornments of her dress and ornaments before others. (3) That she should make herself conspicuous by her gait and figure and coquetry. The same explanation of this word has been given by the leading lexicographers and commentators. Mujahid, Qatadah and Ibn Abi Nujaih say: Tabarruj means to walk in a vain, alluring and coquettish manner. Muqatil says: It means a woman's displaying of her necklaces, ear-rings and bosom. Al-Mubarrad says: That a woman should reveal her adornments which she should conceal. Abu Ubaidah comments: This that a woman should make herself conspicuous by display of her body and dress to attract the attention of men.

The word jahiliyyat has been used at three other places in the Quran besides this, in (Surah Aal-Imran: Ayat 154), where about those who shirk fighting in the way of Allah, it has been said: "They began to cherish about Allah thoughts of Ignorance Uahiljyyat, which were void of the truth. And in (Surah Al-Maidah: Ayat 50), where about those who want to be judged by their own law instead of the law of Allah, it has been said: "Do they desire to be judged by the laws of ignorance (Jahiliyyat)?" and in (Surah Al-Fath: Ayat 26), where the prejudice of the people of Makkah due to which they did not permit the Muslims to perform Umrah, has been called as "the haughty spirit of paganism (jahiliyyat). According to a Hadith once Abu ad-Darda in the heat of a quarrel abused another person in respect of his mother. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) heard of it, he remarked: You still have jahiliyyat in you. According to another Hadith the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Three things show jahiliyyat: to taunt the lineage of another person, to take omens from the movement of the stars, and to mourn over the dead. All these customs show that jahiliyyat in the Islamic terminology is every such conduct which goes against Islamic culture and civilization and Islamic morality and etiquette and Islamic way of thinking and behavior. Thus, jahiliyyat al-ula would mean all those evils in which the Arabs of the pre-Islamic days and the people of the entire world were involved.

This explanation makes it abundantly clear that what Allah forbids women is to move out of their houses showing off their physical charms and beauty. He instructs them to stay in their houses because their real sphere of activity is their home and not the world outside. However, if they have to move out of the house for an outdoor duty, they should not move out as the women used to do in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance. For it does not behoove

the women of a Muslim society to walk out fully embellished to make their face and figure conspicuous by adornments and tightfitting or transparent dresses, and to walk coquettishly. These are the ways of ignorance which Islam does not approve. Now everybody can see for himself whether the culture which is being made popular in our country is the culture of Islam, according to the Quran, or the culture of ignorance.

50. The context in which this verse occurs makes it manifest that the word ahl al-bait (people of the house) here implies the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him), because the address begins with: "O wives of the Prophet," and they are the addressees in the whole discourse preceding it as well as following it. Moreover, the word ahl al-bait in Arabic is used precisely in the sense in which the word "household" is used in English, which includes both a man's wife and children. No one would exclude the wife from the "household." The Quran itself has used this word at two other places besides this, and at both the wife is included in its sense, rather as the most important member of the family. In Surah Hud, when the angels give the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) the good news of the birth of a son, his wife exclaims: "Shall I bear a child now when I have grown too old, and this husband of mine has also become old?" The angels say: "What! Are you surprised at Allah's decree, O people of Abraham's household? Allah's mercy and blessings are upon you." In Surah Al-Qasas, when the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) reaches the Pharaoh's house as a suckling, and the Pharaoh's wife is in search of a suitable nurse for the child, the Prophet Moses' (peace be upon him) sister says, "Shall I tell you of a household whose people will bring him up for you and look after him well?" Thus, the Arabic idiom and the usage of the Quran and the context of this verse, all point clearly to the fact that the Prophet's (peace be upon him) wives as well as his children are included in his ahl albait; rather the more correct thing is that the verse is actually addressed to the wives and the children become included in the household only because of the sense of the word. That is why according to lbn Abbas and Urwah bin Zubair and Ikrimah, the word ahl al-bait in this verse implies the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

But if somebody says that the word ahl al-bait has been used only for the wives and none else can be included in it, it will also be wrong. Not only this that the word "household" includes all the members of a man's family, but the Prophet (peace be upon him) has himself explained that this includes even himself. According to Ibn Abi Hatim, once when Aishah was asked about Ali, she said, "Do you ask me about the person who was among the most loved ones of the Prophet and whose wife was the Prophet's (peace be upon him) daughter and most beloved to him?" Then she related the event when the Prophet (peace be upon him) had called Ali and Fatimah and Hasan and Husain (may Allah be pleased with them all) and covered them all with a sheet of cloth and prayed: "O Allah, these are my household, remove uncleanness from them and make them pure." Aishah says, "I said: I also am included among your household (i.e. I may also be covered under the sheet and prayed for)." Thereupon the Prophet replied: "You stay out: you, of course, are already included." A great many Ahadith bearing on this subject have been related by traditionalists like Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ahmad, Ibn Jarir, Hakim, Baihaqi, etc. on the authority of Abu Said Khudri, Aishah, Anas, Umm Salamah, Wathilah bin Aqsa and some other companions, which show that the Prophet (peace be upon him) declared Ali and Fatimah and their two sons as his ahl al-bait. Therefore, the view of those who exclude them from the ahl al-bait is not correct.

Similarly the view of those people also is not correct, who, on the basis of the above cited Ahadith, regard the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) as excluded from his ahl al-bait. In the first place, anything which has been clearly stated in the Quran cannot be contradicted on the basis of a Hadith. Secondly, these Ahadith also do not have the meaning that is put on them. As related in some traditions that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not cover Aishah and Umm Salamah under the sheet of cloth which he put on the four members of his family, does not mean that he had excluded those ladies from his "household." But it means that the wives were already included in ahl al-bait, because the Quran, in fact, had addressed them as ahl albait. The Prophet (peace be upon him), however, thought that the apparent words of the Quran might cause somebody the misunderstanding about these members that they were excluded from the ahl al-bait. Therefore, he felt the need for clarification in their case and not in the case of his wives.

A section of the people have not only misconstrued this verse to the extent that they have made the word ahl al-bait exclusively applicable to Ali and Fatimah and their children to the exclusion of the wives, but have gone even further and concluded wrongly from its words "Allah only intends to remove uncleanliness from you and purify you completely", that Ali and Fatimah and their children are infallible like the Prophets of Allah. They say that "uncleanliness" implies error and sin, and, as Allah says, these ahl al-bait have been purified of this, whereas the words of the verse do not say that uncleanliness has been removed from them and they have been purified. But the words are to the effect: "Allah intends to remove uncleanliness from you and purify you completely." The context also does not tell that the object here is to mention the virtues and excellences of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) household. On the contrary, they have been advised here what they should do and what they should not, because Allah intends to purify them. In other words, they have been told that if they adopted such and such an attitude and way of life, they will be blessed with cleanliness, otherwise not. However, if the words "Allah intends to remove uncleanliness from you" are taken to mean that Allah has made them infallible, then is no reason why all the Muslims who perform their ablutions before offering the Prayer are not held as infallible, because about them also Allah says: "But Allah wills to purify you and complete His blessings upon you." (Surah Al-Maidah: Ayat 6).

وَاذْكُرْنَ مَا يُتْلَىٰ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ لَطِيفًا خَبِيرًا ۝ 34

(33:34) Remember the Signs of Allah and the words of wisdom which are rehearsed in your homes.[51] Verily Allah is All-Subtle,[52] All-Aware.

51. The word wadhkurna in the original has two meanings: Remember and mention. According to the first meaning the verse would mean: "O wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him), you should never forget that yours is the house from where the world is being instructed in divine revelations and wisdom, therefore, your responsibility is very great. Let it not happen that the people might see specimens of ignorance in this very house." According to the second meaning, it would mean: "O wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him), you should mention and relate before the people whatever you hear and see, for by virtue of your close and constant social association and attachment with the Prophet (peace be upon him) you will know and experience many such things which the other people. will not be able to know by any other means than you."

Two things have been mentioned in this verse: (1) The Revelations of Allah; and (2) the wise sayings. The revelations of Allah are the verses of Allah's Book, but hikmat (wisdom) is a comprehensive word which includes all those wise things which the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught the people. This word may also imply the teachings of the Book of Allah, but there is no reason why it should be made exclusively applicable to them. It inevitably includes the wisdom that the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught by his pure character and by his sayings besides reciting the verses of the Quran. Some people, only on the basis that the word ma yutla (that which is recited) has been used in the verse, make the assertion that the "Revelations of Allah" and "Wisdom" imply only the Quran, for the word "recitation" as a term is specifically used for the recitation of the Quran. But this reasoning is absolutely wrong. The use of the word "recitation" specifically as a term for the recitation of the Quran or the Book of Allah is the work of the people of the later ages. The Quran has not used this word as a term. In (Surah Al-Baqarah: Ayat 102), this same word has been used for the incantation of the magical formulas which the satans falsely attributed to the Prophet Solomon and taught the people. ("They followed that which the satans recited attributing it to the kingdom of Solomon.") This shows that the Quran uses this word in its lexical meaning, and does not specify it for reciting the verses of the Book of Allah.

52. "Well Acquainted": "Knower of even the most secret and hidden things."

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ
وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ
وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَّ
الذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةً وَّأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا 35

(33:35) Surely[53] the men who submit (to Allah) and the women who submit (to Allah),[54] the men who have faith and the women who have faith,[55] the men who are obedient and the women who are obedient,[56] the men who are truthful and the women who are truthful;[57] the men who are steadfast and the women who are steadfast,[58] the men who humble themselves (to Allah) and the women who humble themselves (to Allah),[59] the men who give alms and the women who give alms,[60] the men who fast and the women who fast,[61] the men who guard their chastity and the women who guard their chastity,[62] the men who remember Allah much and the women who remember Allah much:[63] for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and a mighty reward.[64]

53. Presentation of this theme immediately after the foregoing paragraph contains a subtle allusion to the fact that the instructions given above to the Prophet's (peace be upon him) wives are not exclusively meant for them but the Muslim society as a whole should reform itself in accordance with them.

54. Who have surrendered themselves to Allah: Who have accepted Islam as a code of life for themselves, and have decided to follow it in their lives, and who have no wish to resist the Islamic way of life and thought, but have adopted the way of obedience and submission to it.

55. Who are believing: Whose obedience is not merely outward, nor unwilling but who sincerely regard the guidance given by Islam as based on the truth. Whose faith is that the way shown by the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the only right and straight way. And in following which alone lies their true success. That which has been declared as wrong by Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him) is certainly wrong. And that which has been declared as right by Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him) is certainly right. Also, psychologically and intellectually, they do not regard as improper any injunction that has been enjoined by the Quran and Sunnah, and do not remain on the lookout to change it somehow to suit their own desires or mold it according to the current trends of the world, avoiding at the same time the blame that they have effected a change in the command given by Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him). The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) has described the true state of faith in a Hadith in these words:

"He who reconciled himself to Allah as his Lord and to Islam as his way of Life and to Muhammad as his Messenger, has the true taste of faith." (Sahih Muslim).

In another Hadith, he has explained it thus:

"None of you becomes a believer until the desires of his self become subordinate to what I have brought." (Sharh-as- Sunnah).

56. That is, they do not rest content with mere belief but are obedient practically also. They are not the sort of the people who would honestly believe that what Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) have commanded was true but would violate it in practice: that they would sincerely regard what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden as bad but would go on following the same in practical life.

57. That is, hey are truthful in their speech and honest in thou dealings. They do not deal in lies, deceptions, frauds and forgeries. They utter with their tongues only what their conscience approves as true. They practice and perform only what they honestly find to be in accordance with righteousness and truth, and they are honest in all their dealings with others.

58. That is, they patiently and steadfastly bear and face all the obstacles, dangers, difficulties and losses that they might have to encounter in following the right way taught by Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) and in establishing Allah's religion in the world; no fear and no temptation and no desire of the self can succeed in diverting them from the right way.

59. That is, they are free from pride, vanity and haughtiness: they have full understanding of the reality that they arc servants and they have no other position than that of servitude. Therefore, their hearts as well as their bodies remain bowed before Allah, dominated by fear of Him. They never display the attitude which is the hallmark of the lives of those who are

fearless of God and arc involved in arrogance. From the sequence it appears that the mention of Khushu (expression of humility) in particular along with the general attitude of the fear of God implies the Prayer, for the mention of the practice of charity and fast has been made just after it.

60. This does not only imply payment of the obligatory Zakat, but it also includes general charity. It means to say that they spend their wealth freely in the way of Allah and they are not at all niggardly in the matter of helping the servants of Allah as much as they can. No orphan and no sick or afflicted person, no weak or disabled person, no poor and needy one remains deprived of their support in their dwelling; and if there arises the need for monetary help for promoting the cause of Allah's religion, they are never miserly in spending their wealth for that purpose.

61. This includes both the obligatory and the voluntary fasts.

62. This has two meanings: (1) They refrain from adultery, and (2) they avoid nudity. One should also note that nudity does not only mean being naked but it is also nudity to put on a thin dress which shows the body, or is so tight fitting that it reveals all the outlines of the body.

63. Remember Allah much means that one should mention Allah's name in one way or other at all times in every business of life. Man cannot develop such a state of the mind unless the thought of God becomes deeply embedded in his heart. When this idea has passed beyond his conscious mind and settled deep in his subconscious and unconscious mind, then only he will remember and mention God's name in whatever he does and in whatever he says. He will begin with bismillah when he eats and say al-hamdu lillah when he finishes. He will remember Allah when he goes to bed, and mention Allah's name when he gets up. In his conversation also he will again and again pronounce bismillah, al-hamdu-lillalh, insha-Allah, masha Allah, etc. and ask for Allah's help in every matter, and thank Him for every blessing. He will seek His mercy in every affliction, and turn to Him in every trouble. He will fear Him on encountering every evil, and ask for His forgiveness when he happens to have committed an error and will pray to Him for fulfillment of every need. In short, in every state and in every business of life his function will be to remember Allah.

This, in fact, is the essence of the Islamic life. For all other acts of worship there is a prescribed time when they are performed, and one is free when one has performed them. But this is the worship which has no special time; it has to be performed constantly so that it links up the man's life with Allah and His service permanently. The other worships and religious acts themselves also become meaningful only when the heart of man remains inclined to Allah not only at the time when the act is actually being carried out but at all times when the tongue is uttering Allah's name constantly. In such a state as this worship and religious acts develop and flourish in a man's life precisely in the same manner as a plant grows in a congenial climate and environment. Contrary to this, the example of the religious services and worships which are carried out only on special times and occasions in the life which is devoid of this constant remembrance of Allah is of the plant which has been planted in an un-congenial climate, and which is growing only due to the special attention and care of the gardener. This very thing has been explained by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in a Hadith, thus:

Muadh bin Anas Juhani relates that a person asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) of Allah, “Who among those who fight in the way of Allah will get the highest reward?” He replied: “The one who remembers Allah the most.” The man asked: “Who among the observers of the fast will get the highest reward?” He replied: “The one who remembers Allah the most.” The man then asked the same question about the performer of the Prayer, the payer of the Zakat and charities and the performer of Hajj and the Prophet (peace be upon him) in every case gave the same answer, saying: He who remembers Allah the most. (Musnad Ahmad).

64. This verse plainly tells what qualities and characteristics are of real worth in the sight of Allah. These are the basic values of Islam which have been compressed into one sentence. As regards these, there is no difference between the man and woman. However, as for their life activity, the two sexes have separate spheres to function. The males have to function in some particular spheres and the females in some others. But if they possess these qualities and characteristics equally, Allah will raise them to equal ranks and bless them with equal rewards. It will in no way affect their rank and reward if one carried out household chores and the other performed the duties of caliphate and enforced the Shariah injunctions; one raised children in the house and the other went to the battlefield and fought for the sake of Allah and His religion.

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَّلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ اِذَا قَضَى اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗٓ اَمْرًا اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ اَمْرِهِمْ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّعْصِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلٰلًا مُّبِيْنًا 36

(33:36) It[65] does not behove a believer, male or female, that when Allah and His Messenger have decided an affair they should exercise their choice. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger has strayed to manifest error.[66]

65. From here begin the verses which were revealed in connection with the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) marriage with Zainab (may Allah be pleased with her).

66. Ibn Abbas, Qatadah, Ikrimah and Muqatil bin Hayyan say that this verse was revealed at the time when the Prophet (peace be upon him) proposed to Zainab for Zaid, and Zainab and her relatives did not agree. According to Ibn Abbas, when the Prophet (peace be upon him) made the proposal, Zainab said, “I am better than him in lineage.” Ibn Saad says that she also said, "I do not approve him for myself. I am a Quraishite by birth. The same sort of disapproval was expressed by her brother, Abdullah bin Jahsh, because Zaid was a freed slave of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and Zainab was the daughter of his paternal aunt, Umaimah bint Abdul Muttalib. They did not like the Prophet (peace be upon him) to propose a girl of a noble Quraishite family, who was none other than his own first cousin, for his freed slave. At this, this verse was sent down and on hearing it Zainab and all her relatives yielded to the proposal at once. Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) married them, paid ten diners and 60 dirhams from his own pocket as dower on behalf of Zaid, provided the bridal dress and sent some articles of food for domestic use.

Though this verse was revealed on a special occasion, the injunction given in it is the cardinal principle of the constitutional law of Islam, and it applies to the entire Islamic system of life. According to it no Muslim individual or nation, or institution, or court or parliament or state, is entitled to use its own freedom of opinion in a matter in which Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him) have already given a decision. To be a Muslim means to surrender one's freedom of opinion and action before Allah and His Messenger. It would be a contradiction in terms if a person or a nation claimed to be Muslim and then reserved for itself the freedom of choice and action. No sensible person can think of combining the two contradictory attitudes together. The one who desires to remain a Muslim will inevitably have to bow down to the command of Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him), and the one who is not inclined to bow will have to admit that he is not a Muslim. If he does not admit he will be regarded as a hypocrite both by God and by the people even though he might proclaim to be a Muslim at the top of his voice.

وَإِذْ تَقُولُ لِلَّذِيٓ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ وَاتَّقِ اللَّهَ وَتُخْفِي
فِي نَفْسِكَ مَا اللَّهُ مُبْدِيهِ وَتَخْشَى النَّاسَ ۚ وَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَاهُ ۖ فَلَمَّا قَضَىٰ زَيْدٌ مِّنْهَا
وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنَاكَهَا لِكَيْ لَا يَكُونَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ حَرَجٌ فِيٓ أَزْوَاجِ أَدْعِيَآئِهِمْ إِذَا قَضَوْا
مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا ۚ وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ مَفْعُولًا 37

(33:37) (O Prophet),[67] call to mind when you said to him[68]whom Allah had favoured and you had favoured: "Cleave to your wife and fear Allah,"[69] and you concealed within yourself for fear of people what Allah was to reveal, although Allah has greater right that you fear Him.[70] So when Zayd had accomplished what he would of her,[71] We gave her in marriage to you[72] so that there should not be any constraint for the believers regarding the wives of their adopted sons after they had accomplished whatever they would of them.[73] And Allah's command was bound to be accomplished.

67. The discourse from here to (verse 48) was sent down after the Prophet (peace be upon him) had married Zainab, and the hypocrites, the Jews and the mushriks had started a relentless propaganda campaign against him. While studying these verses one should bear in mind the fact that this divine discourse was not meant for the instruction of the enemies who were engaged in a willful campaign of vilification and slander and falsehood to defame the Prophet (peace be upon him) intentionally and to satisfy their rancor. But its real object was to protect the Muslims against the influence of their campaign and to safeguard them against doubts and suspicions. Evidently, the word of Allah could not satisfy the unbelievers. It could give peace of mind only to those who knew and believed it to be Allah's word. There was a danger that those righteous people also might be confused and influenced by the objections that were being raised by their enemies. Therefore, on the one hand, Allah removed all possible doubts from their minds, and on the other, taught the

Muslims as well as the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself how they should conduct themselves under the circumstances.

68. It refers to Zaid as has been mentioned clearly below. In order to understand how Allah and the Prophet (peace be upon him) had favored him, it is necessary here to relate his story briefly. He was the son of Harithah bin Shurahbil, a person of the Kalb tribe, and his mother, Suda bint Thalabah, was from the Bani Maan, a branch of the Tay tribe. When he was eight years old, she took him along to her parents. There the people of Bani Qain bin Jasr raided their camp, plundered their goods and took some men prisoners including Zaid. Then they sold Zaid at the fair of Ukiiz near Taif. His buyer was Hakim bin Hizam, a nephew of Khadijah (may Allah be pleased with her). Hakim brought him to Makkah and presented him to his paternal aunt. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) married Khadijah, he found Zaid in her service and was so impressed by his good manners and conduct that he asked her to give Zaid to him. Thus, this fortunate boy entered the service of the best of men, whom Allah, after a few years, was going to appoint a Prophet (peace be upon him). Zaid at that time was 15 years old. Afterwards, when his father and uncle came to know that their child was at Makkah, they came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and requested him to return him in exchange for a payment. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "I shall call the boy and leave it to him whether he would like to go with you or stay with me. If he chose to go, I would take no payment but would let him go with you. However, if he chose to stay back, I am not the one who would send away a person who would like to stay with me." They said, "This is perfectly right and just. Please ask the boy." The Prophet (peace be upon him) called Zaid and asked him: "Do you know these two gentlemen?" He said, "Yes, this is my father and this is my uncle." The Prophet (peace be upon him) then said, "Well, you know them as well as me. You have the choice to go with them, or stay with me if you so desire." He said, "I have no wish to leave you and go with anyone else." His father and uncle said: "Zaid, will you prefer slavery to freedom, and choose to stay with others in preference to your parents and family?" He replied, "After what I have seen of this person, I cannot prefer anything else of the world over him." Hearing this reply, the father and uncle of Zaid were reconciled to his remaining with the Prophet (peace be upon him). The Prophet (peace be upon him) set Zaid free immediately and proclaimed before a gathering of the Quraish in the Kabah, "Bear witness that hence forth Zaid is my son: he will receive inheritance from me and I from him." Thereafter, he began to be called Zaid bin Muhammad by the people. All this happened before the Prophet's (peace be upon him) advent as a Prophet. Then, when he was blessed with Prophethood by Allah, there were four persons who accepted his claim to it without a moment's hesitation as soon as they heard of it from him. They were Khadijah, Zaid, Ali and Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with them all). Zaid was 30 years old then, and had already spent 15 years in the Prophet's (peace be upon him) service. In the fourth year after Hijrah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) married him to his first cousin Zainab, paid her dower on his behalf and provided them with necessary articles for setting up the house.

This is to what Allah has alluded in the verse, saying: "Upon whom Allah has bestowed favor, and upon whom you (O Muhammad) have done favor."

69. These words were said when the relations between Zaid and Zainab had become very strained, and after making repeated complaints Zaid had finally told the Prophet (peace be upon him) that he intended to divorce her. Although Zainab had accepted to be married to

him in obedience to Allah and His Messenger's command, she could not overcome her feeling that Zaid was a freed slave, who had been brought up by her own family, and she in spite of being the daughter of a noble Arab family, had been wedded to him. Due to this feeling she could never regard Zaid as her equal in matrimonial life, and this caused more and more bitterness between them. Thus after a little more than a year the marriage ended in divorce.

70. Some people have misconstrued this sentence to mean this: The Prophet (peace be upon him) desired to marry Zainab and wanted that Zaid should divorce her. But when Zaid came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said that he wanted to divorce his wife, the Prophet (peace be upon him) stopped him from this only half heartedly. At this Allah said: "You were keeping hidden in your heart that which Allah intended to reveal." The real meaning, however, is contrary to this. If this the sentence is read with (verses 1, 2, 3 and7 of this Surah), one can clearly see that in the very days when bitterness was increasing between Zaid and his wife, Allah had hinted to His Prophet (peace be upon him) that when Zaid had divorced his wife, he would have to marry the divorced lady. But since the Prophet (peace be upon him) knew what it meant to marry the divorced wife of the adopted son in the contemporary Arab society, and that too at a time when apart from a handful of the Muslims the entire country had become jealous of him, he was hesitant to take any step in that direction. That is why when Zaid expressed his intention to divorce his wife, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to him, "Fear Allah and do not divorce your wife." What he meant by this was that Zaid should not divorce his wife so that he was saved from facing the trial, otherwise in case the divorce was pronounced he would have to comply with the command, and thus provoke a severe storm of criticism and vilification against himself. But when the Prophet (peace be upon him) deliberately forbade Zaid to divorce his wife so that he himself might be saved from what he feared would cause him defamation, Allah found this below the high position that He wanted His Prophet to enjoy, whereas Allah intended to effect a great reform through this marriage of the Prophet. The words "And you feared the people, while Allah has more right that you should fear Him," clearly point to the same theme.

The same explanation of this verse has been given by Imam Zain-ul-Aabedin Ali bin Husain (may Allah be pleased with him). He says, Allah had indicated to His Prophet (peace be upon him) that Zainab would be included among his wives. But when Zaid complained about her to him, the Prophet (peace be upon him) admonished him to fear Allah and keep his wife. At this Allah said to His Prophet, "I had informed you that I would give Zainab you to in marriage. But when you were forbidding Zaid to divorce his wife, you were hiding that which Allah was going to reveal." (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir on the authority of Ibn Abi Hatim).

Allama Alusi in his Ruh-al-Maani has also given the same meaning of it. He says, "This is an expression of displeasure on abandoning the better course, which was that the Prophet (peace be upon him) should have kept quiet, or should have told Zaid to do as he liked. The displeasure amounted to this: "Why did you tell Zaid to keep his wife, whereas I had informed you beforehand that Zainab would be included among your wives?"

71. That is, Zaid divorced his wife and her waiting period came to an end. The words "So when Zaid had fulfilled his desire of her" by themselves give the meaning that Zaid was left

with no desire attached to her. And this state of affairs does not appear on mere pronouncement of the divorce, because even during the waiting period the husband can take his wife back if he has any interest in her; and the husband also has this desire left with the divorced wife that it should become known whether she is pregnant or not. Therefore, the desire of her former husband with the divorced wife comes to an end only on the expiry of the waiting period.

72. These words are explicit that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had married Zainab not because of any personal desire but under the command of Allah.

73. These words clearly indicate that Allah accomplished this social reform through the Prophet (peace be upon him) to effect a great change which could not be enforced by any other means. There was no way to put an end to the wrong customs that had become prevalent in Arabia in respect of the adopted relations but that Allah's Messenger himself should take initiative to abolish them. Therefore, Allah arranged this marriage not for the sake of adding a wife to the Prophet's (peace be upon him) household but for enforcing an important social change.

مَا كَانَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ مِنْ حَرَجٍ فِيمَا فَرَضَ اللَّهُ لَهُ ۖ سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ وَكَانَ
أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قَدَرًا مَّقْدُورًا ۙ 38

(33:38) There could be no hindrance to the Prophet regarding what Allah ordained for him.[74] Such has been Allah's Way (with the Prophets) who went before. Allah's command is a decree firmly determined.[75]

74. These words show that for the other Muslims such a marriage is just permissible but for the Prophet (peace be upon him) it was a duty which Allah had imposed on him.

75. That is, for the Prophets it has always been a law that whatever command they receive from Allah, they have to act on it as a duty which they cannot in any case avoid. When Allah enjoins something on His Prophet (peace be upon him), he has to accomplish it even if the entire world is deadly opposed to it.

الَّذِينَ يُبَلِّغُونَ رِسَالَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَهُ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۗ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ
حَسِيبًا 39

(33:39) (This is Allah's Way) regarding those who deliver the Messages of Allah and who fear Him, and fear no one else than Allah. Allah is Sufficient as a Reckoner.[76]

76. The words in the text have two meanings:

(1) That Allah is enough to counter every fear and danger; and,

(2) that Allah is enough to take account: none else but Allah should be feared for accountability.

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ اَبَآ اَحَدٍ مِّنْ رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ رَّسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيّٖنَ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمًا 40

(33:40) Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the seal of the Prophets. Allah has full knowledge of everything.[77]

77. This one sentence was at the root of all those objections which the opponents were raising in connection with this marriage of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Their first objection was that he had married his own daughter-in-law, whereas according to his own law the son's wife is forbidden for the father. This was answered by saying: "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men." That is, Zaid was not his real son, and so it was not unlawful to marry his divorced wife.

Their second objection was that even if his adopted son was not his real son, it was not necessary that he should have married his divorced wife. This was answered by saying: "But he is the Messenger of Allah." That is, it was his duty as the Messenger of Allah to put an end to all kinds of prejudices about a lawful thing which custom and tradition had made unlawful without good reason and declare it to be lawful once again.

The point was stressed by saying: "and (he is) the seal of the Prophets." That is, not to speak of a Messenger, no other Prophet would be raised after him, who could make up for a possible deficiency in the enforcement of a reform in the law and society that might have been left un-enforced in his time. Therefore, it had become all the more necessary that he should himself root out the custom of ignorance.

Again, to further emphasize this point, it was said: "Allah has knowledge of everything." that is, Allah knows best why it was imperative to get the custom of ignorance rooted out at that juncture through the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) rather than let it remain as it was. He knows that no other prophet would be coming after him in the future; therefore, if He did not abolish this custom through His last Prophet, no other person after him would be able to abolish it for all the Muslims of the world for ever. Even if the later reformers would abolish it, no action of any one of them will have the permanent and universal authority behind it so that the people of every country and every age might start following it, and none of them would have a personality endowed with that holiness and sanctity that an action's being merely his way (Sunnah) might root out every feeling of aversion and abhorrence from the mind of the people.

It is a pity that a section of the people in our age have given wrong interpretations of this verse and opened the way to a great mischief. We have therefore added a comprehensive appendix at the end of the commentary of this Surah for the explanation of the question of

the finality of Prophethood and the eradication of the misunderstanding spread by these people.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱذۡكُرُواْ ٱللَّهَ ذِكۡرٗا كَثِيرٗا ۝41

(33:41) Believers, remember Allah much

وَسَبِّحُوهُ بُكۡرَةٗ وَأَصِيلًا ۝42

(33:42) and glorify Him morning and evening.[78]

78. This is meant to instruct the Muslims to the effect: When the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah is being showered with taunts and abuses by the enemies and his person being made the target of a propaganda campaign to frustrate his mission, the believers should neither listen to these absurd things unconcerned, nor should become themselves also involved in the doubts and suspicions spread by the enemies, nor should resort to abusive language in retaliation, but they should turn to Allah and remember Him more than usual as a special measure. The meaning of remembering Allah much has been explained in (E.N. 63) above. "Glorify Him morning and evening" means to glorify Allah constantly, to express His holiness and purity by word of mouth and not merely by counting beads on the rosary.

هُوَ ٱلَّذِي يُصَلِّي عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَمَلَٰٓئِكَتُهُۥ لِيُخۡرِجَكُم مِّنَ ٱلظُّلُمَٰتِ إِلَى ٱلنُّورِۚ وَكَانَ بِٱلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ رَحِيمٗا ۝43

(33:43) It is He Who lavishes His blessings on you and His angels invoke blessings on you that He may lead you out of darkness into light. He is Most Compassionate to the believers.[79]

79. This is meant to make the Muslims realize this: The jealousy and malice of the disbelievers and hypocrites towards you is only due to the mercy that Allah has shown you through His Messenger (peace be upon him). It is through him that you have been blessed with the faith, that you have come out from the darkness of unbelief and ignorance into the light of Islam, that you have developed the high moral and social qualities by virtue of which you stand distinguished above others. It is this which has filled the jealous people with malice and rage against the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah. However, in this state you should not adopt any unbecoming attitude which might alienate you from the mercy of Allah.

The word Salat when used with the preposition ala by Allah in respect of the servants, it means mercy and kindness and compassion and when used by the angels in respect of the human beings, it means the prayer for mercy. That is, the angels pray to Allah to bless the human beings with His bounty and favors. Another meaning of yusalli alaikum is: Allah

blesses you with renown among the people and exalts you to a high rank so that the people begin to praise you and the angels begin to eulogize you.

تَحِيَّتُهُمْ يَوْمَ يَلْقَوْنَهٗ سَلٰمٌ ۚ وَاَعَدَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَرِيْمًا ۝44

(33:44) On the Day they meet Him they will be greeted with: "Peace."[80] He has prepared for them a generous reward.

80. This can have three meanings:

(1) That Allah will Himself receive them with: Peace be upon you, as has been stated in (Surah Ya Sin: Ayat 58): "they have been greeted with "peace" from the Merciful Lord."

(2) That the angels will greet them, as stated in (Surah An- Nahl: Ayat 32): "This is the reward for those pious people whose souls are received in a pure state by the angels, who welcome them, saying: 'Peace be upon you, enter into Paradise as the reward of your good deeds."

(3) That they will greet one another among themselves, as stated in (Surah Yunus: Ayat 10), thus: "Therein their prayer will be Glory to Thee, O Lord, and their greeting: Peace be to you, and the burden of their hymn: Praise is for Allah alone, Lord of the universe."

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اِنَّآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ شَاهِدًا وَّمُبَشِّرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا ۙ ۝45

(33:45) O Prophet,[81] We have sent you forth as a witness,[82] a bearer of good tidings, and a warner,[83]

81. After admonishing the Muslims, Allah now addresses a few words of consolation to His Prophet (peace be upon him), as if to say: "We have blessed you with such and such a high rank and raised you to an exalted place of honor. Your opponents will not be able to harm you in any way by their propaganda campaign of slander and calumny. Therefore, you should not take their mischief to heart, nor give any weight to their propaganda. You should continue doing the duties of your mission, and let them utter whatever nonsense they like." Along with this, incidentally, the other people, both the believers and the unbelievers, also have been told that the person they have to deal with is not an ordinary man but a great personality, whom Allah has raised to the highest ranks of honor and glory.

82. The meaning of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) being a "witness" is very vast. It includes three kinds of evidence:

(1) Verbal evidence, i.e. the Prophet (peace be upon him) should bear out the truth of the realities and principles on which Allah's religion is based and tell the world plainly that they are the truth and all that is opposed to them is falsehood. He should rise to proclaim without hesitation and fear the Being of Allah and His Unity, the existence of the angels, the coming down of revelation, the occurrence of life-after-death, the Hell and Heaven, all are realities, even if they appear strange to the world, and the people mock the one presenting them, or call him a madman. Likewise, the Prophet (peace be upon him) should openly

present before the people the concepts, values, principles and rules pertaining to morality and civilization and social life that God has revealed to him, and reject as wrong all the concepts and ways which are prevalent and are opposed to them, even if the whole world rejects them as wrong and violates them in practice. Similarly, the Prophet (peace be upon him) should proclaim as lawful what is lawful in Allah's law even if the whole world regards it as unlawful, and should proclaim as unlawful whatever is unlawful in Allah's law even if the world regards it as lawful and pure.

(2) Practical evidence: That is, the Prophet (peace be upon him) in his own life should practically demonstrate all that he has been commissioned to present before the world. His life should be free from every shade of that which he calls evil, and his own character should clearly reflect that which he calls good; he should be the foremost in carrying out what he regards as obligatory, and most cautious in refraining from what he calls sinful. He should exert his utmost to enforce the code of life which he calls divine. His own character and conduct should bear out how sincere and truthful he is in his invitation; and his own self should be such a model of his teaching that anyone who sees him should know what kind of a man he wants to produce by the faith to which he invites the world, what kind of a character he wants to instill in him and what system of life he wants to be established through him in the world.

(3) Evidence in the Hereafter. That is, when the court of Allah is established in the Hereafter, the Prophet (peace be upon him) should give evidence to prove that he had conveyed to the people the entire message, without making any alteration or changes in it, that had been entrusted to him, and that he had shown no slackness in making the truth manifest before them, by word and by deed. On the basis of this evidence, it will be determined what reward the believers deserve and what punishment the disbelievers deserve.

From this one can have an idea of how great a responsibility had Allah placed upon the Prophet (peace be upon him) by raising him to the position of a "witness", and how great should be the personality worthy of that high position. Evidently, there has been no slackness whatever on the part of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the matter of giving evidence with regard to the faith, verbally as well as practically. That is why in the Hereafter, he will be able to testify that he had made the truth plain to the people, and that is how Allah's argument will be established against them; otherwise, if, God forbid, there had been any slackness on the part of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in providing evidence, he could neither be a witness against them in the Hereafter nor could any case be established against the deniers of the truth.

Some people have tried to give a different interpretation to the word witness. They say that the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the Hereafter will bear witness to the acts and deeds of the people. From this they conclude that the Prophet (peace be upon him) is watching and witnessing the acts of all the people; otherwise he could not bear the witness. But according to the Quran this interpretation is absolutely wrong. The Quran tells us that Allah has arranged a different system for recording the acts of the people. For this purpose His angels are preparing the conduct book of every person. See (Surah Qaf: Ayats 17-18), and (Surah Al-Kahf: Ayat 49). After this He will make the people's own limbs also to bear witness against them, (Surah Ya Sin: Ayat 65), (Surah Ha Mim As-Sajdah: Ayats 20-21). As for the

Prophets, they are not to testify to the acts of the people, but to give evidence to prove that they had conveyed the truth to the people. The Quran clearly says:

On the Day when Allah will assemble all the Messengers, He will ask: What was the response you received? They will answer: We have no knowledge. You alone have the full knowledge of all that is hidden. (Surah Al-Maidah: Ayat 109).

In the same connection, the Quran says about the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) that when he will be questioned about the deviation of the Christians, he will say: "I was a witness to their conduct as long as I remained among them, but after You recalled me. You watched over them." (Surah Al-Maidah: Ayat 117)

These verses clearly show that the Prophets will not be witnesses in regard to the acts of the people. As to what they will bear witness to the Quran gives an equally clear answer:

O Muslims, We have made you a community of the Golden Mean so that you may be witnesses in regard to mankind and the Messenger may be a witness in regard to you. (Surah Al-Baqarah: Ayat 143).

(O Muhammad, warn them of) the Day when We shall call a witness from among every community to testify against it. And We shall call you to testify against these people. (Surah An-Nahl: Ayat 89).

This shows that on the Day of Resurrection the Prophet's (peace be upon him) evidence in its nature will not be any different from the evidence for bearing which the Prophet's (peace be upon him) community and the witnesses in regard to every other community will be summoned. Evidently, if it be an evidence in regard to the acts, then the omnipresence of all of them also becomes necessary. And if these witnesses will be called to give evidence to confirm that the Creator's message had reached His creation, inevitably the Prophet (peace be upon him) also will be called upon to give a similar evidence.

The same is supported by the Hadith which Bukhari. Muslim, Tirmidhi. Ibn Majah, lmam Ahmad and others have related on the authority of Abdullah bin Masud, Abdullah bin Abbas, Abu ad-Darda, Anas bin Malik and many other companions (may Allah be pleased with them all), whose common theme is this: The Prophet (peace be upon him) on the Day of Resurrection will see some of his companions being brought, but instead of coming to him they will either be going or being pushed to the other side. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) will say: "O Allah, they are my companions!" Allah will say: "You do not know what misdeeds they committed after you." This theme has been reported by numerous companions and with so many chains of authorities that there remains no doubt about its authenticity. This proves that the Prophet (peace be upon him) is not at all a witness to each individual of his community and to each of his acts. As for the hadith which says that the acts of the people of his Ummah are presented before him, it does not in any way contradict this, because its purport is that Allah keeps him informed of the affairs of his Ummah, which does not mean that the Prophet (peace be upon him) is actually witnessing the acts of every person.

83. One should note that a person's giving the good news of a good end for belief and righteous acts and the warning of an evil end for disbelief and evil acts, in his personal capacity, is a different thing, and another's being appointed by Allah as a bearer of the good news and a warner is quite another thing. The one who is appointed to this office by Allah necessarily possesses an authority to give the good news and administer the warnings due to which his good news and his warnings are invested with legality. His giving a good news for an act has the meaning that the Greatest of all Judges, Who has sent him, approves of the act and holds it worthy of a reward. So, it is certainly imperative or obligatory or commendable in nature, and its doer will surely get a reward. On the other hand, his giving a warning of an evil end for an act has the meaning that the Sovereign forbids that act. So, it is certainly sinful and unlawful, and its doer will surely be punished. The good news and warnings of the one who is not divinely appointed cannot ever be invested with such an authority.

وَّدَاعِيًا اِلَى اللّٰهِ بِاِذْنِهٖ وَسِرَاجًا مُّنِيْرًا 46

(33:46) as one who calls people to Allah by His leave,[84] and as a bright, shining lamp.

84. Here also the same difference as pointed out above exists between the preaching of a common man and of a Prophet. As for the invitation to Allah, it is given, and can be given, by every preacher, but he is not appointed by Allah to do so. Contrary to this, a Prophet rises to call the people towards Allah by the leave of Allah. His call is not mere preaching but has also the support of the authority of the Lord of the universe, Who sent him. That is why resistance and opposition to the inviter to Allah amounts to rebellion against Allah Himself precisely as resistance to a government official when he is performing official duty is regarded as hostile to the government itself.

وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ بِاَنَّ لَهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ فَضْلًا كَبِيْرًا 47

(33:47) Announce to the believers the good tidings that Allah has kept bounteous blessings in store for them.

وَلَا تُطِعِ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَدَعْ اَذٰىهُمْ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا 48

(33:48) Do not yield to the unbelievers and the hypocrites, and disregard the hurt that comes from them, and put your trust in Allah. Allah suffices as the Guardian to entrust one's affairs to.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِذَا نَكَحْتُمُ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ثُمَّ طَلَّقْتُمُوْهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ تَمَسُّوْهُنَّ فَمَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ عِدَّةٍ تَعْتَدُّوْنَهَا ۚ فَمَتِّعُوْهُنَّ وَسَرِّحُوْهُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيْلًا 49

(33:49) Believers, when you marry believing women and then divorce them before you have touched them,[85] you may not require them to observe a waiting period that you might reckon against them. So make provision for them and release them in an honourable manner.[86]

85. This sentence is explicit that the word nikah here has been used for the contract of marriage only. The lexicographers have greatly disputed over the real meaning of the Arabic word nikah. One group of them says that as a word it is common both for intercourse and for the contract of marriage. The second group says that in its meaning it is common for both. The third group opines that its real meaning is the contract of marriage and for intercourse it is used only figuratively. And the fourth group expresses the opinion that its real meaning is intercourse and for the contract of marriage it is used only figuratively. Each group has cited Arabic poetry in support of its view. But Raghib Isfahani has emphatically asserted this: "The real meaning of the word nikah is contract of marriage; it has been used for intercourse metaphorically. It is impossible that its real meaning be intercourse and may have been used for the contract of marriage only metaphorically." The argument he gives is that all the words that have been actually coined for intercourse in Arabic, or in other languages of the world, are obscene and vulgar. No gentleman would like to utter them in a civilized gathering. Therefore, it is not possible that a society should use the word which has actually been coined for this act for marriage as a metaphor. For conveying this meaning only chaste words have been used in every language of the world and not obscene words.

As far as the Quran and Sunnah arc concerned, nikah is a term, which either implies only contract of marriage, or intercourse after the contract of marriage; but it has nowhere been used for intercourse outside marriage. This kind of intercourse has been called zina (adultery) by the Quran and Sunnah and not nikah.

86. This is a unique verse which was sent down probably in the same period respecting some case of divorce, and so inserted in this context. This shows that it was sent down after the preceding and before the following discourse. Below is given a summary of the legal injunctions that have been derived from this verse:

(1) Although the word "believing women" has been used, which apparently may give the impression that the law enunciated in this verse is not applicable to the women of the people of the Book, yet all scholars are agreed that this very injunction is applicable to them also. That is, in case a Muslim has married such a woman, all the injunctions relating to her divorce, dower, waiting-period (iddat) and provision at divorce are the same as of marriage with a believing woman. The scholars have also agreed that Allah's mentioning of the believing women here in particular is actually meant to tell the Muslims that only the believing women are suitable for them. That is, although it is permissible for them to marry Jewish and Christian women, it is not proper and commendable. In other words, the Quran seems to impress that Allah expects that the believers would marry only the believing women.

(2) The word mas (to touch) here has been used for intercourse by implication. Thus, the verse apparently implies that if the husband has not had intercourse with the woman, even though he has had seclusion with her and has even touched her with the hand, she will not

have to observe the waiting-term (iddat) in case of divorce. But the jurists, for the sake of precaution, have decreed that if they have had seclusion proper (i.e. seclusion during which intercourse could be possible), waiting-period will have to be observed if divorce is pronounced after it, and the waiting-period would be annulled only in case divorce was pronounced before they have had the seclusion.

(3) The annulment of the waiting-period in case of divorce before the event of seclusion means that in this case the man forfeits his right to take the woman back as his wife, and the woman becomes entitled to marry anyone she likes immediately after the divorce. But it should be borne in mind that this applies only to the divorce which is pronounced before the event of the seclusion. If a woman's husband dies before having the seclusion, the waitingperiod that has to be observed after death will not be annulled, but she will have to pass the same waiting-period of four months and ten days as is obligatory for a married woman in normal conditions. (Iddat is the waiting-period before the expiry of which a divorced woman or a widow is forbidden to remarry).

(4) The words "then there is no waiting term upon them," show that the waiting-period is a right of the man on the woman. But it does not mean that this is only the man's right. It, in fact, includes two other rights as well: the right of the children, and the right of Allah or of the law. The man's right is on the basis that he has the right to take the woman back as his wife during the period, and also on the basis that the proof of the parentage of his children, which depends on the woman's being pregnant or otherwise, becomes established in the waiting-period. The reason for including the right of the children is that the proof of a child's parentage is necessary for the establishment of his legal rights, and his moral status also depends on this that his parentage should not be doubtful. The reason for including the right of Allah (or the right of the law) is that even if the people and their children become heedless of their rights, the divine law requires that their rights should be protected. That is why even if a man gives a warrant to a woman that after his death or after obtaining divorce from him, there will be no waiting-period binding on her from him, the divine law will in no case annul it.

(5) "So provide for them and send them off, a graceful sending." The intention of this injunction would be fulfilled by acting in either of the two ways: If the dower had been fixed at the time of marriage, and then divorce pronounced before the event of seclusion proper, payment of half of the dower will be obligatory, as enjoined in (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 237). To give more than what is obligatory is not binding but certainly commendable. For instance, it is commendable that besides paying half of the dower the man should let the woman retain the bridal garments, or any other articles that he had sent her for the occasion of marriage. But if no dower had been fixed at the time of marriage, it is obligatory to pay her something before sending her away, and this something should be according to the status and financial means of the man, as has been enjoined in (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 236). One group of the scholars holds that something in any case has to be paid in case of divorce as an obligation whether dower has been fixed or not.

(6) "A graceful sending" does not only mean that the woman should be provided with something on divorce but this also that separation should be adopted in a gentlemanly way, without any kind of vilification. If a man does not happen to like a woman, or there has been some other cause of complaint due to which he does not want to keep the woman, he should

divorce her like a gentleman and send her away. He should not start mentioning her faults and relating his complaints against her before the people so as to also prejudice them against her. This instruction of the Quran clearly shows that annexing the enforcement of divorce to the permission of a local council or court is fully against the wisdom and spirit of the divine law, for in that case there remains no chance of "sending her away gracefully", but defamation, revilement and vilification do inevitably result even if the man does not so will. Moreover, the words of the verse also do not admit that the power of the man to divorce should be bound up with the permission of a local council or court. The verse is clearly giving the married man the power of divorce and placing on him alone the responsibility that if he wants to release the woman before touching her he must pay her half the dower as an obligation, or something else according to his means. From this the object of the verse clearly seems to be that in order to prevent divorce from being taken lightly the man should be placed under the burden of a financial responsibility so that he himself uses his power of divorce with sense, and there is no chance of an external interference in the internal affairs of the two families.

(7) Ibn Abbas, Said bin al-Musayyib, Hasan Basri, Ali bin al-Husain (Zain al-Abidin), Imam Shafei and Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal have deduced from the words, "when you marry, and then divorce" that divorce takes effect only when marriage has been contracted. Divorce before the contract of marriage is without effect. Therefore if a person says, "If I marry such and such a woman, or a woman of such and such a tribe or nation, or any other woman, she is divorced," it will be an absurd and meaningless thing; no divorce can take effect from this. The following Ahadith are presented in support of this view:

"The son of Adam is not entitled to use his power of divorce in respect of that which he does not possess." (Ahmad, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah). And: "There is no divorce before marriage." (Ibn Majah). But a great number of the jurists hold that this verse and these Ahadith apply in the case when a man says to a woman, who is not his wife, "You have divorce on you," or "I divorce you." Saying such a thing is no doubt absurd, and is of no legal consequence, but if he says, "If I marry you, you are divorced," this is not divorcing before the marriage, but the person is in fact declaring his intent that when the woman is married to him, she will stand divorced. Such a declaration cannot be absurd and without effect, but, as a matter of fact, whenever the woman is married to him, divorce will fall on her. The jurists who hold the view have further differed as to what extent this kind of divorce will have effect.

Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Muhammad and Imam Zufar hold that divorce will take place in any case whether a person specifics a woman or a tribe or a nation, or talks generally so as to say. "Any woman whom I marry is divorced." Abu Bakr al-Jassas has cited the same opinion also from Umar, Abdullah bin Masud, Ibrahim Nakhai, Mujahid and Umar bin Abdul Aziz (may Allah show mercy to them all).

Sufyan Thauri and Uthman al-Batti say that divorce will take place only in case the person says, "If I marry such and such a woman, she is divorced."

Hasan bin Salih, Laith bin Saad and Amir ash-Shabi, say that such a divorce will take place even if something is said in general terms provided that a particular class of the people has

been mentioned; for instance, if the person has said. "If I marry a woman of such and such a family, or such and such a tribe, or such and such city or country or nation, she is divorced."

Ibn Abi Laila and Imam Malik, disputing the above opinion, have added a condition that the time limit also should be determined. For example, if the man said: "If I marry within this year or the next ten years such and such a woman or a woman from such and such a class, she is divorced," divorce will take place, otherwise not. Imam Malik also adds that if the time limit is so long that the man is not expected to outlive it, his declaration will have no effect.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّبِيُّ إِنَّآ أَحۡلَلۡنَا لَكَ أَزۡوَٰجَكَ ٱلَّٰتِيٓ ءَاتَيۡتَ أُجُورَهُنَّ وَمَا مَلَكَتۡ يَمِينُكَ مِمَّآ أَفَآءَ
ٱللَّهُ عَلَيۡكَ وَبَنَٰتِ عَمِّكَ وَبَنَٰتِ عَمَّٰتِكَ وَبَنَٰتِ خَالِكَ وَبَنَٰتِ خَٰلَٰتِكَ ٱلَّٰتِي هَاجَرۡنَ
مَعَكَۖ وَٱمۡرَأَةً مُّؤۡمِنَةً إِن وَهَبَتۡ نَفۡسَهَا لِلنَّبِيِّ إِنۡ أَرَادَ ٱلنَّبِيُّ أَن يَسۡتَنكِحَهَا خَالِصَةً
لَّكَ مِن دُونِ ٱلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَۖ قَدۡ عَلِمۡنَا مَا فَرَضۡنَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ فِيٓ أَزۡوَٰجِهِمۡ وَمَا مَلَكَتۡ أَيۡمَٰنُهُمۡ
لِكَيۡلَا يَكُونَ عَلَيۡكَ حَرَجٞۗ وَكَانَ ٱللَّهُ غَفُورٗا رَّحِيمٗا 50

(33:50) O Prophet, We have made lawful for you your wives whose bridal dues you have paid,[87] and the slave-girls you possess from among the prisoners of war, and the daughters of your paternal uncles and paternal aunts, and the daughters of your maternal uncles and maternal aunts who have migrated with you, and a believing woman who gives herself to the Prophet and whom he wants to take in marriage.[88] (O Prophet), this privilege is yours alone to the exclusion of other believers.[89] We know well what restrictions We have imposed upon them as regards their wives and those whom their right hands possess, (and have exempted you from those restrictions) that there may be no constraint upon you.[90] Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.

87. This, in fact, is an answer to the objection of the people who said that Muhammad (peace be upon him) forbade others to keep more than four wives at a time but had himself taken a fifth wife. This objection was raised because at the time the Prophet (peace be upon him) married Zainab, he already had four wives with him:

(1) Saudah, whom he had married in the 3rd year before the Hijrah,

(2) Aishah, whom he married in the 3rd year before the Hijrah but who came to live with him in Shawwal, A.H. 1,

(3) Hafsah, whom he married in Shaban, A.H. 3, and,

(4) Umm Salamah, whom he married in Shawwal. A.H. 4. Thus, Zainab was his fifth wife. May Allah be pleased with them all. Here Allah has answered the objection of the disbelievers and the hypocrites, as if to say, O Prophet, We have made lawful for you all these five wives whom you have married by giving them their dowers. In other words, the answer means this: "It is We who have imposed the restriction of four wives on others, and it is also We ourselves who have made Our Prophet an exception to the restriction. When We could impose the restriction, We could also make the exception."

Also, about this answer one should note that it was not meant to satisfy the disbelievers and the hypocrites but those Muslims to whom the opponents of Islam were trying to impart evil suggestions. Since they believed that the Quran is Allah's speech and has been sent down in Allah's own words, Allah declared through a clear and decisive verse that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had not made himself an exception from the general law about four wives of his own accord, but the exception in regard to him had been decreed by Allah.

88. Besides making the fifth wife lawful for the Prophet, Allah in this verse also granted him the permission to marry a few other kinds of the women:

(1) The woman who came into his possession from among the slave-girls granted by Allah. According to this the Prophet (peace be upon him) selected for himself Raihanah from among the prisoners of war taken at the raid against the Bani Quraizah, Juwairiyah from among the prisoners of war taken at the raid against the Bani al- Mustaliq, Safiyyah out of the prisoners of war captured at Khaiber, and Mariah the Copt, who was presented by Maqauqis of Egypt. Out of these he set three of them free and married them, but had conjugal relations with Mariah on the ground of her being his slave-girl. In her case there is no proof that the Prophet (peace be upon him) set her free and married her.

(2) The ladies from among his first cousins, who emigrated along with him. The words "who emigrated with you" do not mean that they accompanied the Prophet (peace be upon him) in his migration journey but this that they also had migrated in the way of Allah for the sake of Islam. The Holy Prophet was given the choice to marry any one of them he liked. Accordingly, in A.H. 7 he married Umm Habibah. (Incidentally, in this verse it has been elucidated that the daughters of one's paternal and maternal uncles and aunts are lawful for a Muslim. In this regard the Islamic Law is different both from the Christian Law and from the Jewish Law. Among the Christians one cannot marry a woman whose line of descent joins one's own anywhere in the last seven generations, and among the Jews it is permissible even to marry one's real niece, i.e. daughter of one's brother or sister.

(3) The believing woman who gives herself to the Prophet (peace be upon him), i.e. who is prepared to give herself in marriage to the Prophet (peace be upon him) without a dower, and he may like to marry her. On account of this permission the Prophet (peace be upon him) took Hadrat Maimunah as his wife in Shawwal, A.H. 7, but he did not think he should have conjugal relations with her without paying her the dower. Therefore, he paid her the dower even though she did not demand or desire it. Some commentators say that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not have any wife who had offered herself to him; but this in fact means that he did not keep any wife without paying her the dower although she offered herself to him.

89. If this sentence is taken to be related with the preceding sentence, it will mean that it is not permissible for any Muslim to take in marriage a woman who gives herself to him, without paying her the dower; and if it is taken to be related with the whole preceding passage, it will imply that the concession to marry more than four wives is only reserved for the Prophet (peace be upon him), not for the other Muslims. This verse also shows that certain commandments are specifically meant for the Prophet (peace be upon him) to follow and are not applicable to the other Muslims. A study of the Quran and Sunnah reveals several such commandments. For example, the Tahajjud prayer was obligatory for the Prophet (peace be upon him) but is voluntary for the Ummah. It is unlawful for him and his family to receive charities though it is not so for others. The inheritance left by him cannot be divided; as for the inheritance left by others relevant commandments have been given in Surah An-Nisa. Keeping of more than four wives was made lawful for him though he was not enjoined to do equal treatment with them. He was permitted to marry a woman who gave herself to him without any dower, and after his death his wives were forbidden for the Ummah. None of these privileges could be enjoyed by any other Muslim. Another special thing that the commentators have mentioned in this regard is that it was forbidden for the Prophet (peace be upon him) to marry a woman from among the people of the Book though it is lawful for the Muslims to do so.

90. This is the reason why Allah made the Prophet (peace be upon him) an exception to the general rule. "That there should be no difficulty (restraint) upon you." does not mean that he was, God forbid, a very lustful person, and therefore, he was permitted to marry several wives so that he might not feel any hindrance due to the restriction to four wives. This meaning will be understood only by the person who, blinded by prejudice, forgets that the Prophet (peace be upon him) at the age of 25 married a lady who was 40 years old, and lived a happy, contented married life with her for full 25 years. Then, when she died, he marred another old lady Saudah, who remained his only wife for the next four years. Now, no sensible and honest person can imagine that when he became over fifty-three he was suddenly filled with lust and needed to have more and more wives. In fact, in order to understand the meaning of "no restraint", one should, on the one hand, keep in view the great task whose responsibility Allah had placed on the Prophet (peace be upon him), and on the other hand, understand the conditions and circumstances under which he had been appointed to accomplish the great task. Anyone who understands these two things with an unbiased mind, will certainly realize why it was necessary to grant him freedom in respect of the wives and what hindrance was there for him in the restriction to four wives.

The task entrusted to the Prophet (peace be upon him) was that he should mold and chisel by all-round education and training an uncouth, uncultured nation which was not uncivilized only from the Islamic point of view but from a general viewpoint as well, into a highly civilized, refined and virtuous nation. For this purpose an unbiased mind will certainly realize why it was necessary to grant him freedom in respect of the wives and what hindrance was there for him in the restriction to four wives. For this purpose it was not enough only to train men but the training of the women was also equally necessary. However, the principles of social life and civilization which he had been appointed to teach forbade free mixing of the sexes together, and it was not possible for him to impart direct training to the womenfolk without violating this rule. Therefore, for imparting education to the women the only alternative left for him was that he should marry several women of

different ages and mental capabilities and should prepare them by education and training to become his helpers, and then employ them to give religious instructions to the young, middle-aged and old women of the city and desert and teach them the new principles of morality and civilization. Moreover, the Prophet (peace be upon him) had also been appointed to abolish the system of life of the pre-Islamic days of ignorance and replace it with the Islamic system of life practically. For the accomplishment of this task a conflict was inevitable with those who upheld the system of ignorance, and this conflict was being encountered in a country where the tribal system of life was prevalent with all its peculiar customs and traditions. Under these conditions, besides other devices, it was also necessary that the Prophet (peace be upon him) should marry in different families and clans in order to cement many ties of friendship and put an end to enmities. Thus, the selection of the ladies whom he married was to some extent determined by this object besides their personal qualities. By taking Aishah and Hafsah as wives he further strengthened and deepened the relations with Abu Bakr and Umar. Umm Salamah was the daughter of the family to which Abu Jahl and Khalid bin Walid belonged, and Umm Habibah was the daughter of Abu Sufyan. These marriages neutralized the enmity of these families to a large extent; so much so that after Umm Habibah's marriage Abu Sufyan never confronted the Prophet (peace be upon him) on the battlefield. Safiyyah, Juwairiah and Raihanah belonged to Jewish families. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) married them after setting them free, the hostile Jewish activities against him subsided. For according to the Arab traditions when the daughter of a clan or tribe was married to a person, he was regarded as the son-in-law of not only the girl's family but of the entire tribe, and it was disgraceful to fight the son-in-law.

Practical reformation of the society and abolition of its customs of ignorance was also included among the duties of his office. Therefore, he had to undertake one marriage for this purpose also, as has been related in detail in this Surah Ahzab itself.

For these reasons it was essential that there should be no restriction for the Prophet in respect of marriage so that in view of the requirements of the great mission entrusted to him he could marry as many women as he wanted.

This also brings out the error of the view of those people who think that polygamy is permissible only under special personal requirements and apart from these there can be no other object for which it may be permissible. Evidently, the reason for the Prophet (peace be upon him) to marry more wives than one was not that the wife was sick, or barren, or that he had no male child, or that there was the question of the bringing up of some orphans. Without these restrictions, he married all his wives either in view of the educational requirements, or for the reformation of society, or for political and social objectives. The question is, when Allah Himself has not kept polygamy restricted to a few particular needs, which are being mentioned these days and the Messenger of Allah took several wives for many purposes other than these, how is another person entitled to propose some restrictions in the law and then claim that he is imposing these in accordance with the Shariah? As a matter of fact, the root cause for the imposition of these restrictions is the Western concept that polygamy is an evil in itself. That very concept has given rise to the idea that this unlawful thing can become lawful only in case of extreme circumstances. Now, however hard one may try to label this imported concept with Islam artificially, it is entirely alien to the Quran and Sunnah and the whole Muslim literature.

تُرۡجِیۡ مَنۡ تَشَآءُ مِنۡهُنَّ وَتُـٔۡوِیۡۤ اِلَیۡكَ مَنۡ تَشَآءُ ؕ وَمَنِ ابۡتَغَیۡتَ مِمَّنۡ عَزَلۡتَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ
عَلَیۡكَ ؕ ذٰلِكَ اَدۡنٰۤی اَنۡ تَقَرَّ اَعۡیُنُهُنَّ وَلَا یَحۡزَنَّ وَیَرۡضَیۡنَ بِمَاۤ اٰتَیۡتَهُنَّ كُلُّهُنَّ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ یَعۡلَمُ مَا فِیۡ
قُلُوۡبِكُمۡ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِیۡمًا حَلِیۡمًا 51

(33:51) Of them you may put off any of them you wish, and you may take any of them whom you wish, and you may call back any of those whom you had (temporarily) set aside: there will be no blame on you (on this account). It is likelier that they will thus be comforted, and will not grieve, and every one of them will be well-pleased with what you give them.[91] Allah knows what is in your hearts. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Forbearing.[92]

91. This verse was meant to relieve the Prophet (peace be upon him) of the domestic worries and anxieties so that he could carry out his duties with full peace of mind. When Allah clearly gave him the power and the authority to treat any of his wives as he liked, there remained no chance that those believing ladies would trouble him in any way, or would create complications for him by their mutual rivalries and domestic squabbles. But in spite of having this authority from Allah the Prophet (peace be upon him) meted out full justice to his wives. He did not prefer one to the other and would visit each of them regularly by turns. Only Abu Razin from among the traditionalists has said that the Prophet (peace be upon him) visited only four of his wives, Aishah, Hafsah, Zainab and Umm Salamah by turns and no turn had been fixed for the other wives. But all other traditionalists and commentators contradict this and prove by authentic traditions that even after having this authority the Prophet (peace be upon him) visited all his wives in turn and treated there alike. Bukhari, Muslim, Nasai, Abu Daud and others have reported on the authority of Aishah that even after the revelation of this verse the Prophet's (peace be upon him) practice was that whenever he wanted to visit any of us, his wives, on the turn of another wife, he would first ask her permission for it. Abu Bakr al-Jassas relates from Urwah bin Zubair that Aishah told him, "As to our rants the Prophet (peace be upon him) never preferred any of us to the other, although it seldom happened that he did not visit all his wives on the same day, but he never touched a wife unless it was her day by turn." And this also is a tradition from Aishah that during his last illness when it became difficult for him to move about he asked for his other wives' permission to stay with her, and only on their approval he passed his last days in her apartment. Ibn Abi Hatim has cited this from Imam Zuhri that the Prophet (peace be upon him) is not known to have deprived any of his wives of her turn. To this only Saudah was an exception, who on account of her advanced age had willingly surrendered her turn in favor of Aishah.

Here, nobody should entertain the doubt that Allah had, God forbid, shown an undue privilege to His Prophet (peace be upon him) and deprived his wives of their rights. As a matter of fact, the great objectives for the sake of which the Prophet (peace be upon him) had been made an exception to the general rule in respect of the number of wives, also demanded that he should be afforded full peace in domestic life and anything that could

cause him distraction and embarrassment should be eradicated. It was a unique honor for the wives that they were privileged to be the life-partners of the greatest of all men like the Prophet (peace be upon him), and by virtue of this they got the opportunity to become his companions and helpers in the great task of reform and invitation that was to become the means of true success for mankind till the end of time. Just as the Prophet (peace be upon him) was offering every kind of sacrifice for the sake of this objective and the companions were also following his example according to their capabilities, so it was also the duty of his wives to display selflessness in every way. Therefore, all the wives accepted Allah's decision with regard to themselves happily and willingly.

92. This is a warning for the Prophet's (peace be upon him) wives as well as for all other people. For the wives it is a warning in the sense that if after the coming down of this divine command they did not feel reconciled to it in their hearts, they would not escape Allah's punishment. And for others the warning is that if they entertained any kind of suspicion in their hearts in regard to the Prophet's (peace be upon him) matrimonial life, or harbored any misgiving in any recess of their minds, this would not remain hidden from Allah. Along with this Allah's attribute of forbearance has also been mentioned so that they know that although even a thought of insolence in regard to the Prophet (peace be upon him) is punishable, yet if a person got rid of such a suspicion he might have the hope of His forgiveness.

لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ النِّسَآءُ مِنۢ بَعۡدُ وَلَآ أَن تَبَدَّلَ بِهِنَّ مِنۡ أَزۡوَاجٖ وَلَوۡ أَعۡجَبَكَ حُسۡنُهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتۡ يَمِينُكَۗ وَكَانَ ٱللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيۡءٖ رَّقِيبًا ٥٢

(33:52) Thereafter women will not be lawful for you, and it will not be lawful for you to take other wives in place of them, even though their beauty might please you,[93] unless they be those whom your right hand owns.[94] Allah is watchful over everything.

93. This has two meanings:

(1) "No other woman except those made lawful to you in (verse 50)above, is any more lawful to you" and,

(2) "When your wives have become pleased and ready to stay with you through every kind of hardship and have rejected the world in preference to the Hereafter, and are satisfied that you may treat them as you please, it is no longer lawful for you that you should divorce any of them and take another wife instead."

94. This verse explains why one is permitted to have conjugal relations with one's slave-girls besides the wedded wives, and there is no restriction on their number. The same thing has also been stated in (Surahs An-Nisa, Ayat 3), (Al-Muminun, Ayat 6), and (Al-Maarij, Ayat 30). In all these verses the slave-girls have been mentioned as a separate class from the wedded wives, and conjugal relations with them have been permitted. Moreover, (Ayat 3 of Surah An- Nisa) lays down the number of the wives as four, but neither has Allah fixed the

number of the slave-girls in that verse nor made any allusion to their number in the other relevant verses. Here, of course, the Prophet (peace be upon him) is being addressed and told: "It is no more lawful for you to take other women in marriage, or divorce any of the present wives and take another wife in her stead; slavegirls, however, are lawful." This shows that no restriction has been imposed in respect of the slave girls.

This, however, does not mean that the divine law has provided the rich an opportunity to purchase as many slave-girls as they like for their carnal indulgence. This is in fact how the self-seeking people have exploited and abused the law. The law had been made for the convenience of the people; it had not been made to be abused. One could, for instance, similarly abuse the law concerning marriage. The Shariah permits a man to marry up to four wives and also gives him the right to divorce his wife and take another one. This law had been made in view of man's requirements and needs. Now, if a person, merely for the sake of sensual enjoyment, were to adopt the practice of keeping four wives for a time and then divorcing them to be replaced by another company of them, it would be abusing the provisions of the law, for which the person himself would be responsible and not the Shariah. Likewise the Shariah has allowed that the women who are captured in war and whose people do not exchange them for Muslim prisoners of war nor ransom them, may be kept as slave-girls, and gave the persons to whom they are assigned by the government the right to have conjugal relations with them so that they do not become a moral hazard for the society. Then, as it was not possible to determine the number of the prisoners of war, legally also it could not be determined how many slave girls a person could keep at a time. The sale of the slaves and slave-girls was also allowed for the reason that if a slave or a slave-girl could not do well with a master, he or she could be transferred to another person so that the same person's permanent ownership did not become a cause of unending torture for both the master and the captive. The Shariah made all these laws keeping in view human conditions and requirements for the convenience of men. If these have been made a means of sexual enjoyment and luxury by the rich, it is they who are to blame for this and not the Shariah.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَدْخُلُوْا بُيُوْتَ النَّبِيِّ اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ اِلٰى طَعَامٍ غَيْرَ نٰظِرِيْنَ
اِنٰىهُ وَلٰكِنْ اِذَا دُعِيْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوْا فَاِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانْتَشِرُوْا وَلَا مُسْتَاْنِسِيْنَ لِحَدِيْثٍ ؕ اِنَّ
ذٰلِكُمْ كَانَ يُؤْذِى النَّبِيَّ فَيَسْتَحْيٖ مِنْكُمْ ۫ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَسْتَحْيٖ مِنَ الْحَقِّ ؕ وَاِذَا سَاَلْتُمُوْهُنَّ مَتَاعًا
فَسْـَٔلُوْهُنَّ مِنْ وَّرَآءِ حِجَابٍ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ اَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوْبِكُمْ وَقُلُوْبِهِنَّ ؕ وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ اَنْ

تُؤْذُوا رَسُولَ اللّٰهِ وَلَآ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوٓا اَزْوَاجَهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖٓ اَبَدًا ۭ اِنَّ ذٰلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ

عَظِيْمًا 53

(33:53) Believers, enter not the houses of the Prophet without his permission,[95] nor wait for a meal to be prepared; instead enter when you are invited to eat,[96] and when you have had the meal, disperse. Do not linger in idle talk.[97] That is hurtful to the Prophet but he does not express it out of shyness; but Allah is not ashamed of speaking out the Truth. And if you were to ask the wives of the Prophet for something, ask from behind a curtain. That is more apt for the cleanness of your hearts and theirs.[98] It is not lawful for you to cause hurt to Allah's Messenger,[99] nor to ever marry his wives after him.[100] Surely that would be an enormous sin in Allah's sight.

95. This is an introduction to the general command that was given in (Surah An-Nur, Ayat 27) about a year later. In the ancient times the Arabs would enter one another's house unceremoniously. If a person had to see another person he did not think it was necessary to call at the door or take permission for entry, but would enter the house and ask the womenfolk and children whether the master was at home or not, This custom of ignorance was the cause of many evils and would often give rise to some serious evils. Therefore, in the beginning a rule was made in respect of the houses of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that no person, whether a close friend or a distant relative, could enter there without permission. Then in Surah An-Nur a general command was given to enforce this rule for the houses of all the Muslims.

96. This is the second command in this connection. An uncivilized practice prevalent among the Arabs was that the visitors would call on a friend or acquaintance right at the time of the meals, or would come and prolong their stay till the meals time approached. This would often cause the master of the house great embarrassment. He could neither be so discourteous as to tell the visitors to leave because it was his meals time, nor could feed so many unexpected guests together. For it is not always possible for a person to arrange meals immediately for as many visitors as happened to call on him at a time. Allah disapproved of this practice and commanded that the visitors should go for meals to a house only when invited. This command did not in particular apply to the Prophet's (peace be upon him) house only but the rules were in the beginning enforced in that model household so that they become general rules of etiquette in the houses of the other Muslims as well.

97. This was to reform yet another foolish practice. The guests at a feast, after they had finished eating, would sit down to endless gossip and discussions much to the inconvenience of the people of the house. They would often embarrass the Prophet (peace be upon him) also by this practice, but he would forbear and forget. At last on the day of the marriage feast of Zainab the embarrassment thus caused crossed all limits. According to the Prophet's (peace be upon him) special attendant, Anas bin Malik, the feast was held at night. Most of the people left after taking food but a couple or two of them got engaged in gossip. Disconcerted the Prophet (peace be upon him) rose and went round to his wives. When he

returned he found the gentlemen still sitting. He turned back and sat in Aishah's apartment. When a good deal of the night had passed he came to know that the gentlemen had left. Then he returned and went to the apartment of Zainab. After this it became inevitable that Allah Himself should warn the people of these evil practices. According to Anas these verses were revealed on this occasion. (Muslim, Nasai, Ibn Jarir).

98. This is the verse which is called "the verse of the veil". Bukhari has related on the authority of Anas that before the coming down of this verse, Umar had made a suggestion several times to the Prophet (peace be upon him) to the effect: O Messenger of Allah, all sorts of the people, good and bad, come to visit you. Would that you commanded your wives to observe hijab. According to another tradition, once Umar said to the holy wives, "If what I say concerning you is accepted, my eyes should never see you." But since the Prophet (peace be upon him) was not independent in making law, he awaited divine revelation. At last, this command came down that except for the mahram males as being stated in (Ayat 55) below no other man should enter the Prophet's (peace be upon him) houses, and whoever had to ask some thing from the ladies, should ask for it from behind a curtain. After this command curtains were hung at the doors of the apartments of the wives, and since the Prophet's (peace be upon him) house was a model for the Muslims to follow, they too hung curtains at their doors. The last sentence of the verse itself points out that whoever desire that the hearts of the men and women should remain pure, should adopt this way.

Now whosoever has been blessed with understanding by Allah can himself see that the Book which forbids the men and women to talk to each other face to face and commands them to speak from behind a curtain because "That is purer for your hearts and for their hearts," could not possibly permit that the men and women should freely meet in mixed gatherings, educational and democratic institutions and offices, because it did not affect the purity of the hearts in any way. For him who does not want to follow the Quran, the best way would be that he should disregard its commands and should frankly say that he has no desire to follow it. But this would be the height of meanness that he should violate the clear commandments of the Quran and then stubbornly say that he is following the spirit of Islam which he has extracted. After all, what is that spirit of Islam which these people extract from sources outside the Quran and the sunnah?

99. The allusion is to the false allegations that were being made in those days against the Prophet (peace be upon him), and some weak-minded Muslims also were joining the disbelievers and the hypocrites in doing this.

100. This is the explanation of what has been said in (verse 6): "The Prophet's wives are mothers of the believers."

إِنْ تُبْدُوا شَيْئًا أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا 54

(33:54) (It does not matter) whether you disclose something or conceal it, for Allah certainly knows everything.[101]

101. That is, “If a person entertains an evil thought in his heart against the Prophet (peace be upon him), or harbors an evil intention about his wives, it will not remain hidden from Allah, and he will be punished for it.”

لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِنَّ فِيْٓ اٰبَآئِهِنَّ وَلَآ اَبْنَآئِهِنَّ وَلَآ اِخْوَانِهِنَّ وَلَآ اَبْنَآءِ اِخْوَانِهِنَّ وَلَآ اَبْنَآءِ
اَخَوٰتِهِنَّ وَلَا نِسَآئِهِنَّ وَلَا مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُنَّ ۚ وَاتَّقِيْنَ اللّٰهَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
شَهِيْدًا 55

(33:55) It will not be blameworthy for the wives of the Prophet if their fathers, their sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons,[102] and the women with whom they have social relations,[103] and the persons whom their right hands possess enter their houses.[104] (O women), shun disobeying Allah. Allah is watchful over everything.[105]

102. For explanation, see (E.Ns 38 to 42 of Surah An-Nur). Allama Alusi’s commentary in this connection is also noteworthy. He says, “Brothers and sons of brothers and sisters include all those relatives who are unlawful for a woman, whether they are blood relations or foster relations. This list does not mention the paternal and maternal uncles because they are like the parents to the woman, or perhaps they have been left out because there was no need to mention them after mentioning their sons, For the reason for not observing hijab from the brother’s son and sister’s son is the same as of not observing it from the paternal and maternal uncles.” (Ruh al-Maani).

103. For explanation, see(E. N. 43 of Surah An-Nur).

104. For explanation, see (E. N. 44 of Surah An-Nur).

105. It means this: “After the coming down of this absolute command no person outside the circle of the relatives, who have been made an exception, should be allowed to enter the houses without hijab being observed from them,” Another meaning is: “The woman should never adopt the attitude that they should observe hijab when the husband is present, but should appear without hijab before the other men, when he is away. Such a conduct may remain hidden from the husband but not from Allah.”

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ وَمَلٰۗىِٕكَتَهٗ يُصَلُّوْنَ عَلَي النَّبِيِّ ۭ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا صَلُّوْا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوْا
تَسْلِيْمًا 56

(33:56) Allah and His angels bless the Prophet.[106] Believers, invoke blessings and peace on him.[107]

106. Allah's sending His blessings on His Prophet, means this: Allah is very kind to His Prophet (peace be upon him): He praises him, blesses his work, exalts his name, and showers His mercy on him. Blessings of the angels, means: They love the Prophet (peace be upon him) most dearly and pray to Allah to bless him with the highest ranks, cause his religion and Shariah to flourish and exalt him to the laudable position. One can clearly see from the context, why this thing has been said here. This was the time when the enemies of Islam were making all sorts of false allegations against the Prophet (peace be upon him) in order to satisfy their jealousy on the success of faith. By sullying him, they thought they would destroy his moral influence through which Islam and the Muslims were gaining more and more ground every day. Such were the conditions when Allah sent down this verse, as if warn the people: "However hard the disbelievers and the hypocrites and the polytheists might try to vilify and slander My Prophet (peace be upon him) with a view to frustrating his mission, they are bound to suffer disgrace and humiliation in the end, for I am kind to him, and the angels, who are administering the entire universe, are his supporters and admirers. His enemies cannot gain anything by their condemnation of him because I am exalting his name and My angels are adoring him constantly. They cannot harm him by their mean machinations when My mercy and blessings are with him, and My angels pray for him day and night to the effect: "O Lord of the worlds, raise Muhammad (peace be upon him) to even higher ranks and make his religion flourish and prosper."

107. In other words, it means this: O people, who have found the right path through Muhammad (peace be upon him), the Messenger of Allah, you should recognize his true worth and be grateful to him for his great favors to you. You were lost in the darkness of ignorance, he afforded you the light of knowledge. You had become morally bankrupt, he raised you high on the moral level so that the people now feel envious of you. You had sunk to barbarism and savagery, he adorned you with the most refined human civilization. The disbelievers everywhere have turned his enemies only because he has done you these favors; otherwise personally he has not done any harm to anyone. Therefore, the inevitable demand of your gratitude to him is that you should regard him with an equal, or even greater love than the malice and grudge these people display against him; that you should show a greater attachment to him than the hatred these people show towards him; that you should praise and adore him even more fervently than they condemn him; that you should wish him well even more heartily than they wish him ill, and pray for him just as the angels do day and night, saying: "O Lord of the worlds: Just as Your Prophet has done us countless and endless favors, so do You also show him endless and limitless mercy, raise him to the highest ranks in the world and bless him with the greatest nearness to Yourself in the hereafter."

In this verse, Muslims have been commanded two things: (1) Sallu alaihi; and (2) sallimu taslima. The word Salat when used with the associating panicle ala gives three meanings: (1) To be inclined to some body, to attend to him with love, and to bend over him; (2) to praise somebody; and (3) to pray for somebody. Obviously, when the word is used in regard to Allah, it cannot be in the third meaning, for it is absolutely inconceivable that Allah should pray to someone else; it can only be used in the first two meanings. But when this word is used for the servants, whether angels or men, it will be in all the three meanings. It will contain the sense of love as well as praise and prayer for mercy. Therefore, the meaning of

giving the command of sallu alaihi to the believers for the Prophet (peace be upon him) is: "Be attached to him, praise and adore him and pray for him."

The word salam also has two meanings: (1) To be secure from every kind of affliction and fault and defect; and (2) to be at peace and refrain from opposing the other person. Therefore, one meaning of sallimu taslima in regard to the Prophet (peace be upon him) is: "You should pray for his well-being and security," and another meaning is: "Cooperate with him with all your heart and mind; refrain from opposing him and obey him most faithfully and sincerely."

When this command was sent down, several of the companions said to the Prophet (peace be upon him), "O Messenger of Allah, you have taught us the method of pronouncing salam i.e. of saying as-salamu alaika ayyuhannabiyyu wa rahmatullahi wa barakat-u-hu in the Prayer, and as-salamu alaika ya Rasul-Allah as a greeting, but what is the method of sending Salat on you?" In response to this, the methods of pronouncing Salat and darud that the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught to many people on different occasions are as follows:

Kaab bin Ujrah: Allahumma salli ala Muhammad-in wa ala al-i Muhammad-in kama sallaita ala Ibrahima wa ala al-i Ibrahima irmaka Hamidum-Majid, wa barik ala Muhammad-in wa ala al-i Muhammad-in kama barakta ala Ibrahima wa ala al-i Ibrahima innaka Hamid-um-Majid. This darud with a little difference in wording has been reported by Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Nasai, Ibn Majah, Imam Ahmad, Ibn Abi Shaibah, Abdur Razzaq, Ibn Abi Hatim and Ibn Jarir on the authority of Kaab bin Ujrah.

Ibn Abbas: From him also the same darud as given above has been reported with a slight difference. (Ibn Jarir).

Abu Humaid Saidi: Allahumma salli ala Muhammad-in wa azwaji-hi wa dhurriyati-hi kama sallaita ala Ibrahima wa ala al-i Ibrhima wa barik ala Muhammad-in wa azwaji-hi wa dhurriyat-hi kama barakta ala al-i Ibrahima irmaka Hamidum- Majid. (Malik, Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, Nasai, Abu Daud, Ibn Majah).

Abu Masud Badri: Allahumma salli ala Muhammad-in wa ala al-i Muhammad-in kama sallaita ala Ibrahima wa ala al-i Ibrahima wa barik ala Muhammad-in wa ala al-i Muhammad-in kama barakta 'ala Ibrahima fil- alamin innaka Hamid-um-Majid (Malik, Muslim, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Nasai Ahmad, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Habban, Hakim).

Abu Said Khudri: Allahumma salli ala Muhammad-in abdika wa rasuli-ka kama sallaita 'ala Ibrahima wa barik 'ala Mahammad-in wa ala al-i Muhammad-in kama ba rakta ala Ibrahim. (Ahmad, Bukhari, Nasai, Ibn Majah).

Buraidah al-Khuzai: Allahumm-ajal Salataka wa rahmataka wa barakati-ka ala Muhammad-in wa ala al-i Muhammad-in kama Ja altaha ala Ibrahima innaka Hamid-um-Majid. (Ahmad, Abd bin Humaid, Ibn Marduyah).

Abu Hurairah: Allahumma salli ala Muhammad-in wa ala al-i Muhammad-in wa barik ala Muhammad-in wa ala al-i Muhammad-in kama sallaita wa barakta ala Ibrahima wa ala al-i Ibrahim fil-alamin innaka Hammid-um-Majid. (Nasai).

Talhah: Allahumma salli ala Muhammad-in wa ala al-i Muhammad-in kama sallaita ala Ibrahima innaka Hamidum- Majid wa barik ala Muhammad-in wa ala al-i Muhammad-in kama barakta ala Ibrahima innaka Hamidum- Majid. (Ibn Jarir).

All these daruds agree in meaning despite the difference in wording. A few points concerning them should be understood clearly:

First, in all these the Prophet (peace be upon him) tells the Muslims that the best way of sending darud and Salat on him is that they should pray to Allah, saying, "O God: send darud on Muhanunad." Ignorant people who do not possess full understanding of the meaning intermediately raise the objection: "How strange that Allah commands us to send darud on His Prophet (peace be upon him), but we, in return, implore Allah that He should send it." The fact, however, is that the Prophet (peace be upon him) has instructed the people, as if to say, "You cannot do full justice to sending of darud and Salat on me even if you want to. Therefore, pray only to Allah to bless me with Salat." Evidently, the Muslims cannot raise the ranks of the Prophet (peace be upon him), Allah only can raise them; the Muslims cannot repay the Prophet (peace be upon him) for his favors and kindness, Allah only can adequately reward him for this; the Muslims cannot attain any success in exalting the Prophet's (peace be upon him) name and promoting the cause of religion unless Allah favors them with His help and succor. So much so that the Prophet's (peace be upon him) love can be impressed in our hearts only by Allah's help; otherwise Satan can turn us away from him by every kind of evil suggestions and suspicions. May Allah protect us from this! Therefore, there is no other way of doing full justice to sending of darud and salat on the Prophet (peace be upon him) than that we should supplicate Allah to send salat on him. The person who says: Allahumma salli ala Muhammad-in, in fact, admits his helplessness before Allah, and says: "O God: it is not in my power to send salat on Your Prophet (peace be upon him) as it should be sent. I, therefore, implore You to send it on my behalf and take from me whatever service You will in this regard."

Secondly, the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not want to have this prayer reserved for only himself but included his followers and his wives and offspring also. The meaning of the wives and offspring is obvious. As for the word al it does not merely denote the people of the Prophet's household, but it applies to all those people who follow him and adopt his way. Lexically, there is a difference between the words aal and ahl. By the aal of a person are understood all those people who are his companions, helpers and followers, whether they are related to him or not, and his ahl are those who are related to him, whether or not they are his companions and followers. The Quran has used the word aal-Firaun at fourteen places but nowhere has it been used to mean the people of Pharaoh's household only; everywhere it implies all those who sided with him in the conflict against the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). (For example, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 49-50), (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 11), (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 130), (Surah Al-Mumin, Ayat 46). Thus, from aal-Muhammad is excluded every such person who is not on the way of Muhammad (peace be upon him), whether he be a member of his household, and in it is included every such person, who is following in his footsteps, whether he is not even distantly related to him by blood. However, those members of the Prophet's household who are related to him by blood and are also his followers are most worthy to be regarded as aal-Muhammad.

Thirdly, the same thing found in all the daruds taught by the Prophet (peace be upon him) is that he may be blessed with the same kindness with which Abraham (peace be upon him) and the followers of Abraham have been blessed. The people have found it difficult to understand this. The scholars have given different interpretations of it but none of them is appealing. In my opinion the correct interpretation is this (though the real knowledge is with Allah): Allah blessed the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) in particular with something with which He has blessed no one else in the world, and it is this: All those human beings who regard the Prophethood and the revelation and the Book as the source of guidance are agreed on the leadership of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), whether they are Muslims or Christians or Jews. Therefore, what the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) means to say is this: "O Allah, just as You have made the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) the refuge of the followers of all the Prophets, so You make me also the refuge, so that no one who is a believer in Prophethood, may remain deprived of the grace of believing in my Prophethood."

That it is an Islamic practice to send darud on the Prophet (peace be upon him), that it is commendable to pronounce it when the Prophet's (peace be upon him) name is mentioned, that it is a Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to recite it in the Prayer in particular, is agreed upon by all the scholars. There is also a consensus that it is obligatory to pronounce the darud on the Prophet (peace be upon him) at least once in a lifetime, because Allah has clearly commanded it, but apart from this there are differences among the scholars regarding it.

Imam Shafei holds the view that it is obligatory to recite salat on the Prophet during tashahhud in the final sitting of the Prayer, for without it the Prayer would be void. Ibn Masud, Abu-Masud Ansari, Ibn Umar and Jabir bin Abdullah from among the companions, Shabi, Imam Muhammad bin Baqir, Muhammad bin Kab al-Qurzi and Muqatil bin Hayyan from among the immediate followers of the companions, and Ishaq bin Rahwayah from among the jurists also held the same opinion, and Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal also had adopted the same in the end.

Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik and the majority of the scholars hold that the pronouncing of the Salat is obligatory only once in a life time. It is just like the Kalimah: whoever affirmed the divinity of Allah and the Prophethood of the Messenger of Allah once in a lifetime carried out his duty. Likewise, the one who pronounced the darud and salat once in his lifetime would be deemed to have done his duty of pronouncing the darud on the Prophet (peace be upon him). After it, it is neither obligatory (fird) to recite the Kalimah nor the darud.

Another group holds that it is absolutely wajib to recite it in the Prayer but not necessarily in the tashahhud.

Still another group holds the view that it is wajib to pronounce the darud in every supplication. Some others say that it is wajib to pronounce it whenever the Prophet's (peace be upon him) name is mentioned, and according to another group recitation of the darud is wajib only once in an assembly or sitting no matter how often the name of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is mentioned during it.

These differences only pertain to the darud's being obligatory in status or otherwise. As for its merit and excellence, its being conducive to high spiritual rewards and its being a great righteous act, there is complete unanimity among the Ummah. No one who is a believer in any degree can have any different opinion about it. The darud is the natural supplication of the heart of every Muslim, who realizes that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the Ummah's greatest benefactor after Allah. The greater one's appreciation of Islam and the faith, the greater will one be appreciative of the favors of the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself; and the greater one's appreciation of the favors of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the more often will he pronounce the darud and salat on him. Thus, in fact, the frequency with which a person pronounces the darud is the measure which shows the depth of his relationship with the Prophet's (peace be upon him) religion and the extent of his appreciation of the blessing of the faith. On this very basis the Prophet (peace be upon him) has said: "The angels send darud on him who sends darud on me, as long as he does so." (Ahmad, Ibn Majah). "He who sends darud on me once, Allah sends darud on him ten times over." (Muslim) "The one who sends darud on me most often will deserve to remain close to me on the Day of Resurrection" (Tirmidhi). "Niggardly is the person who does not send darud on me when I am mentioned before him" (Tirmidhi).

As to whether it is permissible to use the words Allahumma salli ala so and so, or sallallahu alaihi wa sallam, or similar other words for others than the Prophet (peace be upon him), it is disputed. One group of the scholars of whom Qadi Iyad is most prominent holds it as absolutely permissible. Their argument is this: Allah Himself has used the word salat in respect of those who were not prophets at several places in the Quran, e.g. in (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 157), (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 103), (Surah Al-Ahzab, Ayat 43). Similarly, the Prophet (peace be upon him) also prayed for those who were not prophets using the word salat) on several occasions. For example, he prayed for a companion, thus: Allahumma salli ala al Abi Aufa; on the request of Jabir bin Abdullah's wife, he said: Sallallahu alaihi wa ala zaujiki. Then concerning those who came with the Zakat money, he would say: Allahumma salli alaihim. Praying for Saad bin Ubadah he said: Allahumma ajal salataka wa rahmataka ala al-i Saad bin Ubadah. And about the soul of the believer the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave the news that the angels prayed for him, thus: Sallallahu alaika wa ala jasadika. However, the majority of the Muslim scholars opine that it was correct for Allah and His Messenger but not so for the Ummah. They say that it has become a convention with the Muslims to use salat-o-salam exclusively for the Prophets. Therefore, it should not be used for those who are not prophets. On this very basis Umar bin Abdul Aziz once wrote to one of his governors, saying: "I hear that some preachers have started using the word salat in respect of their patrons and supporters in the manner of salat alan-Nabi. As soon as you receive this letter, stop them from this practice and command them to use salat exclusively for the Prophets and remain content with the prayer for the other Muslims." (Ruh al-Maeni). Most scholars also hold that using the words sallallahu alaihi wa sallam for any other Prophet than the Prophet (peace be upon him) is not correct.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا

مُّهِينًا 57

(33:57) Verily those who cause annoyance to Allah and His Messenger Allah has cursed them in this world and in the Hereafter and has prepared for them a humiliating chastisement.[108]

108. "To cause harm to Allah" implies two things: That Allah should be disobeyed, that an attitude of disbelief and shirk and atheism be adopted with regard to Him, and that things made unlawful by Him be made lawful; and (2) that His Messenger be troubled, for just as obedience to the Messenger is obedience to Allah, so is opposition and disobedience of the Messenger opposition and disobedience of Allah.

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ بِغَيْرِ مَا اكْتَسَبُوا فَقَدِ احْتَمَلُوا بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا

مُّبِينًا ع 58

(33:58) Those who cause hurt to believing men and to believing women have invited upon themselves a calumny[109]and a manifest sin.

109. This verse determines the definition of slander. It is to ascribe a fault to a person which he does not have, or an error which he has not committed. The Prophet (peace be upon him) also has explained it. According to Abu Daud and Tirmidhi, when he was asked as to what is ghibat (backbiting), he replied: "It is to make mention of your brother in a manner derogatory to him." The questioner said, "And if the fault is there in my brother?" The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: "If the fault that you mentioned is there in him, you backbite him; if it is not there, you slandered him." Such an act is not only a moral sin, which will entail punishment in the Hereafter, but this verse also requires that also in the law of an Islamic State false allegation should be held as a culpable offense.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُل لِّأَزْوَاجِكَ وَبَنَاتِكَ وَنِسَاءِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِن جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ ط

ذَٰلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَن يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ ط وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا 59

(33:59) O Prophet, enjoin your wives and your daughters and the believing women, to draw a part of their outer coverings around them.[110] It is likelier that they will be recognised and not molested.[111] Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.[112]

110. Jilbab is a large sheet and adna is to draw close and wrap up, but when this word is used with the associating particle ala, it gives the meaning of letting something down from

above. Some modern translators, under the influence of the West, have translated this word "to wrap up" so as to avoid somehow the command about covering of the face. But if Allah had meant what these gentlemen want to construe, He would have said: yudnina ilai-hinna and not yudnina alai-hinna. Anyone who knows Arabic knows that yudnina alai-hinna cannot merely mean "wrapping up." Moreover, the words min jalabib-i hinna also do not permit of this meaning. It is obvious that the preposition min here signifies a part of the sheet, and also that wrapping up is done by means of a whole sheet and not merely by a part of it. The verse, therefore, clearly means: "The women should wrap themselves up well in their sheets, and should draw and let down a part of the sheet in front of the face."

This same meaning was understood by the major commentators who lived close to the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Ibn Jarir and Ibn al-Mundhir have related that Muhammad bin Sirin asked Ubaidah as- Salmani the meaning of this verse. (Ubaidah had become a Muslim in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) but had not been able to visit him. He came to Madinah in the time of Umar and settled down there. He was recognized as equal in rank with Qadi Shuraih in jurisprudence and judicial matters). Instead of giving a verbal reply Ubaidah put on his sheet and gave a practical demonstration by covering his head and forehead and face and an eye, leaving only the other eye uncovered. Ibn Abbas also has made almost the same commentary. In his statements which have been reported by Ibn Abi Hatim and Ibn Marduyah, he says: "Allah has commanded the women that when they move out of their houses for an outdoor duty, they should conceal their faces by drawing and letting down over themselves a part of their sheets, keeping only the eyes uncovered." The same explanation of this verse has been given by Qatadah and Suddi.

All the great commentators who have passed after the period of the companions and their immediate followers have given the same meaning of this verse. Imam Ibn Jarir Tabari, in his commentary of this verse, says: "The respectable women should not look like the slave-girls from their dress when they move out of their houses, with uncovered faces and loose hair; they should rather draw and let down over them a part of their sheets or outergarments so that no evil person may dare molest them." (Jamial Bayan, vol. xxii, p. 33).

Allama Abu Bakr al-Jassas says: "This verse points out that the young woman has been commanded to conceal her face from the other men; when moving out of the house she should cover herself up well to express chastity and purity of character so that people of doubtful character do not cherish any false hope when they see her." (Ahkam al- Quran, vol. iii, p. 458).

Allama Zamakhshari says: "It means that they should let down a part of their sheet over themselves, and should cover their faces and wrap up their sides well." (AlKashshaf, vol. ii, p. 221). Allama Nizamuddin Nishapuri says: "That is, they should let down a part of the sheet over them: in this verse, the women have been commanded to cover the head and face." (Gharaib al-Quran, vol. xxii, p. 32).

Imam Razi says: "What is mean is that the people may know that they are not promiscuous women. For the woman who covers her face, though the face is not included in the satar, cannot be expected to uncover her satar, which is obligatory to cover before the other man.

Thus, everyone will know that they are modest and virtuous women who cannot be expected to do anything indecent." (Tafsir Kabir. vol. vi, p 591)

Incidentally, another thing that is proved by this verse is that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had several daughters, for Allah Himself says: "O Prophet, enjoin your wives and daughters." These words absolutely refute the assertion of those people who without any fear of God make the claim that the Prophet had only one daughter, Fatimah, and the other daughters were not from his own loins but by the former husbands. These people are so blinded by prejudice that they do not even bother to consider what crime they arc committing by denying the parentage of the children of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and what severe punishment will await for them in the Hereafter. All authentic traditions concur that from Khadijah the Prophet (peace be upon him) had not one daughter, Fatimah, but three other daughters as well. The Prophet's earliest biographer, Muhammad bin Ishaq, after mentioning his marriage with Khadijah, says; "She was the mother of all the Prophet's children except Ibrahim. Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) children with Khadijah were Qasim, Tahir, Tayyib, Zainab, Ruqayyah, Fatimah and Umm Kulthum and." (Ibn Hisham, vol. 1, p. 202).

The famous genealogist, Hashim bin Muhammad bin as- Saib al-Kalbi, states: "The first born child to the, Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah before his call to Prophethood was Qasim, then Zainab was born to him, then Ruqayyah, then Umm Kulthum." (Tabaqat Ibn Saad, vol. 1, p. 133). Ibn Hazam writes in Jawami asSirah that from Khadijah the Prophet (peace be upon him) had four daughters, the eldest being Zainab, then Ruqayyah, then Fatimah and then Umm Kulthum (pp. 38-39). Tabari, Ibn Saad, Abu Jafar Muhammad bin Habib (author of Kitab al-Muhabbar) and Ibn Abd al-Bart (author of Kitab allstiab) state on the strength of authentic sources that before her marriage with the Prophet (peace be upon him), Khadijah had two husbands, Abu Halah Tamimi by whom she had a son named Hind bin Abu Halah, and Atiq bin Aidh Makhzumi, by whom she had a daughter named Hind. Then she was married to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and all the genealogists agree that from his loins she had the four daughters as stated above. (see Tabari, vol. ii, p. 411: tabaqat Ibn Saad, vol. viii, pp. 14-16; Kitab al- Muhabbar, pp. 78, 79, 452; .9l-Isti'ab, vol. ii, p. 718). All these statements are authenticated by the Quranic declaration that the Holy Prophet had not one but several daughters.

111. "May be recognized": may be recognized to be noble and chaste women from their simple and modest dress, and not women of ill repute from whom some wicked person could cherish evil hopes. "May not be harmed": will not be teased but let alone.

Let us pause here for a while and try to understand what spirit of the social law of Islam is being expressed by this Quranic command and what is its object which Allah Himself has stated. Before this in (Surah An-Nur, Ayat 31), the women have been forbidden to display their adornments before others except such and such men and women, and "also that they should not stamp their feet on the ground lest their hidden decoration (ornaments) should be known." If that command is read with this verse of Al- Ahzab it becomes obvious that the intention of the command for the woman to cover herself well with the sheet here is to conceal her adornments from others. And, evidently, this purpose can be fulfilled only if the sheet or the outer-garment itself is simple; otherwise wrapping up oneself with a decorated and attractive sheet will defeat the purpose itself. Besides, Allah does not only command the

woman to conceal her adornment by covering herself with the sheet, but also enjoins that she should let down a pan of the sheet over herself. No sensible person can take any other meaning of this command than that it requires to conceal the face along with the concealment of the adornments of the body and dress. Then, Allah Himself states the reason for enjoining the command, saying: "This is an appropriate way by adopting which the Muslim women will be recognized and will remain safe from trouble." Evidently, this instruction is being given to those women who regard flirtation and stares and evil advances by men as annoying and troublesome and not as enjoyable, who do not want to be counted among ill-reputed, immodest society girls, but wish to be known as chaste and modest domestic women. To such noble and pious women Allah says: If you really wish to be known as good women, and the men's lustful attention is not pleasurable but embarrassing for you, then you should not come out of your houses in full makeup like the newlywed brides so as to display your beauty and physical charms before the greedy eyes of the people, but the best way for this would be that you should come out in a simple sheet fully concealing your adornments and covering your face and walking in a manner that even the jingle of your ornaments does not attract attention. The woman who applies herself to makeup and does not step out of the house until she has fully embellished and decorated herself with every adornment cannot have any other intention that to become the center of attention of all the men, whom she herself allures. After this if she complains that the greedy looks of the people cause embarrassment to her, and she does not wish to be known as a "society woman" and a "popular lady", but wants to live as a chaste housewife, it will be nothing but a fraud. It is not the word of the mouth of a person that determines his intention, but his real intention is manifested in his act and mode of behavior. Therefore, the act of the woman who appears before the other then attractively itself shows what motivates her behavior. That is why the mischievous people cherish the same hopes from her as can be cherished from such a woman. The Quran tells the women: "You cannot be chaste women and society women at one and the same time. If you want to live as modest, chaste women, you will have to give up the ways that are conducive to becoming society women only, and adopt the way of life that can be helpful in becoming chaste women."

Whether a man's personal opinion is according to the Quran or opposed to it, and whether he wants to accept the Quranic guidance as a practical guide for himself or not, in any case if he does not wish to be intellectually dishonest in interpreting the Quran, he cannot fail to understand its real intention. If he is not a hypocrite he will frankly admit that the Quran's intention is what has been stated above. After this if he violates any command, he will do so with the realization that he is violating the Quranic command, or regards the Quranic guidance as wrong.

112. That is, Allah will forgive the errors and mistakes that were committed in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance, provided that you reform yourselves now when you have received clear guidance, and do not violate it intentionally.

لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَنْتَهِ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَ الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ وَّ الْمُرْجِفُوْنَ فِي الْمَدِيْنَةِ لَنُغْرِيَنَّكَ
بِهِمْ ثُمَّ لَا يُجَاوِرُوْنَكَ فِيْهَآ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ۚ صلے 60

(33:60) If the hypocrites and those in whose hearts there is a sickness,[113] and the scandal mongers in Madinah[114] do not desist from their vile acts, We shall urge you to take action against them, and then they will hardly be able to stay in the city with you.

113. "Having diseased hearts" points to two kinds of evils:

(1) That a person should be an ill-wisher of Islam and the Muslims although he gets himself counted among the Muslims; and

(2) That he should be cherishing evil intentions and having criminal mentality and his evil tendencies be manifesting themselves in everything he thinks and does.

114. This implies the people who, in order to cause panic among the Muslims and to lower their morale, used to spread rumors in Al-Madinah to the effect that the Muslims had suffered such and such serious setback, that a huge army was gathering together against them at such and such a place, that Al-Madinah was under threat of a sudden attack, etc. Besides this, they had another pastime. They would concoct and spread imaginary stories about the domestic life of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) household and of other Muslims so as to produce suspicions among the common people and destroy the moral influence of the Muslims.

مَّلْعُوْنِيْنَ ۚ اَيْنَمَا ثُقِفُوْٓا اُخِذُوْا وَقُتِّلُوْا تَقْتِيْلًا 61

(33:61) They shall be cursed from all around and they shall be ruthlessly killed wherever they are seized.

سُنَّةَ اللّٰهِ فِي الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللّٰهِ تَبْدِيْلًا 62

(33:62) This has been Allah's Way with those who have gone before, and you shall find no change in Allah's Way.[115]

115. That is, "This is a permanent law of Allah's Shariah that in an Islamic society and state such mischief-mongers are never given an opportunity to flourish and prosper. Whenever the system of society and state is established on divine law, such people will be warned to mend their ways and if they still persisted in their evil ways they would be severely dealt with and exterminated."

يَسْـَٔلُكَ النَّاسُ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ ۭ قُلْ اِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَمَا يُدْرِيْكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ
تَكُوْنُ قَرِيْبًا 63

(33:63) People ask you concerning the Hour (of Resurrection).[116] Say: "Allah alone has knowledge of it. What do you know? Perhaps the Hour is nigh."

116. The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) was generally asked this question by the disbelievers and the hypocrites. By this they did not mean to obtain any knowledge but they did so out of fun and jest. As a matter of fact, they did not believe in the coming of the Hereafter at all; they regarded its concept as an empty threat only. They did not ask about the time of its coming so that they could set their affairs right, but what they really meant was: "O Muhammad (peace be upon him), we have been doing everything to frustrate your mission, and you have not been able to do any harm to us so far; now let us know as to when will Resurrection take place when we will be taken to task by Allah."

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَعَنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ وَاَعَدَّ لَهُمْ سَعِيْرًا ۙ 64

(33:64) Allah has cursed the unbelievers and has prepared for them a Blazing Fire;

خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ۚ لَا يَجِدُوْنَ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا ۚ 65

(33:65) therein they shall abide for ever. They shall find none to protect or help them.

يَوْمَ تُقَلَّبُ وُجُوْهُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ يَقُوْلُوْنَ يٰلَيْتَنَآ اَطَعْنَا اللّٰهَ وَاَطَعْنَا الرَّسُوْلَا 66

(33:66) On that Day when their faces shall be turned around in the Fire, they will say: "Would that we had obeyed Allah and obeyed the Messenger."

وَقَالُوْا رَبَّنَآ اِنَّآ اَطَعْنَا سَادَتَنَا وَكُبَرَآءَنَا فَاَضَلُّوْنَا السَّبِيْلَا 67

(33:67) They will say: "Our Lord, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones, and they turned us away from the Right Way.

رَبَّنَآ اٰتِهِمْ ضِعْفَيْنِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ وَالْعَنْهُمْ لَعْنًا كَبِيْرًا ۧ 68

(33:68) Our Lord, mete out to them a double chastisement and lay upon them a mighty curse."[117]

117. This thing has been stated at several places in the Quran. For instance, see (Surah Al-Aaraf: Ayat 187); (Surah An-Naziyat: Ayats 42-46); (Surah Saba: Ayats 3-5); (Surah Al- Mulk:

Ayats 24-27); (Surah Al-Mutaffifin: Ayats 10-17); (Surah AI-Hijr: Ayats 2-3); (Surah Al-Furqan: Ayats 27-29); (Surah Ha Mim As-Sajdah: Ayats 26-29).

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ لَا تَكُونُواْ كَٱلَّذِينَ ءَاذَوۡاْ مُوسَىٰ فَبَرَّأَهُ ٱللَّهُ مِمَّا قَالُواْۚ وَكَانَ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ وَجِيهٗاۚ 69

(33:69) Believers,[118] do not be like those who distressed Moses and then Allah declared him quit of the ill they spoke about him; and he had a high standing with Allah.[119]

118. One should note that the Quran has at some places addressed the true Muslims with: "O you who have believed," and at others places the Muslim community as a whole, which includes the believers as well as the hypocrites and the Muslims of the weak faith, and at still others places only the hypocrites. When the hypocrites and the Muslims of the weak faith are addressed with: "O you who have believed," it is meant to put them to shame, as if to say, "You claim to have affirmed faith, but your acts and deeds do not support your claim." A little study of the context can easily show which class of the people has been addressed at a particular place. Here, obviously, the common Muslims are being addressed.

119. In other words, it means: "O Muslims, do not behave like the Jews. You should not behave towards your Prophet (peace be upon him) as the children of Israel behaved towards the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him)." The Israelites themselves admit that the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was their greatest benefactor. Whatever they achieved as a nation was only due to him: otherwise in Egypt they would have been doomed to a worse fate than that of the Shudras in India. But how the Israelites treated the greatest benefactor of theirs can be judged by a cursory glance at the following places of the Bible: Exodus, 5: 20-21, 14: 12, 16: 2-3, 17: 3-4. Numbers, 11:1-15, 14:1-10, 16 (the whole chapter), 20: 1-5.

The Quran by referring to this ingratitude of the children of Israel, warns the Muslims, so as to say: "Refrain from adopting this same attitude towards Muhammad (peace be upon him); otherwise you should be ready to face the same fate as the Jews."

This same thing was said by Prophet (peace be upon him) himself on several occasions. Once he was dividing some goods among the Muslims. When the people dispersed, a man said; "Muhammad in this division has shown no regard for Allah and the Hereafter." Abdullah bin Masud heard this remark and told the Prophet (peace be upon him) what had been said concerning him that day. He replied, "May Allah show mercy to Moses (peace be upon him): he was maligned even more severely, but he showed patience." (Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Abu Daud).

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَقُولُواْ قَوۡلٗا سَدِيدٗا 70

(33:70) Believers, fear Allah and speak the truth:

يُّصۡلِحۡ لَكُمۡ اَعۡمَالَكُمۡ وَيَغۡفِرۡ لَكُمۡ ذُنُوۡبَكُمۡ ؕ وَمَنۡ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوۡلَهٗ فَقَدۡ فَازَ فَوۡزًا

عَظِيۡمًا 71

(33:71) Allah will set your deeds right for you and will forgive you your sins. Whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger has achieved a great triumph.

اِنَّا عَرَضۡنَا الۡاَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ وَالۡجِبَالِ فَاَبَيۡنَ اَنۡ يَّحۡمِلۡنَهَا وَاَشۡفَقۡنَ مِنۡهَا

وَحَمَلَهَا الۡاِنۡسَانُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ ظَلُوۡمًا جَهُوۡلًا ۙ 72

(33:72) We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to carry it and were afraid of doing so; but man carried it. Surely he is wrong-doing, ignorant.[120]

120. In the end, Allah wants man to realize his real position in the world; if in that position he regarded the life of the world as mere fun and sport and adopted a wrong attitude carelessly, he would only be working for his own doom.

Here, the word "amanat" (trust) implies khilafat (caliphate) which, according to the Quran, man has been granted in the earth. The inevitable result of the freedom given to man to choose between obedience and disobedience, and the powers and authority granted him over countless creations for using that freedom, is that he himself be held responsible for his voluntary acts and should deserve rewards for his righteous conduct and suffer punishment for his evil conduct. Since man has not attained these powers by his own efforts but has been granted these by Allah, and he is answerable before Allah for their right or wrong use, these have been described by the word khilafat at other places in the Quran, and by amanat here.

In order to give an idea of how important and heavy this "trust" (amanat) is, Allah says that the heavens and the earth, in spite of their glory and greatness, and the mountains, in spite of their size and firmness, could not have the power and courage to bear it. But man, the weak and frail man, has borne this heavy burden on his tiny self.

The presentation of the trust before the earth and the heavens and their refusal to bear it and their being afraid of it may be true literally, or it may have been said so metaphorically. We can neither know nor can comprehend Allah's relationship with His creations. The earth and the sun and the moon and the mountains are dumb, deaf and lifeless for us but they may not be so for Allah. Allah can speak to each of His creations and it can respond to Him, though its nature is incomprehensible for us. Therefore, it is just possible that Allah, in fact, might have presented this heavy trust before them, and they might have shuddered to see it, and they might have made this submission before their Master and Creator.

"Lord, we find our good and our convenience only in remaining as Your powerless servants: we do not find courage to ask for the freedom to disobey and do justice to it, and then suffer Your punishment in case we cannot do justice to it." Likewise, it is also quite possible that before this present life Allah might have given another kind of existence to mankind and summoned it before Himself, and it might have willingly undertaken to accept the delegated powers and authority. We have no rational argument to regard this as impossible. Only such a person, who might have made a wrong estimate of his mental and intellectual powers and capabilities, can think of regarding it as impossible.

However, this is also equally possible that Allah may have said so allegorically. In order to give an idea of the extraordinary importance of the matter, He may have depicted the scene as if the earth and the heavens and the mountains like the Himalayas were present before Him on one side and a 5 to 6 foot man, on the other. Then Allah might have asked:

"I want to invest someone of My creation with the power that being a subject of My Kingdom, it may acknowledge My Supremacy and obey My commands of its own free will; otherwise it will also have the power to deny Me, even rebel against Me. After giving him this freedom I shall so conceal Myself from him as if I did not exist at all. And to exercise this freedom I shall invest him with vast powers, great capabilities, and shall give him dominion over countless of My creations so that he may raise any storm that he may in the universe. Then I shall call him to account at an appointed time. The one who will have misused the freedom granted by Me, will be made to suffer a most terrible punishment; and the one who will have adopted My obedience in spite of all chances and opportunities for disobedience, will be raised to such high ranks as no creation of Mine has ever been able to attain. Now tell, which of you is ready to undergo this test?"

Hearing this discourse a hush might have prevailed for a while all through the universe. Then one huge creation after the other might have bowed down and submitted that it should be excused from the severe test. Then, at last, this frail creation might have risen and submitted: "O my Lord, I am ready to undergo this test. I shall brave all the dangers inherent in the freedom and independence only in the hope that I shall be blessed with the highest office in Your Kingdom if I pass the test."

By imagining this scene through his heart's eye only can man judge exactly what delicate position he holds in the universe. Allah in this verse has called the person unjust and ignorant, who lives a carefree life in the place of test, and has no feeling at all of how great a responsibility he is shouldering, and what consequences he will encounter of the right or wrong decisions that he makes in choosing and adopting an attitude for himself in the life of the world. He is ignorant because the fool holds himself as responsible to no one; he is unjust because he is himself preparing for his doom and is also preparing the doom of many others along with him.

لِّيُعَذِّبَ اللّٰهُ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِيْنَ وَالْمُشْرِكٰتِ وَيَتُوْبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ۚ 73

(33:73) (The consequence of man's carrying the trust is) that Allah may chastise hypocritical men and hypocritical women and accept the repentance of believing men and believing women. He is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.

34. Surah Saba (The Sabaeans)

Name

The Surah takes its name from verse 15 in which the word Saba has occurred, which implies that it is the Surah in which mention has been made of Saba (i. e. the Sabaeans).

Period of Revelation

The exact period of its revelation is not known from any reliable tradition. However, the style shows that it is either the middle or the early Makkan period. If it is the middle period, it was probably its initial stage when the persecution had not yet become tyrannical and the Islamic movement was being suppressed only by resort to derision and ridicule, rumor mongering, false allegations and casting of evil suggestions in the people's minds.

Theme and Subject Matter

The Surah deals with those objections of the disbelievers, which they were raising against the Holy Prophet's message of Tauhid and the Hereafter, and about his Prophethood itself, mostly in the form of absurd allegations and taunts and mockery. These objections have been answered, sometimes by citing them and sometimes without citing them, and the discourse itself shows which objection is being answered at a particular place. The answers mostly take the form of instruction and admonition and argument, but at some places the disbelievers have been warned also of the evil consequences, of their stubbornness. In this connection, the stories of the Sabaeans and the Prophets David and Solomon have been related to impress this lesson: "You have both these historical precedents before you. On the one hand, there were the Prophets David and Solomon, who had been blessed by Allah with great powers and such grandeur and glory as had been granted to hardly any people before them. In spite of this, they were not proud and arrogant, but remained grateful servants of their Lord. They were never rebellious. On the other hand, there were the people of Saba, who, when blessed by Allah, became proud, and were consequently so thoroughly destroyed and dispersed as to be remembered only in myths and legends. With these precedents in view, you may see and judge for yourselves as to which bind of the life is better: that which is built on belief in Tauhid and the Hereafter and the attitude of gratefulness to Allah, or that which is based on disbelief and shirk and denial of the Hereafter and the worship of the world."

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

اَلۡحَمۡدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِىۡ لَهٗ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ وَلَهُ الۡحَمۡدُ فِى الۡاٰخِرَةِ ؕ وَهُوَ الۡحَكِيۡمُ الۡخَبِيۡرُ 1

(34:1) All praise be to Allah to Whom belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth,[1] and all praise be to Him in the World to Come.[2] He is Most Wise, All-Aware.[3]

1. The Arabic word hamd is used both for praise and for gratitude and both the meanings are implied here. When Allah alone is the Owner of the whole universe and of everything in it, then inevitably He alone deserves to be praised for every beauty, perfection, wisdom, power and excellent skill and design shown and manifested by it. Therefore, every inhabitant of the world must thank Allah alone for any benefit and pleasure that he draws from anything here. For when no one else is a partner in the ownership of these things, no one else deserves to be praised or thanked.

2. That is, "Just as every blessing in this world is granted by Allah alone, so also in the Hereafter whatever a person will get, he will get from His treasures and by His grace. Therefore, in the Hereafter too, Allah alone deserves to be praised as well as thanked."

3. That is, "All His works are based on perfect wisdom and knowledge. Whatever He does, He does right. He has full knowledge about every creation of His as to where it is, in what state it is, what are its requirements, what precisely needs to be done for its well-being, what it has done so far and what it will do in the future. He is not unaware of the world created by Him, but is fully aware of the condition and state of every particle in it."

يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا ۚ وَهُوَ

الرَّحِيمُ الْغَفُورُ 2

(34:2) He knows what penetrates into the earth and what goes forth from it, what descends from the heaven and what ascends to it. He is the Most Merciful, the Most Forgiving.[4]

4. That is, "If a person (or persons) is not being seized in spite of rebellion against Him in His Kingdom, it is not because this world is a lawless kingdom, but because Allah is All-Merciful and All-Forbearing. Although it is in His power to seize the sinner and the wrongdoer immediately on the commission of sin, to withhold his sustenance, to paralyze his body, and to put him to death suddenly, yet He does not do it so. It is the demand of His Beneficence that in spite of being All-Powerful, He gives the disobedient servant plenty of time and enough respite to mend his ways and as soon as he desists from his evil ways, He pardons and forgives him."

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَا تَاْتِيْنَا السَّاعَةُ ؕ قُلْ بَلٰى وَرَبِّيْ لَتَاْتِيَنَّكُمْ ۙ عٰلِمِ الْغَيْبِ ۚ لَا يَعْزُبُ
عَنْهُ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَلَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلَاۤ اَصْغَرُ مِنْ ذٰلِكَ وَلَاۤ اَكْبَرُ اِلَّا فِيْ كِتٰبٍ
مُّبِيْنٍ ۙ ق 3

(34:3) The unbelievers say: "How come the Hour is not coming upon us!"[5] Say to them: "Yes indeed, by my Lord, by Him Who fully knows the realm beyond the ken of perception, that the Hour shall inevitably come upon you.[6]Nothing escapes Him, not even the smallest particle in the heavens or the earth; nor is anything smaller or bigger than that but is in a Manifest Book."[7]

5. This they said satirically and mockingly. What they meant was: "This Prophet (peace be upon him) has been giving us the news of his coming of Resurrection for along time now, but Resurrection has not overtaken us so far although we have openly denied and rejected him as a Prophet, have been insolent to him and have ridiculed him in every way.

6. The use of the attribute "Knower of the unseen" for Allah while swearing by him by itself points to the fact that the coming of Resurrection is certain, but no one knows except Allah, Knower of the unseen, when exactly it will come. This same theme has been explained at different places in the Quran in various ways. For details, see (Surah Al-Aaraf: Ayat 187), (Surah TaHa: Ayat 15), (Surah Luqman: Ayat 34), (Surah Al-Ahzab: Ayat 63), (Surah Al-Mulk: Ayats 25-26), (Surah An-Naziyat: Ayats 42-44).

7. This is one of the arguments for the possibility of the Hereafter as is being stated in (verse 7) below. One of the reasons why the deniers of the Hereafter regarded the lifeafter- death as irrational was; They said that when all human beings will have become dust after death, and scattered away in particles, how it will be possible to bring all the countless particles together and combine them to be re-created as the same human bodies once again. This doubt has been dispelled, saying, "Every particle wherever it is, is recorded in God's register, and God knows where a particle is. Therefore, when He wills to recreate, He will not face any difficulty in gathering together all the particles of the body of each and every man."

لِّيَجْزِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّرِزْقٌ كَرِيْمٌ 4

(34:4) (The Hour shall come) that He may reward those who believe and do righteous deeds. Theirs shall be forgiveness and a generous provision.

وَالَّذِيْنَ سَعَوْ فِيْۤ اٰيٰتِنَا مُعٰجِزِيْنَ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مِّنْ رِّجْزٍ اَلِيْمٌ 5

(34:5) As for those who worked against Our Signs in order to frustrate them, they shall suffer a painful chastisement.[8]

8. The above was an argument for the possibility of the Hereafter: this is an argument for its need and necessity. It means: A time must come when the wicked should be requited for their wickedness and the righteous rewarded for their righteousness. Reason wants and justice demands that a worker of goodness should be rewarded and a worker of evil punished. Now when you see that in the present worldly life neither is an evildoer fully requited for his evil nor a worker of goodness for his goodness, rather there are opposite results of evil and goodness in most cases, you should admit that this necessary demand of both reason and justice must be fulfilled at some time in the future. Resurrection and the Hereafter will be the same time. It is not its coming but its not coming which is contrary to reason and against justice.

In this connection, another point becomes evident from the preceding verses. They tell that the result of faith and righteous acts is forgiveness and a bounteous provision, and for those who strive and act antagonistically in order to discredit and defeat Allah's religion, there will be a torment of the worst kind. This makes it manifest that he who believes sincerely will not be deprived of forgiveness even though he may not get a bounteous provision owing to some flaw or weakness in his deeds. And the one who is a disbeliever but who does not adopt an attitude of enmity and antagonism towards the true faith, will not be able to avoid the torment but he will be saved from the worst torment.

وَيَرَى الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ الَّذِيْٓ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ هُوَ الْحَقَّ ۙ وَيَهْدِيْٓ اِلٰى صِرَاطِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَمِيْدِ 6

(34:6) (O Prophet), those who have knowledge see clearly that what has been revealed to you from your Lord is the Truth and directs to the Way of the Most Mighty, the Immensely Praiseworthy Lord.[9]

9. That is, "These antagonists cannot succeed in their object to prove the truth presented by you false, however hard they may try, for they can only delude and misguide the ignorant people by their designs. Those possessed of knowledge cannot be deceived by them."

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا هَلْ نَدُلُّكُمْ عَلٰى رَجُلٍ يُّنَبِّئُكُمْ اِذَا مُزِّقْتُمْ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ ۙ اِنَّكُمْ لَفِيْ خَلْقٍ جَدِيْدٍ ۚ 7

(34:7) The unbelievers say: "Shall we direct you to the man who tells you that when you have been utterly broken to pieces, you will be raised to life again?

اَفۡتَرٰی عَلَی اللّٰہِ کَذِبًا اَمۡ بِہٖ جِنَّۃٌ ؕ بَلِ الَّذِیۡنَ لَا یُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِالۡاٰخِرَۃِ فِی الۡعَذَابِ وَالضَّلٰلِ الۡبَعِیۡدِ 8

(34:8) Has he forged a lie against Allah, or is he afflicted with madness?"[10] Nay, but those who do not believe in the Hereafter are doomed to be chastised and are far gone in error.[11]

10. The chiefs of the Quraish knew well that it was extremely difficult for the common people to accuse Muhammad (peace be upon him) of being a liar, for the entire nation knew that he was completely a truthful person, and no one had ever heard a lie from him all his life. Therefore, they presented their charge against him before the people like this: "When this person utters an impossible thing like the life-after-death from his mouth, he is either uttering (God forbid) a falsehood deliberately, or he is mad." But this accusation of madness also was as absurd as of falsehood, for a stupid person only could admit that such a wise and intelligent man as the prophet (peace be upon him) could be mad. That is why Allah did not feel it was necessary to refute their absurd charge by an argument, and only made mention of their wonder which they expressed at the possibility of the life-after-death.

11. This is the first answer to their charge. It means: "O foolish people, it is you who have lost your reason. For you do not listen to the one who is informing you of the truth and are recklessly galloping on the way that leads to Hell. But the height of your stupidity is that you are calling the one who is anxious for your salvation, a mad peron."

اَفَلَمۡ یَرَوۡا اِلٰی مَا بَیۡنَ اَیۡدِیۡہِمۡ وَمَا خَلۡفَہُمۡ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ؕ اِنۡ نَّشَاۡ نَخۡسِفۡ بِہِمُ الۡاَرۡضَ اَوۡ نُسۡقِطۡ عَلَیۡہِمۡ کِسَفًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ ؕ اِنَّ فِیۡ ذٰلِکَ لَاٰیَۃً لِّکُلِّ عَبۡدٍ مُّنِیۡبٍ ع 9

(34:9) Do they not see how the heavens and the earth encompass them from the front and the rear? We could, if We so wished, cause the earth to swallow them or let fragments of the sky fall upon them.[12] Verily there is a Sign in this for every servant (of Allah) who penitently turns to Him.[13]

12. This is the second answer to their charge. To understand it well one should bear in mind the fact that three things were most prominent among the reasons for which the disbelieving Quraish denied the life-after-death: (1) They did not want to believe in any kind of accountability before God, for after believing in such a thing they would be left with no freedom whatsoever to behave and act as they pleased in the world. (2) They thought it was inconceivable that Resurrection would take place and the present material order of the universe would be destroyed and replaced by a new order. (3) They thought it was impossible that the people who had died hundreds of thousands of years in the past and whose bones even had decayed and disintegrated, would be raised back to life. With the same body and soul. The answer given above covers all these three aspects, and contains a

severe warning as well. The details of the theme contained in these brief sentences are given below:

(1) If you ever had observed this earth and the heavens with clear sightedness, you would have seen that it is not a plaything nor has its creation come into being by accident. Everything in this universe points to the fact that it has been created by an All-Powerful Being with great wisdom. In such a wise system it would be highly absurd to think that somebody could be left to live an irresponsible and unaccountable life after he had been given the faculties of intellect and discrimination and authority.

(2) Anyone who sees the natural order with discerning eyes will realize that the occurrence of Resurrection is not at all difficult. It can take place suddenly as soon as the system in which the earth and the heavens are bound together is disturbed. And the same system testifies that the One who has made and is running this world today can create another world again. If it were difficult for Him to do so, this world would not have existed as it does today.

(3) Your opinion and judgment about the Creator of the universe that it will be impossible for Him to resurrect the dead, is strange. The bodies of the men who die may utterly decay and disintegrate and be scattered but nevertheless remain within the bounds of this very universe and do not go anywhere outside its bounds. Then it is not at all difficult for the God Who has created this earth and the heavens to gather together everything from the earth and water and air wherever it happens to be. Whatever makes up your body today was collected and combined by Him, and brought out from this very earth, water and air. When the collecting and assembling of these elements together is possible today, how will it be impossible tomorrow?

Besides these three arguments, the discourse also contains a subtle warning to the effect: You arc surrounded by God's Kingdom on all sides. Wherever you may go, you would be covered and surrounded by the same universe. You cannot find any place of refuge against God, and God’s power is such that He can afflict you whenever He likes with a calamity from under your feet or from above your heads. You do not know what forces might be working under the very surface of the earth which you find as an abode of perfect peace and safety for yourselves, and when they would cause an earthquake to take place and turn the same earth into your grave. You do not know when a disaster might befall you, a lightning or a devastating rain, or some other calamity from the same sky under which you walk about with full peace and satisfaction of the heart as if it were the ceiling of your own house. In a state like this, your fearlessness of God, your heedlessness of any thought of the Hereafter and your vain and nonsensical talk against the admonition of a well-wisher has no other meaning than that you are only inviting your own doom.

13. That is, the person who is neither prejudiced nor obstinate and stubborn, but is a sincere seeker of guidance from his God, can learn many lessons from the observation of the earth and heavens; but the one whose heart is turned away from God, will see everything in the universe, but will never perceive any sign pointing to the truth.”

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا دَاوٗدَ مِنَّا فَضْلًا ؕ يٰجِبَالُ اَوِّبِيْ مَعَهٗ وَالطَّيْرَ ۚ وَاَلَنَّا لَهُ الْحَدِيْدَ ۙ 10

(34:10) We bestowed Our favour upon David.[14] (We commanded): "O mountains, sing Allah's praises with him"; (and so did We command) the birds.[15] We softened the iron for him, (saying):

14. This is an allusion to the countless favors with which Allah had blessed the Prophet David (peace be upon him). He was an ordinary young man of the tribe of Judah, living at Bethlehem. In a campaign against the Philistines he slew the giant Goliath, the great enemy of Israel, and suddenly grew in esteem of the Israelites. With this event began his rise to prominence; so much so that after the death of Saul he was first elected king of Judah in Hebron, and then a few years later he was made king over all the tribes of Israel. He took Jerusalem and made it the capital of the kingdom of Israel. It was under his leadership that for the first time in history a God-worshipping kingdom was established, whose boundaries extended from the Gulf of Aqabah to the western banks of the River Euphrates. In addition to these favors, he was further graced with Divine bounties in the form of knowledge and wisdom, and the qualities of justice and mercy and devotion to the truth. (For details, see (E.N. 273 of Surah Al-Baqarah) and (E.N. 7 of Surah Bani Israil).

15. For this refer to (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 79 and E.N. 71) thereof.

اَنِ اعْمَلْ سٰبِغٰتٍ وَّقَدِّرْ فِي السَّرْدِ وَاعْمَلُوْا صَالِحًا ؕ اِنِّيْ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ ۭ 11

(34:11) "Fashion coats of mail and measure their links with care[16] and act righteously. I am watching over whatever you do."

16. For this refer to(Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 80 and E.N. 72) thereof.

وَلِسُلَيْمٰنَ الرِّيْحَ غُدُوُّهَا شَهْرٌ وَّرَوَاحُهَا شَهْرٌ ۚ وَاَسَلْنَا لَهٗ عَيْنَ الْقِطْرِ ؕ وَمِنَ الْجِنِّ مَنْ

يَّعْمَلُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ بِاِذْنِ رَبِّهٖ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّزِغْ مِنْهُمْ عَنْ اَمْرِنَا نُذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابِ السَّعِيْرِ 12

(34:12) And We subdued the wind to Solomon: its morning course was a month's journey and its evening course was a month's journey.[17] We gave him a spring flowing with molten brass,[18] and We subdued for him jinn who, by his Lord's permission,[19] worked before him. Such of them as swerved from Our commandment, We let them taste the chastisement of the Blazing Fire.

17. For this refer to(Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 81 and E.N. 74) thereof.

18. Some former commentators have taken this to mean that a spring from the earth had erupted for the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) from which molten copper flowed out instead of water. But another interpretation of this verse can be that in the time of the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) the work of melting and molding copper for different

uses was done on a very large scale and the same has been referred to here as the flowing of a spring of molten copper for him. (See (E.N. 74 of Surah Al- Anbiya).

19. The question whether the jinns who had been subdued to the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) were human beings of the mountain tribes or really the jinns who are well known by this name as the hidden creation has been discussed in detail in our commentary of Surah Al-Anbiya and Surah An-Naml. (See (E.N. 75 of Surah Al-Anbiya) and (E.Ns 23, 45) and (52 of Surah An-Naml).

يَعْمَلُوْنَ لَهٗ مَا يَشَآءُ مِنْ مَّحَارِيْبَ وَتَمَاثِيْلَ وَجِفَانٍ كَالْجَوَابِ وَقُدُوْرٍ رّٰسِيٰتٍ ؕ اِعْمَلُوْٓا اٰلَ دَاوٗدَ شُكْرًا ؕ وَقَلِيْلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّكُوْرُ 13

(34:13) They made for him whatever he would desire: stately buildings, images,[20] basins like water-troughs and huge, built-in-cauldrons:[21] "Work, O house of David, in thankfulness (to your Lord).[22] Few of My servants are truly thankful."

20. The word tamatheel in the text is the plural of timthal, which in Arabic is used for every such thing as is made to resemble a natural thing, whether it is a human being, an animal, a tree, a flower, a river, or some inanimate object. Timthal is the name of every artificial thing which may have been made to resemble something made by God. (Lisan al-Arab). Timthal is every such picture which may have been made to resemble the likeness of something else, whether living or dead." (The commentary, Al-Kashshaf). On this basis the statement of the Quran does not necessarily imply that the images made for the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) were the pictures or images of human beings and animals. They might have been floral designs or natural landscape or different kinds of decorations with which the Prophet Solomon might have decorated his buildings and works.

The misunderstanding has been created by some commentators who have stated that the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) had gotten the pictures of the Prophets and the angels made for himself. They took such things from the Israelite traditions and then explained them saying that in the former Shariahs it was not forbidden to make the pictures. But while accepting and citing these traditions without question, these scholars did not keep in mind the fact that the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) was a follower of the Mosaic law and in that law making of the pictures and images of human beings and animals was also forbidden as it is in the Shariah of Muhammad (peace be upon him). And they also did not remember that because of the enmity which a section of the Israelites bore against the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him), they have accused him of crimes like polytheism, idolatry, sorcery and adultery. Therefore. one should not place reliance on the Israelite traditions and accept anything about this great Prophet, which might contradict any Shariah enjoined by God. Everyone knows that all the Prophets who came after the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) till the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) among the Israelites were the followers of the Torah, and none of them had brought forth a new law, which might have abrogated the law of the Torah. Now the Torah clearly enjoins repeatedly that making of the pictures and images of human beings and animals is absolutely forbidden.

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." (Exod. 20: 4) "Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, nor rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it." (Levit. 26: 1).

"Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female. The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air. The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth." (Deut. 4: 16-18).

"Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place." (Deut. 27: 15).

In the face of these clear and express injunctions how can it be accepted that the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) might have employed the jinns to make pictures and images of the Prophets and the angels for him? And how can this thing be admitted on the authority of the statements of the Jews who accuse the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) of idolatry due to his love for polytheistic wives? (Kings, oh. 11).

However, the Muslim commentators, while citing the Israelite traditions, had made it clear that in the Shariah of Muhammad (peace be upon him) this thing is forbidden; therefore, it is no more lawful for anybody to make pictures and images in imitation of the Prophet Solomon. But some people of the modern time, who want to make photography and carving of idols lawful in imitation of the West, took this verse of the Quran as an argument for themselves. They argue like this: "When a Prophet of Allah has done this and Allah Himself has mentioned this act of the Prophet in His Book, and has expressed no disapproval of it either, it must be lawful."

This argument of these followers of the West is wrong for two reasons. First, the word tamatheel that has been used in the Quran does not explicitly give the meaning of the human and animal pictures, but it applies to the pictures of lifeless things as well. Therefore, only on the basis of this word, it cannot be concluded that it is lawful to make the human and animal pictures according to the Quran. Secondly, it is established by a large number of the Ahadith, which have been reported through authentic chains of transmitters, and commonly reported by many authorities, that the Prophet (peace be upon him) absolutely forbade the making and keeping of the pictures of the living things. In this connection, we reproduce below the authentic traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the verdicts given by the eminent companions:

(1) Mother of the faithful, Aishah has reported that Umm Habibah and Umm Salamah (may Allah be pleased with them all) had seen a church in Habash, which had pictures in it. When they mentioned this before the Prophet (peace be upon him), he said: "The custom among those people was that when a pious man from among them died, they would build a house of worship at his grave and would make his pictures in it. On the Day of Resurrection, these people will be among the most wretched creatures in the sight of Allah." (Bukhari: Kitab as-Salat, Muslim: Kitab al- Masajid; Nasai: Kitab al-Masajid).

(2) Abu Huzaifah has reported that the messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah has cursed the maker of pictures. (Bukhari: Kitab al-Buyu, Kitab at-Talaq, Kitab al-Libas).

(3) Abu Zurah says, "Once when I entered a house along with Abu Hurairah, I saw that a painter was making pictures at the top. Thereupon, Abu Hurairah said, "I have heard the Prophet (peace be upon him) say: Allah says who could be more wicked than the one who tries to create a thing like My creation? Let them, if they can, create a seed or an ant." (Bukhari: Kitab al-Libas; Musnad Ahmad. According to the tradition in Muslim, this was the house of Marwan).

(4) Abu Muhammad Hudhali has reported on the authority of Ali (may Allah be pleased with him): The Prophet (peace be upon him) was present at a funeral prayer when he said: "Who from among you would go to Al-Madinah and demolish every idol that he sees, and level down every grave that he sees, and blot out every picture that he sees." A man said that he would go. So he went but came back without carrying out the task due to fear of the people of Al-Madinah. Then Ali submitted that he would go, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) allowed him to go. Ali went, then came back and said: I have demolished every idol and leveled down every grave and blotted out every picture. Thereupon the Prophet said: "Now if any one made any of these things, he would be denying the teaching sent down on Muhammad (peace be upon him)." (Musnad Ahmad; Muslim: Kitab al-Janaiz; Nasai: Kitab al-Janiz also contain a tradition on the same subject).

(5) Ibn Abbas has reported: "And he who made a picture would be chastised and compelled to breathe the soul into it, which he will not be able to do." (Bukhari: Kitab al-Ta bir, Tirmidhi: Abwab al-Libas; Nasai: Kitab az-Zinah; Musnad Ahmad).

(6) Saeed bin al-Hasan says: "I was sitting with Ibn Abbas when a man came and said: O Ibn Abbas, I am a man who earns his living with his hand, and my profession is to make these pictures. Ibn Abbas replied: I shall say to you the same that I have heard from the Prophet (peace be upon him). I have heard this from him that Allah will chastise the one who makes pictures, and will not leave him till he breathes the soul into it, and he will never be able to breathe the soul into it. At this the man was much upset and his face turned pale. Ibn Abbas said: "Well, if you have to make the pictures, make of this tree, or of something which is lifeless." (Bukhari: Kitab al-Buyu; Muslim: Kitab al-Libas; Nasai: Kitabal-Zinah; Musnad Ahmad).

(7) Abdullah bin Masud has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "On the Day of Resurrection the ones to be most severely punished by Allah would be the painters of the pictures." (Bukhari: Kitab al-Libas; Muslim: Kitab al-Libas; Nasai; Kitab al-Zinah; Musnad Ahmad).

(8) Abdullah bin Umar has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Those who paint the pictures will be punished on the Day of Resurrection. They will be asked to put life into what they have made. (Bukhari: Kitab al- Libas; Muslim: Kitab al-Libas; Nasai; Kitab al-Zinah; Musnad Ahmad).

(9) Aishah says that she bought a cushion in which pictures had been painted. Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) came and stood at the door and did not enter. I said: "I repent

before God of any sin that I may have committed." The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked: "What is this cushion for?" I said: "This is here so that you may sit and may recline on it." He said: "The painters of these pictures will be chastised on the Day of Resurrection: they will be asked to put life into what they have made; and the angels (i.e. the angels of mercy) do not enter a house which has pictures in it." (Bukhari: Kitab al-Libas; Muslim: Kitab al-Libas; Nasai: Kitab az-Zinah; Ibn Majah: Kitab at- Tajarat; Muwatta: Kitabal-Istidhan).

(10) Aishah says: "Once the Prophet (peace be upon him) came to my house, and I had hung a curtain which had pictures on it. The color of his face changed." Then he took hold of the curtain and tore it and said: "Those who try to create like the creation of Allah will be among those who will be severely punished by Allah on the Day of Resurrection." (Muslim: Kitab al-Libas; Bukhari: Kitab al- Libas; Nasai: Kitab az-Zinah).

(11) Aishah says: "Once the Prophet (peace be upon him) came back; from a journey and I had hung a curtain at my door, which had the pictures of winged horses on it. The Prophet (peace be upon him) commanded me to remove it and I removed it." (Muslim: Kitab al-Libas, Nasai: Kitab al-Zinah).

(12) Jabir bin Abdullah says: The Prophet (peace be upon him) prohibited keeping of the pictures in the house and also forbade that somebody should make pictures. (Tirmidhi: Abwab al-Libas). (13) Ibn Abbas has related on the authority of Abu Talhah Ansari: "The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that the angels (i.e. of mercy) do not enter a house where there is a dog, nor where there is a picture. (Bukhari: Kitabal-Libas).

(14) Abdullah bin Umar says: Once Gabriel promised to pay the Prophet (peace be upon him) a visit, but the time passed and he did not come. The Prophet (peace be upon him) felt troubled and came out of his house and met him. When he complained to him, he (Gabriel) replied: "We do not enter a house where there is a dog or a picture." (Bukhari: Kitab al-Libas). Several Traditions on this subject have been related by Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Nasai, Ibn Majah, Imam Malik and Imam Ahmad on the authority of several companions.

As against these, there are some other traditions which allow some exceptions regarding the pictures. For example, according to a tradition of Abu Talhah Ansari, it is permissible to hang the curtain of a cloth which has pictures embroidered on it. (Bukhari: Kitab al-Libas); and according to Aishah's tradition, when she tore a cloth having pictures on it and made a cushion from it to be spread on the floor, the Prophet did not forbid it. (Muslim: Kitab al-Libas); and Salim bin Abdullah bin Umar's tradition that the prohibition is of the picture which is displayed and installed prominently and not of the one which is used as a carpet: (Musnad Ahmad). But none of these traditions contradicts the traditions which have been cited above. None of these sanctions the making and painting of the pictures. They only tell that if a person has a piece of cloth having pictures on it, how he should use it. In this regard, the tradition of Abu Talhah Ansari cannot at all be accepted because it contradicts many other authentic traditions in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) not only forbade use of cloth having pictures on it as a curtain but even tore it into pieces. Moreover, Abu Talhah Ansari's own practice that has been reported in Tirmidhi and Muwatta, in this regard, was that he did not even like to use a piece of cloth which had pictures on it, as a carpet, not to speak of hanging it as a curtain.

As for the traditions related by Aishah and Salim bin Abdullah, they only permit that if a picture is not placed prominently out of respect and esteem but is used as a carpet disrespectfully and is trodden under the feet, it could be tolerable. After all, how can these traditions be cited for obtaining sanction for the culture which regards the art of painting and portrait making and sculpture as an enviable achievement of the human civilization, and wants to popularize it among the Muslims?

The code of practice that the Prophet (peace be upon him) left for his Ummah with regard to the pictures can be seen from the conduct and practice of the eminent companions, which they adopted in this regard. The admitted principle of law in Islam is that the authentic and reliable Islamic law is that which the Prophet (peace be upon him) enjoined during the latter part of his life after it had passed through gradual and preliminary injunctions and exceptions. And after the Prophet (peace be upon him) the eminent companions' practice and persistence on a particular way is a proof that he left the Ummah on that way. Now let us see how these holy and pious people treated and regarded the pictures.

Umar said to the Christians: "We do not enter your churches because there are pictures in them." (Bukhari: Kitab as-Salat).

Ibn Abbas would sometimes offer his Prayer in the church, but not in a church which had pictures in it. (Bukhari; Kitab as-Salam).

Abu al-Hayyaj al-Asadi says: Ali said to me: "Should I not send yon on the same mission on which the Prophet (peace be upon him) had sent me? And it is this that you should not leave any idol that you should not break, and you should not leave any grave that you should not level down, and you should not leave any picture that you should not blot out." (Muslim: Kitab al-Janaiz; Nasai: Kitab al- Janeiz).

Hanash al-Kinani says: Ali said to his chief of the police: "Do you know on what mission I am going to send you? On the mission on which the Prophet (peace be upon him) had sent me, that you should blot out every picture and level down every grave." (Musnad Ahmad).

This very established law of Islam has been accepted and acknowledged by the jurists of Islam and regarded as an article of the Islamic law. Thus, Allama Badruddin Aini writes with reference to Tauhid.

"Our elders (i.e. the Hanifite jurists) and other jurists say that making the pictures of a living thing is not only unlawful but strictly forbidden and a major sin, whether the maker has made it for a purpose where it would be held with contempt or for some other use and purpose. The making and painting of the picture anyway is unlawful, because it is an attempt to create like the creation of Allah. Likewise. The making of pictures whether on the cloth, or on the carpet, or on a coin, or on a utensil, or on a wall, is in any case unlawful. However, making the pictures of something else, for instance, of a tree, etc. is not forbidden. Whether the picture casts a shadow or not is immaterial. The same is the opinion of Imam Malik, Sufyan Thauri, Imam Abu Hanifah, and other scholars. Qadi Iyad says that the dolls of girls are an exception, but Imam Malik; disapproved of even buying them." (Umdat al-Qari vol. xxii p. 70). Imam Nawawi has elucidated this same view in greater detail in his commentary of Muslim. Please refer to Sharh Nawawi, Egyptian Ed., vol. xiv, pp. 81-82).

This is then the injunction about the making of pictures. As regards the use of the pictures made by others, Allama Ibn Hajar has cited the views of the jurists of Islam as follows:

"Ibn Arabi, the Malikite jurist, says that the consensus of opinion is that the picture that casts a shadow is unlawful, whether it is regarded with contempt or not. Only the dolls of girls are an exception." Ibn Arab; also says that the picture which does not cast a shadow but which persists (as in the printed form, unlike the reflection of a mirror) is also unlawful, whether it is regarded with contempt or not. However, if its head is cut off, or its limbs or parts are separated, it may be used. Imam al-Harmayn has cited a verdict according to which a curtain or a cushion having pictures on it may be used, but the picture hung on the wall or ceiling is forbidden, for it would show respect and esteem for it, while the picture on the curtain or cushion, on the contrary, would be held with contempt. Ibn Abi Shaibah has related on the authority of Ikrimah that the scholars among the immediate followers of the companions held the opinion that the picture's being on the carpet or cushion is disgraceful for it; they also opined that the picture hung prominently is unlawful, but the one trodden under the feet is permissible. The same opinion has been cited from Ibn Sirin, Salim bin Abdullah, Ikrimah bin Khalid and Said bin Jubair." (Fath al-Bari, vol. X, p. 300).

The details given above clearly show that the forbidding of the pictures is not a controversial or doubtful matter in Islam, but it is an established article of the law according to the express instructions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the practice of the companions and the unanimous verdicts of the jurists of Islam, which cannot be changed by the hairsplitting of the people influenced by the alien cultures.

In this connection, certain other things should also be understood so that there remains no misunderstanding in this regard.

Some people try to make a distinction between a photograph and a painting, whereas the Shariah forbids the picture itself and not any process or method of making pictures. There is no difference between a photograph and a painting: they are both pictures. Whatever difference is there between them is due to the method of making them, and in this regard the Shariah injunctions make no difference between them.

Some people give the argument that the picture was forbidden in Islam in order to put an end to idol worship. As there is no such danger now, this injunction should be annulled. But this argument is absolutely wrong. In the first place, nowhere in the traditions has it been said that the pictures have been made unlawful in order to avoid the danger of shirk and idol worship. Secondly, the assertion that shirk and idol worship have been eradicated from the world is also baseless. Today in the IndoPak subcontinent itself there are millions of idol worshippers and polytheists. Shirk is being practiced in different regions of the world in different ways. The Christian people of the Book also are worshipping the images and portraits of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) and Mary and other saints; so much so that even a large number of the Muslims also are involved in the evil of worshipping others than God.

Some people say that only those pictures which are polytheistic in nature should be forbidden, i.e. pictures and images of those persons who have been made gods. As for the other pictures and images there is no reason why they should be forbidden. But the people

who argue like this, in fact, become their own law givers instead of deriving law from the commandments and instructions of the Law- Giver. They do not know that the picture does not become the cause of polytheism and idol worship only but has become the cause of many other mischief in the world, and is becoming so even today. The picture is one of those major means by which the aura of greatness of the kings, dictators and political leaders has been impressed upon the minds of the common people. The picture also has been used extensively for spreading obscenity and today this mischief has touched heights unknown to previous history. Pictures have also been used for sowing discord and hatred and for creating mischief between the nations and for misleading the masses in different ways. Therefore, the view that the Law-Giver forbade the picture only in order to eradicate idol worship is basically wrong. The LawGiver has absolutely forbidden pictures of the living things. If we are not our own law givers but are the followers of the Law-Giver, we should desist from this accordingly. It is not at all lawful for us that we should propose from ourselves a basis for a particular injunction and then, on the basis of it, should declare some pictures lawful and some as unlawful.

Some people refer to some apparently harmless kinds of pictures and say that there could be no danger from these: they could not cause the mischief of shirk, obscenity, political propaganda or other evils; therefore, they should not be forbidden. Here again the people commit the same error: they first propose a cause and a basis for an injunction, and then argue that when the cause is not found in a particular forbidden thing, it should not be forbidden. Furthermore, these people also do not understand the rule of the Islamic Shariah that it does not make vague and ambiguous boundaries between the lawful and the unlawful from which a man may not be able to judge when he is within the bounds and when he has crossed them; but it draws a clear line of demarcation which every person can see like the broad daylight. The demarcation in respect of the picture is absolutely clear: pictures of living things are unlawful and of the lifeless things lawful. This line of demarcation does not admit any ambiguity. The one who has to follow the injunctions can clearly know what is permissible for him and what is not. But, if some pictures of the living things had been declared lawful and some unlawful, no list of the two kinds of the pictures however extensive, would have made the boundary between the lawful and the unlawful clear, and the case of many pictures would still have remained ambiguous as to whether they were within the bounds of lawfulness or outside them. This is similar to the Islamic injunction about wine that one should completely abstain from it, and this marks a clear limit, But, if it had been said that one should abstain from such a quantity of wine as intoxicates, it would be impossible to demarcate between the lawful and the unlawful , and no one would have been able to decide what quantity of wine he could drink; and where he had to stop. (For a further discussion, see Rasail-o-Masail, Part 1, pp. 152-155).

21. This gives an idea of the generous and large scale hospitality practiced by the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him). Big bowls like troughs had been arranged to serve as containers of food for the guests and heavy cooking pots were meant for cooking food for thousands of the people at one and the same time.

22. “Grateful”: work like grateful servants. The mere verbal thankfulness of a person who acknowledges only verbally the favors done by the benefactor but uses them against his will is meaningless. The truly grateful person is he who acknowledges the favors with the tongue as well as uses and employs the favors according to the will of the benefactor.

فَلَمَّا قَضَيۡنَا عَلَيۡهِ الۡمَوۡتَ مَا دَلَّهُمۡ عَلٰى مَوۡتِهٖۤ اِلَّا دَآبَّةُ الۡاَرۡضِ تَاۡكُلُ مِنۡسَاَتَهٗ ۚ فَلَمَّا خَرَّ
تَبَيَّنَتِ الۡجِنُّ اَنۡ لَّوۡ كَانُوۡا يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ الۡغَيۡبَ مَا لَبِثُوۡا فِى الۡعَذَابِ الۡمُهِيۡنِ ؕ 14

(34:14) When We executed Our decree of death on Solomon, nothing indicated to the jinn that he was dead except a worm eating away his staff. So when Solomon fell down, the jinn realised[23] that had they known what lies in the realm beyond perception, they would not have continued to be in this humiliating chastisement.[24]

23. Another meaning of the sentence can be: "The true state and condition of the jinns became clear and exposed. "According to the first meaning, it will mean: “The jinns realized that their claim to have the knowledge of the unseen was wrong.” According to the second, it will mean: “The people who thought that the jinns possessed the knowledge of the unseen, came to know that they had no such knowledge.”

24. Some modern commentators have interpreted it as follows: As the Prophet Solomon’s (peace be upon him) son, Rehoboam, was unworthy and given to luxurious living and surrounded by flatterers, he could not sustain the heavy burden of responsibility that fell on his shoulders after the death of his great father. A short time after his succession, the kingdom collapsed, and the frontier tribes (i.e. of the jinns), whom the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) had subdued by his mighty power, rebelled and broke away. But this interpretation does not at all conform to the words of the Quran. The scene depicted by the words of the Quran is somewhat like this: Death came to the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) in a state when he was standing or sitting with the support of a staff. His body stood in place due to the staff, and the jinns continued to perform their duties and services, thinking that he was living. At last, when the wood louse started eating away the staff and it became hollow from within, the Prophet Solomon’s (peace be upon him) body fell down; then the jinns realized that he had died. After all, why should this clear and unambiguous description of the event be construed to mean that the wood louse implied the unworthiness of the Prophet Solomon’s son, and the staff implied his power and authority and the falling down of his body implied the disintegration of his kingdom? Had Allah meant to say all this, there was no shortage of the words in the vast Arabic language. The Quran, in fact, has nowhere used such enigmatic language. How could the common Arabs, who were its first addressees, have solved this riddle?

Then, the most absurd part of this interpretation is that according to it the jinns imply the people of the frontier tribes whom the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) had subdued to perform certain services under him. The question is, which of these tribes had claimed to have the knowledge of the unseen, and whom did the mushriks regard as the knower of the unseen? A person who reads the last words of the verse with open eyes can himself see that jinn here necessarily implies a group of beings who either had themselves made a claim to have the knowledge of the unseen, or who, the people believed, had the knowledge of the unseen; and the secret of this group’s being ignorant and unaware of the unseen became disclosed when they continued to serve the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) under the impression that he was living, whereas he had died. This statement of the Quran was

enough to induce an honest person to revise his this opinion that the jinn imply the frontier tribes, but the people who feel shy of admitting the existence of the hidden creation called the jinn before the materialistic world still insist on this interpretation of theirs in spite of the plain meaning of the Quran.

At several places in the Quran Allah tells that the mushriks of Arabia regarded the jinns as the associates of Allah, and as His children, and used to seek their refuge:

"They set up the jinns as partners with Allah. whereas He has created them." (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 100). "And they have invented a blood-relationship between Allah and the jinns." (Surah As-Saffat, Ayat 158). "And that, some people from among the men used to seek refuge with some people from among the jinns." (Surah Al-Jinn, Ayat: 6).

One of their beliefs was that they regarded the jinns as the knower of the unseen and hidden. and used to turn to them to obtain knowledge of the hidden things. Allah has related this event here in order to repudiate this belief and to make the Arabs realize that they are following the false creeds of ignorance without any valid reason, whereas the fact is that these beliefs are absolutely baseless. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 63)below.

لَقَدْ كَانَ لِسَبَإٍ فِيْ مَسْكَنِهِمْ اٰيَةٌ ۚ جَنَّتٰنِ عَنْ يَّمِيْنٍ وَّشِمَالٍ ؕ كُلُوْا مِنْ رِّزْقِ رَبِّكُمْ
وَاشْكُرُوْا لَهٗ ؕ بَلْدَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ وَّرَبٌّ غَفُوْرٌ 15

(34:15) For Sheba[25] there was also a Sign in their dwelling place:[26] the two gardens[27] to the right and to the left." Eat of your Lord's provision, and render thanks to Him. Most pleasant is your land and Most Forgiving is your Lord."

25. To understand the continuity of the subject matter one should keep in view the theme as expressed in(Ayats 1-9). There it has been pointed out that the pagans of Arabia regarded the coming of the Hereafter as irrational, and declared openly that the Messenger (peace be upon him) who was presenting this doctrine was either a mad man or deliberately was fabricating falsehood. In reply to this, Allah first gave some rational arguments, which we have elaborated in (E.Ns 7, 8 and12)above. Then in (Ayats 10-21) the story of the Prophets David and Solomon and of Saba has been related as an historical argument, which is meant to impress the reality that the history of the human species on the earth itself testifies to the law of retribution. If man studies his own history carefully, he will see that this world is not a lawless kingdom, which might be functioning blindly, but it is being ruled by an All-Hearing and All- Seeing Being, Who treats and deals with His grateful servants in one way and with the ungrateful and thankless people in quite another way. If one wants one can learn this lesson from the same history that in the Kingdom of God which has such a character, goodness and evil cannot have one and the same result. The necessary demand of its justice is that a time must come when goodness should be fully rewarded and evil fully punished.

26. That is, a sign of this that whatever they have is the gift of some one else and not of their own creation, and a sign of this that the one worthy of their service and worship and

gratitude is that God who has blessed them with these favors and not those who have no share in bestowing these, and a sign of this that their wealth is not imperishable but can perish even as it has been amassed.

27. This does not mean that there were only two gardens in the whole country, but that the entire land of Saba was like a garden. Wherever a man stood, he could see a garden on his right and a garden on his left.

فَأَعْرَضُوا فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَيْلَ الْعَرِمِ وَبَدَّلْنَاهُمْ بِجَنَّتَيْهِمْ جَنَّتَيْنِ ذَوَاتَيْ أُكُلٍ خَمْطٍ وَأَثْلٍ وَشَيْءٍ مِّنْ سِدْرٍ قَلِيلٍ 16

(34:16) But they turned away[28] and so We let loose upon them a devastating flood[29] that swept away the dams and replaced their gardens by two others bearing bitter fruits, tamarisks, and a few lote trees.[30]

28. That is, they adopted the way of disobedience and ingratitude instead of obedience and gratefulness.

29. The word arim as used in sayl al-arim in the text is derived from the South Arabic word ariman, which stands for a dam. In the ancient inscriptions that have been unearthed in the ruins of the Yaman, this word has been commonly used in this meaning. For example, in an inscription dated 542 or 543 A.D. which Abraha, the Abyssinian governor of the Yaman, had gotten installed after the repairs to the great dam of Maarib, this word has been used repeatedly in the meaning of a dam. Therefore, sayl al- arim implies a flood that comes when a dam breaks.

30. That is, as a result of the flood that came after the dam burst, the whole land was laid waste. The canals which the Sabaeans had dug out by building dams between the mountains were ruined and the irrigation system destroyed. Then the same land which had been like a garden before became a jungle of wild growth and no eatable plants were left in it except the small plume like fruit of the lote bushes.

ذَٰلِكَ جَزَيْنَاهُمْ بِمَا كَفَرُوا ۖ وَهَلْ نُجَازِي إِلَّا الْكَفُورَ 17

(34:17) Thus did We retribute them for their ingratitude. And none do We retribute in this manner except the utterly ungrateful.

وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ الْقُرَى الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا قُرًى ظَاهِرَةً وَقَدَّرْنَا فِيهَا السَّيْرَ ۖ سِيرُوا فِيهَا لَيَالِيَ وَأَيَّامًا آمِنِينَ 18

(34:18) We placed other prominent towns between them, the towns that We had blessed and had set well-measured stages between them.[31] Move back and forth between them, night and day, in perfect security.

31. "Towns which We had blessed": The lands of Syria and Palestine, which have been generally mentioned in the Quran by this title. For instance, in (Surah Al-Aaraf, Atyat 137), (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayat 1), (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 71, 81).

"Visible towns": Habitations situated on the highway and not inside the country. It may also mean that the habitations were not very far apart but contiguous so that as the outlying areas of one habitation came to an end those of the other started coming into view.

"And We made the stages (of journey) between them easy" implies that from the Yaman to the borders of Syria the whole journey passed through inhabited lands, and the distances between one station and another were known and determined. That makes the distinction between the journey through inhabited land and the journey through uninhabited desert area. In the desert the traveler continues to travel as long as he wills and halts when tired. Contrary to this, in settled areas as the distance between one habitation and the other is well known, the traveler can plan beforehand when he would break his journey, where he would have his midday rest and when he would stay for the night.

فَقَالُوْا رَبَّنَا بٰعِدْ بَيْنَ اَسْفَارِنَا وَظَلَمُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ اَحَادِيْثَ وَمَزَّقْنٰهُمْ كُلَّ
مُمَزَّقٍ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُوْرٍ 19

(34:19) But they said: "Lord, make the stages of our journeys longer."[32] They wronged their own selves so We reduced them to bygone tales, and utterly tore them to pieces.[33] Verily there are Signs in this for everyone who is steadfast and thankful.[34]

32. They may not have prayed thus in so many words. As a matter of fact, whoever is ungrateful to Allah for His blessings, tells Allah, as if to say that he is not worthy of those blessings. Likewise, the nation which abuses the bounties of Allah, in fact, prays to Him, as if to say, "Our Lord, withdraw Your blessings from us, we are not worthy of these." Moreover, the words in the text also seem to suggest that the Sabaeans perhaps regarded their large population as a calamity for themselves, and they also wanted like the other foolish people that their population should fall.

33. That is, the people of Saba were so dispersed in all directions that their dispersion became proverbial. Even today when the Arabs have to mention the complete dispersion of any people they refer to the people of Saba as an example. When Allah caused His blessings to be withdrawn from them, the different tribes of the Sabaeans started leaving their homes and migrating to other parts of Arabia. The Banu Ghassan went to settle in Jordan and Syria, the Aus and Khazraj in Yathrib, and the Khuzaah in Tihamah near Jeddah. The Azd left for Uman and the Bani Lakhm and Judham and Kindah were also forced to give up their homes for other places. Thus, the Sabaeans ceased to exist as a nation and became a mere legend.

34. In this context the "steadfast and grateful" implies every such person (or persons) who does not lose his balance after he has received blessings from Allah, nor exults at prosperity, nor becomes heedless of God Who has blessed him with these. Such a person can learn great lessons from the history of those people who adopted the way of disobedience after attaining opportunities for progress and prosperity and ultimately met with their doom.

وَلَقَدْ صَدَّقَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِبْلِيسُ ظَنَّهُ فَاتَّبَعُوهُ إِلَّا فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ 20

(34:20) Iblis found his estimate of them to be true, and they followed him, except a party of the believers.35

35. History shows that in ancient times there lived among the Sabaeans a small group of the people, who believed in one God, apart from all other gods. The inscriptions that have been discovered in the ruins of Yaman as a result of modern archaeological research point to the existence of this small element. Some inscriptions of the period about 650 B.C. indicate that at several places in the kingdom of Saba there existed such houses of worship as were exclusively meant for the worship of dhu-samavi or dhusamaavi (i.e. Rabb as-samaa: Lord of the heavens). In some places this Deity has been mentioned as Malikan dhusamavi (the King who is the Owner of the heavens). This remnant of the Sabaeans continued to live in Yaman for centuries afterwards. Thus, in an inscription of 378 A.D. there is also mention of a house of worship built in the name of Ilah dhu-semevi. Then, in an inscription dated 465 A.D. the words are; Bi-nasr wa rida ilah-in baal samin wa ardin (i.e. with the help and support of that God who is the Owner of the heavens and the earth). In another inscription of the period dated 458 A.D., the word Rahman has been used for the same God, the actual words being bi-rida Rahmanan (i. e. with the help of Rahman.

وَمَا كَانَ لَهُ عَلَيْهِم مِّن سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَن يُؤْمِنُ بِالْآخِرَةِ مِمَّنْ هُو مِنْهَا فِي شَكٍّ ۗ وَرَبُّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَفِيظٌ ۚ 21

(34:21) Iblis had no authority over them and whatever happened was in order that We might know him who believes in the Hereafter as distinct from him who is in doubt about it.36 Your Lord is watchful over everything.37

36. That is, Iblis did not have the power to have forcibly misled these people to the way of God's disobedience although they had wanted to adopt His obedience. Allah had only given him the power that he may seduce and mislead them and make all such people his followers, who may like to follow him of their own accord. And Iblis was provided these opportunities for seduction so that the believers of the Hereafter were distinguished from those who entertained doubts about its coming.

In other words, this divine statement makes the truth explicit that nothing in this world other than belief in the Hereafter can ensure man's adherence to the right way. If a man disbelieves that he is to be raised back to life after death and has to render an account of his deeds before his God, he will certainly be misled and go astray, for he will never be able to

develop in himself the sense of responsibility which alone can make him adhere to the right way. That is why the artifice of Satan by which he ensnares man is that he makes him heedless of the Hereafter. The one who escapes this satanic enticement can never agree that he should sacrifice the interests of his real everlasting life to the interests of the transient life of the world. On the contrary, the one who disbelieves in the Hereafter under the evil influence of Satan, or at least entertains doubts about it, can never be induced to withdraw from the cash bargain being made in this world only due to the apprehension that it might cause loss in some later life. Whoever has gone astray in the world, has gone astray only due to the denial of the Hereafter, or some suspicion about it; and whoever has adopted righteousness has done so because his righteous deeds have issued from his belief in the Hereafter.

37. To understand fully the allusions made in the Quran to the history of the Sabaeans, one should also keep in view the information that has been obtained through other historical sources about this nation.

Historically, Saba was a great nation of Southern Arabia. which comprised some large tribes. Imam Ahmad, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Abd al-Barr and Tirmidhi have related from the Prophet (peace be upon him) that Saba was the name of an Arab, from whose race issued the following tribes of Arabia: Kindah. Himyar, Azd, Ash ariyyin, Madhhij, Anmar (with its two branches: Khatham and Bajilah), Amilah, Judham, Lakhm and Ghassan.

Since antiquity this Arabian nation has been well known to the rest of the world. Ur inscriptions of 2500 B.C. mention it by the name of Sabom. Then in the Babylonian and Assyrian inscriptions and also in the Bible it has been mentioned several times. (See, for instance, Psalms 72:15; Jeremiah 6: 20; Ezekiel 27:22, 38: 13; Job 6: 19). The Greek and Roman historians and the geographer Theophrastus (288 B.C.) have mentioned it continuously for many centuries of the Christian era since before Jesus (peace be upon him).

Its home was the south-western corner of the Arabian peninsula, now called al-Yaman. Its rise to prominence started in 1100 B.C. In the time of the Prophets David and Solomon (peace be upon them) the Sabaeans had become world famous as a wealthy people. In the beginning they were a sun-worshipping nation. Then, when their queen affirmed faith at the hand of the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) 965-926 B.C., probably most of them became Muslims. But then in some unknown later period they again began to worship gods and goddesses tike Almaqah (the moon-god), Athtar (Venus), Dhat Hamim, Dhat Badan (the sun-god), Harmatam or Harimat and many others. Almaqah was their chief deity, and the kings made claim to the people's obedience as representatives of this deity. Many inscriptions have been unearthed in the Yaman, which show that the whole land abounded in the temples of these gods, especially of Almaqah, and thanks giving services for them were held at every important event.

As a result of the modern archaeological researches about 3,000 inscriptions have been discovered, which throw a good deal of light on the history of this nation. Besides these, if the information yielded by the Arabian traditionists and the Roman and Greek historians is compiled, a detailed history of this nation can be prepared. According to this information the following are the important periods of its history:

(1) The Pre-mid-seventh Century Period: In this period Mukarrib was the title of the Sabaean kings. Probably a synonym of Muqarrib, it signified that the kings regarded themselves as the link between men and gods; or, in other words, they were the priest-kings. Their capital was Sirwah, whose ruins are found at a day's journey to the west of Maarib, and are now called al-Kharibah. The foundations of the great Maarib dam were laid in this period: then the different kings extended it from time to time.

(2) 650 B. C. to 115 B. C.: In this period the Sabaean kings discarded Mukarrib and adopted the title of Malik (king), which signified that theocracy was replaced by secular kingship. They left Sirwah and made Maarib their capital and extended it in every way. This place lay 3900 feet above the sea, and is some 60 miles east of Sana. Even today its ruins bear evidence that it was once the centre of a highly civilized nation.

(3) 115 B.C. to 300 A.D: In this period the Sabaean kingdom fell under the domination of the tribe of Himyar, a more numerous tribe of Saba. They discarded Maarib and made their central place Raydan their capital, which later became known as Zafar. Its ruins can still be seen on a circular hill near the modern city of Yarim. Close by it there resides a small tribe by the name of Hinmar, perhaps the remnant of the great nation which was once well known throughout the world for its glory and grandeur. In the same period the word Yamanat and Yamanaat began to be used for the first time for a part of the kingdom, which gradually became Yaman and the name of the entire land, which extends from Asir to Aden and from Bab al-Mandab to Hadramaut. During this very period the decline of the Sabaean began.

(4) 300 A.D. to the rise of Islam: This is the period of the Sabaea's destruction. They started fighting civil wars, which provided occasion for external intervention. This resulted in the decline in their trade and their agriculture and even loss of political freedom. Taking advantage of the internal conflicts between the Himyarites and other tribes, the Abyssinians occupied the Yaman and ruled it briefly from 340 A.D. to 378 A.D. Then, though political freedom was restored, breaches began to appear in the great dam of Maarib, which in 450 or 451 A.D. led to the catastrophe occasioned by the bursting of the dam as has been referred to in verse 16 above. Although after it till the time of Abraha the dam was extensively repaired, the population that had dispersed could not be brought back, nor could the ruined system of irrigation and agriculture be restored. In 523 A.D., dhu-Nuwas, the Jewish king of the Yaman, carried out the great massacre of the Christians of Najran, which has been referred to in the Quran under ashab alukhdud (Surah Al-Burooj, Ayat 4). In retaliation, the Christian kingdom of Abyssinia invaded Yaman and occupied the entire land. Later the Abyssinian governor of Yaman, Abrahah, in a bid to put an end to the central position of the Kabah and to bring the entire western Arabia into the sphere of the Byzantine Abyssinian influence invaded Makkah in 570 or 571 A.D., a few days before the birth of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Abyssinian army was completely destroyed as alluded to under ashab il-feel (Surah Al-Feel, Ayat 1) in the Quran. At last, in 575 A.D. Yaman fell to the Iranians; their rule came to an end in 628 A.D. when their governor Badhan embraced Islam.

The Sabaeans owed their prosperity to two main factors: agriculture and commerce. They had developed their agriculture by means of a wonderful irrigation system unknown in the ancient world except in Babylon. There were no natural rivers in their land; in the rainy

season small hill-torrents rose on which they had built dams every where in the country and collected water in small lakes from which they had taken out canals to water their lands. This had virtually turned the whole country into a vast garden as mentioned in the Quran. The largest reservoir was the lake which had been formed by the construction of a dam on the opening in the Jabal Balaq near Maarib. But when Allah caused His favors to be turned away from them, the great dam burst in the mid-fifth century A.D. and the resulting floods went on breaking one dam after the other on the way, destroying the entire irrigation system, which could never again be restored.

For commerce the Sabaeans had been blessed by God with the most favorable geographical position of which they took full advantage. For more than a thousand years they monopolized the means of trade between the East and the West. On the one hand, they received silk from China, spices from Indonesia and Malabar, fabrics and swords from India, negro slaves, monkeys, ostrich feathers and ivory from East Africa at their ports, and on the other, they transported this merchandise to the Egyptian and Syrian marts, to be supplied onward to Rome and Greece. Besides, they themselves were great producers of frankincense and myrrh and other perfumes, which were in great demand in Egypt and Syria and in Rome and Greece.

Two great routes existed for this international trade: the sea route and the land route. The maritime trade remained in the Sabaeans' control for more than a thousand years for they alone knew the mysteries of the Red Sea monsoons, breakers and rocks and the anchorages, and no other nation could risk navigation through these dangerous waters. Through this maritime route they took their trade goods to the harbors of Jordan and Egypt. The land routes from Aden and Hadramaut joined at Maarib, from where a highway led to Petra through Makkah, Jeddah, Yathrib, Al-Ula, Tabuk and Aylah, forking at the northern end to Egypt and Syria. Along this land route, a number of Sabaean colonies had been established right from the Yaman to the borders of Syria, as mentioned in the Quran, and trade caravans passed by these day and night. The signs of many of these colonies still exist on this route from which the Sabaean and the Himyarite inscriptions are being discovered.

After the first century after Jesus (peace be upon him) Sabaean trade began to suffer a decline. When the Greek, and then the Roman, kingdoms were established in the Middle East, the citizens began complaining of the high prices that the Arabian traders were charging for the oriental goods because of their monopoly, and urged their governments to take the initiative to break their supremacy in the sea trade. Thus, in the beginning, Ptolemy II (985- 246 B.C.), the Greek ruler of Egypt, reopened the Nile-Red Sea canal originally dug by Pharaoh Sesostris some seventeen centuries ago. Consequently, it was through this canal that the Egyptian fleet entered the Red Sea for the first time, but it could not succeed much against the Sabaeans. When Egypt fell to the Romans they brought a stronger merchant marine into the Red Sea and put a naval fleet at its back. The Sabaeans could not withstand this force. Consequently, the Romans set up their trade colonies at every seaport, arranged supplies for the ships and also stationed their military troops wherever possible. At last, the time came when Aden passed under the military occupation of the Romans. In this connection, the Roman and the Abyssinian kingdoms also entered secret pacts against the Sabaeans, which ultimately deprived this nation of its political freedom as well.

After losing control over maritime trade the Sabaeans were left with trade over the land route only, but many factors combined to gradually break its back too. First, the Nabataeans ousted them from all the colonies of the upper Hejaz and Jordan, from Petra to Al-Ula. Then in 106 A.D. the Romans put an end to the Nabataean kingdom and captured all the Syrian and Jordanian territories up to the Hejaz. After this Abyssinia and Rome jointly tried to ruin the Sabaean trade completely by taking advantage of their internal conflicts. That is why the Abyssinians intervened in the Yaman again and again, till at last they brought the entire land under their occupation.

Thus, Allah's wrath caused this nation to be toppled from the heights of glory and prosperity into oblivion from which they were never able to rise again. There was a time when the Greeks and the Romans felt tempted when they heard of the legendary wealth of these people. Strabo writes, "The Sabaeans use gold and silver utensils and even the ceilings, walls and doors of their houses are bedecked with ivory, gold, silver and jewels." Pliny says, "The entire wealth of Rome and Persia is flowing into Sabaean hands. They are the richest people of the world today, and their fertile land abounds in gardens, crops and cattle." Artemidorus says, "These people roll in luxury. They burn cinnamon, sandalwood and other sweet smelling wood as fuel." Likewise, other Greek historians relate that the passengers passing by their shores can smell the perfumes of their land in the merchant ships at sea. For the first time in history they built a skyscraper, called the castle of Ghumdan, on the hill top in Sana. This citadel, according to the Arab historians, a twenty storey building, each storey being 36 feet high. Thus did they prosper and enjoy life as long as Allah favored them with His bounties. At last, when they transgressed all limits in their ingratitude, the Almighty Allah also withdrew His attention, and they were so utterly destroyed as if they had never existed at all.

قُلِ ادْعُوا الَّذِيْنَ زَعَمْتُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ۚ لَا يَمْلِكُوْنَ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَلَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِيْهِمَا مِنْ شِرْكٍ وَّمَا لَهٗ مِنْهُمْ مِّنْ ظَهِيْرٍ 22

(34:22) (O Prophet),[38] say to those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity: "Call upon those whom you fancied to be deities beside Allah.[39] They own not even the smallest particle, neither in the heavens nor on the earth; nor do they have any share in the ownership of either of them. Nor is any of them even a helper of Allah.

38. Until now the mushriks' wrong notions about the Hereafter have been dealt with. From here the discourse turns to the refutation of shirk itself.

39. That is, Allah makes and un-makes the destinies of individuals and nations and kingdoms in ways as you have seen from the stories of the Prophets David and Solomon (peace be upon them) and the people of Saba. Now, you may invoke, if you so like, these self-made gods of yours to see whether they also possess the power to change someone's good fortune into misfortune and misfortune into good fortune.

وَلَا تَنفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ عِندَهُۥٓ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُۥ ۖ حَتَّىٰٓ إِذَا فُزِّعَ عَن قُلُوبِهِمْ قَالُوا۟ مَاذَا ۙ قَالَ
رَبُّكُمْ ۖ قَالُوا۟ ٱلْحَقَّ ۖ وَهُوَ ٱلْعَلِىُّ ٱلْكَبِيرُ 23

(34:23) No intercession can avail with Allah except for him whom Allah permits (to intercede).[40] When their hearts are relieved of fright they will ask the intercessors: "What did your Lord say?" They will reply: "(He said) what is right, and He is the High, the Great."[41]

40. That is, not to speak of owning something, or being a partner in the ownership of something, or being a helper of Allah in any way, there exists no one in the universe, who of his own accord, may intercede for someone before Allah. You are involved in the misunderstanding that there are some beloved ones of God, or some such powerful personalities, who can force and press God to accept their intercession, whereas the fact is that no one will dare utter a word of recommendation there without Allah's permission. Only such a one will be able to make his submissions who is permitted by Allah to do so, and will intercede for him alone for whom permission for intercession is granted. (To understand the distinction between the Islamic concept of intercession and the polytheistic concept, see (Surah Yunus, Ayats 3, 18); (Surah Hud, Ayats 76, 105); (Surah TaHa, Ayat 109); (Surah Al- Anbiya, Ayat 28); (Surah Al-Hajj, Ayat 76)."

41. Here a graphic picture has been drawn of the time when, on the Day of Resurrection, an intercessor will be seeking permission to intercede on behalf of someone. It presents this scene: "After submitting the application for permission, both the intercessor and the person for whom intercession is being provided are awaiting the reply in a state of restlessness and awe. At last, when the permission is granted and the person perceives satisfaction in the face of the intercessor, he feels a little comforted and asks the intercessor: "What has your Lord said?" The intercessor says, "The truth": permission has been granted. What is meant to be impressed is this: "O foolish people! Such will be the awe of the great court of Allah! How dare you entertain the notion that anybody will have you forgiven by his own power, or dare behave stubbornly and tell Allah: These are my favorites: they will have to be forgiven!"

قُلْ مَن يَرْزُقُكُم مِّنَ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ ۖ قُلِ ٱللَّهُ ۙ وَإِنَّآ أَوْ إِيَّاكُمْ لَعَلَىٰ هُدًى أَوْ فِى
ضَلَٰلٍ مُّبِينٍ 24

(34:24) Ask them, (O Prophet): "Who provides you sustenance from the heavens and the earth?" Say: "Allah.[42] Now, inevitably only one of us is rightly guided, either we or you; and the other is in manifest error."[43]

42. There is a subtle gap between the question and the answer. The addressees were the mushriks who not only did not disbelieve in the existence of Allah but also knew and believed that the keys of the provisions are in His hand. But in spite of this they also held

others as Allah's associates in His work. Now when they were confronted with the question: Who gives you sustenance from the heavens and the earth, they were put in a tight corner. If they mentioned another besides Allah, they would say a thing contrary to their own and their people's creed. If they showed stubbornness and said such a thing, they feared that their own people would immediately refute them. And if they acknowledged that Allah alone is their Sustainer, they would immediately be confronted with the next question: Then, why and what for have you made these others as your gods? When Allah is the Sustainer, why should these others be served and worshipped? Thus they stand confused and bewildered. Neither can they say that Allah alone is the Sustainer nor that another god is the sustainer. When the questioner sees that they do not make any answer, he himself answers his question and says, Allah.

43. This sentence contains an important point of the wisdom of preaching. The logical conclusion of the question and answer cited above would be that the one who serves and worships Allah should be on right guidance and the one who worships others beside Him should be misguided. Therefore, apparently, the conclusion should have been: "Then, we are rightly guided and you are misguided." But such a plain and straight reply, although correct and true, would not have been a wise thing from the point of view of preaching. For when a person is addressed and told plainly that he is misguided and the speaker claims to be rightlyguided himself, he will become obdurate and will never be inclined to accept and acknowledge the truth. As the Messengers of Allah are not sent only for the sake of speaking the plain truth, but are also entrusted with the duty of reforming the wrongdoers as tactfully as possible. Allah has not asked His Prophet (peace be upon him) to tell them plainly, after the question and answer, that they are all misguided and that he alone is rightly-guided. Instead of this, it was said: Tell them: it has become clear that we regard as our Deity only Him Who is the Sustainer, and you have taken as deities those who are not sustainers. Now, it is not possible that both you and we should be on right guidance simultaneously. Only one of us can be rightly-guided, and the other inevitably will be misguided. Now it is for you to consider and judge who is being proved by reason to be in the right and who in the wrong.

قُلْ لَّا تُسْـَٔلُوْنَ عَمَّآ اَجْرَمْنَا وَلَا نُسْـَٔلُ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ 25

(34:25) Tell them: "You will not be called to account about the guilt we committed, nor will we be called to account for what you did."[44]

44. The about question had already made the listeners to think seriously, This additional sentence was meant to make them think even more seriously, as if to say, "It is in our own interest individually that we should consider and decide the question of guidance and misguidance rightly. For if we are misguided, we shall ourselves bear the consequences of our error; you will not be held answerable for it. Therefore, it is in our own interest that we should consider seriously, before adopting a creed, that we are not following a wrong way. Likewise, you also should think seriously for your own sake, not for our sake in any way, and make sure that you are not investing your life's capital in a false creed. For if you committed an error in this regard, you would be harming only your own selves and not us.

قُلْ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا رَبُّنَا ثُمَّ يَفْتَحُ بَيْنَنَا بِالْحَقِّ ۖ وَهُوَ الْفَتَّاحُ الْعَلِيمُ 26

(34:26) Say: "Our Lord will bring us together and then He will rightly judge between us. He is the Great Judge, the All-Knowing."[45]

45. This is the last and the strongest motive for the consideration of which the listeners' attention has been invited. It means to impress: The thing is not only that there is the difference of the truth and the falsehood between you and us, but that both we and you have to be presented before our Lord, the Being who knows the truth and is also fully aware of the affairs of each of us. There before Him not only will this thing be decided who, between you and us, was in the right and who in the wrong, but this issue also will be settled how we made every possible effort to make the truth plain to you, and how you opposed and resisted us in your antagonism to the truth.

قُلْ أَرُونِيَ الَّذِينَ أَلْحَقْتُم بِهِ شُرَكَاءَ كَلَّا ۖ بَلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ 27

(34:27) Say: "Show me those whom you have attached to Him as His associates (in Divinity)."[46] Nay, Allah alone is Most Mighty, Most Wise.

46. That is, before you take the great risk due to your reliance on these deities, just tell me here who among them is so powerful as to arise in the court of Allah as your supporter and save you from His punishment.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا كَافَّةً لِّلنَّاسِ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ 28

(34:28) (O Prophet), We have not sent you forth but as a herald of good news and a warner for all mankind. But most people do not know.[47]

47. That is, you have not been sent as a Prophet for the people of this city, or this country, or this age alone, but for the people of the entire world and for all times, but your compatriots do not recognize your worth and they do not realize how great a person has been raised among them as a Prophet (peace be upon him) and how uniquely they have been blessed by Allah.

The fact that the Prophet (peace be upon him) has not been appointed a Prophet only for his own country or for his own age but for all mankind till Resurrection, has been stated at several places in the Quran. For instance:

"And this Quran has been revealed to me that I should thereby warn you and all those whom it may reach." (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 19).

"O Prophet, say: O mankind, I am a Messenger to all of you from Allah." (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 158).

"O Prophet, We have sent you to be a real blessing for all the people of the world." (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 107).

“Highly blessed is He Who has sent down Al-Furqan to His servant so that he may be a warner to all mankind.” (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayat 1).

The same thing has been stated by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in a number of Ahadith in different ways. For example:

“I have been sent to all mankind, the black as well as the white.” (Musnad Ahmad: Marwiyat Abu Musa Ashari).

“I have been sent to the mankind all together, whereas every Prophet before me was sent only to his own people.” (Musnad Ahmad: Marwiyat Abdullah bin Amr bin Aas).

“Before me every Prophet was specifically sent to his own people; but I have been sent for all mankind.” (Bukhari and Muslim: From traditions related by Jabir bin Abdullah).

“My appointment as a Prophet and Resurrection are like this. Saying this the Prophet (peace be upon him) raised his two fingers.” (Bukhari and Muslim). What he meant by this was: “Just as no third finger intervenes between these two fingers, so there is no prophethood between me the and Resurrection. After me there will be Resurrection only, and I shall be the Prophet till Resurrection.”

وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْوَعْدُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ 29

(34:29) They ask you: “When will this promise (of Resurrection) be fulfilled, if what you say is true?”[48]

48. That is, “When will the time come about which you say: Our Lord will gather you together, then He will judge between us rightly? We have been denying you persistently and opposing you openly for so long. Why is not then the judgment being passed against us?

قُلْ لَّكُمْ مِّيْعَادُ يَوْمٍ لَّا تَسْتَاْخِرُوْنَ عَنْهُ سَاعَةً وَّلَا تَسْتَقْدِمُوْنَ ع 30

(34:30) Say: “Your day is appointed, you can neither hold back its coming by an hour, nor hasten it by an hour.”[49]

49. In other words, the reply means: Allah’s judgments are not subject to your whims that He should be bound to do a thing at the time which you have fixed for it. He carries out His designs only according to His own discretion. You cannot understand how long is mankind to be allowed to function in this world in the scheme of Allah, how many individuals and how many nations are to be put to the test in different ways, and what will be the right time for the Day of Judgment and summoning mankind of all ages for rendering their accounts. All this will be accomplished only at the time which Allah has fixed for it in His scheme of things. Your demands can neither hasten it on by a second nor your supplications can withhold it by a second.

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ بِهٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ وَلَا بِالَّذِيْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ ؕ وَلَوْ تَرٰٓى اِذِ
الظّٰلِمُوْنَ مَوْقُوْفُوْنَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۖۚ يَرْجِعُ بَعْضُهُمْ اِلٰى بَعْضِ ِۨالْقَوْلَ ۚ يَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ
اسْتُضْعِفُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْا لَوْلَآ اَنْتُمْ لَكُنَّا مُؤْمِنِيْنَ 31

(34:31) The unbelievers say: “We shall never believe in this Qur'an, nor in any Scripture before it.”[50] If you could only see the wrong-doers arrayed before their Lord, each bandying charges against the other. Those who were suppressed will say to those who waxed arrogant: “Had it not been for you, we would have been believers.”[51]

50. The allusion is to the pagans of Arabia, who did not believe in any divine Book.

51. That is, the common people who are following their leaders, chiefs, saints and rulers blindly, and are not prepared to listen to any word of advice from a well-wisher against them. When the same people will sec the actual reality and will also remember how their religious leaders used to misrepresent things, and when they will realize what doom they are going to meet on account of following their leaders, they will turn on them, and say, “O wretched people, you led us astray: you are responsible for all our afflictions. Had you not misguided us, we would have listened to the Messengers of Allah and believed in what they said.

قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ اسْتُضْعِفُوْٓا اَنَحْنُ صَدَدْنٰكُمْ عَنِ الْهُدٰى بَعْدَ اِذْ جَآءَكُمْ
بَلْ كُنْتُمْ مُّجْرِمِيْنَ 32

(34:32) The arrogant ones will retort to those who were suppressed: “What! Did we bar you from the guidance after it came to you? Not at all; rather you yourselves were evil-doers.”[52]

52. That is, they will say: We had no power by which a few of us could have compelled hundreds of thousands of the people like you to follow us. If you had the will to believe, you could have deposed us from leadership and power and authority and government. In fact, you were our army, you were the source of our wealth and power. But for your offerings and gifts and taxes we should have been paupers. Had you not sworn allegiance to us, we could not have flourished as saints even for a day. Had you not appreciated and applauded us as leaders, we would have remained unknown. Had you not become our army and fought against the whole world for our sake, we could not have ruled over a single individual. Now why don’t you admit that you yourselves did not want to follow the way that the Messengers had presented before you. You were the slaves of your own lusts and desires, and the demands of your selves could not be fulfilled by the righteous way of

life presented by the Messengers but by what we presented before you. You were heedless of the lawful and the unlawful and craved for the luxuries of life, which we only could provide you. You were in search of such guides as could give you the license to commit any sin, any crime, and take on themselves the responsibility to have you forgiven by God, in exchange for gifts. You wanted to listen to such religious scholars only who could please you by proving every kind of shirk and every innovation in religion and every lust of your self to be the very truth. You needed such forgers who could invent a new religion by altering the religion of God after your desires. You wanted to follow such leaders who could help you become prosperous in this world, no matter how you fared in the Hereafter. You wished to have such rulers who were immoral and dishonest so that under their patronage you also could have the freedom to indulge in any sin, any immorality. Thus, you and we were equal partners in the bargain. Now you cannot delude anyone by saying that you were absolutely innocent and that we had spoiled and corrupted you against your will.

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اسْتُضْعِفُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْا بَلْ مَكْرُ الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ اِذْ تَاْمُرُوْنَنَآ اَنْ نَّكْفُرَ بِاللّٰهِ وَنَجْعَلَ لَهٗٓ اَنْدَادًا ؕ وَاَسَرُّوا النَّدَامَةَ لَمَّا رَاَوُا الْعَذَابَ ؕ وَجَعَلْنَا الْاَغْلٰلَ فِيْٓ اَعْنَاقِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ؕ هَلْ يُجْزَوْنَ اِلَّا مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ 33

(34:33) Those who were suppressed will say to those who waxed arrogant: "By no means; it was your scheming, night and day, when you would enjoin us to disbelieve in Allah and set up others as equals to Him."[53] When they are confronted with the chastisement, they will be remorseful in their hearts. We shall put fetters around the necks of the unbelievers. Can people be requited except for their deeds?

53. In other words, the common people's reply will be: "How can you hold us as equal partners in this responsibility? Do you also remember what sort of trickeries and deceptions and false propaganda you practiced and what efforts you used to make to tempt and entice the people day and night. It is not just that you presented the world before us and we were allured, but this is also a fact that you used to befool us by your frauds and deceptions and each one of you brought a new bait every day to tempt and lure the simple people."

The Quran has made mention of the dispute between the religious guides and their followers at different places in different ways. For details, see Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 38- 39; (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 21); (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 63); (Surah Al-Ahzab, Ayats 66-68); (Surah Al-Mumin, Ayats 47- 48); (Surah HaMim Sajdah, Ayat 29).

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا فِيْ قَرْيَةٍ مِّنْ نَّذِيْرٍ اِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوْهَآ ۙ اِنَّا بِمَآ اُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهٖ كٰفِرُوْنَ 34

(34:34) We never sent a warner to any town but its wealthy ones said: "We disbelieve in the Message you have brought."[54]

54. That the message of the Prophets was first of all opposed and resisted by the well-to-do people who possessed wealth and influence and authority. This has been stated at many places in the Quran. For instance, see (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 123); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 60, 66, 75, 88, 90); (Surah Hud, Ayat 27); (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayat 16); (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayats 24, 33 to 38, 46, 47); (Surah Az- Zukhruf, Ayat 23).

وَقَالُوْا نَحْنُ اَكْثَرُ اَمْوَالًا وَّاَوْلَادًا ۙ وَّمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِيْنَ 35

(34:35) They always said: "We have more wealth and children than you have, and we shall not be chastised."[55]

55. Their reasoning was: "We are greater favorites of Allah than you. That is why He has favored us with the blessings of which you are deprived, or have received them in lesser measure. Why should Allah have given us all these provisions and wealth and power, had He not been pleased with us? Now, how can we believe that Allah Who is showering us with all kinds of His blessings here will punish us in the Hereafter? He will punish only those who are deprived of His favors here,"

This misunderstanding of the world-worshippers has also been mentioned at several places in the Quran and refuted. For instance, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 126, 212); (Surah At-Taubah, Ayats 55, 69); (Surah Hud, Ayats 3, 27); (Surah Ar-Raad, Ayats 26); (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayats 34 to 43); (Surah Maryam, Ayats 73 to 77); (Surah TaHa, Ayat 131); (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayats 55 to 61); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayat 111); (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayats 76 to 83); (Surah Ar-Rum, Ayat 9); (Surah Al-Muddaththir, Ayats 11-26): (Surah Al-Fajr, Ayats 15 to 20).

قُلْ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَقْدِرُ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ع 36

(34:36) (O Prophet), say to them: "My Lord grants provision abundantly to whomsoever He pleases and straitens it for whomsoever He pleases. But most people do not know this.[56]

56. They do not understand the wisdom on which the system of the distribution of provisions is based in the world, and are thus involved in the misunderstanding that whoever is being given abundantly is a beloved of Allah and whoever is being given sparingly is under His wrath. The fact, however, is that if a person looks around with open eyes he will see that in most cases the people with filthy and repulsive character are prosperous, and many good and noble people, who are known and recognized as morally pure, are found living in poverty. Now, how can a sensible person say that Allah dislikes the people of pure character and favors the wicked wrongdoers?

وَمَآ أَمۡوَٰلُكُمۡ وَلَآ أَوۡلَٰدُكُم بِٱلَّتِي تُقَرِّبُكُمۡ عِندَنَا زُلۡفَىٰٓ إِلَّا مَنۡ ءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَٰلِحٗا
فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ لَهُمۡ جَزَآءُ ٱلضِّعۡفِ بِمَا عَمِلُواْ وَهُمۡ فِي ٱلۡغُرُفَٰتِ ءَامِنُونَ 37

(34:37) It is not your riches nor your children that make you near-stationed to Us, except for him who has faith and acts righteously;[57] it is they who will receive double the recompense for their deeds. They shall live in lofty mansions in perfect peace.[58]

57. This can have two meanings and both are correct:

(1) That which brings the people nearer to Allah is not wealth and children but faith and righteous deeds; and,

(2) wealth and children can become a means of nearness to Allah only for that believing, righteous person, who spends his wealth in the way of Allah and tries to make his children God-conscious and righteous by good education and training.

58. Here also is a subtle allusion that their blessing shall be imperishable, and their reward endless. For one cannot enjoy with full satisfaction of the heart a reward which is likely to perish or withdrawn suddenly at any time.

وَٱلَّذِينَ يَسۡعَوۡنَ فِيٓ ءَايَٰتِنَا مُعَٰجِزِينَ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ فِي ٱلۡعَذَابِ مُحۡضَرُونَ 38

(34:38) As for those who work against Our Signs so as to frustrate them, they shall be arraigned into the chastisement.

قُلۡ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبۡسُطُ ٱلرِّزۡقَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهِۦ وَيَقۡدِرُ لَهُۥۚ وَمَآ أَنفَقۡتُم مِّن شَيۡءٖ فَهُوَ
يُخۡلِفُهُۥۖ وَهُوَ خَيۡرُ ٱلرَّٰزِقِينَ 39

(34:39) Say, (O Prophet): "Verily, my Lord grants provision abundantly to whomsoever He pleases and straitens it for whomsoever He pleases.[59] Whatever you spend, He will replace it. He is the Best of all Providers."[60]

59. The repetition of this theme is meant to impress this: The abundance or restriction of the provisions is connected with Allah's will, not with His pleasure and approval. Under the will of Allah every good or evil person is receiving his provision. Both, those who believe in Him and those who do not believe, are getting their provisions. Neither is abundance of the provisions a proof that one is Allah's favorite servant nor is its restriction a sign that one is under His wrath. Under His will a wicked and dishonest person prospers, although wickedness and dishonesty are disliked by Allah. On the contrary, under the same divine will a truthful and honest man suffers losses and undergoes hardships although these qualities are liked by Allah. Hence, the person who regards the material gains and benefits

as the criterion for the good and evil is grossly mistaken. The real criterion is Allah's pleasure and approval which is attained through the moral qualities liked and approved by Him. With these qualities if a person gets the worldly blessings as well, it will certainly be Allah's bounty for which he should be grateful to Him. But if from the moral point of view a person is Allah's rebel and is disobedient to Him and in spite of that is being favored with worldly blessings, it would mean that he is preparing himself for a strict accountability and a most severe punishment.

60. Sustainer, Creator, Inventor, Donor and many other such attributes are in fact the attributes of Allah, but are metaphorically applied to men also. For example, about a person we may say, He provided a job for so-and-so, or he made or invented such and such a thing, or he made a gift to so-and-so. Accordingly, Allah has used the word Khair ar Raziqin (the Best of Providers) for Himself. It means to impress the fact that Allah is the best of providers among all those about whom you think that they are in any way connected with arranging the provisions.

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ يَقُولُ لِلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةِ أَهَٰٓؤُلَآءِ إِيَّاكُمْ كَانُوا۟ يَعْبُدُونَ 40

(34:40) And on the Day when He will muster them all and will ask the angels: "Are they the ones who worshipped you?"[61]

61. Since the earliest times the polytheists in every age have been looking upon the angels as gods and goddesses and carving their idols and worshipping them. One has been regarded as the god of rain, another of lightning and another of wind; one is the goddess of wealth, another of knowledge and another of life and death. About this Allah says that on the Day of Resurrection the angels will be asked: Were you being worshipped as deities by these people? This question is not meant merely to find out the truth, but to ask: Did you approve of their worship? Did you tell the people that you were their deities, so they should worship you? Or, did you wish that the people should do obeisance to you? This question will not only be asked of the angels but of all those beings who have been worshipped as gods in the world. In Surah Al-Furqan it has been said: "On that Day (Allah) will gather all these people together as well as their deities, whom they worship beside Allah. Then he will ask them: Did you mislead these servants of Mine, or did they themselves go astray? (Ayat 17).

قَالُوا۟ سُبْحَٰنَكَ أَنتَ وَلِيُّنَا مِن دُونِهِم ۖ بَلْ كَانُوا۟ يَعْبُدُونَ ٱلْجِنَّ ۖ أَكْثَرُهُم بِهِم مُّؤْمِنُونَ 41

(34:41) They will reply: "Glory to You! You are our Protector, not they.[62] Nay, they rather used to worship the jinn. Most of them believe in them."

62. That is, they will answer: You are Pure and Exalted far above that another should be made a partner in Godhead with you. We have no connection with these people. We are not responsible for them nor for what they did. We are Your servants only.

فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يَمْلِكُ بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ نَّفْعًا وَّلَا ضَرًّا ؕ وَنَقُوْلُ لِلَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا ذُوْقُوْا عَذَابَ

النَّارِ الَّتِيْ كُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُوْنَ 42

(34:42) Today none of you has the power to benefit or harm another;[63] and We shall say to the evil-doers: "Taste now the chastisement of the Fire which you used to deny, calling it a lie."

63. In this sentence, jinn implies the satans among the jinns. The answer means: Apparently these people worshipped us, by mentioning our names and by making our images according to their imaginations. But, in fact, they did not worship us but worshipped the satans, for the satans only had shown them the way that they should regard others than Allah as fulfillers of their needs, and should make offerings before them.

This verse clearly brings out the error of the view of those people who take the word jinn to mean the dwellers of the mountains and deserts and rural areas. Can a sensible person imagine, on the basis of this verse, that the people used to worship the dwellers of the mountains and the deserts and the villages and believed in them? This verse also throws light on another meaning of ibadat. It shows that ibadat is not mere worship and service, but it also implies carrying out somebody's orders and obeying him without question. Even if one curses another (as one curses Satan) but at the time follows his way, one would be performing his ibadat. For other examples, see (Surah An- Nisa, Ayats 117-119); (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 60); (Surah At- Taubah, Ayat 31); (Surah Maryam, Ayat 42); (Surah Al- Qasas, Ayat 63).

وَاِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتُنَا بَيِّنٰتٍ قَالُوْا مَا هٰذَآ اِلَّا رَجُلٌ يُّرِيْدُ اَنْ يَّصُدَّكُمْ عَمَّا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ

اٰبَآؤُكُمْ ۚ وَقَالُوْا مَا هٰذَآ اِلَّآ اِفْكٌ مُّفْتَرًى ؕ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ ۙ اِنْ

هٰذَآ اِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ 43

(34:43) When Our Clear Signs are rehearsed to them they say: "This is a person who wants to turn you away from the deities whom your ancestors worshipped." They say: "This is nothing but an invented falsehood." And when the Truth came to the unbelievers they declared: "This is nothing but plain sorcery,"

وَمَآ اٰتَيْنٰهُمْ مِّنْ كُتُبٍ يَّدْرُسُوْنَهَا وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَآ اِلَيْهِمْ قَبْلَكَ مِنْ نَّذِيْرٍ ؕ 44

(34:44) whereas We gave them no Books that they could study nor sent to them any warner before you.[64]

64. That is, neither a book from God has come to them before this nor a messenger, who might have taught them to worship and serve others than God. Therefore, they are denying the invitation to Tauhid given by the Quran and Muhammad (peace be upon him) due to sheer ignorance, and not on the basis of any knowledge. They have in fact no authority for this.

وَكَذَّبَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۙ وَمَا بَلَغُوْا مِعْشَارَ مَآ اٰتَيْنٰهُمْ فَكَذَّبُوْا رُسُلِيْ ۣ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيْرِ ع 45

(34:45) Those who went before them also denounced (Allah's Messengers) as liars. They have not attained even a tenth of what We had given them. But when they rejected My Messengers, calling them liars, how terrible was My chastisement![65]

65. That is, the people of Makkah have not attained even one-tenth of the power and grandeur and prosperity that was possessed by those people. But just see how they went to their doom ultimately and their power and wealth could not avail them anything, when they refused to believe in the realities presented before them by the Prophets, and founded their system of life on falsehood.

قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اَعِظُكُمْ بِوَاحِدَةٍ ۚ اَنْ تَقُوْمُوْا لِلّٰهِ مَثْنٰى وَفُرَادٰى ثُمَّ تَتَفَكَّرُوْا ۣ مَا بِصَاحِبِكُمْ مِّنْ جِنَّةٍ ۭ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا نَذِيْرٌ لَّكُمْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيْدٍ 46

(34:46) Say to them, (O Prophet): "I give you but one counsel: stand up (for heaven's sake), singly and in pairs, and then think: what is it in your companion(to wit, Muhammad) that could be deemed as madness?"[66] He is nothing but a warner, warning you before the coming of a grevious chastisement.[67]

66. That is, free yourselves of selfish interests and whims and prejudices and consider this sincerely for the sake of Allah: consider this singly as well as jointly in two and three and four in an objective manner and consider it well and deeply. What after all can be the reason that the person whom you call a madman today was, until yesterday, being looked upon as a very wise man among you? The incident that happened a little before his appointment to Prophethood is well known among you. When after the reconstruction of the Kabah the different clans of the Quraish were going to clash among themselves on the question as to who should place the Black Stone in the wall, you yourselves had unanimously agreed to accept Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the arbitrator, and he had settled the question amicably to the entire satisfaction of all concerned. Now, how is it that you have started calling the same person mad, whose wisdom and sagacity has been thus tested and experienced by your whole nation? What is it if not stubbornness? Do you really mean the same that you say with your tongues?

67. That is, do you call him mad only for this reason? Do you regard someone wise who finds you following the path of ruin and applauds you. Do you regard someone mad who warns you beforehand of the coming of a disaster and shows you the way to safety and well-being?

قُلْ مَا سَاَلْتُكُمْ مِّنْ اَجْرٍ فَهُوَ لَكُمْ ؕ اِنْ اَجْرِيَ اِلَّا عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيْدٌ 47

(34:47) Say to them: "Whatever recompense I might ask of you, it shall be yours.[68] My recompense is with Allah, and He is witness over everything."[69]

68. Another meaning of this can be: "I do not ask anything but your well-being: My only recompense is that you should be reformed." This thing has been expressed at another place thus; "O Prophet, say to them: I do not ask of you any recompense for this: I only ask of the one, who will, to adopt the way of his Lord." (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayat 57).

69. That is, "The accusers may say whatever they like but Allah knows everything. He is a witness that I am a selfless person. I am not perforating this mission for any selfish motive."

قُلْ اِنَّ رَبِّيْ يَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ ۚ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوْبِ 48

(34:48) Say to them: "My Lord hurls down the Truth (upon me).[70] He knows fully all that lies beyond the range of perception."

70. The words yaqdhifu bil-haqq give two meanings:

(1) He inspires me with the knowledge of the truth by revelation. and,

(2) He is making the truth to prevail. He is crushing falsehood by means of the truth.

قُلْ جَآءَ الْحَقُّ وَمَا يُبْدِئُ الْبَاطِلُ وَمَا يُعِيْدُ 49

(34:49) Say: "The Truth has come and falsehood can neither originate nor recreate anything."

قُلْ اِنْ ضَلَلْتُ فَاِنَّمَآ اَضِلُّ عَلٰى نَفْسِيْ ۚ وَاِنِ اهْتَدَيْتُ فَبِمَا يُوْحِيْٓ اِلَيَّ رَبِّيْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ سَمِيْعٌ قَرِيْبٌ 50

(34:50) Say: "If I go astray then the hurt of straying will come only upon me. But if I am rightly-guided, that is only because of the revelation that my Lord makes to me. He is All-Hearing, Ever Nigh."[71]

71. From this verse some people of the modern age have argued thus: According to it the Prophet (peace be upon him) also could go astray: rather used to go astray. That is why Allah has made the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself say: "If I have gone astray, I am myself responsible for this. And I am on right guidance only when my Lord sends down revelation (i.e. verses of the Quran) to me." By this wrong interpretation these unjust people in fact want to prove that the Prophet's (peace be upon him) life was, God forbid, a combination of guidance and error, and Allah had made him confess this before the disbelievers lest one should adopt his obedience completely, taking him to be wholly on right guidance. The fact however is that whoever considers the theme in its correct context will know that here the words, if I have gone astray, are not meant to give the meaning that the Prophet (peace be upon him) actually used to go astray, but it means: "If I have gone astray, as you accuse that I have, and my claim to Prophethood and my this invitation to Tauhid are the result of the same deviation, as you seem to imagine, then the burden of my going astray, will be on me alone; you will not be held responsible for it. But if I am on right guidance, as in fact I am, it is because I receive revelation from my Lord, by virtue of which I have obtained the knowledge of the guidance. My Lord is near at hand and is hearing everything. He knows whether I have gone astray or I am on right guidance from Him."

وَلَوْ تَرٰٓى اِذْ فَزِعُوْا فَلَا فَوْتَ وَاُخِذُوْا مِنْ مَّكَانٍ قَرِيْبٍ ۙ 51

(34:51) If you could only see when the unbelievers will go about in a state of terror. They will have no escape and will be seized from a place near at hand.[72]

72. That is, "On the Day of Resurrection, every culprit will be seized in a way as though he lay in hiding close by. As he will try to flee, he will be seized immediately."

وَّقَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ ۚ وَاَنّٰى لَهُمُ التَّنَاوُشُ مِنْ مَّكَانٍۢ بَعِيْدٍ ۖ 52

(34:52) They will then say: "We believe in it";[73] but whence can they attain it from so far-off a place?[74]

73. "We do believe (now) in it": "We believe in the message presented by the Messenger in the world."

74. That is, "They should have believed when they lived in the world; they have come a long way away from it. After having arrived in the next world how can they get a chance to repent and believe?"

وَّقَدْ كَفَرُوْا بِهٖ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ وَيَقْذِفُوْنَ بِالْغَيْبِ مِنْ مَّكَانٍۢ بَعِيْدٍ ۚ 53

(34:53) They disbelieved in it before and indulged in conjectures from far away.[75]

75. That is, they used to charge the Messenger (peace be upon him) and the believers with false accusations and used to taunt and mock his message. Sometimes they said he was a sorcerer or a madman; sometimes they ridiculed Tauhid and the concept of the Hereafter; sometimes they invented the story that someone has taught him everything; and sometimes they said that the believers had started following him only on account of folly and ignorance.

وَحِيْلَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ مَا يَشْتَهُوْنَ كَمَا فُعِلَ بِاَشْيَاعِهِمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا فِيْ شَكٍّ مُّرِيْبٍ ۚ 54

(34:54) A barrier will be placed between them and what they desire, as was done with the likes of them before. Surely they were in a disquieting doubt.[76]

76. As a matter of fact, no one adopts shirk and atheism and denial of the Hereafter by conviction, nor can he, for conviction comes from knowledge. And no one has the knowledge that there is no God, or that many others have a share in divine authority, or that there should be no Hereafter. Thus, whoever has adopted these beliefs in the world, has raised a structure on mere conjecture, which has no basis except doubt and suspicion, and this suspicion has led him to sheer error. Consequently, they doubted God's existence, they doubted the truth of Tauhid, they doubted the coming of the Hereafter; so much so that they made this doubt their faith and did not listen to the Prophets and expended and wasted their entire lifetime indulging in a wrong creed and wrong way of life.

35. Surah Fatir (The Originator), also known as Surah Al Malaika (The Angels)

Name

The word *Fatir* of the first very verse is the title given to this Surah, which simply means that it is a Surah in which the word *Fatir* has occurred. The other name is *Al Malaika*, which also occurs in the first verse.

Period of Revelation

The internal evidence of the style shows that the period of the revelation of this Sarah is probably the middle Makkan period, and especially that part of it, when antagonism had grown quite strong and every sort of mischief was being adopted to frustrate the mission of the Holy Prophet.

Subject Matter and Theme

The discourse is meant to warn and reprove the people of Makkah and their chiefs for their antagonistic attitude that they had then adopted towards the Holy Prophet's message of *Tauhid*, like a well wisher, and also to admonish them like a teacher, as if to say: "O foolish people, the way to which this Prophet is calling you is to your own advantage. Your anger, your tricks and machinations against it and your conspiracies and designs to frustrate it are not directed against him but against your own selves. If you do not listen to him, you will be harming your own selves, not him. Just consider and ponder over what he says : there is nothing wrong in it. He repudiates shirk. If you look around carefully, you will yourself realize that there is no basis for shirk in the world. He presents the doctrine of *Tauhid*. If you use your common sense, you will come to the conclusion that there is no being, beside Allah, Creator of the Universe, which might possess divine attributes and powers and authority. He tells you that you have not been created to be irresponsible in this world, but you have to render an account of your deeds before your God, and that there is life after the life of this world when everyone will meet the consequences of what he has done here. If you thing a little you will see that your doubts and your astonishment about it are absolutely baseless. Don't you see the phenomenon of the reproduction of creation day and night. How can then your own recreation be impossible for that God Who created you from an insignificant sperm drop? Doesn't your own intellect testify that the good and the evil cannot be alike? Then think and judge for yourselves as to what is reasonable, should the good and the evil meet with the same fate and end up in the dust, or should the good be requited with good and the evil with evil? Now, if you do not admit and acknowledge these rational and reasonable things and do not abandon your false gods, and wish to continue living only as irresponsible people in the world, the Prophet will not lose anything. It is you yourselves only who will suffer the consequences. The Prophet's only responsibility was to make the truth plain to you, which be has done."

In this connection, the Holy Prophet has been consoled again and again, as if to say :"When you are doing full justice to the preaching of your mission, you do not incur any responsibility for those who persist in their error and do not accept and follow the right way." Furthermore, he has also been consoled to the effect "You should neither grieve on account of those who do not want to believe, nor consume yourself with the thought of how

to bring them to the rights path. Instead of this, you should pay your full attention to those who are inclined to listen to you."

The believers also, in this connection, have been given the good news so that they may feel strengthened and encouraged and remain steadfast on the path of the truth with full faith in the promises made by Allah.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اَلۡحَمۡدُ لِلّٰہِ فَاطِرِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ جَاعِلِ الۡمَلٰٓئِکَۃِ رُسُلًا اُولِیۡۤ اَجۡنِحَۃٍ مَّثۡنٰی وَثُلٰثَ وَرُبٰعَ ؕ یَزِیۡدُ فِی الۡخَلۡقِ مَا یَشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ عَلٰی کُلِّ شَیۡءٍ قَدِیۡرٌ ۱

(35:1) All praise be to Allah, the Fashioner of the heavens and earth, Who appointed angels[1] as His message bearers, having two, three, four wings.[2] He adds to His creation whatever He pleases.[3] Verily Allah has power over everything.

1. This can have two meanings:

(1) That these angels perform the service of communicating messages between Allah and His Prophets.

(2) That it is the duty of these angels to convey and enforce the commands of Allah Almighty throughout the universe.

The object is to impress this truth: The position of the angels whom the polytheists have made their gods and goddesses is no more than of obedient servants of Allah, the One. Just as the servants of a king run about for the implementation of his orders, so do these angels fly about in the service of the real Sovereign of the Universe. These servants have no authority of their own; All powers rest with Allah, Who is the real Sovereign.

2. We have no means of knowing what is the nature of the wings of these angels. But when Allah has used this word, which in human language is used for the wings of birds, instead of any other words, to express and depict the truth, one can certainly conclude that this very word of our language is nearest to the actual meaning. The mention of two and three and four pairs of the wings shows that different angels have been granted different degrees of powers by Allah. They have been equipped with different powers of speed and efficiency as demanded by the nature of service for which they arc employed.

3. These words show that the number of the wings of the angels is restricted to four, but Allah has provided some angels with more wings than four. According to a Hadith related by Abdullah bin Masud, the Prophet (peace be upon him) once saw the Angel Gabriel with six hundred wings. (Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi). Aishah relates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had seen Gabriel twice in his real form: he had six hundred wings and had covered the entire horizon (Tirmidhi).

مَا يَفْتَحِ اللّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ رَّحْمَةٍ فَلَا مُمْسِكَ لَهَا ۚ وَمَا يُمْسِكْ ۙ فَلَا مُرْسِلَ لَهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ ؕ وَهُوَ
الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ 2

(35:2) Whatever Mercy Allah accords to people, none can withhold; and whatever He withholds, no other will be able to release after Him.[4] He is Most Mighty, Most Wise.[5]

4. This is also meant to remove the misunderstanding of the polytheists, who believed that from among the servants of Allah, someone gave them the provision, someone the children and someone health to their patients. All these superstitions of shirk are baseless, and the pure truth is just that whatever of mercy reaches the people, reaches to them only through Allah Almighty's bounty and grace. No one else has the power either to bestow it or to withhold it. This theme has been expressed at many places in the Quran and the Ahadith in different ways so that man may avoid the humiliation of begging at every door and at every shrine and may realize that making or marring of his destiny is in the power of One Allah alone and of none else.

5. "He is the All-Mighty": He is dominant and the owner of Sovereignty: none can stop His judgments from being enforced. Also "He is All-Wise": every act of His is based on wisdom. When He gives somebody something He gives because it is demanded by wisdom, and when He withholds something from somebody, He withholds it because it would be against wisdom to give it.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ ؕ هَلْ مِنْ خَالِقٍ غَيْرُ اللّٰهِ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِّنَ
السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ فَاَنّٰى تُؤْفَكُوْنَ 3

(35:3) O people, remember Allah's favour upon you.[6] Is there any creator, apart from Allah, who provides you your sustenance out of the heavens and earth? There is no god but He. Whither are you, then, being misdirected?[7]

6. "Remember Allah's favor upon you": Do not be ungrateful: do not forget that whatever you have, has been given by Allah. In other words, this sentence is meant to warn that whoever worships other than Allah, or regards a blessing as a favor done by other than Allah, or thanks other than Allah for a favor received, or prays to other than Allah for the grant of a blessing, is ungrateful.

7. There is a subtle gap between the first and the second sentence, which is being filled by the context itself. To understand this, one may visualize the scene like this: The polytheists are being addressed. The speaker asks the audience: "Is there another creator beside Allah, who might have created you, and might be arranging provisions for you from the earth and heavens?" After this question the speaker waits for the answer. But there is no reply from anywhere. No one replies that there is another one beside Allah, who is their creator and sustainer. This by itself shows that the audience also believe that there is none beside Allah,

who could be their creator and sustainer. Then the speaker says: "If so, then He alone can also be the Deity and no one else. How have you been so deceived? Why have you taken these others as your deities, when Allah alone is your Creator and Sustainer?"

وَاِنۡ يُّكَذِّبُوۡكَ فَقَدۡ كُذِّبَتۡ رُسُلٌ مِّنۡ قَبۡلِكَ ؕ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ تُرۡجَعُ الۡاُمُوۡرُ 4

(35:4) (O Prophet), (there is nothing novel in it) if they cry lies to you;[8] Messengers before you were also cried lies to. To Allah shall all matters be sent back.[9]

8. "If they deny": If they do not believe that there is no one worthy of worship but Allah, and accuse you of having made a false claim to Prophethood.

9. That is, it is not for the people to give the verdict that whomsoever they call a liar should in fact become a liar. The judgment rests with Allah. He shall in the end decide who was the liar, and shall bring the real liars to their evil end.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنَّ وَعۡدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الۡحَيٰوةُ الدُّنۡيَا ۪ وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُمۡ بِاللّٰهِ الۡغَرُوۡرُ 5

(35:5) O people, assuredly Allah's promise is true.[10] So let the life of the world not delude you,[11] and let not the Deluder delude you concerning Allah.[12]

10. "The promise" implies the promise of the Hereafter to which allusion was made in the preceding sentence, saying: "And to Allah return all matters."

11. "Let not deceive you": Deceive you that the world is an end in itself: that there is no Hereafter when one will have to render an account of one's deeds: or that even if there is the Hereafter, the one who is enjoying life here will enjoy life there, too.

12. "Great deceiver": Satan, as is evident from the next sentence. And "deceive you concerning Allah" means:

(1) That he should make some people believe that Allah does not exist at all.

(2) Involve others in the misunderstanding that Allah after having once created the world, has retired and has now practically nothing to do with the universe any more.

(3) Delude others into believing that Allah no doubt is running the universe, but He has taken no responsibility of providing guidance to man: therefore, revelation and prophethood are a mere deception.

(4) Give still others the false hope that since Allah is All- Forgiving and All-Merciful. He will forgive one whatever sins one might have committed, and that He has some beloved ones too: if one remains attached to them, success and salvation are assured.

إِنَّ الشَّيْطٰنَ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ فَاتَّخِذُوْهُ عَدُوًّا ؕ إِنَّمَا يَدْعُوْا حِزْبَهٗ لِيَكُوْنُوْا مِنْ أَصْحٰبِ السَّعِيْرِ ؕ 6

(35:6) Surely Satan is an enemy to you. Therefore, do take him as an enemy. He calls his followers to his way so that they may be among the inmates of the Fire.

اَلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّأَجْرٌ كَبِيْرٌ ؕ 7

(35:7) A severe chastisement lies in store for those that disbelieve,[13] but there is pardon and a great reward for those that believe and work righteous deeds.[14]

13. "Those who disbelieve": those who will refuse to believe in this invitation of Allah's Book and His Messenger.

14. That is, Allah will overlook their errors and will reward them for their good deeds not merely with what they will just deserve but much more richly and generously.

أَفَمَنْ زُيِّنَ لَهٗ سُوْٓءُ عَمَلِهٖ فَرَاٰهُ حَسَنًا ؕ فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَهْدِيْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۖ صلے فَلَا تَذْهَبْ نَفْسُكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسَرٰتٍ ؕ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِمَا يَصْنَعُوْنَ 8

(35:8) (How[15] awful is the straying of the person) for whom his evil deed has been embellished so that it looks fair to him?[16] The fact is that Allah causes whomsoever He will to fall into error and shows the Right Way to whomsoever He will. So, (O Prophet), let not your life go to waste sorrowing over them.[17] Allah is well aware of all that they do.[18]

15. (Verses 3-7) were addressed to the common people. In this paragraph mention has been made of the standard bearers of error and deviation, who were exerting their utmost to frustrate and defeat the mission of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

16. That is, one kind of perverted person is he who commits evil but knows and understands that he is committing evil. Such a person can be reformed by counsel and advice, and sometimes his own conscience also pricks and brings him to the right path, for his habits only are perverted, not his mind. But there is another kind of a person whose mentality has been perverted, who has lost the discrimination between good and evil, for whom the life of sin has become alluring and lustrous, who abhors good and takes evil for civilization and culture, who regards goodness and piety as things of the past, and sinfulness and wickedness as progressiveness, and for whom guidance becomes error and error becomes

guidance. Such a person is not amenable to any advice and any admonition. He neither takes warning from his own follies nor listens to a well wisher. It is useless to waste ones time and energy for the reformation of such a person. Instead, the inviter to the truth should turn his attention towards those whose consciences may still be alive and who may still be inclined to listen to the truth.

17. The insertion of the words "Then indeed, Allah sends astray whom He wills, and guides whom He wills" between the preceding and this sentence, clearly gives the meaning that Allah deprives, of the grace of guidance, those who become so perverted mentally, and leaves them to wander aimlessly in the ways in which they themselves wish to remain lost. After making the Prophet (peace be upon him) realize this fact Allah exhorts him to the effect: It is not within your power to bring such people to the right path; therefore, have patience in their regard. Just as Allah is indifferent about them, so should you also avoid being unduly anxious about their reformation.

Here, one should bear in mind two things very clearly. First, the people being mentioned here were not the common people, but the chiefs of Makkah, who were employing every falsehood, every fraud and every trick to defeat the mission of the Prophet (peace be upon him). These people were, in fact, not involved in any misunderstanding about the Prophet (peace be upon him). They knew well what he was calling them to and what were the evils and moral weaknesses which they themselves were striving to maintain. After knowing and understanding all this, they had firmly resolved not to let him succeed in his object. And for this purpose they did not feel any hesitation in using any mean or petty device. Now, evidently the people who deliberately and after annual consultation invent a new falsehood every next day and spread it against a person, can deceive the whole world but as for themselves they know that they are the liars and that the person whom they have accused is free of every blame. Then, if the person against whom the false propaganda is being made also does not react and respond in a way opposed to truth and righteousness, the unjust people also cannot help realizing that their opponent is a truthful and honest man. If in spite of this the people do not feel ashamed of their misconduct and continue to oppose and resist the truth with falsehood, their conduct itself testifies that they are under Allah's curse and they can no longer discriminate between good and evil.

Secondly, if Allah had only meant to make Prophet (peace be upon him) understand the supreme truth, He could have secretly made him aware of this. There was no need to proclaim it openly in the revelation. To mention it in the Quran and to proclaim it to the world was in fact meant to warn the common people that the leaders and the religious guides whom they were following blindly were the people of perverted mentality, whose mean conduct was itself an evidence that they were under the curse of Allah.

18. This sentence in itself contains the threat that a time is coming when Allah will punish them for their misdeeds. When a ruler says that he is fully aware of the misdeeds of a culprit, it does not only mean that the ruler has the knowledge of his misconduct, but it necessarily contains the warning that he will certainly punish him for this.

وَاللّٰهُ الَّذِیۡۤ اَرۡسَلَ الرِّیٰحَ فَتُثِیۡرُ سَحَابًا فَسُقۡنٰهُ اِلٰی بَلَدٍ مَّیِّتٍ فَاَحۡیَیۡنَا بِهِ الۡاَرۡضَ بَعۡدَ
مَوۡتِهَا ؕ کَذٰلِکَ النُّشُوۡرُ 9

(35:9) It is Allah Who sends forth winds which then set the clouds in motion, which We drive to some dead land giving a fresh life to earth after it had become dead. Such will be the resurrection of the dead.[19]

19. That is, these ignorant people think that the Hereafter is impossible. That is why they are living under the delusion that they may do whatever they like in the world, the time will never come when they will have to appear before their God and render an account of their deeds. But this is no more than a delusion. On the Day of Resurrection, the dead men of all ages will suddenly rise back to life at one call of Allah just as the dead earth comes back to life at one shower of the rain and the roots, lying dead for ages, become green and start sprouting up from the layers of the earth.

مَنۡ کَانَ یُرِیۡدُ الۡعِزَّةَ فَلِلّٰهِ الۡعِزَّةُ جَمِیۡعًا ؕ اِلَیۡهِ یَصۡعَدُ الۡکَلِمُ الطَّیِّبُ وَالۡعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ
یَرۡفَعُهٗ ؕ وَالَّذِیۡنَ یَمۡکُرُوۡنَ السَّیِّاٰتِ لَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ شَدِیۡدٌ ؕ وَمَکۡرُ اُولٰٓئِکَ هُوَ یَبُوۡرُ 10

(35:10) He who seeks glory, let him know that all glory belongs to Allah alone. [20] To Him do good words go up, and righteous action uplifts them.[21] But those who contrive evil deeds,[22] a severe punishment lies in store for them, and their contriving will come to naught.

20. It should be noted that whatever the chiefs of the Quraish were doing against the Prophet (peace be upon him), they were doing it for the sake of their honor and dignity. They thought that if the Prophet (peace be upon him) succeeded in his mission, their greatness and glory would fade away, their influence would die out and their honor among the Arabs would be ruined. At this it is being said: The honor that you have attained for yourselves by your disbelief and rebellion against Allah is a false honor, which is destined to be ruined. The real and enduring honor, which can never suffer debasement, can be attained only through service of Allah. If you turn sincerely and faithfully to Him, you will attain it. And if you turn away from Him, you are bound to live an abject and wretched life.

21. This is the real means of attaining the honor. In the sight of Allah, the false, vicious and mischievous can never rise and flourish. In His sight only such a word can rise and flourish which is honest and pure and is based on the truth, and in which a righteous creed and a correct point of view may have been expressed and presented. Then the thing which makes the pure word to rise and prosper is the action which conforms to it. Wherever the word is pure but the action is opposed to it, the purity of the word suffers a blemish. The mere extravagant rise of the tongue does not exalt a word: the power of the righteous action is needed to exalt and raise it high. Here, one should also note that the Quran presents the

righteous word and the righteous action as interdependent. No action can be righteous merely on the basis of its external and apparent form unless it has a righteous creed behind it. And no righteous creed can be reliable unless it is supported and confirmed by a person's action. For instance, if a person says that he regards Allah, the One, alone as his Deity, but worships others than Allah in practical life, his action belies his word. If a person says that he regards the wine as unlawful but drinks it, his mere word can neither be acceptable to the people nor deserve approval in the sight of Allah.

22. "Those who plot evil": Those who propagate false and evil words by means of cunning tricks, deceit and deceptive reasoning, and do not feel any hesitation in employing any device, however mean and depraved, to frustrate and defeat the word of the truth.

وَاللّٰهُ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَكُمْ اَزْوَاجًا ؕ وَمَا تَحْمِلُ مِنْ اُنْثٰى وَلَا
تَضَعُ اِلَّا بِعِلْمِهٖ ؕ وَمَا يُعَمَّرُ مِنْ مُّعَمَّرٍ وَّلَا يُنْقَصُ مِنْ عُمُرِهٖۤ اِلَّا فِيْ كِتٰبٍ ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ
يَسِيْرٌ 11

(35:11) Allah[23] created you from dust, then from a drop of sperm,[24] then He made you into pairs. No female conceives, nor delivers (a child) except with His knowledge. None is given a long life nor is any diminished in his life but it is written in a Book.[25] Surely that is quite easy for Allah.[26]

23. From here again the discourse is directed to the common people.

24. That is, man in the first instance was created from the dust directly. Then his race was perpetuated through the sperm-drop.

25. That is, it is pre-ordained for everyone who is born in this world how long he will live. If a person lives a long life, he does so by Allah's decree, and if another one lives a short life, he too lives so by Allah's decree. Some ignorant people give the argument that in the past the death rate of the newly born children used to be high, and now it has been checked by the advancement of the medical science. And the people used to live short lives in the past, now due to better medical facilities the life span has increased. But this argument could be presented in refutation of the Quranic argument only when it could be ascertained that Allah, for instance, had preordained a two year life for a certain person, and the modern medical facilities have enhanced it by a day. If a person has no such knowledge, he cannot refute this Quranic statement on any rational grounds. Only on the basis of the statistics that the death rate among children has fallen, or that the people now are living longer lives, it cannot be argued that man has now become able to change the decrees of Allah. Rationally it is not impossible that Allah might have fixed different life spans for the people born in different periods, and this might also be Allah Almighty's decree that man in such and such an age would be granted curative power to treat such and such diseases, and in such and such a period man would be given greater means for longevity.

26. That is, it is not at all difficult for Allah to give commands and pass judgments about each individual of His countless creations when He possesses detailed and perfect knowledge about them.

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْبَحْرٰنِ ۖ هٰذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ سَآئِغٌ شَرَابُهٗ وَهٰذَا مِلْحٌ اُجَاجٌ ؕ وَمِنْ كُلٍّ
تَاْكُلُوْنَ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَّتَسْتَخْرِجُوْنَ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُوْنَهَا ۚ وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ فِيْهِ مَوَاخِرَ لِتَبْتَغُوْا
مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ 12

(35:12) The two masses of water are not alike.[27] The one is sweet, sates thirst, and is pleasant to drink from, while the other is salt, bitter on the tongue. Yet from both you eat fresh meat,[28] and extract from it ornaments that you wear;[29]and you see ships cruising through it that you may seek of His Bounty and be thankful to Him.

27. That is, the body of water in the oceans, and the body of water in the rivers and springs and lakes.

28. "Fresh meat": Meat of water animals.

29. That is pearls and corals and, in some rivers, diamonds and gold.

يُوْلِجُ الَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُوْلِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي الَّيْلِ ۙ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ۖ كُلٌّ يَّجْرِيْ لِاَجَلٍ
مُّسَمًّى ؕ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مَا يَمْلِكُوْنَ مِنْ
قِطْمِيْرٍ ؕ 13

(35:13) He causes the night to phase into the day and the day into the night,[30] and He has subjected the sun and the moon, each running its course to an appointed term.[31] That is Allah, your Lord; to Him belongs the Kingdom; but those whom you call upon, apart from Allah, possess not so much as the skin of a date-stone.[32]

30. That is, the light of the day starts diminishing and the darkness of the night increasing gradually so as to cover up everything completely. Likewise, towards the end of the night, in the beginning, a streak of the light appears on the horizon, and then the bright day dawns.

31. "Subjected ": means subjected to a law.

32. The word qitmir in the original means the thin skin that covers the stone of the date fruit; but what is meant to be said is that the gods of the mushriks do not own anything whatever. That is why we have translated it "a blade of grass", which is an insignificant thing.

إِنْ تَدْعُوهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوا دُعَآءَكُمْ ۚ وَلَوْ سَمِعُوا مَا اسْتَجَابُوا لَكُمْ ۖ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ
يَكْفُرُونَ بِشِرْكِكُمْ ۚ وَلَا يُنَبِّئُكَ مِثْلُ خَبِيرٍ ۝14

(35:14) If you call upon them, they cannot hear your prayer. And if they hear it, they cannot answer it.[33] On the Day of Resurrection they will disown you for associating others with Allah in His Divinity.[34] No one can inform you of the truth save the All-Aware.[35]

33. This does not mean that they cannot tell aloud, in answer to your prayer whether your prayer has been accepted or not, but it means that they cannot take any action on your supplications. If a person sends his application to someone who is not a ruler, his application miscarries. For, the person to whom it has been sent, who has no authority whatever: he can neither reject it nor accept it. However, if the same application is sent to the one who is really a ruler, one or the other action will certainly be taken on it.

34. That is, they will plainly say: We had never told them that we are Allah's associates and that they should worship us. On the contrary, we were not at all aware that they regarded us as Allah's associates and were invoking us for help. None of their prayers has reached us, nor has any of their gifts and offerings.

35. "All-Knower": Allah Almighty Himself. It means this: The other person can at the most refine shirk and prove the powerlessness of the gods of the polytheists by rational arguments only, but We are directly aware of the absolute truth. We are telling you, on the basis of knowledge, that all those whom the people believe to be possessing some powers in Our Godhead are absolutely powerless. They have no authority whatsoever by which they might do somebody good or harm. And We know this directly that on the Day of Resurrection, these gods of the mushriks will themselves refute their shirk.

يٰٓأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَآءُ إِلَى اللّٰهِ ۖ وَاللّٰهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ ۝15

(35:15) O people, it is you who stand in need of Allah;[36] as for Allah, He is Self-Sufficient, Immensely Praiseworthy.[37]

36. That is, you should not remain under the delusion that Allah stands in need of your help. If you do not accept Him as God, His Godhead will fail, and if you do not serve and worship Him, He will incur some loss. Nay, but the fact is that you stand in need of Him. You cannot remain alive for a moment if He does not keep you alive, and does not provide you with the means by which you remain alive in the world and function. Therefore, when you are told to adopt His service and obedience, it is not because Allah stands in need of it, but because upon it depends your own success here as well as in the Hereafter. If you do not do so, you will be harming your own selves only, and not Allah in any way.

37. The word Ghani implies that He is the Owner of everything: He is Self-sufficient and Independent of all. He does not stand in need of anyone's help. The word Hamid implies

that He is Self-Praiseworthy: someone may praise Him, or may not, but He alone is worthy of hamd (praise and gratitude). These two attributes have been used together because one would be ghani even if one did not do any good to anyone by one's wealth. In such a case one would be ghani but not hamid One will be hamid only in case one does not draw any benefit for oneself but benefits others in every way from the treasures of his wealth and resources. Since Allah is perfect in these two attributes, it has been said: "He is not just Ghani (self-sufficient) but such Ghani as is worthy of every kind of praise and gratitude, for He is fulfilling your needs as well as the needs of all other creatures.

اِنۡ يَّشَاۡ يُذۡهِبۡكُمۡ وَيَاۡتِ بِخَلۡقٍ جَدِيۡدٍ ۙ 16

(35:16) If He wishes, He can remove you and put in your place a new creation.

وَمَا ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ بِعَزِيۡزٍ 17

(35:17) That surely is not difficult for Allah.[38]

38. That is, you are not enjoying life on Allah's earth solely by dint of your own power and might. He has the power to remove you from here in no time and raise another people to take your place. Therefore, you should understand your true worth, and should desist from adopting the conduct which has been causing the downfall of the nations. When Allah wills to send someone to his doom, there is no one in the universe, who can stop Him and withhold His decree from being enforced.

وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزۡرَ اُخۡرٰى ؕ وَاِنۡ تَدۡعُ مُثۡقَلَةٌ اِلٰى حِمۡلِهَا لَا يُحۡمَلۡ مِنۡهُ شَىۡءٌ وَّلَوۡ كَانَ ذَا قُرۡبٰى ؕ اِنَّمَا تُنۡذِرُ الَّذِيۡنَ يَخۡشَوۡنَ رَبَّهُمۡ بِالۡغَيۡبِ وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ ؕ وَمَنۡ تَزَكّٰى فَاِنَّمَا يَتَزَكّٰى لِنَفۡسِهٖ ؕ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ الۡمَصِيۡرُ 18

(35:18) No one can bear another's burden.[39] If a heavily laden one should call another to carry his load, none of it shall be carried by the other, even though he be a near of kin.[40] (O Prophet), you can warn only those who fear their Lord without seeing Him and establish Prayer.[41] Whoever purifies himself does so to his own good. To Allah is the final return.

39. "Burden": the burden of the responsibilities of actions. It means: In the sight of Allah every one is responsible for his own actions and for no one else's. There is no possibility that Allah will place the burden of one man's responsibility upon the other, nor is there the possibility that a person will take the burden of another's responsibility upon himself and get himself seized for the crime committed by the other. This thing has been said here because the polytheist kinsmen and relatives of the people who were embracing Islam in

Makkah, used to urge them, saying, Give up Islam and return to your ancestral faith. We take the responsibility of any punishment etc. on ourselves.

40. In the preceding sentence, Allah's law of justice has been enunciated, according to which He will not seize any person for the sin committed by another, but will hold everyone responsible for his own sin. In this sentence the Muslims have been told: Those who urge you to give up faith and commit evil on the assurance that they will take on themselves the burden of your sins on the Day of Resurrection, are in fact giving you a false hope. When Resurrection comes and the people see what fate they are going to meet in consequence of their misdeed, everyone will be concerned only about himself. Brother will turn away from brother and father from son, and no one will be prepared to take even an atom's weight of another's burden on himself.

41. In other words, your warnings cannot have any effect on obstinate and stubborn people. Your admonitions can bring only such people to the right path who have fear of God in their hearts and who are inclined to bow before their real Master.

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ ۙ 19

(35:19) The blind and the seeing are not alike,

وَلَا الظُّلُمَاتُ وَلَا النُّورُ ۙ 20

(35:20) nor darkness and light;

وَلَا الظِّلُّ وَلَا الْحَرُورُ ۚ 21

(35:21) nor cool shade and torrid heat;

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَحْيَاءُ وَلَا الْأَمْوَاتُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُسْمِعُ مَن يَشَاءُ ۖ وَمَا أَنتَ بِمُسْمِعٍ مَّن فِي الْقُبُورِ 22

(35:22) nor are the living and the dead alike.[42] Allah makes to hear whomsoever He wishes, but you, (O Prophet), cannot cause to hear those who are in their graves.[43]

42. In these comparisons the present and the future of a believer and a disbeliever have been contrasted. There is a person who has closed his eyes to the realities and does not care to see as to what truth the whole system of the universe and his own existence itself are pointing. There is the other person, whose eyes are open and who clearly sees that everything outside and inside himself bears evidence to the Unity of God and to man's answerability before him. There is a person, who is wandering blindly in the superstitions of ignorance and the darkness of presumptions and speculations, and is not inclined to benefit by the light of the

candle lit by the Prophet. There is the other person, whose eyes are open and who, as soon as the light spread by the Prophet appears before him, comes to realize that all the ways being followed by the polytheists and the disbelievers and the atheists lead to destruction, and the way to success is only that which has been shown by the Messenger of God. Now how can it be possible that the attitude of the two persons be the same in the world and the two may follow one and the same path together? And how can this also be possible, either that the two should meet the same end and should both end up in the dust after death? Neither should one be punished for his wrongdoings, nor the other be rewarded for his righteous conduct. The sentence, "the cool shade and the heat of the sun are not alike" points to the same fate. The one will be provided shelter under the shade of Allah's mercy and the other will burn in the fire of Hell. Thus, the notions that the two will ultimately meet the same end, is utterly false. In the end, the believer has been likened to the living and the stubborn disbeliever to the dead. That is, the believer is he whose feeling, understanding and perception are alive and whose conscience is making him aware of the distinction between the good and the evil every moment. Contrary to this, the person who has been, wholly lost in the prejudices of disbelief is even worse than the blind person who is wandering about in darkness. Nay, he is like a dead person who has no sense or feeling left in him.

43. That is, as for the powers of Allah, they are unlimited. He can even make the stones to hear. But it is not within the power of the Messenger to make those people to listen to him whose consciences have become dead and whose ears deaf to every call to the truth. He can only make those people to hear him, who are inclined to listen to every reasonable thing.

إِنْ أَنْتَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ 23

(35:23) You are no more than a warner.[44]

44. That is, your only duty is to warn the people and nothing else. If even after this a person does not come to his senses, and remains lost in his deviations, you are not to blame for that, for you have not been entrusted with the duty of making the blind to see and the deaf to hear.

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا ۚ وَإِنْ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ 24

(35:24) We have sent you with the Truth to proclaim good news and to warn. Never has there been a nation but a warner came to it.[45]

45. That there has been no community in the world for whose guidance Allah did not appoint the Prophets. This has been stated at several places in the Quran. In (Surah Ar- Raad, Ayat 7), it was said: "Every people has its guide". In (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayat 10): "O Prophet, We have already sent Messengers before you among many of the ancient peoples". In (Surah An-Nahl, Ayat 36): "We sent to every community a Messenger" and in (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayat: 208): "We have never destroyed a habitation unless it had its warners to administer admonition". But, in this connection, one should note two things so that there remains no misunderstanding. First, one and the same Prophet is enough for the lands to

which his message may reach. It is not necessary that Prophets be sent to every separate habitation and to every separate community. Second, no new Prophet needs to be sent as long as the message and teaching and guidance given by a previous Prophet remains safe and intact. It is not necessary that a separate Prophet be sent for every race and every generation.

وَاِنۡ يُّكَذِّبُوۡكَ فَقَدۡ كَذَّبَ الَّذِيۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِهِمۡ ؕ جَآءَتۡهُمۡ رُسُلُهُمۡ بِالۡبَيِّنٰتِ وَبِالزُّبُرِ وَبِالۡكِتٰبِ الۡمُنِيۡرِ 25

(35:25) If they give the lie to you now, those that went before them also gave the lie to their Messengers when they came to them with Clear Proofs,[46] with Scriptures, and with the Illuminating Book.[47]

46. "Clear proofs": Proofs which clearly testified that they were Allah's Messengers.

47. "Scriptures" probably consisted of good counsels and moral precepts and "the Book" comprised a complete code of the law.

ثُمَّ اَخَذۡتُ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا فَكَيۡفَ كَانَ نَكِيۡرِ ع 26

(35:26) Then I seized those who denied the Truth, and how terrible was My punishment!

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ اَنۡزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً ۚ فَاَخۡرَجۡنَا بِهٖ ثَمَرٰتٍ مُّخۡتَلِفًا اَلۡوَانُهَا ؕ وَمِنَ الۡجِبَالِ جُدَدٌۢ بِيۡضٌ وَّحُمۡرٌ مُّخۡتَلِفٌ اَلۡوَانُهَا وَغَرَابِيۡبُ سُوۡدٌ 27

(35:27) Do you not see that Allah sent down water from the sky with which We brought forth fruits of diverse hues? In the mountains there are white and red, of diverse hues, and pitchy black;

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ وَالدَّوَآبِّ وَالۡاَنۡعَامِ مُخۡتَلِفٌ اَلۡوَانُهٗ كَذٰلِكَ ؕ اِنَّمَا يَخۡشَى اللّٰهَ مِنۡ عِبَادِهِ الۡعُلَمٰٓؤُا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيۡزٌ غَفُوۡرٌ 28

(35:28) and human beings too, and beasts, and cattle diverse are their hues.[48]From among His servants, it is only those who know that fear Allah.[49] Verily Allah is Most Mighty, Most Forgiving.[50]

48. This is meant to impress that in the universe created by Allah nowhere is there homogeneity and uniformity; there is variety everywhere. From the same earth and by the same water different kinds of trees are appearing. Even the two pieces of the fruit of the same tree are not uniform in color and size and taste. In the same mountain one will see a variety of colors and a great difference in the material composition of its different parts. Even among human beings and animals one will not see two offspring of the same parents exactly alike. If a person seeks uniformity of the temperaments and dispositions and mentalities in this universe and is bewildered at the differences which have been alluded to in(verses 19-22) above, it will be his own perception and understanding to blame. This same variety and difference, in fact, point to the reality that this universe has been created by a Wise Being with great wisdom; its Maker is a Unique Creator and a Matchless Fashioner, Who does not have the same model of everything before Him, but has a variety of countless and limitless designs of everything. Then if one ponders over the differences in human temperaments and minds, in particular, one will see that it is not a mere accident, but in fact the masterpiece of the wisdom of creation. If all human beings had been created with the uniform temperaments and desires and feelings and inclinations and ways of thinking, and no room had been left for any difference, it would have been absolutely useless to bring about a new creation like man in the world. When the Creator decided to bring into existence a responsible creation, a creation having power and authority, the necessary inevitable demand of the nature of the decision was that room for all sorts of differences should be provided in its nature and structure. This is the main proof of the fact that the creation of man is not the result of an accident, but the result of a wonderful and wise plan and design. And obviously, wherever there is a wise plan and design, there must necessarily be a Wise Being working behind it, for the existence of wisdom without a Wise Being would be un-imaginable.

49. That is, the more a person is unaware of the attributes of Allah, the more he will be fearless of Him. Contrary to this, the more a person is aware and conscious of Allah's powers, His knowledge, His wisdom, His vengeance and His omnipotence and His other attributes, the more he will fear His disobedience. Thus, in fact, knowledge in this verse does not imply knowledge of academic subjects like philosophy and science and history and mathematics, etc. but the knowledge of divine attributes, no matter whether one is literate or illiterate. The one who is fearless of God is illiterate merely as regards to this knowledge even if he has all the knowledge of the world. And the one who knows the attributes of God and fears Him in his heart, is learned even if he is illiterate. In the same connection, one should also know that in this verse the ulama does not imply the scholars in the technical sense, who are termed as religious scholars because of their knowledge of the Quran and Hadith and Fiqh and philosophy. They will prove true to this verse only when they possess fear of God in their hearts. The same thing has been said by Abdullah bin Masud, thus: Knowledge is not due to much narration of Hadith but due to much fear of Allah. And also by Hassan Basri, thus: The scholar is he who fears Allah though he has not seen Him, and turns to what is approved by Him and keeps away from what makes Him angry.

50. That is, He is All-Mighty, and therefore, can seize the disobedient as and when He likes: no one can escape His grasp. But He is All-Forgiving also and is, therefore, giving respite to the wrongdoers.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً
يَرْجُونَ تِجَارَةً لَّن تَبُورَ ۙ 29

(35:29) Surely those who recite the Book of Allah and establish Prayer and spend, privately and publicly, out of what We have provided them, look forward to a trade that shall suffer no loss;

لِيُوَفِّيَهُمْ أُجُورَهُمْ وَيَزِيدَهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ ۚ إِنَّهُ غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ 30

(35:30) (a trade in which they have invested their all) so that Allah may pay them their wages in full and may add to them out of His Bounty.[51] He is Most Forgiving, Most Appreciative.[52]

51. This kind of conduct and practice of the believers has been likened to a trade bargain because in trade a man invests his money and labor and capabilities in the hope that he will not only get his capital back and his wages for the time and energy spent but in addition some profit as well. Likewise, a believer also invests his wealth and his time and his labor and capabilities in carrying out Allah's commands and in His service and worship and in the struggle to promote the cause of His religion in the hope that he will not only get his full rewards for it but Allah will bless him with much more from His bounty as well. But there is a great difference between the two kinds of bargains. In the worldly trade bargains there is the risk of loss also along with the hope of profits. Contrary to this, in the bargain that a sincere servant makes with his God there is no risk of any loss whatever.

52. That is, Allah's relation with the sincere believers is not that of a miserly master who checks his servant on trivialities and brings all his services and loyalties to naught on account of a minor error. But Allah is the Most Beneficent and Generous Master. He overlooks the errors of His obedient servant and appreciates whatever service he might be able to render.

وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِعِبَادِهِ لَخَبِيرٌ
بَصِيرٌ 31

(35:31) (O Prophet), the Book We have revealed to you is the Truth, confirming the Books that came before it.[53] Verily Allah is well aware of His servants and sees everything.[54]

53. It means: This Book is not presenting anything new which might be opposed to the teaching brought by the former Prophets, but it is presenting the same eternal truth which all the Prophets have been presenting from the very beginning.

54. The object of mentioning these attributes of Allah here is to arouse the people to the aims and ideals in which their true well being lies, to the principles which alone can afford the right guidance and to the rules and regulations which are precisely in accordance with them. None can know these except Allah, because He alone is aware of the nature of His servants and its demands, and He alone watches over their well-being and affairs. The people do not know their own selves as much as their Creator knows them. Therefore, the truth is that, and can only be that, which He has taught by revelation.

ثُمَّ أَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتٰبَ الَّذِيْنَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا ۚ فَمِنْهُمْ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمِنْهُمْ مُّقْتَصِدٌ ۚ وَمِنْهُمْ سَابِقٌۢ بِالْخَيْرٰتِ بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ۭ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيْرُ ۭ 32

(35:32) Then We bequeathed the Book to those of Our servants that We chose.[55] Now, some of them wrong themselves and some follow the medium course; and some, by Allah's leave, vie with each other in acts of goodness. That is the great bounty.[56]

55. This implies the Muslims, who have been sorted out from all mankind so that they may become heirs to the Book of Allah, and convey its message to others after the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Though this Book has been presented before all human beings, those who accepted it in the first instance, were chosen for the honor to become heirs to a great Book like the Quran and the trustees of the teaching and guidance imparted by a great Messenger like the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

56. That is, All these Muslims are not alike but are divided into three classes:

(1) Those unjust to themselves: They are those who believe sincerely and honestly that the Quran is the Book of Allah and Muhammad (peace be upon him) the Messenger of Allah, but in practical life they do not fully follow the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger. They are believers but sinful; culprits but not rebellious; weak of faith but not hypocritical and unbelieving at heart. Therefore, although they are unjust to themselves, they have been included among the chosen servants of God and among the heirs to the Book; otherwise, obviously the rebels and the hypocrites and the unbelieving people could not be so treated and honored. This class of the believers has been mentioned first of All because they are most numerous among the Muslims.

(2) Those following the middle course: They are the people who fulfill the obligations of this inheritance to some extent but not fully. They are obedient as well as erring. They have not left their self altogether free but try as best as they can to turn it to God's obedience. However, at times they give it undue freedom and become involved in sin. Thus, their life becomes a combination of both the good and the evil actions. They are less numerous than the first group but more than the third; that is why they have been mentioned second.

(3) Those excelling in good deeds: They are the people of the first rank among the heirs to the Book, and they are the ones who are doing full justice to the inheritance. They are in the forefront in following and adhering to the Book and the Sunnah; in conveying the message of God to His servants, in offering the sacrifices for the sake of the true faith, and in every

pious and good work. They are not the ones who would commit a sin deliberately, but if they happened to commit a sin inadvertently, they would be filled with remorse as soon as they became conscious of it. They are less numerous than the people of the first two groups, and therefore, have been mentioned last, although they merit the first place in the matter of doing justice to the heritage of the Book of Allah.

As for the sentence, "the great bounty", if it is related with the last sentence, it would mean that to excel in good deeds is the great bounty, and the people who excel in good deeds are the best of the Muslim community. And if it is taken to be related with the first sentence, it would mean that to be a heir to the Book of Allah and to be chosen for this heritage is the great bounty, and the people who have been so chosen on account of their faith in the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are the best among the human beings created by Allah.

جَنّٰتُ عَدۡنٍ يَّدۡخُلُوۡنَهَا يُحَلَّوۡنَ فِيۡهَا مِنۡ اَسَاوِرَ مِنۡ ذَهَبٍ وَّلُؤۡلُؤًا ۚ وَلِبَاسُهُمۡ فِيۡهَا حَرِيۡرٌ 33

(35:33) They shall enter the everlasting Gardens,[57] shall be adorned with bracelets of gold and with pearls, and their apparel therein shall be silk.

57. One section of the commentators has held the view that this sentence is related with the two sentences immediately preceding it. That is, the ones who excel in good deeds are the best of the people and they alone will enter the Gardens. As for the first two groups, nothing has been stated about them so that they became worried concerning their fate and try to improve their lot. This view has been presented by Allama Zamakhshari forcefully and supported by Imam Razi. But the majority of the commentators opine that it is related with the whole preceding discourse, which means that all the three classes of the ummah shall eventually enter Paradise, whether without accountability, or after the accountability, whether remaining secure from every punishment, or after receiving some punishment. This commentary is supported by the Quranic context, for a little below about those who are contrasted with the heirs of the Book, it has been said: "And for those who have disbelieved, there is the fire of Hell." This shows that there is Paradise for all those who have believed in the Book, and Hell for all those who have refused to believe in it. The same has been supported by the Hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him), which Imam Ahmad, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Tabarani, Baihaqi and some other traditionalists have related on the authority of Abu ad- Darda. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

Those who have excelled in good works shall enter Paradise without accountability; and those who are following the middle course, shall be subjected to accountability; but their accountability shall be light. As for those who have been unjust to themselves, they shall be detained throughout the long period of Resurrection and accountability (mahshar). Then Allah shall cover them also with His mercy. And they are the ones who will say: Thanks to Allah Who has removed sorrow from us.

In this Hadith the Prophet (peace be upon him) has himself given a complete commentary of the verse under discussion, and stated separately the end to be met by each of the three groups of the believers. The light accountability for the ones following the middle course means this: The disbelievers will be punished for their disbelief as well as for each single crime and sin of theirs separately, but, contrary to this, the good and bad deeds of the believers who come with both the good and evil deeds will be judged on the whole: they will not be rewarded for each good deed and punished for each evil deed separately. As for those who will be detained throughout the period of Resurrection and accountability because they had been unjust to themselves, it means: They will not be thrown into Hell, but will be sentenced to be detained till the rising of the court. In other words, they will be exposed to all the severities and rigors of the lengthy Day of Resurrection (and God alone knows how lengthy it will be) till Allah Almighty will turn to them in His mercy and command at the rising of the court that they too be admitted into Paradise. The traditionists have cited several sayings to the same effect from many companions like Umar, Uthman, Abdullah bin Masud, Abdullah bin Abbas, Aishah, Abu Said Khudri and Bara bin Azib. And obviously, the companions could not have said any such thing in such matters unless they had heard it from the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself.

But from this one should not form the impression that those who have been unjust to themselves from among the Muslims will only be sentenced to be detained till the rising of the court, and none of them will go to Hell at all. Several crimes have been mentioned in the Quran and Hadith, whose perpetrator will go to Hell in spite of his faith. For instance, Allah Himself has declared that the believer who kills another believer willfully shall go to Hell. Likewise, Hell has been mentioned as the punishment of those people also who violate the provisions of the divine law of inheritance. Those who devour interest even after its prohibition have been declared to be the dwellers of Hell. Besides these, some other major sins have also been mentioned in Hadith, whose perpetrator shall go to Hell.

وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْٓ اَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزَنَ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّنَا لَغَفُوْرٌ شَكُوْرُ ۙ 34

(35:34) They will say: "All praise be to Allah Who has taken away all sorrow from us.[58] Surely our Lord is Most Forgiving, Most Appreciative;[59]

58. "Sorrow": Sorrow of every kind: sorrows and griefs and worries of the world and of the Hereafter with regard to the final end. It means: Now we have nothing to worry about: now there can be no question of any sorrow and trouble afflicting us here.

59. That is He has forgiven us our errors, has appreciated whatever little provision of deeds we had brought and blessed us with His Paradise as a reward.

اَلَّذِيْٓ اَحَلَّنَا دَارَ الْمُقَامَةِ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۚ لَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيْهَا نَصَبٌ وَّلَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيْهَا لُغُوْبٌ 35

(35:35) (the Lord) Who, out of His Bounty, has made us dwell in an abode[60] wherein no toil, nor fatigue affects us.[61]

60. That is, the world was a stage in our journey of life, which we have crossed, and the plain of Resurrection also is a stage of the same journey, which we have also crossed. Now we have reached a place which is our eternal abode: we have not to go elsewhere from here.

61. In other words, all our toils and afflictions have come to an end. Now we do not have to perform any work here in carrying out which we might have to experience any rigor or hardship and after carrying out which we might be fatigued.

وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَهُمْ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ ۚ لَا يُقْضٰى عَلَيْهِمْ فَيَمُوْتُوْا وَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابِهَا ۭ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِيْ كُلَّ كَفُوْرٍ ۚ 36

(35:36) As for those who disbelieved, 62 the Fire of Hell awaits them. There they shall not be finished off and die; nor will the torment (of Hell) be lightened for them. Thus do We requite every thankless being.

62. "Who disbelieved": Who have refused to believe in the Book which Allah has sent down on Muhammad (peace be upon him).

وَهُمْ يَصْطَرِخُوْنَ فِيْهَا ۚ رَبَّنَآ اَخْرِجْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا غَيْرَ الَّذِيْ كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ ۭ اَوَلَمْ نُعَمِّرْكُمْ مَّا يَتَذَكَّرُ فِيْهِ مَنْ تَذَكَّرَ وَجَاۗءَكُمُ النَّذِيْرُ ۭ فَذُوْقُوْا فَمَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ مِنْ نَّصِيْرٍ ۧ 37

(35:37) They will cry out in Hell and say: "Our Lord, let us out so that we may act righteously, different from what we did before." (They will be told): "Did we not grant you an age long enough for anyone to take heed if he had wanted to take heed?63Besides, there came a warner to you. So have a taste of the torment now. None may come to the help of the wrong-doers."

63. This implies every such age of life in which a person may be able to distinguish between good and evil, truth and falsehood, if he likes to, and turn to right guidance instead of deviation, if he wishes. If a person has died before attaining such an age, he will not be called to any account according to this verse. However, the one who has attained this age will certainly be held answerable for his actions. Then, as long as he lives after attaining this age and gets more and more opportunities for choosing and adopting the right path, his responsibility also will increase accordingly; so much so that the one who does not adopt right guidance even in old age will have no chance left for making any excuse. This same thing has been reported by Abu Hurairah and Sahl bin Saad as-Saidi in a Hadith, saying: The one who lives a short life has an excuse to offer, but there is no room for making an

excuse for him who lives for 60 years or more." (Bukhari Ahmad, Nasai, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim).

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَٰلِمُ غَيۡبِ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضِۚ إِنَّهُۥ عَلِيمُۢ بِذَاتِ ٱلصُّدُورِ 38

(35:38) Surely Allah knows the Unseen in the heavens and the earth. He even knows the secrets hidden in people's breasts.

هُوَ ٱلَّذِي جَعَلَكُمۡ خَلَٰٓئِفَ فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِۚ فَمَن كَفَرَ فَعَلَيۡهِ كُفۡرُهُۥۗ وَلَا يَزِيدُ ٱلۡكَٰفِرِينَ كُفۡرُهُمۡ عِندَ رَبِّهِمۡ إِلَّا مَقۡتٗاۖ وَلَا يَزِيدُ ٱلۡكَٰفِرِينَ كُفۡرُهُمۡ إِلَّا خَسَارٗا 39

(35:39) It is He Who made you vicegerents in the earth.[64] So whoever disbelieves will bear the burden of his unbelief.[65] The unbelievers' unbelief adds nothing but Allah's wrath against them. The unbelievers' unbelief adds nothing but their own loss.

64. This can have two meanings:

(1) Now He has settled you on His earth after the passing away of the previous generations and nations.

(2) The powers and authority that He has given to you over different things in the earth are not meant to make you the owners of these things but are meant to enable you to function as the representatives of their real Owner.

65. If the previous sentence is taken to mean that you have been made successors to the previous nations, this sentence would mean this: The one who did not learn any lesson from the fate of the previous nations and adopted the conduct of disbelief due to which those nations have gone to their doom, will himself see the evil end of his folly. And if the sentence is taken to mean this that Allah has delegated to you powers and authority as His vicegerents in the earth, this sentence would mean: He who forgot this position of vicegerency and became independent, or he who adopted service of someone else, apart from his real Master, would see the evil end of his rebellious conduct himself.

قُلۡ أَرَءَيۡتُمۡ شُرَكَآءَكُمُ ٱلَّذِينَ تَدۡعُونَ مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِۖ أَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقُواْ مِنَ ٱلۡأَرۡضِ أَمۡ لَهُمۡ شِرۡكٞ فِي ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِۚ أَمۡ ءَاتَيۡنَٰهُمۡ كِتَٰبٗا فَهُمۡ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَتٖ مِّنۡهُۚ بَلۡ إِن يَعِدُ ٱلظَّٰلِمُونَ بَعۡضُهُم بَعۡضًا إِلَّا غُرُورًا 40

(35:40) Say to them (O Prophet): "Have you ever seen those of your associates [66] upon whom you call apart from Allah? Show me what have they created in the earth? Or do they have any partnership (with Allah) in the heavens? Or have We given them a Book so that they have a clear proof (for associating others with Allah in His Divinity)?"[67]Nay, what these wrong-doers promise each other is nothing but delusion.[68]

66. "Associates of yours", because they are not in fact the associates of Allah, but the ones whom the polytheists themselves have made associates of Allah.

67. That is, do they possess a written sanction from Us in which We might have indicated that We have given such and such persons the powers to heal the sick, or to get jobs for the jobless, or to fulfill needs of the needy, or that We have made such and such beings Our representatives in such and such parts of the earth and now it is in their hands to make or mar the destinies of the people of those parts; therefore, Our servants now should pray to them and present gifts and offerings before them, and for whatever blessings they receive they should thank those demigods only? If you possess any such sanction, produce it. And if you have no such sanction, you should consider on what grounds you have invented these polytheistic creeds and practices. When you are asked as to what sign is there in the heavens and the earth that may point to your self invented gods as being God's associates, you cannot point out any. When you are asked to produce any divine sanction from any Book of Allah, or from your own possession, or from the possession of your self-invented gods, which may testify to God s having Himself delegated to them those powers which you assign to them, you do not produce any. What then is the basis of your these creeds and concepts? Are you the owners of the divine rights and powers that you may assign and distribute them to whomsoever you please?

68. That is, these religious guides, saints, priests, sorcerers, preachers and attendants of shrines and their agents are fooling the people for selfish motives, and are concocting stories to give them false hopes that if they became the followers of such and such personalities, apart from God, they would have all their wishes and needs fulfilled in the world, and all their sins, no matter-how grave and numerous, forgiven by Allah in the Hereafter.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُمْسِكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ أَنْ تَزُوْلَا ۚ وَلَئِنْ زَالَتَآ إِنْ أَمْسَكَهُمَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ
مِّنْ بَعْدِهٖ ۚ إِنَّهٗ كَانَ حَلِيْمًا غَفُوْرًا 41

(35:41) Surely Allah holds the heavens and the earth, lest they should be displaced there, for if they were displaced none would be able to hold them after Him.[69]Surely He is Most Forbearing, Most Forgiving.[70]

69. That is, this limitless universe is being sustained by Allah alone. No angel, or jinn, or prophet, or saint can sustain it. Not to speak of sustaining the universe these helpless creatures do not even have the power to sustain their own selves. Each one of them is entirely dependent on Allah Almighty for his birth and survival every moment. To think

that any one of them has any share in the attributes and powers of divinity is sheer folly and deception.

70. That is, it is Allah's Clemency and Forbearance that He is not seizing the culprits immediately in punishment in spite of All kinds of disobedience which are being shown towards Him.

وَاَقْسَمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ جَهْدَ اَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِنْ جَآءَهُمْ نَذِيْرٌ لَّيَكُوْنُنَّ اَهْدٰى مِنْ اِحْدَى الْاُمَمِ ۚ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ نَذِيْرٌ مَّا زَادَهُمْ اِلَّا نُفُوْرًا ۙ 42

(35:42) Swearing by Allah their strongest oaths they claimed that if a warner came to them they would be better-guided than any other people.71 But when a warner did come to them, his coming only increased their aversion (to the Truth).

71. Before the advent of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the same thing used to be said by the Arabs, in general, and by the Quraish, in particular, when they witnessed the moral degeneration of the Jews and the Christians. Mention of this saying of theirs has also been made in(Surah Al-Anaam, Ayats 156-157) and in (Surah As-Saffat, Ayats 167-169).

اِسْتِكْبَارًا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَمَكْرَ السَّيِّئِ ۭ وَلَا يَحِيْقُ الْمَكْرُ السَّيِّئُ اِلَّا بِاَهْلِهٖ ۭ فَهَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّا سُنَّتَ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ۚ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللّٰهِ تَبْدِيْلًا ۚ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللّٰهِ تَحْوِيْلًا 43

(35:43) They began to wax even more proud on earth and contrived evil designs although the contriving of evil designs only overtakes their authors. Are they waiting, then, for anything except what happened to the nations before them?72 You shall not find any change in the Way of Allah; and you shall not find anything that can ever alter the Way of Allah.

72. That is, this Law of Allah that the nation which repudiates its Prophet, is destroyed should be applied in their case as well.

اَوَلَمْ يَسِيْرُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ وَكَانُوْٓا اَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً ۭ وَمَا كَانَ اللّٰهُ لِيُعْجِزَهٗ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَلَا فِى الْاَرْضِ ۭ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا قَدِيْرًا 44

(35:44) Have they not journeyed in the earth to behold the end of those who went before them though they were stronger than them in might? Nothing in the heavens nor on earth can frustrate Him in the least. He is All-Knowing, All-Powerful.

وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللّٰهُ النَّاسَ بِمَا كَسَبُوْا مَا تَرَكَ عَلٰى ظَهْرِهَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ وَّلٰكِنْ يُّؤَخِّرُهُمْ اِلٰٓى
اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۚ فَاِذَا جَآءَ اَجَلُهُمْ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهٖ بَصِيْرًا ۧ 45

(35:45) If Allah were to take people to task for their deeds, He would not leave any living creature on earth, but He grants them respite to an appointed time. When their appointed time comes to an end, surely Allah fully observes His servants.

36. Surah Ya Sin

Name

The Surah takes its name from the two letters of the alphabet with which it begins.

Period of Revelation

A study of the style shows that it was either sent down during the last stage of the middle Makkan period, or it is one of those Surahs, which were sent down during the last stage of the Holy Prophet's stay at Makkah.

Subject Matter and Theme

The object of the discourse is to warn the Quraish of the consequences of not believing in the Prophethood of Muhammad (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) and of resisting and opposing it with tyranny, ridicule and mockery. The aspect of the warning is dominant and conspicuous although along with repeatedly giving the warnings, arguments also have been given for the correct understanding by the people.

Arguments have been given for three things: (1) For Tauhid, from the signs of the universe and from common sense; (2) for the Hereafter, from the signs of the universe, from common sense and from man's own existence itself; and (3) for the Prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad, from the fact that he was facing all kinds of hardships in the preaching of his message without any selfish motive, and from this that whatever he was inviting the people to was rational and reasonable, accepting which was in the people's own interest.

On the strength of these arguments, themes of reprobation, reproof and warning have been presented repeatedly in a highly forceful manner, so that hearts are shaken up and those which have any capacity for accepting the truth left in them should not remain unmoved.

Imam Ahmad, Abu Daud, Nasai, Ibn Majah and Tabarani have related on the authority of Hadrat Ma'qil bin Yasar that the Holy Prophet said: “Surah Ya Sin is the heart of the Qur’an. “This is similar to describing the Surah Al Fatiha has the Umm al Qur'an (the essence or core of the Qur'an), because Al Fatihah contains the sum and substance of the teaching of the whole Quran. The Surah Ya Sin has been called the throbbing heart of the Qur'an because it presents the message of the Qur'an in a most forceful manner, which breaks the inertness and stirs the spirit of man to action.

Again Imam Ahmad, Aba Da'ud and Ibn Majah have related from the same Ma'qil bin Yasar that the Holy Prophet said: "Recite Surah Ya Sin to the dying ones among you." The object is not only to revive and refresh the whole Islamic creed in the mind of the dying person but also bring before him, in particular, a complete picture of the Hereafter so that he may know what stages he would have to pass through after crossing the stage of this worldly life. In view of this, it would be desirable that along with the recitation of the Surah Ya Sin its translation also is made for the benefit of the person who does not know Arabic so that the purpose of the admonition is duly fulfilled.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

یٰسٓ ۚ 1

(36:1) Ya'. Sin.[1]

1. Ibn Abbas, Ikrimah, Dahhak, Hasan Basri and Sufyan bin Uyainah have opined that it means, "O man", or "O person". Some other commentators have regarded it as an abbreviation of "Ya Sayyid" as well, which, according to this interpretation, would be an address to the Prophet (peace be upon him).

وَالۡقُرۡاٰنِ الۡحَکِیۡمِ ۙ 2

(36:2) By the Wise Qur'an,

اِنَّکَ لَمِنَ الۡمُرۡسَلِیۡنَ ۙ 3

(36:3) you are truly among the Messengers,[2]

2. To begin a discourse like this does not mean that the Prophet (peace be upon him), God forbid, had some doubt about his Prophethood, and Allah had to say this in order to reassure him of it. But the reason is that the disbelieving Quraish at that time were most vehemently refusing to believe in his Prophethood. Therefore, Allah at the very beginning of the discourse has said: You are indeed one of the Messengers, which implies that the people who deny your Prophethood are misled and mistaken. To further confirm the same, an oath has been taken by the Quran and the word "wise" has been used as an epithet of the Quran, which means this: An obvious proof of your being a Prophet is this Quran, which is full of wisdom. This itself testifies that the person who is presenting such wise revelations is most surely a Messenger of God. No man has the power to compose such revelations. The people who know Muhammad (peace be upon him) can never be involved in the misunderstanding that he is himself forging these discourses, or reciting them after having learned them from another man. For further explanation, see (Surah Yunus, Ayats 16-17, 37-39); (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayat 88); (Surah An-Naml, Ayat 75); (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayats 44-46, 85-87); (Surah Al-Ankabut, Ayats 49-51); (Surah Ar-Rum, Ayats 1-5) and the relevant E.Ns.

عَلٰی صِرَاطٍ مُّسۡتَقِیۡمٍ ؕ 4

(36:4) on a Straight Way,

تَنۡزِیۡلَ الۡعَزِیۡزِ الرَّحِیۡمِ ۙ 5

(36:5) (and this Qur'an) is a revelation from the Most Mighty, the Most Compassionate[3]

3. Here, two of the attributes of the Sender of the Quran have been mentioned. First, that He is All-Mighty; second, that He, is All-Merciful. The first attribute is meant to impress the reality that the Quran is not the counsel of a powerless preacher, which if you overlook or ignore, will not bring any harm to you; but this is the Edict of that Owner of the Universe, Who is All-Mighty, Whose decrees cannot be withheld from being enforced by any power, and Whose grasp cannot be avoided by anyone. The second attribute is meant to make one realize that it is all due to His kindness and mercy that He has sent His Messenger for your guidance and instruction and sent down this great Book so that you may avoid errors and follow the right path which may lead you to the successes of the world and the Hereafter.

لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّآ أُنذِرَ ءَابَآؤُهُمْ فَهُمْ غَٰفِلُونَ 6

(36:6) so that you may warn a people whose ancestors were not warned before wherefore they are heedless.[4]

4. Another translation can be: You should warn the people of the same of which their forefathers had been warned, because they live in heedlessness. If the first meaning, as given above in the text, is taken, the forefathers would imply the forefathers of the immediate past, for in the ancient time several Prophets had appeared in Arabia. And if the second meaning is adopted, it would imply this: Revive and refresh the message that had been conveyed to the forefathers of this nation by the Prophets in the past, for these people have forgotten it. Obviously, there is no contradiction between the two translations, and, as to meaning, each is correct in its own place.

A doubt may rise here: How could the forefathers of a nation to whom no warner had been sent at a particular time in the past, be held responsible for their deviation at that time? The answer is: When Allah sends a Prophet in the world, the influence of his message and teaching spreads far and wide, and is handed down by one generation to the other. As long as this influence remains and there continue arising among the followers of the Prophet such people as keep his message of guidance fresh, the period of time cannot be said to be without the guidance. And when the influence of the Prophet's teaching dies out, or the teaching is tampered with, the appointment of another Prophet becomes inevitable. Before the advent of the Prophet (peace be upon him) the influence of the teachings of the Prophets Abraham, Ishmael, Shuaib and Moses and Jesus (peace be upon all of them) could be seen everywhere in Arabia and from time to time there had been arising among the Arabs, or coming from outside, men, who revived their teachings. When the influence was about to die out, and the real teaching was also distorted, Allah raised the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and made such arrangements that his message can neither be wiped out nor tampered with. (For further explanation, see (E. N. 5 of Surah Saba).

لَقَدْ حَقَّ ٱلْقَوْلُ عَلَىٰٓ أَكْثَرِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ 7

(36:7) Surely most of them merit the decree of chastisement; so they do not believe.[5]

5. This is about those people who were being obstinate and stubborn with regard to the message of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and had made up their minds not to listen to him at all. This is because: They have already deserved the torment; therefore, they do not believe. It means: The people who do not heed the admonition, and persist in their denial and hostile attitude to the truth in spite of the final warning from Allah conveyed through the Prophets, are themselves overwhelmed by the evil consequences of their misdeeds and deprived of every opportunity to believe. The same thing has been expressed more clearly in (verse 11)below: You can only warn him who follows the admonition and fears the Merciful God though he cannot see Him.

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا فِي أَعْنَاقِهِمْ أَغْلَالًا فَهِيَ إِلَى الْأَذْقَانِ فَهُم مُّقْمَحُونَ 8

(36:8) We have put fetters around their necks which reach up to their chins so that they are standing with their heads upright,6

6. "Shackles" in this verse implies their own stubbornness which was preventing them from accepting the truth. "Reaching to chins" and "so they are made stiff-necked" implies the stiffness of the neck which is caused by pride and haughtiness. Allah means to impress this: We have made their obstinacy and stubbornness the shackles of their neck, and their pride and haughtiness has made them so stiff-necked that they will not pay heed to any reality, however clear and evident it may be.

وَجَعَلْنَا مِن بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ سَدًّا وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ سَدًّا فَأَغْشَيْنَاهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ 9

(36:9) and We have put a barrier before them and a barrier behind them, and have covered them up, so they are unable to see.7

7. Setting a barrier before them and a barrier behind them, means that the natural result of their stubbornness and pride is that they neither learn any lesson from their past history nor ever consider the consequences of the future. Their prejudices have so covered them from every side and their misconceptions have so blinded them that they cannot see even those glaring realities which are visible to every right-thinking and unbiased person.

وَسَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ 10

(36:10) It is all the same for them whether you warn them or do not warn them for they shall not believe.8

8. This does not mean that it is futile to preach, but it means: Your preaching reaches every kind of people. Some of them are the ones mentioned above, and some others those who are being mentioned in the next verse. When you come across the people of the first kind and you see that they continue to persist in their denial, pride and antagonism, you should leave them alone, but at the same time you should not feel disheartened so as to give up your mission, for you do not know exactly where among the multitudes of the people are those sincere servants of God, who would heed your admonition and fear God and turn to the

right path. The real object of your preaching, therefore, should be to search out and collect this second kind of the people. You should ignore the stubborn people and gather this precious element of the society about you.

إِنَّمَا تُنذِرُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الذِّكْرَ وَخَشِيَ الرَّحْمَٰنَ بِالْغَيْبِ ۖ فَبَشِّرْهُ بِمَغْفِرَةٍ وَأَجْرٍ كَرِيمٍ 11

(36:11) You can warn only him who follows the Admonition and fears the Merciful Lord without seeing Him. Give such a one good tidings of forgiveness and a generous reward.

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ وَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَدَّمُوا وَآثَارَهُمْ ۚ وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي إِمَامٍ مُّبِينٍ ع 12

(36:12) We shall surely raise the dead to life and We record what they did and the traces of their deeds that they have left behind.[9] We have encompassed that in a Clear Book.

9. This shows that three kinds of the entries are made in the conduct-book of men. First, whatever a person does, good or bad is entered in the divine register. Second, whatever impressions a man makes on the objects of his environment and on the limbs of his own body itself, become recorded, and all these impressions will at one time become so conspicuous that man's own voice will become audible and the whole history of his ideas and intentions and aims and objects and the pictures of all of his good and bad acts and deeds will appear before him. Third, whatever influences he has left behind of his good and bad actions on his future generation, on his society and on mankind as a whole, will go on being recorded in his account as far as they reach and as long as they remain active and operative. The full record of the good and bad training given by him to his children, the good or evil that he has spread in the society, and its impact on mankind as a whole, will go on being maintained till the time that it goes on producing good or evil results in the world.

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُم مَّثَلًا أَصْحَابَ الْقَرْيَةِ إِذْ جَاءَهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ 13

(36:13) Recite to them, as a case in point, the story of the people of the town when the Messengers came to them.[10]

10. The early commentators, generally, have expressed the opinion that the habitation implies the Syrian city of Antioch, and the messengers mentioned here were the ones sent by the Prophet Jesus for the preaching of his message there. Another thing that has been mentioned in this connection is that Antiochus was the king of this land at that time. But historically this story which Ibn Abbas, Qatadah, Ikrimah, Kaab Ahbar and Wahb bin Munabbih, and others have related on the basis of unauthentic Christian traditions is baseless. There have been 13 kings of the Seleucid dynasty named Antiochus who reigned in Antioch, and the rule of the last king of this name, rather the rule of this dynasty itself, came to an end in 65 B.C. At the time of the Prophet Jesus, the whole land of Syria and Palestine, including Antioch, was under the Romans. Then, no proof is forthcoming from any authentic tradition of the Christians that the Prophet Jesus might himself have sent any of

his disciples to Antioch for preaching his message. On the contrary, the Acts of the Apostles (N.T.) shows that the Christian preachers had reached Antioch for the first time a few years after the event of the crucifixion. Now, evidently, the people who were neither appointed messengers by Allah nor sent by His Messenger cannot be regarded as messengers of Allah by any interpretation even if they might have travelled for the purpose of preaching of their own accord. Moreover, according to the Bible, Antioch was the first city where the non-Israelites embraced Christianity in large numbers and where the Christian faith met with great success; whereas the habitation mentioned by the Quran was some such habitation which rejected the invitation of the messengers, and was consequently punished with a divine torment. History also does not bear any evidence that Antioch was ever afflicted with a destruction, which might be regarded, as the result of denying the Prophethood.

On account of these reasons it cannot be accepted that the habitation implies Antioch. The habitation has neither been clearly determined in the Quran nor in any authentic Hadith. The identity of the messengers also is not known through any authentic means nor the time when they were appointed. To understand the purpose for which the Quran is narrating this story here, it is not necessary to know the names of the habitation and the messengers. The object is to warn the Quraish, as if to say: You are following the same path of stubbornness, prejudice and denial of the truth as had been followed by the people of that habitation, and are preparing yourselves to meet the same doom as was met by them.

إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ اثْنَيْنِ فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَعَزَّزْنَا بِثَالِثٍ فَقَالُوا إِنَّا إِلَيْكُم مُّرْسَلُونَ 14

(36:14) We sent to them two Messengers and they rejected both of them as liars. Then We strengthened them with a third (Messenger).

قَالُوا مَا أَنتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا وَمَا أَنزَلَ الرَّحْمَٰنُ مِن شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنتُمْ إِلَّا تَكْذِبُونَ 15

(36:15) They said: "We have been sent to you as Messengers." The people of the town said: "You are only human beings like ourselves,[11] and the Merciful Lord has revealed nothing.[12] You are simply lying."

11. In other words, what they wanted to say was: Since you are human beings, you cannot be the messengers of God. The same was the view of the disbelievers of Makkah. They also said: Muhammad cannot be a messenger because he is a man.

They say: What sort of a Messenger is he that he eats food and moves about in the streets. (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayat 7).

And the unjust people whisper to one another, saying: This man is no more than a human being like yourselves. What, will you then be enticed by this sorcery while you perceive it. (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 3).

The Quran refutes this erroneous notion of the people of Makkah and says that it is not any new kind of ignorance which these people are displaying, but all the ignorant people since the earliest times have been involved in the misunderstanding that a human being cannot be

a messenger and a Messenger cannot be a human being. When the chiefs of the people of the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) had rejected his Prophethood, they had said the same thing:

This person is no more than a human being like yourselves. By this he purely intends to obtain superiority over you. Had Allah willed, He would have sent down angels. Since the time of our forefathers we have never heard (that a human being should come as a Messenger). (Surah Al-Mominoon, Ayat 24).

The people of Aad had said the same about the Prophet Hud (peace be upon him): This person is no more than a human being like yourselves, for he eats of what you eat and drinks of what you drink. Now if you submit to a human being like yourselves, you will indeed be the losers. (Surah Al-Mominoon, Ayats 33-34).

The people of Thamud also said the same about the Prophet Salih (peace be upon him): Shall we follow a man from among ourselves? (Surah Al-Qamar, Ayat 24). And the same thing happened with almost every Prophet that the disbelievers said: You are no more than a human being like ourselves, and the Prophets always replied: It is true that we are no more than human beings like you, but Allah shows His favor to anyone of His servants He pleases. (Surah Ibrahim, Ayats 10-11).

Then the Quran says that this very notion of ignorance has been preventing the people from accepting guidance in every age, and the same has been the cause of every nation's downfall.

Has not the news reached to you of those who had disbelieved before this, and then tasted the evil results of their deeds. And in the Hereafter there awaits them a painful torment. They deserved this fate because their Messengers came to them with clear signs, but they said: Shall human beings show us guidance. So they refused and turned away. (Surah At-Taghabun, Ayats 5-6).

Whenever guidance came before the people, nothing prevented them from believing in it except this (excuse): they said: Has Allah sent a human being as His messenger? (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 94).

Then the Quran says explicitly that Allah has always sent human beings as the Messengers and a human being alone can be a Messenger for the guidance for mankind and not an angel, or a supernatural being:

And We sent before you also human beings as Messengers to whom We revealed (Our message). If you (O objectors) have no knowledge of this, you may ask those who have the knowledge. We did not give them such bodies as could survive without food nor were they immortal. (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 7-8).

"All the Messengers whom We sent before you also ate food and moved about in the streets. (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayat 20).

O Prophet, say to them: Had angels settled on the earth and moved about in peace, We would certainly have sent an angel as a messenger to them. (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayat 95).

12. This is another notion of ignorance in which the disbelievers of Makkah were involved. In it are also involved the so-called rationalists of today and in it have been involved the deniers of revelation and Prophethood of every age since the earliest times. These people have held the view that Allah does not send down any revelation at all for the guidance of man. He is only concerned with the affairs of the heavens: He has left the affairs and problems of man to be resoled by man himself.

قَالُوْا رَبُّنَا يَعْلَمُ اِنَّآ اِلَيْكُمْ لَمُرْسَلُوْنَ 16

(36:16) The Messengers said: "Our Lord knows that we have indeed been sent to you

وَمَا عَلَيْنَآ اِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ 17

(36:17) and our duty is no more than to clearly convey the Message."[13]

13. That is, our duty is only to convey to you the message that Allah has entrusted us with. Then it is for you to accept it or reject it. We have not been made responsible to make you accept it forcibly, And if you do not accept it, we shall not be seized in consequence of your disbelief, You will yourselves be answerable for your crimes.

قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا تَطَيَّرْنَا بِكُمْ ۚ لَئِنْ لَّمْ تَنْتَهُوْا لَنَرْجُمَنَّكُمْ وَلَيَمَسَّنَّكُمْ مِّنَّا عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ 18

(36:18) The people of the town said: "We believe you are an evil omen for us. If you do not desist, we will stone you or you will receive a grievous chastisement from us."[14]

14. What they meant was: You are an evil omen for us. Our gods have become angry with us on account of what you have been saying against them. Now whatever calamity is befalling us is only because of you. Precisely the same thing used to be said by the disbelievers and the hypocrites of Arabia concerning the Prophet (peace be upon him): If they suffer a loss, they say: this is because of you. (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 77). That is why at several places in the Quran these people have been told that in the ancient times people also used to say such things of ignorance in regard to their Prophets. The people of Thamud said to their Prophet: We regard you and your companions as a sign of bad omen. (Surah An-Naml, Ayat 47). And the same was the attitude of the people of Pharaoh: Whenever a good time came, they would say: This is but our due, and when there was a hard time, they would ascribe their calamities to Moses (peace be upon him) and his companions. (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 130).

قَالُوْا طَاۤئِرُكُمْ مَّعَكُمْ ۭ اَىِٕنْ ذُكِّرْتُمْ ۭ بَلْ اَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُوْنَ 19

(36:19) The Messengers replied: "Your evil omen is with you.[15] (Are you saying this) because you were asked to take heed? The truth is that you are a people who have exceeded all bounds."[16]

15. That is, no one is an evil omen for another. Everyman's augury is hanging around his own neck. If a person sees an evil, it is because of his own self; and if he sees a good, it is also because of his own self. We have fastened the augury of every man to his own neck. (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayat 13).

16. That is, you in fact want to avoid the good and you like the deviation instead of the guidance. Therefore, instead of determining the truth and falsehood by means of an argument, you are making these false pretenses on account of your superstitious whims.

وَجَآءَ مِنْ اَقْصَا الْمَدِيْنَةِ رَجُلٌ يَّسْعٰى قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اتَّبِعُوا الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ۙ 20

(36:20) In the meantime a man came running from the far end of the town, saying: "My people, follow the Messengers;

اتَّبِعُوْا مَنْ لَّا يَسْـَٔلُكُمْ اَجْرًا وَّهُمْ مُّهْتَدُوْنَ 21

(36:21) follow those who do not ask any recompense from you and are rightly-guided.[17]

17. That servant of God, in this one sentence, put together all the arguments required for determining the genuineness of Prophethood. The genuineness of a Prophet can be determined by two things. First, his word and deed; second, his being selfless. What the person meant to say was this: First, whatever these people are saying is perfectly reasonable, and their own character also is pure; second, no one can prove that they are calling the people to this faith on account of a selfish motive. Therefore, there is no reason why they should not be listened to. By citing this reasoning of the person the Quran set a criterion before the people of how to judge and determine the genuineness of the Prophethood of a Prophet, as if to say: The word and deed of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) bear full evidence that he is on the right path. Then, no one can point out any selfish motive or interest behind his struggle of preaching his message. Therefore, there is no reason why a sensible person should reject what he presents.

وَمَا لِيَ لَآ اَعْبُدُ الَّذِيْ فَطَرَنِيْ وَاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ 22

(36:22) Why should I not serve the One Who created me and to Whom all of you shall be sent back?[18]

18. This sentence has two parts. The first part is a masterpiece of reasoning, the second of the wisdom of preaching. In the first part he says: To worship the Creator is the demand of both reason and nature; it would be highly unreasonable that one should worship those who have not created him and should deny to be the servant of Him Who has created him. In the second part he warns his people to the effect: All of you ultimately have to die and return to that God adoption of Whose service you object to. Therefore, you should consider for yourselves as to what goodness you could expect by turning away from Him.

ءَاَتَّخِذُ مِنۡ دُوۡنِهٖۤ اٰلِهَةً اِنۡ يُّرِدۡنِ الرَّحۡمٰنُ بِضُرٍّ لَّا تُغۡنِ عَنِّىۡ شَفَاعَتُهُمۡ شَيۡـئًا وَّلَا يُنۡقِذُوۡنِ ج

23

(36:23) What! Shall I take any deities apart from Him whose intercession will not avail me the least were the Merciful One to bring any adversity upon me, nor will they be able to rescue me?[19]

19. That is, they are neither such favorites of God that even if I commit grave crimes, He will forgive me on their recommendation, nor are they so powerful that they should be able to rescue me if God may please to punish me.

اِنِّىۡۤ اِذًا لَّفِىۡ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيۡنٍ 24

(36:24) Surely in that case[20] I should indeed be in evident error.

20. If I make them my gods in spite of knowing all this.

اِنِّىۡۤ اٰمَنۡتُ بِرَبِّكُمۡ فَاسۡمَعُوۡنِ ؕ 25

(36:25) I believe in your Lord;[21] so listen to me."

21. This sentence again contains a subtle point of the wisdom of preaching. Saying this the man made the people realize: The Lord in Whom I have believed is not merely my Lord but your Lord, too. I have committed no error by believing in Him, but you, in fact, are certainly committing an error by not believing in Him.

قِيۡلَ ادۡخُلِ الۡجَنَّةَ ؕ قَالَ يٰلَيۡتَ قَوۡمِىۡ يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ۙ 26

(36:26) (Eventually they killed him and he was told): "Enter Paradise."[22] The man exclaimed: "Would that my people knew

22. That is, immediately following his martyrdom, the man was given the good news of Paradise. As soon as he entered the next world through the gate of death, there were the angels to receive him, and they gave him the good news that Paradise was awaiting him. The commentators have disputed the meaning of this sentence. Qatadah says: Allah admitted him into Paradise straight away and he is living in it and receiving his sustenance. And Mujahid says: This was told him by the angels as a good news; he will enter Paradise on the day of Resurrection along with the other believers.

بِمَا غَفَرَ لِىۡ رَبِّىۡ وَجَعَلَنِىۡ مِنَ الۡمُكۡرَمِيۡنَ 27

(36:27) for what reason Allah has forgiven me and placed me among the honoured ones."[23]

23. This is a specimen of the high morality of the believer, He had no ill will or feeling of vengeance in his heart against the people who had just killed him so that he should invoke Allah against them. Instead, he was still wishing them well. After death the only wish that he cherished was: Would that my people could know the good end that I have met, and could learn a lesson from my death, if not from my life, and adopt the righteous way. The noble person did not wish Hell for his murderers but wished that they should believe and become worthy of Paradise. The same thing has been commended in the Hadith: He wished his people well when living as well as when dead.

Allah has narrated this event in order to warn the disbelievers of Makkah to the effect: Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his believing companions are also your wellwishers just as the believer was of his people. They do not cherish any ill-will or feeling of vengeance against you in spite of your persecutions of them. They are not your enemies but enemies of your deviation and error. The only object of their struggle against you is that you should adopt the right way.

This verse also is one of those verses which clearly prove the existence of barzakh. This shows that the period of time between death and Resurrection is not a period of nonexistence altogether, as some ignorant people think. But in this period the spirit lives without the body, speaks and hears speech, has feelings and desires, feels happy and unhappy, and also continues to be concerned about the people of the world. Had it not been so, the believer would not have been given the good news of Paradise after death, and he could not have wished that his people became aware of his good end.

وَمَآ أَنزَلْنَا عَلَىٰ قَوْمِهِۦ مِنۢ بَعْدِهِۦ مِن جُندٍ مِّنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ وَمَا كُنَّا مُنزِلِينَ 28

(36:28) After him, We did not send down any hosts from the heaven; We stood in no need to send down any host.

إِن كَانَتْ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَٰحِدَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ خَٰمِدُونَ 29

(36:29) There was but a single Blast and suddenly they became silent and still.[24]

24. These words contain a subtle satire. In their arrogance and pride of power and their strong antagonism towards the true faith, they thought they would annihilate the three Prophets and their followers, but, contrary to their plot, they were themselves annihilated by only one stroke of the divine punishment.

يَٰحَسْرَةً عَلَى ٱلْعِبَادِ ۚ مَا يَأْتِيهِم مِّن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا كَانُوا۟ بِهِۦ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ 30

(36:30) Alas for My servants! Never does a Messenger come to them but they mock him.

اَلَمۡ يَرَوۡا كَمۡ اَهۡلَكۡنَا قَبۡلَهُمۡ مِّنَ الۡقُرُوۡنِ اَنَّهُمۡ اِلَيۡهِمۡ لَا يَرۡجِعُوۡنَ ؕ 31

(36:31) Have they not seen how many nations before them did We destroy? Thereafter they never came back to them.[25]

25. That is, they were annihilated so completely that not a trace of them was left behind them. No one in the world even remembers them today. Their civilization as well as their race has become extinct.

وَاِنۡ كُلٌّ لَّمَّا جَمِيۡعٌ لَّدَيۡنَا مُحۡضَرُوۡنَ ۚ 32

(36:32) All of them shall (one day) be gathered before Us.

وَاٰيَةٌ لَّهُمُ الۡاَرۡضُ الۡمَيۡتَةُ ۖ اَحۡيَيۡنٰهَا وَاَخۡرَجۡنَا مِنۡهَا حَبًّا فَمِنۡهُ يَاۡكُلُوۡنَ 33

(36:33) Let the[26] dead earth be a Sign for them.[27] We gave it life and produced from it grain whereof they eat.

26. Until now the disbelieves of Makkah were being warned and reproved for their denial of the truth and their attitude of antagonism which they had adopted towards the Prophet (peace be upon him). Now the discourse turns to the basic thing which was the actual cause of the conflict between them and the Prophet (peace be upon him), i.e. the doctrine of Tauhid and the Hereafter, which the Prophet (peace be upon him) was presenting and the disbelievers were refusing to accept. In this connection, some arguments have been given, one after the other, to make the people ponder over the realities, as if to say: Observe these phenomena of the universe, which are ever present before you. Do they not point to the same reality, which this Prophet is presenting before you?

27. "A sign": A sign that Tauhid is the truth and shirk the falsehood.

وَجَعَلۡنَا فِيۡهَا جَنّٰتٍ مِّنۡ نَّخِيۡلٍ وَّاَعۡنَابٍ وَّفَجَّرۡنَا فِيۡهَا مِنَ الۡعُيُوۡنِ ۙ 34

(36:34) We made in it gardens of date-palms and vines, and We caused springs to gush forth

لِيَاۡكُلُوۡا مِنۡ ثَمَرِهٖ ۙ وَمَا عَمِلَتۡهُ اَيۡدِيۡهِمۡ ؕ اَفَلَا يَشۡكُرُوۡنَ 35

(36:35) that they might eat of its fruits. It was not their hands that made them.[28] Will they not, then, give thanks?[29]

28. Another translation of this sentence can be: So that they may eat fruits thereof and what their own hands make. That is, the artificial kinds of food, which the people prepare from the natural products, e.g. bread, curry, jam, pickles, sauces and countless other things.

29. In these brief sentences the vegetable and plant life of the earth has been presented as an argument. Man is eating the products of the earth day and night and regards this as very ordinary. But if he considers it seriously, he will see that the growth of rich crops and lush green gardens from the dry earth and the flow of the springs and rivers is not a simple thing, which might be happening of itself, but there is a great wisdom and power and providence which is working behind it. Consider the reality of the earth. The substances of which it is composed do not possess any power of their own for growth. All these substances individually as well as after every sort of combination, remain inorganic, and thus do not possess any sign of life. The question is: How did it become possible for plant life to emerge from the lifeless earth? If one looks into it, one will see that there are some important factors without whose provision beforehand life here could not have come into existence.

First, in particular regions of the earth, on its outer surface, a layer was arranged of many such substances, which could serve as food for vegetation. This layer was kept soft so that the roots of the vegetation could spread in it and suck food.

Secondly, a system of irrigation was arranged on the earth in different ways so that the food elements could get dissolved in water and absorbed by the roots.

Thirdly, the atmosphere was arranged around the earth which protects it against the calamities of the sky, becomes a means of the rainfall, and possesses gases which are necessary for the life and growth of the vegetation.

Fourthly, a relationship was established between the sun and the earth so as to provide proper temperature and suitable seasons for the vegetation.

With the provision of these main factors (which in themselves are combinations of countless other factors), the coming to life of the vegetation becomes possible. After arranging the suitable conditions the seed of each species of the vegetation was so constituted that as soon as it received favorable soil, water, air and season, vegetable life should begin stirring within it. Besides, inside the same seed a system was so arranged that from the seed of every species a plant precisely of the same species should grow with all the characteristics of its own species and heredity. Then, in addition to this, another wonderful thing was done. Vegetation was not created in twenty, or fifty, or a hundred kinds but in countless species, and they were so made that they should fulfill the requirements of food, medicine and clothing and innumerable other needs of the countless kinds of animals and man, who were to be brought into being after the vegetation on the earth.

Anyone who ponders over this wonderful arrangement, if he is not stubborn and prejudiced, will himself testify that all this could not have come about by itself. There is certainly a wise plan underlying it, according to which harmonies and relationships of the soil, water, air and season with respect to the vegetation, and harmonics and relationships of the vegetation with respect to the needs and requirements of animals and human beings have been determined, keeping in view the finest detail. No sensible person can imagine that these universal, all-embracing relationships could be a mere accident. This same subtle arrangement points to the fact that this cannot be the work of many gods. This is, and can only be the work of One God, Who is the Creator and Lord of the earth, water, air, sun, vegetation, animals and mankind. If each of these had a separate god, it cannot be imagined

that such a comprehensive and universal plan with such deep and wise relationship and harmony could be produced, and should have continued to work with such regularity for millions upon millions of years.

After giving these arguments for Tauhid, Allah says: Do they not then give thanks? That is: Are these people so thankless and ungrateful that they do not render thanks to that God Who has provided all this for their survival, but thank others for the blessings and favors done by Him? Are they so wretched that instead of bowing before Him they bow before the false gods, who have not created even a blade of grass for them?

سُبْحٰنَ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ الْاَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا مِمَّا تُنْۢبِتُ الْاَرْضُ وَمِنْ اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَمِمَّا لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ 36

(36:36) Holy is He[30] Who created all things in pairs, whether it be of what the earth produces, and of themselves, and of what they do not know.[31]

30. Glory be to Him: He is free from every defect and fault, from every error and weakness, and that another one should be His associate and partner in His work. The Quran has generally used these words when refuting polytheistic beliefs, because every belief of shirk is, in fact, an imputation of some defect, some weakness and some fault to Allah. When a person says that Allah has an associate, he in fact, thinks that either Allah is incapable of running and ruling His Kingdom alone, or He is under compulsion to make another His associate in His work. Or, some other beings are so powerful in themselves that they are interfering in God's administration and God is putting up with their interference. Or, God forbid, Allah has the weaknesses of the worldly kings, due to which He is surrounded by an army of ministers, courtiers, flatterers and beloved princes or princesses, and thus many powers of Godhead have become divided among them. Had there been no such notions of ignorance about Allah in the minds, there could be no question of any idea of shirk in the world. That is why it has been stated again and again in the Quran That Allah is free from and exalted far above those defects and faults and weaknesses which the mushriks ascribe to Him.

31. This is still another argument for Tauhid. Here again certain realities of daily experience have been mentioned and it is suggested that man observes these day and night but does not ponder over them seriously, whereas they contain signs and pointers to the reality. The coming together of the man and woman is the cause of man's own birth. Procreation among the animals also is due to the combination between the male and the female. Also about vegetation, man knows that the law of sex is working in it. Even among the lifeless substances when different things combine with one another, a variety of compounds come into existence. The basic composition of matter itself has become possible due to the close affinity between the positive and the negative electric charges. This law of the pairs which is the basis of the existence of the entire universe, contains in itself such complexities and finenesses of wisdom and workmanship, and there exist such harmonies and mutual relationships between the members of each pair that an objective observer can neither regard it as the result of an accident, nor can he believe that many different gods might have

created these countless pairs and matched their members, one with the other, with such great wisdom. The members of each pair being a perfect match for each other and coming into being of new things with their combination itself is an explicit argument of the Creator's being One and only One.

وَاٰيَةٌ لَّهُمُ الَّيۡلُ ۖ نَسۡلَخُ مِنۡهُ النَّهَارَ فَاِذَا هُمۡ مُّظۡلِمُوۡنَ ۙ 37

(36:37) And the night is another Sign for them. We strip the day from it and they become plunged in darkness.[32]

32. The alternation of the night and day also is one of those realities which man does not regard as worthy of much attention only because it is a phenomenon of daily occurrence and experience; whereas if he considers how the day passes and how the night falls, and what is the wisdom in the passing of the day and in the falling of the night, he will himself realize that this is an obvious sign of the existence of an All-Powerful and All-Wise Allah and of His being One and only One. The day cannot pass and the night cannot fall until the sun hides from the earth. The great regularity which is found in the alternation of the day and night was not possible unless the sun and the earth were bound in one and the same relentless system. Then the deep relationship which exists between the alternation of the day and night and the other creations on the earth clearly points to the fact that this system has been established deliberately by a Being with perfect wisdom. The existence on the earth, of the men and animals and vegetation, and even of water and air and different minerals, is in fact, the result of placing the earth at a particular distance from the sun, with the arrangement that the different parts of the earth should go on successively coming before the sun and hiding from it at definite intervals. If the distance of the earth from the sun had been a little longer, or a little shorter, or there had been a perpetual night on one side of it and a perpetual day on the other, or the alternation of the day and night had been much faster or much slower, or sometimes the day had appeared suddenly and sometimes the night without any system, no life could be possible on this planet, and even the form and appearance of the inorganic substances would have been much different from what it is now. If the hearts are not blinded, one can clearly perceive in this system the working of a God, Who willed to bring into being this particular kind of creation on the earth and then established relevance, harmonies and relationships between the earth and the sun precisely in accordance with its needs and requirements. If a person regards the concept of the existence of God and His Unity as far removed from reason, he should think for himself and see how much farther removed should it be from reason to ascribe this wonderful creation to many gods, or to think that all this has happened automatically under some deaf and blind law of nature. When a person who can accept without question these latter unreasonable explanations, only on the basis of conjecture and speculation, says that the existence of a system and wisdom and purpose is not a sufficient proof of the existence of God, it becomes difficult for us to believe whether such a person really feels the need and necessity of a rational proof, sufficient or insufficient in any degree whatever, for accepting any concept of creed in the world.

وَالشَّمۡسُ تَجۡرِىۡ لِمُسۡتَقَرٍّ لَّهَا ؕ ذٰلِكَ تَقۡدِيۡرُ الۡعَزِيۡزِ الۡعَلِيۡمِ ؕ 38

(36:38) The sun is running its course to its appointed place.[33] That is the ordaining of the All-Mighty, the All-Knowing.

33. "Place of rest" may either mean the place where the sun will ultimately come to a halt, or the time when it will come to a halt. The true meaning of this verse can be determined only when man has attained the full and exact knowledge of the realities of the universe. But man's knowledge is such that it has been changing in every age and what he seems to know today might change tomorrow. The people of the ancient times on the basis of their observations of the sun believed that it was moving round the earth. Then after further research and observation the view became that the sun was stationary and all the planets of the solar system were revolving round it. But this theory also did not last long. The later observations revealed that not only the sun but all the stars are also moving in a particular direction, at speeds of 10 to 100 miles per second. About the sun the modern astronomers hold the view that it is moving at a speed of 20 kilometers (about 12 miles) per second along with its whole family of the planets. (See Star and Sun in Encyclopedia Britannica).

وَالْقَمَرَ قَدَّرْنٰهُ مَنَازِلَ حَتّٰى عَادَ كَالْعُرْجُوْنِ الْقَدِيْمِ 39

(36:39) We have appointed stages for the moon till it returns in the shape of a dry old branch of palm-tree.[34]

34. That is, the phases of the moon go on changing throughout the month. It begins as a crescent, then goes on waxing every day till it becomes the full moon on the 14th of the month. Then it starts waning every day till at last it returns to its original shape of the crescent. The same has been happening for millions of years with perfect regularity, and no change has ever occurred in the phases of the moon. That is why one can always calculate and find out exactly in what phase the moon will be on a particular day. If the movement of the moon had not been bound in a system, estimation of its phases would not have been possible.

لَا الشَّمْسُ يَنْۢبَغِيْ لَهَآ اَنْ تُدْرِكَ الْقَمَرَ وَلَا الَّيْلُ سَابِقُ النَّهَارِ ؕ وَكُلٌّ فِيْ فَلَكٍ يَّسْبَحُوْنَ 40

(36:40) Neither does it lie in the sun's power to overtake the moon[35] nor can the night outstrip the day.[36] All glide along, each in its own orbit.[37]

35. This sentence can have two meanings and both are correct.

(1) The sun does not have the power that it should draw the moon into itself, or enter its orbit and collide with it.

(2) The sun cannot appear in the times which have been appointed for the rising and appearing of the moon. It is not possible that the sun should suddenly appear on the horizon when the moon is shining at night.

36. Nor does this happen either that the night should approach before the appointed period of the day comes to an end, and should start spreading its darkness suddenly during the time when the day is meant to spread its light.

37. The word falak in Arabic is used for the orbit of the planets, and it gives a different meaning from the word sama (sky). The sentence, "Each in an orbit is floating" points to four realities.

(1) That not only the sun and the moon but all the stars and planets and celestial bodies are moving.

(2) The falak, or orbit, of each one of them is separate.

(3) That the orbits are not moving with the stars in them, but the stars are moving in the orbits.

(4) That the movement of the stars in their orbits is similar to the floating of something in a fluid.

These verses are not intended to describe the realities of astronomy, but are meant to make man understand that if he looks around himself, with open eyes, and uses his common sense, he will find countless and limitless proofs of the existence of God and His Unity, and he will not come across a single proof of atheism and shirk. The vastness of the solar system in which our earth is included is such that its parent body, the sun, is 300,000 times bigger than the earth, and its farthest planet Neptune is at least 2,793 million miles distant from the sun. However, if Pluto is taken as the farthest planet, it revolves 4,600 million miles away round it. Notwithstanding this vastness, the solar system occupies a very insignificant part of a huge galaxy. The galaxy which includes our solar system has about 3,000 million suns in it, and its nearest sun is so distant from our earth that its light takes about four years to reach us. Then this galaxy also is not the whole universe. According to the investigations made so far, it has been estimated that it is one of about 2,000,000 spiral nebulae, and the nearest nebula is about a million light years away from the earth. As for the farthest celestial bodies which are visible through the modern instruments, their light reaches the earth in about 100 million years. Even now it cannot be claimed that man has seen the whole universe. It is a small part of the Kingdom of God which man has yet been able to observe. It cannot be predicted how far and deep man will yet be able to see with greater and more efficient means of observation at his disposal.

All the information that has been gathered so far about the universe proves that this whole world is made up of the same substance of which our tiny earthly world is made, and the same law is working in the universe which is working in the world of our earth; otherwise it was not at all possible, that man should have made observations of the very distant worlds from the earth, measured their distances and estimated their movements. Is it not a clear proof of the fact that this whole universe is the creation of One God and the Kingdom of One Ruler? Then from the order and the wisdom and the excellence of workmanship and the deep relationships which are found in the hundreds of thousands of the galaxies and in the millions and billions of the stars and planets revolving in them no sensible person can imagine that all this has come about automatically. Is it possible that there should be no

administrator behind this order and system, no sage behind this wisdom, no designer behind this design and work of art, and no planner behind this planning?

وَاٰيَةٌ لَّهُمْ اَنَّا حَمَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ فِي الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُوْنِ ۙ 41

(36:41) Another Sign for them is that We carried all their offspring in the laden vessel[38]

38. "A laden vessel": the Ark of the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him). As to boarding of the progeny of man in it, it means that although apparently a few companions of the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) had boarded it, in reality all human beings who are to be born till Resurrection were boarding it; all the rest of mankind had been drowned in the flood, all later human beings are the children of those who were rescued in the Ark.

وَخَلَقْنَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ مِّثْلِهٖ مَا يَرْكَبُوْنَ 42

(36:42) and then created for them other vessels like those on which they ride.[39]

39. This indicates that the first vessel ever to be made in the world was the one made by the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him). Before that time man did not know any method of crossing the rivers and the seas. This method was first of all taught by Allah to the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him), and when some servants, of Allah were rescued in it from the flood, their future generations started making boats and ships for their sea journeys.

وَاِنْ نَّشَاْ نُغْرِقْهُمْ فَلَا صَرِيْخَ لَهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْقَذُوْنَ ۙ 43

(36:43) Should We so wish, We can drown them, and there will be none to heed their cries of distress, nor will they be rescued.

اِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّنَّا وَمَتَاعًا اِلٰى حِيْنٍ 44

(36:44) It is only Our Mercy (that rescues them) and enables enjoyment of life for a while.[40]

40. The signs until now were mentioned as arguments for Tauhid. This sign has been mentioned to make man realize that whatever powers he has been given over the forces of nature, have been given him by Allah and are not of his own acquirement. And whatever methods he has discovered of exploiting these forces; have been discovered also through the guidance of Allah and not solely by himself. Man did not have the power and strength to have subdued these great forces by his own power, nor the capability to have discovered the secrets of nature himself and known the methods of taking service from them. Then he can use and employ the forces over which he has been given control by Allah only till the time that Allah wills them to remain subdued to him. For when Allah wills otherwise the same forces which were serving man turn against him suddenly and he finds himself utterly helpless before them. To call man's attention to this reality, Allah has presented the case of

the sea journey only as an example. The whole human race would have perished in the flood had Allah not taught the method of making the vessel to the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) and had his followers not boarded it. Then the scattering of the human race over the whole earth became possible only because the people learned the principles of building vessels from Allah and became able to cross the rivers and oceans. But from that humble beginning till today in spite of making great strides in the art of building huge ships and attaining every possible perfection in the science of navigation, man cannot claim that he has brought the rivers and the oceans fully under his control and power. Even today the water of God is still in God's own power alone and whenever He wills He drowns man along with his ships in it.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّقُوا مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَمَا خَلْفَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ 45

(36:45) When it is said to such people: "Guard yourselves against what is ahead of you and what has preceded you[41]that mercy be shown to you" (they pay scant heed to it).

41. "What is behind you": Which the peoples before you have seen and experienced.

وَمَا تَأْتِيهِم مِّنْ آيَةٍ مِّنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ 46

(36:46) Never does any Sign of their Lord come to them, but they turn away from it.[42]

42. "Signs": Verses of the divine Book by which man is admonished, and the signs which are found in the universe and in man's own self and in his history which serve as abject lessons for man, provided he is inclined to learn any lesson.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ أَنفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنُطْعِمُ مَن لَّوْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ أَطْعَمَهُ إِنْ أَنتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ 47

(36:47) And when it is said to them: "Spend (in the Way of Allah) out of the sustenance that Allah has provided you," the unbelievers say to the believers: "Shall we feed him whom, Allah would have fed, had He so wished?" Say: "You are in evident error."[43]

43. This means to show that disbelief has not only blinded their intellect but has destroyed their moral sense, too. They neither have the right thought about Allah nor do they adopt the right attitude towards the people. They react adversely to every admonition, follow a perverse philosophy in respite of every deviation and immorality and have a ready-made pretense for escape from every good.

وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْوَعْدُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ 48

(36:48) They[44] say: "When will this threat (of Resurrection) come to pass? Tell us if indeed you are truthful."[45]

44. After Tauhid the other question about which a dispute was raging between the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the disbelievers was the question of the Hereafter. Rational arguments about this have been given in the end of the discourse. Here, before giving the arguments, the Hereafter has been depicted with all its horrors so that the people should know that what they are refusing to believe in cannot be averted by their denial, but they have to meet and experience it one day inevitably.

45. The question did not mean that they wanted to know the exact date of the coming of the Hereafter, and if, for instance, they were told that it would take place on such and such a date in such and such a month and year, their doubts would have been removed and they would have believed in it. Such questions, in fact, were put as a challenge only for the sake of argument. What they meant to say was that there would be no Resurrection whatever, as if to say: You are threatening us with Resurrection without rhyme or reason. That is why in reply it has not been said that Resurrection will take place on such and such a day, but that it shall come and shall be accompanied by such and such horrors.

مَا يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَّاحِدَةً تَاْخُذُهُمْ وَهُمْ يَخِصِّمُوْنَ 49

(36:49) The Truth is that they are waiting for nothing but a mighty Blast to seize them the while they are disputing (in their worldly affairs),

فَلَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ تَوْصِيَةً وَّلَآ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهِمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ ع 50

(36:50) and they will not even be able to make a testament, nor to return to their households.[46]

46. That is, the Resurrection will not take place piecemeal so that the people may leisurely watch its coming, but it will come all of a sudden when the people will be engaged in their daily business and they will have no idea whatever that the end of the world had approached. There will be a terrible blast and everyone will fall dead at the spot. Abdullah bin Amr and Abu Hurairah have related a Hadith from the Prophet (peace be upon him) saying: The people will be walking on the roads as usual, will be buying and selling in the markets, will be disputing matters in their assemblies, when suddenly the Trumpet shall be sounded. Thereupon the one who was buying cloth would collapse and he would not have the time to put down the cloth from his hand; the one who was filling a cistern to water his animals would not have the time to water; and the one who was going to eat, would not have the time to lift the morsel to his mouth and Resurrection will take place.

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَإِذَا هُم مِّنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَنسِلُونَ 51

(36:51) Then the Trumpet shall be blown and lo! they will come out of their graves and be on the move towards their Lord,[47]

47. For the explanation of the blowing of the Trumpet, see (E.N. 78 of Surah TaHa). As for the length of the interval between the first blowing of the Trumpet and its second blowing, we have no information. The interval may be of hundreds and thousands of years. Abu Hurairah has related that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Israfil has put the Trumpet to his mouth and is looking up to the divine Throne, awaiting orders for blowing it. The Trumpet will be blown thrice.

On the first blowing, called nafakhat al-faza, everything in the earth and heavens will be struck with terror. On the second blowing, called nafakhat as-Saaq, everyone will fall down dead. Then, when none shall remain except Allah, the One, the Everlasting, the earth will be changed altogether and will be spread flat and smooth without a crease or wrinkle on it. Then Allah will administer a rebuke to His Creation, whereupon everyone will rise at the spot where he had fallen dead, on the changed earth, and this will happen on the third blowing of the Trumpet called nafakhat al qiyam li-Rabbil-Alamin. This is supported by several allusions in the Quran also.

For example, see (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 48); (Surah TaHa, Ayats 105-108), and the E.Ns thereof.

قَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا مَن بَعَثَنَا مِن مَّرْقَدِنَا ۜ هَٰذَا مَا وَعَدَ الرَّحْمَٰنُ وَصَدَقَ الْمُرْسَلُونَ 52

(36:52) (nervously) exclaiming. "Alas for us! Who roused us out of our sleeping-place?"[48] "This is what the Merciful One had promised, and what (His) Messengers had said was true."[49]

48. That is, at that time they will not realize that they had been dead and had been raised back to life after a long period, but they will be thinking that they had fallen asleep, and had been woken up suddenly by some terrible catastrophe, and were running away from it. (For further details, see Surahs (TaHa, Ayat 103); (Al-Hajj, Ayats 1-2).

49. Here, it is not clear as to who will give this answer. It may be that they themselves would realize after some time to their horror that it was the same thing of which the Messengers of God used to inform them and they used to belie them. It may also be that the believers will remove their misunderstanding and tell them that it was not waking up from sleep but the second life after death. And it may also be that they will understand this from the general conditions prevailing on the Day of Resurrection and the angels might tell them this.

إِن كَانَتْ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ جَمِيعٌ لَّدَيْنَا مُحْضَرُونَ 53

(36:53) Then there will simply be one single Blast, and all will have gathered before Us.

فَالْيَوْمَ لَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا تُجْزَوْنَ اِلَّا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ 54

(36:54) Today[50] no one shall suffer the least injustice, and you shall not be recompensed except according to your deeds.

50. This is what Allah will tell the disbelievers and the polytheists, the sinners and the culprits, when they will be presented before Him.

اِنَّ اَصْحٰبَ الْجَنَّةِ الْيَوْمَ فِيْ شُغُلٍ فٰكِهُوْنَ ۚ 55

(36:55) Indeed, the people of Paradise will be busy enjoying themselves:[51]

51. To understand this one should remember that the righteous believers will not be withheld in the Plain of Resurrection, but in the very beginning they will be sent to Paradise without accountability, or after a mild reckoning, because their record will be clean. There will be no need to keep them waiting during the hearing by the Court. Therefore, Allah will tell the culprits, who will be required to render their accounts, in the Plain of Resurrection: Look! the righteous people whom you used to mock and regard as foolish in the world, are today enjoying the pleasures of Paradise because of their wisdom, and you, who in your own judgment were very prudent and sagacious, are being condemned to accountability for your misdeeds.

هُمْ وَاَزْوَاجُهُمْ فِيْ ظِلٰلٍ عَلَى الْاَرَآئِكِ مُتَّكِـُٔوْنَ 56

(36:56) they and their spouses shall be reclining on their couches in shady groves;

لَهُمْ فِيْهَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَّلَهُمْ مَّا يَدَّعُوْنَ ۖ 57

(36:57) therein there will be all kinds of fruits to eat, and they shall have all that they desire.

سَلٰمٌ ۚ قَوْلًا مِّنْ رَّبٍّ رَّحِيْمٍ ۗ 58

(36:58) “Peace” shall be the word conveyed to them from their Merciful Lord.

وَامْتَازُوا الْيَوْمَ اَيُّهَا الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ 59

(36:59) “Criminals, separate yourselves from others today![52]

52. This can have two meanings:

(1) Get you apart from the righteous believer; for in the world even if you belonged to the same community and the same clan and the same brotherhood, here you have no connection and relationship left with them.

(2) Get you apart from one another: now you can no longer remain a group. All your parties have been disbanded. All your relations and connections have been severed. Now each of you will be held answerable in your personal capacity for your actions and deeds.

اَلَمۡ اَعۡهَدۡ اِلَيۡكُمۡ يٰبَنِىۡۤ اٰدَمَ اَنۡ لَّا تَعۡبُدُوا الشَّيۡطٰنَ ۚ اِنَّهٗ لَكُمۡ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيۡنٌ ۙ 60

(36:60) Children of Adam, did I not command you not to serve Satan he is to you an open enemy

وَّاَنِ اعۡبُدُوۡنِىۡ ؕ هٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسۡتَقِيۡمٌ 61

(36:61) and serve Me alone: this is the Straight Way?[53]

53. Here again Allah has used ibadat (worship) in the sense of itaat (obedience). This subject has already been explained above in (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 172); (Surah An- Nisa, Ayat 117), (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayats 121, 137), (Surah At- Taubah, Ayat 31); (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 22); (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayat 52); (Surah Maryam, Ayat 42), (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 63) and (E.N. 63 of Surah Saba). In this connection, the fine explanation given of it by Imam Razi in his Tafsir Kabir is also noteworthy. He writes: Do not worship Satan means: Do not obey him, the reason being that only falling prostrate before him is not forbidden, but following him and obeying his commands also is forbidden; therefore, itaat (obedience) is ibadat (worship). After this, the Imam raises the question: If ibadat means itaat, then have the Muslims been commanded to worship the Prophet and the rulers in the verse: Atiullaha wa ati-ur-rasula wa ulil-amri min-kum? He himself answers it thus: If obedience to them is in accordance with the commands of Allah, it will be Allah's worship (ibadat) and His obedience (itaat). Did not the angels fall prostrate before Adam in obedience to Allah's command? This was nothing but worship of Allah. Obedience of the rulers will be their worship only in cases where they are obeyed in matters in which Allah has not given leave to obey them. Then he writes: If a person comes to you and commands you to do something, you should see whether his command is in accordance with the command of Allah or not. If it is not, Satan is with him; and if you obeyed him in this, you worshiped him and his Satan. Likewise, if your self urges you to do something, you should see whether it is permissible to do it according to the Sahariah or not. If it is not permissible, your self is Satan itself, or Satan is with it. If you obeyed him, you in fact became guilty of worshiping him. Further on, he writes: But there are different degrees of the worship of Satan. Sometimes it so happens that a man does a work and his limbs and his tongue also join him in this, and his heart also cooperates. At another time it so happens that a man uses his limbs to do a work but his heart and tongue do not cooperate in this. Some people commit a sin while their heart is disagreeable and their tongue is invoking Allah for forgiveness, and they confess that they are committing an evil. This is Satan's worship with external limbs. There are other people who commit a crime with a cool mind and express pleasure and satisfaction with the tongue

also. Such people are the worshipers of Satan from outside as well as from inside. (Tafsir Kabir, vol. VII, pp. 103-104).

وَلَقَدْ اَضَلَّ مِنْكُمْ جِبِلًّا كَثِيْرًا ؕ اَفَلَمْ تَكُوْنُوْا تَعْقِلُوْنَ 62

(36:62) Still, he misguided a whole throng of you. Did you have no sense?[54]

54. That is, If you had been deprived of reason and you had served your enemy instead of your Lord, you could have the reason to offer an excuse. But you, in fact, had been blessed with reason by Allah and you were using it to advantage in all the affairs of the world, and you had been warned by Allah through the Prophets as well, yet, when you were deceived by your enemy and he succeeded in leading you astray, you could not be excused from the responsibility of your folly.

هٰذِهٖ جَهَنَّمُ الَّتِيْ كُنْتُمْ تُوْعَدُوْنَ 63

(36:63) Now this is the Hell of which you were warned.

اِصْلَوْهَا الْيَوْمَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ 64

(36:64) Burn in it on account of your disbelieving.

اَلْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلٰٓى اَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَآ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ اَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا

يَكْسِبُوْنَ 65

(36:65) Today We shall put a seal on their mouths, and their hands will speak to Us and their feet shall bear witness to what they had been doing.[55]

55. This command will be given in respect of the stubborn culprits, who will refuse to confess their crimes, will belie the witnesses, and will also not acknowledge the genuineness of their conduct-book. Then will Allah Almighty command: Well, stop your babbling. Just see what your own limbs say about your misdeeds. In this connection, here only the evidence to be given by the hands and the feet has been mentioned. But at other places it has been said that their eyes and their ears and their tongues, and the very skins of their body, will tell how they had been employed in the world. They should not forget the Day when their own tongues and their own hands and feet will bear testimony to their misdeeds. (Surah An-Noor, Ayat 24) Then, when all will have reached there, their ears and their eyes and their very skins will bear witness against them concerning what they had been doing in the world. (Surah HaMim-Sajdah, Ayat 20). The question arises: On the one hand, Allah says: We shall seal their mouths, and on the other hand, in the verse of Surah An-Noor, He says: Their tongues will bear testimony against them. How can these two things be reconciled? The answer is: To seal the mouths means to deprive them of their power of

speech. That is, after this they will not be able to say whatever they like with their tongue. The testimony of their tongues means that their tongues themselves will tell how the wicked people had used them, what blasphemies and lies they had been made to utter, what mischief they had invented and what falsehoods they had been made to say on different occasions.

وَلَوْ نَشَآءُ لَطَمَسْنَا عَلٰٓى اَعْيُنِهِمْ فَاسْتَبَقُوا الصِّرَاطَ فَاَنّٰى يُبْصِرُوْنَ 66

(36:66) If We so willed, We would have put out their eyes, then they would rush to see the Way, but how would they be able to see?

وَلَوْ نَشَآءُ لَمَسَخْنٰهُمْ عَلٰى مَكَانَتِهِمْ فَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوْا مُضِيًّا وَّلَا يَرْجِعُوْنَ ع 67

(36:67) If We so willed, We would have transformed them where they were so that they would not go forward or backward.[56]

56. After depicting the scene of Resurrection, the people are being warned to this effect: The Resurrection may seem yet far off to you, but even if you consider seriously your life in this world of which you are so proud, you will see how helpless you are in the powerful grip of Allah. Your eyes by virtue of whose sight you are carrying out all your obligations in the world can be blinded at one command of Allah. Your legs on whose strength you are showing all this activity can become paralyzed as and when Allah wills. As long as the powers and capabilities granted by Allah continue to function, you remain lost in the arrogance of your self, but as soon as one of them fails to function, you come to understand how helpless you are.

وَمَنْ نُّعَمِّرْهُ نُنَكِّسْهُ فِى الْخَلْقِ ؕ اَفَلَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ 68

(36:68) Whomsoever We grant a long life, We reverse him in his constitution.[57] Do they still not understand?

57. "Reverse him in creation," means that in old age Allah turns him back to the state of childhood. He becomes unable to stand and walk without the help and support of others; he is fed by others; he urinates and defecates in bed; talks childishly and is laughed at by others. In short, towards the end of life he returns to the same state of weakness with which he had started life in this world.

وَمَا عَلَّمْنٰهُ الشِّعْرَ وَمَا يَنْۢبَغِىْ لَهٗ ؕ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا ذِكْرٌ وَّقُرْاٰنٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ۙ 69

(36:69) We did not teach him (to wit, the Messenger) poetry and it does not behove him.[58] This is none but an Admonition, and a Clear Book

58. This is a rejoinder to the disbelievers, who slighted the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his message by branding him a poet when he preached Tauhid and talked of the Hereafter,

life-after-death, and Hell and Heaven. (For further explanation, see (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 224-227) and the E.Ns thereof).

لِّيُنذِرَ مَن كَانَ حَيًّا وَيَحِقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ 70

(36:70) that he may warn him who is alive[59] and establish an argument against those that deny the Truth.

59. Every living person means: Every person who is capable of thinking and understanding, who is not like a stone, which neither hears nor understands nor moves from its place however rationally and sympathetically one may explain the distinction between the truth and falsehood and give admonition before him.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا خَلَقْنَا لَهُم مِّمَّا عَمِلَتْ أَيْدِينَا أَنْعَامًا فَهُمْ لَهَا مَالِكُونَ 71

(36:71) Do they not see Our handiwork:[60] We created for them cattle which they own?

60. The word "hands" has been used metaphorically for Allah. This does not mean that, God forbid, Allah has a body and He works with the hands like human beings, but it means to impress that Allah has made these things Himself, and none else has any share in the matter of their creation.

وَذَلَّلْنَاهَا لَهُمْ فَمِنْهَا رَكُوبُهُمْ وَمِنْهَا يَأْكُلُونَ 72

(36:72) We have subjected the cattle to them so that some of them they ride and eat the flesh of others.

وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ وَمَشَارِبُ ۖ أَفَلَا يَشْكُرُونَ 73

(36:73) They derive a variety of benefits and drinks from them. Will they, then, not give thanks?[61]

61. It is ingratitude to regard a blessing as a gift of someone other than the donor, to be grateful to another for it, and to cherish the hope of receiving it or to seek it from another than the donor. Likewise, it is also ingratitude that one should use a blessing against the will of the donor. Therefore, a mushrik or a disbeliever or a hypocrite or a sinful person cannot be regarded as a grateful servant of God when he utters words of thankfulness only with the tongue. The disbelievers of Makkah did not deny that the cattle had been created by Allah; none of them said that the other deities had any hand in their creation. But despite knowing all this when they paid homage to their deities for the blessings granted by Allah, presented offerings before them and prayed to them for more blessings and offered sacrifices for their sake, their verbal gratitude became meaningless. That is why Allah has regarded them as guilty of ingratitude and thanklessness.

وَاتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اٰلِهَةً لَّعَلَّهُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ ؕ 74

(36:74) They set up deities apart from Allah, hoping that they will receive help from them.

لَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ نَصْرَهُمْ ۙ وَهُمْ لَهُمْ جُنْدٌ مُّحْضَرُوْنَ 75

(36:75) Those deities can render them no help. Yet these devotees act as though they were an army in waiting for them.[62]

62. That is, the poor false gods themselves are dependent upon their worshipers for their survival and their safety and their needs. But for their multitudes they could not survive as gods even for a day. These people are behaving as their humble servants. They are setting up and decorating their shrines; they carry out propaganda for them; they fight and quarrel with others for their sake. Then only are they recognized as gods. They are not the real God, Who, whether someone recognizes Him or not, is ruling over the whole universe by His own might and authority.

فَلَا يَحْزُنْكَ قَوْلُهُمْ ۘ اِنَّا نَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّوْنَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُوْنَ 76

(36:76) Let not their words grieve you. Surely We know all things about them, what they conceal and what they reveal.[63]

63. The address is to the Prophet (peace be upon him). Here the allusion is to the campaign of vilification which the chiefs of the disbelievers of Makkah were carrying on against him. They knew in their hearts and acknowledged in their private assemblies that the charges they brought against him were absolutely baseless. In order to create suspicions against him in the minds of the people, they branded him a poet, sorcerer, magician, madman, etc. But their consciences recognized, and they also acknowledged before one another, that whatever they were uttering was false, which they were forging only to frustrate his mission. That is why Allah says to His Prophet: Do not grieve at their absurd and meaningless talk. Those who are opposing and resisting the truth with falsehood shall ultimately meet with failure in this world and see their evil end in the Hereafter, too.

اَوَلَمْ يَرَ الْاِنْسَانُ اَنَّا خَلَقْنٰهُ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ فَاِذَا هُوَ خَصِيْمٌ مُّبِيْنٌ 77

(36:77) Does[64] man not see that We created him of a sperm drop, and lo! he is flagrantly contentious?[65]

64. Here the disbelievers' question cited in (verse 48) above, is being answered by reason and argument. The question: When will the threat of Resurrection be carried out? had not been asked with a view to find out the exact date of the coming of the Hereafter. But they asked it because they thought it was impossible, rather irrational, that human beings would be raised back to life after death. That is why, in reply to their question, arguments are being

given for the possibility of the Hereafter. According to the traditions related by Ibn Abbas, Qatadah and Said bin Jubair, one of the chiefs of Makkah, on this occasion, came up with a rotten bone of a dead person, from the graveyard. He broke and crushed it into pieces before the Prophet (peace be upon him) and scattering its particles in the air, said: O Muhammad, you say that the dead will be raised back to life. Tell us who will give life to these decayed and rotten bones? The answer was given immediately in the form of these verses.

65. That is, We caused the sperm-drop which contained nothing but the basic germ of life to develop to an extent that it started moving and eating like the animals. Furthermore, it has developed such powers of intellect and reasoning and disputation and speech, which are not possessed by any animal; so much so that now he dares stand up as an adversary before his Creator!

وَضَرَبَ لَنَا مَثَلًا وَّنَسِيَ خَلْقَهٗ ؕ قَالَ مَنْ يُّحْيِ الْعِظَامَ وَهِيَ رَمِيْمٌ 78

(36:78) He strikes for Us[66] a similitude and forgot his own creation.[67] He says: "Who will quicken the bones when they have decayed?"

66. That is, he regards Us powerless and weak like the creation, and thinks that just as man cannot raise the dead back to life, so also can't We.

67. "Forgets his own creation": Forgets that We created the basic germ of life from dead matter, which became the means of his creation; then We caused the germ to develop to such an extent that now he stands before Us as a disputant.

قُلْ يُحْيِيْهَا الَّذِيْٓ اَنْشَاَهَآ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ؕ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ خَلْقٍ عَلِيْمُ ۙ 79

(36:79) Say: "He Who first brought them into being will quicken them; He knows well about every kind of creation;

الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الشَّجَرِ الْاَخْضَرِ نَارًا فَاِذَآ اَنْتُمْ مِّنْهُ تُوْقِدُوْنَ 80

(36:80) He Who created from a green tree a fire for you, a fire to light your stoves with."[68]

68. It either means that He has placed the inflammable matter in the green trees due to which people kindle fire from the pieces of wood. Or, it is an allusion to the markh and afar trees, whose green branches the Arabs struck against each other to produce the sparks. In ancient times the Bedouins used this method of kindling the fire and might even be using the same today.

أَوَلَيْسَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِقٰدِرٍ عَلٰٓى أَنْ يَّخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُمْ ؕ بَلٰى ۚ وَهُوَ الْخَلّٰقُ

الْعَلِيْمُ 81

(36:81) Has He Who created the heavens and the earth no power to create the likes of them? Yes, indeed, He is the Superb Creator.

إِنَّمَآ أَمْرُهٗٓ إِذَآ أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَّقُوْلَ لَهٗ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ 82

(36:82) Whenever He wills a thing, He just commands it "Be" and it is.

فَسُبْحٰنَ الَّذِيْ بِيَدِهٖ مَلَكُوْتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ ع 83

(36:83) Holy is He Who has full control over everything, and to Him you shall all be recalled.

37. Surah As Saaffat (Those who set the ranks)

Name

The name is derived from the word *was saaffat* with which the Surah begins.

Period of Revelation

The subject matter and the style show that this Surah probably was sent down in the middle of the Makkan period, or perhaps in the last stage of the middle Makkan period. The style clearly indicates that antagonism is raging strong in the background and the Holy Prophet and his Companions are passing through very difficult and discouraging circumstances.

Subject Matter and Theme

The disbelievers of Makkah have been severely warned for their attitude of mockery and derision with which they were responding to the Holy Prophet's message of *Tauhid* and the Hereafter and for their utter refusal to accept and acknowledge his claim to Prophethood. In the end, they have been plainly warned that the Prophet whom they are mocking and ridiculing will overwhelm them in spite of their power and self and they will find the army of Allah encamping in the very courtyards of their houses (vv. 171-179. This notice was given at a time when there appeared no chance whatever of the Holy Prophet's success and triumph. The Muslims (who have been called Allah's army in these verses) were being made the target of severe persecution. Three- fourth of their population had already emigrated and hardly 40 to 50 of the Companions were left with the Holy Prophet in Makkah who were experiencing all sorts of the excesses with utter helplessness. Under such circumstances, in view of the apparent conditions, no one could believe that the Holy Prophet and the handful of his ill equipped Companions would ultimately attain dominance. The people rather thought that the new movement would end and be buried in the ravines of Makkah. But hardly 15 to 16 years had passed when on the conquest of Makkah precisely the same thing happened of which the disbelievers had been forewarned.

Along with administering warnings, Allah in this Surah has done full justice also to the theme of inducement and instruction in a balanced way. Brief but impressive arguments have been given about the validity of the doctrines of *Tauhid* and the Hereafter. Criticism has been made of the creed of the *mushrikin* to show the absurdity of their beliefs; they have been informed of the evil consequences of their deviations, which have been contrasted with the splendid results of the faith and righteous acts. Then, in continuation of the same, Precedents from past history have been cited to show how Allah had been treating His Prophets and their followers : how He has been favoring His faithful servants and punishing their deniers and rejectors.

The most instructive of the historical narratives presented in this Surah is the important event of the pious life of the Prophet Abraham, who became ready to sacrifice his only son as soon as he received an inspiration from Allah. In this there was a lesson not only for the disbelieving Quraish, who waxed proud of their blood relationship with him, but also for the Muslims who had believed in Allah and His Messenger. By narrating this event they were told what is the essence and the real spirit of Islam, and how a true believer should be

ready to sacrifice his all for the pleasure and approval of Allah after he has adopted it as his Faith and Creed.

The last verses of the Surah were not only a warning for the disbelievers but also a good news for the believers who were passing through highly unfavorable and discouraging conditions on account of their supporting and following the Holy Prophet. In these verses they were given the good news that they should not be disheartened at the hardships and difficulties they had to encounter in the beginning, for in the end they alone would attain dominance, and the standard bearers of falsehood, who appeared to be dominant at the time would be overwhelmed and vanquished at their hands. A few years later the turn the events took, proved that it was not an empty consolation but an inevitable reality of which they had been foretold in order to strengthen their hearts.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

وَالصّٰٓفّٰتِ صَفًّا ۙ 1

(37:1) By those who range themselves in rows;

فَالزّٰجِرٰتِ زَجۡرًا ۙ 2

(37:2) by those who reprove severely,

فَالتّٰلِیٰتِ ذِکۡرًا ۙ 3

(37:3) and those who recite the Exhortation;[1]

1. The majority of the commentators agree that all these three groups imply the groups of the angels, and the same explanation of it has been reported from Abdullah bin Masud, Ibn Abbas, Qatadah, Masruq Said bin Jubair, Ikrimah, Mujahid, Suddi, Ibn Zaid and Rabi bin Anas. Some commentators have given other commentaries also, but this commentary is more in keeping with the context. The words "range in ranks" refer to the fact that all the angels who arc administering the affairs of the universe, are the humble servants of Allah, and are ever ready to carry out any service and implement any of His commands. This theme has been further repeated in (verse 165)below, where the angels say with regard to themselves: "We are the ranged servants (of Allah)."

As for "drive away with strength", some commentators think that it refers to those angels who drive the clouds and arrange the rainfall. Although this meaning is not incorrect either, the meaning which is more relevant to the following context is that among these angels there is also a group of those, who scold and curse the disobedient people and the culprits, and this scolding and cursing is not merely verbal but it rains on human beings in the form of natural disasters and calamities.

"To recite the reminder" implies that among these angels there are also those, who perform the service of admonition in order to draw the people's attention to the truth. This, they do by bringing about natural calamities from which the heedful take heed, and by bringing down the teachings to the Prophets, and in the form of revelations with which the pious men are blessed through them.

إِنَّ إِلٰهَكُمْ لَوَاحِدٌ ۟ 4

(37:4) surely your God is One,[2]

2. This is the truth to impress which an oath has been taken by the angels bearing the above-mentioned qualities. In other words, what is meant to be said is: The whole system of the universe which is functioning in the service of Allah, and all those manifestations of this universe which bring the evil consequences of deviation from the service of Allah before men, testify that the "Deity" of men is One and only One."

The word "Ilah" applies to two meanings.

(1) The Deity who is actually being served and worshiped.

(2) The Deity who, in reality, is worthy of being served and worshiped.

Here, the word "Ilah" has been used in the second meaning, for, as far as the first meaning is concerned, men have adopted many other deities. That is why we have translated Ilahas the Real Deity.

رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَرَبُّ الْمَشَارِقِ ۟ 5

(37:5) the Lord of the heavens and the earth and of whatever lies between the two, the Lord[3] of the Easts.[4]

3. The truth that has been conveyed in these verses is: The Master and Ruler of the Universe is the Real Deity of men. He alone can be, and should be the Deity. It would be utterly irrational that the Rabb (i.e. Master, Ruler, Guardian and Sustainer) of the man should be one but his Ilah (Deity) another. The basic reason for worship is that man should naturally bow down before and acknowledge the superiority of him who can bring him harm and good, who can fulfill his needs and requirements, who can make or mar his destiny and has power over his life and survival itself. If man understands this, he will automatically understand that to worship the one who has no power and not to worship Him Who has All the powers are both against reason and nature. The One who alone is worthy of worship is He who possesses the powers. As far as the powerless beings are concerned, they are neither worthy of worship, nor is it in any way profitable to worship and pray to them, for it is not in their power to take any action whatsoever on man's petitions and prayers. To bow before them humbly and to petition them would be as foolish and meaningless an act as to bow before and petition another one who has himself gone before a ruler to make obeisance and submit his petitions.

4. The sun does not always rise at the same point but at a different point every day. Moreover, it does not rise at one and the same time for the whole world but rises at different times for the different parts of the earth. That is why the plural "mashariq" (Easts) has been used to indicate the different points at which the sun rises according to the season of the year. The corresponding word "magharib" (Wests) has not been used because Mashariq itself points to Magharib However, in Surah Al-Maarij, the word magharib also has been used along with mashariq: Rabb-almashariqi wal-magharib.

إِنَّا زَيَّنَّا السَّمَآءَ الدُّنْيَا بِزِينَةِ ٱلْكَوَاكِبِ ۙ 6

(37:6) We have adorned the lower heaven with the adornment of the stars[5]

5. "Lower heaven": The nearest heaven which can be seen with the naked eye, without the help of a telescope. The worlds beyond which can be seen through the telescopes of different powers, and the worlds which have not so far been observed through any means, are the distant heavens. In this connection, one should also note that "sama" is not something definite and determined, but man generally has been using this word and its other synonyms for the heavens since the earliest times.

وَحِفْظًا مِّنْ كُلِّ شَيْطَٰنٍ مَّارِدٍ ۚ 7

(37:7) and have protected it from every rebellious satan.[6]

6. That is, heaven is not merely empty space so that anyone who likes may enter it, but it has been fortified strongly, and its different regions have been bounded by such strong barriers that it is impossible for any rebel satan to exceed them. Every star and planet in the universe has its own circle and sphere escaping from which is as difficult as entering it. With the naked eye one can only see empty space, but, in reality, there are countless regions in space which have been even more strongly fortified and protected than they could be by steel walls. One can imagine and estimate the strength of these barriers by the difficulties man is experiencing in the way of reaching the moon, which is our nearest neighbor in space. Similar difficulties prevent the other creation of the earth, the jinns, from ascending towards the heavens.

لَّا يَسَّمَّعُونَ إِلَى الْمَلَإِ الْأَعْلَىٰ وَيُقْذَفُونَ مِن كُلِّ جَانِبٍ ۖ 8

(37:8) These satans cannot listen to what transpires in the High Council for they are pelted away from every side

دُحُورًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ وَاصِبٌ ۙ 9

(37:9) and are repelled. Theirs is an unceasing chastisement.

إِلَّا مَنْ خَطِفَ الْخَطْفَةَ فَأَتْبَعَهُ شِهَابٌ ثَاقِبٌ 10

(37:10) And if any is able to snatch a fragment, he is pursued by a piercing flame.[7]

7. To understand this one should keep in view the fact that, in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), soothsaying was in great vogue in Arabia. The soothsayers used to make predictions, give news of the unseen, tell the whereabouts of the lost properties and articles, and the people used to visit them to know the events of their past and future lives. These soothsayers claimed that they had some jinns and satans under their control who brought them all sorts of news. In this environment when the Prophet (peace be upon him) was appointed to Prophethood, and he began to recite the verses of the Quran, which described the past history and contained news of the future, and also stated that an angel brought him these verses, his opponents immediately branded him a soothsayer and started telling others that, like the other soothsayers, he too was associated with a satan, who brought him news from the heavens, which he presented as revelations from Allah. To refute this accusation, Allah says: The satans have no access to heaven. They have no power to hear the conversations of the angels and bring its news for others. If by chance a little of it enters the ear of a satan, and he tries to bring it down, he is followed by a flashing flame. In other words, it means: The grand system of the universe, which is functioning under the agency of the angels has been firmly guarded and secured against any interference of the satans. Not to speak of interfering in it, they do not even have the power to obtain any kind of information about it. (For further explanation, see (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 17-18)and the E.Ns thereof).

فَاسْتَفْتِهِمْ أَهُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمْ مَّنْ خَلَقْنَا ۚ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُمْ مِّنْ طِينٍ لَّازِبٍ 11

(37:11) So ask them (that is, human beings): "Were they harder to create than the objects We created?"[8] We created them from sticky clay.[9]

8. This is an answer to the suspicions of the disbelievers of Makkah, which they presented about the Hereafter. They thought that the Hereafter was not possible, for it is impossible that the dead men should be recreated. In answer to it, Allah presents arguments for the possibility of the Hereafter and asks: If you think that the recreation of the dead men is a very difficult task which We do not have the power to accomplish, do you think it is easy to create the earth and the heavens and the countless things that they contain? Why don't you use your common sense? Do you think that God for Whom it was not at all difficult to create this great universe and Who has created you in the first instance, will not have the power to create you once again?

9. That is, man is not a difficult thing to make. He has been created from clay, and can again be created from the same clay. "Created them from sticky clay" means that the first man was created directly from the clay and then his race was perpetuated by means of the sperm drop. It also means that every man has been created from the sticky clay, for the whole substance of man's body is obtained from the earth. The sperm drop of which he is created is a product of the food, and all the substances which make up his physical being, from the time he is conceived till his death, are also supplied by the food. The source of the food,

whether animal flesh or vegetable, is ultimately the same earth which, in combination with water produces corn and vegetables and fruit to become food for man, and nourish the animals, which supply milk and flesh for the use of man.

Thus, the basis of the argument is: Man could not be living today if the earth and clay had not become the source of life for him. And if it is possible today to create life in it, as your own existence is a clear and definite pointer to this possibility, why should it be impossible to bring about your re-creation from the same earth tomorrow.

بَلۡ عَجِبۡتَ وَيَسۡخَرُوۡنَ ۖ 12

(37:12) You marvel (at the wondrous creations of Allah) and they scoff at it,

وَاِذَا ذُكِّرُوۡا لَا يَذۡكُرُوۡنَ ۖ 13

(37:13) and when they are admonished, they pay no heed;

وَاِذَا رَاَوۡا اٰيَةً يَّسۡتَسۡخِرُوۡنَ ۖ 14

(37:14) and if they see any Sign, they laugh it away

وَقَالُوۡۤا اِنۡ هٰذَاۤ اِلَّا سِحۡرٌ مُّبِيۡنٌ ۖ 15

(37:15) and say: "This is nothing but plain sorcery.[10]

10. That is, this person is talking of the world of magic in which the dead will rise, and will be produced before a court and sent to Heaven and Hell, or it may also mean: This person is talking like a madman. What he talks is a clear proof that somebody has worked magic on him; otherwise a sensible person could not talk such things.

ءَاِذَا مِتۡنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَّعِظَامًا ءَاِنَّا لَمَبۡعُوۡثُوۡنَ ۙ 16

(37:16) Is it ever possible that after we die and are reduced to dust and (a skeleton of) bones, we will be raised to life?

اَوَاٰبَآؤُنَا الۡاَوَّلُوۡنَ ؕ 17

(37:17) And so also shall our forefathers of yore be raised to life?"

قُلۡ نَعَمۡ وَاَنۡتُمۡ دٰخِرُوۡنَ ۚ 18

(37:18) Tell them: “Yes; and you are utterly helpless (against Allah).”[11]

11. That is, Allah can make of you whatever He likes. When He willed, you came into being forthwith; when He wills, you will die at one command by Him; and then whenever He wills, His one command will raise you back to life.

فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ زَجْرَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ فَإِذَا هُمْ يَنظُرُونَ 19

(37:19) There will be a single stern rebuff and lo, they will be observing with their own eyes (all that they had been warned against).[12]

12. That is, when the time comes for this, it will not be difficult to reestablish the whole world. Just a single shout will be enough to make the people to wake up. Here, the word “shout” is very meaningful. It depicts the Resurrection as though the people who had died since the beginning of the creation till the last Day were lying asleep, and a sudden command to them to wake up will cause them to rise up all at once.

وَقَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا هَٰذَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ 20

(37:20) They will then say: “Woe for us. This is the Day of Judgement.”

هَٰذَا يَوْمُ الْفَصْلِ الَّذِي كُنتُم بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ ۚ 21

(37:21) “Yes, this is the Day of Final Decision that you used to deny as a lie.”[13]

13. It may be that this is said by the believers, or by the angels; or it may be, as it were, the common expression of the conditions prevailing in the plain of Resurrection or it may as well be another reaction of the people themselves. That is, they may be saying in their hearts. In the world, you lived in a way as if no Day of Judgment would ever come. Now you have come to your doom. This is the same Day that you used to deny.

احْشُرُوا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَأَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ ۙ 22

(37:22) (Then will the command be given): “Muster all the wrong-doers[14] and their spouses[15] and the deities whom they used to serve

14. “The unjust people” does not only imply those who committed injustices in the world, but as a Quranic term zalamo implies to every such person, who might have adopted the way of rebellion and disobedience against Allah.

15. The word “azwaj” in the original text might also imply their wives, who were their associates in this rebellion, and also all those people who were rebellious and disobedient like them. Moreover it may also mean that the culprits of different categories will be gathered together in separate groups.

مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ فَاهۡدُوۡهُمۡ اِلٰى صِرَاطِ الۡجَحِيۡمِ 23

(37:23) apart from Allah,[16] and direct them to the path of Hell,

16. "gods" here implies two kinds of the gods.

(1) Those men and satans who themselves desired that the people should worship them instead of Allah.

(2) Those idols and trees and stones, etc., which have actually been worshiped in the world.

The first kind of the gods will be included among the culprits themselves and will be led to Hell for punishment. The other kind of them will be thrown into Hell along with their worshipers so that they constantly feel ashamed of and continue to regret their follies. Besides, there is also a third kind of the gods, who have been worshiped in the world, but without their own consent and knowledge. They rather forbade the people to worship anyone but Allah, e.g. the angels, prophets and saints. Obviously, this kind of the gods will not be included among the gods who will be driven to Hell along with their worshipers.

وَقِفُوۡهُمۡ اِنَّهُمۡ مَّسۡـُٔوۡلُوۡنَ ۙ 24

(37:24) and detain them there; they will be called to account.

مَا لَـكُمۡ لَا تَنَاصَرُوۡنَ 25

(37:25) How is it that you are not helping one another?

بَلۡ هُمُ الۡيَوۡمَ مُسۡتَسۡلِمُوۡنَ 26

(37:26) Indeed, today they are surrendering themselves completely."[17]

17. The first sentence will be addressed to the culprits, and the second to the common spectators, who will be watching the scene of the culprits' departure for Hell. This sentence itself tells of the general conditions at the time. It tells how the haughty and stubborn culprits of the world will be moving towards Hell meekly and without showing any resistance. Somewhere some kind will be seen being pushed about, and no one from among his courtiers will come forward to rescue "his majesty". Somewhere some conqueror of the world and some dictator will be moving away in humiliation and disgrace, and his brave army itself will deliver him for the punishment. Somewhere some saint or some holy father will be seen being thrown into Hell, and no one of his disciples will bother to save him from disgrace. Somewhere some leader will be trudging helplessly towards Hell, and those who used to glorify and applaud him in the world will turn away their eyes from him. So much so that the one who was ever prepared to sacrifice everything for the beloved in the world, will feel least concerned to save him from his plight. By depicting this scene Allah wants to impress how the relationships of man with man, which are based on rebellion against Allah

in the world, will break in the Hereafter, and how the pride of those who are involved in arrogance and conceit here will be ruined.

وَاَقۡبَلَ بَعۡضُهُمۡ عَلٰى بَعۡضٍ يَّتَسَآءَلُوۡنَ 27

(37:27) They will then turn towards each other (and start wrangling).

قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّكُمۡ كُنۡتُمۡ تَاۡتُوۡنَنَا عَنِ الۡيَمِيۡنِ 28

(37:28) (The followers will say to their leaders): "You used to come to us from the right hand."[18]

18. The word yameen in Arabic is used for several meanings. It may mean use of the force, or well-wishing, or swearing of an oath. Accordingly, the verse would mean.

(1) You compelled us into following error and deviation.

(2) You deceived us by posing as our well-wishers.

(3) You swore oaths to satisfy us that what you were presenting was the very truth.

قَالُوۡا بَلۡ لَّمۡ تَكُوۡنُوۡا مُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ۚ 29

(37:29) They will say: "Nay, you yourselves were not the ones who would believe.

وَمَا كَانَ لَنَا عَلَيۡكُمۡ مِّنۡ سُلۡطٰنٍ ۚ بَلۡ كُنۡتُمۡ قَوۡمًا طٰغِيۡنَ 30

(37:30) We had no power over you. You were a rebellious people,

فَحَقَّ عَلَيۡنَا قَوۡلُ رَبِّنَا ۖ اِنَّا لَذَآئِقُوۡنَ 31

(37:31) and so we became deserving of the Word of our Lord that we shall be made to suffer chastisement.

فَاَغۡوَيۡنٰكُمۡ اِنَّا كُنَّا غٰوِيۡنَ 32

(37:32) So we led you astray; we ourselves were strayed."[19]

19. For explanation see (E.Ns 51, 52, 53 of Surah Saba). 3

فَاِنَّهُمۡ يَوۡمَئِذٍ فِى الۡعَذَابِ مُشۡتَرِكُوۡنَ 33

(37:33) On that Day, they will all share the chastisement.[20]

20. That is, the followers as well as the guides, misleaders as well as the misled, all shall suffer the same torment. Neither will the followers' excuse be heeded that they did not go astray but had been led astray, nor the guides' excuse accepted that the people themselves were not desirous of following the right way.

إِنَّا كَذَٰلِكَ نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِينَ 34

(37:34) Thus do We treat the culprits.

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ۙ 35

(37:35) Whenever it was said to them: "There is no true deity apart from Allah," they waxed proud

وَيَقُولُونَ أَئِنَّا لَتَارِكُو آلِهَتِنَا لِشَاعِرٍ مَّجْنُونٍ ۖ 36

(37:36) and said: "Shall we forsake our deities for the sake of a distracted poet?"

بَلْ جَاءَ بِالْحَقِّ وَصَدَّقَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ 37

(37:37) (They say so although) he brought the Truth and confirmed the veracity of the Messengers.[21]

21. Confirmation of the Messengers has three meanings and all the three are implied here.

(1) That he had not opposed any former Messenger so that the believers of that Messenger could have a rational ground of prejudice against him; he had rather confirmed all the former Messengers sent by God.

(2) That he had not brought any new or novel thing, but he had presented the same that the former Messengers of God had been presenting from the very beginning.

(3) That he truly fulfilled and corresponded to the predictions that the former Messengers had made concerning him.

إِنَّكُمْ لَذَائِقُو الْعَذَابِ الْأَلِيمِ ۚ 38

(37:38) (They will be told): "You shall taste the grievous chastisement.

وَمَا تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ۙ 39

(37:39) You will only be recompensed according to your deeds."

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ 40

(37:40) But Allah's chosen servants (shall be spared this woeful end).

أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ رِزْقٌ مَّعْلُومٌ ۙ 41

(37:41) For them awaits a known provision,[22]

22. "A provision, determined": A provision all of whose characteristics have been made known to them, which they are sure to receive, about which they have also the full satisfaction that they will continue to receive it forever, and about which there is no apprehension that they may or may not get it at some time.

فَوَاكِهُ ۖ وَهُم مُّكْرَمُونَ ۙ 42

(37:42) a variety of delicious fruits; and they shall be honoured[23]

23. In this there is also a subtle allusion to the fact that, in Paradise, the food will be provided not to serve as food but for pleasure and delight. That is, the food there will not be meant to replenish the bodily deficiencies through diet, for no deficiency whatever will occur in the body in that eternal life, nor will man have appetite, for appetite is caused by the process of assimilation in the body, nor will the body demand food for its survival. That is why the word fawakih has been used for the different kinds of food in Paradise, which contains the sense of taste and pleasure more than that of nutrition.

فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ ۙ 43

(37:43) in the Gardens of Bliss.

عَلَىٰ سُرُرٍ مُّتَقَابِلِينَ 44

(37:44) They will be seated upon couches set face to face;

يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِم بِكَأْسٍ مِّن مَّعِينٍ ۙ 45

(37:45) a cup filled with wine[24] from its springs,[25] will be passed around to them;[26]

24. Here it has not been mentioned as to who will take these cups of wine round to the dwellers of Paradise. This has been stated at other places. And there will go round to them young boys, exclusively appointed for their service, who will be as lovely as well-guarded pearls. (Surah At- Toor, Ayat 24). They will be attended by brisk-moving boys who will

forever remain boys. If you saw them, you would think they were pearls, scattered. (Surah Ad-Dahr, Ayat 19). Then, its further details are found in the traditions related by Anas and Samurah bin Jundub from the Prophet (peace be upon him), according to which: The children of the mushrikin will be attendants of the dwellers of Paradise. (Abu Daud Tayalisi, Tabarani, Bazzar). Though these traditions are weak as regards their links of transmitters, there are several other Ahadith which mean that children who died young, before attaining maturity, will go to Paradise. Ahadith also show that the children whose parents are blessed with Paradise will live with them so as to be a comfort of the eyes for them. This leaves behind those children whose parents will not go to Paradise. Thus, with regard to them, it seems reasonable that they will be made the attendants of the dwellers of Paradise. (For a detailed discussion of this, see Fath ul-Bari and Umdat ul-Qari: Kitab ul-Janaiz, Bab; Maqila fi-aulad il-mushrikin; Rasail-o-Masail, vol. iii, pp. 177-187).

25. Here the word kaas (cup) only has been used and there is no mention of the wine. But in Arabic the use of kass always implies wine. The cup which contains milk or water, instead of wine, or is empty, is not called kaas. The word kaas is used for a cup only when it contains wine.

26. That is, it will not be the kind of wine that is extracted from rotten fruit and corn in the world, but it will flow naturally from fountains like canals. In Surah Muhammad, the same thing has been described more clearly, thus: And canals will be flowing in it of wine which will be delightful for the drinkers. (verse 15).

بَيۡضَآءَ لَذَّةٍ لِّلشّٰرِبِيۡنَ ۖ 46

(37:46) white, sparkling (wine), a delight to the drinkers.

لَا فِيۡهَا غَوۡلٌ وَّلَا هُمۡ عَنۡهَا يُنۡزَفُوۡنَ 47

(37:47) There will neither be any harm in it for their body nor will it intoxicate their mind.[27]

27. That is, the wine of Paradise will be free from both the evils which are found in the wine of the world. The wine of the world, first of all, afflicts man with its stink; then it embitters his taste, upsets his stomach, affects his mind and causes illusion; then it affects the liver and spoils the health generally. Then, when the intoxication is gone, it leaves behind other ill-effects on the body. Its other evil is that man gets drunk with it, talks nonsense and brawls. This is how the wine affects man's mind and reason. Man suffers both these evil effects of the wine only for the sake of delight and pleasure. Allah says that the wine of Paradise will certainly afford and give full pleasure and delight, but it will be free from the kinds of the evils that go with the worldly wine.

وَعِنۡدَهُمۡ قٰصِرٰتُ الطَّرۡفِ عِيۡنٌ ۙ 48

(37:48) Theirs shall be wide-eyed maidens[28] with bashful, restrained glances,[29]

28. Probably, these will be the girls who died before attaining the age of discretion in the world, and whose parents did not deserve to enter Paradise. This can be said on the basis of analogy that just as the boys similarly placed will be appointed for the service of the dwellers of Paradise, and they will ever remain boys, so will the girls be made the houris and they will ever remain young and beautiful. The correct knowledge, however, is with Allah.

29. "Restraining their looks": Restraining their looks from everyone except their husbands.

كَاَنَّهُنَّ بَيْضٌ مَّكْنُوْنٌ 49

(37:49) so delicate as the hidden peel under an egg's shell.[30]

30. The words of the text actually mean this: As if they were the hidden or well preserved eggs. The commentators have given different interpretations of these words, but the correct commentary is the one which Umm Salamah has related from the Prophet (peace be upon him). She says that when she asked the Prophet (peace be upon him), the meaning of this verse, he said: Their delicacy and elegance and tenderness will be like the thin skin which is there between the shell of the egg and its fleshy part. (Ibn Jarir).

فَاَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ يَّتَسَآءَلُوْنَ 50

(37:50) Then some of them will turn to others, and will ask each other.

قَالَ قَآئِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ اِنِّيْ كَانَ لِيْ قَرِيْنٌ ۙ 51

(37:51) One of them will say: "I had a companion in the world

يَّقُوْلُ اَئِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُصَدِّقِيْنَ 52

(37:52) who used to say: Are you also one of those who confirm the Truth (of life after death)?

ءَاِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَّعِظَامًا ءَاِنَّا لَمَدِيْنُوْنَ 53

(37:53) After we are dead and have become all dust and bones shall we still be requited?'[31]

31. That is, were you also one of those credulous people who put their faith in an irrational and impossible thing like life-after-death.

قَالَ هَلْ اَنْتُمْ مُّطَّلِعُوْنَ 54

(37:54) He will say: Do you wish to know where he is now?'

فَاطَّلَعَ فَرَاٰهُ فِيْ سَوَآءِ الْجَحِيْمِ 55

(37:55) Then he will look downwards, and will see him in the depths of Hell.

قَالَ تَاللّٰهِ اِنْ كِدْتَّ لَتُرْدِيْنِ ۙ 56

(37:56) He will say to him: By Allah, you almost ruined me.

وَلَوْلَا نِعْمَةُ رَبِّيْ لَكُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِيْنَ 57

(37:57) But for Allah's favour, I should be one of those who have been mustered here.[32]

32. This shows how powerful will be man's hearing, seeing and speaking powers in the Hereafter. Sitting in Paradise he bends his head a little and is able to see a person, who is undergoing torment thousands of miles away in Hell, without the agency of a television set. Then, they not only just see each other, but also commune with each other directly without the medium of the telephone or radio and they speak and hear each other over vast distances.

اَفَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَيِّتِيْنَ ۙ 58

(37:58) So, are we not going to die,

اِلَّا مَوْتَتَنَا الْاُوْلٰى وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِيْنَ 59

(37:59) except for our first death? And shall we suffer no chastisement?'"[33]

33. The style clearly shows that while speaking to his friend in Hell, the dweller of Paradise suddenly starts talking to himself. He speaks these three sentences in a way as if he found himself in a state much better than that he ever expected and imagined for himself, and now being beside himself with wonder and joy he is engaged in a sort of soliloquy. In such a state the speaker does not speak to an addressee, nor the questions he asks are meant to find out something from somebody, but in this state the man's own feelings find expression through his tongue. The dweller of Paradise, while speaking to the dweller of Hell, suddenly starts feeling how he has been favored by good fortune: now there is neither death nor any torment: all troubles and distresses have come to an end and he has been blessed with immortality. Under this very feeling he exclaims: Well are we not to die any other than our first death? Are we not to be punished?

إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَهُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ 60

(37:60) Surely this is the supreme triumph.

لِمِثْلِ هَٰذَا فَلْيَعْمَلِ الْعَامِلُونَ 61

(37:61) For the like of it should the workers work.

أَذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ نُّزُلًا أَمْ شَجَرَةُ الزَّقُّومِ 62

(37:62) Is this a better hospitality or the tree of al-Zaqqum?[34]

34. Zaqqum is a tree of the cactus species found in Tihamah. It is bitter in taste, obnoxious in smell and sheds a milk like juice when cut or broken.

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهَا فِتْنَةً لِّلظَّالِمِينَ 63

(37:63) We have made this tree a trial for the wrong-doers.[35]

35. That is, on hearing this, the disbelievers get a new opportunity to taunt the Quran and mock the Prophet (peace be upon him). They ridicule it saying: Listen another strange thing: A tree will grow in the blazing fire of Hell.

إِنَّهَا شَجَرَةٌ تَخْرُجُ فِي أَصْلِ الْجَحِيمِ ۖ 64

(37:64) It is a tree that grows in the nethermost part of Hell.

طَلْعُهَا كَأَنَّهُ رُءُوسُ الشَّيَاطِينِ 65

(37:65) Its spathes are like the heads of satans.[36]

36. Nobody should have the misunderstanding that since no one has seen the head of Satan, it was no use likening the buds of zaqqum to it. This is, in fact, an imaginative kind of the simile, and is employed in the literature of every language. For example, in order to give an idea of the rare beauty of a woman, it is said she is a fairy, and in order to describe her ugliness, it is said that she is a hag or a demon. Likewise, a pious-looking person is described as an angel and a dreadful-looking person as a devil.

فَإِنَّهُمْ لَآكِلُونَ مِنْهَا فَمَالِـُٔونَ مِنْهَا الْبُطُونَ ۖ 66

(37:66) (The people of Hell) will surely eat of it, filling their bellies with it.

ثُمَّ إِنَّ لَهُمْ عَلَيْهَا لَشَوْبًا مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ ۚ 67

(37:67) Then on top of it they will have a brew of boiling water.

ثُمَّ إِنَّ مَرْجِعَهُمْ لَإِلَى الْجَحِيمِ 68

(37:68) Then their return will be to the same blazing Hell.[37]

37. This shows that when the dwellers of Hell will be in distress due to hunger and thirst, they will be driven to the side where there would be the zaqqum trees and the springs of boiling water. When they will have eaten and drunk, they will be brought back to Hell.

إِنَّهُمْ أَلْفَوْا آبَاءَهُمْ ضَالِّينَ ۙ 69

(37:69) These are the ones who found their fathers steeped in error,

فَهُمْ عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِمْ يُهْرَعُونَ 70

(37:70) and they are running in their footsteps.

وَلَقَدْ ضَلَّ قَبْلَهُمْ أَكْثَرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ۙ 71

(37:71) Before them a multitude of people of olden times had erred,

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا فِيهِم مُّنذِرِينَ 72

(37:72) and We had sent among them Messengers to warn them.

فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُنذَرِينَ ۙ 73

(37:73) Observe, then, what was the end of those that had been warned,

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ۚ 74

(37:74) except for the chosen servants of Allah?[38]

38. That is, they never used their own common sense to see whether the way their forefathers had been following was right or wrong; they just blindly adopted the way that they found others following.

وَلَقَدْ نَادٰىنَا نُوْحٌ فَلَنِعْمَ الْمُجِيْبُوْنَ ۖ صلے 75

(37:75) Noah[39] had called upon Us (earlier).[40] See, how excellent We were in answering him!

39. This theme is related with the preceding sentences. A study of them shows why these stories are being narrated here.

40. This refers to the prayer that the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) had at last made to Allah Almighty, being disappointed with his people, after having preached the true faith to them for a very long period of time, without much success. This prayer has been related in Surah Al- Qamar, thus: He called out to his Lord, saying: I am overcome: take now Thy vengeance.(verse 10).

وَنَجَّيْنٰهُ وَاَهْلَهٗ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيْمِ ۖ صلے 76

(37:76) We delivered him and his household from the great calamity;[41]

41. That is, from the severe distress that was being caused to him on account of the continuous opposition and antagonism of a wicked and cruel people. This also contains a subtle allusion that just as the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) and his companions were saved from the great distress, so We will also ultimately save the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions from the great distress that is being caused to them by the people of Makkah.

وَجَعَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهٗ هُمُ الْبٰقِيْنَ ۖ صلے 77

(37:77) and made his offspring the only ones to survive,[42]

42. This can have two meanings.

(1) That the progeny of the people who were opposing the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) was made extinct and the Prophet Noah's progeny alone was allowed to survive.

(2) That the whole human race was made extinct, and only the Prophet Noah's progeny was allowed to inhabit the earth after that. The commentators generally have adopted this second meaning, but the words of the Quran are not explicit in this regard and no one knows the reality except Allah.

وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْاٰخِرِيْنَ ۖ صلے 78

(37:78) and We established for him a good name among posterity.

سَلٰمٌ عَلٰى نُوْحٍ فِى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ 79

(37:79) Peace be upon Noah among all the nations.[43]

43. That is there is none in the world today, who would talk evil of the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him). After the flood till today the world has been praising and speaking well of him for thousands of years.

اِنَّا كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ 80

(37:80) Thus do We reward all those who do good.

اِنَّهٗ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ 81

(37:81) Surely he was one of Our truly believing servants.

ثُمَّ اَغْرَقْنَا الْاٰخَرِيْنَ 82

(37:82) Thereafter We caused the others to be drowned.

وَاِنَّ مِنْ شِيْعَتِهٖ لَاِبْرٰهِيْمَ ۘ 83

(37:83) Abraham was on the self-same way (as Noah).

اِذْ جَآءَ رَبَّهٗ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيْمٍ 84

(37:84) When he came to his Lord with a pure heart,[44]

44. "Approached his Lord": Turned to his Lord sincerely and exclusively; "with a sound heart": With a heart that was free from all kinds of moral evils and weaknesses of faith, free from every trace of unbelief and shirk, doubt and suspicion, from every feeling of disobedience and rebellion, from every crookedness, confusion and complexity, and free from every evil inclination and desire, and a heart that neither cherished any malice and jealousy and ill-will against anyone, nor had any evil intention.

اِذْ قَالَ لِاَبِيْهِ وَقَوْمِهٖ مَاذَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ ۚ 85

(37:85) and said to his father and his people:[45] "Whom do you worship?

45. For further details of this story of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), see (Surah Al-Anaam,Ayats 72-90); (Surah Maryam, Ayats 41-60); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 51-75); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 69-89); (Surah Al- Ankabut, Ayats 16-17) and the E.Ns thereof.

أَئِفْكًا آلِهَةً دُونَ اللَّهِ تُرِيدُونَ ۖ 86

(37:86) Is it false deities that you want to serve rather than Allah?

فَمَا ظَنُّكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ 87

(37:87) What do you think of the Lord of the whole Universe?"[46]

46. That is, why have you formed such a wrong view of Allah? Do you think that the gods that you yourselves have carved out from wood and stone can be like Him, or can be His associates in his attributes and rights? And are you involved in the misunderstanding that you will somehow manage to escape His punishment after you have indulged in such blasphemy?

فَنَظَرَ نَظْرَةً فِي النُّجُومِ ۙ 88

(37:88) Then[47] he looked carefully at the stars[48]

47. The reference is to a particular incident the details of which have been given in (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 71-73)and (Surah Al-Ankabut, AYats 16-27).

48. Ibn Abi Hatim has cited a saying of the famous commentator Qatadah, an immediate follower of the companions, to the effect that the Arabic idiomatic expression, "glanced a glance at the stars," means that he pondered deeply, or that he started thinking seriously. Allama Ibn Kathir has preferred this same view, and this is also supported by the common observation: when a person is confronted by a problem that needs serious consideration, he looks upward or to the sky for a while, and then makes a reply, after due consideration.

فَقَالَ إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ 89

(37:89) and said: "I am sick."[49]

49. This is one of those three things concerning which it is said that the Prophet Abraham had told three lies in his life, whereas it should be ascertained before declaring it a lie, or anything contrary to fact, whether the Prophet Abraham at that time was not suffering from any illness, and therefore, he had made this excuse only as a pretense. If there is no proof, there is no reason why it should be regarded as a lie. For a detailed discussion, please refer to (E.N. 60 of Surah Al-Anbiya)and Rasail-o-Masail, vol. II, pp. 35 to 39. (A book by Abul Aala Moududi).

فَتَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ مُدْبِرِينَ 90

(37:90) So turning their backs, they went away from him.[50]

50. This sentence by itself shows the real state of the affairs. It appears that the people might be going to some fair of theirs. The family of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) might have also asked him to accompany them. He might have excused himself, saying that he was indisposed, and therefore, could not go. Had it been something contrary to fact, the people of the house would have said: You look perfectly normal: you are making a false excuse. But when they accepted his excuse and left him behind, it clearly shows that the Prophet Abraham must at that time be suffering from cough and cold or some other such visible illness on account of which the people of the house agreed to leave him behind.

فَرَاغَ إِلَىٰٓ ءَالِهَتِهِمۡ فَقَالَ أَلَا تَأۡكُلُونَ ج 91

(37:91) Then he went quietly to the (temple of the deities) and said: "What is the matter with you, why do you not eat?[51]

51. This shows that there were different kinds of food placed before the idols in the temple.

مَا لَكُمۡ لَا تَنطِقُونَ 92

(37:92) What is the matter with you, why do you not speak?"

فَرَاغَ عَلَيۡهِمۡ ضَرۡبَۢا بِٱلۡيَمِينِ 93

(37:93) Then he turned upon them, striking them with his right hand,

فَأَقۡبَلُوٓاْ إِلَيۡهِ يَزِفُّونَ 94

(37:94) whereupon people came to him running.[52]

52. Here the story has been told in brief. According to the details given in Surah Al-Anbiya, when they returned and found all their idols broken to pieces in the temple, they started making investigations. Some people said that a young man, called Abraham, had been talking such and such things against idol-worship. At this the multitude demanded that he should be immediately seized and brought before them. Therefore, a group of the people went running to him and brought him before the multitude.

قَالَ أَتَعۡبُدُونَ مَا تَنۡحِتُونَ لا 95

(37:95) Abraham said to them: "Do you worship what you yourselves have carved with your own hands

وَٱللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمۡ وَمَا تَعۡمَلُونَ 96

(37:96) while it is Allah Who has created you and all that you make?"

قَالُوا ابْنُوا لَهُ بُنْيَانًا فَأَلْقُوهُ فِي الْجَحِيمِ 97

(37:97) They spoke among themselves: "Build him a pyre and then throw him into the furnace."

فَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَسْفَلِينَ 98

(37:98) They had contrived an evil plan against him, but We abased them all.[53]

53. The words in(Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 69) are to the effect, We commanded: O fire, be cool and become safe for Abraham. And in(Surah Al-Ankbut, Ayat 24), it has been said: Then Allah saved him from the fire. This proves that those people had actually thrown the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) into the fire, and then Allah had rescued him from it safe and sound. The words of the verse, "So they intended against him a plot, then We made them the lowest" cannot be taken to mean that they had only intended to throw the Prophet Abraham into the fire but could not carry their plan into effect; but when these words are read with the verses cited above, the meaning becomes plain that they had wanted to kill him by casting him into the fire but could not do so, and the Prophet Abraham's miraculous escape proved his superiority and the polytheists were humbled by Allah. The real object of relating this incident is to warn the people of the Quraish to this effect: The way that you have adopted is not the way of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), whose descendants you claim yourselves to be, but his way is the one being presented by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Now, if you plot against him in order to defeat him and frustrate his mission, as the people of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) had done against him, you alone will be defeated in the end, because you cannot defeat Muhammad (peace be upon him).

وَقَالَ إِنِّي ذَاهِبٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ 99

(37:99) Abraham said:[54] "I am going to my Lord;[55] He will guide me.

54. The Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) said these words on his departure after he had been delivered safe from the fire and had decided to leave the country.

55. It mean: I am leaving my home and country for the sake of Allah, for my people have turned hostile to me only because of my turning to Him exclusively; otherwise there was no worldly dispute between them and me because of which I might have had to leave my country. Moreover, I have no place of refuge in the world, to which I may turn. I am leaving my home with full faith and trust only in Allah: I shall go wherever He leads me.

رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ 100

(37:100) Lord, grant me a righteous son."[56]

56. This prayer by itself shows that the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) at that time was childless. From the details given at other places in the Quran, it becomes clear that he had left his country with only one wife and one nephew (the Prophet Lot). Therefore, he naturally desired that Allah should bless him with a righteous child, who could be a source of comfort and consolation for him in a foreign land.

فَبَشَّرْنٰهُ بِغُلٰمٍ حَلِيْمٍ 101

(37:101) (In response to this prayer) We gave him the good news of a prudent boy;[57]

57. From this one should not understand that this good news was given to him immediately following his prayer. In the Quran itself, at another place, this saying of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) has been related: All praise be to Allah who has given me sons like Ishmael and Isaac in my old age. (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 39). This proves that there was an interval of many years between the prayer and this good news. The Bible says that at the birth of the Prophet Ishmael, the Prophet Abraham was 86 years old (Gen. 16: 16) and at the birth of the Prophet Isaac a hundred years. (Gen. 21: 5).

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ قَالَ يٰبُنَيَّ اِنِّيْٓ اَرٰى فِي الْمَنَامِ اَنِّيْٓ اَذْبَحُكَ فَانْظُرْ مَاذَا تَرٰى ؕ قَالَ

يٰٓاَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ ۫ سَتَجِدُنِيْٓ اِنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مِنَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ 102

(37:102) and when he was old enough to go about and work with him, (one day) Abraham said to him: "My son, I see in my dream that I am slaughtering you.[58] So consider (and tell me) what you think."[59] He said: "Do as you are bidden.[60] You will find me, if Allah so wills, among the steadfast."

58. One should note that the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) had dreamed that he was sacrificing his son and not that he had sacrificed him. Although at that time he understood the dream to mean that he should sacrifice his son and on that very basis, he became ready to sacrifice him, with a cool mind, yet the fine point that Allah had in view in making him see the dream has been explained by Himself in (verse 105) below.

59. The object of asking this of the son was not that he would carry out Allah's command only if he agreed, otherwise not, but the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), in fact, wanted to find out how righteous, in actual reality, was his child for whom he had prayed to Allah. If the son himself was found to be ready to lay down his life for the sake of Allah's approval and pleasure, it would mean that the prayer had been fully granted, and the son was not his offspring in the natural way only but was morally and spiritually also a true son.

60. The words clearly tell that the son had not taken the dream of his Prophet father to be a mere dream but a command from Allah. Had it not been a command actually, it was necessary that Allah should have explicitly or implicitly stated that the son of Abraham (peace be upon him) had mistaken it for a command. But the whole context is without any

such allusion. On this very basis, there is the Islamic belief that the dream of the Prophets is never a mere dream, it is also a kind of revelation. Obviously, if a thing, which could become such a fundamental principle in the divine Shariah, had not been based on reality, but had been a mere misunderstanding, it was not possible that Allah should not have refuted it. It is impossible for the one who believes the Quran to be Allah's Word, to accept that such an error and omission could emanate from Allah also.

فَلَمَّآ أَسۡلَمَا وَتَلَّهُۥ لِلۡجَبِينِ ۚ 103

(37:103) When both surrendered (to Allah's command) and Abraham flung the son down on his forehead,[61]

61. That is, the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) did not make his son lie flat on his back but made him lie prostrate lest while slaughtering him the sight of his face should arouse compassion and love and make him shaky. Therefore, he wanted to use the knife from under the throat.

وَنَٰدَيۡنَٰهُ أَن يَٰٓإِبۡرَٰهِيمُ ۙ 104

(37:104) We cried out:[62] "O Abraham,

62. One section of the grammarians says that here "and" has been use to mean "then"; thus, the sentence would be: When the two had submitted themselves (to Allah) and Abraham had flung his son down on his brow, then We called out. But another section of them says that here the answer to the word "when" has been omitted and left for the listener to fill; for it was better to leave such an indescribable thing to the imagination instead of expressing it in words. When Allah might have seen that the old father who had gotten a son after long earnest prayers, has become ready to sacrifice him only for His pleasure and approval; and the son also had became ready to get slaughtered, His infinite Mercy might have been aroused at the sight, and the Master might have felt great love for the father and son. All this can only be imagined. No words would ever describe the scene adequately.

قَدۡ صَدَّقۡتَ ٱلرُّءۡيَآ ۚ إِنَّا كَذَٰلِكَ نَجۡزِي ٱلۡمُحۡسِنِينَ 105

(37:105) you have indeed fulfilled your dream.[63] Thus do We reward the good-doers."[64]

63. That is, "We did not make you see in the dream that you had actually slaughtered your son and he had died, but that you were slaughtering him. That vision you have fulfilled. Now, it is not Our will to take the life of your child. The actual object of the vision has been fulfilled by your submission and preparation to sacrifice him for Our sake."

64. That is, We do not subject the people who adopt the righteous way to trials in order to involve them in trouble and distress and affliction just for the sake of it, but these trials are meant to bring out their excellencies and to exalt them to high ranks. And then We deliver

them safe and sound from the dilemma in which We place them for the sake of the trial. Thus, your willingness and preparation to sacrifice yow son is enough to entitle you to be exalted to the rank that could be attained only by the one who would actually have slaughtered his son for Our approval and pleasure. Thus, We have saved the life of yow child as well as exalted you to this high rank.

إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَهُوَ الْبَلَاءُ الْمُبِينُ 106

(37:106) This was indeed a plain trial.[65]

65. That is, the object was not to get your son slaughtered through you but to test you to see that you did not hold anything of the world dearer than Us.

وَفَدَيْنَاهُ بِذِبْحٍ عَظِيمٍ 107

(37:107) And We ransomed him with a mighty sacrifice,[66]

66. "A great sacrifice": A ram, as mentioned in the Bible and the Islamic traditions, that Allah's angel presented at the time before the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), so that he should sacrifice it instead of his son. This has been called "a great sacrifice" because it was to serve as a ransom from a faithful servant like Abraham for a patient and obedient son like Ishmael, and Allah made it a means of fulfilling the intention of an unprecedented sacrifice. Another reason for calling it "a great sacrifice" is that Allah made it a tradition till the Day of Resurrection that all the believers should offer animal sacrifice on the same date in the entire world so as to keep fresh the memory of the great and unique event signifying faithfulness and devotion.

وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ 108 صلے

(37:108) and We preserved for him a good name among posterity.

سَلَامٌ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ 109

(37:109) Peace be upon Abraham.

كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ 110

(37:110) Thus do We reward the good-doers.

إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ 111

(37:111) Surely he was one of Our believing servants.

وَبَشَّرْنٰهُ بِاِسْحٰقَ نَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ 112

(37:112) And We gave him the good news of Isaac,[67] a Prophet and among the righteous ones.[68]

67. Here, the question arises: Who was the son whom the Prophet Abraham had gotten ready to offer as a sacrifice, and who had willingly offered himself to be slaughtered as a sacrifice? The first answer to this question is given by the Bible; and it is this:

And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: . . . Take now thy son thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." (Gen. 22: 1-2).

In this statement, on the one hand, it is being said that Allah had asked for the offering of the Prophet Isaac, and on the other, that he was Abraham's only son, whereas the Bible itself, at other places, conclusively states that the Prophet Isaac was not the only son of the Prophet Abraham. Consider the following statements of the Bible:

Now Sarai, Abram's wife bore him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said unto Abraham, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abraham hearkened to the voice of Sarai. And Sarai Abraham's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abraham had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her husband Abram to be his wife. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived. (Gen .16: 1-4).

And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael. (16: 11).

And Abraham was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abraham. (16: 16).

And God said unto Abraham: As for Sarai thy wife, I will bless her and give thee a son also of her, and thou shalt call his name Isaac, which Sarai shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year. And Abraham took Ishmael his son and every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him. And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. (Gen. 17: 15- 25).

And Abraham was one hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. (Gen. 21: 5).

This brings out the contradictions of the Bible. It is evident that for 14 years the Prophet Ishmael was the only son of the Prophet Abraham. Now if the offering had been asked of the only son, it was not of Isaac but of Ishmael, for he alone was the only son; and if the

offering of Isaac had been asked, it would be wrong to say that the offering of the only son had been asked.

Now let us consider the Islamic traditions, and they contain great differences. According to traditions cited by the commentators from the companions and their immediate followers, one group of them is of the opinion that the son was the Prophet Isaac, and this group contains the following names:

Umar, Ali, Abdullah bin Masud, Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib, Abdullah bin Abbas, Abu Hurairah, Qatadah, Ikrimah, Hasan Basri, Said bin Jubair, Mujahid, Shabi, Masruq, Makhul, Zuhri, Ata, Muqatil, Suddi, Kaab Ahbar, Zaid bin Aslam, and others.

The other group says that it was the Prophet Ishmael, and this group contains the names of the following authorities:

Abu Bakr, Ali, Abdullah bin Umar, Abdullah bin Abbas, Abu Hurairah, Muawiyah, Ikrimah, Mujahid, Yusuf bin Mahran, Hasan Basri, Muhammad bin Kaab al-Qurzi, Shabi, Said bin al-Musayyab, Dahhak, Muhammad bin Ali bin Husain (Muhammad alBaqir), Rabi bin Anas, Ahmed bin Hanbal, and others.

When compared, the two lists will be seen to contain several common names. This is due to the reason that from the same person two different views have been reported. For example, from Abdullah bin Abbas, Ikrimiah has related the saying that the son was the Prophet Isaac, but from him again Ata bin Abi Rabah relates: The Jews claim that it was Isaac, but the Jews tell a tie. Likewise. from Hasan Basri, one tradition is to the effect that the Prophet Isaac was the son meant to be made the offering, but Umar bin Ubaid says that Hasan Basri had no doubt regarding that the son whom the Prophet Abraham had been commanded to offer as a sacrifice was the Prophet Ishmael (peace be upon him).

This diversity of tradition has resulted in the diversity of opinion among the scholars of Islam. Some of them e.g. Ibn Jarir and Qadi Iyad, have expressed the firm opinion that the son was the Prophet Isaac. Others, like Ibn Kathir have given the verdict that it was the Prophet Ishmael. There were others who are uncertain and wavering, e.g. Jalaluddin Suyuti. However, a deep inquiry into the question establishes the fact that the son intended to be offered as a sacrifice was the Prophet Ishmael. The following are the arguments:

(1) As stated by the Quran above, at the time of his emigration from the country, the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) had prayed for a righteous son and in answer to it, Allah had given him the good news of a clement boy. The context shows that this prayer was made at a time when he was childless, and the boy whose good news was given was his first-born child. Then, this also becomes obvious from the Quranic story that when the child grew up to boyhood, he was inspired to offer him as an offering. Now, it is established beyond any doubt that the Prophet Abraham's first-born son was the Prophet Ishmael and not the Prophet Isaac. The Quran itself has stated the order between the two sons, thus: All praise be to Allah who has given me sons like Ishmael and Isaac in my old age. (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 39).

(2) The words used in the Quran with regard to the Prophet Isaac while giving the good news of his birth are: And they gave him the good news of the birth of a son, possessing knowledge, (alim). (Surah Az-Zariyat, Ayat 28) Do not be afraid: We give you the good news of a son, possessing knowledge. (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayat 53). But the son, the good news of whose birth has been given here; has been called a clement (haleem) son. This shows that the two sons had distinctive qualities, and the offering had been asked of the clement son and not of the son possessing knowledge.

(3) Along with giving the good news of the birth of the Prophet Isaac in the Quran, the good news of the birth of a grandson like Jacob was also given: Then We gave her the good news of Isaac, and after Isaac of Jacob. (Surah Hud, Ayat 71). Now obviously, if about the son along with the news of whose birth the news of a worthy son to be born to him had also been given, the Prophet Abraham was shown a vision that he was sacrificing him, he would never have understood that he was being inspired to offer that very son as an offering. Allama Ibn Jarir contends that the Prophet Abraham might have been shown this vision at a time when Jacob had already been born to the Prophet Isaac. But this is, in fact, a very weak reply to the argument. The Quran says: When the boy became able to work with his father, then he was shown the vision. Anyone who reads these words with an unbiased mind will have the image of an 8 to 10 years lad before him. No one can imagine that these words had been used about a young man having children.

(4) Allah, at the end of the story, says: We gave him the good news of Isaac, a Prophet among the righteous. This clearly shows that it was not the same son, whom he had been inspired to offer as a sacrifice; but before this the good news of some other son had been given; then when he grew up and became able to work with his father, it was commanded to sacrifice him. Afterwards, when the Prophet Abraham came through this test successfully, he was given the good news of the birth of another son, the Prophet Isaac (peace be upon them all). This order of the events conclusively proves that the son whom the Prophet Abraham had been commanded to sacrifice was not Isaac but another son who had been born several years beforc him. Allama Ibn Jarir rejects this express argument, saying that in the beginning only the good news of the birth of the Prophet Isaac had been given. Then, when he became ready to be scarificed for the sake of Allah's approval and pleasure, it was rewarded in the form of the good news of his Prophethood. But this reply to the argument is weaker still. If it had really been so, Allah would not have said: We gave him the good news of Isaac, a Prophet among the righteous, but: We gave him the good news that this same son of yours would be a Prophet among the righteous.

(5) Authentic traditions confirm that the horns of the ram which was slaughtered as a ransom for the Prophet Ishmael remained preserved in the Kabah till the time of Abdullah bin Zubair. Afterwards when Hajjaj bin Yusuf besieged Ibn Zubair in the Kabah and demolished the Kabbah, the horns were also destroyed. Both, Ibn Abbas and Amir Shabi testify that they had seen the horns in the Kabah. (Ibn Kathir). This is a proof of the fact that the event of the sacrifice had taken place in Makkah and not in Syria, and concerned the Prophet Ishmael. That is why a relic of it had been preserved in the Kabah built by the Prophets Abraham and Ishmael.

(6) The Arab traditions confirmed that this event of the sacrifice had taken place in Mina (near Makkah), and it was not only a tradition but practically also it had been a part of the

Hajj rites for centuries. Even until the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) people used to offer the animal sacrifice in Mina at the place where the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) had offered the sacrifice. Afterwards, when the Prophet (peace be upon him) was raised as a Prophet, he also maintained and continued the same tradition. Even till today sacrifices are offered in Mina on the 10th of Dhil-Hajj. This continual practice of 4,500 years or so is an undeniable proof of the fact that the heirs to the tradition of sacrifice made by the Prophet Abraham have been the descendants of the Prophet Ishmael and not of the Prophet Isaac. There has never been any such tradition among the descendants of the Prophet Isaac according to which the whole community might have offered the sacrifice at one and the same time and regarded it as a continuation of the sacrifice made by the Prophet Abraham.

In the face of such arguments it appears strange how the idea of the Prophet Isaac's being the son offered as the sacrifice spread among the Muslim community itself. If the Jews might have tried to attribute the honor to their ancestor, the Prophet Isaac, by depriving the Prophet Ishmael of it, it would be understandable.

But the question is: How did a large number of the Muslims come to accept this wrong notion? A very satisfactory answer to this question has been given by Allama Ibn Kathir in his commentary. He says: The reality is known to Allah alone but it appears that all the sayings (in which the Prophet Isaac has been mentioned as the son offered as a sacrifice) are related from Kaab Ahbar. This man, when he became a Muslim in the time of Umar, used to relate before him the contents of the ancient Jewish and Christian scriptures, and Umar would hear them. On this basis, the other people also began to listen to him, and started relating every mixture of the truth and falsehood that they heard from him, whereas this Ummah did not stand in need of anything whatever from the store of his knowledge and information.

This thing is further explained by a tradition from Muhammad bin Kaab al-Kurzi. He says that once during his presence the question whether the son offered as a sacrifice was the Prophet Isaac or the Prophet Ishmael arose before Umar bin Abdul Aziz. Among them at that time was a person who had been a Jewish scholar but had become a sincere Muslim afterwards. He said, "O Commander of the Faithful! By God it was Ishmael, and the Jews know it, but claim on account of their jealousy of the Arabs that it was the Prophet Isaac. (Ibn Jarir). When the two things are put side by side, it becomes evident that actually it was the Jewish propaganda that spread among the Muslims who have always been unbiased in scholastic literary matters, a large number of them accepted the statements of the Jews as a historic truth, which they presented as historical traditions with reference to the ancient scriptures, and did not realize that these were based on prejudice instead of knowledge.

68. This sentence throws light on the real object for which this event of the Prophet Abraham's sacrifice has been related here. From the race of his two sons arose two great nations in the world. First, the children of Israel, from whose house two major religions (Judaism and Christianity) emerged, which dominated and won over large human populations. Second, the children of Ishmael, who were the religious leaders and guides of all the Arabs at the time of the revelation of the Quran, and the tribe of Quraish of Makkah at that time held the most important position among them. Whatever eminence these two branches of the offspring of the Prophet Abraham attained became possible only on account of their connection and relation with the Prophet Abraham and his two illustrious sons;

otherwise, God alone knows how many such families have arisen in the world and been assigned to oblivion. Now, Allah relates the most glorious event of the history of this family and makes both its branches realize that whatever honor and eminence they have attained in the world, has been due actually to the great traditions of Godworship and sincerity and obedience, which were set by their ancestors, the Prophets Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac (may peace be upon them all). He tells them: The great blessings which We bestowed on them, were not bestowed arbitrarily and haphazardly. We did not just pick out a person and his two sons blindly and blessed them, but they gave definite proofs of their loyalty and faithfulness to their real Master and then became deserving of His favors. Now, you cannot become entitled to those favors merely on the basis of your pride of descent, for We shall see who among you is righteous and who is wicked and then deal with him accordingly.

وَبٰرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَعَلٰٓى اِسْحٰقَ ؕ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا مُحْسِنٌ وَّظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهٖ مُبِيْنٌ ع 113

(37:113) And We blessed him and Isaac. Among the offspring of the two some did good and some plainly wronged themselves.

وَلَقَدْ مَنَنَّا عَلٰى مُوْسٰى وَهٰرُوْنَ ج 114

(37:114) Verily We bestowed Our favours on Moses and Aaron

وَنَجَّيْنٰهُمَا وَقَوْمَهُمَا مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيْمِ ج 115

(37:115) and We delivered both of them and their people from the great calamity.[69]

69. "A great distress": the distress in which they were involved at the hands of Pharaoh and his people.

وَنَصَرْنٰهُمْ فَكَانُوْا هُمُ الْغٰلِبِيْنَ ج 116

(37:116) We succoured them, and they gained the upper hand (against their enemies).

وَاٰتَيْنٰهُمَا الْكِتٰبَ الْمُسْتَبِيْنَ ج 117

(37:117) We granted them a Clear Book,

وَهَدَيْنٰهُمَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ ج 118

(37:118) and showed them the Straight Way,

وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِمَا فِى الْاٰخِرِيْنَ لا 119

(37:119) and preserved for them a good name among posterity.

سَلٰمٌ عَلٰى مُوْسٰى وَهٰرُوْنَ 120

(37:120) Peace be upon Moses and Aaron.

اِنَّا كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ 121

(37:121) Thus do We reward the good-doers.

اِنَّهُمَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ 122

(37:122) Surely both of them were among Our believing servants.

وَاِنَّ اِلْيَاسَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ؕ 123

(37:123) Surely, Elias too was among the Messengers.[70]

70. The Prophet Elias (peace be upon him) was from among the Israelite Prophets. He has been mentioned only twice in the Quran, here and in Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 85. The present-day scholars have determined his period between 875 and 850 B.C. He was an inhabitant of Gilead, which in ancient days was the territory now under the northern districts of the modern state of Jordan, to the south of the River Yarmuk. In the Bible he has been mentioned as Elijah the Tishbite. Here is briefly his life story.

After the death of the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) the Israelite kingdom was broken up into two parts mainly due to the unworthiness of his son, Rehoboam. One part which consisted of Jerusalem and southern Palestine remained with the descendants of the Prophet David (peace be upon him), while in the second, which comprised northern Palestine, an independent state by the name of Israel was established with Samaria as its capital. Although conditions in both the states were very bad, the state of Israel, from the very beginning, followed the path of depravity due to which the evils of polytheism and idolworship and tyranny and wickedness went on increasing and multiplying in it endlessly; so much so that when Ahab, the king of Israel, married Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Sidon (Lebanon), the mischief reached its extremity. Under the influence of this polytheistic princess Ahab himself became a polytheist. He built a temple and altar to Baal in Samaria, tried his very best to introduce and popularize Baal-worship instead of the worship of One God, and consequently, offerings began to be made publicly in the name of Baal in the Israelite towns and cities.

This was the time when the Prophet Elijah (peace be upon him) appeared on the scene. He came from Gilead and gave Ahab a notice that in consequence of his sins, the land of Israel would go without rain, even without the dew. This word of the Prophet of Allah proved to be literally true and there fell no rain in Israel for thee and a half years. At last, Ahab came to his senses and he sought the Prophet Elijah's help. But Elijah, before praying for the rain,

thought it necessary to make the distinction between Allah, Lord of the worlds, and Baal plain before the people of Israel. For this purpose, he commanded that the priests of Baal would make an offering in the name of their deity, and he also would make an offering in the name of Allah, Lord of the worlds, in front of the assembled people. Then the one whose offering would be consumed by a fire from heaven, without the agency of the human hand, the truth of his deity would be established beyond doubt. Ahab accepted this proposal. Thus, 850 of the priests of Baal assembled on Mt. Carmel to answer the challenge given by the Prophet Elijah. In this encounter the Baal worshipers were defeated, and the Prophet Elijah proved that Baal was a false god, and the real God is the One God alone who had appointed him as His Prophet. After this, Elijah got the priests of Baal slaughtered in front of the same assembly of the people; then he prayed for the rain, and his prayer was immediately answered and the whole land of Israel was saturated with water.

But, despite these miracles, Ahab could not shake off the influence of his polytheistic wife. Jezebel turned hostile to the Prophet Elijah and she hoped that he would be put to death just as the Baal worshipers had been put to death. Under the circumstances the Prophet Elijah was compelled to leave the country and he remained lodged in a cave at the foot of Mt. Sinai for several years. The lamentation that he made to Allah, on this occasion, has been related in the Bible, in these words:

The children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. (I Kings, 19: 10).

About the same time Jehoram, the ruler of the Jewish state of Jerusalem, married the daughter of Ahab, the king of Israel, and under her polytheistic influence the same evils that had spread in Israel also began to spread in Judah. The Prophet Elijah carried out his prophetic duty again and wrote a letter to Jehoram, the following words of which have been reported in the Bible:

Thus saith the Lord God of David thy father, because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah. But hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house, which were better than thyself: Behold, with a great plague will the Lord smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods: And thou shalt have great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day. (2 Chronicles, 21: 12-15).

Whatever the Prophet Elijah had prophesied in this letter proved true. First, the kingdom of Jehoram was destroyed by the external invaders, and the enemies even carried away his wives, then he himself died of the disease of the bowels.

A few years later the Prophet Elijah again went to Israel and constantly tried hard to bring Ahab, and after him his son, Ahaziah, to the right path, but the evil that had taken root in the house of the royal family of Samaria could not be eradicated. At last, due to the curse of the Prophet the family of Ahab met its doom, and then Allah recalled his Prophet from the

world. For details, see the following books of the Bible: I Kings, chs. 17, 18, 19, 21; 2 Kings, chs. 1, 2; 2 Chronicles, ch. 21.

إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِۦٓ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ 124

(37:124) (Call to mind) when he said to his people: "Will you not fear Allah?

أَتَدْعُونَ بَعْلًا وَتَذَرُونَ أَحْسَنَ الْخَٰلِقِينَ ۙ 125

(37:125) Do you call upon Baal[71] and forsake the Best of the Creators?

71. Lexically, baal means master, chief and possessor. This word was also used for husband, and has been used in this sense at several places in the Quran itself, e.g. in (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 228); (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 127); (Sura Houd, Ayat 72) and (Surah An-Noor, Ayat 31). However; in the ancient times the Semetic nations used it in the meaning of deity or lord; they had even given the name of Baal to a special god. The chief male god of the Phoenicians, in particular, was Baal and their chief goddess was Ashtoreth, his wife. The scholars differ as to whether Baal meant the sun or Jupiter, and Ashtoreth the moon or Venus. In any case, historically it is certain that Baal worship was prevalent from Babylon to Egypt throughout the Middle East, and the polytheistic communities of the Lebanon and Syria and Palestine, in particular, had become its devotees. When the Israelites settled in Palestine and Jordan after they came out from Egypt, they started contracting marriage and other social relations with the polytheistic nations round about them, in violation of the strict prohibitive injunctions of the Torah, the disease of idolworship began to spread among them, too. According to the Bible, this moral and religious decline had started appearing among the Israelites soon after the death of Joshua, son of Nun, who was the first caliph of the Prophet Moses:

And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim. And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtoreth. (Judges, 2: 11-13).

And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites and Hivites, and Jebusites. And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods. (Judges, 3: 5-6).

At that time worship of Baal had so deeply affected the Israelites that, according to the Bible, in one of their habitations a public altar had been built at which offerings were made to Baal. A God-worshiping Israelite could not bear the sight; so he pulled down the altar one night. Next morning a great multitude of the people gathered together and demanded that the man who had cast down the altar be put to death. (Judges, 6:25-32). This evil, at last, was put to an end by Samuel, Saul and the Prophets David and Solomon (peace be upon them). They not only reformed the Israelites generally but also eradicated polytheism and idol worship from their kingdom. But after the death of the Prophet Solomon the mischief was again revived and the Israelite state of northern Palestine was swept away in the flood of Baal-worship.

اللَّهَ رَبَّكُمْ وَرَبَّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ 126

(37:126) Allah is your Lord and the Lord of your ancestors of yore."

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ ۙ 127

(37:127) But they denounced him as a liar, so they will surely be arraigned (for punishment),

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ 128

(37:128) except Allah's chosen servants.[72]

72. That is, only those people will be made an exception from the punishment, who did not belie the Prophet Elijah (peace be upon him), and whom Allah chose from among the nation for His worship.

وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ ۙ 129

(37:129) We preserved a good name for him among posterity.[73]

73. The treatment that the Israelites meted out to the Prophet Elijah (peace be upon him) in his life has been referred to above, but after his death they became so enamored of him that they held him in the highest esteem and reverence after the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). They formed the belief that Elijah (peace be upon him) had been taken up alive into heaven by a whirlwind (2 Kings, ch. 2), and that he will come back to the world again. Thus, in Malachi (O.T.) it is written:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. (4: 5).

At the time the Prophets John and Jesus (peace be upon them) appeared, the Jews were awaiting the advent of these three men: the Prophet Elias, the Christ and "that Prophet" (i.e. Muhammad). When the ministry of the Prophet John began and he slatted baptizing the people, the Jews sent priests to him to ask, "Are you the Christ?" And he said that he was not the Christ. Then they asked, "Are you Elias?" And he answered that he was not Elias; then they asked, "Are you that Prophet?" And he answered that he was not "that Prophet" either. Thereupon they said, "If you are neither the Christ, nor Elias, nor that Prophet, why do you then baptize?" (John, 1: 19-26). Afterwards when the name of the Prophet Jesus spread among the people, the Jews thought that perhaps the Prophet Elias had come. (Mark, 6: 14-15). Even among the disciples of Jesus themselves the idea was common that Elias the Prophet would come, but Jesus removed their misunderstanding, saying, Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatever they listed. Then the

disciples understood that he spoke to them of John the Baptist and not of Elias who had appeared eight hundred years earlier. (Matthew. 11: 14; and 17: 10-131).

سَلٰمٌ عَلٰٓى اِلْ يَاسِيْنَ 130

(37:130) Peace be upon Elias.[74]

74. The words in the original are: Salam-un ala El-ya-sin. Some commentators say that El-ya-sin is the other name of the Prophet Elias, just as Abraham is the other name of the Prophet Ibrahim; some others say that different versions of the Hebrew names were prevalent among the Arabs, e.g. one and the same angel was called Michal and Michail and Michain. The same has been the case with the name of the Prophet Elias also. In the Quran itself the same mountain has been called Toor Sina and Toor Sinin. 1

اِنَّا كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ 131

(37:131) Thus do We reward the good-doers.

اِنَّهٗ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ 132

(37:132) He was one of Our believing servants.

وَاِنَّ لُوْطًا لَّمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ؕ 133

(37:133) And Lot too was one of the Messengers.

اِذْ نَجَّيْنٰهُ وَاَهْلَهٗٓ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ۙ 134

(37:134) (Call to mind) when We delivered him and all his kinsfolk,

اِلَّا عَجُوْزًا فِى الْغٰبِرِيْنَ 135

(37:135) except for an old woman who was among those that stayed behind.[75]

75. This implies the wife of the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him), who did not migrate with her illustrious husband, but remained behind with her people and was punished.

ثُمَّ دَمَّرْنَا الْاٰخَرِيْنَ 136

(37:136) Then We utterly destroyed the rest of them.

وَإِنَّكُمْ لَتَمُرُّونَ عَلَيْهِم مُّصْبِحِينَ ۙ 137

(37:137) You pass by their desolate habitations in the morning[76]

76. The reference is to the mined habitations of the people of Lot by which the Quraishite merchants passed day and night during their trade journeys to Syria and Palestine. 1

وَبِاللَّيْلِ ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ۝ 138

(37:138) and at night. Do you still not understand?

وَإِنَّ يُونُسَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ۘ 139

(37:139) And Jonah too was one of the Messengers.[77]

77. This is the third place where the Prophet Jonah (peace be upon him) has been mentioned in the Quran. Before this he has already been mentioned in Surah Younus and Surah Al-Anbiya. (For reference, please see (Surah Younus, Ayat 98) and (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 87-88) and E.Ns thereof).

إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُونِ ۙ 140

(37:140) Call to mind when he fled to the laden ship,[78]

78. The word abaqa in Arabic is used for the flight and escape of a slave from his master's house.

فَسَاهَمَ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُدْحَضِينَ ۚ 141

(37:141) cast lots, and was among the losers.

فَالْتَقَمَهُ الْحُوتُ وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ 142

(37:142) Then a fish swallowed him, and he was blameworthy.[79]

79. This is what one understands from a study of these sentences:

(1) The vessel which the Prophet Jonah (peace be upon him) boarded was already overloaded.

(2) Lots were drawn in the vessel probably at a time when during the voyage it was felt that the lives of the passengers had been endangered due to the overloading; therefore, lots were cast to pick oat a person to be thrown overboard.

(3) The lot fell on the Prophet Jonah (peace be upon him), and so he was thrown into the sea and a fish swallowed him.

(4) The Prophet Jonah (peace be upon him) was so afflicted because he had fled and abandoned the place of his mission without the permission of his Master (Allah Almighty). This meaning is confirmed by the word abaqa as has been explained in (E.N. 78) above, and also by the word muleem. Muleem is a blameworthy person, who becomes worthy of blame by himself because of his sin and error, whether somebody else blames him for it or not. (Ibn Jarir).

فَلَوْلَآ أَنَّهُۥ كَانَ مِنَ ٱلْمُسَبِّحِينَ ۙ 143

(37:143) Had he not been one of those who glorify Allah,[80]

80. It has two meanings and both are implied: (1) That the Prophet Jonah (peace be upon him) was not of the people who are heedless of God, but was of those who glorify and adore Allah constantly and perpetually. (2) That when he went inside the fish, he turned to Allah alone and glorified Him. In Surah Al-Anbiya it has been said: He invoked Us from the depths of the darkness, saying: There is no god but You: Glory be to You: I am indeed blameworthy. (verse 87).

لَلَبِثَ فِى بَطْنِهِۦٓ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ۚ 144

(37:144) he would certainly have remained in its belly till the Day of Resurrection.[81]

81. This does not mean that the fish would have lived till Resurrection and the Prophet Jonah (peace be upon him) would have remained alive in its belly till then, but that the fish's belly would have become his grave till Resurrection. The famous commentator Qatadah has given this same meaning of this verse. (Ibn Jarir).

فَنَبَذْنَٰهُ بِٱلْعَرَآءِ وَهُوَ سَقِيمٌ ۚ 145

(37:145) But We threw him on a wide bare tract of land while he was ill;[82]

82. That is, when the Prophet Jonah (peace be upon him) confessed his fault, and began to glorify Allah like a true and sincere believer, the fish spat him up on the beach by Allah's command. The beach was a bare plain, without any vegetation on it, or anything to provide him shade, or any means of food.

Here, the rationalists have been heard expressing the misgiving that it is impossible for a man to come out alive from the belly of a fish. But, towards the end of the last century, an event took place near the sea-shores of England (the center of this so-called rationalism), which belies this claim. In August, 1891, some fishermen went to the high sea to hunt whales in a ship called Star of the East. There they injured a great fish which was 20 feet long, 5 feet wide and weighed a hundred tons, but during the struggle the fish swallowed a fisherman, James Bartley, in front of the very eyes of his companions. Next day the same fish

was found dead on the sea. The fishermen hauled it up on board and when they cut open its belly, James Bartley came out alive. He had remained in the fish's belly for full 60 hours. (Urdu Digest, February, 1964). Obviously, when such a thing is possible in normal circumstances naturally, why should it be impossible under abnormal conditions as a miracle of God?

وَأَنۢبَتۡنَا عَلَيۡهِ شَجَرَةٗ مِّن يَقۡطِينٖ ٱ 146

(37:146) and caused a gourd tree[83] to grow over him,

83. The Arabic word yaqteen applies to a tree which does not stand on a stem but grows and spreads like a creeper, e.g. a pumpkin, cucumber, water-melon, etc. In any case, a creeper was produced miraculously, so that its leaves should provide shade to the Prophet Jonah and its fruit should serve him both as food and as shade.

وَأَرۡسَلۡنَٰهُ إِلَىٰ مِاْئَةِ أَلۡفٍ أَوۡ يَزِيدُونَ ٱ 147

(37:147) and We sent him forth to a nation of a hundred thousand or more,[84]

84. The mention of a hundred thousand people or more does not mean that Allah had any doubt about their number, but it means that a casual observer would have estimated the population to be more than a hundred thousand people in any case. Probably it was the same place which the Prophet Jonah (peace be upon him) had left and fled. After his departure when the people of the place saw the scourge approaching, they believed. But this was only a kind of repentance which was accepted and the scourge averted. Now, the Prophet Jonah (peace be upon him) was again sent to them so that the people should believe in him as a Prophet and become Muslims formally. To understand this, one should keep in view verse 98 of Surah Younus.

فَـَٔامَنُواْ فَمَتَّعۡنَٰهُمۡ إِلَىٰ حِينٖ ط 148

(37:148) and they believed. So We let them enjoy life for a while.[85]

85. Some people have taken exception to what we have written concerning this story of the Prophet Jonah in our commentary of Surahs Younus and Al-Anbiya. It would therefore be proper that we should reproduce here the explanations given by the other commentators in this regard.

The famous commentator Qatadah in his commentary of (verse 98 of Surah Younus) says: There has been no habitation which disbelieved and might have believed after the arrival of the scourge, and then might have been left unpunished. The only exception were the people of the Prophet Jonah (peace be upon him). When they searched for their Prophet and did not find him, and felt that the scourge had approached near at hand, Allah put repentance in their hearts. (Ibn Kathir, vol. II, p. 433).

Commenting on the same verse Allama Alusi says: The Prophet Jonah (peace be upon him) had been sent to the people of Nineveh in the land of Mosul. They were polytheistic people. The Prophet Jonah invited them to believe in Allah the One, and to give up idol-worship. They refused to believe and belied him. Jonah gave them the news that they would be visited by a scourge after three days and he left the place at midnight before the expiry of the three days. Then, in the day time when the scourge approached and the people realized that they would all perish, they began to search for the Prophet but did not find him. At last, they took their families and their cattle and came out in the desert and expressed belief and repentance. So, Allah showed them mercy and accepted their prayer. (Ruh al-Ma ani, vol. XI, p. 170).

Commenting on(verse 87 of Surah Al-Anbiya), Allama Alusi writes: The Prophet Jonah's (peace be upon him) forsaking his people in anger was an act of migration, but he had not been commanded to do so. (Ruh al-Maani, vol. xvii, p. 77). Then he explains the meaning of the sentence, "Inna kun-tu min-az-zalimin", of Jonah's prayer, thus: That is, I was blameworthy in that I hastened to migrate, against the way of the Prophets, before receiving the command for it. This was, in fact, a confession of his sin and expression of repentance so that Allah might remove his affliction. (Ruh al-Maani, vol. xvii, p. 78).

Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi's note on this verse is: He became angry with his people when they did not believe, and forsook them, and did not return to them of his own accord when the scourge had been averted, and did not await Our command for the migration. (Bayan ul-Quran).

Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Uthmani writes in his note on this verse: Vexed at the misconduct of his people he left the city in anger and did not await the divine command and threatened the people that they would be visited by a torment after three days. lnni kun-tu min az-Zalimin: He confessed his error that he had made haste and left the habitation without awaiting Allah's command.

Explaining these verses of Surah Saaffat, Imam Razi writes: The Prophet Jonah's (peace be upon him) fault was that when Allah threatened to destroy the people who had belied him, he thought that the scourge would inevitably befall them. Therefore, he did not show patience and abandoned his mission and left the place, whereas he ought to have continued the work of his mission, for there was a possibility that Allah might not destroy those people. (Tafsir Kabir, vol. vii, p. 158). Explaining the verse Idh abaqa, Allama Alusi writes: "Literally, abaqa means the escape of a slave from his master's house. Since Jonah had run away from his people without Allah's leave, the word has been rightly used about him. Then he writes: When the third day came, the Prophet Jonah left the place without Allah's permission. Thus, when his people did not find him, they came out along with their young and old people and their cattle, and they implored Allah and begged for His forgiveness and Allah forgave them. (Ruh al-Maani, vol. xxii, p. 13).

Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Uthmani has explained the words wa huwa mulim, thus: The accusation against him was that he had left the city because of an error of judgment, without awaiting the divine command, and even specified the day for the coming of the scourge.

Then Maulana Shabbir Ahmad's note on (verse 48 of Surah Al-Qalam) is: Do not be perplexed and agitated with regard to the deniers like the Man of the Fish (i.e. the Prophet Jonah)." And about the sentence: wa huwa makzum of the same verse, he writes: That is, he was full of anger against his people, so he prayed for the torment, rather foretold it, in fretful haste.

These explanations by the commentators clearly show that there were three offenses on account of which the Prophet Jonah was made to suffer Allah's displeasure:

(1) That he himself fixed the day of the torment, whereas Allah had not made any declaration in this regard.

(2) That he emigrated from the city even before the day came; whereas a Prophet should not leave the place of his mission until Allah commands him to do so.

(3) That he did not return to his people after the torment had been averted from them.

فَاسْتَفْتِهِمْ اَلِرَبِّكَ الْبَنَاتُ وَلَهُمُ الْبَنُوْنَ ۙ 149

(37:149) So ask their opinion:[86] "(Are you convinced) that your Lord should have daughters and you should have sons?[87]

86. Another theme starts from here. In the preceding theme that started from verse 11, the Quraish had been put this question: Ask them: what is more difficult: their own creation or of those things that We have created? Now, they are being asked this second question. The object of the first question was to warn the disbelievers of their deviation because of which they regarded life-after-death and the meting out of rewards and punishments as impossible, and therefore, mocked the Prophet (peace be upon him) for it. Now they are being asked this second question to warn them of their ignorance due to which they attributed children to Allah and would join anybody with Allah in any relationship they liked on mere conjecture.

87. Traditions show that in Arabia the tribes of Quraish, Juhainah, Bani Salimah, Khuzaah, Bani Mulaih, etc. held the belief that the angels were Allah's daughters. This belief of their ignorance has been referred to at several places in the Quran, e.g. in (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 117); (Surah An- Nahl, Aytas 57-58); (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayat 40); (Surah Az- Zukhruf, Ayats 16, 19); (Surah An-Najm, Ayats 21-27).

اَمْ خَلَقْنَا الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ اِنَاثًا وَّهُمْ شٰهِدُوْنَ 150

(37:150) Did We create the angels as females the while they witnessed?"

اَلَآ اِنَّهُمْ مِّنْ اِفْكِهِمْ لَيَقُوْلُوْنَ ۙ 151

(37:151) Behold, it is one of their fabrications that they say:

وَلَدَ اللّٰهُ ۙ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ 152

(37:152) "Allah has begotten." They are liars!

اَصْطَفَى الْبَنَاتِ عَلَى الْبَنِيْنَ ؕ 153

(37:153) Did He choose daughters rather than sons?

مَا لَكُمْ ۫ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُوْنَ 154

(37:154) What is the matter with you that you make such strange judgements?

اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ۚ 155

(37:155) Will you then not take heed?

اَمْ لَكُمْ سُلْطٰنٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ۙ 156

(37:156) Do you have any clear authority for such claims?

فَاْتُوْا بِكِتٰبِكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ 157

(37:157) Bring your Book, if you are truthful.[88]

88. That is, there can be only two bases for regarding the angels as the daughters of Allah. Either such a thing could be said on the basis of observation, or the one who asserted it should possess a divine book in which Allah Himself might have stated that the angels were His daughters. Now, if those who held such belief could neither make a claim to have observed such a thing nor did they possess any divine book that might contain such a thing, there could be no greater stupidity than this that one should base his religious belief on mere conjecture, and attribute to Allah, Lord of the worlds, such things as were patently ridiculous.

وَجَعَلُوْا بَيْنَهٗ وَبَيْنَ الْجِنَّةِ نَسَبًا ؕ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمَتِ الْجِنَّةُ اِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُوْنَ ۙ 158

(37:158) They have established a kinship between Allah and the angels;[89] and the angels know well that these people will be arraigned (as culprits).

89. Though the word used is al-jinnah instead of almalaikah, some major commentators have opined that here the word jinn has been used for malaikah in its literal sense (of hidden creation); malaikah (angels) also are, in reality, a hidden creation, and the following theme also demands that al jinnah here be taken in the sense of al-malaikah.

سُبۡحٰنَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُوۡنَ ۙ 159

(37:159) (They say): “Exalted be Allah above what they attribute to Him,

اِلَّا عِبَادَ اللّٰهِ الۡمُخۡلَصِيۡنَ 160

(37:160) all of them except the chosen servants of Allah.

فَاِنَّكُمۡ وَمَا تَعۡبُدُوۡنَ ۙ 161

(37:161) So you and your deities

مَاۤ اَنۡتُمۡ عَلَيۡهِ بِفٰتِنِيۡنَ ۙ 162

(37:162) shall not be able to tempt anyone away from Allah

اِلَّا مَنۡ هُوَ صَالِ الۡجَحِيۡمِ 163

(37:163) except him who shall roast in the Blazing Fire.[90]

90. Another translation of this verse can be: Therefore, you and your worship: on this you cannot tempt into mischief anyone except him. According to this second translation, the meaning would be: O you who have gone astray, by this worship that you are performing before us, and regarding us as the children of Allah, Lord of the worlds, you cannot tempt us into mischief. By this you can only beguile a fool who might be working for his own doom. So, we refuse to fall into the trap that you have set for us.

وَمَا مِنَّاۤ اِلَّا لَهٗ مَقَامٌ مَّعۡلُوۡمٌ ۙ 164

(37:164) As for us, there is none but has an appointed station.[91]

91. That is, not to speak of being Allah’s children, we do not have the power to exceed in any way or degree the place and position and status appointed for each of us by Allah.

وَّاِنَّا لَنَحۡنُ الصَّآفُّوۡنَ ۚ 165

(37:165) Verily we range ourselves in rows (as humble servants)

وَاِنَّا لَنَحۡنُ الۡمُسَبِّحُوۡنَ 166

(37:166) and we are of those who glorify Allah.”

وَاِنۡ كَانُوۡا لَيَقُوۡلُوۡنَ ۙ 167

(37:167) They used to say before:

لَوۡ اَنَّ عِنۡدَنَا ذِكۡرًا مِّنَ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ ۙ 168

(37:168) “If only we had the Reminder which had been granted to the people of yore

لَكُنَّا عِبَادَ اللّٰهِ الۡمُخۡلَصِيۡنَ 169

(37:169) we would surely have been Allah's chosen servants.”[92]

92. This same thing has already been mentioned in(Surah Fatir, Ayat 42).

فَكَفَرُوۡا بِهٖ فَسَوۡفَ يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ 170

(37:170) But when it came to them, they rejected it. They shall soon come to know (the end of such an attitude).

وَلَقَدۡ سَبَقَتۡ كَلِمَتُنَا لِعِبَادِنَا الۡمُرۡسَلِيۡنَ ۖ 171

(37:171) We have already given Our promise to Our Messengers

اِنَّهُمۡ لَهُمُ الۡمَنۡصُوۡرُوۡنَ ۖ 172

(37:172) that they shall certainly be succoured,

وَاِنَّ جُنۡدَنَا لَهُمُ الۡغٰلِبُوۡنَ 173

(37:173) and that Our hosts shall triumph.[93]

93. Allah’s army: implies the believers who obey Allah’s Messenger and side with him. This also includes those unseen powers by which Allah helps the followers of the truth.

This help and domination does not necessarily mean that in every age every Prophet of Allah and his followers must attain political dominance, but this dominance has many forms, one of which is political rule as well. Wherever the Prophets of Allah did not attain any such dominance, they did establish their moral superiority even in those places. The nations which did not accept their message and adopted a way contrary to their teachings were ultimately doomed to destruction. Whatever philosophies of error and misguidance the people invented and whatever corrupt and evil practices of life they enforced died out ultimately after they had their sway for some time. But the truths preached by the Prophets

of Allah for thousands of years have been unalterable before as they are unalterable today. No one has been able to disprove them in any way.

فَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ ۙ 174

(37:174) So, (O Prophet), leave them alone for a while,

وَّاَبْصِرْهُمْ فَسَوْفَ يُبْصِرُوْنَ 175

(37:175) and see, and soon they too shall see.[94]

94. That is, it will not take long when they will see their defeat and your victory with their own eyes. This proved to be true as it had been foretold. Hardly 14 to 15 years had passed after the revelation of these vases when the pagans of Makkah witnessed the Prophet (peace be upon him) enter their city as a conqueror, and then a few years later the same people saw that Islam had overwhelmed not only Arabia but the mighty empires of Rome and Iran as well.

اَفَبِعَذَابِنَا يَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَ 176

(37:176) Do they seek to hasten Our chastisement?

فَاِذَا نَزَلَ بِسَاحَتِهِمْ فَسَآءَ صَبَاحُ الْمُنْذَرِيْنَ 177

(37:177) When that chastisement will descend upon their courtyard, evil shall that Day be for those who had been warned.

وَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ ۙ 178

(37:178) Leave them alone for a while,

وَّاَبْصِرْ فَسَوْفَ يُبْصِرُوْنَ 179

(37:179) and see; and they too shall soon see.

سُبْحٰنَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ ۚ 180

(37:180) Exalted be your Lord, the Lord of Glory, above what they attribute to Him,

وَسَلٰمٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ۚ 181

(37:181) and peace be upon the Messengers,

وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۧ 182

(37:182) and all praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Universe.

38. Surah Saad

Name

The Surah takes its name from the alphabetic letter Suad with which it begins.

Period of Revelation

As will be explained below, according to some traditions this Surah was sent down in the period when the Holy Prophet had started calling the people openly to Islam in Makkah, and this had caused great alarm among the chiefs of the Quraish. If this be true, its period of revelation would be about the 4th year of the Prophethood. According to some other traditions, it was sent down after Hadrat Umar's embracing Islam, and this happened, as is well known, after the migration to Habash. Another chain of the traditions shows that the event which occasioned the revelation of this Surah took place during the last illness of Abu Talib. If this be correct, the period of its revelation would be the 10th or 11th year of the Prophethood.

Historical Background

Here is a resume of the traditions related by Imam Ahmad, Nasa'i, Tirmidhi, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Shaibah, Ibn Abu Hatim, Muhammad bin Ishaq and others:

When Abu Talib fell ill, and the Quraish chiefs knew that his end was near, they held consultations and decided to approach the old chief with the request that he should solve the dispute between them and his nephew. For they feared that if Abu Talib died and then they subjected Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) to a harsh treatment, after his death, the Arabs would taunt them, saying, "They were afraid of the old chief as long as he lived now that he is dead they have started maltreating his nephew." At least 25 of the Quraish chiefs including Abu Jahl, Abu Sufyan, Umayyah bin Khalaf, As bin Wa'il, Aswad bin al-Muttalib, 'Uqbah bin Abi Mu'ait, Utbah and Shaibah went to Abu Talib. First, they put before him their complaints against the Holy Prophet as usual, then said, "We have come to present before you a just request and it is this : let your nephew leave us to our religion, and we shall leave him to his. He may worship whomever he may please: we shall not stand in his way in this matter; but he should not condemn our gods, and should not try to force us to give them up. Please tell him to make terms with us on this condition". Abu Talib called the Holy Prophet and said, "Dear nephew, these people of your tribe have come to me with a request. They want you to agree with them on a just matter so as to put an end to your dispute with them." Then he told him about the request of the chiefs of the Quraish. The Holy Prophet replied, "Dear uncle: I shall request them to agree upon a thing which, if they accept, will enable them to conquer the whole of Arabia and subject the non-Arab world to their domination. "Hearing this the people were first confounded; they did not know how they should turn down such a proposal. Then, after they had considered the matter, they replied: "You speak of one word: we are prepared to repeat ten others like it, but please tell us what it is." The Holy Prophet said: La ilaha ill-Allah. At this they got up all together and left the place saying what Allah has narrated in the initial part of this Surah.

Ibn Sa'd in his Tabaqat has related this event just as cited above, but, according to him, this did not happen during Abu Talibs last illness but at the time when the Holy Prophet had started preaching Islam openly, and the news of the conversion of one person or the other was being heard almost daily in Makkah. In those days the Quraish chiefs had led several deputations to Abu Talib and had asked him to stop Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) from preaching his message, and it was with one of those deputations that this conversation had taken place.

Zamakhshari, Razi, Nisaburi and some other commentators say that this deputation went to Abu Talib at the time then the chiefs of the Quraish had been upset at Hadrat Umar's embracing Islam; but no reference to its basis is available in any book of the traditions, nor have these commentators cited the source of their this information. However, if it be true, it is understand able. For the unbelieving Quraish had already been bewildered to see that the person who had arisen from among themselves with the message of Islam had no parallel in the entire tribe as regarded nobility, purity of character, wisdom and seriousness. Moreover, his right hand man and chief supporter was a man like Abu Bakr, who was well known in and around Makkah as a gentle, righteous and brilliant man. Now when they might have seen that a brave and resolute man like Umar also had joined them, they must have felt that the danger was growing and becoming intolerable.

Subject Matter and Topics

The Surah begins with a review of the aforesaid meeting. Making the dialogue between the Holy Prophet and the disbelievers the basis, Allah says that the actual reason with those people for their denial is not any defect in the message of Islam but their own arrogance, jealousy and insistence on following the blind. They are not prepared to believe in a man from their own clan as a Prophet of God and follow him. They want to persist in the ideas of ignorance which they have found their ancestors following. And when a person exposes their this ignorance and presents the truth before them, they are alarmed and regard it as an oddity, rather as a novel and impossible thing. For them the concept of Tauhid and the Hereafter is not only an unacceptable creed but also a concept which only deserves to be ridiculed and mocked.

Then, Allah, both in the initial part of the Surah and in its last sentences, has precisely warned the disbelievers, as if to say, "The man whom you are ridiculing today and whose guidance you reject will soon overpower you, and the time is not far when in this very city of Makkah, where you are persecuting him, he will overwhelm you completely."

Then describing nine of the Prophets, one after the other, with greater details of the story of the Prophets David and Solomon; Allah has emphasized the point that His Law of Justice is impartial and objective, that only the right attitude of man is acceptable to Him, that He calls to account and punishes every wrongdoer who. ever he be, and that He likes only those people who do not persist in wrongdoing but repent as soon as they are warned of it, and pass their life in the world keeping in mind their accountability in the Hereafter.

After this, the final end that the obedient servants and the disobedient people will meet in the Hereafter, has been depicted, and two things have been especially impressed on the disbelievers:(1) That the leaders and guides whom the ignorant people are following blindly

in the world, on the way of deviation, will have reached Hell even before their followers in the Hereafter, and the two groups will be cursing each other there; and (2) that the disbelievers will be amazed to see that there is no trace whatever in Hell of the believers whom they used to regard as contemptible in the world and will themselves be involved in its torment.

In conclusion, mention has been made of the story of Adam and Iblis (Satan), which is meant to tell the disbelieving Quraish that the same arrogance and vanity which was preventing them from bowing before Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) had prevented Iblis also from bowing before Adam. Iblis felt jealous of the high rank God had given to Adam and became accursed when he disobeyed His Command. Likewise, "You, O people of Quraish, are feeling jealous of the high rank God has bestowed on Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) and are not prepared to obey him whom God has appointed His messenger. Therefore, you will be doomed ultimately to the same fate as will be met by Satan."

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

صٓ ۟ وَالۡقُرۡاٰنِ ذِی الذِّکۡرِ ؕ 1

(38:1) Sad,[1] and by the Qur'an full of exhortation![2]

1. Although like all other enigmatic letters (muqattaat), it is also difficult to determine the meaning of the letter Suad, yet the interpretation of it given by Ibn Abbas and Dahhak is quite plausible. According to them, it implies: Sadiqun fiqauli- hi, or Sadaqa Muhammadun: Muhammad (peace be upon him) is truthful: whatever he says is the very truth.

2. The words dhidh-dhikr of the text can have two meanings: (1) Dhi sharaf: the noble Quran. (2) Dhi at-tadhkir: the Quran which is full of admonition, or the Quran which serves as a reminder, or arouses a heedless person.

بَلِ الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا فِیۡ عِزَّۃٍ وَّشِقَاقٍ 2

(38:2) Nay, but the unbelievers are steeped in arrogance and stubborn defiance.[3]

3. If the interpretation given of suad by Ibn Abbas and Dahhak is accepted, the sentence would mean this: By this noble Quran, or by this Quran which is full of admonition, Muhammad (peace be upon him) is presenting the truth, but the people who persist in their denial, are in fact, involved in arrogance and stubbornness. And if Suad is taken as one of those enigmatic letters whose meaning cannot be determined, then the answer to the oath is omitted, which is indicated by “but” and the sentence following it. The meaning then would be: The reason for the denial of these disbelievers is not that the religion which is being presented before them is unsound, or that Muhammad (peace be upon him) has shown some slackness in the matter of presenting the truth before them, but their own boasting and bragging, their haughtiness and stubbornness, and this is borne out by this Quran itself,

which is full of admonition. Every unbiased person who studies it will admit that full justice has been done in it to the task of making the people understand the truth.

كَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنْ قَرْنٍ فَنَادَوْا وَّلَاتَ حِيْنَ مَنَاصٍ 3

(38:3) How many a nation did We destroy before them! (When they approached their doom) they cried out (for deliverance), but the time for deliverance was already past.

وَعَجِبُوْٓا اَنْ جَآءَهُمْ مُّنْذِرٌ مِّنْهُمْ ۫ وَقَالَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ هٰذَا سٰحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ ۖ 4

(38:4) They wondered that a warner had come to them from among themselves,[4] and the deniers of the Truth said: "This is a sorcerer,[5] and a big liar.

4. That is, they are so foolish that when a man from their own kind and from their own clan and brotherhood, whom they knew well, was appointed to warn them, they wondered at it, whereas it would have been strange if some other kind of creature had been sent down from heaven to warn human beings, or an utter stranger had arisen among them suddenly and started functioning as a prophet. In that case they would have been perfectly justified to say: What an odd thing! How can this strange creature know our conditions and feelings and requirements that he should guide us? How can we test and find out the truth about the stranger who has suddenly arisen among us and know whether he is trustworthy or not? And how can we decide whether we should or should not believe in him when we have not judged and seen his character and personality?

5. The disbelievers used the word sahir (wizard, sorcerer, magician) for the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the sense that whoever came in contact with him was so influenced by him that he would become his follower like a possessed person. He would least mind severing of his connections with others or incurring material losses. The father would give up the son and the son would give up the father. The wife would separate from the husband and the husband would separate from the wife. One would at once be prepared to leave his country if so required. One would even be ready to pass through the severest persecutions for the sake of the faith. (For further details, see (Surah Al- Anbiya, Ayat 3 and E.N. 5) thereof).

اَجَعَلَ الْاٰلِهَةَ اِلٰهًا وَّاحِدًا ۚ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَشَيْءٌ عُجَابٌ ۖ 5

(38:5) Has he made the gods one single God? This is truly astounding."

وَانْطَلَقَ الْمَلَاُ مِنْهُمْ اَنِ امْشُوْا وَاصْبِرُوْا عَلٰٓى اٰلِهَتِكُمْ ۚ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَشَيْءٌ يُّرَادُ ۖ 6

(38:6) And the elders among them went forth[6] saying: "Go ahead and be steadfast in adhering to your deities.[7] What is being said is with a design."[8]

6. The allusion is to the chiefs who got up and left Abu Talib when they had heard what the Prophet (peace be upon him) said.

7. "This thing": the Prophet's (peace be upon him) asking them to affirm faith in La-ilaha ill-Allah so as to overpower both Arabia and the adjoining lands.

8. What they meant to say was this: Muhammad has some vested interests. He is extending this invitation to us in order to subjugate us and rule us as his subjects.

مَا سَمِعْنَا بِهٰذَا فِي الْمِلَّةِ الْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّا اخْتِلَاقٌ ۖ 7

(38:7) We have not heard this in the religious community close to our time.[9] This is nothing but a fabrication.

9. That is, there have been our own elderly people in the recent past. There are Christians and Jews also living in our land and in the adjoining lands; and there are the Zoroastrians abounding in Iran and Iraq and eastern Arabia. None of them has ever preached that man should only believe in One Allah, Lord of the worlds, and in none else beside Him. No one can remain content with One God only. Everyone believes in the beloved ones of Allah also. They are All paying obeisance to them, making offerings at their shrines and praying for fulfillment of their needs and requirements. From one place people get children and from another provisions of life, and from yet another whatever they pray for. The whole world believes in their powers and capabilities, and those who have benefited from them tell how the needs of the people are being met and their difficulties being removed through their help and grace. Now this man is telling us a queer thing which we had never heard before. He says that none of these holy men has any share in Godhead and that Godhead wholly belongs only to Allah.

ءَاُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ مِنْۢ بَيْنِنَا ۭ بَلْ هُمْ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْ ذِكْرِيْ ۚ بَلْ لَّمَّا يَذُوْقُوْا عَذَابِ ۭ 8

(38:8) Has this Exhortation been sent down among us only to him, to the exclusion of all others?" Nay, they are in doubt regarding My Exhortation,[10] and are saying all this because they have not yet had any taste of My chastisement.

10. In other words Allah says: Muhammad, these people are not belying you but Me. As for your truthfulness, they had never doubted it before. Now that they are doubting it, it is because of My Admonition. Now that I have entrusted to you the mission of admonishing them, they have started doubting the truthfulness of the very person whose righteousness and piety they used to swear by. The same theme has also been discussed in (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 33 and E.N. 21) thereof.

اَمْ عِنْدَهُمْ خَزَاۗىِٕنُ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّكَ الْعَزِيْزِ الْوَهَّابِ ۚ 9

(38:9) Do they possess the treasures of your Lord, the Most Mighty, the Great Bestower?

أَمْ لَهُمْ مُّلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فَلْيَرْتَقُوْا فِي الْاَسْبَابِ 10

(38:10) Or do they possess the dominion of the heavens and the earth and of all that is in between them? If so, let them ascend the heights of the realm of causation and see![11]

11. This is an answer to this saying of the disbelievers: Was he the only (fit) person among us to whom Allah's admonition should have been sent down? Allah says: It is for Us to decide whom We should choose and appoint as a Prophet and whom We should not. These people do not possess any power and authority to exercise choice in this regard. If they wish to attain such an authority, they should try to reach the divine Throne in order to obtain control over the office of sovereignty of the Universe, so that revelation should come down on him whom they regard as deserving their mercy and not on him whom We regard as fit for it. This theme has occurred at several places in the Quran, because the unbelieving Quraish again and again said: How did Muhammad (peace be upon him) become a Prophet? Did Allah find no better man among the principal leaders of the Quraish worthy of this office? (See (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayat 100); (Surah Az-Zukhruf, Ayats 31-32).

جُنْدٌ مَّا هُنَالِكَ مَهْزُوْمٌ مِّنَ الْاَحْزَابِ 11

(38:11) This is only a small army out of the several armies that will suffer defeat here.[12]

12. "There" implies the city of Makkah. That is, the time is coming when these people shall be humbled and routed in the very place where they are opposing and mocking you. Then, they will be standing, with heads hung down, before the same man whom they despise and refuse to recognize as a Prophet of Allah.

كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوْحٍ وَّعَادٌ وَّفِرْعَوْنُ ذُو الْاَوْتَادِ 12

(38:12) Before them the people of Noah, Ad, and Pharaoh of the tent-pegs gave the lie (to the Messengers)[13]

13. The use of dhul-autad (of the stakes) for Pharaoh is either in the sense that his kingdom was very strong as though a stake were firmly driven into the ground, or for the reason that wherever his large armies camped, pegs of the tents were seen driven into the ground on every side, or because he would torture and punish at the stakes anyone with whom he was angry. And possibly the stakes may imply the pyramids of Egypt which seem to be driven into the earth like the stakes.

وَثَمُوْدُ وَقَوْمُ لُوْطٍ وَّاَصْحٰبُ لْئَيْكَةِ اُولٰٓئِكَ الْاَحْزَابُ 13

(38:13) and so did Thamud and the people of Lot and the people of Aykah. These were all leagued together.

إِنْ كُلٌّ إِلَّا كَذَّبَ الرُّسُلَ فَحَقَّ عِقَابِ ۚ 14

(38:14) Each of them gave the lie to Messengers and My decree of chastisement came upon them.

وَمَا يَنْظُرُ هَٰؤُلَاءِ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً مَا لَهَا مِنْ فَوَاقٍ 15

(38:15) They are waiting for nothing except a single Cry, after which there will be no second Cry.[14]

14. That is, only a single blast of the torment will be enough to annihilate them; no other will be needed for the purpose. Another meaning of the sentence can be: After this they will get no more relief and no more respite.

وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا عَجِّلْ لَنَا قِطَّنَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ 16

(38:16) They say: "Our Lord, hasten to us our share (of chastisement) before the Day of Reckoning."[15]

15. That is, Allah's torment will be so severe and terrible as mentioned above, but just consider the behavior of these foolish people. They are telling the Prophet mockingly: Do not put off our affairs till the Day of Reckoning with which you are threatening us, but settle our account just now.: Whatever punishment is to be inflicted on us should be inflicted immediately.

اصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا دَاوُودَ ذَا الْأَيْدِ ۖ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ 17

(38:17) (O Prophet), bear with patience what they say,[16] and call to mind Our servant David,[17] who was endowed with great strength[18] and who constantly turned (to Allah).

16. The allusion is to the absurd conversation of the disbelievers of Makkah, as narrated above, to the effect that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was a sorcerer and a liar, and to their objection whether he was the only fit person in the sight of Allah to be appointed as a Messenger, and to their some accusation that he had vested interest in preaching the doctrine of Tauhid to the people and not any religious mission.

17. "Remember Our servant David". It would mean: There is a lesson in this story for these people. Or it would mean: The remembrance of this story will help you too, to have patience. As the narrative is meant to serve both purposes, comprehensive words have been used as contain both meanings. (For the story of the prophet David (peace be upon him), see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 251); (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayat 55); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 78-81); (Surah An-Naml, Ayat 15) and the E.Ns thereof, and (E.Ns 14 to 16 of Surah Saba).

18. The words in the original are: dhal-ayd (possessor of the hands). The word “hand” is used metaphorically for strength and power not only in Arabic but in other languages also. When as an attribute of the Prophet David (peace be upon him) it is said that he was a "possessor of the hands", it will necessarily mean that he possessed great powers. These powers may mean the physical strength which he displayed during his combat against Goliath, military and political power by which he crushed the neighboring idolatrous nations and established a strong Islamic empire, moral strength by which he ruled like a poor king and always feared Allah and observed the bounds set by Him, and the power of worship by virtue of which, besides his occupations in connection with rule and government and fighting in the cause of Allah, he fasted every alternate day and spent a third of the night in worship according to a tradition of Bukhari. Imam Bukhari in his History has related, on the authority of Abu- Darda, that whenever the Prophet David (peace be upon him) was mentioned, the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to say: He was the greatest worshiper of God.

إِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهُ يُسَبِّحْنَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِشْرَاقِ ۙ 18

(38:18) With him We had subjected the mountains that they join him in celebrating Allah's glory, evening and morning,

وَالطَّيْرَ مَحْشُورَةً ۖ كُلٌّ لَّهُ أَوَّابٌ 19

(38:19) and the birds, too, in their flocks, and turn again and again to celebrating Allah's glory.[19]

19. For explanation, see(Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 79 and E.N. 71) thereof.

وَشَدَدْنَا مُلْكَهُ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْحِكْمَةَ وَفَصْلَ الْخِطَابِ 20

(38:20) And We strengthened his kingdom and endowed him with wisdom and decisive judgement.[20]

20. That is, he was never ambiguous in speech but clear and forthright. Whatever problem he talked about he would lay bare its basic points, and would clearly and precisely determine the real issue under question, and would pass a decisive judgment.” This quality is not attained by a person unless he is granted wisdom, understanding and mastery of language of the highest degree.

وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ نَبَأُ الْخَصْمِ إِذْ تَسَوَّرُوا الْمِحْرَابَ ۙ 21

(38:21) Has the story of the litigants reached you of those who entered his private chambers by climbing over the wall?[21]

21. The object why the Prophet David (peace be upon him) has been mentioned here is to relate the story that begins from here; the object of mentioning his sterling qualities in the introduction was only to point out the high caliber of the Prophet David (peace be upon him) with whom this incident took place.

إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَىٰ دَاوُۥدَ فَفَزِعَ مِنْهُمْ ۖ قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ ۖ خَصْمَانِ بَغَىٰ بَعْضُنَا عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تُشْطِطْ وَاهْدِنَآ إِلَىٰ سَوَآءِ الصِّرَاطِ 22

(38:22) As they came upon David and he was frightened of them[22] they said: "Be not afraid. We are just two litigants: one of us has committed excess against the other. So judge rightly between us, and be not unjust; and guide us to the Right Way.

22. He was alarmed because the two men had appeared in the private quarters of the ruler of the land suddenly, by climbing over the wall, instead of going before him by the proper entrance.

إِنَّ هَٰذَآ أَخِى لَهُۥ تِسْعٌ وَتِسْعُونَ نَعْجَةً وَلِىَ نَعْجَةٌ وَٰحِدَةٌ فَقَالَ أَكْفِلْنِيهَا وَعَزَّنِى فِى الْخِطَابِ 23

(38:23) Behold, this is my brother;[23] he has ninety-nine ewes and I have only one ewe." And yet he said: "Give her into my charge," and he got the better of me in argument.[24]

23. "Brother" does not mean a real brother but a brotherin- faith and a member of one's own clan.

24. To understand what follows one should note that the complainant did not say that the other person had taken away his only ewe and added it to his own ewes, but said that he was asking for it, and since he was a powerful person he had prevailed over him in the matter and he could not reject his demand, being a weak and poor man.

قَالَ لَقَدْ ظَلَمَكَ بِسُؤَالِ نَعْجَتِكَ إِلَىٰ نِعَاجِهِۦ ۖ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْخُلَطَآءِ لَيَبْغِى بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّٰلِحَٰتِ وَقَلِيلٌ مَّا هُمْ ۗ وَظَنَّ دَاوُۥدُ أَنَّمَا فَتَنَّٰهُ فَاسْتَغْفَرَ رَبَّهُۥ وَخَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَأَنَابَ 24

(38:24) David said: "He has certainly wronged you in seeking to add your ewe to his ewes;[25] and indeed many who live together commit excesses, one to the other, except

those that believe and act righteously; and they are but few." (While so saying) David realized that it is We Who have put him to test; therefore, he sought the forgiveness of his Lord, and fell down, bowing and penitently turning (to Him).[26]

25. Here, one should not doubt that the Prophet David (peace be upon him) gave his decision after hearing only what one party had to say. The fact of the matter is that when the respondent kept quiet at the complaint of the complainant and said nothing in defense it by itself amounted to a confession by him. That is why the Prophet David (peace be upon him) came to the conclusion that the facts of the case were the same as the complainant had stated.

26. There is a difference of opinion as to whether it is obligatory to perform a sajdah (prostration) on this occasion or not. Imam Shafai says that it is not obligatory, for this is only a Prophet's repentance; but Imam Abu Hanifah has opined that prostration here is obligatory. The traditionalists have related three traditions from lbn- Abbas in this regard. According to Ikrimah, Ibn Abbas said: This is not one of those verses on the recitation of which prostration is obligatory, but I have seen the Prophet (peace be upon him) prostrating himself on this occasion. (Bukhari, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Nasai, Musnad Ahmad). The second tradition which Saeed bin Jubair has related from Ibn Abbas is to the effect: The Prophet (peace be upon him) prostrated himself in Surah Suad and said: The Prophet David (peace be upon him) had prostrated himself in order to express his repentance and we prostrate ourselves as a token of gratitude, because his repentance was accepted. (Nasai) In the third tradition that Mujahid has related from him, he says: Allah has commanded the Prophet (peace be upon him), in the Quran: These were the ones whom Allah had shown the right way; therefore, you should follow their way. (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 90). Now, since David was a Prophet and he had prostrated himself on this occasion, the Prophet (peace be upon him) also prostrated himself here only to follow his way. (Bukhari). These three are the statements of Ibn Abbas. Abu Said Khudri says: The Prophet (peace be upon him) once recited Surah Suad in his address, and when he came to this verse, he descended from the pulpit and performed a prostration and the audience also did the same along with him. Then, on another occasion, he recited this same Surah and when the people heard this verse, they were ready to perform the prostration. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: This is the repentance of a Prophet, but I see that you have gotten ready to perform the prostration. Saying this he descended from the pulpit and prostrated himself and the people also did the same. (Abu Daud). Although these traditions do not provide any absolute argument to prove that it is obligatory to perform the prostration here, yet they prove at least that because the Prophet (peace be upon him) generally performed a prostration on this occasion, it is in any case commendable to prostrate here.

Another thing that one notices in this verse is that Allah has used the words kharra rakian (fell in ruku) here, but all the commentators agree that this implies kharra sajid-an (fell in sajdah: prostration). On this very basis, Imam Abu Hanifah and his companions have expressed the opinion that one may perform only a ruku instead of a sajdah, when one recites or hears being recited a verse requiring a sajdah in the Prayer or outside it. For when Allah has used the word ruku to imply sajdah, it becomes obvious that ruku can represent sajdah. Imam Khattabi, a Shafeite jurist, also holds the same opinion, Though this opinion in itself is sound and reasonable, we do not find any precedent in the practices of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions that they might have been content with performing a ruku only instead of a sajdah on a verse requiring a sajdah. Therefore, one

should act upon the view only when there is an obstruction in performing the sajdah; it would be wrong to make it a practice, Imam Abu Hanifah and his companions themselves also did not intend that it should be made a practice; they only ruled that it was permissible.

فَغَفَرْنَا لَهٗ ذٰلِكَ ؕ وَاِنَّ لَهٗ عِنْدَنَا لَزُلْفٰى وَحُسْنَ مَاٰبٍ 25

(38:25) Thereupon We forgave him his shortcoming and indeed (an exalted position of) nearness awaits him, and an excellent resort.[27]

27. This shows that the Prophet David (peace be upon him) had certainly committed an error, and it was an error which bore some resemblance with the case of the ewes. Therefore, when he gave a decision on it, he at once realized that he was being put to the test. But the nature of the error was not such as could not be forgiven, or if forgiven, it would have deposed him from his high rank. Allah Himself says: When he fell down prostrate and repented, he was not only forgiven but his high rank in the world and the Hereafter also remained unaffected.

يٰدَاوٗدُ اِنَّا جَعَلْنٰكَ خَلِيْفَةً فِى الْاَرْضِ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوٰى فَيُضِلَّكَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَضِلُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌ ۢ بِمَا نَسُوْا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ ع 26

(38:26) (We said to him): "O David, We have appointed you vicegerent on earth. Therefore, rule among people with justice and do not follow (your) desire lest it should lead you astray from Allah's Path. Allah's severe chastisement awaits those who stray away from Allah's Path, for they had forgotten the Day of Reckoning.[28]

28. This is the warning that Allah gave to the Prophet David (peace be upon him) on accepting his repentance along with giving him the good news of exalting his rank. This by itself shows that the error that he had committed contained an clement of the desires of the flesh; it also pertained to the abuse of power and authority; and it was an act which was unworthy of a just and fair-minded ruler.

We are confronted with three questions here:

(1) What was the error that the Prophet David committed?

(2) Why has Allah made only tacit allusions to it instead of mentioning it openly and directly?

(3) What is its relevance to the present context?

The people who have studied the Bible (the Holy Book of the Jews and Christians) are not unaware that in this Book the Prophet David (peace be upon him) has been accused clearly of committing adultery with the wife of Uriah the Hittite and then marrying her after having Uriah intentionally slain in a battle. It has also been alleged that this same woman, who had surrendered herself to the Prophet David (peace be upon him), while being another man's wife, was the mother of the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him). This story is found with all its details in chapters 11 and 12 of the Second Book of Samuel in the Old Testament. It had been included in it centuries before the revelation of the Quran. Any Jew or Christian who read his Holy Book anywhere in the world, or heard it read, was not only aware of this story but also believed in it as true. It spread through them, and even in the present time no book is written in the West on the history of the Israelites and the Hebrew religion, in which this charge against the Prophet David (peace be upon him) is not repeated. This well known story also contains the following:

And the Lord sent Nathan onto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveler unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man' lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. (2 Samuel, chapter 12: 1-9).

When this story was so well known among the people there was no need that a detailed account of it should have been given in the Quran, nor is it the way of Allah to mention such things openly in His Holy Book. That is why only tacit allusions have been made to it here as well as pointed out what the actual event was and what the people of the Book have turned it into. The actual event as one clearly understands from the aforesaid statement of the Quran was:

The Prophet David (peace be upon him) had only expressed this desire before Uriah (or whatever be the name of the man) that he should divorce his wife; as this desire had been expressed not by a common man but by an illustrious king and a great Prophet before a member of the public, the man was finding himself constrained to yield to it even in the absence of any compulsion. On this occasion, before the man could act as the Prophet David had desired, two righteous men of the nation suddenly made their appearance before David and presented before him this matter in the form of an imaginary case. At first, the Prophet David thought it was a real case, and so gave his decision after hearing it. But as soon as he

uttered the words of the decision, his conscience gave the warning that the parable precisely applied to the case between him and the person, and that the act which he was describing as an injustice had issued forth from his own person. As soon as he realized this, he fell down prostrate, repented and reversed his decision.

The question, as to how this event took the ugly shape as related in the Bible, also becomes obvious after a little consideration. It appears that the Prophet David (peace be upon him) had come to know of the unique qualities of the woman through some means and had started thinking that she should be the queen of the country instead of being the wife of an ordinary officer. Overwhelmed by the thought he expressed the desire before her husband that he should divorce her. He did not see any harm in it because it was not looked upon as anything improper among the Israelites. It was an ordinary thing among them that if a person happened to like the wife of another, he would freely request him to give her up for him. Nobody minded such a request, and often it so happened that friends would divorce their wives for each other's sake of their own accord, so that the other may marry her. However, when the Prophet David (peace be upon him) expressed this desire, he did not realize that the expression of such a desire could be without compulsion and coercion when expressed by a common man, but it could never be so when expressed by a king. When his attention was drawn to this aspect of the matter through a parable, he gave up his desire immediately, and the thing was forgotten. But afterwards when, without any desire or planning on his part, the woman's husband fell martyr on the battlefield, and he married her, the evil genius of the Jews started concocting stories and this mischievous mentality became even more acute after a section of the Israelites turned hostile to the Prophet Solomon. (Please see (E.N. 56 of Surah An-Naml). Under these motives the story was invented that the Prophet David (peace be upon him), God forbid, had seen Uriah's wife washing herself from the roof of his palace. He had her called to his house and committed adultery with her and she had conceived. Then he had sent Uriah on the battle-front to fight the children of Ammon, and had commanded Joab, the army commander, to appoint him in the forefront of the battle where he should be killed. And when he was killed, he married his widow, and from the same woman the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) was born. The wicked people described all these false accusations in their Holy Book, so that they should go on reading it generation after generation and slandering the two most illustrious men of their community, who were their greatest benefactors after the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him).

A section of the commentators of the Quran has almost entirely accepted these tales that have reached them through the Israelites. They have dropped only that pan of these traditions in which mention has been made of the accusation of adultery against the Prophet David and the woman's having conceived. The rest of the story as found in the traditions reproduced by them is the same as it was well known among the Israelites. Another group of the commentators has altogether denied that any such act was ever committed by the Prophet David (peace be upon him), which bore any resemblance with the case of the ewes. Instead of this, they have put forward such interpretations of this story as are wholly baseless, unauthentic and without relevance to the context of the Quran itself. But among the Muslim commentators themselves there are some who have accepted the truth and the facts of the story through the clear references made to it in the Quran. Here are, for instance, some of their views:

Both Masruq and Saeed bin Jubair have related this saying of Abdullah bin Abbas: The only thing that the Prophet David (peace be upon him) did was that he expressed his desire before the woman's husband that he should give up his wife for him. (lbn Jarir).

Allama Zamakhshari writes in his commentary Al- Kashshaf: The way Allah has narrated the story of the Prophet David (peace be upon him) indicates that he had only expressed his desire before the man that he should leave his wife for him.

Allama Abu Bakr al-Jassas has expressed the opinion that the woman was not the other man's wedded wife but was only his betrothed. The Prophet David (peace be upon him) had also asked for the same woman's hand in marriage. This earned him Allah's displeasure, for he had asked for her hand in spite of the fact that another man had already asked for her hand, and the Prophet David (peace be upon him) already had several wives with him in his house. (Ahkamul-Quran). Some other commentators also have expressed the same opinion, but this does not entirely conform to what the Quran has said. The words of the suitor as related in the Quran are to the effect: I have only one ewe; he says: Give this ewe also in my charge. The Prophet David (peace be upon him) also said the same thing in his decision: This person has certainly wronged you in demanding your ewe to be added to his ewes. This parable could apply to the case between the Prophet David (peace be upon him) and Uriah only in case the woman was the latter's wife. Had it been the cast of asking for the woman's hand when another man had already asked for her hand, the parable would have been like this: I desired to have an ewe, and this man said: leave this also for me.

Qadi Abu Bakr Ibn al-Arabi has discussed this question in detail in his Ahkamal-Quran and concluded: What actually happened was just that the Prophet David (peace be upon him) asked one of his men to leave his wife for him and made this demand seriously. The Quran does not say that the man gave up his wife on this demand and the Prophet David (peace be upon him) then married her and the Prophet Solomon was born of her womb. What displeased Allah was that he asked the woman's husband to leave her for him. This act, even if otherwise lawful, was unworthy of the office of Prophethood; that is why he earned Allah's displeasure and was admonished.

This commentary fits in well with the context in which this story has been told. A little consideration of the context shows that it has been related in the Quran on this occasion for two objects. The first object is to exhort the Prophet (peace be upon him) to patience, and for this purpose he has been addressed and told: Have patience on what these people say against you, and remember Our servant David (peace be upon him). That is: You are being accused only of sorcery and lying, but Our servant David (peace be upon him) was even accused of adultery and having a person killed willfully, by the wicked people: therefore, bear up against what you may have to hear from these people. The other object is to warn the disbelievers to the effect: You are committing all sorts of excesses in the world with impunity, but the God in Whose Godhead you are committing these misdeeds does not spare anyone from being called to account. Even if a favorite and beloved servant of His happens to commit but a minor error, He calls him to strict accountability. For this very object the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been asked: Tell them the story of Our servant David (peace be upon him), who was a man of high character, but when he happened to commit sin, We did not even spare him but condemned him severely.

In this regard, there is another misunderstanding which must also be removed. The suitor in his parable said that his brother had 99 ewes and he had only one ewe, which he was demanding from him. From this one gets the idea that perhaps the Prophet David (peace be upon him) had 99 wives, and by having another he wanted to make their number 100. But, in fact, it is not necessary that every minor part of the parable should be literally applicable to the case between the Prophet David (peace be upon him) and Uriah the Hittite. In common idiom the numbers ten, twenty, fifty, etc. are mentioned to express plurality and not to indicate the exact number of something. When a man tells another that he has told him something ten times over, he only means to stress that he has been told that thing over and over again. The same is also true here. By means of the parable the suitor wanted the Prophet David (peace be upon him) to realize that he already had several wives with him, and even then he desired to have the only wife of the other man. This same thing has been cited by the commentator Nisaburi from Hasan Basri: The Prophet David (peace be upon him) did not have 99 wives: this is only a parable (For a detailed and well-reasoned discussion of this story, see our book Tafhimat, vol. II, pp. 29.44).

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَآءَ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ۚ فَوَيْلٌ
لِّلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنَ النَّارِ ؕ 27

(38:27) We did not create this heaven and earth and all that lies between them in vain. That is the fancy of those who denied the Truth.[29] So woe from the Fire to all who deny the Truth.

29. That is, We have not created anything in the world merely in sport and fun so that it may be without any wisdom and purpose and justice, and there may occur no result from any act, good or bad. This is the conclusion of the preceding discourse as well as an introduction to the following theme. The object of this statement as a conclusion to the discourse is to impress the following truth: Man has not been left to wander about at will in the world, nor is this world a lawless kingdom that one may do here whatever he likes with impunity. As an introduction to the following theme, the sentence is meant to say: The person who does not believe in the meting out of the rewards and punishments, and thinks that both the good and the evil people will ultimately end up in the dust after death and that nobody will be called to account, nor will anyone be rewarded for good or punished for evil, in fact, regards the world as a plaything and its Creator a senseless player, and thinks that by creating the world and man in it, the Creator of the Universe has committed a useless thing. The same thing has been stated in different ways at several places in the Quran, e.g. Did you think that We created you without any purpose, and that you would never be brought back to Us? (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayat 115).

We have not created the heavens and the earth and whatever lies between them merely in sport: We have created them with the truth, but most of them do not know. For the resurrection of them all the appointed time is the Day of Decision. (Surah Ad-Dukhan, Ayat 38-40).

أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَالْمُفْسِدِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الْمُتَّقِينَ كَالْفُجَّارِ 28

(38:28) Shall We then treat alike those that believe and act righteously and those that create mischief on earth? Or treat alike the God-fearing and the wicked?[30]

30. That is, do you think it is reasonable and fair that both the pious and the wicked should be treated alike in the end? Do you regard this concept as satisfying that the pious man should not get any reward for his piety and the wrongdoer should not receive any punishment for his sins? Obviously, if there is to be no Hereafter, and there is to be no accountability and no rewards and no punishments for human acts, it negates both Allah's wisdom and His justice, and the entire order of the Universe becomes a blind order. On this assumption there remains no motive for doing good and no deterrent against evil. God forbid, if the Godhead of God should be such a lawless kingdom, the one who leads a pious life in the face of all kinds of hardships in the world and endeavors to reform the people, would be a foolish person, and the one who gains benefits by committing all kinds of excesses and enjoys sinful pleasures of life, would be a wise man.

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ 29

(38:29) This is the Blessed Book[31] that We have revealed to you, (O Muhammad), that people with understanding may reflect over its verses and those with understanding derive a lesson.

31. The Quran has been called a blessed Book in the sense that it is highly useful for man. It gives him the best guidance to improve and reform his life. By following it he has only to gain and nothing to lose.

وَوَهَبْنَا لِدَاوُودَ سُلَيْمَانَ ۚ نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ ۖ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ ۖ 30

(38:30) We bestowed upon David (an illustrious son), Solomon.[32] How excellent a servant (of Ours he was)! Indeed he constantly turned to Us in devotion.

32. The Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) has been mentioned already at the followings places: (Surah Al- Baqarah, Ayat 102); (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayat 5); (Surah Al- Anbiya, Ayats 78-82); (Surah An-Naml, Ayats 15-44); (Surah Saba, Ayats 12-14).

إِذْ عُرِضَ عَلَيْهِ بِالْعَشِيِّ الصَّافِنَاتُ الْجِيَادُ ۙ 31

(38:31) And when one evening well-trained and running horses of noble breed were brought to him[33]

33. The words as-safinat-ul-jiyad in the original imply the horses, which are very calm and quiet when they stand, and very fast moving when they run.

فَقَالَ اِنِّیۡۤ اَحۡبَبۡتُ حُبَّ الۡخَیۡرِ عَنۡ ذِکۡرِ رَبِّیۡ ۚ حَتّٰی تَوَارَتۡ بِالۡحِجَابِ ۖ وقفة 32

(38:32) he said: "Lo! I have come to love this wealth[34] on account of the remembrance of my Lord." And when the horses disappeared,

34. The Arabic word khair in the text is used for abundance of wealth as well as for horses metaphorically. As the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) had kept these horses for fighting in the way of Allah, he called them khair.

رُدُّوۡهَا عَلَیَّ ؕ فَطَفِقَ مَسۡحًۢا بِالسُّوۡقِ وَ الۡاَعۡنَاقِ 33

(38:33) (he ordered): "Bring these horses back to me," and then he began to gently stroke their shanks and necks.[35]

35. There is a difference of opinion among the commentators about the translation and commentary of these verses.

One section of them interprets them as follows:

The Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) became so absorbed in reviewing the horses and watching their races, that he forgot to offer his Asr Prayer, or according to some others, to perform certain devotions that he used to perform before the sunset. Then when the sun went down, he commanded that the horses be brought back, and when they came back, the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) started slashing them with the sword, or in other words, slaughtering them as a sacrifice to Allah, because they had caused him to become heedless of the remembrance of Allah. Accordingly, the verses have been translated thus: And he said: I so preferred the love of this wealth that I became heedless of the remembrance (the Asr Prayer, or the special devotions) of my Lord till (the sun) went down (behind the veil of the west). (Then he commanded:) bring them back, (and when the horses came back) he began to stroke their shanks and necks (with the sword). Although this commentary has been given by some major commentators, it is not plausible for the reason that in this the commentator has to add three things from himself, which have no basis whatsoever. In the first place, he has to assume that the Prophet Solomon's Asr Prayer was lost in the occupation, or some special devotions that he used to perform at that time, whereas the words of the Quran are only to the effect: I so preferred this wealth that I became heedless of the remembrance of my Lord. In these there is no ground for taking any word for the Asr Prayer or the special devotions. Secondly, he also assumes that the sun set, whereas there is no mention of the sun whatsoever. On the contrary, when one reads the words hatta tawarar bilhijab (when they disappeared from sight) one's mind automatically turns to as-safinat ul jiyad (well-bred horses) which have been mentioned in the preceding verse. Thirdly, he also has to assume that the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) did not simply stroke the shins and necks of the horses with the hand but stroked them with the sword, whereas the Quran does not contain the words mashan-bissaif or any other pointer

from which stroking may be taken to mean stroking with the sword. We have a fundamental difference with this kind of the commentary. In our opinion, only in four cases it would be right to interpret the words of the Quran in other than their normally accepted meaning: (1) Either there should be a pointer to it in the words of the Quran itself; or (2) There should be an allusion to it at some other place in the Quran; or (3) An explanation of it should be afforded by some authentic Hadith; or (4) It should have some other reliable source, e.g. if it pertains to history, there should be an historical evidence to support it. If it pertains to the manifestations of the universe, there should be authentic scientific knowledge to substantiate it. And if it pertains to the Shariah values, the sources of Islamic law should explain it. In the absence of any of these, we do not think it is right to invent a story on the basis of one's own imagination and add it to the words of the Quran.

One section of the commentators has differed a little from the above translation and commentary. They say that the pronoun in both hatta tawarat bil-hijab and ruddu-ha alayya turns only to the sun. That is, when the Asr Prayer was lost and the sun went down behind the veil of the west, the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) said to the workers of destiny: Turn the sun back so that the Asr time comes back for me to offer the Prayer. So, the sun retreated and he performed his Prayer. But this commentary is even more unacceptable than the previously mentioned one not because Allah is powerless to bring the sun back, but because Allah has made no mention of it anywhere. On the contrary, if such a wonderful miracle had actually been worked for the sake of the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him), it would certainly be worthy of mention. Moreover, if the extraordinary event of the returning of the sun after having set had actually taken place; the history of the world would never be without it. In support of this commentary these commentators present some Ahadith also in order to prove that the returning of the sun after having set is not a rare event that happened only once, but it has happened several times. There is the mention of bringing the sun back in connection with the Prophet's (peace be upon him) Ascension (miraj); the sun was also brought back on the occasion of the Battle of the Trench for the Prophet (peace be upon him), and also for Ali, when the Prophet (peace be upon him) was sleeping with his head in Ali's lap and his Asr Prayer was lost: then the Prophet (peace be upon him) had prayed for the return of the sun and it had returned. But the reasoning from these traditions is even weaker than the commentary in support of which they have been presented. Ibn Taimiyyah has proved as fabricated the tradition about Ali after a detailed discussion of its chains and transmitters. Imam Ahmad says it has no basis, and Ibn Jauzi says that it is without any doubt a forged tradition. The tradition of the sun's being brought back on the occasion of the battle of the Trench also is weak according to some traditionalists and fabricated according to others. As far as the tradition regarding the event of the Ascension is concerned, the truth about it is that when, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was describing what had happened in the Night of Ascension, before the disbelievers of Makkah, they asked for a proof of it. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied that on the way from Jerusalem he had seen a caravan at such and such a place, which had met with such and such an accident. When asked as to when that caravan would reach Makkah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) named the day. When the day came, the people of the Quraish waited for the caravan all day till the sun began to set. On this occasion the Prophet prayed that the sun should not set till the caravan had arrived. So, the caravan actually arrived before the sunset. Some reporters even have stated that the day on that occasion had been enhanced by an hour, and the sun had stood still for that long. The question is: Are such

traditions sufficient evidence for the proof of such an extraordinary event? As we have said above, the returning of the sun, or its standing still for an hour, is no ordinary event. Had such an event actually taken place, it would have become well known the world over. Its mention and narration could not remain restricted to only a few reporters.

The third section of the commentators interprets these verses as any unbiased person would interpret them from these words. According to this commentary, what actually happened was this: When a squadron of fine, well bred horses was presented before the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him), he said: I love this wealth not for the sake of personal glory or desire but for the cause of raising the Word of my Lord. Then he ordered that the horses run a race, and they disappeared from sight. Then he ordered that they be brought back, and when they were brought back, according to Ibn Abbas: He started passing his hand on their necks and shanks with love. This same commentary is correct in our opinion, because it corresponds to the words of the Quran, and for the sake of the full meaning, nothing needs to be added to it, which may neither be in the Quran, nor in any authentic Hadith, nor in the Israelite history.

Besides, one should also note that Allah has narrated this event immediately after using epithets like nim al-abd, innahu awwab (an excellent servant, who turned to His Lord over and over again) for the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him). This clearly shows that the object is to relate this message: Behold, what a good servant of Ours he was! He loved the means of kingly pomp and glory not for the sake of the world but for Our sake! After watching and reviewing his grand cavalry, he did not boast of his power and grandeur like the worldly rulers but even at that time he remembered only Us.

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا سُلَيْمٰنَ وَاَلْقَيْنَا عَلٰى كُرْسِيِّهٖ جَسَدًا ثُمَّ اَنَابَ 34

(38:34) Surely We put Solomon to the test and cast upon his throne a mere body. Thereupon he penitently turned (to Us).

قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِيْ وَهَبْ لِيْ مُلْكًا لَّا يَنْۢبَغِيْ لِاَحَدٍ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِيْ ۚ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ 35

(38:35) He said: "My Lord, forgive me and bestow upon me a kingdom such as none other after me will deserve. Surely You are the Bounteous Giver."[36]

36. In view of the contest, the real object here is to relate this event; the preceding verses are an introduction to it. Just as above this, first the Prophet David (peace be upon him) was praised, then the event narrated by which he was put to temptation, then it was said that Allah Almighty does not spare even such a beloved servant from accountability, then about his noble nature it was said that as soon as he was warned of the temptation, he repented and bowed before Allah and withheld himself from the act, so also here the sequence is like this: First, the Prophet Solomon's (peace be upon him) high rank and his deep sense of devotion has been mentioned, then it is said that he was also put to the test, then it has been stated that when a mere body was placed on his throne, he immediately felt warned on his error, and pleading the forgiveness of his Lord, withdrew from the act, because of which he was involved in the temptation. In other words, Allah by means of these two stories wants

to impress two things upon the reader simultaneously: (1) Not to speak of the common men, even high-ranking Prophets were not spared from His strict accountability; and, (2) The right attitude for man is not to brag and feel proud after committing an error, but to bow down humbly before his Lord as soon as he realizes his sin. It was the result of this attitude that Allah not only forgave the mistakes of those illustrious men but blessed them with still more favors and kindness.

Here, the question again arises as to what was the temptation in which the Prophet Solomon was involved; what is the meaning of placing a mere body on his throne, and what was the nature of the warning on the occurrence of which he repented? In reply to this the commentators have adopted four different points of view:

One section of them has related a long story whose details are disputed, but their resume is this: The error committed by the Prophet Solomon was either that one of his wives continued to worship the idols in the palace for forty days and he remained unaware of it, or that he remained confined to his residence for a few days and did not attend to redressing of the oppressed people's grievances. For this he was punished as follows: A satan somehow made away with his ring by which he ruled over the jinns, men and wind. As soon as he lost the ring he was deprived of his powers and he remained wandering from place to place for forty days; in the interval the satan continued to rule in the guise of Solomon. The placing of a mere body on Solomon's throne implied this very satan, who had sat on his throne. Some people have gone to the extent to say that during that period even the chastity of the women in the royal household did not remain safe from the satan. At last from his conduct the ministers and the chiefs and the scholars of the court began to doubt that he was not Solomon. Therefore, when they opened the Torah before him, he fled. On the way the ring fell from his hand in the sea, or he cast it into the sea himself, and a fish swallowed it. Then, somehow the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) came by the fish. When in order to cook it, he cut open its belly, he found his ring in it. Then, no sooner did he get the ring than the jinns and men presented themselves humbly before him. This whole story, from the beginning to the end, is nonsensical and absurd, which the converts from among the Jews and Christians took from the Talmud and other Israelite traditions and spread it among the Muslims. It is strange that some of our well known scholars took these traditions as authentic and cited them as the explanation of the allusions of the Quran, whereas neither is there any truth in Solomon's ring, nor could his glorious works be attributed to any ring, nor had the satans been given the power that they might disguise themselves as Prophets and mislead the people, nor can it be imagined about Allah that He would punish a Prophet for an error in such a manner as to enable a satan to corrupt and destroy a whole community, disguised as a prophet. The Quran itself repudiates this commentary. In the verses that follow Allah says: When Solomon met with the trial, and he asked Our forgiveness for it, then We subdued the wind and the satans to him. But, on the contrary, according to the above commentary, the satans were already under his control by virtue of the ring. It is strange that the scholars who have made this commentary did not care to consider what the subsequent verses say.

The second section of them says that a son was born to the Prophet Solomon after twenty years. The satans feared that if he became king after Solomon, they would continue to remain slaves as they were under him. Therefore, they plotted to kill him. When Solomon came to know of this plot, he hid the child in the clouds so that he was brought up there.

This was the temptation in which he was involved. He placed reliance on the protection of the clouds instead of having trust in Allah. For this he was punished in this way that the child died and fell on his throne as a mere body. This tale also is baseless and is expressly against the Quran, for in this also it has been assumed that the winds and satans were already under the Prophet Solomon's control, whereas the Quran in clear words has stated their subjection to be an event that took place after the trial.

The third section says that the Prophet Solomon one day swore that he would go in to his 70 wives that night, and from each a warrior would be born, who would fight in the cause of Allah, but while he said this he did not say: Insha Allah: if Allah so wills. Consequently, only one wife conceived and from her also a defective child was born, whom the midwife brought and placed on his throne. This Hadith has been reported by Abu Harairah from the Prophet (peace be upon him) and it has been related by Bukhari and Muslim and other traditionists in several ways. In Bukhari itself this tradition has been related at different places in different ways. At one place the number of the wives has been stated as 60 and at others 70 or 90 or 99 or 100. As far as the chains of the transmitters are concerned, most of the traditions have strong chains, and their authenticity cannot be disputed from the point of view of the principles of reporting. But the subject-matter of the Hadith is patently against reason, and proclaims aloud that such a thing could not have been said by the Prophet (peace be upon him), as reported. But, on the contrary, he might have probably mentioned it as an example of the foolish and nonsensical tale-telling of the Jews, and the hearer might have misunderstood that the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself had stated it as an event. To force the people to accept such traditions only on the strength of their chains of transmitters would be making religion a matter of mockery and jest. Everyone can calculate for himself that even in the longest night of winter the interval between the "Isha" and the Fajr Prayers cannot be of more than ten to eleven hours. If the minimum number of the wives be 60, it would mean that the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) went on having intercourse with them continuously for 10 to 11 hours that night at the rate of six wives per hour, without having a moment's rest. Is it practically possible? And can it be expected that the Prophet (peace be upon him) might have related it as an event? Then in the Hadith nowhere has it been said that the body that had been placed on Solomon's throne, as stated in the Quran, implied the malformed child. Therefore, it cannot be claimed that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had narrated this event as a commentary of this verse. Furthermore, though it is understandable why the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) asked for Allah's forgiveness on the birth of the child, one fails to understand why, along with the prayer for forgiveness, he prayed: My Lord, grant me a kingdom as may belong to no one else after me.

Another commentary which Imam Razi has preferred is this: The Prophet Solomon was afflicted with a serious disease, or on account of an impending danger his body had been reduced to a mere skeleton. But this commentary also does not conform to the words of the Quran. The Quran says: We put Solomon to the test and placed a mere body on his throne. Then he turned (to Allah). From these words no one can understand that the mere body implied the body of the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) himself. They clearly show that putting to the test implied some error that he happened to commit. On this, the way he was given the warning was that a mere body was placed on his throne, and when he realized his error he turned to Allah.

As a matter of fact, this is one of the most difficult places of the Quran, and we do not find any indisputable ground for giving a definite and absolute commentary of it. But if the words of the Prophet Solomon's prayer: My Lord, forgive me, and grant me a kingdom as may belong to no one else after me, are read in the light of the Israelite history, it appears that probably he cherished in his heart the desire that his son should succeed him on the throne so that His kingdom and sovereignty should continue in his own race after him. This same thing has been called a temptation for him by Allah, and he realized this when his heir Rehoboam grew up into an unworthy young man, whose ugly manners clearly foretold that he would not be able to sustain the mighty kingdom of the Prophets David and Solomon (peace be upon them) even for a few days. Placing a mere body on his throne probably means that the son whom he wanted to succeed him on the throne, was an unworthy person. Therefore, he restrained his desire, asked for Allah's forgiveness and prayed that the kingdom should end with him, and he would curb his desire to have it continued in his dynasty. The Israelite history also shows the same thing. The Prophet Solomon did not make any will about his successor, nor made it binding for the people to obey a particular person. After him his ministers put Rehoboam on the throne, but not long afterwards ten tribes of Israel took northern Palestine and broke away, and only the tribe of Judah remained loyal to the throne of Jerusalem.

فَسَخَّرۡنَا لَهُ الرِّيۡحَ تَجۡرِىۡ بِاَمۡرِهٖ رُخَآءً حَيۡثُ اَصَابَ ۙ 36

(38:36) We subjected the wind to him, so that it blew gently at his bidding, wherever he directed it,[37]

37. For explanation, see (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 81 and E.N. 74) thereof. However, there is one thing which requires further explanation here. In Surah Al-Anbiya where mention has been made of subjecting the wind for the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him), it has been described as the strongly blowing wind, but here "it blew by his command gently wherever he intended". This means that the wind in itself was strong and violent as is needed for moving the sailing-ships but it had been made gentle for the Prophet Solomon in the sense that it blew whither-soever he wanted it to blow for his commercial fleets.

وَالشَّيٰطِيۡنَ كُلَّ بَنَّآءٍ وَّغَوَّاصٍ ۙ 37

(38:37) and We also subjected the devils to him all kinds of builders and divers;

وَّاٰخَرِيۡنَ مُقَرَّنِيۡنَ فِى الۡاَصۡفَادِ 38

(38:38) and others that were bound with chains.[38]

38. For explanation, see (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 82); (Surah An-Naml, Ayats 17, 39)and the E.Ns thereof. The satans imply the jinns, and the satans linked in chains imply the serving satans, who were fettered and imprisoned as a punishment for making mischief. It is not necessary that the fetters and chains in which those satans were bound might be made of iron and they might appear as bound in them like the human prisoners. In any case, they

were imprisoned in a manner that they could neither escape nor were able to commit further mischief.

هٰذَا عَطَآؤُنَا فَامْنُنْ اَوْ اَمْسِكْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ 39

(38:39) "This is Our bestowal. So give or withhold as you wish without account."[39]

39. This verse can have three meanings: (1) This is Our unlimited gift: You have the authority to give of it freely to whomsoever you like and keep it from whomsoever you like. (2) This is Our gift: You may give of it to whomsoever you like and keep it from whomsoever you like, you will not be called to account for giving it or keeping it from the people. (3) Another meaning of it given by some commentators is: The satans have been placed entirely under your control: you may set free whomsoever you like and restrain whomsoever you like. You will not be held accountable for this.

وَاِنَّ لَهٗ عِنْدَنَا لَزُلْفٰى وَحُسْنَ مَاٰبٍ ع 40

(38:40) Indeed an exalted position of nearness awaits him and an excellent resort.[40]

40. Here, the object is to tell that just as a servant's arrogance causes Allah's displeasure and wrath, so does his humility earns Allah's pleasure and approval for him. If a servant commits an error and becomes even more arrogant when warned, he is led to the same fate as is being mentioned in connection with the story of Adam and Satan below. Contrary to this, if a servant happens to commit an error and he repents and bows down before his Lord humbly, he is blessed with such bounties as the Prophets David and Solomon (peace be upon them) were blessed with. The prayer that Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) had made after seeking Allah's forgiveness, was literally fulfilled and Allah actually granted him a kingdom as had neither been granted to anyone before him nor bestowed on anyone after him. Having control over the winds and the jinns is an extraordinary power, which has been granted only to the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) and to none else in human history.

وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَآ اَيُّوْبَ ۘ اِذْ نَادٰى رَبَّهٗٓ اَنِّيْ مَسَّنِيَ الشَّيْطٰنُ بِنُصْبٍ وَّعَذَابٍ ؕ 41

(38:41) And remember Our servant Job:[41] when he cried to his Lord: "Behold, Satan has afflicted me with much hardship and suffering."[42]

41. This is the fourth place in the Quran where the Prophet Job (peace be upon him) has been mentioned. Before this he has been mentioned in (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 163); (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 84)and (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 83-84). For the details about him, please see (E.Ns 76 to 79 of Surah Al- Anbiya).

42. This does not mean that Satan has afflicted me with illness and brought distress upon me, but it means: The affliction of the severities of illness, the loss of property and wealth, and the desertion of the near and dear ones is not so great a torment and trouble for me as the

temptation of Satan, who is exploiting my condition to despair me of my Lord and wants that I should turn ungrateful to Him and become desperate and impatient. This meaning of the lamentation of the Prophet Job (peace be upon him) is preferable for two reasons: (1) According to the Quran, Allah has granted Satan only the power of temptation. He has not given him the power to afflict with illness the worshipers of Allah and compel them to deviate from the way of service and obedience by causing them physical ailments. (2) In Surah Al-Anbiya when the Prophet Job (peace be upon him) puts before Allah his complaint about illness and disease, he does not mention Satan at all, but says only: I have been afflicted with the disease and You are most Merciful.

ۚ اُرۡكُضۡ بِرِجۡلِكَ ۚ هٰذَا مُغۡتَسَلٌۢ بَارِدٌ وَّشَرَابٌ 42

(38:42) (We commanded him): "Stamp your foot on earth, and here is cool water to wash with and to drink."[43]

43. That is, as soon as he stamped his foot on the ground, a spring gushed forth by Allah's command, drinking from which and washing with which was the remedy of the Prophet Job's (peace be upon him) disease. Most probably he was suffering from some skin disease. According to the Bible also: Satan smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. (Job, 2: 7).

وَوَهَبۡنَا لَهٗۤ اَهۡلَهٗ وَمِثۡلَهُمۡ مَّعَهُمۡ رَحۡمَةً مِّنَّا وَذِكۡرٰى لِاُولِى الۡاَلۡبَابِ 43

(38:43) And We granted to him his family and also the like of them,[44] as a mercy from Us, and as a reminder to people of understanding,[45]

44. Traditions show that during this illness everyone except his wife had deserted the Prophet Job (peace be upon him); even his children had turned away. To this Allah has alluded, saying: When We granted him health, the whole family returned to him, and then We granted him even more children.

45. That is, in it there is a lesson for an intelligent man. Neither should man forget God and become arrogant in good times nor despair of Him in bad times. Good fortune and misfortune are entirely in the Power of Allah, the One. If He wills He can change the best times of man into the worst times and the worst into the best. Therefore, a wise person should trust in Him alone in all sorts of circumstances and should pin all his hopes on Him.

وَخُذۡ بِيَدِكَ ضِغۡثًا فَاضۡرِبۡ بِّهٖ وَلَا تَحۡنَثۡ ؕ اِنَّا وَجَدۡنٰهُ صَابِرًا ؕ نِعۡمَ الۡعَبۡدُ ؕ اِنَّهٗۤ

اَوَّابٌ 44

(38:44) (and We said to him): "Take in your hand a bundle of rushes and strike with it, and do not break your oath."[46]Indeed We found him steadfast. How excellent a servant (of Ours) he was. Indeed he constantly turned (to his Lord).[47]

46. A careful study of these words shows that the Prophet Job (peace be upon him) during illness had been annoyed with somebody (according to traditions, his wife) and sworn to beat him or her by giving so many stripes. When Allah restored him to health and the anger of the illness was gone, he became worried as how to fulfill the oath. For if he carried out the oath, he would be inflicting pain on an innocent person, and if he did not, he would be committing the sin of breaking the oath. Allah took him out of the difficult situation by the command: Take a broom containing as many sticks of straw as the number of the stripes you had sworn to give; then strike the person just once with the broom so as both to fulfill your oath and to avoid giving undue trouble to the person concerned.

Some jurists hold the view that this concession was specially meant for the Prophet Job (peace be upon him), and some others think that other people also can take advantage of it. The first view has been cited by Ibn Asakir from Abdullah bin Abbas and by Abu Bakr al-Jassas from Mujahid, and Imam Malik also held the same view. The second view has been adopted by Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Abu Yusuf, Imam Muhammad, Imam Zufar and Imam Shafei. They say that if a person, for instance, has sworn to give his servant ten stripes, and afterwards combines ten whips and strikes him only once in a way that some part of each whip strikes him, his oath will be fulfilled.

Several Ahadith show that the Prophet (peace be upon him), in order to inflict the prescribed punishment on a fornicator who was too ill or too weak to receive a hundred stripes, also adopted the method taught in this verse. Allama Abu Bakr al-Jassas has related a tradition on the authority of Saeed bin Saad bin Ubadah to the effect that a person from the tribe of Bani Saidah happened to commit fornication, and he was a sick man and a mere skeleton. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) commanded: Take a branch of the palm tree with a hundred twigs on it and strike him therewith once and for all. (Ahkam al Quran). In Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud, Nasai, Ibn Majah, Tabarani, Abdur Razzaq and other collections of Hadith, there are several Ahadith supporting it, which conclusively proves that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had devised this very method for inflicting the prescribed punishment on a sick or weak person. However, the jurists lay the condition that some part of every twig or piece of straw must strike the culprit, and even if only one stroke, it must also hurt the culprit; that is, it is not enough just to touch him but he must be struck with it.

Here the question also arises that if a person has sworn to do something and afterwards he comes to know that it is improper then what should he do? There is a tradition from the Prophet (peace be upon him) to the effect that in such a case one should do only that which is better, and the same is the atonement for the oath. Another tradition from him says that one should do something good instead of the improper thing and should atone for his oath. This verse supports this second tradition, for if keeping oneself from an improper thing had been the atonement for the oath, Allah would not have told the Prophet Job (peace be upon him) to strike the broom once and fulfill his oath, but would have said: Do not do this improper thing, and your restraint itself is the atonement for your oath.

This verse also shows that it is not necessary to carry out immediately what one has sworn to do. The Prophet Job (peace be upon him) had sworn an oath in the state of illness, and fulfilled it after complete recovery, and not immediately even after the recovery.

Some people have regarded this verse as an argument for practicing pretense under the Shariah. No doubt it was a pretense which the Prophet Job (peace be upon him) had been taught but it had been taught not for evading anything obligatory but for avoiding an evil. Therefore, in the Shariah those pretenses only are lawful, which are adopted to remove injustice and sin and evil from one's own self or from another person, otherwise practice of pretense is highly sinful if it is employed for the purpose of making the unlawful as lawful, or evading the obligatory duties and righteous acts. For a person who practices pretense for such impious objects, in fact, tries to deceive God. For example, a person who transfers his wealth to another before the completion of a year on it, only for the purpose of evading payment of the Zakat on it, not only evades an obligatory duty, but also thinks that Allah will get deceived by this trickery and will consider him as relieved of his duty. The jurists who have mentioned such pretenses in their books, do not mean that one should practice them in order to evade the Shariah obligations, but they mean to point out that a judge or ruler cannot take to task a person who escapes the consequences of a sin under a legal cover for his affair is with Allah.

47. The Prophet Job (peace be upon him) has been mentioned in this context to impress the reader that when the righteous servants of Allah are afflicted with hardships and calamities, they do not complain of their distress to Allah but endure the tests and trials set by Him patiently and invoke only Him for help. They do not despair of God and do not turn to others for help if their distress is not removed after making invocations to God for some time, but they believe that whatever they will get, they will get only from Allah. Therefore, they remain hopeful of His mercy, no matter how long they might have to suffer the distress. That is why they are honored and blessed with the favors and bounties with which the Prophet Job (peace be upon him) was honored and blessed in his life. So much so that if they get involved in a moral dilemma due to a state of agitation, Allah shows them a way out of it in order to save them from evil, as He showed a way to the Prophet Job (peace be upon him).

وَاذْكُرْ عِبٰدَنَآ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ اُولِى الْاَيْدِىْ وَالْاَبْصَارِ 45

(38:45) And remember Our servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob they were endowed with great strength and vision.[48]

48. The actual words in the text mean: Those who possessed the hands and the insights. The hand, as we have explained above, implies power and capability. To describe these Prophets as "men of great power and insight" means that they were practical men. They possessed great power to obey Allah and to abstain from sin, and they had made great efforts for raising the Word of Allah in the world. "Insight" does not mean eye-sight but the vision of the heart and mind. They could see and recognize the truth. They did not live like the blind in the world, but they walked the straight path of guidance, in the full light of knowledge, with open eyes. In these words, there is a subtle allusion to this also that the people who commit evil, and have gone astray, are in fact, deprived of the hands as well as the eyes. He

only, who works in the cause of Allah, possesses the hands, and he, who distinguishes between the light of the truth and the darkness of falsehood, only possesses the eyes.

إِنَّآ أَخۡلَصۡنَٰهُم بِخَالِصَةٖ ذِكۡرَى ٱلدَّارِۚ 46

(38:46) Verily We exalted them in consideration of a sterling quality: their remembrance of the Abode of the Hereafter.[49]

49. That is, the real cause for their success and eminence was that there was nothing of worldliness in their character. All their efforts, mental and physical, were directed towards the Hereafter. They remembered it themselves and urged others also to remember it. That is why Allah exalted them to such high ranks as have never been attained by those who remained absorbed in earning worldly wealth and prosperity. In this regard, one should also keep in view the subtle point that Allah here has only used the word ad-dar (that abode, or the real abode) for the Hereafter. This is meant to impress the truth that this world is no abode for man, but only a passage and a rest house, which man has to leave in any case. The real abode is the abode of the Hereafter. He who works to adorn that abode is the man of insight and such a one should inevitably be a commendable person in the sight of Allah. As for him who in order to adorn his transitory abode in this rest house behaves in a way as to ruin his real abode in the Hereafter is foolish and naturally cannot be liked by Allah.

وَإِنَّهُمۡ عِندَنَا لَمِنَ ٱلۡمُصۡطَفَيۡنَ ٱلۡأَخۡيَارِ 47

(38:47) In Our sight they are among the chosen and excellent ones.

وَٱذۡكُرۡ إِسۡمَٰعِيلَ وَٱلۡيَسَعَ وَذَا ٱلۡكِفۡلِۖ وَكُلّٞ مِّنَ ٱلۡأَخۡيَارِۖ 48

(38:48) And remember Ishmael, Elisha,[50] and Dhu al-Kifl.[51]All were of the best.

50. The Prophet AlYasa (peace be upon him) has been mentioned only twice in the Quran, in Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 86 and here, without any detail about him. Only his name appears in the chain of the Prophets. He was one of the major Prophets of Israel, belonged to Abel Meholah, a place on the river Jordan, and is well known as Elisha among the Jews and Christians. When the Prophet Elijah (peace be upon him) had taken refuge in the Sinai peninsula, he was commanded to return to Syria and Palestine for some important works, one of which was to prepare the Prophet Elisha for his successor-ship. Accordingly, when the Prophet Elijah came to his town, he found Elisha ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth. The Prophet Elijah passed by him and cast his mantle upon him, and he left the oxen and followed him. (I Kings, 19:15-21). He remained under training with him for 10 to 12 years. Then, when Allah recalled Elijah, he was appointed Prophet in his place. (2 Kings, oh.2). The Second Book of the Kings gives a detailed account of the Prophet Elisha (chs, 2 to 13), which shows that when the Israeli state of northern Palestine got lost in polytheism, idol-worship and moral evils, Elisha a pointed Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, king of Israel against the royal dynasty due to whose misdeeds those evils had spread in Israel. Jehu not only put an end to Baal-worship, but also

condemned to death every member of the wicked family, including its children. But in spite of this reformist revolution the evils that had taken root in Israel could not be completely eradicated, and after the death of the Prophet Elisha they assumed enormous proportions; so much so that the Assyrians began to invade Samaria whenever they pleased. (For details, see (E.N. 7 of Surah Bani-Israil) and (E.Ns 70, 71 of Surah As-Saaffat).

51. Dhul-Kifil also has been mentioned only twice in the Quran, in (Surah Al Anbiya, Ayat 85) and here. For our research about him see (E.N. 81 of Surah Al-Anbiya).

هٰذَا ذِكْرٌ ؕ وَاِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ لَحُسْنَ مَاٰبٍ ۙ 49

(38:49) This was a remembrance. An excellent retreat awaits the God-fearing

جَنّٰتِ عَدْنٍ مُّفَتَّحَةً لَّهُمُ الْاَبْوَابُ ۚ 50

(38:50) everlasting Gardens with gates wide open for them[52]

52. The words mufattahat-al-lahum-ul-abwab may have several meanings: (1) They will go about in the Gardens (Paradise) freely without any hesitation. (2) No effort will have to be made to open the gates of Paradise, they will open automatically as soon as they will have the desire to enter them. (3) The angels appointed for keeping Paradise will open the gates for them as soon as they see them. This third meaning has been expressed more clearly at another place in the Quran, thus: When they arrive there, and its gates shall already have been opened, its keepers will say: Peace be upon you, you have fared well, enter here to dwell for ever. (Surah Az-Zumar, Ayat 73).

مُتَّكِـِٕيْنَ فِيْهَا يَدْعُوْنَ فِيْهَا بِفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيْرَةٍ وَّشَرَابٍ 51

(38:51) wherein they shall recline, wherein they shall ask for abundant fruit and drinks,

وَعِنْدَهُمْ قٰصِرٰتُ الطَّرْفِ اَتْرَابٌ 52

(38:52) and wherein there shall be with them well-matched, bashful mates.[53]

53. “Of equal age” may mean that they will be of equal age among themselves, and also that they will be of the same age as their husbands.

هٰذَا مَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ لِيَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ 53

(38:53) All this is what you are promised for the Day of Judgement.

إِنَّ هٰذَا لَرِزْقُنَا مَا لَهُ مِنْ نَّفَادٍ ۝54 صلج

(38:54) This is Our provision for you, never to end.

هٰذَا ؕ وَإِنَّ لِلطّٰغِيْنَ لَشَرَّ مَاٰبٍ ۝55 لا

(38:55) All this (is for the God-fearing). But for the transgressors, an evil resort awaits them

جَهَنَّمَ ۚ يَصْلَوْنَهَا فَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ۝56 ج

(38:56) Hell, where they will be roasted. An evil place to dwell!

هٰذَا ۙ فَلْيَذُوْقُوْهُ حَمِيْمٌ وَّغَسَّاقٌ ۝57 لا

(38:57) All this (is for them); so let them taste boiling water and pus,[54]

54. Several meanings of the word ghassaq, as used in the original, have been given by the lexicographers: (1) Any moisture that is discharged by the body in the form of pus, blood, or mixture of pus and blood, etc. and this includes tears as well. (2) Something extremely cold. (3) Something stinking and giving out offensive smell. However, the word is generally used in the first meaning only, though the other two meanings also are correct lexically.

وَّاٰخَرُ مِنْ شَكْلِهٖۤ اَزْوَاجٌ ؕ ۝58

(38:58) and other sufferings of the kind.

هٰذَا فَوْجٌ مُّقْتَحِمٌ مَّعَكُمْ ۚ لَا مَرْحَبًا بِهِمْ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ صَالُوا النَّارِ ۝59

(38:59) (Observing their followers advancing to Hell they will say, among themselves: "This is a troop rushing in to you. There is no welcome for them. They are destined to roast in the Fire."

قَالُوْا بَلْ اَنْتُمْ ۖ لَا مَرْحَبًا بِكُمْ ؕ اَنْتُمْ قَدَّمْتُمُوْهُ لَنَا ۚ فَبِئْسَ الْقَرَارُ ۝60

(38:60) They will reply: "Rather, no welcome to you. (You will roast in Hell.) It is you who led us to this end. What an evil resort!"

قَالُوْا رَبَّنَا مَنْ قَدَّمَ لَنَا هٰذَا فَزِدْهُ عَذَابًا ضِعْفًا فِي النَّارِ ۝61

(38:61) They will say: “Our Lord, give twofold punishment in the Fire to him who has led us to this.”

وَقَالُوْا مَا لَنَا لَا نَرٰى رِجَالًا كُنَّا نَعُدُّهُمْ مِّنَ الْاَشْرَارِ ؕ 62

(38:62) They will say to one another: “But why do we not see those whom we considered him among the wicked?[55]

55. This implies the believers whom the disbelievers used to look down upon as bad people in the world. It means: They will look around bewildered and will find only themselves and their guides in Hell but will find no trace of those people of whom they used to talk disparagingly in the world, and whom they used to mock in their meetings for talking about God, the Messenger and the Hereafter.

اَتَّخَذْنٰهُمْ سِخْرِيًّا اَمْ زَاغَتْ عَنْهُمُ الْاَبْصَارُ 63

(38:63) Is it that we mistakenly made fun of them; or have they disappeared from our sight?”

اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ لَحَقٌّ تَخَاصُمُ اَهْلِ النَّارِ ع 64

(38:64) Verily all this is true. This is how the inmates of the Fire will dispute among themselves.

قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اَنَا مُنْذِرٌ ۖ وَّمَا مِنْ اِلٰهٍ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ۙ 65

(38:65) Tell them, (O Prophet):[56] “I am nothing but a warner.[57] There is no deity but Allah, the One, the Supreme,

56. Now the discourse turns to the same theme with which it began. One should read it with (1-14 verses) in order to understand the meaning fully.

57. In verse 4 it was said: The people wonder that a warner from among themselves has come to them. Here it is being said: Tell them: I am only a warner. That is: I do not command an army that I may forcibly pull you from a wrong way and put you on the right way. If you do not listen to me and do not accept my message, you will only be causing a loss to yourselves. If you like to remain ignorant, you may continue to be heedless, for you will see your end yourselves.

رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا الْعَزِيْزُ الْغَفَّارُ 66

(38:66) the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is in between them, the Most Mighty, the Most Forgiving.”

قُلۡ هُوَ نَبَؤٌا عَظِيۡمٌ ۙ 67

(38:67) Say: "This is a tiding of tremendous import

اَنۡتُمۡ عَنۡهُ مُعۡرِضُوۡنَ 68

(38:68) from which you are turning away."[58]

58. This is the answer to what the disbelievers said in verse 5: Has he made just One God in place of all the gods? This is indeed a strange thing. It means: You may frown and scowl as you like, but this is a reality of which I am informing you, and your frowning and scowling cannot change it.

This answer not only contains the statement of the truth, but it also contains the argument for it. The mushriks said: Deities are many of whom one is Allah also. How is it that you have done away with all other deities and kept only One Allah? In answer it was said: The real Deity is One Allah alone, for He is dominant over everything: He is the Owner of the earth and the heavens, and everything in the Universe belongs to Him. Every being other than Him, whom you have set up as other gods in the Universe, is dominated and subdued before Him; therefore, the subservient beings cannot be associates in the Godhead of the Dominant and All-Mighty God. Therefore, there is no ground for which they may be regarded as deities.

مَا كَانَ لِىَ مِنۡ عِلۡمٍۢ بِالۡمَلَاِ الۡاَعۡلٰٓى اِذۡ يَخۡتَصِمُوۡنَ 69

(38:69) (Tell them): "I had no knowledge of the High Council when they were disputing.

اِنۡ يُّوۡحٰٓى اِلَىَّ اِلَّاۤ اَنَّمَاۤ اَنَا نَذِيۡرٌ مُّبِيۡنٌ 70

(38:70) I am told (about matters) by means of revelation only because I am a clear warner."

اِذۡ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلۡمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّىۡ خَالِقٌۢ بَشَرًا مِّنۡ طِيۡنٍ 71

(38:71) When your Lord said to the angels:[59] "Verily I am creating a human being from clay.[60]

59. This is the explanation of the dispute referred to about, and the dispute implies Satan's dispute with God, as becomes evident from the verses that follow. In this regard, one should bear in mind the fact that "the exalted" implies the angels, and the dialogue between Allah and Satan was not direct but it took place through some angel. Therefore, no one should have the misunderstanding that Allah also was included among the exalted ones. This story

has already been narrated at the following places: (Surah Al- Baqarah, Ayats 30-39); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 11-25); (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 26-44); (Surah Bani Israil, Ayats 61-65); (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayat 50); (Surah TaHa, Ayats 116-126).

60. Lexically, bashar means a gross body whose surface is bare and uncovered by anything else. After the creation of man this word has been used for man himself, but mentioning him by the word bashar before his creation and making him from clay clearly means: I am about to make an image of clay, which will be without any feathers and hair, etc. whose skin will not be covered by wool or hair or feathers like the skin of other animals.

فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ 72

(38:72) After I have created him and breathed into him of My spirit,[61] fall you down, prostrating yourselves to him."[62]

61. For explanation, see (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 29-30), and (E.N. 16 of Surah As-Sajdah).

62. For explanation, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 34); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 11) and the E.Ns thereof.

فَسَجَدَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ ۙ 73

(38:73) Then the angels, all of them, prostrated themselves before Adam

إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ ۖ اسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ 74

(38:74) except Iblis. He waxed proud and became one of the unbelievers.[63]

63. For explanation, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 34); (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayat 50) and the E.Ns. thereof.

قَالَ يَا إِبْلِيسُ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَن تَسْجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقْتُ بِيَدَيَّ ۖ أَسْتَكْبَرْتَ أَمْ كُنتَ مِنَ الْعَالِينَ 75

(38:75) The Lord said: "O Iblis, what prevented you from prostrating yourself before him whom I created of My Two Hands.[64] Are you waxing proud, or fancy yourself to be too exalted?"

64. These words have been used to point out the honor, rank and glory bestowed on man by his Creator. In other words, Allah did not get man created through his angels but created him by Himself because his creation was a highly noble task. Therefore, what is meant to be said is: What has prevented you from prostrating yourself before him whom I have made directly Myself?

The words be-yadaiia (both hands) probably are meant to refer to the fact that this new creation combines in itself two important aspects of Allah's power of creation: (1) That man has been given an animal body on account of which he belongs to the animal kingdom. (2) That on account of the Spirit breathed into him, he has been characterized with qualities which place him in honor and merit above all earthly creations and creatures.

قَالَ اَنَا خَيۡرٌ مِّنۡهُ ؕ خَلَقۡتَنِىۡ مِنۡ نَّارٍ وَّخَلَقۡتَهٗ مِنۡ طِيۡنٍ 76

(38:76) He replied: "I am nobler than he. You created me from fire and created him from clay."

قَالَ فَاخۡرُجۡ مِنۡهَا فَاِنَّكَ رَجِيۡمٌ ۖ صلج 77

(38:77) He said: "Get out of here;[65] surely you are accursed,[66]

65. "Out of it": From the place where Adam was created and where the angels were commanded to bow down before Adam, and where Iblis committed disobedience of Allah.

66. Lexically, the word rajim, as used in the original, means "cast off" or "smitten"; in common usage it is used for the person, who has been thrown down from a place of honor and humiliated. In Surah Al-Aaraf, the same thing has been expressed thus: Get out: you are indeed one of those who wish themselves ignominy. (verse 13).

وَّاِنَّ عَلَيۡكَ لَعۡنَتِىۡۤ اِلٰى يَوۡمِ الدِّيۡنِ 78

(38:78) and My curse shall remain upon you till the Day of Resurrection."[67]

67. This does not mean that there will be no curse on him after the Day of Judgment, but rather it means: He will remain accursed till the Day of Judgment because of his disobedience, and after the Day of Judgment he will be punished for the sins which he will have committed from the creation of Adam until Resurrection.

قَالَ رَبِّ فَاَنۡظِرۡنِىۡۤ اِلٰى يَوۡمِ يُبۡعَثُوۡنَ 79

(38:79) Satan said: "My Lord, then grant me respite till the Day that they are raised up."

قَالَ فَاِنَّكَ مِنَ الۡمُنۡظَرِيۡنَ ۙ 80

(38:80) He said: "You are of those who have been granted respite

اِلٰى يَوۡمِ الۡوَقۡتِ الۡمَعۡلُوۡمِ 81

(38:81) till the Day whose Hour I know."

قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ۙ 82

(38:82) (Iblis) said: "By Your glory, I shall mislead them all

إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ 83

(38:83) except those of Your servants, the chosen ones from amongst them."[68]

68. This does not mean: I will not lead Your chosen servants astray, but it means: I shall have no power over Your chosen servants.

قَالَ فَالْحَقُّ ۖ وَالْحَقَّ أَقُولُ ۚ 84

(38:84) He (i.e. Allah) said: "This is the Truth and I only speak the Truth

لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْكَ وَمِمَّنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ 85

(38:85) I will certainly fill the Gehenna with you[69] and with all those among them who follow you."[70]

69. "With you" is not only addressed to Iblis but to the whole species of satans. That is, Iblis and his whole army of the satans who will be joining him in misleading mankind till Resurrection.

70. This entire story has been related in answer to this saying of the chiefs of the Quraish: Was he the only (fit) person among us to whom Allah's admonition should have been sent down? Its first answer was the one given in verses 9-10, saying: Are you the owners of the treasures of the mercy of your Mighty and Bounteous Lord? And does the kingdom of the heavens and the earth belong to you, and is it for you to decide as to who should be appointed God's Prophet and who should not be appointed? In the second answer the chiefs of the Quraish have been told: Your jealousy, your pride and arrogance against Muhammad (peace be upon him) are similar to the jealousy and arrogance of Iblis against Adam (peace be upon him). Iblis had also refused to acknowledge the right of Allah to appoint anyone He pleased as His vicegerent, and you are also refusing to acknowledge His right to appoint anyone He pleases as His Messenger. Iblis disobeyed the command to bow down before Adam, and you are disobeying the command to follow Muhammad (peace be upon him). Your resemblance with him does not end here, but your fate also will be the same as has been pre-ordained for him, i.e. the curse of God in the world and the fire of Hell in the Hereafter.

Besides, in connection with this story, two other things also have been stressed: (1) Whoever is disobeying Allah in this world, is in fact, falling a prey to Iblis, his eternal enemy, who has resolved to mislead and misguide mankind since the beginning of creation. (2) The one who

disobeys Allah on account of arrogance and persists in His disobedience is under His wrath: such a one has no forgiveness from Him.

قُلْ مَآ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ وَّمَآ اَنَا مِنَ الْمُتَكَلِّفِيْنَ 86

(38:86) (O Prophet), tell them: "I do not ask you for any recompense for the performance of this task;[71] nor am I given to affectation.[72]

71. That is, I am a selfless person: I have no vested interest in preaching this message.

72. That is, I am not one of those who arise with false claims for the sake of vanity and pose to be what actually they are not. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has not been made to say this merely for the information of the disbelievers of Makkah but this is testified by his whole life which he lived among the same people for forty years before his advent as a Prophet. Every child of Makkah was a witness that Muhammad (peace be upon him) was not an impostor. Never had anybody from among the people of Makkah ever heard anything from him which might have caused somebody the doubt that he aspired to be a great man and was planning and scheming for that end.

اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ 87

(38:87) This is nothing but an Admonition for all people the world over.

وَلَتَعْلَمُنَّ نَبَاَهٗ بَعْدَ حِيْنٍ ع 88

(38:88) You will know the truth of the matter after a while."[73]

73. That is, those of you who live will see for themselves within a few years that what I am saying is fulfilled. Those who die will come to know as soon as they pass through the gate of death that the truth is the same which I am preaching.

39. Surah Az Zumar (The Troops)

Name

The Surah derives its name from verse 71 and 73 in which the word zumar has occurred.

Period of Revelation

In verse 10 (wa ardullah-i-wasi atun: and Allah's earth is vast) there is abundant evidence that this Surah was sent down before the migration to Habash. Some traditions provide the explanation that this verse was sent down in respect of Hadrat Ja'far bin Abi Talib and his companions when they made up their mind to emigrate to Habash.(Ruh al-Maani, vol. XXII, p. 226).

Theme and Subject matter

The entire Surah is a most eloquent and effective address which was given some time before the emigration to Habash, in an environment filled with tyranny and persecution, ill-will and antagonism, at Makkah. It is a sermon whose addressees mainly are the unbelieving Quraish, although here and there the believers also have been addressed. In it the real aim of the invitation of Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) had been enunciated, which is this: Man should adopt Allah's servitude sincerely, and should not pollute his God worship with the service of any other. Presenting this cardinal principle in different ways over and over again, the truth of Tauhid and the excellent results of accepting it, and the falsehood of shirk and the evil consequences of following it, have been explained in a most forceful way, and the people exhorted to give up their wrong way of life and return to the mercy of their Lord. In this very connection, the believers have been instructed, as if to say: "If a place has become narrow for the worship and service of Allah, His earth is vast: you may emigrate to some other place in order to save your faith: Allah will reward you for your patience. "On the other hand, the Holy Prophet has been encouraged, so as to say: "Tell the disbelievers plainly that they may do whatever they like, but their persecutions and tyrannies will never deter you from the way of Islam; that they may go on doing their worst to obstruct your way, but you will continue to perform your mission in spite of the adverse conditions and circumstances."

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

تَنۡزِیۡلُ الۡکِتٰبِ مِنَ اللّٰہِ الۡعَزِیۡزِ الۡحَکِیۡمِ 1

(39:1) The revelation of this Book is from Allah, the Most Mighty, the Most Wise.[1]

1. This is a brief introduction to the Surah which only stresses the point that the Quran is not Muhammad's (peace be upon him) word, as the disbelievers assert, but it is Allah's Word, which He Himself has sent down. Along with this, two of Allah's attributes have been mentioned to warn the listeners of two realities so that they do not underestimate this Word but understand its full importance: (1) That Allah Who has sent it down, is All-Mighty; that is, He is so powerful that no power can prevent His will and decisions from being enforced

and none can dare resist Him in any way. (2) That He is All-wise; that is, the guidance He is giving in this Book, is wholly based on wisdom, and only an ignorant and foolish person can turn away from it. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 1 of Surah As-Sajdah).

إِنَّآ أَنزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكَ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ بِٱلْحَقِّ فَٱعْبُدِ ٱللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَّهُ ٱلدِّينَ ۝2

(39:2) (O Prophet), it is We Who have revealed this Book to you with Truth.[2] So serve only Allah, consecrating your devotion to Him.[3]

2. That is, it contains nothing but the truth, and there is no element of falsehood in it.

3. This is a very important verse which states the real objective of the message of Islam. Therefore, one should not pass over it superficially, but should try to understand its meaning and intention. It has two basic points: (1) That the demand is to worship Allah. (2) That the demand is of such worship as may be performed by making religion exclusively Allah's. Ibadat is derived from abd, and this word is used as an antonym of freeman for the slave and bondsman in Arabic. Accordingly, ibadat contains two meanings: (1) Worship and devotion. (2) Humble and willing obedience, as is borne out by the well known and authoritative Arabic Lexicon, Lisan al- Arab. Thus, according to the authentic lexical explanation, the demand is not only of Allah's worship but also of willing and sincere obedience to His commands and laws.

The Arabic word deen contains several meanings:

(1) Domination and sovereignty, rule and political power and authority to enforce one's decisions on others.

(2) Obedience, compliance with commands and servitude.

(3) The practice and the way that a man follows.

In view of these three meanings, deen in this verse means: The way of life and attitude which a man adopts after acknowledging the supremacy and accepting the obedience of another; and to worship Allah making one's religion exclusively His. This means that one should refrain from combining another's worship with the worship of Allah, but should worship Allah alone, should follow His guidance alone, and should comply with His commands and injunctions only.

أَلَا لِلَّهِ ٱلدِّينُ ٱلْخَالِصُ ۚ وَٱلَّذِينَ ٱتَّخَذُوا۟ مِن دُونِهِۦٓ أَوْلِيَآءَ مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَآ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ زُلْفَىٰٓ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ فِى مَا هُمْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ۗ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِى مَنْ هُوَ كَٰذِبٌ كَفَّارٌ ۝3

(39:3) Lo, religion is exclusively devoted to Allah.[4] Your religion is entirely consecrated to Him. As for those who have taken others than Allah for their guardians, (they say): "We worship them only that they may bring us nearer to Allah."[5] Allah will judge between them concerning what they differ about.[6] Verily Allah does not guide anyone who is given to sheer lying, is an utter unbeliever.[7]

4. This is an actual fact and reality, which has been presented as an argument for the above demand. It means: You should worship Allah, making deen exclusively His, for it is only Allah's right that He should be obeyed and worshiped sincerely and exclusively. In other words, there is no one else who may deserve to be worshiped so that he also should be served and worshiped besides Allah and his commands and laws also obeyed. If a person serves someone else, apart from Allah, sincerely and exclusively, he does it wrong. Likewise, if he combines the worship of someone else with his worship of Allah, this also is against the truth. The best commentary of this verse is the Hadith which Ibn Marduyah has related from Yazid ar-Raqashi. He says: A person asked the Prophet (peace be upon him): We give away our wealth so that we become well-known. Shall we get a reward for this? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: No. He asked: What, if one has the intention both of Allah's reward and of reputation in the world? The Holy Prophet replied: Allah does not accept any deed unless it is performed exclusively for His sake. After this he recited this same verse.

5. The disbelievers of Makkah said and the polytheists the world over generally say the same: We do not worship other beings regarding them as our creators: the Creator is only Allah, and He alone is the real Deity; but He is too high for us to have access to Him. Therefore, we make these saintly beings a means to convey our prayers and our petitions to Allah.

6. One should understand it well that unity and concord is possible only through Tauhid: there can be no unity through shirk. The polytheists the world over have never agreed as to which beings are the definite means of access to Allah. Some people have taken some particular gods and goddesses as the means, but even among them there is no agreement on all the gods and goddesses; some others have taken the moon, the sun, Mars, Jupiter, etc. as the means, and they also are not agreed as to which of them holds what rank and which is the real means of approach to Allah. Some others have taken the dead saints as the means, but they also differ widely about them: one believes in one saint and another in another. The reason is that the belief about these different beings is neither based on any knowledge, nor has Allah ever sent down a list telling that such and such persons are His special favorites; therefore, they only should be made the means to have access to Him. This is a creed which has spread among the people only on account of superstitions and whims and blind imitation of the elders. Hence the differences.

7. Here, Allah has used two words for these people, kazib (liar) and kaffar (denier). They have been called kazib because they have falsely invented this creed by themselves, and then they spread falsehood among others. As for kaffar. it has two meanings: (1) A stubborn disbeliever, i.e. the people who insist on their false creed even after the doctrine of Tauhid has come before them. (2) Ungrateful for blessings, i.e. they arc receiving all kinds of blessings from Allah, but are thanking those other beings about whom they have assumed that these blessings are reaching them through their agency and influence.

لَوۡ اَرَادَ اللّٰهُ اَنۡ يَّتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا لَّاصۡطَفٰى مِمَّا يَخۡلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ ۙ سُبۡحٰنَهٗ ؕ هُوَ اللّٰهُ الۡوَاحِدُ

الۡقَهَّارُ 4

(39:4) If Allah had wanted to take to Himself a son, He could have chosen anyone He wanted out of those whom He creates.[8] Glory be to Him (that He should have a son). He is Allah: the One, the Overpowering.[9]

8. That is, it is just impossible that Allah should have begotten a son. The only possibility is that Allah should choose someone for Himself; and whomever He chooses will inevitably be from among the creatures, for everything in the world, apart from Allah, is His creation. Now, evidently, however exalted and chosen a creature might be, it cannot have the position of the offspring. For between the Creator and the created there exists a great disparity of nature and essence and character, and parenthood necessarily demands that there should be the unity of nature and essence between a father and his offspring. Besides, one should also bear in mind the point that the words: "If Allah had intended to take a son, He could have chosen from what He created" themselves give the meaning that Allah has never intended so. Here the object is to impress that not to speak of taking a son, Allah has never even intended so.

9. The following are the arguments by which the doctrine of parenthood has been refuted:

First, that Allah is free from every defect and fault and weakness. Obviously, children are needed by the one who is defective and weak. The one who is mortal and stands in need of them, so that his progeny should continue to live after him in the world. Likewise, he who adopts a son does so either because he feels the need of having an heir, being childless himself, or he adopts a son being overpowered by love of somebody. Attributing such human weaknesses to Allah and forming religious creeds on their basis is nothing but ignorance and shortsightedness.

The second argument is that Allah in His essence and Being is unique. He is not a member of a species, whereas, evidently, offspring must necessarily belong to a species. Furthermore, there can be no concept of offspring without marriage, and marriage can take place only between homogeneous individuals. Therefore, the one who proposes offspring for the Unique and Matchless Being like Allah, is ignorant and foolish.

The third argument is that Allah is Omnipotent, i.e. whatever is there in the world is subdued to Him and is held in His powerful grasp. No one in this Universe has any resemblance with Him in any way or degree on account of which it may be imagined that he has a relation with Allah.

خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضَ بِالۡحَقِّ ۚ يُكَوِّرُ الَّيۡلَ عَلَى النَّهَارِ وَيُكَوِّرُ النَّهَارَ عَلَى الَّيۡلِ
وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمۡسَ وَالۡقَمَرَ ؕ كُلٌّ يَّجۡرِىۡ لِاَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ؕ اَلَا هُوَ الۡعَزِيۡزُ الۡغَفَّارُ 5

(39:5) He created the heavens and the earth with Truth,[10] and He folds up the day over the night and folds up the night over the day. He has subjected the sun and the moon, each is running its course until an appointed time. Lo, He is the Most Mighty, the Most Forgiving.[11]

10. For explanation, see (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 19); (Surah An-Nahl, Ayat 3); (Surah Al-Ankabut, Ayat 44), and the E.Ns thereof.

11. That is, He is All-Mighty: if He wills to punish you, no power can resist Him. But it is His kindness that He does not seize you forthwith in spite of your arrogant and insolent behavior, but He goes on giving you respite after respite. Here, Allah's making no haste in seizing people in punishment and His giving them respite has been called forgiveness.

خَلَقَكُمۡ مِّنۡ نَّفۡسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنۡهَا زَوۡجَهَا وَاَنۡزَلَ لَكُمۡ مِّنَ الۡاَنۡعَامِ ثَمٰنِيَةَ
اَزۡوَاجٍ ؕ يَخۡلُقُكُمۡ فِىۡ بُطُوۡنِ اُمَّهٰتِكُمۡ خَلۡقًا مِّنۡۢ بَعۡدِ خَلۡقٍ فِىۡ ظُلُمٰتٍ ثَلٰثٍ ؕ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ
رَبُّكُمۡ لَهُ الۡمُلۡكُ ؕ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ فَاَنّٰى تُصۡرَفُوۡنَ 6

(39:6) He it is Who created you from a single being, and He it is Who made from it its mate.[12] He it is Who created for you eight heads of cattle in pairs.[13] He creates you in your mothers' wombs, giving you one form after another in threefold depths of darkness.[14] That, then, is Allah, your Lord.[15] His is the kingdom.[16] There is no god but He.[17] So, whence are you being turned astray?[18]

12. This does not mean that first He created the human beings from Adam and then created his wife, Eve. But here, instead of the chronological order, there is the order of presentation, examples of which are found in every language. For instance, we say, "Whatever you did today is known to me, and whatever you did yesterday is also in my knowledge." This cannot mean that what happened yesterday has happened after today.

13. That is, the camel, cow, sheep and goat, whose four males and four females together make eight heads of cattle.

14. The three dark veils are: the belly, the womb and the caul or membrane enclosing the fetus.

15. "Your Lord": your Master, Ruler and Providence.

16. That is, all powers and authority rest with Him and it is He Who is ruling over the whole Universe.

17. In other words, the reasoning is this: When Allah alone is your Lord and His is the sovereignty, then inevitably your Deity also is He. How can another be your deity when he has neither any share in providence nor any role in sovereignty? After all, how can it be reasonable for you to take others as your deities when Allah alone is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, when Allah alone has subjected the sun and the moon for you, when He alone brings the day after the night and the night after the day, and when He alone is your own Creator and Lord as well as of all animals and cattle?

18. These words need deep consideration. It has not been said: "How are you turning away?" but "How are you turned away?" That is, there is someone else who is misleading you, and being thus deceived you do not understand such a simple and reasonable thing. The other thing which by itself becomes evident from the style is: The word "you" is not addressed to the agents but to those who were turning away under their influence. There is a subtle point in this which can be understood easily after a little thought. Those who were working to turn away others (from the right way) were present in the same society and were doing whatever they could openly and publicly. Therefore, there was no need to mention them by name. It was also useless to address them, for they were trying to turn away the people from the service of Allah, the One, and entrapping them for the service of others, and keeping them entrapped for selfish motives. Obviously, such people could not be made to see reason by argument, for it lay in their own interest not to understand and see reason, and even after understanding they could hardly be inclined to sacrifice their interests. However, the condition of the common people who were being deceived and cheated was certainly pitiable. They had no interest involved in the business; therefore, they could be convinced by reasoning and argument, and after a little understanding they could also see what advantages were being gained by those who were showing them the way to other deities, after turning them away from Allah. That is why the address has been directed to the common people, who were being misguided rather than those few who were misguiding them.

إِنْ تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنْكُمْ ۖ وَلَا يَرْضَىٰ لِعِبَادِهِ الْكُفْرَ ۖ وَإِنْ تَشْكُرُوا يَرْضَهُ
لَكُمْ ۗ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ۗ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ
تَعْمَلُونَ ۗ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ 7

(39:7) If you disbelieve, know well that Allah has no need of you.[19] Yet He does not like unbelief in His servants.[20]But if you are thankful, your thankfulness will please Him.[21] No one shall bear another's burden.[22] You are destined to return to your Lord and He will tell you what you used to do. He is well aware even of what lies hidden in your breasts.

19. That is, your disbelief cannot cause any decrease or deficiency in His Kingdom. He will be God if you believe in Him, and He will still be God if you deny Him. He is ruling over His Kingdom by His own power. Your believing or denying Him does not affect His Sovereignty in any way. According to Hadith (Muslim), Allah says: O My servants, if all of you, the former and the latter, the men and the jinns, become like the heart of a most sinful person among you, it will cause no deficiency whatever in My Kingdom.

20. That is, He does not approve, not for any interest of His own but for the interest and benefit of the servants themselves that they should disbelieve, for disbelief is harmful for them. Here, one should bear in mind the fact that Allah's will is one thing and His approval and pleasure another. Nothing in the world can happen against Allah's will, but many things can happen against His approval, and are happening day and night. For example, the dominance of the tyrants and the wicked in the world, the existence of thieves and robbers, the presence of murderers and adulterers, are possible only because Allah has made room for the occurrence of these evils and the existence of these criminals in the scheme of things ordained by Him. Then He provides opportunities also of committing evil just as He provides opportunities to the good of doing good. Had He made no room for these evils and had provided no opportunities of committing wrongs to the evildoers, no evil would have ever occurred in the world. All this is based on Allah's will. But the occurrence of an act under divine will does not mean that Allah's approval also goes with it. This may be explained by an example. If a person tries to obtain his living only by lawful means, Allah provides him his living through those means. This is His will. But providing for the thief or the robber or the corrupt person under the will does not mean that Allah also likes stealing and robbery and taking of bribes. Allah says the same thing here, as if to say: If you want to disbelieve, you may do so. We will not stop you from this nor make you believe forcibly. But We do not approve that you should deny your Creator and Provider, being His servants, for it is harmful for yourselves. Our Godhead is not harmed and affected by it in any way.

21. The word shukr (gratitude) has been used here as against kufr (disbelief) instead of Iman (belief). This by itself shows that kufr is, in fact, ingratitude and disloyalty, and faith is the necessary requirement of gratitude. The person who has any feeling of the favors of Allah Almighty, cannot adopt any other way than that of belief and faith. Therefore, gratitude and faith are correlatives. Wherever there is gratitude there will be faith also. On the contrary, wherever there is disbelief, there will be no question of gratitude at all, for gratitude along with disbelief is meaningless.

22. It means this: Each one of you is himself responsible for his deeds. If a person adopts disbelief in order to please others, or to avoid their displeasure, those others will never bear the burden of his disbelief, but will leave him to bear his own burden. Therefore, anyone who comes to know that disbelief is wrong and belief is right, should give up the wrong attitude and adopt the right attitude, and avoid making himself liable for Allah's punishment by associating himself with his family or brotherhood or nation.

وَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنسَانَ ضُرٌّ دَعَا رَبَّهُ مُنِيبًا إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا خَوَّلَهُ نِعْمَةً مِّنْهُ نَسِيَ مَا كَانَ يَدْعُوا
إِلَيْهِ مِن قَبْلُ وَجَعَلَ لِلَّهِ أَندَادًا لِّيُضِلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِ ۚ قُلْ تَمَتَّعْ بِكُفْرِكَ قَلِيلًا ۖ إِنَّكَ مِنْ
أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ 8

(39:8) When any affliction befalls man,[23] he cries out to his Lord, penitently turning to Him.[24] But when his Lord bestows His favour upon him, he forgets the affliction regarding which he had cried out[25] and sets up compeers to Allah[26] that they may lead others astray from His Path.[27] Say, (O Prophet): "Enjoy your unbelief for a while. Surely you will be among the inmates of the Fire."

23. "The man": the disbeliever who adopted the way of ingratitude.

24. That is, at that time he does not remember those other deities whom he used to invoke in good times; but he despairs of them all and turns only to Allah, Lord of the worlds. This is a clear proof of the fact that in the depths of his heart he has the feeling that all other deities are helpless, and the realization that Allah alone is the possessor of all powers and authority lies buried and hidden deep in his mind.

25. That is, he again forgets the bad times when abandoning all other deities he was invoking only Allah, the One.

26. That is, he again starts serving others: he obeys them, prays to them and makes offerings before them.

27. That is, he is not content with his own self having gone astray, but also leads others astray, telling them that the affliction which had befallen him, had been averted by the help of such and such a pious man or saint, or god and goddess. Thus, many other people also put their faith in these deities besides Allah, and are further misled as the ignorant and foolish people describe their experiences before them.

أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَانِتٌ آنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ ۗ قُلْ هَلْ
يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۗ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ۝ 9

(39:9) Is such a person (preferable or he) who is obedient, and prostrates himself in the watches of the night, stands (in Prayer), is fearful of the Hereafter, and looks forward to the mercy of His Lord? Ask them: "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?"[28] Only those endowed with understanding take heed.

28. It should be noted that two kinds of the men are being contrasted here. First, those who turn to Allah when a calamity befalls them, but worship others than Allah normally. Second,

those who have made it their permanent way of life to obey Allah and worship and serve Him, and their worshiping Him in solitude during the night is a proof of their sincerity. The first kind of the men have been called ignorant by Allah, even if they might have devoured whole libraries. And the second kind of the men have been called the learned, even if they might be illiterate. For the real supremely important thing is the knowledge of the truth and man's action according to it, and on this depends his true success. Allah asks: How can these two be equal? How can they possibly follow the same way together in the world, and meet with the same end in the Hereafter?

قُلْ يٰعِبَادِ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوْا رَبَّكُمْ ؕ لِلَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوْا فِيْ هٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ ؕ وَاَرْضُ
اللّٰهِ وَاسِعَةٌ ؕ اِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى الصّٰبِرُوْنَ اَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ 10

(39:10) Tell them (O Prophet): "O you servants of Mine who believe, have fear of your Lord.[29] A good end awaits those who did good in this world.[30] Allah's earth is spacious.[31] Verily those who persevere shall be granted their reward beyond all reckoning."[32]

29. That is, do not rest content with belief but follow it up with piety and fear of God. Act according to what Allah has enjoined and avoid what He has forbidden and live in the world fearing His accountability.

30. Good and well-being both of this world and of the Hereafter.

31. That is, if one city, territory or land has become difficult for the worshipers of Allah, they may emigrate to another place where they may not have to face any such hardship.

32. Those who brave all kinds of hardships and persecutions in following the way of God-worship and piety but do not abandon the way of the truth. This also includes those people who emigrate to other countries and experience hardships in the foreign land for the sake of religion and faith, and those also who continue to face every kind of temptation and calamity firmly and patiently in the land where they are being persecuted.

قُلْ اِنِّيْٓ اُمِرْتُ اَنْ اَعْبُدَ اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصًا لَّهُ الدِّيْنَ ۙ 11

(39:11) Tell them, (O Prophet): "I am bidden to serve Allah, consecrating my devotion to Him,

وَاُمِرْتُ لِاَنْ اَكُوْنَ اَوَّلَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ 12

(39:12) and I am bidden to be the first of those who surrender to Him."[33]

33. That is, my mission is not only to exhort others but also to practice what I preach to myself. First, I follow the way which I call others to follow.

قُلْ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّيْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ 13

(39:13) Say: "If I disobey my Lord, I fear the chastisement of an Awesome Day."

قُلِ اللّٰهَ اَعْبُدُ مُخْلِصًا لَّهٗ دِيْنِيْ ۙ 14

(39:14) Say: "Allah alone shall I serve, consecrating my devotion to Him.

فَاعْبُدُوْا مَا شِئْتُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَ اَهْلِيْهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ اَلَا ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِيْنُ 15

(39:15) So serve, apart from Him, whomsoever you please." Say: "Behold, the real losers shall be those who will have lost their own selves and their kith and kin on the Day of Resurrection. Behold, that is the obvious loss.[34]

34. Bankruptcy is loss of a person's capital and failure of his business so that he is unable to pay his debts in full. This same metaphor Allah has used here for the disbelievers and polytheists, The sum total of whatever man has gotten in this worldly life, his intellect, body, powers, capabilities, means and opportunities is, in fact, the capital which he invests in the business of the worldly life. If a person invested all this capital on the hypothesis that there is no God, or that there are many gods, whose servant he is, and that he is not accountable to anyone, or that someone else will rescue him on Judgment Day, it would mean that he made a losing bargain and lost all his capital. This is his first loss. His second loss is that in everything that he did, on the basis of the wrong hypothesis, he went on wronging himself and many other men, and the coming generations and many other creatures of Allah, throughout his life. Thus, he got into countless debts, but has no money with which he may fully pay his debts. Over and above this, he has not only himself incurred this loss, but has caused the same loss to his children and near and dear ones and friends and fellow countrymen by his wrong education and training and wrong example. It is these three losses together which Allah has called khusran-i-mubin (utter bankruptcy) in this verse.

لَهُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ مِّنَ النَّارِ وَمِنْ تَحْتِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ ؕ ذٰلِكَ يُخَوِّفُ اللّٰهُ بِهٖ عِبَادَهٗ ؕ يٰعِبَادِ فَاتَّقُوْنِ 16

(39:16) There shall be sheets of fire above them and beneath them. This is the end against which Allah warns His servants. So dread My wrath, O you servants of Mine!"

وَالَّذِيْنَ اجْتَنَبُوا الطَّاغُوْتَ اَنْ يَّعْبُدُوْهَا وَاَنَابُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرٰى ۚ فَبَشِّرْ
عِبَادِ ۙ 17

(39:17) (On the other hand), good tidings await those who eschew serving false gods[35] and penitently return to Allah. (O Prophet), give good tidings to My servants,

35. Taghut is from tughyan and means rebellion. If someone is called taghut (rebellion) instead of taghi (rebel), it would mean that he is a rebel incarnate. For example, if a person is called husn (beauty) instead of hasin (beautiful), it would mean that he has reached perfection in beauty. The deities other than Allah have been called taghut because it is rebellion to worship others besides Allah, but the one who has others worship him, is a rebel of the worst kind. (For further explanation, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 256), (Surah An-Nisa, Ayats 60, 76), (Surah An-Naml, Ayat 36) and the E.Ns thereof).

الَّذِيْنَ يَسْتَمِعُوْنَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُوْنَ اَحْسَنَهٗ ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ الَّذِيْنَ هَدٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَاُولٰۗىِٕكَ
هُمْ اُولُوا الْاَلْبَابِ 18

(39:18) to those who pay heed to what is said and follow the best of it.[36] They are the ones whom Allah has guided to the Right Way; they are the ones endowed with understanding.

36. This verse can have two meanings:

(1) That they do not follow every voice but ponder over what every man says and accept only what is right and true.

(2) That they do not try to give a false meaning to what they hear but adopt its good and righteous aspects.

اَفَمَنْ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ ۭ اَفَاَنْتَ تُنْقِذُ مَنْ فِي النَّارِ ۚ 19

(39:19) (O Prophet), can you save him (from chastisement) against whom the sentence of chastisement has become due;[37] him who has, (as it were), already fallen into the Fire?"

37. That is, the person who has made himself worthy of Allah's punishment and about whom Allah has already decided that he will be punished.

لٰكِنِ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ لَهُمْ غُرَفٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهَا غُرَفٌ مَّبْنِيَّةٌ ۙ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْاَنْهٰرُ ۭ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ ۭ لَا يُخْلِفُ اللّٰهُ الْمِيْعَادَ 20

(39:20) But those who fear their Lord shall have lofty mansions built over one another beneath which rivers flow. This is Allah's promise and never does Allah fail to fulfil His promise.

اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ اَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاۗءِ مَاۗءً فَسَلَكَهٗ يَنَابِيْعَ فِي الْاَرْضِ ثُمَّ يُخْرِجُ بِهٖ زَرْعًا
مُّخْتَلِفًا اَلْوَانُهٗ ثُمَّ يَهِيْجُ فَتَرٰىهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهٗ حُطَامًا ۭ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَذِكْرٰى لِاُولِي
الْاَلْبَابِ ۧ 21

(39:21) Do you not see that Allah sent down water from the sky, then made it flow on earth as springs and streams and rivers[38] and then with it He brings forth vegetation of various hues; then this vegetation ripens and dries up, turning yellow, whereafter He reduces it to broken straw? Surely there is a lesson in this for those endowed with understanding.[39]

38. The word yanaabi in the text is comprehensive and applies to all the three sources of water.

39. That is, a man of understanding learns this lesson from it that the life of this world and its adornments are all transitory. The end of every spring is autumn. The fate of every youth is weakness and death. And every rise has a fall. Therefore, this world is not something of which one should be charmed and enamored so as to forget God and the Hereafter and should conduct himself here in a manner as to ruin his Hereafter, only for the sake of enjoying the short lived pleasures of this world. Then a man of understanding also learns this lesson from these phenomena that the spring and autumn of this world are only under Allah's control. Allah allows to grow and prosper whomsoever He wills and ruins and lays waste whomsoever He wills. Neither it is in anybody's power to stop the growth of someone whom Allah wills to grow, nor has anyone the power to save him from destruction whom Allah wills to destroy.

اَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللّٰهُ صَدْرَهٗ لِلْاِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلٰي نُوْرٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ ۭ فَوَيْلٌ لِّلْقٰسِيَةِ قُلُوْبُهُمْ مِّنْ
ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ 22

(39:22) Can he whose breast Allah has opened up for Islam[40] and who is thus (moving along a Path) illumined by a light from Allah[41] (be likened to him who derives no lesson from what he observes)? Woe, then, to those whose hearts were further hardened[42] after Allah's admonition. Such are indeed in obvious error.

40. "Whose breast... Islam": Whom Allah helps to learn a lesson from these realities and to be satisfied with Islam as based on the truth. Opening of a man's breast for something is, in fact, a state in which there remains no anxiety or ambiguity or suspicion and doubt in his mind about the thing, nor has he the feeling of any danger and loss in accepting and adopting it, but he decides with full satisfaction of the heart that it is the truth; therefore, he must follow it whatever be the consequences. Having made such a decision when a person adopts the way of Islam, he obeys whatever command he receives from Allah and His Messenger willingly and with pleasure, without any hesitation. He accepts whatever beliefs and ideas, rules and regulations he comes across in the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet (peace be upon him) as if they were the voice of his own heart. He does not feel any compunction on giving up an unlawful gain, because he believes that it was no gain for him at all; it was rather a loss from which Allah saved him by His grace. Likewise, even if he incurs a loss while following the way of righteousness, he does not feel sad about this but bears it with patience and regards it as an ordinary loss as compared to the loss of turning away from the way of Allah. The same is his behavior on confronting dangers. He believes that there is no other way for him, which he may follow in order to avoid the danger. The straight way of Allah is only one, which he has to follow in any case. If there is a danger in following it, let it be.

41. "Upon a light from his Lord": In the light of the knowledge of the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet (peace be upon him), by the help of which he sees clearly at every step which is the straight path of the truth among the countless by-paths of life.

42. As against the opening of the breast there can be two other states of man's heart: (1) The state of narrowing of the breast and squeezing of the heart; and in this state there still remains some room for the truth to permeate it. (2) The state of hardening or petrifying of the heart; in this there is left no room whatever for the truth to permeate. About this second state Allah says that the person who reaches such a stage is totally ruined. This means that if a person becomes inclined to accept the truth, even though with an unveiling and squeezed heart, there remains some possibility for him to be redeemed. This second theme becomes obvious from the style and tenor of the verse itself, though Allah has not stated it directly. For the real intention of the verse was to warn those who were bent upon stubbornness in their antagonism towards the Prophet (peace be upon him) and had made up their mind not to listen to him at all. For this they have been warned, as if to say: You take pride in this stubbornness of yours, but, as a matter of fact, there cannot be a greater misfortune and unworthiness of man than that his heart should become even more hardened, instead of becoming soft, when he hears Allah being mentioned and the admonition sent by Him.

اَللّٰهُ نَزَّلَ اَحۡسَنَ الۡحَدِيۡثِ كِتٰبًا مُّتَشَابِهًا مَّثَانِىَ ۖ تَقۡشَعِرُّ مِنۡهُ جُلُوۡدُ الَّذِيۡنَ يَخۡشَوۡنَ
رَبَّهُمۡ ۚ ثُمَّ تَلِيۡنُ جُلُوۡدُهُمۡ وَقُلُوۡبُهُمۡ اِلٰى ذِكۡرِ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُدَى اللّٰهِ يَهۡدِىۡ بِهٖ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ ؕ
وَمَنۡ يُّضۡلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ مِنۡ هَادٍ 23

(39:23) Allah has revealed the best teaching, a self-consistent Book[43] which repeats its contents in manifold forms whereat shiver the skins of those that hold their Lord in awe, and then their skins and their hearts soften for Allah's remembrance. That is Allah's Guidance wherewith He guides whosoever He pleases. And he whom Allah does not guide to the Right Path has none to guide him.

43. That is, there is no contradiction and disagreement between them. The whole Book, from the beginning to the end, projects one and the same aim, one and the same belief, and one and the same system of thought and action. Each of its parts confirms and supports and explains the other themes; and there is perfect consistency in it both in meaning and in style.

اَفَمَنۡ يَّتَّقِىۡ بِوَجۡهِهٖ سُوۡٓءَ الۡعَذَابِ يَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ ؕ وَقِيۡلَ لِلظّٰلِمِيۡنَ ذُوۡقُوۡا مَا كُنۡتُمۡ
تَكۡسِبُوۡنَ 24

(39:24) How woeful is the plight of him who has nothing except his face to shield him from severe chastisement on the Day of Resurrection?[44] Such evil-doers shall be told: "Taste now the consequence of your deeds."[45]

44. One takes a blow on his face only when he is absolutely helpless and powerless, otherwise until one has some power to resist, he goes on receiving the blows on the other parts of his body but saves his face. Therefore, here the extreme state of helplessness of a person has been depicted, saying that he will receive the severe punishment on his face.

45. The word kasab, in the Quranic terminology, implies one's descrying and earning a reward and punishment in consequence of his actions and deeds. The real earning of a doer of good is that he becomes worthy of Allah's reward, and the earning of the evil-doer is the punishment that he will receive in the Hereafter.

كَذَّبَ الَّذِيۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِهِمۡ فَاَتٰىهُمُ الۡعَذَابُ مِنۡ حَيۡثُ لَا يَشۡعُرُوۡنَ 25

(39:25) Their predecessors gave the lie to the Truth and then chastisement came upon them from whence they could not imagine.

فَاَذَاقَهُمُ اللّٰهُ الْخِزْیَ فِی الْحَیٰوةِ الدُّنْیَا ۚ وَلَعَذَابُ الْاٰخِرَةِ اَكْبَرُ ۘ لَوْ كَانُوْا یَعْلَمُوْنَ 26

(39:26) So Allah made them taste degradation in the life of this world, and certainly the chastisement of the Hereafter will be much more grievous. Would that they knew!

وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِیْ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ لَّعَلَّهُمْ یَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ۚ 27

(39:27) We have indeed propounded for mankind all kinds of parables in this Qur'an that they may take heed.

قُرْاٰنًا عَرَبِیًّا غَیْرَ ذِیْ عِوَجٍ لَّعَلَّهُمْ یَتَّقُوْنَ 28

(39:28) It is an Arabic Qur'an[46] free of all crookedness[47] that they may guard against their evil end.

46. That is, it has not been sent down in a foreign language so that the people of Makkah and Arabia should stand in need of a translator or interpreter, but it is in their own language, which they can understand directly.

47. That is, there is nothing of double-dealing in it so that a common man should find it difficult to understand, but everything has been presented in it in a straightforward manner, from which everyone can know what this Book states as wrong and why, what it states as right and on what ground, what it wants the people to accept and what it wants them to reject, and what it enjoins and what it forbids.

ضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا رَّجُلًا فِیْهِ شُرَكَآءُ مُتَشٰكِسُوْنَ وَرَجُلًا سَلَمًا لِّرَجُلٍ ؕ هَلْ یَسْتَوِیٰنِ
مَثَلًا ؕ اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ ۚ بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا یَعْلَمُوْنَ 29

(39:29) Allah propounds a parable: there is a man whose ownership is shared by several quarrelsome masters, each pulling him to himself; and there is another who is exclusively owned by one man. Can the two be alike?[48] All praise and thanks be to Allah.[49] But most of them are unaware.[50]

48. Allah in this parable has explained the difference between shirk and Tauhid and the impact each has on human life so clearly that it is not possible to put across such a vast theme so concisely and effectively in other words. Everyone will admit that the person who has many masters, each one pulling him to himself, and the masters are also so ill-tempered that no one spares him time in his service to obey the other, and no one rests content only with threatening and cursing him if he fails to carry out his command from among the contradictory commands of the other masters, but is bent upon punishing him, his life would certainly be in great anguish. On the contrary, the person, who is the slave or servant of only one master, would be living a life of ease and comfort because he will not have to

serve and seek the pleasure of another master. This is such a straightforward thing which does not need deep consideration for its understanding. After this it remains no longer difficult for a person to understand that the peace of mind and satisfaction that accrue to him from the service of One God, can never accrue from the service of many gods.

Here, it should be understood well that the parable of many ill-tempered and contesting masters cannot apply to the images of stone, but it only applies to living masters, who practically give contradictory commands to man and keep pulling him to themselves in actual reality. One such master sits in his own self, which presents before him desires of every kind and compels him to fulfill them. Other countless masters are there in the house, in the family, in the brotherhood, in the society, among the religious guides and the rulers and legislators, in the business and economic circles and among the dominant powers of civilization whose contradictory demands and requirements keep on pulling man to themselves at All times; then any god whose demand he fails to fulfill in any way, does not let him go unpunished in his own circle. However, each one's instrument of punishment is different. Someone causes a heart-break, another takes offense, another humiliates, another boycotts, another bankrupts, another makes a religious or a legal attack. Man has no other way of being saved from this anguish and agony but to adopt the way of Tauhid and become the slave of One God, and throw off the yoke of servitude of every other god.

Adoption of the Way of Tauhid also has two forms, which lead to different results:

First, that an individual should decide to become the servant of One God individually but his environment is hostile. In this case the external conflict and his anguish and agony might increase, but if he has adopted the way sincerely, internal peace and satisfaction will necessarily accrue. He will turn down every such desire of the self as goes against the divine commands, or whose fulfillment may clash with the demands of God-worship. He will also reject every such demand of the family, society, nation, government, religious guides and economic powers that conflicts with the divine law. Consequently, he might have to face extreme hardships, rather he will surely face, but his heart will have full satisfaction that he is fulfilling the demand of the servitude of that God Whose servant he actually is, and that those whose servant he is not, have no right on him, because of which he may have to serve them against the command of his God. No power of the world can deprive him of this satisfaction of the heart and peace of mind; so much so that even if he has to go to the gallows for its sake, he will go to it with a clear conscience, and he will have no compunction as to why he did not save his life by bowing before the false gods.

The second form is that the whole society be established on the basis of the Tauhid imbibing the principles of morality, civilization, culture, education, religion, law, social custom, politics, economics in every sphere of life as a creed, which the Master of the Universe has given through His Book and His Messenger. The law should declare as a crime everything which God's religion has declared sinful and the government administration should try to eradicate the same. The system of education and training should prepare the minds and character to avoid the same. The same should be condemned from the religious pulpit, and regarded as vicious and forbidden in every economic enterprise. Likewise, everything that Allah's religion has declared as good and virtuous should be protected and defended by the law, developed by the administrative forces, impressed in the minds and instilled in character by the entire system of education and training, infused from the religious pulpit,

admired by the society and followed by it practically and enforced in every economic enterprise. This is how man can attain to perfect internal and external peace and satisfaction, and all the doors to material and spiritual progress are thrown open, for the conflict in it between God-worship and the worship of others would be reduced to the minimum.

Although Islam invites every single individual to adopt Tauhid as his creed and to worship Allah alone, braving every danger and hardship, even in the absence of the established order, it cannot be denied that Islam's ultimate aim and object is to establish this second order. And the same has been the objective of the endeavors of all the Prophets to bring into existence a community of the Muslims who should follow Allah's religion collectively, free from the domination and influence of unbelief and the unbelievers. No one, unless he is unaware of the Quran and the Sunnah and senseless, can say that the objective of the Prophets' struggle has been only the faith and obedience of the individual, and that it has never been their aim to enforce and establish Islam in the society and state.

49. Here, in order to understand the real significance of alhamdu- lillah (praise be to Allah), one should visualize this scene. After presenting the above question before the people the speaker observed a pause so that the opponents of Tauhid could give an answer to it if they had any. Then, when they could not give any answer, and from nowhere it was said that both were equal, the speaker said: Al-hamdulillah: Thank God that you too appreciate the difference between the two situations and none among you can dare say that slavery to many masters is better than slavery to one master, or that both are equal.

50. That is, you fully understand and appreciate the difference between slavery to one master and slavery to many masters, but when you are made to understand the difference between God-worship and the worship of many gods, you show lack of understanding.

إِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ وَّإِنَّهُمْ مَّيِّتُوْنَ ۙ 30

(39:30) (O Prophet), you are destined to die and they too are destined to die.[51]

51. There is a subtle gap between the preceding sentence and this, which can be filled by every intelligent person himself by a little consideration of the context. It contains this theme: You are making every effort to make the people understand a simple thing in a simple way, but they are not only showing stubbornness with regard to what you say and rejecting it but are also bent upon harming you in order to suppress the manifest truth. Well, neither you are immortal nor they. Both you and they have to die one day. then, each of you will experience his own end.

ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ تَخْتَصِمُوْنَ ع 31

(39:31) Then eventually all of you will contend before your Lord on the Day of Resurrection.

فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَذَبَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ وَ كَذَّبَ بِالصِّدْقِ اِذْ جَآءَهٗ ؕ اَلَيْسَ فِيْ جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْكٰفِرِيْنَ 32

(39:32) Who, then, can be more unjust than he who lied against Allah and denied the Truth when it came to him, calling it a lie? Is there no room for such unbelievers in Hell?

وَالَّذِيْ جَآءَ بِالصِّدْقِ وَصَدَّقَ بِهٖۤ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُوْنَ 33

(39:33) But he who brought the Truth, and those who confirmed it as true, such are the ones who shall be guarded against the chastisement.[52]

52. It means this: As to who will receive punishment in the trial before Allah on the day of Resurrection, you should note it well that the punishment inevitably will be inflicted on those wicked people who invented a false creed that there were also other associates with Allah, who had a share in His Being, authority, powers and rights, and worse than that, when the truth was presented before them, they not only paid no heed to it, but, on the contrary, treated the one who presented it as an impostor. As far as the person who came with the truth, and those who affirmed faith in him, are concerned there can obviously be no question of their receiving any punishment from the court of Allah.

لَهُمْ مَّا يَشَآءُوْنَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ؕ ذٰلِكَ جَزٰٓؤُا الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ۚ 34

(39:34) They shall have from their Lord all that they wish for.[53] That is the reward of those that do good,

53. One should note that the words used here are indarabbi- him (with their Lord) and not fil-jannah (in Paradise), and obviously man reaches in the presence of his Lord just after death. Therefore, the intention of the verse seems to be: Not only after entering Paradise but right from the time of death till his entry into Paradise Allah will treat the righteous believer in the same kind manner. The believer will certainly desire to be saved from the torment of barzakh, from the severities of the Day of Resurrection and Judgment, from the humiliation of the Plain of Gathering and from the punishment of his errors and shortcomings, and Allah Almighty will fulfill all his desires.

لِيُكَفِّرَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ اَسْوَاَ الَّذِيْ عَمِلُوْا وَيَجْزِيَهُمْ اَجْرَهُمْ بِاَحْسَنِ الَّذِيْ كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ 35

(39:35) so that Allah may remit their worst deeds and reward them according to the best of their deeds.[54]

54. The people who believed in the Prophet (peace be upon him) had happened to commit most heinous sins, both ideological and moral, in the days of ignorance, and after affirmation of the faith the good that they did was not only that they gave up the falsehood they had been professing and accepted the truth that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had presented, but in addition, they had performed the best righteous acts in morality, devotion and in their dealings with others. Allah says: The worst deeds that they had committed in the days of ignorance will be wiped off from their account, and they will be rewarded for the best of their deeds found in their conduct book.

اَلَيْسَ اللّٰهُ بِكَافٍ عَبْدَهٗ ؕ وَيُخَوِّفُوْنَكَ بِالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ هَادٍ ۚ 36

(39:36) (O Prophet), does Allah not suffice for His servant? They frighten you with others apart from Him,[55] although he whom Allah lets go astray, none can guide him to the Right Way.

55. The disbelievers of Makkah used to say to the Prophet (peace be upon him): You behave insolently in respect of our deities and utter rude words against them. You do not know how powerful they are and what miraculous powers they possess. Anybody who dishonored them was ruined. If you also do not desist from what you say against them, you too will be annihilated.

وَمَنْ يَّهْدِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ مُّضِلٍّ ؕ اَلَيْسَ اللّٰهُ بِعَزِيْزٍ ذِى انْتِقَامٍ 37

(39:37) And he whom Allah guides to the Right Way, none can lead him astray. Is not Allah the Most Mighty, the Lord of Retribution?[56]

56. That is, this also is a result of their lack of guidance that the foolish people esteem highly the power and honor of their deities but they never think that Allah also is All- Mighty and they can also be punished for insulting Him by the shirk they are committing against Him.

وَلَئِنْ سَاَلْتَهُمْ مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اللّٰهُ ؕ قُلْ اَفَرَءَيْتُمْ مَّا تَدْعُوْنَ
مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ اَرَادَنِىَ اللّٰهُ بِضُرٍّ هَلْ هُنَّ كٰشِفٰتُ ضُرِّهٖۤ اَوْ اَرَادَنِىْ بِرَحْمَةٍ هَلْ هُنَّ
مُمْسِكٰتُ رَحْمَتِهٖ ؕ قُلْ حَسْبِىَ اللّٰهُ ؕ عَلَيْهِ يَتَوَكَّلُ الْمُتَوَكِّلُوْنَ 38

(39:38) If you ask them: “Who created the heavens and the earth?” they will surely answer: “Allah.” Tell them: “What do you think, then, of the deities whom you call upon instead of Allah? If Allah should will that an affliction befall me, will those deities remove the harm inflicted by Him? Or if Allah should will that I receive (His) Mercy, will they be able to withhold His Mercy from me?” Say: “Allah is sufficient for me; those who have to put their trust, let them put their trust in Him.[57]

57. Ibn Abi Hatim has related from Ibn Abbas that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The person who desires that he should become most powerful among men should repose his trust in Allah. And the person who desires that he should become the wealthiest among men should have more trust in that which is with Allah than that which is in his own hand. And the person who desires that he should become most honorable among men should fear Allah All- Mighty.

قُلْ يٰقَوْمِ اعْمَلُوْا عَلٰى مَكَانَتِكُمْ اِنِّيْ عَامِلٌ ۚ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ 39

(39:39) Tell them: “My people, continue to work in your position as you will, I too will continue with my work.[58]Soon you shall know

58. That is, you may go on doing what you can in order to harm me and do not give me any respite.

مَنْ يَّاْتِيْهِ عَذَابٌ يُّخْزِيْهِ وَيَحِلُّ عَلَيْهِ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيْمٌ 40

(39:40) whom the degrading chastisement will visit and upon whom the everlasting chastisement will alight.

اِنَّآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ لِلنَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ ۚ فَمَنِ اهْتَدٰى فَلِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَاِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا ۚ وَمَآ اَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيْلٍ ۚ 41

(39:41) (O Prophet), We revealed to you the Book with the Truth for all mankind. So he who follows the Right Way does so to his own benefit, and he who goes astray, shall hurt only himself by straying. You are not accountable on their behalf.[59]

59. That is, it is not for you to bring them to the right path. Your only duty is to present the right path before them. If they prefer to remain astray after that, you are not responsible for it.

اَللّٰهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْاَنْفُسَ حِيْنَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِيْ لَمْ تَمُتْ فِيْ مَنَامِهَا ۚ فَيُمْسِكُ الَّتِيْ قَضٰى عَلَيْهَا
الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الْاُخْرٰٓى اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۭ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ 42

(39:42) It is Allah Who takes away the souls of people at the hour of their death, and takes away at the time of sleep the souls of those that have not died.[60] Then He retains the souls of those against whom He had decreed death and returns the souls of others till an appointed time. Surely there are Signs in this for a people who reflect.[61]

60. Taking the souls during sleep, implies the suspension of the powers of feeling and consciousness, understanding and will.

61. By this Allah wants every man to realize how life and death are entirely in His own hand. No one has the guarantee that he will certainly get up alive in the morning when he goes to sleep at night. No one knows what disaster could befall him within a moment, and whether the next moment would be a moment of life for him or of death. At any time, while asleep or awake, in the house or outside it, some unforeseen calamity, from inside his body or from outside, can suddenly cause his death. Thus, man who is so helpless in the hands of God, would be foolish if he turned away from the same God or became heedless of Him.

اَمِ اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ شُفَعَاۗءَ ۭ قُلْ اَوَلَوْ كَانُوْا لَا يَمْلِكُوْنَ شَيْـــًٔا وَّلَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ 43

(39:43) Or have they taken others instead of Allah as intercessors?[62] Say: "Will they intercede though they may have no power and though they may not even understand?"

62. That is, in the first place, these people have foolishly presumed that there are some beings who wield great influence with Allah, and whose intercession is never turned down, whereas there is no proof of their being intercessors at all, nor has Allah ever said that they hold such a position with Him, nor did these beings themselves ever claim that they would use their influence with Allah and help them out in every case. Another folly of these people is that they have ignored the real Master and have believed the imaginary beings to be all powerful who deserve to receive all their devotion and dedication.

قُلْ لِّلّٰهِ الشَّفَاعَةُ جَمِيْعًا ۭ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ 44

(39:44) Say: "All intercession lies with Allah.[63] His is the dominion of the heavens and the earth. And to Him will all of you be sent back."

63. That is, not to speak of getting his intercession granted, no one has the power to stand before Allah as an intercessor. The right to grant or not to grant anyone the permission to intercede with Him exclusively rests with Allah. Then He may allow intercession for whomever He may please and forbid for whomever He may please. (For understanding the difference between the Islamic concept of intercession and the polytheistic concept, see

(Surah Al- Baqarah, Ayat 255); (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 51); (Surah Younus, Ayats 3, 18); (Surah Hud, Ayat 105); (Surah Ar- Raad, Ayat 11); (Surah An-Naml, Ayats 73, 84); (Surah TaHa, Ayats 109-110); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 23); (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayat 76), and the E.Ns thereof and (E.N. 40 of Saba).

وَإِذَا ذُكِرَ اللّٰهُ وَحْدَهُ اشْمَأَزَّتْ قُلُوبُ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ ۚ وَإِذَا ذُكِرَ الَّذِينَ مِن
دُونِهِ إِذَا هُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ 45

(39:45) When Allah alone is mentioned, the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter contract with bitterness, but when deities apart from Allah are mentioned, they are filled with joy.[64]

64. This evil is common to almost all polytheistic people of the world, and even some unfortunate Muslims also suffer from it, They profess with the tongue that they believe in Allah, but when One Allah alone is mentioned before them, their faces arc distorted, and they say: This man certainly does not believe in the saints and holy men, that is why he talks of Allah and Allah alone. And if others besides Allah are mentioned, they are delighted, and their faces brighten up with joy. Their this attitude shows as to who is the actual object of their love and esteem. Allama Alusi, in his commentary Ruh al-Maani, has related his own experience here. He says: One day I saw that a man was invoking the help of a dead saint in his affliction. I said: O bondsman of Allah, invoke Allah, for He Himself says: If My servants ask you, O Prophet, concerning Me, tell them I am quite near to them. I hear and answer the prayer of the supplicant when he calls to Me, (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 186), Hearing this, the man became angry. The people told me afterwards that he said: This man is a denier of the saints. And some others heard him also say: The saints answer the prayers more promptly than does Allah.

قُلِ اللّٰهُمَّ فَاطِرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ عٰلِمَ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ أَنْتَ تَحْكُمُ بَيْنَ عِبَادِكَ
فِي مَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ 46

(39:46) Say: "O Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, the Knower of the unseen and the seen, You it is Who will judge among Your servants concerning what they differed.

وَلَوْ أَنَّ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لَافْتَدَوْا بِهِ مِن سُوءِ الْعَذَابِ يَوْمَ
الْقِيٰمَةِ ۖ وَبَدَا لَهُم مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مَا لَمْ يَكُونُوا يَحْتَسِبُونَ 47

(39:47) If the wrong-doers possessed the treasures of the earth in their entirety and as much besides, they would gladly offer it on the Day of Resurrection to redeem themselves from the harrowing chastisement. This because there will appear to them from Allah something (exceedingly dismal which) they had never even imagined.

وَبَدَا لَهُمْ سَيِّاٰتُ مَا كَسَبُوْا وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ 48

(39:48) The evil consequences of their deeds will become fully apparent to them, and what they had scoffed at will encompass them.

فَاِذَا مَسَّ الْاِنْسَانَ ضُرٌّ دَعَانَا ۫ ثُمَّ اِذَا خَوَّلْنٰهُ نِعْمَةً مِّنَّا ۙ قَالَ اِنَّمَآ اُوْتِيْتُهٗ عَلٰى عِلْمٍ ؕ بَلْ

هِيَ فِتْنَةٌ وَّلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ 49

(39:49) When an affliction befalls man,[65] he cries out to Us; but when We grant him a favour from Us, he says: "I have been granted this on account of my knowledge."[66] Nay; this (favour) is a test; but most of them do not know.[67]

65. "The man": the one who has aversion to Allah and whose face is distorted on hearing Allah alone being mentioned.

66. This sentence can have two meanings:

(1) That Allah knows that I am worthy of this blessing. That is why He has given me All this, otherwise He would not have blessed me if I had been an evil and wicked person in His sight.

(2) That I have attained to this by virtue of my ability.

67. People ignorantly think that whoever is being blessed by Allah in some way is being so blessed necessarily on account of his worth and ability and that the same is a sign or proof of his being a favorite in His sight. Whereas the fact is that whoever is being given something here, is being given it for the sake of a trial by Allah. This is a means of the test, and not any reward for ability, otherwise many able and worthy people would not be living in poverty and many unworthy people would not be rolling in prosperity. Likewise, these worldly blessings are not a sign of one's being a favorite with Allah either. Everyone can see that many good people whose goodness is unquestionable are living in hardships in the world, and many wicked people whose evil-doing is well known are enjoying the pleasures of life. Now, can a sensible man take the affliction of the one and the life of ease and comfort of the other as an argument to say that Allah hates the good man and prefers the bad man.

قَدْ قَالَهَا الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَمَآ اَغْنٰى عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ 50

(39:50) Their predecessors also said the same, but their earnings proved of no avail to them,[68]

68. That is, when they were seized for evil-doing, the ability of which they were so proud, did not avail them anything, and this also became known that they were not Allah's favorites. Evidently, if their earning had been due to their capability and their being favorites with Allah, they would not have been seized for evil-doing at all.

فَاَصَابَهُمۡ سَيِّاٰتُ مَا كَسَبُوۡا ؕ وَالَّذِيۡنَ ظَلَمُوۡا مِنۡ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ سَيُصِيۡبُهُمۡ سَيِّاٰتُ مَا كَسَبُوۡا ۙ

وَمَا هُمۡ بِمُعۡجِزِيۡنَ 51

(39:51) and the evil consequences of their deeds overtook them. The wrongdoers among these will also be overtaken by the evil consequences of their deeds. They will be utterly unable to frustrate (Us).

اَوَلَمۡ يَعۡلَمُوۡۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَبۡسُطُ الرِّزۡقَ لِمَنۡ يَّشَآءُ وَيَقۡدِرُ ؕ اِنَّ فِىۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوۡمٍ

يُّؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ع 52

(39:52) Do they not know that Allah enlarges and straitens the provision of whomsoever He pleases?[69] Therein are Signs for those that believe.

69. That is, the abundance or restriction of the provisions is based on another law of Allah, which has some other wisdom. The distribution of the provisions does not at all depend on man's worthiness and ability, or on his being a favorite of Allah, or for being under His wrath. (For details, see (Surah At-Taubah, Ayats 55, 69, 85); (Surah Younus, Ayat 17); (Surah Hud, Ayats 3, 27); (Surah Ar-Raad, Ayat 26); (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayats 34-36); (Surah TaHa, Ayats 131-132); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 105); Surah Al-Mumin: Introduction and (Ayats 55-56); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayat 111); (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayats 78, 89) and the E N. thereof. and (E.Ns 54 to 60 of Surah Saba).

قُلۡ يٰعِبَادِىَ الَّذِيۡنَ اَسۡرَفُوۡا عَلٰٓى اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ لَا تَقۡنَطُوۡا مِنۡ رَّحۡمَةِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَغۡفِرُ

الذُّنُوۡبَ جَمِيۡعًا ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الۡغَفُوۡرُ الرَّحِيۡمُ 53

(39:53) Tell them, (O Prophet): "My servants[70] who have committed excesses against themselves, do not despair of Allah's Mercy. Surely Allah forgives all sins. He is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.[71]

70. Some commentators have given a strange interpretation to these words. They say that Allah Himself has commanded the Prophet (peace be upon him) to address the people as

"My servants" therefore, all men are the servants of the Prophet (peace be upon him). This interpretation is no interpretation at all but a worst distortion of the meaning of the Quran and indeed tampering with the Word of Allah. If this interpretation were correct, it would falsify and negate the whole Quran. For the Quran, from the beginning to the end, establishes the concept that men are the servants of Allah alone, and its whole message revolves around the point that they should serve none but One Allah alone. The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself was Allah's servant. Allah had sent him not as rabb (sustainer, providence) but as a Messenger so that he should himself serve Him and teach the other people also to serve Him alone. After all, how can a sensible person believe that the Prophet (peace be upon him) might have one day stood up before the disbelieving Quraish of Makkah and made the sudden proclamation: You are in fact the slaves of Muhammad and not of al-Uzzah and ash- Shams. (We seek Allah's refuge from this).

71. The address here is to all mankind. There is no weighty argument to regard only the believers as the addressees. As has been observed by Allama Ibn Kathir, to address such a thing to the common men does not mean that Allah forgives all sins without repentance, but Allah Himself has explained in the following verses that sins are forgiven only when the sinner turns to Allah's worship and service and adopts obedience to the message sent down by Him. As a matter of fact, this verse brought a message of hope for those people who had committed mortal sins like murder, adultery, theft, robbery, etc. in the days of ignorance, and had despaired whether they would ever be forgiven. To them it has been said: Do not despair of Allah's mercy; whatever you might have done in the past, if you sincerely turn to your Lord's obedience, you will be forgiven every sin. The same interpretation of this verse has been given by Ibn Abbas, Qatadah, Mujahid and Ibn Zaid. (Ibn Jarir, Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi). For further explanation, see (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayats 70-71) and the E.Ns thereof.

وَأَنِيبُوٓا۟ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَسْلِمُوا۟ لَهُۥ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ ٱلْعَذَابُ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ 54

(39:54) Turn to your Lord and surrender yourselves to Him before the chastisement over-takes you; for then you will receive no help.

وَٱتَّبِعُوٓا۟ أَحْسَنَ مَآ أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُم مِّن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ ٱلْعَذَابُ بَغْتَةً وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ 55

(39:55) Follow the best[72] of what has been revealed to you from your Lord before the chastisement suddenly comes upon you without you even being aware of it."

72. "To follow the best aspect of the Book of Allah" means that one should carry out the commands Allah has given and refrain from what He has forbidden, and learn lessons from what He has brought out in the parables and narratives. As against this, the one who turns away from Allah's commands, indulges in the forbidden things, and does not heed His admonitions, follows the worst aspect of the Book of Allah, i.e. that aspect which the divine Book has declared as the most evil.

اَنۡ تَقُوۡلَ نَفۡسٌ یّٰحَسۡرَتٰی عَلٰی مَا فَرَّطۡتُّ فِیۡ جَنۡۢبِ اللّٰہِ ۫ وَ اِنۡ کُنۡتُ لَمِنَ السّٰخِرِیۡنَ ۙ 56

(39:56) Lest a person should say: "Alas for me for neglecting my duty towards Allah and for being among those that scoffed";

اَوۡ تَقُوۡلَ لَوۡ اَنَّ اللّٰہَ ہَدٰىنِیۡ لَکُنۡتُ مِنَ الۡمُتَّقِیۡنَ ۙ 57

(39:57) and lest a person should say: "If only Allah had guided me, I should have been one of the God-fearing";

اَوۡ تَقُوۡلَ حِیۡنَ تَرَی الۡعَذَابَ لَوۡ اَنَّ لِیۡ کَرَّۃً فَاَکُوۡنَ مِنَ الۡمُحۡسِنِیۡنَ 58

(39:58) or lest he should say, when he sees the chastisement: "O that I might return again, and be among those who do good."

بَلٰی قَدۡ جَآءَتۡکَ اٰیٰتِیۡ فَکَذَّبۡتَ بِہَا وَ اسۡتَکۡبَرۡتَ وَ کُنۡتَ مِنَ الۡکٰفِرِیۡنَ 59

(39:59) Yes indeed! But My Signs came to you and you rejected them as lies, and waxed arrogant and were among those who disbelieved.

وَ یَوۡمَ الۡقِیٰمَۃِ تَرَی الَّذِیۡنَ کَذَبُوۡا عَلَی اللّٰہِ وُجُوۡہُہُمۡ مُّسۡوَدَّۃٌ ؕ اَلَیۡسَ فِیۡ جَہَنَّمَ مَثۡوًی

لِّلۡمُتَکَبِّرِیۡنَ 60

(39:60) On the Day of Resurrection you shall see that the faces of those who had lied against Allah have turned dark. Is Hell not vast enough to provide a room to the vainglorious?

وَ یُنَجِّی اللّٰہُ الَّذِیۡنَ اتَّقَوۡا بِمَفَازَتِہِمۡ ۫ لَا یَمَسُّہُمُ السُّوۡٓءُ وَ لَا ہُمۡ یَحۡزَنُوۡنَ 61

(39:61) But as for the God-fearing, Allah will deliver them on account of their achievements: no harm shall visit them nor shall they grieve.

اَللّٰہُ خَالِقُ کُلِّ شَیۡءٍ ۫ وَّ ہُوَ عَلٰی کُلِّ شَیۡءٍ وَّکِیۡلٌ 62

(39:62) Allah is the Creator of everything; He is the Guardian over everything.[73]

73. That is, He did not just create the world and then left it alone, but He is constantly guarding and watching over everything. Just as everything in the world came into being by

His act of creation so everything is living and surviving by His leave, and flourishing and functioning only under His protection and care.

لَهٗ مَقَالِيۡدُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ؕ وَ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الۡخٰسِرُوۡنَ ع 63

(39:63) To Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth. It is those who disbelieve in Allah's Signs who will be the losers.

قُلۡ اَفَغَيۡرَ اللّٰهِ تَاۡمُرُوۡٓنِّيۡۤ اَعۡبُدُ اَيُّهَا الۡجٰهِلُوۡنَ 64

(39:64) (O Prophet), say: "Ignorant people! Do you bid me to serve any other beside Allah?"

وَلَقَدۡ اُوۡحِىَ اِلَيۡكَ وَاِلَى الَّذِيۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِكَ ۚ لَئِنۡ اَشۡرَكۡتَ لَيَحۡبَطَنَّ عَمَلُكَ وَلَتَكُوۡنَنَّ مِنَ الۡخٰسِرِيۡنَ 65

(39:65) (Tell them clearly that) it was revealed to you and to all Prophets before you: "If you associate any others with Allah in His Divinity, your works will surely come to naught[74] and you will certainly be among the losers."

74. That is, no act which is performed along with shirk will be adjudged as a righteous act, and no one who, being a mushrik, performs many acts as good acts in his personal judgment, will deserve any reward for them, and his whole life work will be deemed to have gone waste.

بَلِ اللّٰهَ فَاعۡبُدۡ وَكُنۡ مِّنَ الشّٰكِرِيۡنَ 66

(39:66) Therefore, serve Allah alone and be among those who give thanks.

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ قَدۡرِهٖ ۖ وَالۡاَرۡضُ جَمِيۡعًا قَبۡضَتُهٗ يَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ وَالسَّمٰوٰتُ مَطۡوِيّٰتٌۢ بِيَمِيۡنِهٖ ؕ سُبۡحٰنَهٗ وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يُشۡرِكُوۡنَ 67

(39:67) They did not recognise the true worth of Allah.[75] (Such is Allah's power that) on the Day of Resurrection the whole earth will be in His grasp, and the heavens shall

be folded up in His Right Hand.[76] Glory be to Him! Exalted be He from all that they associate with Him.[77]

75. That is, they have no conception of the greatness and glory of Allah; they have never tried to understand how high is the position of the Lord of the Universe and how insignificant are the beings whom these foolish people have made associates in Godhead and worthy of their worship.

76. This is a figurative way of describing the complete control and authority of Allah over the earth and heavens. Just as a man encloses a small ball in the hollow of his hand with perfect ease, or a person rolls up an handkerchief in his hand without any difficulty, so will all men (who fail to conceive the greatness and glory of Allah) see with their own eyes, on the Day of Resurrection, that the earth and the heavens are like an ordinary ball and a small scroll in the hand of Allah. Traditions have been related in Musnad Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, Nasai, Ibn Majah, Ibn Jarir and others, on the authority of Abdullah bin Umar and Abu Hurairah, that once during a sermon the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited this verse and then said: Allah will hold the heavens and the earths (i.e. the planets) in His grasp and will roll them about in such a way as a child rolls a ball, and will say: I am God, the One: I am the King: I am the All-Mighty, Owner of glory: Where are the kings of the world? Where are the tyrants? Where are the arrogant? Saying these words he started so shaking that we feared that he might topple over along with the pulpit.

77. That is, there is no comparison whatever between Allah's greatness and glory and the insignificance of those who are associated with Him in Godhead.

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّوْرِ فَصَعِقَ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ اِلَّا مَنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ ثُمَّ نُفِخَ فِيْهِ
اُخْرٰى فَاِذَا هُمْ قِيَامٌ يَّنْظُرُوْنَ 68

(39:68) And the Trumpet shall be blown[78] and all who are in the heavens and the earth shall fall down dead save those whom Allah wills. Then the Trumpet shall be blown again, and lo! all of them will be standing and looking on.[79]

78. For the explanation of Thoor (Trumpet), see (Surah Al- Anaam, Ayat 73); (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 48); (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayat 99); (Surah TaHa, Ayats 102-103); (Surah Al-Hajj, Ayat 1); (Surah Al-Momioon, Ayat 101); (Surah An-Naml, Ayat 87) and the E,Ns thereof.

79. Here, mention has been made of the Turmpet's being blown only twice. Besides, in Surah An-Naml there is the mention of another blowing of the Trumpet before these two, on hearing which everything in the earth and the heavens will be struck with terror (verse 87). On this very basis, the Ahadith mention that the Trumpet will be blown thrice:

(1) Nafakhat al-Fazaon, hearing which everything will be struck with terror.

(2) Nafakhat as-Saaq, on which everyone will fall down dead,

(3) Nafakhat al-qiyam li-Rabbit-alamin, i.e. the Trumpet on the blowing of which all dead men will return to life and arise from their graves to present themselves before their Lord.

وَاَشۡرَقَتِ الۡاَرۡضُ بِنُوۡرِ رَبِّهَا وَوُضِعَ الۡكِتٰبُ وَجِآیۡٓءَ بِالنَّبِيّٖنَ وَالشُّهَدَآءِ وَقُضِيَ
بَيۡنَهُمۡ بِالۡحَقِّ وَهُمۡ لَا يُظۡلَمُوۡنَ 69

(39:69) The earth shall shine with the light of its Lord, and the Scroll (of deeds) shall be set in place, and the Prophets and all witnesses[80] shall be brought, and judgement shall be justly passed among them, and they shall not be wronged;

80. "The witnesses": those who will bear witness to the effect that the Message of Allah had been conveyed to the people as well as those who will bear witness to the acts and deeds of the people. It is not necessary that these witnesses will be only human beings. The angels, the jinns, the beasts, men's own limbs, their dwelling places and the trees and stones, will all be included among the witnesses. 7

وَوُفِّيَتۡ كُلُّ نَفۡسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتۡ وَهُوَ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَا يَفۡعَلُوۡنَ ع 70

(39:70) and everyone shall be paid in full for all that he did. Allah is best aware of all that they do.

وَسِيۡقَ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡۤا اِلٰى جَهَنَّمَ زُمَرًا ؕ حَتّٰۤى اِذَا جَآءُوۡهَا فُتِحَتۡ اَبۡوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمۡ
خَزَنَتُهَاۤ اَلَمۡ يَاۡتِكُمۡ رُسُلٌ مِّنۡكُمۡ يَتۡلُوۡنَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّكُمۡ وَيُنۡذِرُوۡنَكُمۡ لِقَآءَ
يَوۡمِكُمۡ هٰذَا ؕ قَالُوۡا بَلٰى وَلٰكِنۡ حَقَّتۡ كَلِمَةُ الۡعَذَابِ عَلَى الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ 71

(39:71) (After the judgement has been passed) the unbelievers shall be driven in companies to Hell so that when they arrive there, its gates shall be thrown open[81] and its keepers shall say to them: "Did Messengers from among yourselves not come to you, rehearsing to you the Signs of your Lord and warning you against your meeting of this Day?" They will say: "Yes indeed; but the sentence of chastisement was bound to be executed against the unbelievers."

81. That is, the gates of Hell will not have already been opened but will be opened on their arrival there just as the gate of a prison is opened on the arrival of the culprits and is closed as soon as they have entered it.

قِيلَ ادْخُلُوٓا اَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۚ فَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِيْنَ 72

(39:72) It will be said: "Enter the gates of Hell. Herein shall you abide." How evil is the abode of the vainglorious!

وَسِيْقَ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ اِلَى الْجَنَّةِ زُمَرًا ۭ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَاۗءُوْهَا وَفُتِحَتْ اَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ

لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوْهَا خٰلِدِيْنَ 73

(39:73) And those who eschewed disobeying their Lord shall be driven in companies to Paradise so that when they arrive there its gates will have already been thrown open and its keepers shall say to them: "Peace be upon you; you have done well. So enter. Herein you shall abide."

وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْ صَدَقَنَا وَعْدَهٗ وَاَوْرَثَنَا الْاَرْضَ نَتَبَوَّاُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ حَيْثُ نَشَاۗءُ ۚ

فَنِعْمَ اَجْرُ الْعٰمِلِيْنَ 74

(39:74) They will say: "All thanks and praise be to Allah Who has made His promise to us come true, and Who gave us the earth to inherit.[82] We may now dwell in Paradise wherever we please."[83] How excellent is the reward of those who laboured![84]

82. For explanation, see (Surah Ta Ha, Ayats 106-107,124); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 106-107)and the E.Ns thereof.

83. That is, the Paradise which has been granted to each of us, is now our property and we possess full rights over it.

84. Maybe this is said by the dwellers of Paradise, or maybe this sentence is added by Allah to what the dwellers of Paradise will say.

وَتَرَى الْمَلٰۗىِٕكَةَ حَاۗفِّيْنَ مِنْ حَوْلِ الْعَرْشِ يُسَبِّحُوْنَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ ۚ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ

وَقِيْلَ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ع 75

(39:75) You shall see the angels surrounding the Throne, glorifying their Lord with His praise, and judgement will have been made among them with fairness, and it will be proclaimed: "All praise and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the whole Universe." [85]

85. That is, the entire Universe will proclaim the praises of Allah All-Mighty.

40. Surah Al Mu'min (The Believer),

also known as Surah Al Ghafir (The Forgiver)

Name

The Surah takes its name Al Mu'min from verse 28, implying thereby, that it is a Surah in which Al Mu'min (the Believer of Pharaoh's people) has been mentioned.

Period of Revelation

According to Ibn 'Abbas and Jabir bin Zaid, this Surah was sent down consecutively after Surah Az-Zumar, and its present position in the order of the Surahs in the Quran is the same as its chronological order.

Background of Revelation

There are clear indications in the subject matter of this Surah to the conditions in which it was revealed. The disbelievers of Makkah at that time were engaged in two kinds of the activities against the Holy Prophet. First, they were creating every kind of suspicion and misgiving in the minds of the people about the teaching of the Quran and the message of Islam and about the Holy Prophet himself by starting many disputes and discussions, raising irrelevant objections and bringing ever new accusations so that the Holy Prophet and the believers were sick of trying to answer them. Second, they were preparing the ground for putting an end to the Holy Prophet himself. They were devising one plot after the other, and on one occasion had even taken the practical steps to execute a plot. Bukhari has related a tradition on the authority of Hadrat Abdullah bin Amr bin 'As saying that one day when the Holy Prophet was offering his Prayer in the precinct's of the Kabbah, suddenly 'Uqbah bin Abi Mu'ait, rushed forward and putting a piece of cloth round his neck started twisting it so as to strangle him to death. Hadrat Abu Bakr, who happened to go there in time, pushed him away. Hadrat Abdullah says that when Abu Bakr was struggling with the cruel man, he was saying words to the effect: "Would you kill a man only because he says: Allah is my Lord?" With a little variation this event has also been mentioned in Ibn Hisham, Nasa'i and Ibn Abi Hatim .

Theme and Topics

Both aspects of this have been clear]y stated at the very outset, and then the whole following discourse is a most effective and instructive review of them.

As an answer to the conspiracies of murder, the story of the Believer of the people of Pharaoh has been narrated (vv. 23 - 55) and through this story three different lessons have been taught to the three groups:

1. The disbelievers have been admonished: "Whatever you intend to do against Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace), the same did the Pharaoh with his might intend against the Prophet Moses. Now, would you like to meet with the same fate with which he met by plotting such conspiracies ?"

2. The Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) and his followers have been taught the lesson: "These wicked people may apparently be very strong and powerful and you very weak and helpless against them, yet you should rest assured that the might of that God Whose Word you are trying to raise high is superior to every other power. Therefore, you should only seek Allah's refuge in response to every and any dreadful threat that they utter against you, and then busy yourself after this in fearlessly performing your mission. The God-worshiper has only one answer to every threat of the tyrant: `I have taken refuge in my Lord and your Lord against every arrogant person who does not believe in the Day of Reckoning.' (v. 27) Thus, if you go on performing your mission fearless of every danger and with full trust in God, His succor will ultimately reach you, and the Pharaohs of today shall be doomed just as the Pharaohs of yesterday. Till that time you will have to face and bear patiently every wave of persecution and tyranny that may be directed against you."
3. Besides these two, there was a third group of the people also in the society, who had been convinced in their hearts that the Truth was only on the side of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace), and that the disbelieving Quraish were being unjust and cruel. But in spite of the conviction they were watching quietly and unconcerned the conflict between the Truth and falsehood. Allah here has aroused their conscience as if to say: "When the enemies of the Truth have openly plotted, in front of your very eyes, it would be a sad reflection on you if you still remained indifferent. Under such conditions, unless a person's conscience has wholly become dead, he should rise and perform the duty, which a righteous man from among the courtiers of Pharaoh himself had performed at a time when the Pharaoh had made up his mind to kill the Prophet Moses. The circumstances that prevent you from raising your voice had also obstructed the way of the Believer, but he had full faith in Allah and disregarded all expediency; then note that the Pharaoh was not able to do him any harm."

Now as for the conspiracies, which were continuing in Makkah day and night to defeat the Truth, on the one hand, arguments have been given to prove the doctrines of Tauhid and the Hereafter as true, which were the real basis of the dispute between the Holy Prophet and the disbelievers, and it has been stated plainly and openly that the disbelievers are wrangling over those truths without any knowledge. On the other, the motives which were the real cause of the Quraishite chiefs' conflict against the Holy Prophet, have been exposed. Apparently they were trying to have the common people believe that they had some genuine objections against the teaching of the Prophet and his claim to prophethood; that is why they were not prepared to listen to him. But, in fact, this was their struggle for power. In verse 56, they have been openly warned, so as to say" "The real cause of your denial is your arrogance and vanity. You think that if you acknowledge the prophethood of Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace), your power and authority will come to an end. That is why you are straining every nerve to frustrate and defeat him."

In the same connection, the disbelievers have been warned again and again to the effect: “If you do not desist from wrangling against the Revelations of Allah, you will be doomed to the same fate as the nations of the past. Much worse torment awaits you in the Hereafter. Then you will repent, but it will be too late.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

حٰمٓ ۚ 1

(40:1) Ha'. Mim.

تَنۡزِیۡلُ الۡکِتٰبِ مِنَ اللّٰہِ الۡعَزِیۡزِ الۡعَلِیۡمِ ۙ 2

(40:2) This Book is a revelation from Allah, the All-Mighty, the All-Knowing;

غَافِرِ الذَّنۡۢبِ وَقَابِلِ التَّوۡبِ شَدِیۡدِ الۡعِقَابِ ذِی الطَّوۡلِ ؕ لَاۤ اِلٰہَ اِلَّا ہُوَ ؕ اِلَیۡہِ الۡمَصِیۡرُ 3

(40:3) the Forgiver of sins, the Accepter of repentance, the Stern in retribution, the Bountiful. There is no god but He. To Him are all destined to return.[1]

1. This is the introduction to the discourse. By this the listener has been forewarned to the effect: What is being presented before you is not the word of an ordinary being but of that God Who has infinite power. After this, some of Allah's attributes have been mentioned, one after the other, which bear a deep relevance to the following theme:

First, that He is All-Mighty, i.e. He is Dominant over everything. His every decree concerning anybody is always enforced; none can fight Him and win; none can escape His grasp. Therefore, a person who expects to be successful after turning away from His command and expects to frustrate His Message after having a dispute with Him is himself foolish. Such notions are only deceptions.

Second, that He is All-Knowing, i.e. He does not say anything on mere conjecture, but has the direct knowledge of everything. Therefore, whatever information He gives about the supernatural realities is true, and the one who does not accept it is following nothing but ignorance. Likewise, He knows in what lies the true success of man and what rules and laws and commands are necessary for his well being. His every teaching is based on wisdom and correct knowledge, which does not admit of any error. Therefore, if a person does not accept His guidance, he only wants to follow the path of his own ruin. Then, nothing from the acts and deeds of man can remain hidden from Him, so much so that He even knows the intentions of man, which are the real motives of his deeds. Therefore, man can never escape His punishment.

The third attribute is that He is Forgiver of sin and Acceptor of repentance. This attribute brings hope and causes inducement, which has been mentioned so that the people who have led lives of sin, should not despair but should reform themselves with the hope that if they refrained from their behavior even now, they could still be redeemed by Allah's mercy. Here, one should understand well that forgiving of sins and accepting of repentance are not necessarily one and the same thing, but in most cases Allah forgives sins even without the repentance. For example, a person commits errors as well as does good and his good acts

become the means of forgiveness for his mistakes, whether or not he had opportunity to show repentance for the errors, but might even have forgotten them. Likewise, all the troubles and hardships and diseases and calamities that afflict man and cause him grief in the world, serve as penance for his mistakes. That is why mention of forgiveness of sins has been made separately from the acceptance of repentance. But one should remember that the concession of forgiveness of errors without repentance only refers to those believers, who are free from defiance and who committed sins due to human weakness and not persistence in pride and sin.

The fourth attribute is that He is stern in punishment. By this the people have been warned that just as Allah is Merciful for those who adopt the way of His service, so He is stern for those who adopt an attitude of rebellion against Him. When a person (or persons) transgresses the limits where he can still deserve pardon and forgiveness from Allah, then he becomes worthy of His punishment, and His punishment is so dreadful that only a fool would persist in his wrongdoing.

The fifth attribute is that He is Bountiful, i.e. He is Generous and Beneficent. All creatures are being showered with His blessings and favors every moment, whatever the servants are getting, they are getting only through His bounty and beneficence.

After these five attributes, two realities have been stated expressly:

(1) That none but Allah is the Deity, no matter how many false gods the people might have set up.

(2) That to Him everyone must return. There is no other deity which can call the people to account and reward or punish them.

Therefore, if somebody makes someone else his deity, apart from Him, he will himself face the consequences of his folly.

مَا يُجَادِلُ فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فَلَا يَغُرُرْكَ تَقَلُّبُهُمْ فِي الْبِلَادِ 4

(40:4) None but the unbelievers dispute regarding the Signs of Allah.[2][3] So let not their strutting about in the land delude you.[4]

2. "To dispute" means using crooked arguments in reasoning, raising irrelevant objections, isolating a word or a sentence from its context, subjecting it to hair-splitting and making it the basis of doubts and accusations, misconstruing words from their true sense and intention so that neither should one understand the meaning oneself nor let others understand it. Such a way of dispute is adopted only by those whose difference of opinion is based on ill-will and malice. If a well-intentioned opponent disputes a point, he does so for the sake of arriving at the truth, and wants to be satisfied through discussion whether his own point of view is correct. Such a discussion is engaged in quest of truth and not for refutation. Contrary to this, the real purpose of the malicious opponent is not to understand anything nor to help others to understand, but to degrade and humiliate the other man; he joins a discussion only with the intention that he would not let the other man carry his point.

That is why he never faces the real problems but launches his attacks only on the irrelevant issues.

3. Here, the word kufr has been used in two meanings: for ingratitude and for denial of the truth. According to the first meaning, the sentence would mean: As against the revelations of Allah this sort of behavior is adopted only by those who have forgotten His bounties and who have even lost the feeling that it is by His bounty that they are flourishing. According to the second, it would mean: This sort of behavior is adopted only by those who have turned away from the truth and are determined not to accept it. From the context it becomes obvious that here the disbeliever does not imply every non-Muslim, for a non- Muslim who disputes a point in good faith for the sake of understanding Islam, and who tries to grasp thoroughly those things which he fends hard to follow, although a non Muslim technically, yet that which has been condemned in this verse does not apply to him.

4. There is a gap between the previous sentence and this, which has been left for the listener to fill. From the context and style it becomes evident that those who adopt the attitude of disputation as against the revelations of Allah Almighty, can never escape the punishment. Therefore, they shall inevitably meet their doom. Now, if one sees that those people, even after adopting such an attitude, are strutting about, their business is flourishing, their governments functioning in a grand style and they are enjoying the good things of life, one should not be misled into thinking that they have escaped Allah's punishment, or that war against Allah's revelations is a sport which can be adopted as a pastime and its evil consequences warded off easily. This, in fact, is a respite which they have been granted by Allah. Those who abuse this respite for doing more mischief are indeed preparing for an ignominious end.

5. That is, the torment that seized them in the world was not their final punishment, but Allah has also decreed that they shall go to Hell. Another meaning can be: Just as the nations of the past have gone to their doom, so will those people also who are committing disbelief go to Hell, according to the fixed decree of Allah.

كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَّالْاَحْزَابُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ ۖ وَهَمَّتْ كُلُّ اُمَّةٍۢ بِرَسُوْلِهِمْ
لِيَاْخُذُوْهُ ؕ وَجَادَلُوْا بِالْبَاطِلِ لِيُدْحِضُوْا بِهِ الْحَقَّ فَاَخَذْتُهُمْ ۫ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ 5

(40:5) Before them the people of Noah also gave the lie (to Messengers), and so did many parties after them. Each nation sallied forth against its Messenger to seize him, and they disputed with false arguments seeking therewith to repudiate the Truth. Then I seized them; and behold, how woeful was My retribution!

وَكَذٰلِكَ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ 6

(40:6) Thus has the decree of your Lord become due against the unbelievers. They are destined for the Fire.[5]

5. That is, the torment that seized them in the world was not their final punishment, but Allah has also decreed that they shall go to Hell. Another meaning can be: Just as the nations of the past have gone to their doom, so will those people also who are committing disbelief go to Hell, according to the fixed decree of Allah.

اَلَّذِيْنَ يَحْمِلُوْنَ الْعَرْشَ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهٗ يُسَبِّحُوْنَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ۚ رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَّحْمَةً وَّعِلْمًا فَاغْفِرْ لِلَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا وَاتَّبَعُوْا سَبِيْلَكَ وَقِهِمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيْمِ 7

(40:7) The angels that bear the Throne and those that are around to extol your Lord's glory with His praise, they believe in Him, and ask forgiveness for the believers,[6]saying: "Our Lord! You encompass everything with Your Mercy and Knowledge.[7] So forgive those that repent and follow Your Path, and guard them against the chastisement of Hell.[8] [9]

6. This thing has been said for the consolation of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) companions, who were feeling greatly discouraged at the impudence and rebellious attitude of the disbelievers of Makkah as against their own helplessness, as if to say: Why do you feel grieved at what these mean and worthless people say? You have the support of the angels who bear the divine Throne and of those who stand around it. They are interceding with Allah for you. The mention of the angels who bear the divine Throne and of those who stand around it, has been made, instead of the common angels, to impress the fact that not to speak of the common angels of divine kingdom, even the angels who are the pillars of this kingdom, being nearest in rank and station to Allah, bear deep sympathy and regard for you. Then the words: They affirm faith in Him and ask forgiveness for the believers, show that the relationship of the faith is the real relationship, which has joined the heavenly creatures and the earthly creatures together, and which has induced sympathy and esteem in the angels stationed around the Throne for the mortal humans inhabiting the earth, who affirm faith in Allah just like them. The angels affirming the faith in Allah does not mean that they could disbelieve, and they adopted belief instead of disbelief, but it means that they believe in the sovereignty of Allah, the One, alone there is no other being that may be commanding them and they submit before it in utter obedience. When the same attitude and behavior was adopted by the human believers, a strong relationship of cherishing a common creed and faith was established between them and the angels in spite of the great disparity in species and remoteness in rank and station.

7. That is, the weakness, lapses and errors of Your servants are not hidden from You. You indeed know everything, but like Your knowledge, Your Mercy also is infinite. Therefore, forgive the poor creatures in spite of knowing their errors. Another meaning can be: Forgive by Your Mercy all those about whom by knowledge You know that they have repented sincerely and have, in reality, adopted Your way.

8. To forgive and to save from the torment of Hell are although not related, and there seems to be no need to mention the other when one has been mentioned, this style, in fact, reflects the deep interest the angels have in the believers. It is customary that when a person who is deeply involved in a matter, finds an opportunity to make submissions before a judge, he presents the same petition humbly over and over again, in different ways, and does not rest content with making the petition just once.

9. And save those who have given up disobedience and rebellion, adopted obedience and followed the way which You Yourself have shown.

رَبَّنَا وَاَدۡخِلۡهُمۡ جَنّٰتِ عَدۡنِ ۨالَّتِیۡ وَعَدۡتَّهُمۡ وَمَنۡ صَلَحَ مِنۡ اٰبَآئِهِمۡ وَاَزۡوَاجِهِمۡ وَذُرِّیّٰتِهِمۡ ؕ اِنَّكَ اَنۡتَ الۡعَزِیۡزُ الۡحَكِیۡمُ ۙ 8

(40:8) Our Lord, admit them to the everlasting Gardens You have promised them[10] and those of their fathers and spouses and progeny that were righteous.[11] Surely You alone are Most Mighty, Most Wise;

10. Here again there is the same state of solicitude as referred to in E.Ns above. Obviously, forgiving and saving from Hell by itself amounts to admitting to Paradise. And then soliciting Allah for granting the believers the same Paradise which He Himself has promised them, seems to be unnecessary, but the angels are so earnest in their desire of well-being for the believers that they go on repeating their good wishes for them although they know that Allah will certainly bless them with these favors in the Hereafter.

11. That is. join with them their parents and their wives and children for the comfort of their eyes. This same thing Allah Himself has stated as among the blessings which the believers will be granted in Paradise. For this see (Surah Ar- Raad, Ayat 23) and (Surah At-Toor, Ayat 21). In the verse of Surah At-Toor, there is also the explanation that if a person will deserve a higher rank in Paradise, which his parents will not deserve, he will not be lowered in rank to be joined with them but Allah will raise them to join him in the higher station.

وَقِهِمُ السَّیِّاٰتِ ؕ وَمَنۡ تَقِ السَّیِّاٰتِ یَوۡمَئِذٍ فَقَدۡ رَحِمۡتَهٗ ؕ وَذٰلِكَ هُوَ الۡفَوۡزُ الۡعَظِیۡمُ ۚ 9

(40:9) and guard them against all ills.[12] He whom You guard against ills on that Day,[13] to him You have surely been Most Merciful. That is the great triumph."

12. The word sayyiat (evils) is used in three different meanings and all three arc implied here: (1) False beliefs, perverted morals and evil deeds. (2) Consequences of deviation and evil deeds. (3) Calamities, disasters and suffering in this world, or in barzakh, or on the Day of Resurrection. The object of the angels' prayer is that they be saved from everything which may be evil for them.

13. "Evils of that Day" implies the dread and terror of the Day. deprivation of the shade and every other comfort, severity of accountability, the ignominy of exposing every secret of life

before all mankind, and other humiliations and hardships which the guilty ones will experience in the Hereafter.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُنَادَوْنَ لَمَقْتُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ مِن مَّقْتِكُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ إِذْ تُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى الْإِيمَانِ فَتَكْفُرُونَ 10

(40:10) It will be announced to the unbelievers (on the Day of Resurrection): "Surely Allah's abhorrence of you when you were called to believe but you disbelieved was greater than is your abhorrence of yourselves today."[14]

14. That is, when the disbelievers will see on the Day of Resurrection that they had committed a grave folly by founding their entire life-work on polytheism and atheism, denial of the Hereafter and opposition to the Messenger. And due to that folly they were now doomed to that evil end. They will bite at their fingers and will curse themselves fretfully. At that time the angels will proclaim to them: Today you are being angry with yourselves, but in the world when the Prophets of Allah and the other good people invited you to the right path to save you from this evil end, you turned down their invitation, Allah's wrath against you then was even greater.

قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَمَتَّنَا اثْنَتَيْنِ وَأَحْيَيْتَنَا اثْنَتَيْنِ فَاعْتَرَفْنَا بِذُنُوبِنَا فَهَلْ إِلَى خُرُوجٍ مِّن سَبِيلٍ 11

(40:11) They will say: "Our Lord, twice have You caused us to die and twice have You given us life.[15] We have now confessed our sins.[16] Is there, then, any way out?"[17]

15. This same thing has already been mentioned in (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 28). It implies this: How can you disbelieve in Allah? He granted you life when you were lifeless; then He will give you death and then will again raise you back to life. The disbelievers do not deny the first three of these conditions, because they are perceptible and therefore un-deniable. But they refuse to accept the occurrence of the fourth condition, for they have not yet experienced it, and only the Prophets have foretold it. On the Day of Resurrection when the fourth condition will also be practically experienced by them, then they will acknowledge that the same which the Prophets had foretold had actually happened.

16. That is, we confess that we made a grave mistake when we denied this after life; our life was filled with sins when we followed falsehood.

17. That is, is there any possibility now that our confession of sins be accepted and we be rescued from this state of torment in which we have been seized?

ذٰلِكُمْ بِاَنَّهٗٓ اِذَا دُعِيَ اللّٰهُ وَحْدَهٗ كَفَرْتُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ يُّشْرَكْ بِهٖ تُؤْمِنُوْا ۭ فَالْحُكْمُ لِلّٰهِ الْعَلِيِّ

الْكَبِيْرِ 12

(40:12) (They will be told): "(The cause of your present state is that) when Allah alone was invoked, you disbelieved; and when others instead of Him were invoked, you believed. Today all judgement lies with Allah, the Most High, the All-Great."[18]

18. That is, the Judgment now rests entirely with that God alone, Whose Godhead you did not acknowledge, and those others whom you persistently regarded as associates and partners in the powers of Godhead, have no share whatsoever in the judgment. (For a full understanding of this point, please see (verse 45 of Surah Az-Zumar and its E.N. 64). This sentence by itself gives the meaning that there would be no possibility of any way out for the disbelievers from the state of torment, for they did not only deny the Hereafter but they had aversion to their Creator and Sustainer, and they were not satisfied until they had associated others with Him.

هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُرِيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ وَيُنَزِّلُ لَكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَاۗءِ رِزْقًا ۭ وَمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ اِلَّا مَنْ يُّنِيْبُ 13

(40:13) He it is Who shows you His Signs[19] and sends down provision for you from the sky.[20] Yet none takes heed except he who constantly turns to Allah.[21]

19. Signs imply those signs which point to the great truth that the Fashioner, Ruler and Administrator of the Universe is One and only One God.

20. Provision here implies the rain, for every kind of the sustenance that man gets in the world, depends ultimately on the rainfall. Allah presents this one single sign out of His countless signs, as if to draw the people's attention to the fact: If you only consider and ponder over the arrangement of this one thing, you will understand that the concept being presented in the Quran of the administration of the Universe, is true. This arrangement could exist only if the Creator of the earth and its creatures and of water and air and the sun and the heat and cold was only One God, and this arrangement could continue to exist for millions and millions of years with perfect regularity only if the same Eternal God caused it to exist continually. And the One Who brought this arrangement into existence could only be an All-Wise and All-Merciful Lord, Who along with creating men, animals and vegetables in the earth, also created water precisely according to their needs and requirements, and then made these wonderful arrangements for transporting and spreading that water to different parts of the earth with perfect regularity. Now, who can be more unjust than the one who sees all this and yet denies God, or associates some other beings also with Him in Godhead?

21. That is, a person who has turned away from God and whose intellect has been clouded and corrupted by heedlessness or prejudice, cannot learn any lesson from any sign. He will see with his animal eyes that the winds blew, the clouds gathered, the lightning thundered

and flashed and the rain fell; but his human eyes will never perceive why all this happened, who caused it, and what rights He has on him.

فَادْعُوا اللّٰهَ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ 14

(40:14) So call upon Allah, consecrating all your devotion to Him,[22] howsoever much the unbelievers may dislike it.

22. For the explanation of making one's religion sincerely Allah's, see (E.N. 3 of Surah Az-Zumar).

رَفِيْعُ الدَّرَجٰتِ ذُو الْعَرْشِ ۚ يُلْقِي الرُّوْحَ مِنْ اَمْرِهٖ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ لِيُنْذِرَ يَوْمَ التَّلَاقِ ۙ 15

(40:15) Exalted in Rank,[23] Lord of the Throne:[24] He causes the spirit to descend on whomsoever of His servants He pleases[25] so as to warn them of the Day of Encounter;[26]

23. That is, He is exalted far above all the creations of the world. Anything that exists in the universe, whether an angel or a prophet or a saint, or borne other creation, may be very exalted and superior to other creations, but it cannot be imagined to have a station anywhere near the highest rank and position of Allah, not to speak of its being an associate in His attributes and powers and authority.

24. That is, He is King and Ruler of the whole universe, and Master of the Throne of the Kingdom of the universe. (For explanation, see (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 54 and E.N. 41) thereof; (Surah Younus, Ayat 3); (Surah Ar-Raad, Ayat 2); (Surah TaHa, Ayat 5) and the E.Ns thereof).

25. "The inspiration" implies Revelation and Prophethood. (For explanation, see (Surah An-Nahl, Ayat 2); (Surah Bani- Israil, Ayat 85) and the E.Ns thereof). And the words: "He places the inspiration of His command upon whom He wills of His slaves" mean this: Nobody has a monopoly over the bounties of Allah. Just as no one has a right to object as to why was so and so given beauty, and so and so was given extraordinary powers of memory or intelligence, so also no one has the right to abject as to why so and so only was chosen to be a prophet and why a person of some one's own choice was not made a prophet.

26. "The Day of Meeting": The Day when all mankind, jinn and satans will be gathered together before their Lord simultaneously and the witnesses of their acts and deeds also will be present to bear the witness.

يَوۡمَ هُمۡ بَارِزُوۡنَ ۚ لَا يَخۡفٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ مِنۡهُمۡ شَىۡءٌ ؕ لِمَنِ الۡمُلۡكُ الۡيَوۡمَ ؕ لِلّٰهِ الۡوَاحِدِ الۡقَهَّارِ 16

(40:16) the Day when they will emerge and nothing of them shall be hidden from Allah. (On that Day they will be asked): "Whose is the kingdom today?"[27] (The whole world will cry out): "It is Allah's, the One, the Overpowering."

27. That is, though in the world many vain and selfconceited people publicly proclaimed to be the kings and sovereigns, whose, in fact, is the Kingdom today? Who is the Owner of the powers and authority and Whose is the command? If a person hears these words in his right senses, he will be filled with terror, no matter how mighty a king or dictator he might be posing himself to be, and will immediately come to his senses. Here the mention of an historical event will not be out of place. When the Samanid ruler, Nasr bin Ahmad (301-331 A.H.), entered Nishapur, he held a court and after ascending the throne desired that the proceedings be started with recitation from the Quran. At this an elderly pious man came forward and recited this very section of this Surah. When he came to this verse, Nasr was struck with awe; he descended the throne trembling, took off the crown and fell down in prostration, saying: O my Lord, Kingdom is Thine, not mine!

اَلۡيَوۡمَ تُجۡزٰى كُلُّ نَفۡسٍۢ بِمَا كَسَبَتۡ ؕ لَا ظُلۡمَ الۡيَوۡمَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَرِيۡعُ الۡحِسَابِ 17

(40:17) (It will then be said): "Today shall everyone be fully recompensed for his deeds. None shall be wronged today.[28] Surely Allah is Swift in Reckoning."[29]

28. That is, none shall be wronged in any way whatsoever today. It should be noted that in respect of recompense, injustice can have several forms: (1) A person may deserve a reward but he is not given it. (2) He is given a lesser reward than what was due to him. (3) He is given a punishment although he is not liable to any punishment. (4) The one who is liable to punishment is not given any punishment. (5) The one who is liable to a lesser punishment is given a greater punishment. (6) The oppressor goes free. (7) One is seized for the sin committed by another. What Allah means to say is that none of these different kinds of injustices will be allowed to take place in His Court.

29. It means: it will take Allah no time to do the reckoning. Just as He is providing for every creature of the universe simultaneously and He is not so occupied in providing for one that He may have no time to provide for others, and just as He is seeing everything in the universe simultaneously, and hearing everything simultaneously, is managing every small and big affair simultaneously, and nothing absorbs His attention so completely that He may be unable to give attention to others, at the same time, so He will subject to reckoning every single individual simultaneously and the hearing of one case will not make Him so occupied as to render Him unable to hear other countless cases at the same time. Then in His Court no delay will also be allowed to take place due to any difficulty in the investigation of the facts of the case and the availability of the witnesses. The Judge of the Court will Himself be aware of all the facts directly. Each party in every case will stand completely exposed before

Him and clear undeniable evidence of the events and deeds, with each minor detail, will come forward without any delay. Therefore, each case will be settled and decided instantaneously.

وَأَنذِرْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْآزِفَةِ إِذِ الْقُلُوبُ لَدَى الْحَنَاجِرِ كَاظِمِينَ ۚ مَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ حَمِيمٍ
وَلَا شَفِيعٍ يُطَاعُ ۚ 18

(40:18) (O Prophet), then warn them of the Day that has drawn near,[30] the Day when hearts full of suppressed grief will leap up to the throats and the wrong-doers shall neither have any sincere friend[31] nor intercessor whose word will be heeded.[32]

30. In the Quran the people have been made to realize again and again that Resurrection is not far off but has approached near at hand, and can take place any moment. In (Surah An-Nahal, Ayat 1), it has been said: Allah's judgment has come, so do not clamor for hastening it. In (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 1): The time of the reckoning of the people has drawn near, and yet they are turning away in heedlessness. In (Surah Al-Qamar, Ayat 1): The Hour of Resurrection has drawn near and the moon has split asunder. And in (Surah An-Najm, Ayat 57): That which is coming is near at hand, none but Allah can avert it. All this is meant to warn the people to the effect that they should not become fearless of Resurrection thinking it to be yet far away, but should mend their ways and reform themselves at once.

31. The word hameem as used in the original implies such a friend of a person as is aroused to action when he sees him being beaten, and rushes forward to protect and save Him.

32. This thing has been said to refute the concept of intercession held by the disbelievers. As a matter of fact, the wicked people will have no intercessor at all, for permission to intercede, if at all granted, can be granted only to the righteous servants of Allah, and Allah's righteous servants can never make friends with the disbelievers, polytheists and sinners so that they should even think of intruding on their behalf to save them. But as the disbelievers have generally held, and still hold, the belief that the saints, whose disciples they are, will not allow that they go to Hell, but will see that they are forgiven. Therefore, it has been said: There will be no such intercessor there who may have to be listened to, and whose recommendation Allah may have to accept necessarily.

يَعْلَمُ خَائِنَةَ الْأَعْيُنِ وَمَا تُخْفِي الصُّدُورُ 19

(40:19) He knows even the most stealthy glance of the eyes and all the secrets that hearts conceal.

وَاللّٰهُ يَقْضِيْ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ لَا يَقْضُوْنَ بِشَيْءٍ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ

الْبَصِيْرُ ۔ 20

(40:20) Allah will judge with justice, whereas those whom they call upon beside Him cannot judge at all. Surely Allah and He alone is All- Hearing, All-Seeing.[33]

33. That is, He is not a blind and deaf god like your deities that He may be unaware of the misdeeds of a person about whom He is passing judgment.

اَوَلَمْ يَسِيْرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِيْنَ كَانُوْا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ؕ كَانُوْا هُمْ

اَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَّاٰثَارًا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَاَخَذَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِذُنُوْبِهِمْ ؕ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ

وَّاقٍ 21

(40:21) Have they not journeyed in the land that they might observe the end of those who came before them? They were even greater in strength than they and left behind more splendid traces in the land. Then Allah seized them because of their sins and they had none who could protect them from Allah.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَانَتْ تَّاْتِيْهِمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَكَفَرُوْا فَاَخَذَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ قَوِيٌّ شَدِيْدُ

الْعِقَابِ 22

(40:22) They came to this end because their Messengers would come to them with Clear Signs[34] and yet they would refuse to believe. So Allah seized them. He is indeed Strong, Terrible in Retribution.

34. Bayyinat means three things:

(1) The clear signs which pointed to the Messengers' being appointed by Allah.

(2) The convincing arguments which were a clear proof of their teachings being based on the truth.

(3) The clear guidance and instructions about the problems and affairs of life which could enable every reasonable person to see that such pure teachings could not be given by an impostor.

وَلَقَدۡ اَرۡسَلۡنَا مُوۡسٰى بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَسُلۡطٰنٍ مُّبِيۡنٍ ۙ 23

(40:23) Verily We sent Moses[35] with Our Signs and a clear authority[36]

35. For the other details of the story of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 49-61); (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 164); (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayats 20-26); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 103-162); (Surah Yunus, Ayats 7, 5- 92); (Surah Houd, Ayats 17, 96-97), 110); Introduction to Surah Yusuf; (Surah Ibrahim, Ayats 5-8); (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayats 101-104); (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayats 60-82); (Surah Maryam, Ayats 51-53); (Surah TaHa, Ayats 9-98); (Surah AlMuminun, Ayats 45-49); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 10-68); (Surah An-Naml, Ayats 7-14); Introduction to Surah Al- Qasas and (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayats 3-44); (Surah Al-Ahzab, Ayats 69); (Surah As-Saff, Ayats 114-122) and the E.Ns thereof.

36. "A manifest authority": With such clear signs as left no doubt that he had been sent by Allah, and he had Allah, Lord of the worlds' power at his back. From a careful study of the details of the Prophet Moses' story, as given in the Quran, it becomes obvious as to what were those signs which are being described here as a clear authority of his appointment as a Prophet by Allah. In the first place, even this was strange that a person who, a few years earlier, had fled the country after killing a man of Pharaoh's nation and whose warrants of arrest had been issued, should make a sudden appearance directly in the packed court of Pharaoh, with a staff in hand, and should boldly and fearlessly address the king and his nobles and demand that they should acknowledge him as the representative of Allah, Lord of the worlds, and should act according to what he says, and none dares to lay his hands on him. Whereas the nation to which Moses belonged, had been so suppressed under slavery that if he had been apprehended immediately on the charge of murder, no one would have voiced even a protest, not to speak of rising in rebellion. This shows that Pharaoh and his courtiers had been aweinspired just at the appearance of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), even before they witnessed the miracles of the staff and the shining hand, and they had realized in the very beginning that he had some greater power behind him, Then each of the wonderful miracles that he performed, one after the other, was enough to bring about the conviction that it was not a manifestation of magic but of divine power. After all, what power of magic could cause a staff to change into a serpent, or cause a whole country to suffer from famine, or cause different sorts of disasters to strike vast areas of the land on a sudden notice by Moses and be removed on a notice by him? That is why, according to the Quran, Pharaoh and all the responsible people of his kingdom had been convinced in their hearts, whether they might be refusing to profess with the tongue, that Moses had indeed been appointed a Prophet by Allah. (For details, see (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 106-117); (Surah TaHa, Ayats 56 78); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 30-51); (Surah An-Naml, Ayats 10-13).

اِلٰى فِرۡعَوۡنَ وَهَامٰنَ وَقَارُوۡنَ فَقَالُوۡا سٰحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ 24

(40:24) to Pharaoh and Haman[37] and Korah. They said: "(He is) a sorcerer, an utter liar."

37. For a reply to the critics' objections about Haman, see (E.N. 8 of Surah Al-Qasas).

فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمۡ بِالۡحَقِّ مِنۡ عِنۡدِنَا قَالُوا اقۡتُلُوۡۤا اَبۡنَآءَ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا مَعَهٗ وَاسۡتَحۡيُوۡا نِسَآءَهُمۡ ؕ وَمَا كَيۡدُ الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ اِلَّا فِىۡ ضَلٰلٍ 25

(40:25) When Moses brought them the Truth[38] from Us they said: "Kill the sons of all the believers who have joined him, but spare the women."[39] The guile of the unbelievers always ends in vain.[40]

38. The truth: the miracles and signs by which the Prophet Moses proved that he was a Messenger sent by Allah and the strong arguments by which he showed that he was wholly in the right.

39. As already mentioned in (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 127), Pharaoh's courtiers had said to him: Will you leave Moses and his people free to spread disorder in the land? And he himself had said: I will have their sons slain and let their daughters live. This verse states that this order was at last issued from Pharaoh's court. It was, in fact, meant to so terrify the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) himself and his supporters and followers that they should abandon him out of fear.

40. Another meaning of this sentence can be: Whatever the disbelievers had plotted, was aimed at deviation, tyranny and antagonism to the truth. That is, even after being convinced of the truth in their hearts, they continued to show stubbornness and did not hesitate to adopt any mean device whatsoever in order to defeat and frustrate the truth.

وَقَالَ فِرۡعَوۡنُ ذَرُوۡنِىۡۤ اَقۡتُلۡ مُوۡسٰى وَلۡيَدۡعُ رَبَّهٗ ۚ اِنِّىۡۤ اَخَافُ اَنۡ يُّبَدِّلَ دِيۡنَكُمۡ اَوۡ اَنۡ يُّظۡهِرَ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ الۡفَسَادَ 26

(40:26) One day[41] Pharaoh said: "Let me go and kill Moses;[42] then let him invoke his Lord. I fear that he will change your religion or cause disruption in the land."[43]

41. The event which is being related here is a very important event of the Israelite history, which the Israelites themselves have totally forgotten. Both the Bible and the Talmud are without it, and no mention of it is found in the other Israelite traditions either. Only through the Quran has the world come to know that during the conflict between Pharaoh and the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) this event had taken place at some time. Anybody who reads this story, provided that he has not been blinded by prejudice against Islam and the Quran, cannot but realize that from the viewpoint of the invitation to the truth this story is very valuable, and this thing by itself also is in no way against reason that a person from among the nobles of the kingdom of Pharaoh himself might have quietly believed in his heart, having been influenced by the personality of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), his preaching and the wonderful miracles shown by him, and might not have been able to restrain himself when he saw that Pharaoh was planning to kill him. But the way the Western orientalists, in spite of their tall claims to knowledge and research, try to repudiate

the self-evident truths of the Quran, on account of prejudice, can be judged from this that the author of the article "Musa" in the Encyclopaedia of Islam writes in respect of this story:

"The Kuranic story of a believer at the court of Pharaoh who wants to save Musa is not quite clear (xl, 28). Ought we to compare Jethro in the Haggada who advises clemency at Pharaoh's court?

In other words, these so called researchers have one thing settled with them: They must find fault with everything that the Quran presents. Now, if they do not find any ground for criticizing a statement of it, they should at least say this much out of mischief that the story is not entirely clear, and also should incidentally create this doubt in the reader's mind that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) might have heard from somewhere the story of Jethro mentioned in the Haggada taking place even before the birth of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), and inserted it here in this form. This is the type of literary research which these people have adopted with regard to Islam and the Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

42. In this sentence Pharaoh tries to give the impression as if some people were restraining him from killing the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). Had they not stood in his way, he would have killed him long ago, whereas in fact there was no external power to restrain him; it was the fear of his own heart which was preventing him from laying his hands on the Messenger of Allah.

43. That is, I fear a revolution from him, and even if he is unable to bring it about, there is at least the danger that he will cause mischief to appear in the country by his activities. Therefore, even if he doesn't commit a crime punishable with death, he should be put to death only for the sake of the maintenance of public order. As for this whether there is a real danger to the public order from him, the king's satisfaction in this regard is enough. If his majesty is convinced that he is dangerous, it should be declared that he is really dangerous and punishable with death.

Here, the meaning of "changing the religion" also should be understood well, on account of which Pharaoh wanted to put the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) to death. Deen here implies the system of government, and what Pharaoh meant to say was this: I fear that he will change your king. (Ruhal-Maani, vol. xxiv, p. 56). In other words, the deen of the land was the religious, political, cultural and economic system that was prevalent in Egypt on the basis of Pharaoh's and his family's sovereignty, and Pharaoh was afraid that Moses' message would change that very deen. But like the cunning and deceitful rulers of every age, he also did not say that he feared being deposed from his position of authority and, therefore, he wanted to kill Moses (peace be upon him), but he presented the case like this: O people, the danger is for you, not for me, for if Moses' movement succeeded your deen would change. I am not worried for myself: I am worried for your sake as to what would become of you when you have been deprived of the protection of my authority. Therefore, the wicked man who poses such a danger should be put to death, for he is an enemy of the state.

وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰٓ إِنِّي عُذْتُ بِرَبِّي وَرَبِّكُم مِّن كُلِّ مُتَكَبِّرٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُ بِيَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ ع 27

(40:27) Moses said: "I have taken refuge with my Lord and your Lord from everyone who waxes arrogant and does not believe in the Day of Reckoning."[44]

44. Here, there are two equal probabilities and there is no ground for preferring one to the other. The first probability is that the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) might himself be present in the court at the time and Pharaoh might have expressed his intention to kill him in his presence, and the Prophet might have given this direct answer there and then, addressing him and his courtiers. The other probability is that Pharaoh might have expressed this intention in the absence of Moses in a meeting with the responsible people of his government and a report of this conversation might have been conveyed to the Prophet by some of the believers, whereupon he might have said these words in some gathering of his followers. Whatever be the case, it is apparent from the words that the threat of Pharaoh could not cause any state of fear in Moses' heart and with trust in Allah he flung his threat back at Pharaoh. The context in which this event has been related in the Quran by itself shows that the same also was the reply from the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to those wicked people who, being fearless of the Day of Reckoning, were devising plots to kill him.

وَقَالَ رَجُلٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ مِّنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَكْتُمُ إِيمَانَهُۥٓ أَتَقْتُلُونَ رَجُلًا أَن يَقُولَ رَبِّيَ اللَّهُ صلے ق
وَقَدْ جَآءَكُم بِالْبَيِّنَٰتِ مِن رَّبِّكُمْ ط وَإِن يَكُ كَٰذِبًا فَعَلَيْهِ كَذِبُهُۥ ط وَإِن يَكُ صَادِقًا
يُصِبْكُم بَعْضُ الَّذِي يَعِدُكُمْ ج إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ هُوَ مُسْرِفٌ كَذَّابٌ 28

(40:28) Then a man endowed with faith, from Pharaoh's folk, who had kept his faith hidden, said: "Do you kill a person simply because he says: 'My Lord is Allah' even though he brought to you clear Signs from your Lord?[45] If he is a liar, his lying will recoil upon him;[46] but if he is truthful, you will be smitten with some of the awesome consequences of which he warns you. Allah does not guide to the Right Way any who exceeds the limits and is an utter liar.[47]

45. That is, He has shown such manifest signs to you as have made it absolutely clear that he is a Messenger sent by your Lord. The Believer, from among the people of Pharaoh, was obviously referring to the signs the details of which have already been given in (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 107-117, 130-133); (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayats 101-102); (Surah TaHa, Ayats 56-73); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 30-51); (Surah An-Naml, Ayats 10-13).

46. That is, if in spite of such manifest signs as he has shown you, you regard him as a liar, you should leave him alone, for the alternative probability, and a very strong probability too, is that he is truthful, and therefore you may involve yourselves in God's torment by laying your hands on him. Therefore, even if you think that he is a liar, you should leave him to

himself. For if he is lying, in the name of Allah, Allah Himself will take him to task. Similar words had the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) himself said to Pharaoh before this: If you do not believe in me, do not harm me. (Surah Ad-Dukhan, Ayat 21).

Here one should keep in mind that the Believer of the people of Pharaoh had not openly disclosed in the beginning that he had affirmed faith in the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), but he spoke as if he also belonged to Pharaoh's side, and was only wishing his people well. But when Pharaoh and his courtiers did not seem to see reason and continued to behave stubbornly, he at last disclosed the secret of his faith, as becomes obvious from his speech in(verses 38-44).

47. This sentence can have two meanings and probably the Believer had intentionally employed it, because he did not yet want to express his belief openly. Its one meaning is: One and the same person cannot combine righteousness and lying and falsehood. You can clearly see that Moses is a man of very sublime and pure character. Therefore, how can you believe that, on the one hand, he should be such a liar as to lay a baseless claim to prophethood in the name of Allah. And on the other hand, Allah should bless him with such high morals? The other meaning is: If you are bent upon taking the life of Moses (peace be upon him) by transgressing all limits and will execute your evil designs by bringing false accusations against him, you should remember that Allah will never show you the way to success.

يٰقَوْمِ لَكُمُ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ ظٰهِرِيْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ ۡ فَمَنْ يَّنْصُرُنَا مِنْۢ بَاْسِ اللّٰهِ اِنْ جَآءَنَا ؕ
قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ مَآ اُرِيْكُمْ اِلَّا مَآ اَرٰى وَمَآ اَهْدِيْكُمْ اِلَّا سَبِيْلَ الرَّشَادِ 29

(40:29) My people, today the kingdom is yours, and you are supreme in the land. But if Allah's chastisement were to come upon you, who will come to our help?"[48] Pharaoh said: "I only counsel what I consider right; I only direct you to the Path of Rectitude."[49]

48. That is, why are you being ungrateful to Allah for His blessing of granting you domination in the land and are inviting His scourge to visit you?

49. From this answer of Pharaoh it appears that he had not yet found out that the noble of his court had become a Believer in his heart. That is why he did not show any displeasure at what he said, but made clear that he was not inclined to change his opinion even after hearing what he had to say.

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْٓ اٰمَنَ يٰقَوْمِ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّثْلَ يَوْمِ الْاَحْزَابِ ۙ 30

(40:30) He who had faith said: "My people, I fear that you will confront a day like that which overtook many parties before you,

مِثْلَ دَأْبِ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَّعَادٍ وَّثَمُودَ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ ؕ وَمَا اللّٰهُ يُرِيدُ ظُلْمًا لِّلْعِبَادِ 31

(40:31) like the day that overtook the people of Noah and Ad and Thamud, and those who came after them. Allah does not wish to subject His servants to any injustice.[50]

50. That is, Allah has no enmity with His servants that He should destroy them without any reason. He sends calamities upon them only when they have transgressed all limits, and sending the torment then is the very demand of justice.

وَيٰقَوْمِ اِنِّيٓ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَوْمَ التَّنَادِ ۙ 32

(40:32) My people, I fear that you will encounter a day when there will be much wailing and you will cry out to one another for help,

يَوْمَ تُوَلُّوْنَ مُدْبِرِيْنَ ۚ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ عَاصِمٍ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ هَادٍ 33

(40:33) the day when you will turn around to retreat, there will be none to protect you from Allah. He whom Allah lets go astray, none will be able to show him the Right Way.

وَلَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ يُوْسُفُ مِنْ قَبْلُ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَمَا زِلْتُمْ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّمَّا جَآءَكُمْ بِهٖ ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا هَلَكَ قُلْتُمْ لَنْ يَّبْعَثَ اللّٰهُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ رَسُوْلًا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ مَنْ هُوَ مُسْرِفٌ مُّرْتَابُ ۖ ۚ 34

(40:34) Verily Joseph came to you with Clear Signs before, yet you continued to doubt his Message. Thereafter when he died, you said: 'Allah shall send no Messenger after him.'"[51] Thus Allah leads astray those who transgress the limits and are given to much doubting;

51. That is, your deviation, and then your stubbornness, is such that before Moses (peace be upon him), there came in your land the Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him) about whom you yourselves admit that he was a man of the highest morals, and you also admit that by giving the right interpretation of the king's dream he saved you from the dreadful effects of the seven year long famine, which had struck Egypt in his time, and your entire nation also acknowledges that Egypt has never witnessed a period of greater justice and prosperity than the period of his rule. But in spite of knowing and recognizing all his merits and high

qualities you did not believe in him during his life time, and when he died, you said: Never will the like of him came again! That is, you recognized his excellences only for an excuse to deny every prophet who came after him. This means that you would not accept guidance in any case.

ٱلَّذِينَ يُجَٰدِلُونَ فِىٓ ءَايَٰتِ ٱللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ سُلْطَٰنٍ أَتَىٰهُمْ ۖ كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِندَ ٱللَّهِ وَعِندَ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ۖ كَذَٰلِكَ يَطْبَعُ ٱللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ قَلْبِ مُتَكَبِّرٍ جَبَّارٍ 35

(40:35) those[52] who contend regarding Allah's Signs without any evidence that might have come to them.[53] That is exceedingly loathsome to Allah and to those that believe. Thus does Allah seal the heart of everyone who is proud and high-handed.[54]

52. It so appears that the next few sentences are an addition by Allah and an explanation of the words of the Believer of the people of Pharaoh.

53. That is, Allah allows only those people to go astray who possess the following three qualities:

(1) They transgress all limits in their evil doing, and then develop such a taste for it that they do not feel inclined to accept any invitation to reform their morals.

(2) Their permanent attitude in respect of the Prophets is characterized by doubt and suspicion. The Prophets of God may bring any clear signs before them, yet they doubt their Prophethood and view with suspicion those truths which they present with regard to Tauhid and the Hereafter.

(3) They try to resist the revelations of the Book of Allah with crooked arguments instead of considering them rationally, and these objections are neither based on any sound reason nor on the authority of a revealed Book, but from the beginning to the end their only basis is obstinacy and stubbornness.

When a group of the people develops these three evils, Allah hurls it into the deep pit of Hell fire where from no power can then rescue them.

54. That is, the seal is not set on the heart of anybody without a reason. This seal of curse is set only on the heart of the one who is filled with arrogance and spirit of violence and tyranny.

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَٰهَٰمَٰنُ ٱبْنِ لِى صَرْحًا لَّعَلِّىٓ أَبْلُغُ ٱلْأَسْبَٰبَ ۙ 36

(40:36) Pharaoh said: “Haman, build for me a lofty tower that I may scale the highways

أَسۡبَابَ السَّمٰوٰتِ فَاَطَّلِعَ اِلٰٓى اِلٰهِ مُوۡسٰى وَاِنِّىۡ لَاَظُنُّهٗ كَاذِبًا ؕ وَكَذٰلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِفِرۡعَوۡنَ سُوۡٓءُ
عَمَلِهٖ وَصُدَّ عَنِ السَّبِيۡلِ ؕ وَمَا كَيۡدُ فِرۡعَوۡنَ اِلَّا فِىۡ تَبَابٍ ع 37

(40:37) the highways to the heavens and have a look at the God of Moses, although I am certain that Moses is a liar."[55] Thus Pharaoh's evil deed was made to seem fair to him, and he was barred from the Right Path. Pharaoh's guile only led him to his own perdition.

55. Pharaoh addresses these words to Haman, his minister, interposing in the speech of the Believer in a way as though he has no regard for what he was saying. Therefore, he turns away from him arrogantly and says to Haman: Build me a high tower so that I may climb it to see where the God of whom this Moses speaks, lives. (For explanation, see(Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 38) and E.Ns thereof).

وَقَالَ الَّذِىۡۤ اٰمَنَ يٰقَوۡمِ اتَّبِعُوۡنِ اَهۡدِكُمۡ سَبِيۡلَ الرَّشَادِ ۚ 38

(40:38) The person endowed with faith said: "My people, follow me; I shall direct you to the Path of Rectitude.

يٰقَوۡمِ اِنَّمَا هٰذِهِ الۡحَيٰوةُ الدُّنۡيَا مَتَاعٌ ۫ وَّاِنَّ الۡاٰخِرَةَ هِىَ دَارُ الۡقَرَارِ 39

(40:39) My people, the life of this world is ephemeral,[56] whereas the Hereafter, that is the permanent abode.

56. That is, you are being forgetful of Allah on account of your pride in the transient wealth and prosperity of this world, this is your folly.

مَنۡ عَمِلَ سَيِّئَةً فَلَا يُجۡزٰٓى اِلَّا مِثۡلَهَا ۚ وَمَنۡ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنۡ ذَكَرٍ اَوۡ اُنۡثٰى وَهُوَ مُؤۡمِنٌ
فَاُولٰٓئِكَ يَدۡخُلُوۡنَ الۡجَنَّةَ يُرۡزَقُوۡنَ فِيۡهَا بِغَيۡرِ حِسَابٍ 40

(40:40) Whosoever does an evil deed will be requited only with the like of it; and whosoever acts righteously and has attained to faith be he a male or a female they shall enter Paradise and be provided sustenance beyond all reckoning.

وَيٰقَوۡمِ مَا لِىۡۤ اَدۡعُوۡكُمۡ اِلَى النَّجٰوةِ وَتَدۡعُوۡنَنِىۡۤ اِلَى النَّارِ ؕ 41

(40:41) My people, how is it that I call you to salvation while you call me to the Fire;

تَدْعُوْنَنِيْ لِاَكْفُرَ بِاللّٰهِ وَاُشْرِكَ بِهٖ مَا لَيْسَ لِيْ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ ۡ وَّاَنَا اَدْعُوْكُمْ اِلَى الْعَزِيْزِ

الْغَفَّارِ 42

(40:42) you call me to deny Allah and to associate with Him as His partners those regarding whom I have no knowledge (that they are Allah's partners in His Divinity),[57] whereas I call you to the Most Mighty, the Most Forgiving?

57. That is, about whom I have no scientific proof that they are God's associates. Why should I then accept such a stupendous thing blindly that they also have a share in Godhead and that I have to serve them along with Allah?

لَا جَرَمَ اَنَّمَا تَدْعُوْنَنِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ لَيْسَ لَهٗ دَعْوَةٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَا فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ وَاَنَّ مَرَدَّنَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ

وَاَنَّ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ هُمْ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ 43

(40:43) There is no doubt that those whom you call me to have no claim to be called upon in this world and in the Hereafter.[58] Certainly to Allah shall be our return, and those who exceed the limits[59] are destined to the Fire.

58. This sentence can have several meanings:

(1) That they neither possess here nor in the Hereafter any right that the people should be invited to acknowledge their godhead.

(2) That they have been made gods by the people themselves without any reason, for they have neither claimed godhead for themselves in this world nor will they put forward any such claim in the Hereafter that they also were gods and should have been acknowledged as such.

(3) That it is of no use invoking them here nor in the Hereafter, for they are absolutely powerless and invoking them is of no avail at all.

59. A transgressor is every such person who recognizes the godhead of others than Allah, or assumes godhead for himself, or rebels against God and adopts an attitude of independence in the world, and then commits excesses against himself, against other creatures of God and against everything else with which he has to deal. Such a person, in fact, transgresses all limits of reason and justice.

فَسَتَذْكُرُوْنَ مَآ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ ۭ وَاُفَوِّضُ اَمْرِيْٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بَصِيْرٌۢ بِالْعِبَادِ 44

(40:44) Soon you shall remember what I say to you. I entrust my affairs to Allah. Surely Allah is watchful over His servants."[60]

60. This sentence clearly shows that while saying all this the Believer was certain that he would have to bear the brunt of the wrath of the entire kingdom of Pharaoh in consequence of his speaking the truth, and that he would have to lose all his honors and privileges, even his life. But in spite of knowing all this he performed his duty only with his trust in Allah, according to the call of his conscience, on this critical occasion.

فَوَقٰىهُ اللّٰهُ سَيِّاٰتِ مَا مَكَرُوْا وَحَاقَ بِاٰلِ فِرْعَوْنَ سُوْٓءُ الْعَذَابِ ۚ 45

(40:45) Eventually Allah saved the person endowed with faith from all the evils of their guile,[61] and a woeful chastisement[62] encompassed the Pharaonites.

61. This shows that the Believer was such an important man in the kingdom of Pharaoh that although he spoke out the truth in the face of Pharaoh, in the packed court, yet none could have the courage to punish him publicly. That is why, Pharaoh and his supporters had to make secret plans to kill him, but these plans also were frustrated by Allah.

62. It so appears from the style that this event of the Believer's speaking out the truth had taken place in the last stage of the conflict between the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and Pharaoh. Probably being fed up and disgusted with the long drawn out conflict, Pharaoh might have at last made up his mind to kill the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). But he might have felt from the truthfulness of that influential person of his kingdom that the Prophet Moses' (peace be upon him) influence had even reached the higher circles of his government. Therefore, he might have decided that before taking the extreme step against Moses (peace be upon him) he should find out who among the chiefs and nobles and higher officials of the kingdom had been influenced by the movement, and should seize Moses (peace be upon him) after having punished them. But while he was still busy devising his plans, Allah commanded the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and his companions to migrate, and it was while pursuing them that Pharaoh was drowned in the sea along with his hosts.

اَلنَّارُ يُعْرَضُوْنَ عَلَيْهَا غُدُوًّا وَّعَشِيًّا ۚ وَيَوْمَ تَقُوْمُ السَّاعَةُ ۫ اَدْخِلُوْٓا اٰلَ فِرْعَوْنَ اَشَدَّ الْعَذَابِ 46

(40:46) They are exposed to the Fire every morning and evening; and when the Last Hour will come to pass, a command shall be given: "Admit the Pharaonites to an even more severe chastisement."[63]

63. This verse is an express proof of the torment of barzakh, which has often been mentioned in the traditions as the torment of the grave. Allah here has in clear words mentioned two stages of the torment, a lesser torment, which is being given now to Pharaoh and his people before the coming of Resurrection, and it is, this that they are presented before the fire of Hell morning and evening, which strikes terror in their hearts and they see the Hell which they will have to enter ultimately. After this when Resurrection comes, they will be given the real and greater punishment which is destined for them, i.e. they will be hurled into the

same Hell, which they are being made to witness since the time they were drowned till today, and will continue to witness it till the Hour of Resurrection. And such a treatment is not especially meant for Pharaoh and his people. All the culprits continue to witness the evil end, from the hour of death till Resurrection, which is awaiting them. On the other hand, the righteous people are made to see continually the pleasant picture of the good end, which Allah has gotten ready for them. A tradition has been related in Bukhari, Muslim, and Musnad Ahmad on the authority of Abdullah bin Umar, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Whoever from among you dies is shown his final resting place morning and evening continually, whether he be a dweller of Paradise or of Hell. It is said to him: This is the place which you will enter when Allah will raise you back to life on the Day of Resurrection and will call you into His presence. (For further details, see (Surah Al-Anfaal, Ayats 50-51); (Surah An-Nahal, Ayats 28-32); (Surah Al-Mominoon, Ayats 99-100)and the E.Ns thereof, and (E.Ns 22, 23 of Surah YaSeen).

وَإِذْ يَتَحَآجُّونَ فِي النَّارِ فَيَقُولُ الضُّعَفَٰٓؤُا لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوٓا إِنَّا كُنَّا لَكُمْ تَبَعًا فَهَلْ أَنتُم مُّغْنُونَ عَنَّا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ النَّارِ 47

(40:47) Just imagine when they will remonstrate with one another in Hell. The weak ones will say to those who waxed proud: "We were your followers. Will you, then, lighten for us a part of our suffering of the Fire?"[64]

64. This they will not say in any hope that their previous guides or rulers or leaders would actually be able to save them from the torment, or would have it reduced. At that time they will have fully realized that those people could not avail them anything there. But they will say this in order to humiliate them, as if to say: In the world you ruled over us with great show of power and authority, now save us also from this disaster which has befallen us only because of you.

قَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوٓا إِنَّا كُلٌّ فِيهَآ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ حَكَمَ بَيْنَ الْعِبَادِ 48

(40:48) Those who had waxed proud will reply: "All of us are in it. Allah has already passed His judgement among His servants."[65]

65. That is, both you and we have already been sentenced and Allah has passed His judgment regarding each of us. Now it does not lie in anyone's power to change the sentence of Allah, or to make any increase or decrease in the punishment awarded by Him.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ فِي النَّارِ لِخَزَنَةِ جَهَنَّمَ ادْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ يُخَفِّفْ عَنَّا يَوْمًا مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ 49

(40:49) Those suffering in the Fire will say to the keepers of Hell: "Call upon your Lord to lighten the chastisement for us just for a day."

قَالُوْٓا اَوَلَمْ تَكُ تَاْتِيْكُمْ رُسُلُكُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ ؕ قَالُوْا بَلٰى ؕ قَالُوْا فَادْعُوْا ۚ وَمَا دُعٰٓؤُا
الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اِلَّا فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ ۧ 50

(40:50) The keepers of Hell will ask: "Did your Messengers not come to you with Clear Signs?" They will say: "Yes (they did)." The keepers of Hell will say: "Then you yourselves should call (upon the Lord). And the call of the unbelievers will end in vain."[66]

66. That is, when the fact is this that the Messengers had come to you with the clear signs, and you have already been sentenced to suffer punishment here, because you had refused to believe in them, it is not possible for us to pray for you to Allah. For obviously there should be some plea for such a prayer, and you have exhausted every plea by your misconduct. So, you pray for yourselves if you so like, but we would tell you beforehand that the prayers of the people who had disbelieved in the world like you have been of no avail.

اِنَّا لَنَنْصُرُ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ يَقُوْمُ الْاَشْهَادُ ۙ 51

(40:51) Surely We shall help Our Messengers and the believers in the life of this world[67] and on the Day when witnesses will rise to testify,[68]

67. For explanation, see (E.N. 93 of Surah As-Saaffat).

68. That is, when Allah's Court will be established and the witnesses will be produced before Him.

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ مَعْذِرَتُهُمْ وَلَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوْٓءُ الدَّارِ 52

(40:52) the Day when the excuses offered by the wrong-doers shall not avail them. They shall be victims of the curse and a woeful abode.

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْهُدٰى وَاَوْرَثْنَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ الْكِتٰبَ ۙ 53

(40:53) We surely guided Moses[69] and made the Children of Israel the heirs of the Book

69. That is, We did not just leave Moses alone when We sent him against Pharaoh, but We gave him guidance at every step till success. This contains a subtle allusion to the effect: O Muhammad, We shall help you too in the same manner. We have neither left you alone after raising you as a Prophet in the city of Makkah and the tribe of Quraish so that these wicked people may treat you as they like, but We Ourselves are with you and are giving you guidance at every step.

هُدًى وَّذِكۡرٰى لِاُولِى الۡاَلۡبَابِ 54

(40:54) which was a guidance and good counsel to people endowed with understanding and wisdom.[70]

70. That is just as those who disbelieved in Moses (peace be upon him) were deprived of this blessing and the Israelites who believed in him were made heirs to the Book, so will also those who deny you be deprived and only those who believe in you will have the good fortune to inherit the Quran and rise in the world as the standard bearers of guidance.

فَاصۡبِرۡ اِنَّ وَعۡدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ وَّاسۡتَغۡفِرۡ لِذَنۡۢبِكَ وَسَبِّحۡ بِحَمۡدِ رَبِّكَ بِالۡعَشِىِّ وَالۡاِبۡكَارِ 55

(40:55) Be steadfast,[71] then, (O Prophet), Allah's promise is true.[72] Seek forgiveness for your shortcomings,[73] and celebrate the praise of your Lord, evening and morning.[74]

71. "Have patience": Bear up with a cool mind against these hardships through which you are passing.

72. The allusion is to the promise made above in the sentence: We do help Our Messengers and the believers in the life of this world.

73. A study of the context shows that here "sin" implies the state of impatience that was being caused to the Prophet (peace be upon him) on account of the severe antagonism, especially the persecution of his followers. He earnestly desired that either some miracle should be shown, which should convince the disbelievers or something else should soon come down from Allah, which should quell the storm of opposition. Though this desire in itself was not a sin, which should have called for repentance, the high rank with which Allah had blessed the Prophet (peace be upon him) demanded great grit and will power; so the little impatience shown by him was regarded as inconsistent with his high rank. Therefore, he was required to ask Allah's forgiveness for showing the weakness and was told to hold his ground like a rock as a man of a high rank like him should.

74. That is, Glorification of Allah with His praises is the only means by which those who work for the sake of Allah can get the strength to resist and overcome the hardships faced in the way of Allah. Glorifying the Lord morning and evening can have two meanings:

(1) Remembering Allah constantly and perpetually.

(2) Performing the Prayers at the specific times.

And in this second case, the allusion is to the five times of the Prayers, which were enjoined on all the believers as a duty some time after the revelation of this Surah. For the word ashiyy in Arabic is used for the time from the declining of the sun till the early part of nigh, which covers the times of the four Prayers from Zuhr to Isha, and ibkar is the time from dawn to the rising of the sun, which is the time of the Fajr Prayer. (For further details, see (Surah Al- Baqarah, Ayats 3, 43, 45, 238); (Surah Houd, Ayat 114); (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 98-99); Introduction to (Surah Bani Israil and Ayats 78-79); (Surah TaHa, Ayat 130); (Surah An-

Noor, Ayats 56-58); (Surah Al-Ankabut, Ayat 45); (Surah Ar- Rum, Ayats 17-18, 31) and the E.Ns thereof).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي آيَاتِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ سُلْطَانٍ أَتَاهُمْ ۙ إِنْ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ إِلَّا كِبْرٌ مَّا هُم
بِبَالِغِيهِ ۚ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ ۖ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ 56

(40:56) Verily those who dispute regarding the Signs of Allah without any evidence that might have come to them, nothing but vain pride fills their hearts. Yet they shall never be able to satisfy the pride[75] with which they are puffed up.[76] So seek refuge with Allah.[77] Verily He is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.

75. That is, the real cause for their opposition without any argument and their irrational crooked argumentation is not that they do not understand the thruth and the themes of goodness and reform being presented before them in the form of the revelations of Allah; therefore, they dispute about them in good faith in order to understand them. But the actual reason for their wrong attitude is that their selfconceit does not permit any tolerance. They do not want that in Arabia the guidance and leadership of Muhammad (peace be upon him) should be accepted and acknowledged. And ultimately one day they themselves should have to accept the leadership of the person against whom they think they have a greater right to be the chiefs and leaders. That is why they are straining every nerve not to let Muhammad (peace be upon him) have his way, and they do not hesitate to use any mean device whatsoever for the purpose.

76. In other words it means: He whom Allah has made great, will remain great, and the efforts of the small people who are trying to establish their superiority will ultimately end in failure.

77. That is, just as Moses (peace be upon him) had become free from fear and anxiety after invoking Allah Almighty's help and refuge against Pharaoh's threats, so should you also seek His help and refuge against the threats and conspiracies of the chiefs of the Quraish, then should busy yourself in raising His word being free from every anxiety.

لَخَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ خَلْقِ النَّاسِ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ 57

(40:57) Surely[78] the creation of the heavens and the earth is a greater act than the creation of human beings. But most people do not know.[79]

78. After reviewing the conspiracies and plots of the chiefs of the Quraish in (verses 21-56), the address is now being directed towards the common people, and they are being made to understand that the truths to which Muhammad (peace be upon him) is inviting them, are absolutely rational, as if to say: Your own good and well-being lies in accepting them, and rejecting them is ruinous for your own selves. In this connection, first of all arguments have been given for the doctrine of the Hereafter, for the disbelievers regarded this very doctrine as most bewildering and incomprehensible.

79. This is an argument for the possibility of the Hereafter. The disbelievers thought it was impossible for man to be resurrected after death. In answer to this, it is being said: Those who talk like this are, in fact, ignorant. If they use their common sense, they will easily understand that for that God Who has created this wonderful Universe it cannot at all be difficult to create men once again.

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ ۙ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَلَا الْمُسِيءُ ۚ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ 58

(40:58) Never can the blind and the seeing be equal; nor those that believe and act righteously and those that do evil. Little do you understand.[80]

80. This is an argument for the necessity of the Hereafter. In the preceding sentence it was said that the Hereafter can take place, and its occurrence is not impossible. In this it is being said that the Hereafter should take place. It is the demand of both reason and justice that it should occur, and its nonoccurrence is against reason and justice. After all, how can a reasonable man believe it to be right that those who live like the blind in the world and fill God's earth with mischief by their immoral and wicked deeds, should not see the evil end of their misdeeds and wrong conduct. Likewise, those people who pass their lives in the world with open eyes, and believe and do good works, should be deprived of seeing a good result of their righteousness? If this is expressly against reason and justice, then the belief of denying the Hereafter also should be against reason and justice, for the non-occurrence of the Hereafter means that the good and the bad should both become dust after death and meet with one and the same end. For in this case, not only are reason and justice destroyed but morality also is proved to be meaningless and absurd. For if good and evil have one and the same end and destiny, then the evildoer would be highly wise, because he gratified all his desires before his death, and the good man highly foolish because he kept himself subjected to every sort of moral restoration without any reason.

إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَآتِيَةٌ لَّا رَيْبَ فِيهَا وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ 59

(40:59) The Hour will indeed come; there is no doubt about that. Yet most people do not believe.[81]

81. This is the absolute assertion about the occurrence of the Hereafter, which can be made only on the basis of knowledge and not on the basis of reasoning, and in no other discourse than of revelation this assertion can be made with such absoluteness. That which can be said without revelation only on the basis of intellectual reasoning is that Resurrection can take place and it should take place. Beyond this, to assert that Resurrection will certainly take place, can be said only by that Being Who knows that Resurrection will occur, and that Being is none but Allah. It is here that it becomes explicit and evident that if religion can be based on pure knowledge, instead of speculation and reasoning, it can only be on the knowledge obtained through divine revelation.

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمُ ادْعُونِيٓ أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ ۚ 60

(40:60) Your[82] Lord said: "Pray to Me, and I will accept your prayers.[83] Surely those who wax too proud to worship Me shall enter Hell, utterly abased."[84]

82. After the Hereafter, the discourse now turns to Tauhid which was the second point of dispute between the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the disbelievers.

83. That is, all the powers to answer our prayers rest in Me only; so you should not pray to others but pray to Me. To understand the spirit of this verse well, three points should be comprehended properly:

First, man prays only to that being whom he regards as All- Hearing and All-Seeing and Possessor of supernatural powers. And the real motive of prayer for man is the internal feeling that the natural means and resources of the material world are not enough to remove any of his troubles and to fulfill any of his needs, or are not proving to be enough. Therefore, it is inevitable that he should turn to a being who is possessor of supernatural powers and authority. Man invokes that Being even without having seen Him; he invokes Him at all times, at all places, and under all circumstances; he invokes Him in solitude, aloud as well as in a low voice, and even in the depths of his heart. He does so inevitably on the basis of the belief that that Being is watching him everywhere, is also hearing whatever he has in his heart, and possesses such absolute powers that, it can come to the help of the supplicant wherever he is, and can help him out of every trouble and difficulty. After having known this truth about the prayer, it remains no longer difficult for man to understand that the one who invokes another than Allah for help, commits shirk absolutely and purely and clearly, for he believes those attributes to be belonging to the other being, which only belong to Allah. Had he not believed the other being to be an associate of Allah in the divine attributes, he would never have even thought of invoking it for help.

Second, one should fully understand that man's merely thinking about a being that it is the possessor of powers and authority, does not necessitate that it should actually become possessor of the powers and authority. Being possessor of powers and authority is a factual matter, which is not dependent on somebody's understanding or not understanding it. The one who is actually the Possessor of the powers will in any case remain the Possessor whether man regards Him so or not. And the one who is not in reality the possessor, will not be able to have any share whatever in the powers only because man has believed it to be possessing the powers. Now, the fact of the matter is that the Being Who is All-Powerful, All-Hearing, All-Seeing, and Who is actually controlling the whole Universe is only Allah, and He alone is Possessor of all powers and authority. There is none else in this Universe, who may have any power to hear the prayers and to answer them or reject them. As against this factual matter, if some people of themselves start entertaining the belief that some prophets, saints, angels, jinns, planets or imaginary gods also are share-holders in the powers, the reality will not change in any way whatsoever. The Owner will remain the Owner and the helpless servants will remain the servants.

Thirdly, the one who invokes others than Allah behaves like the supplicant who takes his petition to a government office, but leaving aside the real officer who has authority, presents it before one of the other supplicants who may be present there with his petition, and then starts imploring him humbly, saying: you possess all the powers, and yours is the only authority here; so, you alone can fulfill my needs. Such a conduct, in the first place, is in itself highly foolish, but in a case like this it also amounts to high insolence, because the real officer who has the authority, is present and before his very eyes applications and petitions are being made before another, apart from him. Then this ignorance and folly reaches its height when the person before whom the petition is being presented makes the petitioner understand over and over again that he himself is a petitioner like him and possesses no power at all, and that the real officer who has the powers is present, and he should make his petition before him. But in spite of this counsel and warning, the foolish person goes on saying: You are my lord, you alone can fulfill my need.

Keeping these three things in view, one should try to understand what Allah has said here: Call upon Me, I shall answer your prayers, it is for Me to accept them.

84. Two things deserve special attention in this verse:

(1) Dua (prayer) and ibadat (worship) have been used as synonyms here. The prayer of the first sentence has been called worship in the second. This makes it explicit that prayer itself is worship, rather the essence of worship.

(2) The words "Who disdain My worship" have been used for those who do not pray to Allah. This shows that praying to Allah is the very requirement of one's servitude to Him, and turning away from Him amounts to being vain and arrogant.

According to Numan bin Bashir, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The prayer is the very essence of worship. Then he recited this verse. (Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Abu Daud, Nasai, Ibn Majah, Ibn Abu Hatim, Ibn Jarir). According to Anas, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Prayer is the marrow of worship. (Trimidhi). Abu Hurairah says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Allah becomes angry with him who does not ask Him for anything. (Tirmidhi).

In the light of the above, the enigma that often causes confusion in the minds is also resolved. In connection with prayer, people say that when the evil or the good destiny is in the control of Allah and whatever He has already decreed in accordance with His dominant wisdom and expedience has to take place inevitably. What is then the use of the prayer? This is a serious misunderstanding which destroys the importance of prayer from the heart of man, and with this false notion even if man prays, his prayer would be soulless. The above verse of the Quran removes this misunderstanding in two ways:

In the first place, Allah says in clear words: Call upon Me: I will answer your prayers. This proves that fate or destiny is not something which, God forbid, might have tied the hands of Allah Himself also, and the powers to answer the prayer might have been withdrawn from Him. The creatures have no power to avert or change the decrees of Allah: but Allah Himself certainly has the power to change His decrees and decisions on hearing a servant's prayer and petition. The other thing that has been stated in this verse is that whether a

prayer is accepted or not, it is never without an advantage. The servant by presenting his petition before his Lord and by praying to Him acknowledges His Lordship and Supremacy and admits his own servitude and helplessness before Him. This expression of servitude is in itself worship, rather the essence of worship of whose reward the servant will in no case be deprived, irrespective of whether he is granted the particular thing for which he had prayed or not.

We get a full explanation of these two themes in the sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The following traditions throw light on the first theme. Salman Farsi relates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Nothing can avert destiny but the prayer. (Tirmidhi). That is, no one has the power to change the decisions of Allah but Allah Himself can change His decisions, and this happens when the servant prays to Him.

Jabir bin Abdullah says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Whenever man prays to Allah, Allah either gives him the same which he prayed for, or prevents a calamity of the same degree from befalling him provided that he does not pray for a sin or for severing relations with the kindred. (Tirmidhi). Another Hadith on the same subject has been reported by Abu Saeed Khudri in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Whenever a Muslim prays, unless it be a prayer for a sin or for severing relations with a kindred, Allah grants it in one of the three ways: Either his prayer is granted in this very world, or it is preserved for rewarding him in the Hereafter, or a disaster of the same degree is prevented from befalling him. (Musnad Ahmad).

Abu Hurairah says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Whenever one of you prays, he should not say: O God, forgive me if You so please, show me mercy if You so please, grant me provisions if You so please, but he should say definitely: O God, fulfill my such and such need. (Bukhari). According to another tradition from Abu Hurairah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Pray to Allah with the certainty that He will answer it. (Tirmidhi). In still another tradition Abu Hurairah has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The servant's prayer is granted provided that he does not pray for a sin or for severing connections with the kindred, and is not hasty. It was asked: What is being hasty, O Messenger of Allah? He replied: Being hasty is that man should say: I have prayed much, too much, but I see that my prayer is nor being answered. Then he should be tired of it and give up praying. (Muslim). The other theme is explained by the following traditions:

Abu Hurairah relates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Nothing is as praiseworthy in the sight of Allah as the prayer. (Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah).

Ibn Masud says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Ask of Allah His bounty, because Allah likes that He should be asked. (Tirmidhi).

Ibn Umar and Muadh bin Jabal state that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The prayer is in any case beneficial, both with respect to those calamities which have descended and with respect to those which have not yet descended. So, O servants of Allah, you must always pray. (Tirmidhi, Musnad Ahmad). Anas says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Each one of you should ask his every need of Allah; so much so that even if his shoe-lace breaks, he should pray for it to Allah. (Tirmidhi). That is, even in matters which man feels are in his own power, he should invoke Allah's help for it before planning his own

devices for it, for in no matter can man succeed only on the basis of his own devices without the help and succor of Allah, and praying before devising plans means that the servant is at all times acknowledging the supremacy of Allah and admitting his own helplessness.

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الَّیْلَ لِتَسْكُنُوْا فِیْهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَذُوْ فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا یَشْكُرُوْنَ 61

(40:61) Allah it is Who made the night so that you may seek repose in it, and made the day radiant. Surely Allah is Most Bounteous to people; but most people do not give thanks.[85]

85. This verse comprises two important themes: First, the night and the day have been presented in it as an argument for Tauhid, because their alternating regularly means that One God alone is ruling over the earth and the sun, and their alternation's being beneficial for man and other earthly creatures is an express proof of the fact that the same One God is also the Creator of all these things and has devised this system with such great wisdom that it should be beneficial and useful for all His creatures. Secondly, in this verse the atheists and the polytheists have been to realize how great a blessing has Allah bestowed on them in the shape of the night and the day and what ungrateful wretches they are that while they are benefiting from this blessing of His they are being disloyal and rebellious to Him day and night (For father explanation see (Surah Yunus, Ayat 87); (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayat 62), E.Ns thereof).

ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَیْءٍ ۫ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ فَاَنّٰى تُؤْفَكُوْنَ 62

(40:62) Allah (Who bestowed all these favours upon you) is your Lord, the Creator of everything. There is no god but He.[86] Whence are you, then, being led astray?[87]

86. That is, the alternation of the night and day has proved that Allah alone is your Creator as well as of everything else, and the great advantage and benefits that accrue from this alternation for your life, prove that He is your highly Beneficent Lord. After this, it automatically follows that He is your real Deity too. For, it would be entirely against reason and justice that your Creator and Provider should be Allah and your deities others.

87. That is, who is misleading you to think that those who are neither the creators nor providers should deserve to be worshiped by you.

كَذٰلِكَ یُؤْفَكُ الَّذِیْنَ كَانُوْا بِاٰیٰتِ اللّٰهِ یَجْحَدُوْنَ 63

(40:63) Thus it is only those who had denied Allah's Signs that were led astray.[88]

88. That is, in every age the common people have been deluded by the misguides only because the people did not believe in the revelations that Allah sent down through His

Messengers to make them understand the truth. Consequently; they were trapped by the selfish, dishonest people, who had set up shrines of false gods as a business.

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ قَرَارًا وَّالسَّمَآءَ بِنَآءً وَّصَوَّرَكُمْ فَاَحْسَنَ صُوَرَكُمْ وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِّنَ الطَّیِّبٰتِ ؕ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ ۚ فَتَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِیْنَ 64

(40:64) Allah it is Who made the earth a dwelling place for you[89] and made the sky a canopy,[90] Who shaped you and shaped you exceedingly well and gave you good things as sustenance.[91] That is Allah, your Lord; blessed be Allah, the Lord of the Universe.

89. For explanation, see (Surah An-Naml, Ayat 61 and E.N. 74)on it.

90. That is, you have not been exposed to outer space so that heavenly calamities should rain on you and annihilate you completely, but We have built over the earth a fully fortified celestial system (which appears like a dome to the eye), which does not allow any destructive element to reach you; so much so that even the destructive cosmic rays cannot reach you and that is how you are living peacefully on the earth.

91. That is, We had provided for you such a safe and peaceful place of rest even before your creation. Then We created you and gave you a fine body with most appropriate limbs and physical and mental powers of a high caliber. You did not create this erect stature, these hands and feet, these eyes and nose and ears, this talking tongue and this brain, which is a treasure-house of great capabilities, nor were these created by your mother and father, nor a prophet, or a saint, or a god had the power to create them. Their Maker and Creator was the All-Wise, All-Merciful, All-Mighty Sovereign, Who created Man with this wonderful body to function in the world, when He decided to bring him into being. Then as soon as you were created, you found by His beneficence a vast table laid out with pure provisions containing items of pure food which is not poisonous but health-giving, which is not bitter and tasteless but tasty, which is not rotten and stale and stinking but good smelling, which is not lifeless dregs but rich in vitamins and useful organic substances, so essential for the proper development and nourishment of yew body. Who has provided in such abundance this water, and corn, vegetables, fruits, milk, honey, meat and condiments, which not only add relish to your food but also provide you vitality and pleasures of life? And who has made the arrangements that these measureless granaries of food should go on coming out from the earth endlessly and their supply should never fail? Just consider this: What would have become of life if there had been no arrangement of food and man had been brought into existence suddenly? Is this not a clear proof that Your Creator is not merely a Creator but is an All-Wise Creator and All-Merciful Lord? (For further explanation, see (Surah Houd, Ayat 6); (Surah An-Naml, Ayats 60-66) and the E.Ns thereof):

هُوَ الْحَیُّ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ فَادْعُوْهُ مُخْلِصِیْنَ لَهُ الدِّیْنَ ؕ اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِیْنَ 65

(40:65) He is the Ever-Living:[92] there is no god but He. So call upon Him, consecrating to Him all your devotion.[93] All praise and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the whole Universe.[94]

92. That is, His is the real and true life. He only is living by virtue of His own power. No one else has the eternal and everlasting lift but Him. All others have borrowed and temporary life, which is destined to death and perishable.

93. For explanation, see (E.Ns 3, 4 of Surah Az-Zumar).

94. That is, there is none else the hymns of whose praise may be sung and who may be thanked.

قُلْ إِنِّي نُهِيتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَمَّا جَاءَنِيَ الْبَيِّنَاتُ مِنْ رَبِّي وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أُسْلِمَ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ 66

(40:66) Say, (O Prophet): "I have been forbidden to worship those beside Allah whom you call upon.[95] (How can I worship any beside Allah) when clear Signs have come to me from my Lord and I have been commanded to surrender to Allah, the Lord of the Universe?"

95. Here again ibadat (worship) and dua (prayer) have been used as synonyms.

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ يُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوا أَشُدَّكُمْ ثُمَّ لِتَكُونُوا شُيُوخًا ۚ وَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُتَوَفَّىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلِتَبْلُغُوا أَجَلًا مُسَمًّى وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ 67

(40:67) He it is Who created you from dust, then from a sperm-drop, then from a clot; then He brings you out as an infant, then causes you to grow into full maturity, and then causes you to grow further so that you may reach old age, while some of you He recalls earlier.[96] All this is in order that you may reach an appointed term[97] and that you may understand (the Truth).[98]

96. That is, someone dies before birth, and someone before attaining youth, and someone before reaching old age.

97. "An appointed term" may either imply the time of death, or the time when all human beings will be resurrected and presented before their Lord. In the first case, the meaning would be: Allah passes every man through different stages of life and takes him to the specific time which He has appointed for everyone's return. Before that time even if the

whole world joins to kill him, it cannot kill him; and when that time has arrived, none can keep him alive even if all the powers of the world join together to do so. In the second case, it would mean: This gamut of life has not been brought about so that man may end up in the dust and be completely annihilated, but Allah passes him through different stages of life so that all human beings may present themselves before Him at the time which He has appointed for the purpose.

98. That is, you are not being passed through these different stages of lift so that you may live as the animals live and die as they die, but for the purpose that you may use your common sense which Allah has granted you and then understand the system in which you are living. The creation of a wonderful thing like life from the lifeless substances of the earth, then the coming into being of a marvelous creation like man from the microscopic germ of the sperm, then its developing inside the mother's womb, from the time of conception till delivery, in such a manner that its sex, its form and appearance, its bodily structure, its mental qualifications and characteristics, and its faculties and capabilities should be determined therein, uninfluenced by any external factor or agency. Then the one who is to be eliminated by abortion does fall a prey to abortion. The one who is to die in infancy, does die in infancy, whether he be the child of a king. And the one who is to reach maturity or old age, does reach that age, even through highly dangerous conditions, in which death should be certain. And the one who is to die in a particular stage of life, does die in that stage even if he is given the best medical attention and treatment in the best hospitals by the best doctors. Are not all these things pointing to the truth that the ultimate control of life and death is in the hand of an all-Mighty Sovereign? And when the reality is this that an All-Powerful Being is controlling the life and death, then how did a prophet or a saint or an angel or a star or planet become worthy of worship and service? When did a creature attain the rank that we should pray to it, and accept it as the maker and un-maker of our destiny? And how did a human power have the status that we should obey its commands and prohibitions and its self-made law about the lawful and the unlawful, without question? (For further explanation, see (Surah Al-Hajj, Ayats 5-7) and the E.Ns on it).

هُوَ الَّذِیۡ یُحۡیٖ وَ یُمِیۡتُ ۟ فَاِذَا قَضٰۤی اَمۡرًا فَاِنَّمَا یَقُوۡلُ لَهٗ کُنۡ فَیَکُوۡنُ ﴿۶۸﴾

(40:68) He it is Who gives life and causes death. Whenever He decrees a thing, He only commands to it "Be", and it is.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلَی الَّذِیۡنَ یُجَادِلُوۡنَ فِیۡۤ اٰیٰتِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اَنّٰی یُصۡرَفُوۡنَ ۚ﴿۶۹﴾

(40:69) Did you not see those who dispute concerning Allah's Signs? Whence are they, then, being turned astray?[99]

99. That is, have you not understood even after the above discourse what is the real source of these people's misunderstanding and misconduct, and what has caused them to go astray? (One should note that the addressee here is not the Prophet (peace be upon him) but every such person who reads these verses or hears them read).

الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِالْكِتٰبِ وَبِمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا بِهٖ رُسُلَنَا ۚ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ 70

(40:70) Those who gave the lie to this Book and all the Books which We had sent with Our Messengers[100] shall soon come to know the Truth

100. This is the real cause of their going astray. Their denial of the Quran and the teachings brought by the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah and their resisting by disputation the revelations of Allah instead of pondering over them seriously, was the basic cause, which has led them astray and exhausted all possibilities of their adopting the right way.

اِذِ الْاَغْلٰلُ فِيْٓ اَعْنَاقِهِمْ وَالسَّلٰسِلُ ۭ يُسْحَبُوْنَ ۙ 71

(40:71) when fetters and chains shall be on their necks, and they shall be dragged into

فِي الْحَمِيْمِ ۤ ثُمَّ فِي النَّارِ يُسْجَرُوْنَ ۚ 72

(40:72) boiling water, and cast into the Fire.[101]

101. That is, when compelled by the intensity of thirst they will ask for water, the keepers of Hell will drag them by the chains towards the springs of boiling water, and when they will have drunk from them, they will drag them back to be cast into the fire of Hell.

ثُمَّ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ اَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تُشْرِكُوْنَ ۙ 73

(40:73) It will then be said to them: "Where are those whom you

مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ۭ قَالُوْا ضَلُّوْا عَنَّا بَلْ لَّمْ نَكُنْ نَّدْعُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ شَيْـــًٔا ۭ كَذٰلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ 74

(40:74) associated with Allah in His Divinity?"[102] They will say: "We have lost them; rather, we never used to call upon anyone before."[103] Thus will Allah cause them to stumble in error.

102. That is, if they really were gods or associates in Godhead, and you worshiped them in the hope that they would help you in the evil time, then why don't they come to rescue you now?

103. They do not mean to say, we did not associate them with God in the world, but they mean: Now we have understood well that those whom we invoked in the world were nothing and mere nonentities.

ذٰلِكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَفْرَحُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَمْرَحُوْنَ ۚ 75

(40:75) (They will be told): "This is because while you were on earth you took delight in untruth and exulted in it.[104]

104. That is, you not only followed that which was untrue and false, but you became so enamored of the untruth that when the truth was presented before you, you paid no heed to it, but continued to exult in your worship of the falsehood.

اُدْخُلُوْٓا اَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۚ فَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِيْنَ 76

(40:76) Enter Hell now to abide in it. How woeful is the abode of those who wax proud!

فَاصْبِرْ اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ ۚ فَاِمَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِيْ نَعِدُهُمْ اَوْ نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ فَاِلَيْنَا

يُرْجَعُوْنَ 77

(40:77) So be patient,[105] (O Prophet). Surely Allah's promise is true. Whether We show them a part of the woeful consequences against which We warn them (while you are still in their midst) or We recall you (from this world) before that, eventually it is to Us that they shall be brought back.[106]

105. That is, you should have patience at what those people say and do, who are opposing you by disputation and wrangling and want to defeat you by mean devices.

106. That is, it is not necessary that We should punish every such person who has tried to harm you, in this world and during yow lifetime. Whether a person receives his punishment here or not, he cannot in any case escape our grasp: He has to return to Us after death. Then he will receive full punishment of his misdeeds.

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَصَصْنَا عَلَيْكَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ لَّمْ نَقْصُصْ

عَلَيْكَ ۭ وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُوْلٍ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ بِاٰيَةٍ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ۚ فَاِذَا جَاۗءَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ قُضِيَ بِالْحَقِّ وَخَسِرَ

هُنَالِكَ الْمُبْطِلُوْنَ ۧ 78

(40:78) Indeed We sent many Messengers before you: of them there are some whose account We have narrated to you and there are others whose account We have not narrated to you.[107] It did not lie in any Messenger's power to bring any Sign[108] except

with Allah's leave. So when Allah's decree came, the matter was decided with justice, and those steeped in error courted utter loss,[109] then and there.

107. A new theme starts from here. The disbelievers of Makkah said to the Prophet (peace be upon him): We would not believe you to be Allah's Messenger unless you showed us the miracle that we ask you to show us. In the following verses an answer is being given to this very demand without mentioning it. (For the type of the miracles they demanded, see (Surah Houd, Ayat 12); (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayat 7); (Surah Bani Israil, Ayats 90-93); (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayat 21) and the E.Ns thereof).

108. That is, no Prophet ever showed a miracle by his own will and desire, nor had any Prophet the power to show a miracle by himself. Whenever a miracle was shown through a Prophet, it was shown when Allah willed it to be shown through him to the disbelievers. This is the first answer to the disbelievers' demand.

109. That is, a miracle has never been shown for the mere fun of it. It is a decisive thing. If a nation does not believe even after a miracle has been shown, it is destroyed. You are demanding a miracle only for the sake of fun, but you have no idea that by making such a demand you are, in fact, inviting your own doom. This is the second answer to their demand. (For details, please see (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 8, 58-60); (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 59); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 5-9); (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayats 22-23); (Surah Ash- Shuara, Ayats 66-67) and the E.Ns thereof).

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَنْعَامَ لِتَرْكَبُوْا مِنْهَا وَمِنْهَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ۟ 79

(40:79) Allah it is Who has made cattle for you so that you ride some of them and from some of them you derive food.

وَلَكُمْ فِیْهَا مَنَافِعُ وَلِتَبْلُغُوْا عَلَیْهَا حَاجَةً فِیْ صُدُوْرِكُمْ وَعَلَیْهَا وَعَلَى الْفُلْكِ تُحْمَلُوْنَ ۟ 80

(40:80) In them there are also other benefits for you, and through them you fulfil your heartfelt need (to reach places), and you are borne along upon them as upon the ships.

وَیُرِیْكُمْ اٰیٰتِهٖ ۫ فَاَیَّ اٰیٰتِ اللّٰهِ تُنْكِرُوْنَ ۟ 81

(40:81) Allah shows His Signs to you; then which of Allah's Signs will you deny?[110]

110. It means this: If you are not demanding a miracle only for the sake of fun and amusement but want to have the satisfaction whether that to which Muhammad (peace be upon him) is inviting you (i.e. Tauhid and the Hereafter) is true or not, then God's those signs which you are observing and experiencing at all times, are quite enough. For there remains no need for other signs when there are these signs to help you understand the truth. This is the third answer to their demand of the miracles. This answer also has been given at

several places in the Quran and we have given detailed commentary on it. ((See Surah Al-Anaam, Ayats 37-39); (Surah Younus, Ayat 101); (Surah Ar-Raad, Ayats 7- 13); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 4-9) and the E.Ns thereof).

The animals which serve man on the earth, especially the cow, ox, buffalo, sheep, goat, camel and horse, have been created with such nature by the Creator that they easily become man's domestic pet servants and he uses them to fulfill countless of his needs. He rides on them, employs them for carrying loads and in agriculture, get milk from them which he drinks and also uses it for making curd, butter, oil, condensed milk, cheese and different sorts of confectioneries; eats their flesh, uses their fat, and puts to good uses their wool and hair and skin and intestines and bones, even their blood and dung. Is it not a manifest proof that the Creator of man has created these animals even before creating him in view of his countless needs, on a special pattern so that he may use them to advantage?

The three-fourths of the earth's surface is under water and only one-fourth is dry land. In the dry parts also there are small and wide tracts of land which are separated by water. The spreading of human populations on the dry lands and the establishment of commercial and other relations between them could not be possible unless water and oceans and winds were made subject to such laws as would make navigation possible, and such materials were made available on the earth, which man could employ for building ships. Is it not an express sign that there is One God and only One All-Powerful, All-Merciful and All-Wise Lord, Who has made man and earth and water and oceans and winds and everything on the earth according to His own special scheme? Rather, if man only considers from the viewpoint of navigation, how the positions of the stars and regular movements of the planets are helpful in it, he will have the testimony that not only of the earth but of the heavens also that the Creator is the same One Bountiful Lord.

Then, consider also this: Can you in your right senses imagine that the All-Wise God, Who has given His countless things in the control of man and has granted him all these provisions for his well-being, will be, God forbid, so blind of the eye and so thoughtless as would never call man to account after giving him all this?

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ كَانُوا أَكْثَرَ مِنْهُمْ وَأَشَدَّ قُوَّةً وَآثَارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَمَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ 82

(40:82) Did[111] they not journey in the land that they may behold the end of those who had gone before them? They were more numerous and greater in strength and left behind more splendid traces in the land. Yet their attainments did not avail them.

111. This is the conclusion to the discourse. While studying this please also keep in view(verses 4-5) and(verse 21) of this Surah.

فَلَمَّا جَآءَتۡهُمۡ رُسُلُهُمۡ بِالۡبَيِّنٰتِ فَرِحُوۡا بِمَا عِنۡدَهُمۡ مِّنَ الۡعِلۡمِ وَحَاقَ بِهِمۡ مَّا كَانُوۡا بِهٖ يَسۡتَهۡزِءُوۡنَ 83

(40:83) When their Messengers came to them with Clear Signs, they arrogantly exulted in whatever knowledge they had.[112] They were then encompassed by what they had mocked.

112. That is, they took their philosophy and their science, their law, their secular sciences and their mythology and theology invented by their religious guides as the real knowledge, and regarded the Knowledge brought by the Prophets of Allah as worthless and therefore paid no heed to it.

فَلَمَّا رَاَوۡا بَاۡسَنَا قَالُوۡۤا اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَحۡدَهٗ وَكَفَرۡنَا بِمَا كُنَّا بِهٖ مُشۡرِكِيۡنَ 84

(40:84) When they saw Our chastisement, they said: “We have come to believe in Allah, the Only One, and we reject all what we had associated (with Allah in His Divinity).”

فَلَمۡ يَكُ يَنۡفَعُهُمۡ اِيۡمَانُهُمۡ لَمَّا رَاَوۡا بَاۡسَنَا ؕ سُنَّتَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِىۡ قَدۡ خَلَتۡ فِىۡ عِبَادِهٖ ۚ وَخَسِرَ هُنَالِكَ الۡكٰفِرُوۡنَ ۧ 85

(40:85) But their believing after they had seen Our chastisement did not avail them. That has been Allah's Way concerning His servants.[113] And the unbelievers courted utter loss, then and there.

113. “Allah’s established way”: the Law that repentance and faith are beneficial only till the time man is not seized by the torment of Allah or death. Believing or repenting after the torment has arrived or the signs of death have appeared, is not acceptable to Allah.

41. Surah Ha Mim As Sajdah, also known as Surah Fussilat (Explained in Detail)

Name

The name of this Surah is composed of two words, Ha-Mim and As-Sajdah, which implies that it is a Surah which begins with Ha-Mim and in which a verse requiring the performance of sajdah (prostration) has occurred.

Period of Revelation

According to authentic Traditions, it was sent down after the affirmation of the Faith by Hadrat Hamzah and before the affirmation of the Faith by Hadrat Umar. Muhammad bin Ishaq, the earliest biographer of the Holy Prophet, has related on the authority of Muhammad bin Ka'b al-Qurzi, the famous follower of the Companions, that one day some of the Quraish chiefs were sitting in their assembly in the Masjid al-Haram, while in another corner of the Mosque there was the Holy Prophet sitting by himself. This was the time when Hadrat Hamzah had already embraced Islam and the people of the Quraish were feeling upset at the growing numbers of the Muslims. On this occasion, Utbah bin Rabi'ah (the father-in-law of Abu Sufyan) said to the Quraish chiefs: "Gentlemen, if you like I would go and speak to Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) and put before him some proposals; maybe that he accepts one of them, to which we may also agree, and so he stops opposing us." They all agreed to this, and Utbah went and sat by the Holy Prophet. When the Holy Prophet turned to him, he said: "Nephew, you know the high status that you enjoy in the community by virtue of your ancestry and family relations, but you have put your people to great trouble: you have created divisions among them and you consider them to be fools: you talk ill of their religion and gods, and say things as though all our forefathers were pagans. Now listen to me and I shall make some suggestions. Consider them well: maybe that you accept one of them." The Holy Prophet said: "Abul Walid, say what you want to say and I shall listen to you." He said, "Nephew, if by what you are doing, you want wealth, we will give you enough of it so that you will be the richest man among us; if you want to became an important man, we will make you our chief and will never decide a matter without you; if you want to be a king, we will accept you as our king; and if you are visited by a jinn, whom you cannot get rid of by your own power, we will arrange the best physicians and have you treated at our own expense." 'Utbah went on speaking in this strain and the Holy Prophet went on listening to him quietly. Then he said, "Have you said, O Abul Walid, what you had to say?" He replied that he had. The Holy Prophet said: "Well, now listen to me." Then pronouncing Bismilah ir Rehman-ir-Raihm he began to recite this very Surah, and Utbah kept on listening to it, putting his hands behind his back and leaning on them as he listened. Coming to the verse of prostration (v. 38) the Holy Prophet prostrated himself; then raising his head, said, "This was my reply, O Abul Walid, now you may act as you please." then Utbah arose and walked back towards the chiefs, the people saw him from afar, and said: "By God! Utbab's face is changed. He does not look the same man that he was when he went from here." Then, when he came back and sat down, the people asked, "What have you heard?" He replied, "By God! I have heard something the like of which I had never heard before. By God, it's neither poetry, nor sorcery, nor magic. O chiefs of the Quraish, listen to what I say and leave this man to himself. I think what he recites is going to have its effect. If the other Arabs overcome him, you will be saved from raising your band against your brother, and the others will deal with him. But if he

overcame Arabia, his sovereignty would be your sovereignty and his honor your honor." Hearing this the chiefs spoke out: “You too, O father of Walid, have been bewitched by his tongue." Utbah replied, "I have given you my opinion; now you may act as you please." (Ibn Hisham, vol. I, pp. 313-314).

This story has been narrated by several other traditionists also on the authority of Hadrat Jabir bin Abdullah in different ways, with a little variation in wording. In some traditions it has also been related that when during the recitation the Holy Prophet had come to verse 13, viz. "If they turn away, say to them: I warn you of a thunderbolt the like of which had visited the Ad and the Thamud,” Utbah had spontaneously placed his hand on the Holy Prophet's mouth, and said: "For God's sake, have mercy on your people." Afterwards he justified his action before the Quraish chiefs, saying: "You know that whatever Muhammad says is always fulfilled; therefore, I feared lest a torment should descend on us." (For details, see Tafsir Ibn Kathir, vol. IV, pp. 90- 91; Al Bidayah wan-Nihayah, vol. III, p. 62).

Theme and Subject Matter

In the discourse that Allah sent down in response to what Utbah said, no attention whatever was paid to the absurd proposals that he had made to the Holy Prophet. For what he had said was, in fact, an attack on the Holy Prophet's intention and his intellect. His assumption was that as there was no possibility of his being a Prophet and the Quran being Allah's Revelation, inevitably the motive of his invitation must either be the desire to obtain wealth and political power, or, God forbid, he had lost his reason. In the first case, he wanted to make a bargain with the Holy Prophet; in the second, he was insulting him when he said that the Quraish chiefs would have been cured of his madness at their own expense. Obviously, when the opponents come down to such absurd things, no gentleman would like to answer them, but would ignore them and say what he himself had to say.

Therefore, ignoring what Utbah said, this Surah makes antagonism its subject of discussion, which the unbelieving Quraish were showing stubbornly and wickedly in order to defeat the message of the Qur'an. They would say to the Holy Prophet, "You may try however hard you try: we would not listen to you. We have put coverings on our hearts and we have closed our ears. There is a wall between you and us, which would never let us meet together."

They had given a clear notice to the Holy Prophet to the effect: "You may continue your mission of inviting the people to yourself, but we would go on opposing you as hard as we can to frustrate your mission."

For this object they had devised the following plan: Whenever the Holy Prophet or a follower of his would try to recite the Qur'an before the people, they would at once raise such a hue and cry that no one could bear anything.

They were desperately trying to misconstrue the verses of the Qur'an and spread every kind of misunderstanding among the people. They misconstrued everything and found fault even with the straightforward things. They would isolate words and sentences from their right context, from here and there, and would add their own words in order to put new

meanings on them so as to mislead the people about the Quran and the Messenger who presented it.

They would raise strange objections a specimen of which has been presented in this Surah. They said, "If an Arab presents a discourse in Arabic, what could be the miracle in it? Arabic is his mother tongue. Anyone could compose anything that he pleased in his mother tongue and then make the claim that he had received it from God. It would be a miracle if the person would suddenly arise and make an eloquent speech in a foreign tongue which he did not know. Then only could one say that the discourse was not of his own composition but a revelation from God."

Here is a resume of what has been said in answer to this deaf and blind opposition:

1. The Qur'an is most certainly the Word of God, which He has sent down in Arabic. The ignorant people do not find any light of knowledge in the truths that have been presented in it plainly and clearly, but the people of understanding are seeing this light as well as benefiting by it. It is surely Allah's mercy that He has sent down this Word for the guidance of man. If a person regarded it as an affliction, it would be his own misfortune. Good news is for those who benefit by it and warning for those who turn away from it.
2. If you have put coverings on your hearts and have made yourselves deaf, it is none of the Prophet's job to make the one hear who does not want to hear, and the one who does not want to understand forcibly. He is a man like you; he can make only those to hear and understand, who are inclined to hear and understand.
3. Whether you close down your eyes and ears and put coverings on your hearts, the fact, however, is that your God is only One God, and you are not the servant of any one else. Your stubbornness cannot change this reality in any way. If you accept this truth and correct your behavior accordingly you will do good only to yourselves, and if you reject it, you will only be preparing your own doom.
4. Do you have any understanding as to whom you disbelieve and with whom you associate others in divinity? It is with regard to that God Who has created this limitless universe, Who is the Creator of the earth and heavens, from Whose blessings you are benefiting on the earth, and on Whose provisions you are being fed and sustained. You set up His mean creatures as His associates and then you are made to understand the truth you turn away in stubbornness.
5. If you still do not believe, then be aware that a sudden torment is about to visit you, the like of which had visited the Ad and the Thamud, and this torment also will not be the final punishment of your crimes, but there is in addition the accountability and the fire of Hell in the Hereafter.
6. Wretched is the man who gets as company such satans from among men and jinn, who show him nothing but green and pleasant, who make his follies seem fair to him, who neither let him think aright himself nor let him hear right from others. But on the Day of Reckoning when their doom overtakes them, each one of them will say that if he happened to get hold of those who had misled and deceived him in the world, he would trample them under his foot.
7. This Quran is an unchangeable Book. You can not defeat it by your machinations and falsehoods. Whether falsehood comes from the front or makes a secret and indirect attack from behind, it cannot succeed in refuting it.

8. Today when this Quran is being Presented in your own language so that you may understand it, you say that it should have been sent down in some foreign tongue. But had We sent it in a foreign tongue for your guidance, you would yourselves have called it a joke, as if to say, "What a strange thing! The Arabs are being given guidance in a non- Arabic language, which nobody understands." This means that you, in fact, have no desire to obtain guidance. You are only inventing ever new excuses for not affirming the faith.
9. Have you ever considered that if it became established that the Qur'an was really from Allah, then what fate you would meet by denying it and opposing it so vehemently as you do?
10. Today you do not believe but soon you will see with your own eyes that the message of this Qur'an had pervaded the whole world and you have yourselves been overwhelmed by it. Then you will come to know that what you were being told was the very truth.

Besides giving these answers to the opponents, attention has been paid to the problems which the believers and the Holy Prophet himself were facing in that environment of active resistance. Not to speak of preaching the message to others, the believers were even finding it difficult to follow the way of the Faith. Any one about whom it became known that he had become a Muslim, life would become an agony. As against the dreadful combination of the enemy and its all pervading power, they were feeling utterly helpless and powerless. In this state, in the first place, they were consoled and encouraged, as if to say: "You are not, in fact, helpless and powerless, for any person who believes in God as his Lord and adheres to this belief and way of life resolutely, God's angels descend on him and help and support him at every stage, from the life of this world till the Hereafter." Then they were encouraged with the consolation: "The best man is be who does good, invites others to God and proclaims firmly that he is a Muslim."

The question that was vexing the Holy Prophet at that time was as to how be should carve out a way of preaching his message when he had to face such heavy odds on every side. The solution he was given to this question was: "Although apparently the obstacles seem to be insurmountable, the weapon of good morals and character can smash and melt them away. Use this weapon patiently, and whenever Satan provokes you and incites you to use some other device, seek refuge in Allah."

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

حٰمٓ ۚ 1

(41:1) Ha'. Mim.

تَنۡزِیۡلٌ مِّنَ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ ۚ 2

(41:2) This is a revelation from the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate,

كِتٰبٌ فُصِّلَتْ اٰيٰتُهٗ قُرْاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ 3

(41:3) a Book whose verses have been well-expounded; an Arabic Qur'an for those who have knowledge,

بَشِيْرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا ۚ فَاَعْرَضَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ 4

(41:4) one bearing good news and warning.[1] Yet most of them turned away and are not wont to give heed.

1. This is a brief introduction to the Surah. A study of the following discourse can show what relevance the things mentioned in it have with the theme that follows. The first thing said is that this Word is being sent down by God, as if to say: You, O people, may go on saying again and again that this Word is being composed by Muhammad (peace be upon him) but the fact is that its revelation is from God, Lord of the worlds. Furthermore, the addressees have also been warned, so as to say: If you express your displeasure on hearing this discourse, this displeasure is not against Muhammad (peace be upon him) but is against God. If you reject it, you reject Allah's Word, not a man's word. And if you turn away from it, you do not turn away from a man but from Allah.

Secondly, that the one sending it down is that God, Who is extremely Merciful (Rehman and Rahim) to His creatures. The mention of the attribute of mercy of the sender of revelation, instead of any other attributes, points to the truth that He has sent down this Word under the requirement of His mercifulness. By this the addressees have been warned, so as to say: If someone spurns this Word, or rejects it, or expresses displeasure at it, he in fact is his own enemy. That is indeed a supreme blessing which God has sent down, out of this infinite mercy, for the guidance and well-being and happiness of man. If God were merciless to mankind, He would have left them to wander about in darkness and would have least cared what pit they fell into. But this is His bounty and beneficence that along with bringing men into existence and providing for them, He has also taken on Himself the responsibility to show them the light of knowledge in order to adorn their lives, and is sending down this Word to a servant of His for the same purpose. Now, who could be more ungrateful and a greater enemy of himself than him who, instead of benefiting from this mercy, made up his mind to fight it?

Thirdly, that the verses of this Book are well-expounded. That is, there is nothing confusing and ambiguous in it so that somebody might excuse himself from accepting it on the ground that he was unable to understand the contents of the Book. It has been plainly told in it what is the truth and what is the falsehood, what are the right beliefs and what are the wrong beliefs, what is good and what is evil, what is high morality and what is vice, in what way lies the good of man and in what he incurs loss for himself. If a person rejects such clear and manifest guidance, or pays no heed to it, he cannot offer any excuse for it. His attitude clearly implies that he wants to remain in the wrong willfully.

Fourthly, that this is an Arabic Quran, which implies this: If this Quran had been sent down in some other language, the Arabs would have presented the excuse that they were ignorant

of the language in which God had sent His Book. But this is their own language. They cannot put forward the excuse that they cannot understand it. Here, one should also keep in view (verse 44) in which the same theme has been expressed in a different way. And the suspicion that in that case there is a reasonable excuse for the non-Arabs not to accept the message of the Quran has already been removed in the commentary of (Surah Yusuf, Ayat 2 and E.N. 2) on it. (For further details, please also see Rasail-o- Masail. Vol. I, pp. 19-23).

Fifthly, that this Book is for those who possess knowledge. That is, only the people of understanding can draw any benefit from this Book. For the ignorant it is as useless as a precious diamond for the one who cannot distinguish it from a mere stone.

Sixthly, that this Book gives good news and administers warning. That is, it does not consist of mere fantasy, or a philosophy, or a specimen of good literary composition, which one may accept or reject without entailing any consequence, but it is openly administering a warning to the whole world that the results of accepting and believing in it are marvelous and of rejecting it very dreadful. Thus only a fool could reject it with scant attention. 5

وَقَالُوْا قُلُوْبُنَا فِيْٓ اَكِنَّةٍ مِّمَّا تَدْعُوْنَآ اِلَيْهِ وَفِيْٓ اٰذَانِنَا وَقْرٌ وَّمِنْۢ بَيْنِنَا وَبَيْنِكَ حِجَابٌ

فَاعْمَلْ اِنَّنَا عٰمِلُوْنَ 5

(41:5) They say: "Our hearts are securely wrapped up against what you call us to,[2] and in our ears is a heaviness, and between you and us there is a veil.[3] So act; we too are acting."[4]

2. That is, it has no way open to reach our hearts.

3. That is, this invitation has divided us. It has cut us off from you. It has become a hindrance for us to join you.

4. It has two meanings:

(1) That we have nothing to do with you.

(2) That if you do not desist from your preaching, you may go on doing your mission, we will also not stop our opposition to you, and we will do whatever we can to defeat and frustrate your mission.

قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيَّ اَنَّمَآ اِلٰهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ فَاسْتَقِيْمُوْٓا اِلَيْهِ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوْهُ ؕ

وَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ۙ 6

(41:6) Tell them, (O Prophet): "I am only a human being like you.[5] It is revealed to me that your God is One God;[6] so direct yourselves straight to Him,[7] and seek His forgiveness. Woe to those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity,[8]

5. That is, it is not in my power to remove the covering that envelops your hearts, open your ears, and tear away the curtain which you have drawn between me and yourselves. I am only a man. I can make only him understand who is inclined to listen, and can only meet him who is ready to meet with me.

6. That is, you may, if you so like, put coverings on your hearts and make your ears deaf, but the fact is that you don't have many gods: there is only One God, whose servants you are. And this is no philosophy, which I might have thought out myself, and which might have equal probability of being true or false, but this reality has been made known to me through revelation, which cannot admit of any likelihood of error.

7. That is, do not make any other your God: do not serve and worship any other deity: do not invoke and bow to any other for help: and do not obey and follow the customs and laws and codes made and set by others.

8. Seek for His forgiveness: Ask for His forgiveness for the unfaithfulness that you have been showing so far towards Him, for the shirk and disbelief and disobedience that you have been committing till now, and for the sins that you happened to commit due to forgetfulness of God.

الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَهُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ 7

(41:7) who do not pay Zakah,[9] and who deny the Hereafter.

9. Here, the meaning of the word zakat has been disputed by the commentators. Ibn Abbas and his illustrious pupils, Ikrimah and Mujahid, say that zakat here implies the purity of the soul and self which accrues from belief in Tauhid and obedience to Allah. According to this explanation, the translation of the verse would be: Woe to the mushriks, who do not adopt purity. The other group which includes commentators like Qatadah, Suddi, Hasan Basri, Dahhak, Muqatil and Ibn as-Saib take this word here also in the meaning of the zakat on property and wealth. According to this explanation, the verse means: Woe to those who do not fulfill the right of Allah by committing shirk and the right of the men by withholding the zakat.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَهُمْ اَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُوْنٍ ع 8

(41:8) As to those who have faith and do good works, surely theirs shall be a never-ending reward.[10]

10. The words ajrun ghaira mamnun in the original have two other meanings also:

(1) That it will be a reward which will never decrease and diminish.

(2) That this reward will not be given with reminders of good done, like the gift made by a miserly person, who keeps on reminding the beneficiary of his favor if at all he gives away anything.

قُلْ اَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَكْفُرُوْنَ بِالَّذِىْ خَلَقَ الْاَرْضَ فِىْ يَوْمَيْنِ وَتَجْعَلُوْنَ لَهٗٓ اَنْدَادًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ رَبُّ
الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۚ 9

(41:9) Tell them, (O Prophet): "Do you indeed disbelieve in Him and assign compeers to Him Who created the earth in two days? He is the Lord of all beings of the Universe.

وَجَعَلَ فِيْهَا رَوَاسِىَ مِنْ فَوْقِهَا وَبٰرَكَ فِيْهَا وَقَدَّرَ فِيْهَآ اَقْوَاتَهَا فِىْٓ اَرْبَعَةِ اَيَّامٍ ؕ سَوَآءً
لِّلسَّآئِلِيْنَ 10

(41:10) (After creating the earth) He set up firm mountains on it, blessed it,[11] and provided it with sustenance in proportion to the needs of all who seek (sustenance). [12] All this was done in four days.[13]

11. Blessings of the earth imply those measureless and countless things which have been continuously coming out of it since millions and millions of years, and are fulfilling the ever increasing needs and requirements of all the creatures from the microscopic germs to the highly civilized man. Among these the principal blessings are the air and the water by which alone vegetable, animal and then human life became possible on the earth.

12. This sentence has been interpreted by the commentators in different ways:

Some of them interpret it to mean: The provisions of the earth were placed in it precisely according to the needs and requirements of those who ask, in exactly four days. That is, it took exactly four days, neither more nor less.

Ibn Abbas, Qatadah and Suddi interpret it to mean: The provisions of the earth were placed in it in four days. The answer to those who ask is completed. That is, whoever asks as to how long it took, his complete answer is that it took four days.

According to Ibn Zaid it means: The provisions of the earth were placed in it for those who ask within four days, precisely in accordance with the demand and need of everyone.

As far as the rules of the language are concerned, the words of the verse admit of all these three meanings, but in our opinion the first two meanings have no merit. In view of the context, it is immaterial whether the work was completed in exactly four days and not in more or less four days. There is no need whatever for such an addition to make up for any deficiency in supporting the description of Allah's perfect power, perfect providence and

perfect wisdom. Likewise, the commentary: The answer to those who ask is completed, is a very weak commentary. There is no indication in the theme preceding the verse and following it, to show that at that time somebody had asked the question as to how long it had taken for those works to be completed, and this verse was sent down as an answer to it. That is why we prefer to adopt the third meaning. In our opinion the correct meaning of the verse is this: Allah placed within the earth the full provisions of food precisely and exactly in accordance with the demands and needs of every kind of creature that Allah would create in the earth from the beginning of the creation till Resurrection. There are countless kinds of vegetation found on land and in water and the food requirements of each kind are different from those of other kinds. Allah has created countless species of living creatures in the air and on land and in water, and every species demands a different kind of food. Then unique among all these is the species of man, who requires different kinds of food not only for the development and nourishment of his body but also for the satisfaction of his taste. Who beside Allah could know how many members of the different kinds of creatures would be born on this globe, from the beginning of life till its end, and when and where they would be born and how much and what kind of food would be required for their nourishment? Just as He had made the plan of creating those creatures who stood in need of food in His scheme of creation, so He made full arrangements of food also to meet their requirements and demands.

In the modern age, the people who have brought out the Islamic edition of the Marxist conception of Socialism in the name of "the Quranic order of providence", translate the words sawa-al-lis-sa-ilin as equal for all those who ask, and raise the edifice of reasoning on it, saying that Allah has kept equal provisions for all the people in the earth. Therefore, in order to fulfill the intention of the verse a system of the state is needed, which may provide equal rations of food to everybody. For, in the system of individual ownership the equality which the Quranic law demands cannot be established. But these people, in their enthusiasm to press the Quran in the service of their theories, forget that those who ask, who have been mentioned in this verse, are not only human beings but all those different species of animals and plants who need food for survival. Has Allah really established equality among all of them, or even among all the members of each different species of the creatures, in the matter of the provision of food? Do you find anywhere in this entire system of nature the arrangement of the distribution of equal rations of food? If that is not the case, it means that in the vegetable and animal kingdom, where the distribution of the provisions is directly being arranged by the State of Allah, and not by the human state, Allah Himself is violating His own this "Quranic law", rather, God forbid, is practicing injustice! Then, they also forgo that "those who ask" also include those animals which man domesticates and arranging provisions for which is also his responsibility, e.g. sheep, goats, cows, buffaloes, horses, donkeys, mules, camels, etc: If the Quranic law is that equal food be given to all those who ask, and to enforce the same law a state is needed, which may administer the order of providence, will that state establish economic equality between men and animals also?

13. Here, the commentators generally have been confronted with this question: If it is admitted that the creation of the earth took two days and the setting up of the mountains and placing of the provisions and blessings in it took four days, and the creation of the heavens, as mentioned below, took another two days, the total number of the days would be

eight, whereas at several places in the Quran Allah has said that the creation of the earth and heavens took six days in all. (For example,see (Surah Al- Aaraf, Ayat 54); (Surah Younus, Ayat 3), (Surah Houd, Ayat 7); (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayat 59). On this very basis, almost all the commentators agree that these four days include the two days of the creation of the earth. That is, two days were taken for the creation of the earth and two days for the creation of the rest of the things within the earth, as mentioned below. Thus, the earth along with its provisions became complete in four days in all. But this not only is against the apparent words of the Quran, but the difficulty also is, in fact, an imaginary difficulty, to avoid which a need for this interpretation has been felt. The two days of the creation of the earth are, in fact, not separate from the two days in which this universe as a whole was created. If we consider the following verses, we see that in them the creation of both the earth and the heavens has been mentioned together, and then it has been stated that Allah made the seven heavens in two days. These seven heavens imply the whole universe, one part of which is also our earth. Then, when like the other countless stars and planets of the universe this earth also took the shape of a unique globe within two days, Allah began to prepare it for animate creatures, and in four days created in it all those provisions which have been mentioned in the above verse. What development works were carried out in the other stars and planets in these four days have not been mentioned by Allah, for not to speak of the man of the period of the revelation of the Quran, even the man of the present age does not have the capability to digest and assimilate this information.

ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰٓ إِلَى السَّمَآءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْأَرْضِ ٱئْتِيَا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا ۖ قَالَتَآ أَتَيْنَا طَآئِعِينَ 11

(41:11) Then He turned to the heaven while it was all smoke.[14] He said to the heaven and the earth: "Come (into being), willingly or unwillingly." They said: "Here we come (into being) in willing obeisance."[15]

14. Three things need to be explained here:

First, by heaven is meant the whole universe, as becomes obvious from the following sentences. In other words, turning to the heaven means that Allah turned to the creation of the universe.

Second, by smoke is implied the initial and primary stage of matter, in which it lay diffused in space in a shapeless, dust like condition before the formation of the universe. Scientists of the modern age describe the same thing as nebulae, and the same also is their view about the beginning of the universe: that is, before creation the matter of which the universe was built lay diffused in smoke-like nebulous form.

Third, it would be wrong to interpret "then He turned to the heaven" to mean that first He created the earth, then set mountains in it, then arranged blessings and provisions of food in it, and then, at the end, He turned towards the creation of the universe. This misunderstanding is removed by the following sentence: "He said to it and the earth: Come both of you, willingly or by compulsion. They said: We have come willingly." This makes it

clear that in this verse and in the following verses, mention is being made of the time when there was neither the earth nor the heaven, but the creation of the universe was being started. Only the word thumma (then) cannot be made the argument to say that the earth had been created before the heavens. There are several instances of this in the Quran that the word thumma is not necessarily used to show the chronological order but it is also used for the order of Presentation. (Please see (E.N. 12 of Surah Az-Zumar).

Among the earliest commentators the dispute has been going on for ages as to what was created first according to the Quran, the earth or the heavens. One group of them argues on the basis of this verse and (verse 29 of Surah Al- Baqarah)that the earth was created first. The other group argues from (verses 27-33 of Surah An-Naziat) that the heavens were created first, because there it has been clearly stated that the earth was created after the heavens. But the fact is that nowhere in the Quran has the mention of the creation of the universe been made to teach Physics or Astronomy, but while inviting towards belief in the doctrines to Tauhid and the Hereafter, like countless other signs, the creation of the heavens and the earth has also been presented as food for thought. For this purpose it was not at all necessary that the chronological order of the creation of the heavens and the earth should have been presented, and it should have been told whether the heavens were created first or the earth. No matter whether this was created first or that, in any case both are an evidence of Allah Almighty's being the One and only Deity, and are a testimony that their Creator has not created this whole universe as a plaything for a care-free person. That is why the Quran sometimes mentions the creation of the earth first and sometimes the creation of the heavens first. Where the object is to make man realize the blessings of God, there generally it has mentioned the earth first, for it is closer to man; and where the object is to give man the concept of God's greatness and His omnipotence there it has generally mentioned the heavens first, for the scene of the revolving heavens has always been awe-inspiring for man.

15. In these words Allah has described the nature of His method of creation in a manner as to differentiate between divine creation and human workmanship. When man wants to make something, he prepares a plan for it in his mind, then gathers together the necessary material, then works persistently hard to mold the material according to his plan, and in the process of his effort the material which he wants to mold according to his mental plan constantly resists him; so much so that sometimes the resistance of the material succeeds and the thing is not made precisely according to the desired plan, and sometimes man's effort overcomes the resistance and he succeeds in giving it the desired form and shape. For example, when a tailor wants to make a shirt, he first conceives in his mind the shape of the shirt, then arranging the cloth he tries to cut and sew it according to his concept of the shirt, and during this effort, he has to face constantly the resistance of the cloth, for it does not easily yield to be molded according to the tailor's concept; so much so that sometimes the resistance of the cloth dominates and the shirt doesn't take the desired shape, and sometimes the tailor's effort dominates and he is able to shape it precisely according to his concept. Now, consider Allah's mode of creation. The matter of the universe lay scattered and diffused in the form of smoke. Allah willed to give it the shape of the universe as it is now. For this purpose, He did not have to sit down, like a human artisan, and chisel and mold the earth and the moon and the sun and the other stars and planets, but He only commanded the scheme of the universe that was in His Mind to come into being, i.e. the smoke like diffused matter to take the shape of the galaxies and stars and planets, which He

wanted to create. This matter did not have the power to resist the command of Allah. Allah did not have to make any effort to give it the shape of the universe. No sooner was the command given than the matter started contracting and condensing and taking shape obediently according to the scheme of its Master, so that the whole universe including the earth became ready as planned.

This same scheme of Allah's method of creation has been described at several other places in the Quran like this: When Allah decides to do something He only commands it to be and it is done. (See (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 117); (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayats 47, 59); (Surah An-Nahl, Ayat 40); (Surah Maryam, Ayat 35); (Surah YaSeen, Ayat 82), (Surah Al-Mumin, Ayat 68).

فَقَضٰىهُنَّ سَبۡعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ فِىۡ يَوۡمَيۡنِ وَاَوۡحٰى فِىۡ كُلِّ سَمَآءٍ اَمۡرَهَا ؕ وَزَيَّنَّا السَّمَآءَ الدُّنۡيَا
بِمَصَابِيۡحَ ۖ وَحِفۡظًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ تَقۡدِيۡرُ الۡعَزِيۡزِ الۡعَلِيۡمِ 12

(41:12) Then He made them seven heavens in two days and revealed to each heaven its law. And We adorned the lower heaven with lamps, and firmly secured it.[16] All this is the firm plan of the All-Mighty, the All-Knowing.

16. To understand these verses well, it would be useful to study the following portions of the Tafheem al-Quran: (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 29); (Surah Ar-Raad, Ayat 2); (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 16-18); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 30-33); (Surah Al-Hajj, Ayat 65); (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayat 17); (Surah YaSeen: E.N. 37), and (E.Ns 5-9 of Surah As-Saaffat)." 1

فَاِنۡ اَعۡرَضُوۡا فَقُلۡ اَنۡذَرۡتُكُمۡ صٰعِقَةً مِّثۡلَ صٰعِقَةِ عَادٍ وَّثَمُوۡدَ ؕ 13

(41:13) But if they turn away,[17] tell them: "I warn you against a sudden scourge like that which struck Ad and Thamud."

17. That is, if they do not believe that God and Deity is One and only One, Who has created this earth and the whole universe, and if they still persist in their ignorance that they would make others as their deities beside Him, others who are in fact His creatures and slaves, and regard them as His associates in His Being and rights and powers, then warning for them is like that of what stuck Aad and Thamud.

اِذۡ جَآءَتۡهُمُ الرُّسُلُ مِنۡۢ بَيۡنِ اَيۡدِيۡهِمۡ وَمِنۡ خَلۡفِهِمۡ اَلَّا تَعۡبُدُوۡۤا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ ؕ قَالُوۡا لَوۡ شَآءَ رَبُّنَا
لَاَنۡزَلَ مَلٰٓئِكَةً فَاِنَّا بِمَاۤ اُرۡسِلۡتُمۡ بِهٖ كٰفِرُوۡنَ 14

(41:14) When the Messengers (of Allah) came to them from the front and from the rear,[18] saying: "Do not serve any but Allah"; they said: "Had our Lord so willed, He would have sent down angels. So we deny the Message you have brought."[19]

18. This sentence can have several meanings:

(1) That the Messengers continued to come to them one after the other.

(2) That the Messengers tried in every way to make them understand the truth and did not leave any stone unturned to bring them to the right path.

(3) That the Messengers came to them in their own country as well as in the adjoining countries.

19. That is, if Allah had disapproved of our religion, and had willed to send a messenger to us to keep us away from it, He would have sent the angels. As you are not an angel but a man like us, we do not believe that you have been sent by God, and sent for the purpose that we give up our religion and adopt the way of life that you are presenting. The disbelievers' saying that they deny, what you have been sent with, was only sarcastic. It does not mean that they believed him to have been sent by God and then denied what he said. But this is a sarcastic expression of the type that Pharaoh had uttered before his courtiers about the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him): This messenger of yours, who has been sent to you, seems to be utterly mad. (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayat 27). For further explanation, see (E.N. 11 of Surah YaSeen).

فَاَمَّا عَادٌ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَقَالُوْا مَنْ اَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً ؕ اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّ
اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَهُمْ هُوَ اَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً ؕ وَكَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يَجْحَدُوْنَ 15

(41:15) As for Ad, they waxed proud in the land without justification and said: "Who is greater than we in strength?" Did they not see that Allah, Who created them, is greater in strength than they? They continued to deny Our Signs,

فَاَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيْحًا صَرْصَرًا فِيْٓ اَيَّامٍ نَّحِسَاتٍ لِّنُذِيْقَهُمْ عَذَابَ الْخِزْيِ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ
الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَلَعَذَابُ الْاٰخِرَةِ اَخْزٰى وَهُمْ لَا يُنْصَرُوْنَ 16

(41:16) whereupon We sent upon them a fierce wind on inauspicious days[20] that We might make them taste a degrading chastisement in the life of this world.[21] And surely the chastisement of the Hereafter is even more degrading. There will be none to help them there.

20. "Evil days" does not mean that the days in themselves were evil or ill-omened, and the torrent came because the people of Aad met with those evil or ill-omened days. If this were the meaning and there were some ill omen in the days themselves, the torment would have visited all the nations of the world. The correct meaning, therefore, is that since in those days God's torment descended on this nation, the days were evil or ill-omened for the

people of Aad. It is not correct to argue on the basis of the verse that some days are ill-omened and some auspicious.

The lexicographers have disputed the meaning of the words rih-an sarsaran, which have been used for the stormy wind. Some say that they imply an intensely hot wind, others say that they imply an extremely cold wind, and some others say that they imply a wind which produces a great noise when it blows. In any case, they all agree that the words are used for a severe storm.

The details of this torment given at other places in the Quran show that this wind continued to rage for seven nights and eight days consecutively. It swept the people off the ground and they fell down dead and lay scattered here and there like hollow trunks of the palm-tree. (Surah Al- Haaqqah, Ayat 7). It left rotting everything on which it blew. (Surah Adh-Dhariyat, Ayat 42). When the people of Aad saw it advancing, they rejoiced with the hope that the dense clouds would bring much rain, which would water their withering crops. But when it came, it laid waste the entire land. (Surah Al-Ahqaf, Ayats 24-25).

21. This ignominious torment was an answer to their arrogance and vanity because of that which they had assumed greatness in the land without any right, and would boast that there was none more powerful than them on the entire earth. Allah disgraced them and destroyed the major part of their population along with their civilization. The remnant of their population was humbled and debased before those very nations whom they used to overawe by their show of power and might (for the details of the story of Aad see (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 65-72); (Surah Houd, Ayats 50-60); (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayats 32-41); (Surah Ash- Shuara, Ayats 123-140); (Surah Al-Ankabut, Ayat 40) and the relevant E.Ns).

وَاَمَّا ثَمُوْدُ فَهَدَيْنٰهُمْ فَاسْتَحَبُّوا الْعَمٰى عَلَى الْهُدٰى فَاَخَذَتْهُمْ صٰعِقَةُ الْعَذَابِ الْهُوْنِ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ۚ 17

(41:17) As for Thamud, We bestowed guidance upon them, but they preferred to remain blind rather than be guided. At last a humiliating scourge overtook them on account of their misdeeds.

وَنَجَّيْنَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَكَانُوْا يَتَّقُوْنَ ۚ 18

(41:18) Yet We delivered those who believed and were God-fearing.[22]

22. For the details of the story of Thamud see (Surah Al- Aaraf, Ayats 73-79); (Surah Houd, Ayats 61-68); (Surah Al- Hijr, Ayats 80-84); (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayat 59); (Surah AshShuaara, Ayats 141-159); (Surah An-Naml, Ayats 45-53) and the E.Ns.

وَيَوْمَ يُحْشَرُ اَعْدَآءُ اللّٰهِ اِلَى النَّارِ فَهُمْ يُوْزَعُوْنَ 19

(41:19) Imagine the Day when Allah's enemies will be mustered to the Fire,[23] and the people of the former times will be detained until the arrival of people of the later times,[24]

23. What is meant to be said hare is: When they will be rounded up to be presented in the Court of Allah, though the words used are to the effect: When they will be gathered to be driven to Fire of Hell, for Hell in any case will be their final destination.

24. That is, All the former and latter generations and races will be gathered together at a time and called to account together. For, whatever a person does in his lifetime, whether good or evil, its influence and impact does not end with his life but continues to operate even after his death for long periods of time, for which he is totally responsible. Likewise, whatever a generation does in its own time, its influence continues to affect the later generations for centuries, and it is responsible for its heritage. It is inevitable to examine all these influences and their results and to collect their evidences. For that very reason, generation after generation of the people will go on arriving and will be withheld. The court will start its work when all the former and latter generations will have assembled together in the Plain of Resurrection. (For further explanation, see(Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 38-39 and E.N. 30) on it.

حَتَّىٰٓ إِذَا مَا جَآءُوهَا شَهِدَ عَلَيْهِمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَأَبْصَٰرُهُمْ وَجُلُودُهُم بِمَا كَانُوا۟ يَعْمَلُونَ 20

(41:20) and when all have arrived, their ears, their eyes, and their skins shall bear witness against them, stating all that they had done in the life of the world.[25]

25. The explanation of this given in the Hadith is that when a stubborn culprit will go on denying his crimes, and will even belie all the witnesses, then the limbs of his body will bear the witness, one after the other, by the command of Allah, and will tell what offenses he had committed through them. This thing has been reported by Anas, Abu Musa Ashari, Abu Said Khudri and Ibn Abbas from the Prophet (peace be upon him), and traditionists like Muslim, Nasai, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Bazzar and others have related these in their books. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 55 of Surah YaSeen).

This verse is one of those many verses which prove that the Hereafter will not only be a spiritual world but human beings will be resurrected with the body and soul as they are now in this world. Not only this: they will be given the same body in which they live now. The same particles and atoms which composed their bodies in the world will be collected on the Day of Resurrection, and they will be resurrected with the same previous bodies in which they had lived and worked in the world. Evidently, the limbs of man can bear the witness in the Hereafter only in case they are the same limbs with which he committed a crime in his previous life. This subject is borne out decisively and absolutely by the following verses of the Quran: (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayats 49-51, 98); (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayats 35- 38, (82-83); (Surah An-Noor, Ayat 24); (Surah As-Sajdah, Ayat 10); (Surah YaSeen,

Ayats 65, 78, 79); (Surah As-Saafat, Ayats 16-18); (Surah Al-Waqiah, Ayats 47-50); (Surah An-Naziat, Ayats 10-14).

وَقَالُوْا لِجُلُوْدِهِمْ لِمَ شَهِدْتُّمْ عَلَيْنَا ؕ قَالُوْٓا اَنْطَقَنَا اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْطَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَّهُوَ خَلَقَكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَّاِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُوْنَ 21

(41:21) They will ask their skins: "Why did you bear witness against us?" The skins will reply: "Allah gave us speech,[26] as He gave speech to all others. He it is Who created you for the first time and it is to Him that you will be sent back.

26. This shows that not only man's own limbs will bear witness on the Day of Resurrection, but every such thing before which man would have committed any crime will also speak out. The same thing has been said in Surah Al- Zilzal, thus: The earth will cast out all the burdens, which lie within it, and man will say: what has befallen it? On that Day shall it relate whatever had happened (on it), because your Lord will have commanded it (to do so). (verses 2-5).

وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَتِرُوْنَ اَنْ يَّشْهَدَ عَلَيْكُمْ سَمْعُكُمْ وَلَآ اَبْصَارُكُمْ وَلَا جُلُوْدُكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ ظَنَنْتُمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَعْلَمُ كَثِيْرًا مِّمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ 22

(41:22) When you used to conceal yourselves (while committing misdeeds) you never thought that your ears or your eyes or your skins would ever bear witness against you; you rather fancied that Allah does not know a great deal of what you do.

وَذٰلِكُمْ ظَنُّكُمُ الَّذِيْ ظَنَنْتُمْ بِرَبِّكُمْ اَرْدٰىكُمْ فَاَصْبَحْتُمْ مِّنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ 23

(41:23) This thought of yours about your Lord has led to your perdition and you have become among the losers."[27]

27. Hasan Basri has explained this verse thus: Every man's attitude and conduct is determined by the thought and conjecture that he has about his God. The conduct of a righteous believer is right because his thought and conjecture about his Lord is right, and the conduct of a disbeliever and a hypocrite and a sinful person is wrong because his thought and conjecture about his Lord is wrong. This same theme has the Prophet (peace be upon him) expressed in a comprehensive and brief Hadith, thus: Your Lord says: I am with the thought and conjecture that My servant holds about Me. (Bukhari, Muslim).

فَاِنْ يَّصْبِرُوْا فَالنَّارُ مَثْوًى لَّهُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ يَّسْتَعْتِبُوْا فَمَا هُمْ مِّنَ الْمُعْتَبِيْنَ 24

(41:24) In this state, whether they bear with patience (or not), Fire alone shall be their abode. And if they seek to make amends, they will not be allowed to do so.[28]

28. It can also mean this: If they would want to return to the world, they would not be able to return, and this: If they would want to come out from Hell, they would not be able to come out of it, and this: If they would want to offer an excuse or repentance, it would not be accepted.

وَقَيَّضْنَا لَهُمْ قُرَنَآءَ فَزَيَّنُوْا لَهُمْ مَّا بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَحَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ فِيْٓ
اُمَمٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ ۚ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا خٰسِرِيْنَ ع 25

(41:25) We had assigned to them companions who embellished for them all that was before them and behind them.[29]Thus the same decree (of chastisement) which had overtaken the previous generations of jinn and human beings (also) became due against them. Surely they became the losers.

29. This is the permanent and eternal way of Allah that He dots not let the men with evil intentions and desires have good companions, but lets them have bad companions according to their own inclinations. Then, as they go on descending into the depths of vice, more and more evil and wicked men and devils go on joining them as their associates and advisers and companions. Some people's saying that so-and-so is himself a very good man but happens to have bad companions is, in fact, contrary to fact. The law of nature is that every man gets the same sort of friends as he himself is. If bad people happen to be associated with a good man, they cannot remain associated with him for long. Likewise, if good and noble men happen to be associated with evil intentioned and immoral men by chance, their association cannot last long. An evil man naturally attracts only evil men to himself and only evil men become attracted towards him just as filth attracts flits and flits are attracted by the filth.

The meaning of: "Who have made attractive for them what was before them and what was behind them" is this: They assured them that their past had been glorious and their future would also be bright. They made them see everything attractive and pleasant on every side. They told them that those who criticized them were foolish because they were not doing anything novel or strange. Those who had made any progress in the world before them had been doing the same that they were doing. Ahead of them there was no Hereafter at all in which they might have to be called to account for their deeds. But if at all, the Hereafter did take place, as some foolish people assert it would, the God who was blessing them in the world would bless them there too. Hell had not been made for them but for those whom God had deprived of His blessings here.

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَا تَسْمَعُوْا لِهٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ وَالْغَوْا فِيْهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَغْلِبُوْنَ 26

(41:26) The deniers of the Truth say: "Do not give ear to the Qur'an and cause interruption when it is recited; thus perhaps you will gain the upper hand."[30]

30. This was one of those plans of the disbelievers of Makkah with which they wanted to frustrate the Prophet's (peace be upon him) mission of preaching his message. They knew well haw impressive was the Quran, how high was the character of the man presenting it, and how effective and inspiring the style of his preaching. They knew that anyone who heard such matchless discourses in such an attractive style from such a noble person could not help being hued and charmed. Therefore, they planned that they should neither hear it themselves nor let anyone else hear it; whenever Muhammad (peace be upon him) should start reciting it, they should create noise, clap hands, pass taunting remarks and raise all sorts of objections and such a hue and cry as to subdue his voice. By this plan they hoped they would be able to defeat the Prophet of Allah.

فَلَنُذِيقَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا ۙ وَّلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَسْوَأَ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ 27

(41:27) We shall certainly make these unbelievers taste a terrible chastisement and shall fully requite them according to the worst deeds that they committed.

ذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ أَعْدَاءِ اللَّهِ النَّارُ ۚ لَهُمْ فِيهَا دَارُ الْخُلْدِ ۖ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ 28

(41:28) That is the recompense of the enemies of Allah the Fire, their abiding home. That will be the re-compense for their denying Our Signs.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا رَبَّنَا أَرِنَا الَّذَيْنِ أَضَلَّانَا مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ نَجْعَلْهُمَا تَحْتَ أَقْدَامِنَا لِيَكُونَا مِنَ الْأَسْفَلِينَ 29

(41:29) There the unbelievers will say: "Our Lord, show us those that led us astray, both jinn and humans, and we will trample them under our feet so that they are utterly degraded."[31]

31. That is, in the world these people were at the beck and call of their leaders and religious guides and deceitful devils, but when on the Day of Resurrection they will come to know where their leaders had led them, they will curse them and would wish that they should somehow get hold of them so that they may trample them under their foot.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَلَّا تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ 30

(41:30) Those[32] who say "Allah is our Lord" and then remain steadfast,[33] upon them descend angels[34] (and say): "Do not fear nor grieve,[35] and receive good tidings of Paradise which you were promised.

32. After warning the disbelievers of the consequences of their opposition to the truth and their stubbornness, the address now turns to the believers and the Prophet (peace be upon him).

33. That is, they did not call Allah their Lord merely incidentally, nor were they involved in the error to regard Allah as their Lord and at the same time others as well as their lords, but they embraced the faith sincerely and stood by it steadfastly: neither adopted a creed contrary to it later nor mixed it up with a false creed, but they fulfilled the demands of the doctrine of Tauhid in their practical lives as well.

"Then remain upright" has been explained by the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the eminent companions thus:

Anas has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Many people called Allah their Lord, but most of them became disbelievers. Firm and steadfast is he who remained firm on this creed till his death. (Ibn Jarir, Nasai, Ibn Abi Hatim).

Abu Bakr Siddiq has explained it thus: Then he did not associate another with Allah: did not attend to any other deity beside Him. (Ibn Jarir).

Umar once recited this verse on the pulpit and said: By God, the steadfast are those who remained firm on obedience to Allah: did not run about from place to place like foxes. (Ibn Jarir).

Uthman says: Performed his deeds sincerely for the sake of Allah only. (Kashsaf).

Ali says: Performed the duties enjoined by Allah faithfully and obediently. (Kashshaf).

34. It is not necessary that the coming down of the angels may be perceptible, and the believers may see them with the eyes, or hear their voices with the ears. Although Allah also sends the angels openly for whomever He wills, generally their coming down for the believers, especially in hard times when they are being persecuted by the enemies of the truth, takes place in imperceptible ways and their voices penetrate into the depths of the heart as peace and tranquility instead of just striking the ear-drums. Some commentators have regarded this coming down of the angels as restricted to the time of death or grave, or the Plain of Resurrection. But if the conditions in which these verses were sent down are kept in view, there remains no doubt that the real object of stating this thing here is to mention the coming down of the angels on those who struggle with their lives in this world in the cause of the truth, so that they are consoled and encouraged and they rest assured that they are not helpless but the angels of Allah are at their back. Although the angels also come to receive the believers at the time of death and they also welcome them in the grave (in the state of burzakh), and they will also accompany them constantly on the Day of Resurrection, from the time Resurrection takes place till their entry into Paradise, yet their company is not particularly restricted to the Hereafter but remains available in this world also. The context clearly shows that in the conflict between the truth and falsehood just as

the worshipers of falsehood are accompanied by the devils and mischievous people, so are the believers accompanied by the angels. On the one hand, the companions of the worshipers of falsehood show their misdeeds seem fair to them and assure them that the tyrannical and dishonest acts that they are committing are the very means of their success and through them only will their leadership and dominance remain safe in the world. On the other hand, the angels come down to the worshipers of the truth and give them the message that is being mentioned in the following sentences.

35. These are very comprehensive words, which contain a new theme of consolation and peace for the believers, in every stage of life, from the world till the Hereafter. This counsel of the angels in this world means: No matter how strong and powerful be the forces of falsehood, you should not be afraid of them, and whatever hardships and deprivations you may have to experience on account of your love of the truth, you should not grieve on account of them, for ahead there lie in store for you such things against which every blessing of the world is insignificant. When the angels say the same words at the time of death, they mean this: There is no cause of fear for you in the destination you are heading for, for Paradise awaits you there, and you have no cause of grief for those whom you are leaving behind in the world, for we are your guardians and companions here. When the angels will say these very words in the intermediary state between death and Resurrection and in the Plain of Resurrection, they will mean: Here, there is nothing but peace for you. Do not grieve for the hardships you had to suffer in the world, and do not fear what you are going to face in the Hereafter, for we are giving you the good news of Paradise, which used to be promised to you in the world.

نَحْنُ أَوْلِيَاؤُكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ ۖ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهِي أَنْفُسُكُمْ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَدَّعُونَ ۖ 31

(41:31) We are your companions in this world and in the Hereafter. There you shall have all that you desire and all what you will ask for.

نُزُلًا مِّنْ غَفُورٍ رَّحِيمٍ ۝ 32

(41:32) This is by way of hospitality from Him Who is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful."

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِّمَّنْ دَعَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَقَالَ إِنَّنِي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ 33

(41:33) And who is fairer in speech than he who calls to Allah and acts righteously and says: "I am a Muslim"?[36]

36. After consoling and encouraging the believers, now they are being exhorted towards their real duty. In the preceding verse they were told: Being firm in the service to Allah and standing steadfast on this way after adopting it is by itself the basic good, which makes man a friend of the angels and worthy of Paradise. Now they are being told: The next thing

which wins man the highest place of honor is that he should do good deeds himself and should invite others to the service of Allah, and even in the environment of severe antagonism where to proclaim Islam is tantamount to inviting hardships for oneself, one should firmly say that one is a Muslim. To understand the full significance of these words, one should keep in view the conditions in which they were said. The conditions were that anyone who proclaimed to be a Muslim would feel as if he had stepped into a jungle of beasts, where everyone was rushing at him to tear him into pieces. More than that, if anyone opened his mouth to preach Islam he would feel as if he had called on the beasts to come and devour him. Such were the conditions when it was said: A person's believing in Allah as his Lord and adopting the right way and standing steadfast on it is indeed a great and fundamental good, but the greatest good is that man should boldly say that he is a Muslim and should invite others towards Allah's service, fearless of the consequences, and while performing this duty should remain so pure and pious in conduct and character that no one should have a cause to find fault with Islam and with those who uphold it.

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ۚ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ 34

(41:34) (O Prophet), good and evil are not equal. Repel (evil) with that which is good, and you will see that he, between whom and you there was enmity, shall become as if he were a bosom friend (of yours).[37]

37. To understand the full significance of these words, one should keep in view the conditions in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) and, through him, his followers were given this instruction. The conditions were that the invitation to the truth was being resisted and opposed with extreme stubbornness and severe antagonism, in which all bounds of morality, humanity and decency were being transgressed. Every sort of lie was being uttered against the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions. Every kind of evil device was being employed to defame him and to create suspicions against him in the minds of the people. Every kind of accusation was being leveled against him and a host of the propagandists were busy creating doubts against him in the hearts. In short, he and his companions were being persecuted in every possible way because of which a substantial number of the Muslims had been compelled to emigrate from the country. Then the program that had been prepared to stop him from preaching was that a hand of the mischievous people was set behind him, who would raise such a hue and cry that no one should be able to hear anything as soon as he opened his mouth to preach his message. In such discouraging conditions when apparently every way of extending invitation to Islam seemed to be blocked, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was taught this recipe for breaking the opposition.

First, it was said that goodness and evil are not equal, as if to say: Although apparently your opponents might have raised a dreadful storm of mischief and evil, as against which goodness might seem absolutely helpless and powerless, yet evil in itself has a weakness which ultimately causes its own destruction. For as long as man is man, his nature cannot

help hating evil. Not only the companions of evil, even its own upholders know in their hearts that they are liars and wicked people and are being stubborn for selfish motives. Not to speak of creating dignity and honor for them in the hearts of others. It lowers them in their own esteem, and causes their morale to be weakened and destroyed in the event of every conflict. As against this evil, the good which appears to be utterly helpless and powerless, goes on operating and working and it becomes dominant in the long run. For, in the first place, the good has a power of its own which wins the hearts and no man, however perverted and corrupted, can help esteeming it in his own heart. Then, when the good and evil are engaged in a face to face conflict and their nature and merits become apparent and known, after a long drawn out struggle, not many people would be left, who would not start hating the evil and admiring the good.

Second, it was said that evil should be resisted not by the mere good but by a superior good, as if to say: If a person treats you unjustly and you forgive him, it is the mere good. The superior good is that you treat the one who ill-treats you which kindness and love.

The result would be that your worst enemy would become your closest friend, for that is human nature itself. If you remain quiet in response to an abuse, it will be mere goodness but it will not silence the abuser. But if you express good wishes for him in response to his abuses, even the most shameless opponent will feel ashamed, and then would hardly ever be able to employ invectives against you. If a person doesn't miss any opportunity to harm you, and you go on tolerating his excesses, it may well make him even bolder in his mischief. But if on an occasion he gets into trouble and you come to his rescue, he will fall down at your feet, for no mischief can hold out against goodness. However, it would be wrong to take this general principle in the meaning that every enemy will necessarily become a close friend when you have treated him with the superior good. There are such wicked people also in the world, whose inimical nature will never change for the better no matter how tolerantly you may overlook their excesses and how benevolently you may react and respond to every evil committed by them. But such devil-incarnates are as few in the world as the embodiments of goodness are.

وَمَا يُلَقّٰىهَآ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوْا ۚ وَمَا يُلَقّٰىهَآ اِلَّا ذُوْ حَظٍّ عَظِيْمٍ 35

(41:35) But none attains to this except those who are steadfast;[38] none attains to this except those endowed with mighty good fortune.[39]

38. Although a very efficacious recipe, it is not easy to use. It requires a great will power, resolution, courage, power of endurance and full control over one's own self. A man may act benevolently in response to an evil done, on an impulse, and there is nothing extraordinary in it. But when a person has to fight for years and years, for the sake of the truth, those mischievous worshipers of falsehood, who do not feel any hesitation in violating any bond of morality, and are also intoxicated with power, it requires extraordinary grit to go on resisting the evil with good, and that too with the superior good, without ever showing any lack of restraint and self-control. Such a work can be accomplished only by him who has resolved with a cool mind to work for the cause of upholding the truth, who has subdued his self to intellect and sense and in whom good and

righteousness have taken such deep roots that no malice and mischief of the opponents can succeed in deposing him from his high position.

39. This is a law of nature. Only a man of very high rank is characterized by these qualities; and the one who possesses these qualities cannot be prevented by any power of the world from attaining to his goal of success. It is in no way possible that the depraved people may defeat him with their mean machinations and shameless devices.

وَإِمَّا يَنزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ ۖ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ 36

(41:36) And if you are prompted by a provocation from Satan, seek refuge with Allah.[40] He, and He alone, is All-Hearing, All- Knowing.[41]

40. Satan feels grieved when he sees that in the conflict between the truth and falsehood, meanness is being resisted with nobility and evil with goodness. He wants that he should somehow incite the fighters for the sake of the truth and their prominent men in particular, and especially their leaders, to commit such a mistake, even if once, on the basis of which he may tell the common people that evil is not being committed by one side only. If mean acts are being committed by one side, the people of the other side also are not morally any better, they too have committed such and such a shameless act. The common people do not have the capability that they may assess and counterbalance fairly the excesses being committed by one party by the reactions of the other. As long as they see that while the opponents are adopting every mean act yet these people do not swerve at all from the path of decency and nobility, goodness and righteousness, they continue to regard and esteem them highly. But if at some time they happen to commit an unworthy act, even if it is in retaliation against a grave injustice, both the sides become equal in their esteem, and the opponents also get an excuse to counter one blamable act with a thousand abuses. That is why it has been said: Be on your guard against the deceptions of Satan. He will incite you as a well wisher to take note of every abuse and every insult and attack and urge you to pay the opponent in the same coin, otherwise you would be regarded as a coward and weaken your image of strength. On every such occasion whenever you feel any undue provocation, you should take care that this is an incitement of Satan who is arousing you to anger and wants you to commit a mistake. And after having been warned, do not be involved in the misunderstanding that you have full control over yourself, and Satan cannot make you commit any mistake. This high opinion of one's own power of judgment and will is another and more dangerous deception of Satan. Instead of it you should seek Allah's refuge, for man can save himself from mistakes only if Allah helps and grants him protection.

The best commentary of this subject is the event which Imam Ahmad has related in his Musnad on the authority of Abu Hurairah. He says that once a man started uttering invectives against Abu Bakr in the presence of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Abu Bakr kept on hearing the invectives quietly and the Prophet (peace be upon him) kept on smiling at it. At last, when Abu Bakr could restrain himself no longer, he also uttered a harsh word for the person in response. No sooner did he utter the word, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was seized by restraint, which appeared on his face, and he rose and left the place immediately. Abu Bakr also rose and went behind him. On the way he asked: How is it that as long as the person went on abusing me, you kept quiet and smiling, but when I also said

a word in retaliation, you were annoyed. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: As long as you were quiet, an angel remained with you who went on replying to him on your behalf, but when you spoke out, Satan came in place of the angel. I could not sit with Satan.

41. After seeking Allah's refuge against the storm of opposition, the thing that brings patience and peace and tranquility to the heart of the believer is this conviction, Allah is not unaware. He knows whatever we are doing as well as that which is being done against us. He is hearing whatever we and our opponents utter and watches the conduct of both of us. On the basis of this very conviction, the believer entrusts his own and the opponents of the truth's affair to Allah and remains satisfied.

This is the fifth place where the Prophet and, through him, the believers have been taught this wisdom of preaching and reforming the people. For the other four places, see (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 199-204), (Surah An-Nahl, Ayats 125- 128), (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayats 96-98), (Surah Al-Ankabut, Ayats 46-47) and the E.Ns.

وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهِ الَّيْلُ وَالنَّهَارُ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ ؕ لَا تَسْجُدُوْا لِلشَّمْسِ وَلَا لِلْقَمَرِ

وَاسْجُدُوْا لِلّٰهِ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَهُنَّ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اِیَّاهُ تَعْبُدُوْنَ 37

(41:37) And[42] of His Signs are the night and the day, and the sun and the moon.[43] Do not prostrate yourselves before the sun, nor before the moon, but prostrate yourselves before Allah Who created them, if it is Him that you serve.[44]

42. Now the discourse turns to the common people and they are made to understand the truth in a few sentences.

43. That is, they are not the objects of divine power that you may start worshiping them, thinking that Allah is manifesting Himself in their form, but they are the signs of Allah by pondering over which you can understand the reality of the universe and its system, and can know that the doctrine of the Oneness of God which the Prophets are teaching is the actual reality. The mention of the night and day before the sun and moon has been made to give the warning that the hiding of the sun and appearing of the moon at night, and the hiding of the moon and appearing of the sun in the day clearly point to the fact that neither of them is God or object of divine power, but both are helpless and powerless objects, and are moving subject to the law of God.

44. This is an answer to the philosophy that the intelligent among the polytheists generally used to propound to prove that polytheism was rational. They said that they did not bow to these objects but bowed to God through them. An answer to this has been given, so as to say: If you really are Allah's worshipers, there is no need of these intermediaries: why don't you bow down to Him directly?

فَإِنِ اسْتَكْبَرُوا فَالَّذِينَ عِندَ رَبِّكَ يُسَبِّحُونَ لَهُ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَهُمْ لَا
يَسْأَمُونَ ﴿38﴾

(41:38) But if they wax proud[45] (and persist in their attitude, it does not matter, for) the angels near-stationed to your Lord glorify Him night and day, and never grow weary.[46]

45. If they are arrogant: If they think it is below their dignity for them to listen to you, and still persist in the ignorance in which they are involved.

46. It means this: The system of this whole universe, whose agents are the angels, is running on the basis of Allah's Oneness and His servitude. The angels who are its agents are testifying every moment that their Lord is pure and exalted far above that another should be His associate in His Divinity and worship. Now, if a few foolish persons do not believe even after admonition, and turn away from the way that is being followed by the whole universe and persist in following the way of shirk only, let them remain involved in their folly.

The consensus is that it is obligatory to perform sajdah (prostration) here, but the jurists differ as to which of the two preceding verses requires the performance of sajdah. Ali and Abdullah bin Masud performed the sajdah at the end of (verse 37), while Ibn Abbas, Ibn Umar, Said bin Musayyab, Masruq, Qatadah, Hasan Basri, Abu Abdur Rahman as-Sulami, Ibn Sirin, Ibrahim Nakhai and several other prominent jurists have expressed the opinion that it should be performed at the end of verse 38. The same also is the opinion of Imam Abu Hanifah, and the Shafeites also have held the same view as preferable.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنَّكَ تَرَى الْأَرْضَ خَاشِعَةً فَإِذَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِي
أَحْيَاهَا لَمُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ ۚ إِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿39﴾

(41:39) And of His Signs is that you see the earth withered, then We send down water upon it, and lo! it quivers and swells. Surely He Who gives life to the dead earth will also give life to the dead.[47] Surely He has power over everything.

47. For explanation, see (Surah An-Nahl, Ayat 65); (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 5-7); (Surah Ar-Room, Ayat 19) and (E.N. 19 of Surah Al-Fatir).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا لَا يَخْفَوْنَ عَلَيْنَا ۗ أَفَمَن يُلْقَىٰ فِي النَّارِ خَيْرٌ أَم مَّن يَأْتِي آمِنًا
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۚ اعْمَلُوا مَا شِئْتُمْ ۖ إِنَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿40﴾

(41:40) Those[48] who pervert Our Signs[49] are not hidden from Us.[50] Is he who will be cast into the Fire better, or he who comes secure on the Day of Resurrection? Do as you wish; He sees all what you do.

48. After telling the common people in a few sentences that the doctrine of Tauhid and the Hereafter to which Muhammad (peace be upon him) is inviting them, is rational and the signs of the universe testify to its being right and true, the discourse again turns to the opponents who were determined to oppose it stubbornly.

49. The word yulhidun in the original is derived from ilhad which means to deviate, to turn away from the right to the wrong path, to adopt crookedness. Thus, ilhad in the revelations of Allah would mean that instead of understanding them in their clear and straightforward meaning one should misconstrue them and go astray and also lead others astray. One of the devices being adopted by the disbelievers of Makkah to defeat the message of the Quran was that they would hear the verses of the Quran and then would isolate one verse from its context, tamper with another, misconstrue a word or a sentence and thus raise every sort of objection and would mislead the people, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had said such and such a thing that day.

50. These words imply a severe threat. The All-Powerful Ruler's saying that the acts of such and such a person are not hidden from Him by itself contains the meaning that he cannot escape their consequences.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِالذِّكْرِ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ ۖ وَإِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ ۙ 41

(41:41) These are the ones who rejected the Good Counsel when it came to them, although it is certainly a Mighty Book.[51]

51. A mighty Book: An unchanging Book, which cannot be defeated by tricks and cunning devices, which the worshipers of falsehood are employing against it. It has the force of the truth in it, the force of true knowledge, the force of argument and reason, the force of eloquence and style, the force of divinity of God who sent it, and the force of the personality of the Messenger who presented it. No one, therefore, can defeat it by falsehood and hollow propaganda.

لَّا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِن بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ ۖ تَنزِيلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ 42

(41:42) Falsehood may not enter it from the front or from the rear.[52] It is a revelation that has been sent down from the Most Wise, the Immensely Praiseworthy.

52. "Falsehood . . . . from before it" means that none can succeed in proving anything wrong or any teaching false in the Quran by making a frontal attack on it; "nor from behind it" means that nothing can be discovered till Resurrection which may be opposed to the truths and realities presented by the Quran; no new science, if it is really a science, can be propounded, which may contradict the knowledge contained in the Quran; no new experiment or observation can be made to prove that the guidance given to man by the Quran in respect of the beliefs, morality, law, civilization or culture, and economic, social

and political life is wrong. That which this Book has declared as the truth can never be proven to be falsehood and that which it has declared as falsehood can never be proven to be the truth. Furthermore, it also means that whether falsehood makes a frontal attack, or makes a surprise attack by deception, it cannot defeat the message which the Quran has brought. In spite of all sorts of open and secret machinations of the opponents the message will spread and none shall be able to defeat and frustrate it.

مَا يُقَالُ لَكَ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ قِيلَ لِلرُّسُلِ مِن قَبْلِكَ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو مَغْفِرَةٍ وَذُو عِقَابٍ أَلِيمٍ 43

(41:43) (O Prophet), nothing is said to you but what was already said to the Messengers before you. Surely your Lord is the Lord of forgiveness[53] and the Lord of grievous chastisement.

53. That is, it is all due to His clemency and forgiveness that although His Messengers were opposed, abused and persecuted yet He went on giving respite to their opponents for years and years on end.

وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا أَعْجَمِيًّا لَّقَالُوا لَوْلَا فُصِّلَتْ آيَاتُهُ ۖ أَأَعْجَمِيٌّ وَعَرَبِيٌّ ۗ قُلْ هُوَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هُدًى وَشِفَاءٌ ۖ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ فِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرٌ وَهُوَ عَلَيْهِمْ عَمًى ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ يُنَادَوْنَ مِن مَّكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ 44

(41:44) Had We revealed this as a non-Arabic Qur'an they would have said: "Why were its verses not clearly expounded? How strange, a non-Arabic scripture and an Arab audience!"[54] Tell them: "It is a guidance and a healing to the believers. But to those who do not believe, it serves as a plug in their ears and a covering over their eyes. It is as if they are being called from a place far away.[55]

54. This is the kind of the stubbornness that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was confronting. The disbelievers said: Muhammad (peace be upon him) is an Arab. Arabic is his mother tongue. How can one believe that the Arabic Quran that he presents has not been forged by himself but has been revealed to him by God? The Quran could be believed to be the revelation of God if he had started speaking fluently in a foreign language unknown to him, like Persian, Latin, or Greek. This argument of theirs has been refuted by Allah, saying: Now when the Quran has been sent down in their own tongue so that they may understand it, they raise the objection: Why has it been sent down to an Arab in Arabic? But if it had been sent down in a foreign tongue, these very people would have said: How strange! An Arab Messenger has been sent to the Arabs, but the revelations being sent to him are in a tongue which is neither understood by him nor by his people.

55. When a person is summoned from afar, he hears a voice but does not understand what is being said to him. This is a wonderful simile which fully depicts the psychology of the stubborn opponents. Naturally when you talk to a person who is free from prejudice, he will listen to you, will try to understand what you say, will accept it if it is reasonable, with an open mind. On the contrary, the person who is not only prejudiced against you but is also malicious and spiteful, will not at all listen to you however hard you may try to make him understand your viewpoint. In spite of hearing you all the time he will not understand at all what you had been saying.

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ فَاخْتُلِفَ فِيْهِ ؕ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ ؕ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَفِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مُرِيْبٍ 45

(41:45) And in the past We gave Moses the Book and yet it became an object of dispute.[56] If your Lord's decree had not gone forth before, a decisive judgement would have been made among them, once and for all.[57] Surely they are in a disquieting doubt about it.[58]

56. That is, some people had believed in it and some others had made up their minds to oppose it.

57. It has two meanings:

(1) If Allah had not already decreed that the people would be given enough respite for consideration the disputants would have long been destroyed.

(2) If Allah had not already decreed that the disputes would finally be decided on the Day of Judgment, the reality would have been made plain as to who is in the right and who is in the wrong.

58. In this brief sentence the spiritual disease of the disbelievers of Makkah has been clearly diagnosed. It says that they are involved in doubt about the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and this doubt has caused them great anguish and confusion. That is, although apparently they deny the Quran as being Allah's Word and the Prophet (peace be upon him) as being His Messenger very vehemently, yet this denial is not based on any conviction, but their minds are afflicted with great vacillation, and doubt. On the one hand, their selfish motives, their interests and their prejudices demand that they should belie the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and oppose them strongly. On the other hand, their hearts are convened from within, that the Quran is, in fact, a unique and un-paralleled Word the like of which has never been heard from any literary man or poet. Neither can the insane utter such things in their madness, nor can devils come to teach God-worship, piety and righteousness to the people. Likewise, when they say that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is a liar, their heaps from within put them to shame, and ask: Can such a person ever be a liar? When they brand him a madman, their hearts cry out from within and ask: Do you really think that he is mad? When they accuse that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is not interested in the truth but is working for selfish

motives, their hearts from within curse them and ask: Do you call this virtuous man selfish, whom you have never seen striving for the sake of wealth and power and fame, whose life has been free from every tract of selfinterest, who has always been working to bring about goodness and piety, but has never acted from any selfish motives.

مَنۡ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفۡسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنۡ اَسَآءَ فَعَلَيۡهَا ؕ وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلۡعَبِيۡدِ 46

(41:46) Whoever does good, does so to his own benefit; and whoever does evil, will suffer its evil consequence. Your Lord does no wrong to His servants.[59]

59. That is, your Lord can never be so unjust as to let go to waste the good deeds of a good man and fail to punish the evil-doers for their evil.

اِلَيۡهِ يُرَدُّ عِلۡمُ السَّاعَةِ ؕ وَمَا تَخۡرُجُ مِنۡ ثَمَرٰتٍ مِّنۡ اَكۡمَامِهَا وَمَا تَحۡمِلُ مِنۡ اُنۡثٰى وَلَا تَضَعُ اِلَّا بِعِلۡمِهٖ ؕ وَيَوۡمَ يُنَادِيۡهِمۡ اَيۡنَ شُرَكَآءِىۡ ۙ قَالُوۡۤا اٰذَنّٰكَ ۙ مَا مِنَّا مِنۡ شَهِيۡدٍ ۚ 47

(41:47) The knowledge of the Hour rests solely with Him.[60] [61] Not a fruit comes forth from its sheath, nor does any female conceive nor give birth to a child but it is in His knowledge.[62] On that Day He will call out to them: “Where are those associates of Mine?” They will answer: “We have declared to You that none of us can bear witness to that.”[63]

60. That is, "None but Allah knows when the Hour would occur. " This is the answer to the disbelievers' question as to when the threat being given them of meeting with the consequences of their evil deeds will be carried out. Allah has answered their question without citing it.

61. The Hour: the Hour of Resurrection, i.e. the Hour when the evildoers will be punished for their evil and the grievances of the oppressed good people will be redressed.

62. By this the listeners have been made to realize two things:

(1) That not only of Resurrection but the knowledge of all unseen things is reserved for Allah alone; there is no other knower of the unseen.

(2) That God Who possesses the detailed knowledge of the most minor things cannot remain unaware of the acts and deeds of anybody.

Therefore, no one in His kingdom should act fearlessly, with impunity. Only according to this second meaning the sentence becomes relevant to what follows. If one studies the following sentences, the theme that immediately becomes obvious is: Don’t concern yourselves about finding our the date of the coming of Resurrection; you should, however, be anxious about the consequences of your deviations you will have to bear when it comes. This same thing had the Prophet (peace be upon him) once said to a person, who asked him

the date of the coming of Resurrection. All the major collections of Hadith contain a commonly reported tradition to the effect: Once when the Prophet (peace be upon him) was on a journey, a man on the way shouted his name from a distance. The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked what he wanted to say. He said: When will Resurrection come? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: It must come, in any case! What preparations have you made for it?

63. That is, now we have realized that what we had in our minds was absolutely wrong. Now none among us is of the view that there is another one who is also your associate in Godhead. The words "we announce" show that on the Day of Resurrection the disbelievers will be asked again and again, on every occasion: In the world you went on refusing to believe what the Messengers of God said: now say who was in the right: they or you? And the disbelievers will every time confess that the truth indeed was that which the Messengers preached and they themselves were in the wrong because they forsook the knowledge and persisted in their own ignorance.

وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَظَنُّوْا مَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ مَّحِيْصٍ 48

(41:48) Then all those deities whom they once used to call upon shall vanish[64] and they will come to know for sure that there is no escape for them.

64. That is, in their utter hopelessness they will look around to see if they could find any one of those whom they used to serve and worship in the world, who could come to their rescue and save them from God's torment, or at least have their punishment reduced, but they will find no helper on any side.

لَا يَسْئَمُ الْاِنْسَانُ مِنْ دُعَآءِ الْخَيْرِ ۫ وَاِنْ مَّسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَيَـُٔوْسٌ قَنُوْطٌ 49

(41:49) Man wearies not of praying for good,[65] but when evil visits him, he despairs and gives up all hope.

65. "For good": For prosperity, abundance of provisions, good health, well-being of children, etc. And man here does not imply every human being for it also includes the prophet and the righteous people, who are free from this weakness as is being mentioned below. But here it implies the mean and shallow person who starts imploring God humbly when touched by harm and is beside himself with joy when he receives the good things of life as most human beings are involved in this weakness, it has been called a weakness of man.

وَلَئِنْ اَذَقْنٰهُ رَحْمَةً مِّنَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ضَرَّآءَ مَسَّتْهُ لَيَقُوْلَنَّ هٰذَا لِيْ ۙ وَمَآ اَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ
قَآئِمَةً ۙ وَّلَئِنْ رُّجِعْتُ اِلٰى رَبِّيْٓ اِنَّ لِيْ عِنْدَهٗ لَلْحُسْنٰى ۚ فَلَنُنَبِّئَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِمَا
عَمِلُوْا وَلَنُذِيْقَنَّهُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيْظٍ 50

(41:50) And if We bestow Our Mercy upon him after hardship, he will surely say: "This is what I truly deserve,[66] and I do not believe that the Hour (of Resurrection) will ever come to pass; and if I am returned to my Lord, there too I shall enjoy the best." Surely We shall fully apprise the unbelievers of what they have done, and We shall certainly make them taste a severe chastisement.

66. That is, I have gotten all this because of my being worthy of it. It is my right that I should receive all this.

وَاِذَآ اَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْاِنْسَانِ اَعْرَضَ وَنَاٰ بِجَانِبِهٖ ۚ وَاِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ فَذُوْ دُعَآءٍ عَرِيْضٍ 51

(41:51) When We bestow Our favour upon man, he turns away and waxes proud;[67] but when a misfortune touches him, he is full of supplication.[68]

67. That is, he turns away from Our obedience and worship, and thinks it is below his dignity to bow to Us.

68. For other verses on this subject, see (Surah Younus, Ayat 12); (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 83); (Surah ArRoom, Ayat 33-36); (Surah Az-Zumar, Ayats 8-9, 49)and the E.Ns.

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ كَفَرْتُمْ بِهٖ مَنْ اَضَلُّ مِمَّنْ هُوَ فِيْ شِقَاقٍۢ
بَعِيْدٍ 52

(41:52) Tell them, (O Prophet): "Did you ever consider: if this Qur'an is indeed from Allah and you still deny it, who can be in greater error than he who goes far in fiercely opposing it?"[69]

69. It does not mean that they should believe in it only owing to the danger that if it were really from Allah they would be inviting their own doom by denying it. But it means this: It is not wisdom that you should be bent upon opposing it stubbornly without seriously trying to understand what it says. You cannot assert that you have come to know that this Quran is not from God, and you have known with certainty that God has not sent it. Obviously, your refusal to believe in it as divine Word is not based on knowledge, but on conjecture, which may possibly be right as well as wrong. Now consider both the possibilities. If your

conjecture were right, then, according to your own thinking, both the believers and the unbelievers would be equal, because both will became dust after death, and there is no life of Hereafter where belief and unbelief might be distinguished. But, if this Quran were really from God, and that of which it is forewarning did really take place, then think what doom you would invite for yourselves by denying it and opposing it like that. Therefore, your own interest demands that you should give up stubbornness and consider this Quran seriously; if even after due consideration, you decide not to believe in it, you may not, but you should not oppose it to the extent that you start employing falsehood and deception and persecution to bar the way of its message and prevent others from believing in it, not being content with your own unbelief.

سَنُرِيهِمْ اٰيٰتِنَا فِي الْاٰفَاقِ وَفِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتّٰى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ اَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ ؕ اَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ
اَنَّهٗ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيْدٌ 53

(41:53) Soon shall We show them Our Signs on the horizons and in their own beings until it becomes clear to them that it is the Truth.[70] Is it not enough that your Lord is a witness over everything?[71]

70. This verse has two meanings and both have been given by the major commentators:

First, that they will soon see wit their own eyes that the message of the Quran has spread in all the adjoining lands, and they themselves have yielded to it. Then they will realize that what they are being told today, which they are denying, was absolutely true. Some people have objected to this meaning, saying that a message's being dominant and overwhelming vast areas is no argument to prove that it is the truth. False messages also become dominant and their adherents also go on subduing one country after the other. But this is a superficial objection which has been raised without a thorough study of the matter. The wonderful conquests that Islam achieved in the period of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the rightly guided Caliphs, were not the signs of Allah only in the sense that the believers conquered one country after the other, but in the sense that this conquest of the countries was not like other conquests of the world, which make one man or one family or one nation master of the life and property of others and God's earth is filled with tyranny and injustice. Contrary to this, this conquest brought with it a great religious, moral, intellectual, cultural, political, economic and social revolution; whose influence, wherever it reached, elicited what was best in man and suppressed what was worst in him. This revolution developed and nurtured the moral excellences which the world could hope to see only in the hermits and the meditating recluses and could never imagine that they could also be found among the people responsible for running the worldly affairs in the politics of the rulers, in the chambers of justice, in the wars and conquests of the commanders of forces, in the work of the tax collectors and in the commerce of the big businessmen. This revolution so raised the common people in the society created by it in respect of the sense of morality, character, cleanliness and purity that even the select people of other societies seemed to be much inferior to them. It took man out of the labyrinths of superstition and whim and put him on the broad highway of scientific research and rational thought and action. It treated and

cured these diseases of the collective life of whose treatment no idea existed in the other systems, or if at all they tried to treat them, they did not succeed in it. For example, separation between men on the basis of color, race, country and language, classification of men in the same society and discrimination among them, non existence of legal rights and equality in practical life, degeneration of women and their deprivation of the basic rights, prevalence of crime, liquor drinking and use of all intoxicating drugs, the governments being above criticism and accountability, deprivation of the fundamental human rights the masses, disrespect of agreements in international relations, barbarism in wars, and such other diseases. In Arabia itself this revolution brought about order in place of chaos, peace in place of bloodshed and anarchy, piety in place of wickedness, justice in place of tyranny and injustice, purity and culture in place of filth and indecency, knowledge in place of ignorance, brotherhood and love in place of long-standing feuds, and it made a nation whose people could not dream of anything beyond leadership of their tribe, leaders of the world. These were the signs which the very generation before whom the Prophet (peace be upon him) had recited this verse for the first time, saw with their own eyes, and after that till today Allah has been constantly showing those signs. The Muslims, even during their downfall, displayed such high morals as could never be attained by those people who represent as the leaders of civilization and culture. No precedent can be found from any period of the history of the Muslims of the tyrannical treatment that has been meted out by the European nations to the subdued nations of Africa, America, Asia and of Europe itself. This is the blessing of the Quran which has so humanized Muslims that they could not become so tyrannical even when they had attained domination as the non-Muslims have been in all periods of history and are even today. A person who has eyes can himself see how the Muslims treated the Christians in Spain when they ruled it for centuries, and how the Christians treated the Muslims when they gained power there; how the Muslims behaved towards Hindus during their eight hundred year long rule in India and how the Hindus are now treating them after they have attained power; how the Muslims treated the Jews during the past 1300 years and how the Jews are treating the Muslims in Palestine.

The other meaning of this verse is that Allah will show the people in the external world around them as well as in their own selves such signs as will make manifest that the teaching the Quran is giving is the very truth. Some people have raised the objection that the people even at that time were observing the world around them and also their own selves; therefore, it would be meaningless to show them any such signs in the future. But this objection also is as superficial as the objection against the first meaning. No doubt, the external world is the same as man has been seeing in the past and his own self also is of the same nature as has been seen in every age, yet in these the signs of God are so numerous that man has never comprehended them fully nor will ever be able to do so. In every age man has met with many new signs and this will go on happening till the Resurrection Day.

71. That is, is it not enough to warn the people of their evil end that Allah is watching whatever they are doing to belie and defeat the Message of the truth?

اَلَآ اِنَّهُمۡ فِیۡ مِرۡیَةٍ مِّنۡ لِّقَآءِ رَبِّهِمۡ ؕ اَلَآ اِنَّهٗ بِکُلِّ شَیۡءٍ مُّحِیۡطٌ ﴿54﴾

(41:54) Lo, they are in doubt concerning their meeting with their Lord.[72] Surely He fully encompasses everything.[73]

72. That is, the basic cause of their attitude and conduct is that they are not sure that they will ever have to appear before their Lord and be held accountable for their deeds and actions.

73. That is, they cannot escape His grasp nor can anything of their deeds be prevented from being recorded by Him.

42. Surah Ash Shura (The Consultation)

Name

It is derived frog the sentence, wa amru-hum shura baina hum, of verse 38, implying thereby that it is a Surah in which the word shura has occurred.

Period of Revelation

Although it could not be known from any authentic traditions, yet one feels after a study of its subject matter that this Surah might have been sent down consecutively after Ha-Miim As Sajdah, for it seems to be, in a way, a supplement to it. This will become clear to every person who first studies Surah Ha-Mim As Sajdah carefully and then goes through this Surah. He will see that in that Surah the Quraish chiefs had been taken to tack for their deaf and blind opposition so that anyone in Makkah and in its out-skirts, who had any sense of morality and nobility left in him, should know how unreasonably the chiefs of the people were opposing Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace), and as against them, how serious he was in everything he said, how rational was his standpoint and how noble his character and conduct. Immediately after that warning this Surah was sent down, which did full justice to teaching and instruction, and made the truth of the Holy Prophet's message plain in such an impressive way that anyone who had any element of the love of the truth in him and who had not been blinded by the errors of ignorance, could not help being influenced by it.

Theme and Subject Matter

The discourse begins in a way as if to say: “Why are you expressing surprise and amazement at what Our Prophet is presenting before you? What he says is not new or strange, nor anything novel, which might have been presented for the first time in history: that Revelation should come down to a man from God and he should be given instructions for the guidance of mankind. Allah has been sending similar Revelations with similar instructions to the former Prophets before this. It is not surprising that the Owner of the Universe should be acknowledged as Deity and Ruler, but what is strange is that one should accept another as divine and deity in spite of being His subject and slave. You are being angry with him who is presenting Tauhid before you, where as the shirk that you are practicing with regard to the Master of the Universe is such a grave crime as may cause the heavens to break asunder. The angels are amazed at this boldness of yours and fear that the wrath of Allah might descend on you any moment."

After this the people have been told that a person's being appointed to Prophethood and his presenting himself as a Prophet does not mean that he has been made master of the people's destinies and he has come to the world with that very claim. Allah has kept the destinies in His own hand. The Prophet has come only to arouse the heedless and guide the strayed ones to the Right Path. To call to account those who do not listen to him and to punish or not to punish them is Allah's own responsibility. and not part of the Prophet's work. Therefore, they should take it out of their head that the Prophet has come with a claim similar to those that are made by their so called religious guides and saints to the effect that he who would not listen to them, or would behave insolently towards them, would be burnt

to death: In this very connection, the people have also been told that the Prophet has not come to condemn them but he is their well wisher; he is warning them that the way they are following will only lead to their own destruction.

Then, an answer has been given to the question: Why didn't Allah make all human beings righteous by birth, and why did He allow the difference of viewpoint owing to which the people start following each and every way of thought and action? The answer given is this: Owing to this very fact has it become possible for man to attain to the special mercy of Allah, which is not meant for other dumb creatures, but is only meant for those endowed with power and authority, who should take Allah as Patron and Guardian not instinctively but consciously by willing choice. Allah supports the man who adopts this way and guides and helps him to do good and right and admits him into His special mercy. On the contrary, the man who misuses his option and makes his patron those who are not, in fact, the guardians, and cannot be, are deprived of divine mercy. In this connection, it has also been made clear that only Allah is the Patron of man and of all other creatures. Others are neither the patron nor have the power to do full justice to patronage. Man's success depends only on this that he should make no mistake in choosing a patron for himself by the use of his free choice, and should take only Him his Guide Who, in reality, is the real Patron.

After this, it has been explained what the Din being presented by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) really is:

Its primary basis that as Allah Almighty is the Creator, Master and real Patron of the Universe and Man, He alone is Man's Ruler, He alone has the right to give Man Faith (Din) and Law (system of belief and practice) and judge the disputes of man and tell what is Truth and what is falsehood. No other being has any right whatever to be man's lawgiver. In other words, like the natural sovereignty, the sovereignty with regard to law-making also is vested only in Allah. No man or creature, apart from Allah, can be the bearer of this sovereignty. And if a person does not recognize and accept this Divine rule of Allah, it is merely futile for him to recognize the natural sovereignty of Allah.

On this very basis has Allah ordained a Din (True Religion) for Man from the very beginning. It was one and the same Religion that was vouchsafed in every age to all the Prophets. No Prophet ever founded any separate religion of his own. The same one Religion has been enjoined by Allah for all Mankind since the beginning of creation, and all the Prophets have been following it and inviting others to follow it.

This Religion and Creed was not sent so that man may rest content only with believing in it, but it was sent with the purpose and intention that it alone should be introduced, established and enforced in the world, and no man made religion be made to prevail in Allah's earth apart from His Religion. The Prophets had not been appointed only to preach this Religion but to establish it particularly in the world.

This same was the original Religion of mankind, but after the death of the Prophets, selfish people created new creeds by creating schisms for vested interests due to self conceit, vanity and ostentation. All the different religions and creeds found in the world today have resulted from corruption of the original Divine Truth.

Now, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace,) has been sent so that he may present before the people the same and original Religion in place of the various practices and artificial creeds and man made religions, and may try to establish the same. On this, if instead of being grateful, you feel angry and come out to fight him, it is your folly; the Prophet will not abandon his mission only because of your foolishness. He has been enjoined to adhere to his faith at all costs and to carry out the mission to which he has been appointed. Therefore, the people should not cherish any false hope that in order to please thee he would cater to the same whims and superstitions of ignorance which has corrupted Allah's Religion before.

You do not understand how great an impudence it is against Allah to adopt a man made religion and law instead of the Religion and Law enjoined by Allah. You think it is an ordinary thing and there is nothing wrong with it. But in the sight of Allah it is the worst kind of shirk and a grave crime whose punishment will be imposed on all those who enforced their own religion on Allah's earth and those who adopted and followed their religion.

Thus, after presenting a clear and visible concept of Religion it is said: “The best possible method that could be employed for your instruction and for bringing you to the Right Path has already been employed. On the one hand, Allah has sent down His Book, which is teaching you the truth in a most impressive way in your own language; and on the other, the lives of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) and his Companions are present before you by which you can see for yourselves what kind of men are prepared by the guidance given in this Book. Even then if you do not accept this guidance, nothing else in the world can bring you to the Right Path. The only alternative, therefore, is that you should be allowed to persist in the same error in which you have remained involved for centuries, and made to meet with the same doom which has been destined by Allah for such wrongdoers."

While stating these truths, brief arguments have been given, here and there, for Tauhid and the Hereafter, the world worshipers have been warned of the evil consequences and their punishment in the life hereafter, and the disbelievers have been criticized for the moral weaknesses, which were the real cause of their deviation from the truth. The Surah has been concluded with two important themes.

First, that the Holy Prophet was wholly unaware of this concept of the "Book" or the True Faith during the first forty years of his life and then his sudden appearance before the people with those two things, is a manifest proof of his being a Prophet.

Secondly, his presenting his own teaching as the teaching of God does not mean that he claims to have spoken to God, face to face, but God has conveyed to him this Guidance, as in the case of all other Prophets, in three ways: He speaks to His Prophets either through Revelation, or from behind a veil, or He sends an angel with the message. This thing was clarified so that the opponents did not have an opportunity of accusing the Holy Prophet of claiming to have spoken to God, face to face, and the lovers of the truth should know by what methods Allah gave instruction to the man whom He had appointed to the mission of Prophethood.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

حٰمٓ 1

(42:1) Ha'. Mim.

عٓسٓقٓ 2

(42:2) Ayn. Sin. Qaf.

كَذٰلِكَ يُوۡحِىۡۤ اِلَيۡكَ وَاِلَى الَّذِيۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِكَ ۙ اللّٰهُ الۡعَزِيۡزُ الۡحَكِيۡمُ 3

(42:3) Thus does Allah, the Most Mighty, the Most Wise reveal to you even as (He revealed) to those (Messengers) who preceded you.[1]

1. The style of the opening verses by itself shows that in the background there are the misgivings, wonder and amazement which were being expressed at that time in every assembly, every meeting place, every street and every house and shop of Makkah at the message of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the themes of the Quran. The people said; Where is this man bringing from new revelations to us every day? The like of these we have never heard nor seen before. How strange that he rejects as false the religion that our forefathers have been following in the past, the religion that is still being followed by all of us, and the traditions and ways that have been prevalent in the country for so many centuries; and he says that the religion that he presents only is right and true. They said: Had he presented even this new religion in a way as to substitute some of the falsehood he found in the ancestral paganism and prevalent customs with certain others which might be the result of his own thought, there could be a dialogue with him. But he says that what he recites is divine Word. How can we accept this? Does God visit him, or does he visit God? Or does some dialogue take place between him and God? It is in the background of such expression of wonder and doubt that although the address is apparently directed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), the disbelievers have in fact been told: Yes, these very things are being revealed by the All-Mighty, the All-Wise Allah, and with the same themes has its revelation been coming down to all the former Prophets.

Lexically, wahi means swift and secret instruction, i.e. an inspiration which is made with such haste and speed that none may know it except the inspirer and the one being inspired. As a term this word has been used for the guidance and instruction that is put in the mind of a man by Allah like a flash of lightning. What is meant to be said here is this: There is no question of Allah's visiting somebody or somebody's visiting Allah and speaking face to face with Him. He is All-Mighty and All-Wise. Whenever He pleases to have a contact with a servant for the guidance and instruction of mankind, nothing can obstruct His will and intention, for He adopts the method of revelation for the purpose by His wisdom. This very theme has been repeated in the last verses of the Surah with greater clarity and detail.

As to the people's objection that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was presenting strange and novel things, it has been said: There is nothing strange and novel in what Muhammad (peace be upon him) presents. Allah has been giving the same guidance and instruction to the Prophets who came before him in the world.

لَهٗ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيْمُ 4

(42:4) His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth; He is the Most High, the All-Great.[2]

2. These introductory sentences are not meant to be said merely in praise of Allah Almighty, but their each word has a deep link with the background in which these verses were sent down. The foremost basis of the objections of the people who were expressing wonder and doubts against the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Quran was that he was inviting them to Tauhid and they were being alarmed at this and saying that if Allah alone is the Creator, Sustainer and Ruler, what would be the position of their saints and holy men? At this it has been said: This whole universe belongs to Allah. How can therefore the godhead of another work and operate in the kingdom of the real Sovereign, particularly when those others whose godhead is acknowledged, are themselves also His subjects? Then, it has been said: He is the High, the Great! That is, He is far above that somebody else should be equal to Him in rank and should become His associate in His Being, attributes, powers or rights.

تَكَادُ السَّمٰوٰتُ يَتَفَطَّرْنَ مِنْ فَوْقِهِنَّ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يُسَبِّحُوْنَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَ لِمَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ اَلَآ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ 5

(42:5) The heavens may well nigh rend asunder from above[3] while the angels proclaim the praise of their Lord and ask forgiveness for those on earth.[4] Lo, it is Allah, and He alone, Who is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.[5]

3. That is, it is not a trivial matter that a creature should be joined in lineage with Allah and regarded as His son or daughter. Another regarded as fulfiller of the needs and the answerer of the petitions so that the people should start invoking him for help. Yet another taken as the maintainer of the entire world, and his devotees should start proclaiming that their holy saint heard the prayer of everyone at all places at all times and came to his help and answers his petition. Another invested with the authority to enjoin and prohibit things and declare them as lawful and unlawful, and the people should start obeying his commands, instead of the commands of God, as if he alone was their God. This boldness against God is such that they may well cause the heavens to break asunder. (This same theme has also been presented in (Surah Maryam, Ayats 88- 91).

4. It means: the angels shudder with disgust when they hear such nonsense being uttered by the people in respect of their Lord, and they regard it as a rebellion against Him. They say: Glorified be Allah! No one can have the position that he should become an associate with Allah, Lord of the worlds, in divinity and command; there is none beside Him who may be

our and all other servants benefactor so that hymns be sung in his praise and he be thanked. So they feel that it is a grave crime being committed in the world, and it may provoke Allah Almighty's wrath any moment. Therefore, they implore Allah for mercy again and again for the dwellers of the earth who have forgotten themselves and their God, and pray that they may yet be spared from the torment and given more respite to mend their ways.

5. That is, it is only Allah's clemency, mercifulness and forgiveness that the people who have touched the extreme limits in disbelief, polytheism, atheism, sinfulness and tyranny, have been receiving respite after respite for years and years, even for centuries; yet they not only go on receiving their sustenance but are also acclaimed as the great people of the world and they are provided with such adornments of the worldly life as cause the ignorant people the misunderstanding that this world perhaps has no God.

وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهُ حَفِيظٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ وَمَا أَنتَ عَلَيْهِم بِوَكِيلٍ 6

(42:6) Those who have taken others than Him as their protectors beside Him,[6] it is Allah Who oversees them; you are no guardian over them.[7]

6. The word auliya (sing. wali) as used in the text is very comprehensive in meaning. The different beliefs and all sorts of diverse practices with regard to the false deities held and worshiped by the polytheistic people, have been described as: taking others as auliya (guardians) instead of Allah in the Quran. According to the Quran, a person takes such a one his wali:

(1) Whom he obeys in all matters, whose instructions he carries out and whose ways and customs and rules he follows in all affairs of life (Surah An-Nisa, Ayats 118-120); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats: 3,27-30);

(2) In whose guidance he has full faith, and who he thinks will lead him aright and save him from error and deviation (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 257); (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 97); (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayats 17-50); (Surah Al-Jathiah, Ayat 19).

(3) About whom he trusts that he will protect him from the torment of God in the Hereafter if it really existed (Surah An-Nisa, Ayats 123, 173); (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 51); (Surah Ar-Raad, Ayat 37); (Surah Al-Ankabut, Ayat 22); (Surah Al- Ahzab, Ayat 65); (Surah Az-Zumar, Ayat 3).

(4) About whom he has the belief that he helps him in the world in supernatural ways, protects him from disaster and afflictions, gets him jobs, blesses him with children, and fulfills his desires and all other needs. (Surah Houd, Ayat 20); (Surah Ar-Raad, Ayat 16); (Surah Al-Ankabut, Ayat 4l).

At some places in the Quran the word wali has been used in one of these senses and at others in all its meanings. The verse being commented upon is one of such verses. In it, taking others as guardians instead of Allah implies regarding them as one's patron and supporter and helper in all the four above mentioned meanings.

7. Allah is watching over them and seeing whatever they are doing and is recording their conduct. It is His responsibility to call them to account and punish them. As for the words "You are not disposer of affairs over them", these have been addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him). They mean: Their destiny has not been placed under yow control so that you may burn to ashes anyone who does not listen to you, or depose him from power, or annihilate him. This, however, does not mean that, God forbid, the Prophet (peace be upon him) regarded himself as such, and this was said in order to remove his misunderstanding or self-conceit, but this was meant for the disbelievers. Although apparently the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself is the addressee, the real object is to tell the disbelievers that the Prophet of Allah has made no such claims as were usually made by their so-called saints who posed to possess great spiritual powers. Among the ignorant people it is generally thought that the so-called holy men have the power to ruin the destiny of anyone who behaves insolently towards them in any way; so much so that even after their death if somebody happened to dishonor their grave, or if nothing else, only nursed an evil thought about them in his mind, they destroyed him completely. Such a thought is in most cases spread by the holy men themselves. As for the good men who do not themselves say any such thing, their names are exploited by some other clever people, who spread such thoughts about them in order to promote their business. In any case this is regarded as a necessary corollary of spirituality and piety among the common people that one should possess the powers of making and marring destinies. To destroy the spell of this same fraud, Allah is addressing His Messenger (peace be upon him), as if to tell the disbelievers: You are no doubt Our Messenger and We have blessed you with Our revelations, but your duty is only to guide the people to the right path. Their destinies have not boon placed under yow control; they are in Our hands; therefore, to watch over the deeds and acts of the servants and to punish or not to punish them is Our own responsibility." 7

وَكَذٰلِكَ اَوۡحَيۡنَاۤ اِلَيۡكَ قُرۡاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّتُنۡذِرَ اُمَّ الۡقُرٰى وَمَنۡ حَوۡلَهَا وَتُنۡذِرَ يَوۡمَ الۡجَمۡعِ لَا رَيۡبَ فِيۡهِ ؕ فَرِيۡقٌ فِى الۡجَنَّةِ وَفَرِيۡقٌ فِى السَّعِيۡرِ 7

(42:7) And thus did We reveal this Arabic Qur'an[8] to you that you may warn the people of the Mother of Cities (to wit, Makkah) and those who dwell around it;[9] and warn them of the Day of Gathering[10] concerning which there is no doubt: whereon some will be in Paradise, and some in the Blazing Fire.

8. The same thing which had been said in the beginning of the discourse has been said again with greater emphasis, and by making mention of the Arabic Quran, the listeners have been warned to the effect: The Quran is not in any foreign language but in your own language, you can understand it yourself directly, study its themes and see for yourself that the pure and selfless guidance that is being given in it can be from none other than the Lord of the Universe.

9. That is, arouse them from slumber and warn them that there is nothing but destruction in store for them in consequence of the errors of morality and conduct in which they are

involved and of the perverse principle on which they have ordered their individual and collective lives.

10. That is, tell them also that this destruction is not confined only to this world but the Day has to come when Allah will gather together all mankind and subject them to accountability. Even if a person escaped the evil consequences of his deviation and wickedness in the world, there will be no chance of his escape on that Day, and highly unfortunate is he, who is doomed to a tragic fate both in this world and in the Hereafter.

وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَجَعَلَهُمْ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً وَّلٰكِنْ يُّدْخِلُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ فِيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ؕ وَالظّٰلِمُوْنَ مَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا نَصِيْرٍ 8

(42:8) If Allah had so willed, He could have made them all a single community. But He admits whomsoever He pleases into His Mercy. As to those given to wrong-doing, they shall have none as protector or helper.[11]

11. This theme has three objects in this context:

First, it is meant to instruct and console the Prophet (peace be upon him), as if to say: Do not grieve so much at the ignorance and deviation of the disbelievers of Makkah and their stubbornness and obduracy. It is Allah's will that man should be granted the freedom of choice and action. Then whoever desires to have guidance should be given guidance, and whoever wants to remain astray should be allowed to go astray. Had this not been Allah's will, there was no need whatsoever of sending the Prophets and the Books. For this only a creative hint of Allah Almighty's was enough, all human beings would have become as obedient as the rivers, mountains, trees, stones, and all other creatures. (In this connection, see (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayats 35-36, 107).

Secondly, its addressees are all those people who were involved in the confusion, and even now are, that if Allah really had wanted to show guidance to human beings and He did not like the differences of creed and practice that were prevalent among the people, and wanted to have the people adopt the way of the faith and Islam, there was no need for the revelation and the Book and the Prophethood. He could have easily achieved this object by creating everyone a believer and Muslim by birth. Another result of this confusion was also this reasoning: When Allah has not done so, the different ways that we are following, are approved by Him, and whatever we are doing, is according to His will. Therefore, nobody has any right to object to it. (To remove this misunderstanding also this theme has been mentioned at several places in the Quran. Please see (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayats 112, 137, 148-149); (Surah Yunus, Ayat 99); (Surah Houd, Ayats 118-119); (Surah An-Nahl, Ayats 9, 35)and the relevant E.Ns).

Thirdly, its object is to make the believers realize the truth about the difficulties that one generally faces in the way of preaching religion and reforming the people. Those people who do not understand the reality of the God, given freedom of choice and will and of the resulting differences of temperament and methods, sometimes become despondent at the

slow progress of the reformatory work and wish that some supernatural things should appear from Allah, which should change the hearts of the people, and are sometimes inclined to adopt unsound methods of bringing about reformation, owing to excessive enthusiasm. (For this object also this theme has occurred at some places in the Quran, for which see (Surah Ar-Raad, Ayat 31); (Surah An-Nahl, Ayats 91-93).

To highlight these objects a very important theme has been expressed in these brief sentences. Allah's real vicegerency in the world and His Paradise in the Hereafter is not an ordinary blessing, which may be distributed over creatures of the rank of the earth and stones and donkeys and horses as a common blessing. This is indeed a special blessing and a blessing of a very high order for which even the angels were not considered fit. That is why Allah created man as a creature endowed with power and authority and placed vast means of His earth under his control and blessed him with these special powers so that he may pass through the test, success in which alone can entitle a servant to His blessings. This blessing is Allah's own; no one has a monopoly over it, nor can anyone claim to have it on the basis of a personal right, nor has anyone the power to take it by force. He who presents service before Allah, who takes Him as his Guardian and comes under His protection, alone can have it. Then Allah blesses him with help, guidance and grace to pass this test, so that he may enter His Mercy. As for the unjust man who turns away from Allah Himself and instead takes others as his patrons, Allah has no need that he should become his guardian by force. And the others whom He takes as his guardians do not possess any knowledge and power and authority that they may enable him to achieve success by dint of their guardianship of him.

أَمِ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ ۖ فَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْوَلِيُّ وَهُوَ يُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۝ 9

(42:9) (Are they so foolish that) they have chosen others rather than Allah as their protectors? Yet it is Allah Who is the Protector and Who resurrects the dead and Who has power over everything.[12]

12. That is, protection or guardianship is not a thing of one's personal choice and satisfaction that he may take anyone, he may please, as his guardian, and the other may also become his real and true guardian and may do full justice to the function of guardianship. This is a reality, which does not change with the whims of the people. The guardian is he who is really the guardian, whether someone regards and acknowledges him as his guardian or not, and the one who is not in reality the guardian is not the guardian, no matter whether someone continues to regard and acknowledge him as his guardian till the last moment. Now, as for the question: What is the proof of only Allah's being the real guardian and of no one else's being the guardian? The answer is: Man's real guardian can be the one who changes death into life, who has created a living man by breathing life into inorganic substances, and who also possesses the powers and authority to do full justice to the function of guardianship. If there is such a one, apart from Allah, he may be made the guardian, and if He is Allah alone, then taking another beside Him as one's guardian is nothing but ignorance and folly and selfdestruction.

وَمَا اخۡتَلَفۡتُمۡ فِيۡهِ مِنۡ شَىۡءٍ فَحُكۡمُهٗۤ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبِّىۡ عَلَيۡهِ تَوَكَّلۡتُ ۘ وَاِلَيۡهِ

أُنِيۡبُ 10

(42:10) The[13] judgement on whatever you differ rests with Allah.[14] Such is Allah,[15] my Lord; in Him I have put all my trust and to Him I always turn in devotion.[16]

13. From here to the end of(verse 12), though the whole discourse is a revelation from Allah, the speaker is not Allah but the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah. In other words, Allah Almighty is telling His Prophet (peace be upon him) to make this proclamation to the people. Such themes in the Quran sometimes begin with qul (say, O Prophet) and sometimes without it. Only the style indicates that the speaker at a place is not Allah but Allah's Messenger. Even at some places though the words are Allah's, the speaker are the believers, as for example in Surah Surah Al-Fatiha. Or, the speaker are the angels as in (Surah Maryam, Ayats 64-65).

14. This is the natural and logical demand of Allah Almighty's being the Master of the Universe and His being the real Guardian. When Sovereignty and Guardianship belong to Him only inevitably He alone is also the Ruler. And it is for Him to judge human beings' mutual disputes and differences. Those who restrict it only to the Hereafter make a mistake. There is no argument to prove that Allah's position as a Ruler has no effect in this world but is meant only for the life Hereafter. Likewise, those who restrict it only to beliefs and a few questions of religious nature are also in the wrong. The words are general and they clearly proclaim Allah as having the sole right to judge all disputes and differences. According to them, just as Allah is the Master of the Day of Judgment in the Hereafter; so He is the best of Judges in this world too. And just as He is the Settler of the differences pertaining to beliefs as to what is the truth and what is falsehood, so also in legal matters He is the Settler of differences as to what is pure for man and what is impure, what is lawful and desirable for him and what is forbidden and undesirable. What is evil and vicious in morals and what is good and virtuous, what are the rights of the people in their mutual dealings and what are the right practices in social political and economic life and what are wrong. On this very basis the Quran has declared this principle as the fundamental of law:

If there arises any dispute between you about anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger. (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 59). And: It does not behoove a believing man and a believing woman that when Allah and His Messenger have given their verdict in a matter, they should exercise an option in that matter of theirs. (Surah Al-Ahzab, Ayat 36). And: O people, follow what has been sent down to you from your Lord and do not follow other patrons beside Him. (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 3).

Then, in the context in which this verse has occurred, it gives another meaning also and that is: To decide differences is not only Allah's legal right on accepting or rejecting which depends on man's being a believer or an unbeliever, but Allah, in fact, practically also is deciding between the truth and falsehood due to which falsehood and its worshipers are ultimately being destroyed and the truth and the faithful are being honored and exalted, no matter how delayed the enforcement of this decision may seem to be. This theme occurs in

(verse 24) below, and has been expressed at several places in the Quran. For this please see (Surah Ar-Raad, Ayats 17,41); (Surah Ibrahim, Ayats 24-27); (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 8); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 18, 44 and the E.Ns).

15. The same Allah, Who is the real Settler of disputes.

16. These are two verbs one of which is in the past tense and the other in the present which contains the sense of perpetuity. In the past verb it was said: In Whom did I put my trust, i.e. I decided once and for all that as long as I live I have to rely on His help, on His guidance, on His support and protection, and on His decision. Then in the present verb it was said: To Whom I turn, i.e. Whatever situation I face in life, I turn only to Allah in it. I do not look towards others in an affliction or trouble or difficulty but invoke only Him for help. I seek only His refuge when I face a danger and depend on His protection. I turn to Him for guidance whenever I am confronted by a problem and seek its solution in His teaching and guidance. And I look up only to Him when I have a dispute with somebody with the belief that He alone will give the final decision, and have the faith that whatever decision He gives will be the right one.

فَاطِرُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ؕ جَعَلَ لَكُمۡ مِّنۡ اَنۡفُسِكُمۡ اَزۡوَاجًا وَّمِنَ الۡاَنۡعَامِ اَزۡوَاجًا ۚ
يَذۡرَؤُكُمۡ فِيۡهِ ؕ لَيۡسَ كَمِثۡلِهٖ شَىۡءٌ ۚ وَهُوَ السَّمِيۡعُ الۡبَصِيۡرُ 11

(42:11) The Originator of the heavens and the earth, He has appointed for you pairs of your own kind, and pairs also of cattle. Thus does He multiply you. Naught in the universe is like Him.[17] He is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.[18]

17. Literally, "Nothing is like His likeness," which implies this: Even if there were a likeness of Allah, nothing would be like it, not to speak of being like unto Allah Himself.

18. That is, at one and the same time He is hearing everybody and seeing everything in the Universe.

لَهٗ مَقَالِيۡدُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ۚ يَبۡسُطُ الرِّزۡقَ لِمَنۡ يَّشَآءُ وَيَقۡدِرُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ بِكُلِّ شَىۡءٍ
عَلِيۡمٌ 12

(42:12) His are the keys of the heavens and the earth. He enlarges and straitens the sustenance of whomsoever He pleases. Surely He has knowledge of everything.[19]

19. These are the arguments to prove why Allah alone is the true Guardian and why putting trust in Him alone is right and correct and why He alone should be turned to in all matters. (For explanation, see (Surah An-Naml, Ayats 60-66); (Surah Ar-Room, Ayats 20-22 and the E.Ns)).

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الدِّيْنِ مَا وَصّٰى بِهٖ نُوْحًا وَّالَّذِيْٓ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهٖٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ
وَمُوْسٰى وَعِيْسٰٓى اَنْ اَقِيْمُوا الدِّيْنَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوْا فِيْهِ ؕ كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ مَا تَدْعُوْهُمْ
اِلَيْهِ ؕ اَللّٰهُ يَجْتَبِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَهْدِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ مَنْ يُّنِيْبُ 13

(42:13) He has prescribed for you the religion which He enjoined upon Noah and which We revealed to you (O Muhammad), and which We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus, commanding: "Establish this religion and do not split up regarding it."[20] What you are calling to is very hard upon those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity. Allah chooses for Himself whomsoever He pleases and guides to Himself whoever penitently turns to Him.[21]

20. Here the same thing as already mentioned in the first verse has been further elaborated. It clearly states that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is not the founder of any new religion, nor was any of the Prophets a founder of a separate religion, but it has been one and the same religion which all the Prophets have been presenting from Allah from the very beginning, and the same is being presented by Muhammad (peace be upon him). In this regard, the first name mentioned is of the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him), who was the first Prophet after the Flood. After him the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has been mentioned, who is the last of the Prophets; then the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) has been mentioned, whom the Arabs acknowledged as their guide, and last of all, the Prophets Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them) have been mentioned to whom the Jews and the Christians attribute their religions. This does not mean that only these five Prophets had been enjoined this religion, but what is meant to be said is that all the Prophets who came to this world, brought one and the same religion and the names of the five illustrious Prophets have been mentioned only as examples through whom the world received the most well known codes of divine law.

As this verse throws important light on Deen (religion) and its aim, it is necessary that we should study it to understand it well.

Lexically, the word sharaa in sharaa lakum (ordained for you) means to make the way. As a term it implies appointing a way, a code and a rule. Accordingly, in Arabic the words tashri and shariat and shari are understood as the synonyms of legislation and law and law giver respectively. This divine legislation, in fact, is the natural and logical result of the fundamental truths which have been stated in(verses 1, 9 and 10) above: that Allah alone is the Owner of everything in the Universe, and He alone is man's real Guardian and it is for Him to judge the disputes that arise between human beings. Now, when Allah alone is the Owner and Guardian and Ruler, inevitably He alone is entitled to make the code of law for man and it is His responsibility that He should give this code of law to man. So, He has carried out His responsibility like this.

Then the words min-ad-din (of the nature of din) denote that the way appointed by Allah is legislation pertaining to deen. If the explanation of the word deen that we have given in (E.N. 3 of Surah Az-Zumar) above, is kept in view, there can be no difficulty in understanding that deen means nothing but acknowledging the sovereignty and leadership of someone and obeying his commands. And when this word is used in the meaning of the way, it implies the way which man must regard as obligatory for himself to follow and the one appointing it as the one whom he ought to obey. On this basis, calling God-appointed Way as legislation pertaining to deen clearly means that it is not merely recommendatory in nature or a mere counsel, but it is a law enjoined by the Master, which must necessarily be obeyed by the servants and disobedience of which is tantamount to rebellion, and the one who does not obey it, in fact, denies Allah's being the Sovereign and Ruler and his own position of a servant.

Then, it has been said that this legislation which pertains to deen is the same as was enjoined on Noah. Abraham and Moses and the same now has been enjoined on Muhammad (peace be upon them all). This contains several points:

(1) That Allah did not send this legislation of His directly to every man, but appointed whenever He deemed proper and necessary a person as His Messenger and consigned the legislation w him.

(2) That this legislation has been the same from the beginning. It did not so happen that in one age one particular deen was appointed for a nation, and in another age another and contradictory deen was sent for another nation. Allah did not send many deens but on every occasion He sent one and the same deen.

(3) That it is an essential part of this deen to acknowledge the apostleship of those men through whom the legislation has been sent and the revelation in which the legislation has been couched, besides acknowledging the Sovereignty of Allah; and it is the demand of reason and logic too, that it should be a necessary part of it, for a man cannot obey this legislation at all unless he is satisfied that it is authentically from Allah.

Then it has been said that the Prophets were given this legislation pertaining to deen, with the express instruction: Aqim-ud-din; "Establish this deen", or "Keep this deen established," as variously translated by Shah Waliullah, Shah Rafiuddin and Shah Abdul Qadir. Both these translations are correct, for iqamat means both to establish and to keep established, and the Prophets were appointed to perform both the functions. Their first duty was to establish this din wherever it was not established, and the second that they should keep it established after they had established it, or had found it already established in a place. Obviously, a thing can be kept established only when it has already been established, otherwise the primary requirement would be to establish it first, and then make continuous effort to keep it established.

Here, two questions arise: First, what is the meaning of establishing the deen? Second, what is deen itself, which we have been enjoined to establish and then keep it established? Let us try to understand these questions well.

The word iqamat (to establish) when used in respect of a material or physical object implies causing it to rise from the sitting or lying positions or assembling the scattered parts of a thing and raising it up high. But when iqamat is used in respect of a thing which is not material but spiritual in nature, it does not merely imply preaching it, but also acting according to it as best as one can, introducing it and enforcing it practically. For example, when we say that so and so established his rule, it does not mean that he invited others to his government but that he subdued the people of the land and organized the different departments of the government in a way that the administration of the country began to function according to his orders. Similarly, when we say that courts have been established in the country, it means that judges have been appointed to do justice and they ate hearing the cases and giving judgments, and not that hymns in praise of justice are being sung and the people being impressed. Likewise, when the Quran enjoins the establishment of the Prayer (Salat), it does not imply that one should merely preach and exhort others to the Prayer but that one should not only perform it himself, observing all its conditions, but should also strive to make arrangement so that it becomes a regular practice among the believers. There should be mosques, there should be arrangements for offering the Prayer collectively and for the Friday congregational Prayer, and for making calls to the Prayer punctually. There should be the Imams to lead the Prayers and the scholars to give sermons, and the people should visit the mosques regularly and punctually and make offering the Prayer an essential part of their daily routine. After this explanation, there should remain no difficulty in understanding that when the Prophets were enjoined to establish the deen and to keep it established, it did not simply mean that they should practice it themselves and not only that they should preach it to others so that the people may accept its truth, but also that when the people have accepted it, steps should be taken to introduce and enforce the entire deen practically among them so that they may start living according to it forever afterwards. No doubt preaching is the primary necessary stage of this work without which there can be no second stage, but every intelligent person can himself see that in this command preaching has not been made the object, but the real object is to establish the deen and keep it established. Preaching is certainly a means to the end but not the end in itself, but nobody can say that it was the only and foremost object of the mission of the Prophets.

Now, let us take the second question. When some people saw that the deen which has been enjoined to be established is common among all the Prophets, and their shariahs have been different, as Allah Himself says: We appointed for each community among you a law and a way of life, they formed the view that inevitably this deen did not imply the shariah commandments, rules and regulations but only the acceptance of Tauhid, the Hereafter and the Book and the Prophethood and performance of certain acts of devotion to Allah, or at the most, it included some of the major moral principles which have been common to all the shariahs. But this is a superficial view, which has been formed after having a cursory glance over the unity of religion and the difference of the shariahs. This is, however, a dangerous view, which if not corrected in time, may well lead to the separation between deen (religion) and shariahs (law). It was this very view in, which St. Paul was involved, who presented the doctrine of the deen (religion) without shariah (law), and corrupted the community of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him). For, if shariah (law) is something separate from deen (religion) and the command is only for establishing the deen and not the shariah, inevitably the Muslims also, like the Christians, would regard the shariah as unimportant and overlook its establishment as not being the real object by itself, and would remain content with only

beliefs and a few important moral principles. Instead of determining the meaning of deen from such speculations, let us turn to the Quran itself and see whether the deen which we have been enjoined here to establish implies the beliefs and a few important moral principles only, or the shariah values and commandments as well. When we explore the Quran we find that what it regards as deen includes the following things as well:

(1) And the only command they were given was to worship Allah, making their deen sincerely His, turning all their attention towards Him, and to establish the Salat and to pay the Zakat, this alone is the true and right deen. (Surah Al-Bayyinah, Ayat 5). This shows that the Salat and the Zakat are included in this deen, whereas the commandments pertaining to both have been different in the different shariahs. No one can say that in all the previous shariahs the Salat has had the same form, the same elements, the same number of the rakahs, the same direction of the qiblah, the same times and the same other commands concerning it. Likewise, no one can claim also about the Zakat that in all the shariahs the same has been the exemption limits, the same rates and the same injunctions concerning its collection and distribution. But in spite of the difference of the shariahs, Allah has regarded both these as part of deen.

(2) You are forbidden carrion and blood, the flesh of swine and of that animal which has been slaughtered in any name other than of Allah, and of the strangled animal, and of that beaten to death or killed by a fall or gored to death or mangled by a beast of prey, save of that you duly slaughtered while it was still alive, and of that which is slaughtered at (ungodly) shrines. It is also unlawful for you to try to find your fortune by means of divining devices, for all these things are sinful acts. Today the disbelievers have despaired of (vanquishing) your religion; therefore do not fear them but fear Me. Today I have perfected your deen for you and completed My blessing on you and approved Islam as the deen (way of life) for you. (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 3). This shows that all these shariah commandments are also deen.

(3) Fight with those from among the people of the Book, who do not believe in Allah nor in the Last Day; who do not make unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have made unlawful, and do not adopt the right deen as their deen. (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 29). This shows that besides belief in Allah and the Hereafter it is also deen to accept and follow the commands about the lawful and the unlawful, which have been given by Allah and His Messenger.

(4) The woman and the man guilty of fornication, flog each one of them with a hundred stripes, and let not any pity for them restrain you in regard to a matter prescribed in the deen of Allah, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. (Surah An-Noor, Ayat 2). It did not behoove Joseph to seize his brother by the king's deen. (Surah Yousuf, Ayat 76). This shows that the criminal law is also deen. If a man follows the criminal law prescribed by God, he is a follower of God's deen and if he follows a king's law, he is a follower of the king's deen.

These are the four specimens in which the shariah commandments have been described as deen in clear words. But, besides these, a careful study shows that the eradication of the sins for which Allah has held out the threat of Hell (e.g. adultery, taking of interest, killing of a believer, consuming the property of the orphan, taking possession of the other peoples properties in unlawful ways etc.), and the crimes which become the cause of God's torment,

e.g. sodomy (the act of Prophet Lot's people) and dishonesty in business dealings (as practiced by the Prophet Shuaib's people) should necessarily be included in deen, for if deen cannot save one from Hell and Allah's torment, what use could it be? Likewise, those shariah commandments also should be part of the deen, violation of which has been regarded as cause of entry into the Fire, e.g. injunctions relating to inheritance, after stating which it has been said: And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger and transgresses the limits prescribed by Him, Allah will cast him into the Fire wherein he will have a disgraceful torment. (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 14). Likewise, the prohibition of those things whose prohibition Allah has mentioned with great emphasis and absoluteness, e.g. prohibition of the mother, sister and daughter and prohibition of wine, theft, gambling, false evidence, etc. if not included in the establishment of the deen, it would mean that Allah has given some unnecessary commands also, which are not meant to be introduced and enforced. Similarly, establishing those things which Allah has made obligatory, e.g. fasting and pilgrimage, cannot be excluded from the establishment of deen only on the pretext that the entire month of fasting of Ramadan had not been enjoined in the previous shariahs, and pilgrimage to the Kabah was enjoined only in the Shariah which was inherited by the Ishmaelite branch of the Prophet Abraham's progeny.

As a matter of fact, the misunderstanding was caused only because the verse: We appointed for each community among you a law and a way of life, has been misconstrued to mean that since the shariah appointed for every community was separate and the command given was only to establish the deen (way of life) which was common to all the Prophets, the establishment of the shariah was not included in the establishment of the deen, whereas the real meaning of this verse is just the opposite of it. If the context(verses 41-50)in which this verse has occurred in Surah Al- Maidah is studied carefully, it will be seen that the correct meaning of this verse is: Whatever shariah was given by Allah to the community of a Prophet, was the deen for that community, and the establishment of the same deen was the object during his Prophethood. And since now is the period of the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) Prophethood, the shariah which has been given to the Ummah of Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the deen of this time, and to establish the same is to establish the deen. As for the difference of the shariah, it does not mean that the shariahs sent by God were mutually contradictory, but it means that in their details there have been some differences owing to the different environments, take, for instance, the Prayer and the Fast. The Prayer has been obligatory in all the shariahs, but the qiblah of all the shariahs was not the same, and there was a difference in its times and rakahs and elements as well. Likewise, the Fast was obligatory in every shariah, but the month long fasting of Ramadan was not there in the other shariahs. From this it is not correct to conclude that the Prayer and the Fast as such are included in the establishment of deen but performing the Prayer in a particular way and observing the Fast at a particular time is excluded from it. However, the correct conclusion that one can draw is: To perform the Prayer and observe the Fast according to the rules and procedures that had been appointed for the people in the shariah of every Prophet amounted to establishment of deen in his time. In the present age the establishment of the deen is that these acts of worship be performed according to the procedures enjoined in the Shariah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The same is true about all other Shariah commandments as well.

Whoever studies the Quran carefully will see that this Book does not envisage that its adherents will live as subjects of the disbelievers and will pass a religious life under them, but it openly proclaims that it will have its own rule established; it demands from its followers that they should struggle with their lives for the intellectual, cultural, legal and political supremacy of the true faith; and it gives them a program for the reformation of human life, the major part of which can be acted upon only when political power and authority is in the believers' hand. As stated by itself, the object of this Book's being sent down is: We have sent down this Book to you with the truth so that you may judge between the people in accordance with the light that Allah has shown you. (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 105). The Commandments given in this Book about the collection and distribution of the Zakat expressly envisage a government who should be responsible for collecting the Zakat and distributing it among the deserving people according to a laid down procedure. (Surah At-Taubah, Ayats 60,103). The prohibition of interest that has been enjoined in this Book and the declaration of war that has been made against those who do not abstain from taking interest (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 275-279) can be enforced only when the political and economic system of the country is entirely in the believers' hand. The Law of Retribution for murder (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 178), cutting off of the hand for theft (Surah AI-Maidah, Ayat 38) and carrying out of the prescribed punishment for adultery and calumny (Surah An-Noor, Ayat 2-4) have not been enjoined on the assumption that the believers will remain subject to the police and courts of the disbelievers. The command to fight the disbelievers (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 190,216) has not been given with the idea that the followers of this deen will carry out this command by getting enlisted in the army of disbelief. The command to take Jizyah from the followers of the former Books (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 29) has not been given on the assumption that the Muslims will take Jizyah from them while being their subjects and will be responsible for their protection. And this thing is not true only about the Madinite Surahs; in the Makkan Surahs as well a discerning eye can clearly see that the scheme envisaged from the very beginning was of Islam's supremacy and dominance and not of Islam's and the Muslims' subjugation under an un-Islamic rule. See, for instance, (Surah Bani Israil, Ayats 76-89); (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayats 85-86); (Surah Ar-Room, Ayats 1-6); (Surah As-Saaffat, Ayats 171-179); Surah Suad, Introduction, (Ayat 11 and E.N. 12)on it.

Above all, this misinterpretation clashes with the great work that the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself accomplished during the 23 years of his Prophethood. Who can deny the fact that he subdued entire Arabia by means of both preaching and the sword and established in it a full fledged system of government with a detailed law, covering all aspects of life, from beliefs and rites of worship to personal conduct, collective morality, culture and civilization, economic and social life, politics and judiciary, peace and war. If this entire work of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is not accepted as a commentary of the command of iqamat deen (establishment of deen) which, according to this verse, he had been enjoined to undertake like all other Prophets, then it could have one of the two meanings: That earlier, God forbid, the Prophet (peace be upon him) should be blamed that he had been appointed only to preach and teach beliefs and a few important moral rules but he exceeded his mandate and established a government of his own whim and laid down a code of law, which was different from the common law of the Prophets as well as in excess of it; or that Allah should be blamed that after having made the above mentioned declaration in Surah Ash-Shura. He went back on His own word, and made His last Prophet do something which was not only much over and about and different from the objective of

iqamat deen as stated in this Surah, but on the completion of this mission He also made this declaration, contrary to His first declaration: Today I have perfected your deen for you. (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 3). May Allah keep us safe from this! Apart from these two, if there is any third alternative, which makes this interpretation of iqamat deen plausible and also does not lay any blame on Allah or His Messenger, we would like to know it.

After giving the command for iqamat deen, the last thing that Allah has stated in this verse is this: La tatafarraqu fihi: Do not create schisms in the deen: Be not divided in it. Creating schisms in deen implies that one should introduce something new in religion for which there exists no sound basis, and then should insist that belief and unbelief depend on the acceptance of the innovation, and should separate along with those who have accepted it from those who have not accepted it. This new thing can be of several kinds:

(1) To introduce something entirely new into deen.

(2) To exclude from deen something which actually belonged to it.

(3) To tamper with the fundamentals of deen by misinterpretations and introduce new beliefs and novel practices.

(4) To distort the deen by making changes of fundamental nature in it, for example, by reducing what was important in it to un-important, by raising what was at most permissible to the position of imperative and obligatory, even to the position of the most fundamental pillar of Islam. Owing to such innovations, divisions first appeared in the communities of the Prophets; then gradually the creeds of the sects developed into wholly separate and mutually exclusive religious systems whose followers now do not have any idea that once they all belonged to one and the same origin. These divisions have nothing to do with the permissible and reasonable difference of opinion which naturally takes place among the scholars when they are engaged in understanding and studying the injunctions and fundamentals of the deen for the purpose of deriving and extracting points of law, and for which there is room in the words of the Book of Allah itself owing to the considerations of lexicon, idiom and rules of grammar. (For a detailed discussion of this subject, see(Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 213); (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayats 19, 50); (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 171); (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 77); (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 159); (Surah An-Nahl, Ayats 118-124); (Surah Al- Anbiya, Ayats 92-93); (Surah Al-Hajj, Ayat 67); (Surah Al- Muminun, Ayats 53-54); (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 53); (Surah ArRoom, Ayat 32 and the E.Ns).

21. Here the same thing as stated in(verses 8-9) above, has been reiterated, and we have explained it in (E.N. 11) above. The object of repeating it here is as if to say: You are presenting the clear highway of religion before them but the foolish people, instead of appreciating the blessing, are becoming annoyed over it. But even among them there are the people of their own tribe, who are turning to Allah and Allah also is drawing them closer to Himself. But one should understand that Allah's bestowal of His blessings is not blind. He draws only him towards Himself who is inclined to be drawn and not him who runs away from Him.

وَمَا تَفَرَّقُوٓا إِلَّا مِنۢ بَعۡدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ ٱلۡعِلۡمُ بَغۡيَۢا بَيۡنَهُمۡۚ وَلَوۡلَا كَلِمَةٞ سَبَقَتۡ مِن رَّبِّكَ
إِلَىٰٓ أَجَلٖ مُّسَمّٗى لَّقُضِيَ بَيۡنَهُمۡۚ وَإِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوْرِثُواْ ٱلۡكِتَٰبَ مِنۢ بَعۡدِهِمۡ لَفِي شَكّٖ مِّنۡهُ
مُرِيبٖ 14

(42:14) They did not split up except after knowledge had come to them,[22] and then only because they wished to commit excesses against each other.[23] Had your Lord not already decreed that judgement would be made later at an appointed time, the matter between them would surely have been decided once and for all.[24] Indeed those who were later made the heirs of the Book are in disquieting doubt about it.[25]

22. That is, the divisions were created not because Allah had failed to send the Prophets and the Books, and therefore, the people could not know the right way and so invented their own separate religions, sects, schools of thought and systems of life, but divisions appeared after knowledge had come to them from Allah. Therefore, Allah is not responsible for it, but the people who abandoned the clear principles of religion and commands of the Shariah and created their own creeds and religions are themselves responsible for it.

23. That is, the motive for creating the divisions was not good, but they resulted from the desire for ostentation, love of an independent entity, mutual rivalry and stubbornness, the urge to humiliate and defeat one another, and greed for worldly wealth and position. When the clever and ambitious saw that if the godly people followed the true religion honestly, there would only be One God before whom the people would bow, there would be one Messenger whom they would acknowledge as their guide and leader, there would be one Book which they would turn to and there would be a clearly defined creed and code of life which they would be following. In such a system there could be no place of distinction for themselves, on the strength of which they could have their own leadership flourish so that the people should rally round them, and bow to them and also make rich offerings to them. This was the real cause which became the motive of the invention of new creeds and philosophies, new ways and rites of worship and new systems of life, and diverted a large part of humanity from the highway of divine religion and misled them into blind alleys. Then the mutual disputes of the factions and their religious, economic and political conflicts gave rise to intense bitterness, which in turn led to bloodshed and violence among humanity.

24. That is, all such people who were guilty of inventing false systems and followed them would have been annihilated in the world itself by a torment, and only the righteous ones allowed to survive, which should have indicated as to who was a follower of the truth and who of falsehood in the sight of Allah. But Allah has deferred this decision till Resurrection, for after such a decision in the world, the trial of mankind becomes meaningless.

25. It means: After the passage of the time of every Prophet and his closest followers when the divine Book reached the later generations, they did not receive it with faith and conviction but were involved in doubts and suspicions and confusions about it. There were

many causes for this state of affairs, which can be easily understood by a study of the case of the Torah and the Gospel. The earlier generations have not conveyed both these Books to the later generations well preserved in their original state and in their original words and language. They mixed up the divine word in them with the human word in the form of their commentary, history, verbal traditions and juristic hair-splitting. They made their translations prevail until the original was lost and only the translations remained. Their historical authenticity also was ruined, so much so that nobody now can say with certainty that the Book in his hand is the same that the world had once received through the Prophet Moses or the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon them). Then their elders in the different periods of history initiated such discussions on religion, divinity, philosophy, law, physics, psychology and sociology and invented such systems of thought that the people were lost in them and it became impossible for them to decide as to which was the straight highway of the truth among the countless crooked ways. And since the divine Book did not exist in its original, reliable state, they could neither turn to any authority that could help them to distinguish the truth from falsehood.

فَلِذٰلِكَ فَادْعُ ۚ وَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَآ أُمِرْتَ ۚ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَآءَهُمْ ۚ وَقُلْ اٰمَنْتُ بِمَآ أَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ
مِنْ كِتٰبٍ ۚ وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمُ ۖ اَللّٰهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ ۖ لَنَآ أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ ۚ
لَا حُجَّةَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمُ ۖ اَللّٰهُ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا ۚ وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ ۖ 15

(42:15) (This being so, O Muhammad), call people to the same religion and be steadfast about it as you were commanded, and do not follow their desires,[26] and say (to them): "I believe in the Book Allah has sent down.[27] I have been commanded to establish justice among you.[28] Allah is our Lord and your Lord. We have our deeds and you have your deeds.[29] There is no contention between us and you.[30] Allah will bring us all together. To Him all are destined to return."

26. That is, do not make any change nor effect any increase or decrease in this religion only to please them. Do not resort to any compromises with the misguided people on the principle of give and take. Do not make any room in the religion for their whims, prejudices and practices of ignorance in the hope that they would embrace Islam. Let the one who wants to accept, accept the original, pure religion of God, as sent down by Him, straight forwardly; otherwise let him go and enter any hell that he chooses for himself. The religion of God cannot be changed for the sake of the people; if the people are desirous of their own well being and true success, let them change their ways and mold themselves according to it.

27. In other words, I am not like those schismatic people who believe in some Books sent down by God and disbelieve in others; I believe in every Book sent down by Him.

28. This sentence has several meanings:

(1) I have been appointed to discard the schisms and adopt true impartiality. I do not like to harbor prejudice in favor of one and against the other schism. I have one and the same kind of relationship with all human beings, and it is the relationship of justice and equity. I am a companion and supporter of everyone who follows the truth, whether he is an utter stranger for me, and an opponent of everyone who follows falsehood, whether he is a neighbor or a close kinsman.

(2) There is no place of distinction for anybody in the system of truth, which I have, been appointed to present before you. It honors everyone equally. It does not contain separate sets of the rights for the kindred and the stranger, the big and the small, the poor and the rich, the noble and the humble. Whatever is good in it is good for everyone, and whatever is sinful and unlawful and criminal in it is sinful, unlawful and criminal for everybody. In its just system, there is no exception even for my own self.

(3) I have been appointed to establish justice in the world. I have been entrusted with the mission of doing justice between the people and should put an end to their excesses and injustice, which are prevalent in your society.

Besides, there is also a fourth meaning of this sentence, which remained hidden in Makkan life but became clear after emigration to Madinah, and it was: I am a judge appointed by God, I am responsible to do justice between you.

29. That is, each one of us is himself responsible and accountable for his deeds. If you do good, you will yourself profit by its good results, and not we. If we do evil, we ourselves shall bear all its evil consequences, and not you. The same thing has been stated in (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 139); (Surah Younus, Ayat 41); (Surah Houd, Ayat 35); and (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 55).

30. That is, we have done our best in conveying to you the message in a rational way. Now there is no use wrangling and disputing; therefore, even if you try to have a dispute with us, we have no desire to join in.

وَالَّذِيْنَ يُحَآجُّوْنَ فِي اللّٰهِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا اسْتُجِيْبَ لَهٗ حُجَّتُهُمْ دَاحِضَةٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ وَّلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌ 16

(42:16) Those who contend concerning Allah[31] (after His call has been responded to), their contention is absolutely void in the sight of their Lord. Allah's wrath is upon them and a grievous chastisement awaits them.

31. This is an allusion to the state of affairs that was being experienced in Makkah at that time almost daily. Whenever it became known about somebody that he had become a Muslim, the people would start treating him mercilessly. They would worry and vex him, would neither let him have peace in the house nor in the street nor in society. Wherever he went, they would start an endless discussion with the object to somehow make him

abandon Muhammad (peace be upon him) and return to the same creed of ignorance which he had rejected.

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیۡۤ اَنۡزَلَ الۡکِتٰبَ بِالۡحَقِّ وَالۡمِیۡزَانَ ؕ وَمَا یُدۡرِیۡکَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ قَرِیۡبٌ 17

(42:17) Allah it is Who sent down this Book with the Truth and the Balance.[32] And what would make you know that the Hour (of Judgement) has drawn near?[33]

32. Mizan (Balance): the Shariah of Allah, which, like a balance, brings out clearly the distinction between the right and the wrong, the truth and falsehood, justice and injustice, and righteousness and wickedness. In(verse 15) above, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been made to say: I have been commanded to do justice between you. Here, it has been told that with this Book the Balance has come by which justice will be established.

33. That is, the one who is inclined to mend his ways, must mend his ways forthwith, he should not lose time under the delusion that the Hour of Judgment is yet far off. Man cannot be sure whether he will be able to take another breath or not, his present breath may be his last.

یَسۡتَعۡجِلُ بِهَا الَّذِیۡنَ لَا یُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِهَا ۚ وَالَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا مُشۡفِقُوۡنَ مِنۡهَا ۙ وَیَعۡلَمُوۡنَ اَنَّهَا الۡحَقُّ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّ الَّذِیۡنَ یُمَارُوۡنَ فِی السَّاعَةِ لَفِیۡ ضَلٰلٍۢ بَعِیۡدٍ 18

(42:18) Those who do not believe in it seek to hasten its coming. But those who believe (in it) hold it in dread and know that the Hour (of Judgement) is bound to come. Lo, those who dispute concerning the coming of the Hour are gone far in error.

اَللّٰهُ لَطِیۡفٌۢ بِعِبَادِهٖ یَرۡزُقُ مَنۡ یَّشَآءُ ۚ وَهُوَ الۡقَوِیُّ الۡعَزِیۡزُ ع 19

(42:19) Allah is Most Gentle to His servants[34] and grants sustenance to whomsoever He pleases.[35] He is All-Strong, Most Mighty.[36]

34. The word “Subtle” cannot fully convey the meaning of the word Latif as used in the original. This word contains two meanings: First, that Allah is very Kind and Compassionate to His servants; second, that He is a subtle observer and keeps in view even their minutest and most ordinary needs, which none else can see, and He fulfills them in such ways that they themselves do not perceive as to which need of theirs has been fulfilled at what time and by whom. Then the slaves here does not imply only the believers but all slaves. That is, Allah is Kind and Compassionate to all His slaves.

35. It means: The demand of His general kindness and compassion is not this that all the slaves should be given everything equally. For, although He is providing for each and every one from His treasures, there is no equality and uniformity in the measure of His provisions.

He has given one thing to one and another to another. He has provided someone with something in a greater measure and another with another thing more generously.

36. That is, His system of providence is functioning undo His own might. No one has the power to change it or take away something forcibly from Him, or prevent Him from providing for somebody.

ج

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ حَرْثَ الْاٰخِرَةِ نَزِدْ لَهٗ فِيْ حَرْثِهٖ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ حَرْثَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهٖ مِنْهَا وَمَا لَهٗ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ مِنْ نَّصِيْبٍ 20

(42:20) Whoever seeks the harvest of the Hereafter, We shall increase for him his harvest, and whoever seeks the harvest of this world, We shall give him thereof; but he will have no share in the Hereafter.[37]

37. Two of the truths have been mentioned in the previous verse, which we are observing everywhere at all times:

(1) That Allah is Kind and Compassionate to all His servants.

(2) That the measure of His provisions is not the same for everybody, but it varies from man to man. Now, in this verse it is being told that although the partial differences in kindness and measures of provisions are countless, there is also a difference of fundamental nature, which is: there is one kind of the provision for the seeker of the Hereafter and of another kind for the seeker of the world.

This is a very important truth which has been stated here briefly. Let us understand it fully, for it helps every man to determine his attitude to life.

Both the seeker of the Hereafter and the seeker of the world have been likened to the farmer in this verse, who labors persistently hard right from the time he prepares the soil until the time his crop is ready for harvesting. He puts in all his labor so that he may reap and gather the crop of the seeds he sowed. But because of the difference of the intention and objective and also the difference of the attitude and conduct, to a large extent, a vast difference takes place between the farmer who sows for the Hereafter and the farmer who sows for this world. Therefore, Allah has ordained different results and consequences of the labors of each, although the place of activity of both is this very earth.

As to the farmer who is sowing for the Hereafter, Allah has not said that he will get no share from the world. The world, in a more or less measure, he will get in any case. For, he also has a share in the common provisions being bestowed by Allah, and every person, good or bad, is getting his sustenance here. But Allah has not given him the good news of the harvest of this world but that his harvest of the Hereafter will be increased, for he is a seeker of the same, and is concerned about his end there. There are several ways in which this harvest can be increased. For example, as he will go on doing righteous deeds with sincere intentions, he will be blessed with the grace to do more and more righteous deeds and his

breast will be opened out for more and more good works. When he will make up his mind to adopt pure means for achieving pure aims, he will be blessed with pure means only and Allah will not let it so happen that all doors to goodness be closed and only doors to evil to remain open for him. Above all, his each good work, however small and insignificant, will at least be increased ten times over in the Hereafter, and there is no limit to this increase. Allah will increase it hundreds of thousands of times for whomever He may please.

As for the one who is only sowing for this world, and is not at all concerned about the Hereafter, Allah has plainly told him of two of the results of his labors:

(1) That, however hard he may struggle and strive, he will not get the whole of what he is trying for, but only a fraction of it, which Allah has ordained for him.

(2) That whatever he has to get, he will get only in this world, there is no share for him in the good things of the Hereafter.

أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكٰٓؤُا شَرَعُوْا لَهُمْ مِّنَ الدِّيْنِ مَا لَمْ يَأْذَنْۢ بِهِ اللّٰهُ ۭ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةُ الْفَصْلِ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ ۭ وَاِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ 21

(42:21) Do they have any associates (of Allah) who have laid down for them a way pertaining to faith which Allah did not sanction?[38] But for the fact that a decree had already been made, the matter between them would have been decided once and for all. Surely a grievous chastisement awaits the wrong-doers.[39]

38. In this verse the word shuraka (associates) obviously does not mean those beings whom the people invoke, or those in whose names they make offerings, or those before whom they carry out rites of worship, but inevitably it refers to those men whom the people regard as associates in the authority and sovereignty of Allah, whose thoughts, creeds, ideologies and philosophies they believe in, whose values they adopt, whose moral precepts and norms of civilization and culture they accept, and whose laws and rules and regulations they adopt to their rituals and rites of worship, in their personal and collective lives, in their trade and business dealings, in their politics and governments, as if they constituted the shariah that they had to follow faithfully. This is a complete code of life which the inventors invented against the legislation of Allah, Lord of the worlds, without His sanction and followed by the followers. This is the same sort of shirk as prostrating oneself before another and invoking another than Allah. (For further explanation, see (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 60); (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 87); (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayats 121, 136,137); (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 31); (Surah Younus, Ayat 59); (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 22); (Surah An-Nahl, Ayats 115- 116); (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayat 52); (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayats 62-64); (Surah Saba, Ayat 41); (Surah YaSeen, Ayat 74 and the relevant E.N.s).

39. That is, this is such a boldness against Allah that had not judgment been deferred till Resurrection, the torment would have been sent down on every such person, who in spite of being Allah's servant, enforced his own religion and way of life on Allah's earth, and those

people also would have been visited by it, who forsook Allah's religion and accepted the religion invented by others.

تَرَى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ مُشْفِقِيْنَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوْا وَهُوَ وَاقِعٌۢ بِهِمْ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا
الصّٰلِحٰتِ فِيْ رَوْضَاتِ الْجَنّٰتِ ۚ لَهُمْ مَّا يَشَآءُوْنَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ
الْكَبِيْرُ 22

(42:22) You will see the wrongdoers fearful of the consequence of their deeds which will certainly overtake them. But those who have faith and do good deeds will be in the meadows of the Gardens, wherein they shall have whatever they desire from their Lord; that is the great Bounty.

ذٰلِكَ الَّذِيْ يُبَشِّرُ اللّٰهُ عِبَادَهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ ؕ قُلْ لَّآ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ
اَجْرًا اِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبٰى ؕ وَمَنْ يَّقْتَرِفْ حَسَنَةً نَّزِدْ لَهٗ فِيْهَا حُسْنًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ
شَكُوْرٌ 23

(42:23) That is the Bounty of which Allah gives tidings to His servants who have faith and do good deeds. Tell them, (O Prophet): "I do not ask you for any recompense for my work[40] except love towards kinsfolk."[41] Whoever does a good deed, We shall increase its merit for him. Surely Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Appreciative.[42]

40. That is, every effort that the prophet (peace be upon him) was making to save the people from Allah's punishment and to enable them to become worthy of the promise of Paradise.

41. The word qurba in the original has been interpreted differently by the different commentators. One section of them takes it in the meaning of kinship and has given this meaning to the verse: I do not ask of you any reward for this service, but I do desire that you (O people of Quraish) should show some regard for the kinship that is there between me and you. You should have accepted my invitation, but if you do not accept it, you should not be so hard-hearted as to become my bitterest enemies in the entire land of Arabia. This is the interpretation given by Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas, which has been cited by lmam Ahmad, Bukhari. Muslim. Tirmidhi, Ibn Jarir, Tabarani, Baihaqi. Ibn Said and others on the authority of many reporters and the same commentary has been given by Mujahid. Ikrimah, Qatadah, Suddi, Abu Malik, Abdur Rehman bin Zaid bin Aslam, Dahhak. Ata bin Dinar and the other major commentators.

The other section takes qurba in the meaning of nearness and interprets the verse to mean: I do not seek from you any other reward than this that you should develop in yourselves a desire for attaining nearness to Allah. That is, you should be reformed. That is my only reward. This commentary has been reported from Hasan Basri and a saying of Qatadah also has been cited in support of this, so much so that in a tradition by Tabarani this saying has also been attributed to Ibn Abbas. In the Quran itself, at another place, this same subject has been treated, thus: Tell them: I do not seek of you any reward for this work. I only ask of the one, who will, to adopt the way of his Lord. (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayat 57).

The third group takes qurba in the meaning of the kindred, and interprets the verse to mean this: I do not seek from you any other reward than this that you should love my near and dear ones. Then, some of the commentators of this group interpret the kindred to mean alt the children of Abdul Muttalib, and some others restrict it to Ali and Fatimah and their children. This commentary has been reported from Saeed bin Jubair and Amr bin Shuaib, and in some traditions it has been attributed to Ibn Abbas and Ali bin Hussain (Zainal Abedin), but this interpretation cannot be accepted for several reasons. Firstly, when Surah Ash-Shura was revealed at Makkah, Ali and Fatimah had not yet been married and, therefore, there could be no question of their children. As for the children of Abdul Muttalib, they were not all following the Prophet (peace be upon him) but some of them had openly joined with his enemies, and the enmity of Abu Lahab is well known. Second, the kindred of the Prophet (peace be upon him) were not only the children of Abdul Muttalib but he had his kindred among all the families of the Quraish through his mother and his father and his wife Khadijah. In all these clans he had his best supporters as well as his staunch enemies. Third, and this is the most important point, in view of the high position of a Prophet (peace be upon him) from which he starts his mission of inviting the people towards Allah, it does not seem fitting that he would ask the people to love his kindred in return for his services in connection with his great mission. No person of fine taste could imagine that Allah would have taught His Prophet (peace be upon him) such a little thing, and the Prophet would have uttered the same before the Quraish. In the stories that have been narrated of the Prophets in the Quran, we find that a Prophet after Prophet stands up before his people sad says: I do not ask of you any reward: my reward is with Allah, Lord of the worlds. (Surah Younus, Ayat 72); (Surah Houd, Ayats 29, 51); (Surah Ash- Shuara, Ayats 109, 127, 145, 164, l80). In Surah YaSeen the criterion given of a Prophet's truthfulness is that he gives his invitation without any selfish motive. (verse 21). In the Quran the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself has been made to say again and again words to the effect: I demand no reward from you for this message. (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 90); (Surah Yousuf, Ayat 104); (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayat 72); (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayat 57); (Surah Saba, Ayat 47); (Surah Suad, Ayat 86); (Surah At-Toor, Ayat 40); (Surah Al- Qalam, Ayat 46). After this, what could be the occasion for the Prophet (peace be upon him) to tell the people that in return for his service of inviting them to Allah, they should love his relatives. Then it seems all the more irrelevant when we state that the addressees here are the disbelievers and not the believers. The whole discourse, from the beginning to the end, is directed to them. Therefore, there could be no question in this regard of asking the opponents for any reward, for a reward is asked of those who show some appreciation for the services that a person has rendered for them. The disbelievers were not at all appreciative of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) services. On the contrary, they regarded them as a crime and had turned bitterly hostile to him.

42. That is, contrary to the culprits who commit disobedience knowingly, Allah's affair with the servants who strive to do good, is like this:

(1) He makes them even more righteous than they could be solely by their own efforts.

(2) He overlooks the weaknesses that remain in their work, and the sins that are committed by them inadvertently, in spite of striving to become good.

(3) Allah appreciates whatever little provision of the good deeds they bring and rewards them richly and generously for it.

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا ۖ فَإِن يَشَإِ اللَّهُ يَخْتِمْ عَلَىٰ قَلْبِكَ ۗ وَيَمْحُ اللَّهُ الْبَاطِلَ وَيُحِقُّ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ ۚ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ 24

(42:24) Do they say: "He has forged a lie against Allah?"[43] If Allah so wanted He could seal up your heart.[44] Allah blots out falsehood and confirms the truth by His Words.[45] He is well aware of all the secrets hidden in the breasts (of people).[46]

43. In this interrogative sentence the style is of severe reproach. It means: O Prophet (peace be upon him): Have these people become so bold and fearless that they do not feel any shame in accusing you of inventing a lie, and that too of a heinous sin against Allah? They calumniate you that you are forging the Quran yourself and then falsely attributing to Allah.

44. That is, such big lies are only uttered by those whose hearts have been sealed up. If Allah wills, He may include you also among them, but it is His mercy that He has kept you away from them. This answer contains a severe satire against the people who were so accusing the Prophet (peace be upon him). It means this: O Prophet, they think that you are a man like them. Just as they are in the habit of uttering any big lie only for the sake of a selfish motive, so they thought you also must have forged a lie for selfish ends. But it is Allah's mercy that He has not sealed up your heart as He has sealed up theirs.

45. That is, it is Allah's way that He does not grant stability to falsehood, and in the long run proves the truth to be true. Therefore, O Prophet (peace be upon him), you should go on doing your mission, without paying any attention to their false accusations. A time will come when this whole falsehood will vanish like dust, and the truth of that which you are presenting will become visible and manifest.

46. That is, He knows why you are being thus falsely accused and what are the actual motives that are working behind all this struggle that is being made to frustrate and defeat you.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَعْفُو عَنِ السَّيِّئَاتِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ 25

(42:25) He it is Who accepts repentance from His servants and forgives sins and knows all what you do,[47]

47. Calling the people's attention to repentance immediately after the preceding verse by itself gives the meaning, as if to say: O wicked people, why are you making yourselves still more worthy of God's punishment by falsely accusing the true Prophet? If you desist from your misdeeds even now, and offer true repentance, Allah will forgive you. Repentance means that one should feel remorse for the evil he has done, and should refrain and desist from it in the future. Moreover, it is also an inevitable demand of true repentance that one should try his utmost to compensate for the evil he has done in the past, and wherever compensation is not possible, he should seek Allah's forgiveness and should do more and more good to wipe off the blot from himself. But no repentance can be true repentance unless it is offered with the intention of pleasing Allah. Giving up an evil for some other reason or intention is no repentance at all.

وَيَسْتَجِيبُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَيَزِيدُهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ ۚ وَالْكَافِرُونَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ 26

(42:26) and answers the prayers of those who believe and do good deeds and bestows upon them even more out of His Bounty. As for those who deny (the Truth), a grievous chastisement awaits them.

وَلَوْ بَسَطَ اللَّهُ الرِّزْقَ لِعِبَادِهِ لَبَغَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَٰكِن يُنَزِّلُ بِقَدَرٍ مَّا يَشَاءُ ۚ إِنَّهُ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرٌ بَصِيرٌ 27

(42:27) If Allah were to grant ample sustenance to His servants they would go about transgressing in the land. But He sends down in due measure whatever (sustenance) He wills. Surely He is Well-Aware and All-Seeing concerning matters that relate to His servants.[48]

48. If the context in which this thing has been said is kept in view, it appears that Allah here is alluding to the basic factor that was working in the rebellion of the disbelievers of Makkah. Although they were insignificant as against the mighty Roman and Iranian Empires and their position among the nations of the neighboring countries was no more than of a commercial tribe of a backward people, the relative prosperity and glory that they enjoyed among the other Arabs had made them so proud and arrogant that they were not inclined even to listen to the Prophet (peace be upon him) of Allah, and their chiefs of the tribes regarded it below their dignity that Muhammad bin Abdullah (peace be upon him) should be their guide and they his followers. On this it is being said: If We had actually opened up the gates of provisions for these mean people, they would have burst with pride. But We are watching over them, and are providing for them only sparingly so as to keep them within limits. According to this meaning this verse, in other words, is touching on the same subject

which has already been treated in (Surah At- Taubah, Ayats 68-70); (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayats 32-42); (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayats 75-82); (Surah Ar-Room, Ayat 9); (Surah Saba, Ayats 34-36)and (Surah Al-Mumin, Ayats 82-85).

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ يُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا قَنَطُوْا وَيَنْشُرُ رَحْمَتَهٗ ؕ وَهُوَ الْوَلِيُّ الْحَمِيْدُ 28

(42:28) He it is Who sends down the rain after they despair of it, spreading out His Mercy. He is the Protector, the Immensely Praiseworthy.[49]

49. Here, the word wali implies the Being who is the Governor of the affairs of all His creations, Who has taken the responsibility of fulfilling all the needs and requirements of His servants.

وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ خَلْقُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَثَّ فِيْهِمَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ ؕ وَهُوَ عَلٰى جَمْعِهِمْ اِذَا يَشَآءُ قَدِيْرٌ ع 29

(42:29) And of His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the living creatures that He has spread out in them.[50] He has the power to bring them together when He so wills.[51]

50. "In them both": In both the earth and the heavens.

51. That is, just as He has the power to disperse them, so He has also the power to gather them all together. Therefore, it is wrong to think that Resurrection cannot take place, and all the former and the latter generations cannot be raised up and gathered all together.

وَمَآ اَصَابَكُمْ مِّنْ مُّصِيْبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ اَيْدِيْكُمْ وَيَعْفُوْا عَنْ كَثِيْرٍ ؕ 30

(42:30) Whatever misfortune befalls you is a consequence of your own deeds. But much of it He forgives.[52]

52. One should note that here the cause of all human afflictions is not being stated but the address is directed to the people who were at that time committing disbelief and disobedience at Makkah. They are being told: Had Allah seized you for all your sins and crimes, He would not have even allowed you to live. But the calamities (probably the allusion is to the famine of Makkah) that have descended on you, are only a warning so that you may take heed and examine your actions and deeds to see as to what attitude and conduct you have adopted as against your Lord. And you can try to understand how helpless you actually are against God against Whom you are rebelling, and know that those whom you have taken as your patrons and supporters, or the powers that you have relied upon, cannot avail you anything against the punishment of Allah.

For further explanation it is necessary to state that as regards to the sincere believer, Allah's law for him is different. All the calamities and hardships that befall him go on becoming an atonement for his sins, errors and deficiencies. There is an authentic Hadith to the effect: Whatever sorrow and suffering, distress and grief, and affliction and worry that a Muslim experiences, even if it be a thorn prick, it is made an atonement by Allah for one or the other of his errors. (Bukhari, Muslim). As for the hardships that a believer faces in the way of raising Allah's Word, they do not merely become an atonement for his deficiencies but also a means of the exaltation of ranks with Allah. In this connection, it cannot even be imagined that they descend as a punishment for sins.

وَمَآ أَنتُم بِمُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۖ وَمَا لَكُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ 31

(42:31) You cannot frustrate Him in the earth; you have no protector nor helper against Allah.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ الْجَوَارِ فِي الْبَحْرِ كَالْأَعْلَامِ 32

(42:32) And of His Signs are the ships that sail in the sea like mountains.

إِن يَشَأْ يُسْكِنِ الرِّيحَ فَيَظْلَلْنَ رَوَاكِدَ عَلَىٰ ظَهْرِهِ ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ 33

(42:33) If He so wills, He can cause the winds to become still so that they will remain motionless on its surface. Surely there are many Signs in this for those who are wont to be steadfast and give thanks.[53]

53. Signs for him who patiently endures, who keeps himself fully under control and remains steadfast on the path of servitude under all circumstances, good or bad; who does not forget himself so as to become rebellious against God and cruel to the people, when favored with good times, and loses heart and stoops to anything when visited by evil times. A grateful person is every such person who regards it as a bounty of Allah and not the result of any merit or excellence in himself when he is exalted to any high place of honor in life by a divine decree, and keeps his mind concentrated on the blessings which remain available to man even under the worst circumstances instead of his deprivations when deposed to the lowest of the low position. Thus, he continues to thank his Lord in both prosperity and adversity with his tongue and heart.

أَوْ يُوبِقْهُنَّ بِمَا كَسَبُوا وَيَعْفُ عَن كَثِيرٍ 34

(42:34) He may, while forgiving much of the sins of those that ride these ships, drown them on account of some of their misdeeds.

وَّيَعۡلَمَ الَّذِيۡنَ يُجَادِلُوۡنَ فِىۡۤ اٰيٰتِنَا ؕ مَا لَهُمۡ مِّنۡ مَّحِيۡصٍ 35

(42:35) Then those who wrangle about Our Signs will come to know that there is no escape for them.[54]

54. The Quraish, in connection with their business and trade, had also to visit Habash and the coastal lands of Africa, and in these journeys they used sailing ships and boats for crossing the Red Sea, which is a very dangerous sea. It is generally stormy and abounds in submerged rocks which are a serious hazard for navigation especially during the storms. Therefore, the state that has been depicted here by Allah could be fully realized by the people of the Quraish in the light of their personal experiences.

فَمَاۤ اُوۡتِيۡتُمۡ مِّنۡ شَىۡءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الۡحَيٰوةِ الدُّنۡيَا ۚ وَمَا عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ خَيۡرٌ وَّاَبۡقٰى لِلَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَلٰى رَبِّهِمۡ يَتَوَكَّلُوۡنَ ۚ 36

(42:36) That which has been given to you is only the wherewithal of the transient life of this world.[55] But that which is with Allah is better and more enduring[56] for those who believe and put their trust in their Lord;[57]

55. That is, it is not a thing at which man should exult whatever worldly wealth a person has in his possession, he has it only for a short time. He uses it for a few years and then leaves the world empty-handed. Then, although the amount of the wealth may be very high in the ledgers, practically only a fraction of it is used by the man himself. To exult at such wealth does not behoove a man who understands the truth about himself, about his wealth and this world itself.

56. That is, that wealth is far more superior as regards to its nature and quality and is also eternal and everlasting.

57. Here, trust (tawakkul) in Allah has been regarded as an inevitable demand of the faith and a necessary characteristic for success in the Hereafter. Tawakkul means:

(1) That man should have full confidence in the guidance of Allah, and should understand that the knowledge of the truth, the principles of morality, the bounds of the lawful and the unlawful, and the rules and regulations of passing life in the world, that Allah had enjoined, are based on the truth and in following them alone lies man's good and well being.

(2) That man should not place reliance on his own powers and abilities, means and resources, plans and schemes and the help of others than Allah, but he should keep deeply impressed in his mind the fact that his success in every thing, here and in the Hereafter, actually depends on the help and succor of Allah, and that he can become worthy of Allah's help and succor only if he works with the object of winning His approval, within the bounds prescribed by Him.

(3) That man should have complete faith in the promises that Allah has made with those who would adopt the way of faith and righteousness and work in the cause of the truth instead of falsehood, and having faith in the same promises would discard all those benefits, gains and pleasures that may seem to accrue from following the way of falsehood, and endure all those losses, hardships and deprivations that may become his lot on account of following the truth steadfastly. From this explanation of the meaning of tawakkul it becomes obvious how deeply it is related with the faith, and why those wonderful results that have been promised to the believers who practice tawakkul cannot be obtained from the mere empty affirmation of the faith.

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَجْتَنِبُوْنَ كَبٰٓئِرَ الْاِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ وَاِذَا مَا غَضِبُوْا هُمْ يَغْفِرُوْنَ ۚ 37

(42:37) who eschew grave sins and shameful deeds,[58] and whenever they are angry, forgive;[59]

58. For explanation, see (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 31); (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 151); (Surah An-Naml, Ayat 90); (Surah An- Najm, Ayat 32 and the E.Ns).

59. That is, they are not wrathful and crazy but are temperate and cool minded. They are not revengeful but forbearing and forgiving by nature. If ever they feel angry at something they control their rage. This characteristic is the best of man's qualities, which has been highly commended in the Quran (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 134) and regarded as a major factor of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) success (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 159). According to Aishah, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) never avenged himself on anybody, however, when a thing enjoined to be held sacred by Allah was desecrated, he would award the punishment. (Bukhari, Muslim).

وَالَّذِيْنَ اسْتَجَابُوْا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَاَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ ۪ وَاَمْرُهُمْ شُوْرٰى بَيْنَهُمْ ۪ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ۚ 38

(42:38) who obey their Lord[60] and establish Prayer; who conduct their affairs by consultation,[61] and spend out of what We have bestowed upon them;[62]

60. Literally: "Who answer the call of their Lord", that is they hasten to do whatever Allah enjoins them to do, and accept whatever Allah invites them to accept.

61. This thing has been counted here as the best quality of the believers and has been enjoined in(Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 159). On this basis, consultation is an important pillar of the Islamic way of life, and to conduct the affairs of collective life without consultation is not only the way of ignorance but also an express violation of the law prescribed by Allah. When we consider why consultation has been given such importance in Islam, three things become obvious:

First, that it is injustice that a person should decide a matter by his personal opinion and ignore others when it involves the interests of two or more persons. No one has a right to do, as he likes in matters of common interest. Justice demands that all those whose interests are involved in a matter be consulted, and if it concerns a large number of the people, their reliable representatives should be made a party in consultation.

Second, that a man tries to do what he likes in matters of common interest either because he wants to usurp the rights of others for selfish ends, or because he looks down upon others and regards himself as a superior person. Morally both these qualities are equally detestable, and a believer cannot have even a tinge of either of these in himself. A believer is neither selfish so that he should get undue benefits by usurping the rights of others, nor he is arrogant and self-conceited that he should regard himself as all-wise and all-knowing.

Third, that it is a grave responsibility to give decisions in matters that involve the rights and interests of others. No one who fears God and knows what severe accountability for it he will be subjected to by his Lord, can dare take the heavy burden of it solely on himself. Such a boldness is shown only by those who arc fearless of God and heedless of the Hereafter. The one who fears God and has the feeling of the accountability of the Hereafter, will certainly try that in a matter of common interest he should consult all the concerned people or their authorized representatives so as to reach, as far as possible, an objective and right and equitable decision, and if there occurs a mistake one man alone should not be held responsible for it.

A deep consideration of these three things can enable one to fully understand that consultation is a necessary demand of the morality that Islam has taught to man, and departure from it is a grave immorality which Islam does not permit. The Islamic way of life requires that the principle of consultation should be used in every collective affair, big or small. If it is a domestic affair, the husband and the wife should act by mutual consultation, and when the children have grown up, they should also be consulted. If it is a matter concerning the whole family, the opinion of every adult member should be solicited. If it concerns a tribe or a fraternity or the population of a city, and it is not possible to consult all the people, the decision should be taken by a local council or committee, which should comprise the trustworthy representatives of the concerned people according to an agreed method. If the matter concerns a whole nation, the head of government should be appointed by the common consent of the people, and he should conduct the national affairs in consultation with the leaders of opinion whom the people regard as reliable, and he should remain at the helm of affair only as long as the people themselves want him to remain in that position. No honest man can try to assume the headship of a nation by force, or desire to continue in that position indefinitely, nor can think of coming into power by deception and then seek the people's consent by coercion, nor can he devise schemes so that the people may elect representatives to act as his advisers not by their own free choice but according to his will. Such a thing can be desired only by the one who cherishes evil intentions, and such a fraud against the Islamic principle of consultation can be practiced only by him who does not feel any hesitation in deceiving both God and the people whereas the fact is that neither can God be deceived nor the people be so blind as to regard the robber, who is committing robbery in the bright day light openly, as their well wisher and servant.

The principle of consultation as enshrined in amru-hum shura baina-hum by itself demands five things:

(1) The people whose rights and interests relate to collective matters, should have full freedom to express their opinion and they should be kept duly informed of how their affairs are being conducted. They should also have the full right that if in the conduct of the affairs they see an error, a weakness or a deficiency, they can check it and voice a protest, and if they do not see any change for the better, they can change their rulers. To conduct the people's affairs by keeping them silent and un-informed is sheer dishonesty which no one can regard as adherence to the principle of consultation in Islam.

(2) The person who is to be entrusted with the responsibility of conducting the collective affairs, should be appointed by the people's consent, and this consent should be their free consent, which is not obtained through coercion, temptation, deception, and fraud, because in that case it would be no consent at all. A nation's true head is not he who becomes its head by trying every possible method, but he whom the people make their head by their own free choice and approval.

(3) The people who are appointed as advisers to the head of the state should be such as enjoy the confidence of the nation, and obviously the people who win representative positions by suppression or by expending wealth, or by practicing falsehood and fraud, or by misleading the people cannot be regarded as enjoying the confidence in the real sense.

(4) The advisers should give opinion according to their knowledge and faith and conscience and they should have full freedom of such expression of opinion. Wherever this is not the case, wherever the advisers give advice against their own knowledge and conscience, under duress or temptation, or under party discipline, it will be treachery and dishonesty and not adherence to the Islamic principle of consultation.

(5) The advice that is given by a consensus of the advisers, or which has the support of the majority of the people, should be accepted, for if a person (or a group of persons) behaves independently and acts on his own whims, even after hearing the advice of others, consultation becomes meaningless. Allah does not say: They are consulted in their affairs, but says: They conduct their affairs by mutual consultations. This instruction is not implemented by mere consultation, but for its sake it is necessary that the affairs be conducted according to what is settled by consensus or by majority opinion in consultation.

Along with this explanation of the Islamic principle of consultation, this basic thing also should be kept in view that this consultation is not independent and autocratic in conducting the affairs of the Muslims, but necessarily subject to the bounds that Allah Himself has set by His legislation, and is subject to the fundamental principle: It is for Allah to give a decision in whatever you may differ, and if there arises any dispute among you about anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger. According to this general principle, the Muslims can hold consultations in Shariah matters with a view to determining the correct meaning of a text or verse and to find out the ways of implementing it so as to fulfill its requirements rightly but they cannot hold consultations in order to give an independent judgment in a matter which has already been decided and settled by Allah and His Messenger.

62. It has three meanings:

(1) They spend only out of what lawful provisions We have given them, they do not touch unlawful things for supplementing their expenditure.

(2) They do not set aside the provisions granted by us, but spend them.

(3) They spend out of what they have been given in the cause of Allah also, they do not reserve everything for personal use only.

The first meaning is based on this that Allah calls the lawful and pure provisions only as the provisions granted by Him. He does not call the provisions earned in impure and unlawful ways His provisions. The second meaning is based on that whatever Allah provides for man is provided so that he may spend it and not that he may set it aside and hoard it up like a miser. The third meaning is based on that according to the Quran, spending does not mean spending merely on his own self and for his personal needs, but it also contains the meaning of spending for the sake of Allah in His way. On account of these three reasons Allah here is counting spending of wealth among the best qualities of the believers because of which the blessings of the Hereafter have been reserved only for them.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اِذَآ اَصَابَهُمُ الْبَغْيُ هُمْ يَنْتَصِرُوْنَ 39

(42:39) who, when a wrong is done to them, seek its redress.[63]

63. This also is one of the best characteristics of the believers, they do not fall a prey to the tyrants. Their tender heartedness and forgiving nature is not the result of any weakness. They have not been taught to live humbly and meekly like the hermits and ascetics. Their nobility demands that when they are victors they should forgive the errors of the vanquished. When they possess the power, they should avoid vengefulness and when a weak or subdued person happens to commit a mistake they should overlook it. But when a powerful person, drunk with authority, commits violence against them, they should resist and fight him with all their might. A believer is never cowed by a wicked person nor bows to an arrogant man. For such people he proves to be a hard nut which breaks the teeth of those who try to break it.

وَجَزٰٓؤُا سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِّثْلُهَا ۚ فَمَنْ عَفَا وَاَصْلَحَ فَاَجْرُهٗ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۭ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ 40

(42:40) The recompense[64] of evil is evil the like of it.[65] But he who forgives and makes amends, his reward lies with Allah.[66]Surely He does not love the wrong-doers.[67]

64. The passage from here to the end of (verse 43) is an explanation of verse 39.

65. This is the first fundamental principle which must be borne in mind in retaliation. The right limit of retaliation is that one should return the same sort of ill treatment that he has received; he has no right to return a greater ill treatment.

66. This is the second principle. It means: Although it is permissible to retaliate against the one who has committed a violence, wherever pardoning can be conducive to reconcilement, pardoning is better for the sake of reconcilement than retaliation. And since man pardons the other by suppressing his own feelings, Allah says that the reward of such a one is with Him, for he has suppressed his own self for the sake of reforming the evil-doers.

67. In this warning allusion has been made to a third principle about retaliation, and it is this: One should not become a wrongdoer himself in the process of avenging a wrong done by the other. It is not permissible to do a greater wrong in retaliation for the wrong done. For example, if a person gives another a slap, the other can return only one slap; he cannot shower blows and kicks. Likewise, it is not right to commit a sin in retaliation for a sin. For example, if a wicked man has killed the son of someone, it is not right to go and kill the son of the former. Or, if a mean person has violated the chastity of a person's sister or daughter, it is not lawful for him to commit rape on the former's sister or daughter.

وَلَمَنِ انْتَصَرَ بَعْدَ ظُلْمِهٖ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ سَبِيْلٍ ؕ 41

(42:41) There is no blame against him who avenges himself after he has been wronged.

اِنَّمَا السَّبِيْلُ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ يَظْلِمُوْنَ النَّاسَ وَيَبْغُوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ 42

(42:42) Blame attaches only to those who subject people to wrong and commit excesses on earth. A painful chastisement awaits them.

وَلَمَنْ صَبَرَ وَغَفَرَ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ لَمِنْ عَزْمِ الْاُمُوْرِ ع 43

(42:43) But he who patiently endures and forgives, that is a conduct of great resolve.[68]

68. One should note that the qualities of the believers that have been mentioned in these verses, practically existed in the lives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions, and the disbelievers of Makkah were their eye-witnesses. Thus, Allah has, in fact, told the disbelievers: The real wealth is not the provisions that you have received for passing the transitory life of the world, and are bursting with pride of it, but the real wealth are the morals and characteristics which the believers from your own society have developed by accepting the guidance given by the Quran.

وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ ؕ وَتَرَى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ لَمَّا رَاَوُا الْعَذَابَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ
هَلْ اِلٰى مَرَدٍّ مِّنْ سَبِيْلٍ ۚ 44

(42:44) He whom Allah lets go astray, none after Him can be his protector.[69] You will see that when the wrong-doers observe the chastisement, they will exclaim: "Is there any way to go back?"[70]

69. That is, Allah sent the best Book like the Quran for the guidance of the people, which is giving them the knowledge of the reality in a rational and effective way and guiding them to the right way of life. He sent a Prophet like Muhammad (peace be upon him) for their guidance, a man of better character than whom they had never seen before. And then Allah also showed them the results of the teaching and training of this Book and this Messenger in the lives of the believers. Now, if after witnessing all this, a person turns away from the guidance, Allah casts him into the same deviation from which he has no desire to come out. And when Allah Himself has driven him away, who else can take the responsibility of bringing him to the right way.

70. That is, today when there is a chance of coming back, they are refusing to come back. Tomorrow when the judgment will have been passed and the sentence enforced, then seeing their fate they will wish to come back.

وَتَرٰىهُمْ يُعْرَضُوْنَ عَلَيْهَا خٰشِعِيْنَ مِنَ الذُّلِّ يَنْظُرُوْنَ مِنْ طَرْفٍ خَفِيٍّ ؕ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنَّ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَاَهْلِيْهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ اَلَآ اِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ
فِيْ عَذَابٍ مُّقِيْمٍ 45

(42:45) You shall see them, as they are brought face to face with the chastisement, in a state of abject humiliation, looking with a furtive glance.[71] But the believers will say: "Surely the true losers are they who lose themselves and their kindred on the Day of Resurrection." Lo, the wrong-doers will be in an enduring torment.

71. By nature man is such that when a dreadful scene comes before him and he knows that soon he is going to fall a prey to it, he closes his eyes forthwith in fear. Then, when he cannot hold himself any longer, he tries to see what kind of the calamity it is and how far away it is from him. But he does not find the courage to lift up his head and have a full view of it. Therefore, he opens his eyes a little again and again and sees it from the corner of the eye, and then again closes his eyes from fear. The same state of those who will be driven to Hell has been depicted here.

وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ اَوْلِيَآءَ يَنْصُرُوْنَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ سَبِيْلٍ ؕ 46

(42:46) They shall have no protectors to help them against Allah. For he whom Allah causes to go astray will have no way to save himself.

اِسْتَجِيْبُوْا لِرَبِّكُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَّا مَرَدَّ لَهٗ مِنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ مَّلْجَاٍ يَّوْمَئِذٍ وَّمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّكِيْرٍ 47

(42:47) Accept the command of your Lord before there comes a Day from Allah that cannot be averted.[72] On that Day there shall be no shelter for you, and none may change your predicament.[73]

72. That is, neither will Allah Himself avert it, nor has anyone else the power to avert it.

73. This sentence has several other meanings also:

(1) You will not be able to deny any of your misdeeds.

(2) You will not be able to hide yourself even in disguise.

(3) You will not be able to protest or show any displeasure against any treatment that is meted out to you.

(4) It will not be in your power to change the condition in which you are placed.

فَاِنْ اَعْرَضُوْا فَمَآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيْظًا ؕ اِنْ عَلَيْكَ اِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ ؕ وَاِنَّآ اِذَآ اَذَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً فَرِحَ بِهَا ۚ وَاِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ ۢ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ فَاِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ كَفُوْرٌ 48

(42:48) (O Prophet), if they turn away from the Truth, know that We did not send you to them as their overseer.[74] Your task is only to convey (the Message). Indeed when We give man a taste of Our Mercy, he exults in it. But if any misfortune afflicts them on account of their deeds, man is utterly ungrateful.[75]

74. That is, you have not been made responsible that you must bring them to the right path anyhow, nor will you be held accountable as to why these people did not come to the right path.

75. Man here implies the mean and shallow people who are the subject of the discourse here, who have gotten a measure of the worldly provisions and are exulting in this, and who do not pay any attention when they are admonished to come to the right path. But when they are visited by a disaster in consequence of their own misdeeds, they start cursing their fate, and forget all those blessings which Allah has blessed them with, and do not try to understand how far they themselves are to be blamed for the condition in which they are placed. Thus, neither does prosperity become conducive to their reformation nor can adversity teach them a lesson and bring them to the right path. A study of the context shows that this is, in fact, a satire on the attitude of the people who were the addressees of the above discourse, but they have not been addressed to tell them of their weakness directly, but the weakness of man has been mentioned in a general way and pointed out that what is the real cause of his sad plight. This gives an important point of the wisdom of preaching: the weaknesses of the addressee should not be made the target directly, but they should be mentioned in a general way so that he is not provoked, and if his conscience has still some life in it, he may try to understand his shortcoming with a cool mind.

لِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ ؕ يَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ اِنَاثًا وَّيَهَبُ لِمَنْ
يَّشَآءُ الذُّكُوْرَ ۙ 49

(42:49) The dominion of the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah.[76] He creates whatever He pleases. He grants females to whomever He pleases and males to whomever He pleases,

76. That is, if the people who are involved in disbelief and polytheism do not believe even after the admonition, they may not, for the truth is the truth. The kingdom of the earth and heavens has not been entrusted to the so-called kings and despots and chiefs of the world nor has any prophet, saint, god or goddess any share in it, but its Master is One Allah alone. His rebel can neither succeed by his own power, nor can any of the beings whom the people look upon as owners of divine powers by their own folly, come to their rescue and aid.

اَوْ يُزَوِّجُهُمْ ذُكْرَانًا وَّاِنَاثًا ۚ وَيَجْعَلُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ عَقِيْمًا ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيْمٌ قَدِيْرٌ 50

(42:50) or grants them a mix of males and females, and causes whomever He pleases to be barren. He is All- Knowing, All-Powerful.[77]

77. This is a manifest proof of Allah's Sovereignty being absolute. No man, whether he be posing as owner of the highest worldly authority, or regarded as owner of great spiritual powers, has ever been able to produce children for himself according to his own choice and desire, not to speak of providing children for others. The one whom Allah made barren could not have children through any medicine, any treatment, any amulet or charm. The

one whom Allah gave only daughters could not get a single son by any device, and the one whom Allah gave only sons could not have a single daughter by any means. In this matter everyone is absolutely helpless. Even after seeing all this if some one posed to be all-powerful in God's kingdom, or regarded another as a possessor of the powers, it would be his own shortsightedness for which he himself will suffer, the truth will not change at all.

وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ اَنْ يُّكَلِّمَهُ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا وَحْيًا اَوْ مِنْ وَّرَآئِ حِجَابٍ اَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُوْلًا فَيُوْحِيَ بِاِذْنِهٖ مَا يَشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيٌّ حَكِيْمٌ 51

(42:51) It[78] is not given to any human being that Allah should speak to him except through revelation,[79] or from behind a veil,[80] or that a messenger (an angel) be sent to him who reveals to him by Allah's leave whatever He wishes.[81] He is All-High, Most Wise.[82]

78. In conclusion, the same theme with which the discourse began has been reiterated. To understand it fully, please see the(first verse of this Surah and the E.N). on it.

79. Here, wahi means to inspire somebody with something, or to show something to somebody in a vision as were the Prophets Abraham and Joseph shown (peace be upon them). See (Surah Yousuf, Ayats 4, 100); (Surah As-Saaffat, Ayat 102).

80. That is, one may hear a voice without seeing the speaker, just as it happened in the case of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) when he suddenly began to hear a voice from a tree on Mount Toor, while the speaker was hidden from him. See (Surah TaHa, Ayats 11-48), (Surah An- Naml, Ayats 8-12); (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayats 30 35).

81. This is the form of wahi by which all divine Scriptures have actually reached the Prophets of Allah. Some people have misinterpreted this sentence and given it this meaning Allah sends a messenger who by His command conveys His message to the common people. But the words of the Quran fa-yuhiya bi-idni-hi ma yasha (then He reveals by His command whatever He wills) show that this interpretation is absolutely wrong. The Prophets's preaching before the common people has neither been called wahi anywhere in the Quran nor is there any room in Arabic for describing a man's speaking to another man openly by the word wahi. Lexically, wahi means secret and swift instruction. Only an ignorant person will apply this word to the common preaching by the Prophets.

82. That is, He is far above that He should speak to a man face to face, and His wisdom is not helpless that He may adopt another method of conveying His instructions to a servant of His than of speaking to him face to face.

وَكَذٰلِكَ اَوۡحَيۡنَاۤ اِلَيۡكَ رُوۡحًا مِّنۡ اَمۡرِنَا ؕ مَا كُنۡتَ تَدۡرِىۡ مَا الۡكِتٰبُ وَلَا الۡاِيۡمَانُ
وَلٰكِنۡ جَعَلۡنٰهُ نُوۡرًا نَّهۡدِىۡ بِهٖ مَنۡ نَّشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِنَا ؕ وَاِنَّكَ لَتَهۡدِىۡۤ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ
مُّسۡتَقِيۡمٍ ۙ 52

(42:52) Even so We revealed to you, (O Prophet), a spirit by Our command.[83] (Ere to that) you knew neither what the Book nor what the faith was.[84] But We made that spirit a light whereby We guide those of Our servants whom We please to the Right Way. Surely you are directing people to the Right Way,

83. "And thus" does not refer only to the last method of wahi, but to all the three methods as mentioned in the preceding verses, and a spirit implies wahi (revelation), or the teaching given to the Prophet (peace be upon him) by revelation. Both the Quran and the Hadih confirm that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was given instruction by all these three methods:

(1) In a Hadith Aishah has stated that revelation in the beginning came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the form of true visions. (Bukhari, Muslim) This continued in later life also. Traditions mention many visions in which he was given some teaching or informed of something and in the Quran also a vision of his has been clearly mentioned (Surah Al-Fath, Ayat 27). Besides, several traditions also mention that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: I have been inspired with such and such a thing, or I have been informed of this and this, or I have been enjoined this, or I have been forbidden this. All such things relate to the first kind of the wahi and the divinely inspired traditions (Ahadith Qudsi) mostly belong to this category of the traditions.

(2) On the occasion of the Miraj (Ascension) the Prophet (peace be upon him) was honored with the second kind of the wahi also. In several authentic traditions the way mention has been made of the commandment of the Salat five times a day and the Prophet's (peace be upon him) making submissions in that regard again and again clearly shows that at that time a similar dialogue took place between Allah Almighty and His servant Muhammad (peace be upon him) as had taken place between Allah and the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) at the foot of Mount Toor. As for the third kind, the Quran itself testifies that it was conveyed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) through Angel Gabriel, the trustworthy. (Surah Al- Baqarah, Ayat 97); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats192-195).

84. That is, before his appointment to Prophethood, the Prophet (peace be upon him) had never had any idea that he was going to receive a Book, or that he should receive one, but he was completely unaware of the heavenly Books and the subjects they treated. Likewise, although he believed in Allah, intellectually he was not aware of the requirements of the faith in Allah, nor did he know that along with that belief it was also necessary that he should believe in other things, the angels, the Prophethood, the divine Books and the Hereafter. Both these things were such as were not hidden even from the disbelievers of

Makkah. No one belonging to Makkah could bear witness that he had ever heard anything pertaining to a divine Book from the Prophet (peace be upon him) before his sudden proclamation of the Prophethood, or any such thing that the people should believe in such and such things. Obviously if a person had already been looking forward to becoming a prophet, it could not be that the people who remained socially associated with him day and night for 40 years should not have even so much as heard the word Book and the faith from him, and after 40 years he should suddenly have started making fiery speeches on the same themes.

صِرَاطِ اللّٰهِ الَّذِیْ لَهٗ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِی الْاَرْضِ ؕ اَلَآ اِلَی اللّٰهِ تَصِیْرُ الْاُمُوْرُ ۧ 53

(42:53) the Way of Allah, to Whom belongs the dominion of all that is in the heavens and the earth. Lo, it is to Allah that all things ultimately revert.[85]

85. This is the final warning that has been given to the disbelievers. It means: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said something and you heard and rejected it. The matter would not end there. Whatever is happening in the world, will be presented before Allah, and ultimately He Himself will decide what should be the end of every person.

43. Surah Az Zukhruf (The Ornaments of Gold)

Name

It is derived from the word zukhruf-an which occurs in verse 33 of this Surah.

Period of Revelation

It could not be known from any authentic tradition, but a study of its subject matter shows that this Surah also was sent down in the same period in which the Surahs Al-Mumin, As-Sajdah and Ash-Shura, were sent down. It appears that the revelation of this series of the Surahs began when the disbelievers of Makkah were planning to put an end to the Holy Prophet's life. Day and night they were holding consultations in their assemblies as how to eliminate him, and even an attack on his life also had been made as has been clearly referred to in vv. 79-80.

Theme and Topics

In this Surah a forceful and severe criticism has been made of the Quraish and the common Arabs creeds and superstitions of ignorance in which they persisted, and their stubbornness has been exposed in a firm and effective way, so that every member of the society, who was reasonable in some degree, should be made to consider the evils in which the community was involved and its tyrannical treatment of the person who was trying to redeem it.

The discourse starts in a way as if to say: "You, by means of your mischiefs, want that the revelation of this Book should be stopped, but Allah has never withheld the appointment of His Prophets and the revelation of His Books because of the mischief of the people, but has destroyed the wicked people, who obstructed the way of His guidance. The same He will do again. A little further in vv. 41-43 and 79-80 the same thing has been reiterated. Though the people who were plotting against his life are meant, the Holy Prophet has been addressed to the effect: "whether you remain alive or not, We will certainly punish the wicked," and the people themselves have been plainly warned to the effect: "If you have decided to take an action against Our Prophet, We too will take a decisive action."

Then, it has been told what is the reality of the religion that the people are following so devotedly and what are the arguments on whose strength they are resisting Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and Blessings).

They themselves admit that the Creator of the earth and heavens and of themselves and their deities is only Allah. They also know and admit that the blessings they are benefiting from, have been bestowed by Allah; yet they insist on making others associates of Allah in His Godhead.

They regard the servants as the children of Allah, and that too daughters, whom they regard as disgraceful for themselves.

They believe that the angels are goddesses; they have carved their images as females; they adorn them with female dresses and ornaments, and call them daughters of Allah: they

worship them and invoke them for the fulfillment of their needs. How did they know that the angels were female?

When they are rebuked for these superstitions, they present the pretense of destiny and say :"Had Allah disapproved of these our practices, we could not have worshiped these images, whereas the means of finding out whether Allah had approved of something or not, are His Books and not those things which are happening in the world according to His Will. For under His Will not only idol worship but crimes like theft and adultery, robbery. murder, etc. also are being committed. Can this argument be used to justify as right and proper this commission of every crime and evil is the world?

When it is asked: Have you any other authority, apart from this wrong argument, for the polytheism of yours? They reply, "The same has been the practice since the time of our forefathers." In other words, this in their opinion is a strong enough argument for a creed's being right and true, whereas the Prophet Abraham, descent from whom is the only basis of their pride and distinction, had rejected the religion of his elders and left his home, and he had discarded every such blind imitation of his forefathers, which did not have the support of any rational argument. Then, if these people had to follow their elders only, for this also they selected their most ignorant elders and abandoned their most illustrious elders like the Prophets Abraham and Ishmael (on whom be peace).

When they are asked: "Has ever a Prophet or a Book sent down by God also given this teaching that others beside Allah too are worthy of worship? they present this practice of the Christians as an argument that they took Jesus son of Mary as son of God and worshiped him; whereas the question was not this whether the community of a Prophet had committed shirk or not, but this whether a Prophet had himself taught shirk. Jesus son of Mary had never said that he was son of God and that the people should worship him. His own was the same teaching which every other Prophet had given "My Lord as well as your Lord is Allah: so worship Him alone."

They were disinclined to believe in the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet because he was neither a rich man nor a person of high worldly position and rank. They said "Had Allah willed to appoint a prophet among us, He would have appointed one of the great men of' our two cities (Makkah and Taif). On that very basis, Pharaoh also had looked down upon the Prophet Moses and said: "If Allah, the King of the heavens, had to send a messenger to me, the king of the earth, He would have sent him with bracelets of gold and a company of angels in attendance. Where from has this mendicant appeared I am superior to him, for the kingdom of Egypt belongs to me, and the canals of the River Nile are flowing under my control. What is the status of this man as against me? He has neither wealth nor authority."

Thus, after criticizing each practice of ignorance of the disbelievers and rejecting it with rational arguments, it has been pointed out: "Neither has God any offspring, nor are there separate gods of the earth and heavens, nor is there any intercessor who may be able to protect from His punishment those who adopt deviation knowingly. Allah is far above this that He should have children. He alone is the God of the whole Universe: all others are His servants and not associates in His attributes and powers, and only such men can intercede with Him, who are themselves followers of the Truth and they also can intercede only for those who may have adopted obedience of the Truth in the world."

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

حٰمٓ ۚ 1

(43:1) Ha'. Mim.

وَالۡکِتٰبِ الۡمُبِیۡنِ ۙ 2

(43:2) By the Clear Book;

اِنَّا جَعَلۡنٰہُ قُرۡءٰنًا عَرَبِیًّا لَّعَلَّکُمۡ تَعۡقِلُوۡنَ ۚ 3

(43:3) verily We have made it an Arabic Qur'an that you may understand.[1]

1. The object of taking an oath by the Quran is to impress this fact: We are the Author of this Book and not Muhammad (peace be upon him), and the attribute of the Quran chosen for the oath is that it is a lucid Scripture. To swear by the Quran itself with this attribute in order to impress that the Quran is divine Word by itself implies this: O people, this is an open Book before you. Read it intelligently. Its clear and un-ambiguous themes, its language and literary style, its teaching which distinguishes the truth from falsehood, all are testifying to the fact that none but the Lord of the Universe could be its Author. Then the sentence: "Indeed, We made it a Quran in Arabic that you might understand" has two meanings:

(1) It is not in any foreign tongue but in your own language; therefore, you can have no difficulty in assessing its value and worth. Had it been in a non-Arabic language, you could have offered the excuse that you could not determine its being divine, or otherwise, for you did not understand it. But you cannot offer this excuse about this Arabic Quran. Its each word is clear to you, its each passage and discourse, both in language and in theme, is plain for you. Now you may see it for yourself whether this could be the word of Muhammad (peace be upon him) or of some other Arab.

(2) We have sent this Book in Arabic because We are addressing the Arabs, who can only understand an Arabic Quran. The person who disregards this expressly rational ground for sending down the Quran in Arabic and regards it as the word of Muhammad (peace be upon him) instead of divine Word only because Muhammad's mother tongue is also Arabic, commits a grave injustice. (To understand this second meaning, please see (Surah HaMim As-Sajdah, Ayat 44 and its E.N).

وَاِنَّہٗ فِیۡۤ اُمِّ الۡکِتٰبِ لَدَیۡنَا لَعَلِیٌّ حَکِیۡمٌ ؕ 4

(43:4) Indeed it is transcribed in the Original Book with Us;[2] sublime and full of wisdom.[3]

2. Umm al-Kitab: the "Original Book": the Book from which all the Books sent down to the Prophets have been derived. In Surah Al-Waqiah the same thing has been described as Kitab-um-Maknun (the hidden and preserved Book) and in (Surah Al-Burooj, Ayat 22)as Lauh-i Mahfuz (the preserved tablet), that is, the tablet whose writing cannot be effaced, which is secure from every kind of interference. By saying that the Quran is inscribed in Umm al-Kitab, attention has been drawn to an important truth. Different Books had been revealed by Allah in different ages to different Prophets for the guidance of different nations in different languages, but all these Books invited mankind to one and the same faith. They regarded one and the same thing as the truth. They presented one and the same criterion of good and evil. They propounded the same principles of morality and civilization. In short, they brought one and the same Deen (religion). The reason was that their source and origin was the same, only words were different; they had the same meaning and theme which is inscribed in a Source Book with Allah, and whenever there was a need, He raised a Prophet and sent down the same meaning and subject-matter clothed in a particular diction according to the environment and occasion. Had Allah willed to raise the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in another nation instead of the Arabs, He would have sent down the same Quran in the language of that nation. In it the meaning and content would have been expressed according to the environments and conditions of the people and land. The words would have been different and the language also different but the teaching and guidance the same basically, and it would be the same Quran though not the Arabic Quran. This same thing has been expressed in Surah Ash-Shuara, thus: This (Book) has been revealed by the Lord of the worlds. The trustworthy Spirit has come down with it upon your heart so that you may become one of those who are (appointed by God) to warn (the people) in plain Arabic language, and this is also contained in the scriptures of the former peoples. (verses 192-196). (For explanation, see(Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 192-196) and the E.Ns there of).

3. This sentence is related both to Kitab-i mubin and to Umm al-Kitab. Thus, it is in praise of both the Quran and the Original Book from which the Quran has been derived. This praise is meant to impress the fact that if a person does not recognize the true worth of this Book and does not benefit from its wise teachings because of his own folly, it would be his own misfortune. If someone tried to degrade it and found fault with it, it would be his own meanness. It cannot become worthless on account of someone's lack of appreciation of it, and its wisdom cannot be eclipsed by anyone's throwing dust at it. This is by itself a glorious Book, which stands exalted by its matchless teaching, miraculous eloquence, faultless wisdom and the sublime personality of its great Author. Therefore, none can succeed in minimizing its value and worth. In(verse 44) below the Quraish in particular and the Arabs in general have been told that the revelation of the Book for which they are showing such lack of appreciation had provided them a unique opportunity of honor, which if they lost, would subject them to a severe accountability before God. (See E.N. 39) below.

أَفَنَضْرِبُ عَنْكُمُ الذِّكْرَ صَفْحًا أَنْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا مُّسْرِفِينَ 5

(43:5) Should We divert this Good Counsel from you because you are a people immersed in extravagance?[4]

4. In this one sentence the entire history that had taken place since the time the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had proclaimed to be a Prophet till the revelation of these verses during the past few years has been compressed. This sentence depicts the following picture: A nation has been involved in ignorance, backwardness and depravity for centuries. Suddenly, Allah looks at it with favor. He raises in it an illustrious guide and sends down His own Word to take it out of the darkness of ignorance so that it is aroused from slumber, it gives up superstitions of ignorance and it becomes aware of the truth and adopts the right way of life. But the ignorant people of the nation and the tribal chiefs turn hostile to the guide, and try their utmost to defeat him and his mission. With the passage of time their hostility and mischief go on increasing; so much so that they make up their mind to kill him. At this, it is being said: Should We stop making any efforts to reform you because you are proving to be unworthy people? Should We withhold sending down this Admonition, and leave you lying in the same wretched state in which you have been lying since centuries? Do you really think that should be the demand of Our Mercy? Have you ever considered what doom you would meet when you have turned down the bounty of Allah and persisted in falsehood after the truth has come before you?

وَكَمْ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ نَّبِيٍّ فِى الْاَوَّلِيْنَ 6

(43:6) How many a Prophet did We send to the earlier peoples!

وَمَا يَاْتِيْهِمْ مِّنْ نَّبِيٍّ اِلَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ 7

(43:7) Yet never did a Prophet come to them but they mocked him.[5]

5. That is, if such absurdity and senselessness had barred the sending of a Prophet or a Book, no Prophet would ever have come to any nation nor a Book sent to it.

فَاَهْلَكْنَآ اَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ بَطْشًا وَّمَضٰى مَثَلُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ 8

(43:8) We utterly destroyed them although they were greater in might than these. The examples of ancient peoples have gone before.[6]

6. That is, the result of the senselessness of some particular people could not be that the entire mankind should be deprived of the guidance of the Prophethood and the Book. The result has always been that the worshippers of falsehood, with the pride of power, did not desist from mocking the Prophets and were ultimately destroyed. When Allah's wrath descended upon the people, those who possessed thousands of times greater power than that possessed by the chiefs of the Quraish, they were crushed to annihilation like mosquitoes and fleas.

وَلَئِنْ سَاَلْتَهُمْ مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ خَلَقَهُنَّ الْعَزِيْزُ الْعَلِيْمُ ۙ 9

(43:9) Yet if you were to ask them: "Who created the heavens and the earth?" they will certainly say: "The All-Mighty, the All-Knowing has created them."

الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ مَهْدًا وَّ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ فِيْهَا سُبُلًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ ۙ 10

(43:10) He it is Who made this earth for you a cradle[7] and made in it pathways[8] for you that you may find the way to your destination;[9]

7. At other places the earth has been described as a bed, but here as a cradle. That is, just as a child lies resting in its cradle, so is this great globe meant to be a place of rest for you, which is suspended in space, which is spinning on its axis at a speed of 1,000 miles an hour, which is revolving around the sun at a speed of 66,000 miles an hour. Its interior is so intensely hot that it can melt the stones and sometimes it manifests its power in the form of volcano eruptions. But, in spite of that, the Creator has made it so tranquil that one sleeps on it in fill peace and there is no jerk whatsoever. One lives on it and does not at all feel that this globe is suspended and he is hanging from it with his head pointing downward. One moves about on it with satisfaction and never thinks that he is riding on a vehicle moving faster than a bullet. You dig it at will and turn it inside out and beat it as you like to obtain your sustenance. Whereas, a little shaking of it in an earthquake makes you feel what a terrible giant it is, which Allah has subdued for you. (For further explanation, see (Surah Al-Naml, Ayat 61 and E.N. 74) of it.

8. The passes in the mountains and the rivers in the hill and plain regions are the natural paths, which Allah has provided on the surface of the earth. Man has spread on the earth by means of these. If the mountainous ranges had been created erect, without a crevice, and there had been no rivers and streams, man would have been confined to the same areas where he was born. Then, Allah through another grace has not made the entire surface of the earth uniform in nature, but has created different marks of distinction by means of which man recognizes different lands and feels the difference between one land and another. This is the second important means by which man became able to move about on the earth. This blessing can be appreciated by the one who has had a chance of going on a vast desert, where for thousands of milts the earth is without any landmarks and one does not know where one has reached and where one has to go.

9. This sentence gives two meanings simultaneously:

(1) That by means of these natural paths and landmarks you may find your way and reach the place you want to reach.

(2) That you may obtain guidance from the observation of this craftsmanship of Allah Almighty. May reach the underlying reality and understand that this system of the earth is not functioning haphazardly, nor has been devised by many gods jointly, but there is one All-Wise Creator, Who has made these paths in the hills and on the plains in view of the needs and requirements of His creatures, and has given each region of the earth a different form in countless different ways by means of which man can distinguish one region from the other.

وَالَّذِىْ نَزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءًۢ بِقَدَرٍ ۚ فَاَنْشَرْنَا بِهٖ بَلْدَةً مَّيْتًا ۚ كَذٰلِكَ تُخْرَجُوْنَ 11

(43:11) He Who sent down water from the sky in a determined measure,[10] and thereby We revived a dead land: likewise will you be raised up (from the earth)[11]

10. That is, for each region He has ordained an average measure of the rain which falls year after year for long ages regularly. It does not happen that an area may have two inches of the rainfall one year and 200 inches of it the next year. Then He spreads the rainfall over different places in different times in such a way that it becomes beneficial on the whole for the products of the earth. And this is also His wisdom that He has deprived some parts of the earth of the rainfall almost entirely and turned them into dry barren deserts, and in some other parts, He sometimes causes famines to occur and sometimes sends torrential rains so that man may know what a great blessing the rain and its general regularity is for the populated areas, and he may also remember that this system is under the control of another power, whose decrees cannot be changed by anyone. No one has the power that he may change the general average of the rainfall of a country, or effect a variation in its distribution over vast areas of the earth, or avert an impending storm, or attract the clouds towards his own land and compel them to rain. (For further explanation, see (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 21-22); (Surah Al- Muminun, Ayats 18-20).

11. Here, the birth of vegetation in the earth by means of water has been presented as an argument for two things simultaneously:

(1) That these things are happening by the power and wisdom of One God; no one else is His associate in these works.

(2) That there can be life after death and it will be. (For further explanation, see (Surah An-Nahl, Ayats 65-67); (Surah Al-Hajj, Ayats 5-7); (Surah An-Naml, Ayat 60); (Surah Ar-Room, Ayats 19, 24); (Surah Fatir E.N. 19)and (Surah YaSeen E.N. 29).

وَالَّذِىْ خَلَقَ الْاَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْفُلْكِ وَالْاَنْعَامِ مَا تَرْكَبُوْنَ 12

(43:12) He Who created these pairs,[12] all of them, and provided you ships and cattle on which you ride,

12. Pairs here does not imply only pairs of men and women among human beings and of males and females among animals and vegetation, but there are countless other things which the Creator has made as matching partners of each other and by whose coming together and combination new and ever new things come into being in the world. For example, among the elements, some can be combined with others and some cannot be combined. The combination of those which can combine is resulting into various compositions, e.g. the negative and positive charges in electricity are the matching partners of each other and their mutual attraction is causing wonderful things to happen in the world. If man considers the structure and the mutual relationships and the different forms of cooperation and the results of the combination of this and other countless pairs which Allah has created among countless of His creations. He cannot help testifying to the truth that this

great workshop of the world is the creation of one and only one Almighty, All-Wise Designer, and is functioning only under His care and control. Only a man of mean intelligence could suppose that all this happened, and is happening, without a Wise Being, or there is the possibility in it of the agency and interference of more than one God.

لِتَسْتَوٗا عَلٰى ظُهُوْرِهٖ ثُمَّ تَذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ رَبِّكُمْ اِذَا اسْتَوَيْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ وَتَقُوْلُوْا سُبْحٰنَ الَّذِيْ سَخَّرَ لَنَا هٰذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهٗ مُقْرِنِيْنَ ۙ 13

(43:13) so that when you are mounted upon them you may remember the bounty of your Lord, and say: "Glory be to Him Who has subjected this to Us whereas we did not have the strength to subdue it.[13]

13. That is, only man from among all the creatures of the earth has been given this power by Allah to use boats and ships and animals as conveyance. Should he never think and be grateful as to who it is who created possibilities for him to run boats in the mighty oceans, and who created some animals, among the countless kinds of animals, with a nature that they become his servants in spite of being far stronger than him in power, so he ride on them and drive them wherever he likes. To benefit by these blessings and to forget the Benefactor is a sign of the heart's becoming dead and the conscience's being insensitive. For, when a man endowed with a living heart and a sensitive conscience will sit on these conveyances, he will be filled with the feelings of the blessings and with the gratitude for it, and will cry out: Glorified is the Being Who subjected these things to me. Glorified is He from that another should be His associate in His Being and attributes and powers. Glorified is He and free from the weakness that He should become helpless of performing the functions of His Godhead by Himself and should stand in need of other associate gods. Glorified is He that I should make another an associate with Him in rendering thanks for these blessings.

The best practical commentary of the intention and meaning of this verse are the words that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to pronounce at the time he sat on the conveyance. Abdullah bin Umar says that whenever the Prophet (peace be upon him) sat on a conveyance for a journey, he would pronounce Allahu-Akbar three times, then would recite this verse, and then pray: O God, I implore You to grant me in this journey the grace of goodness and piety and such acts as may please You. O God, make the journey easy and roll up the long distance for us. O God, You alone are the Companion during the journey and Guardian of the family in our absence. O God, take care of us during the journey and our household in our absence. (Musnad Ahmed, Muslim, Abu Daud, Nasai, Darimi, Tirmidhi).

Ali says: Once the Prophet (peace be upon him) put his foot in the stirrup with Bismillah, and then, after riding, said: Alhamdu-lillah subhan-alladhi sakhkhara lana hadha . . . . , then pronounced Alhamdu-lillah three times, and Allahu- Akbar three times; then said: Subhana-ka la-ilaha illa anta, qad zalamtu nafsi faghfir-li. Then he laughed. I asked: What made you laugh. O Messenger of Allah? He replied: When a servant says: Rabb-ighfir-li, Allah Almighty is very pleased with this. He says: My servant knows that there is none beside Me who can forgive sins. (Ahmed, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Nasai, and others)

Abu Mijlaz says: Once I rode on my animal and recited this verse: Subhan-alladhi sakhkhara lane hadha . . ., Hasan said: Have you been commanded to say so? I said: What should I say then? He replied: Say, thank God, Who guided us to Islam: Thanks to Him, Who did us a favor by sending Muhammad (peace be upon him): Thanks to Him Who admitted us into the best community that has been raised for the people; then recite this verse. (Ibn Jarir, Ahkam al- Quran by Jassas).

وَإِنَّآ إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا لَمُنقَلِبُونَ 14

(43:14) It is to our Lord that we shall eventually return."[14]

14. That is, while embarking on every journey one should remember that there is ahead a longer and final journey also. Besides there is the possibility in the use of every conveyance that an accident may turn that very journey into one's last journey; therefore, every time one should remember his return to his Lord so that if something unexpected happens, he does not die unaware.

Let us pause here for a while and consider the moral results of this teaching. Can one imagine that a person who while sitting on a conveyance starts his journey consciously with full remembrance of Allah and his return and accountability before Him, would commit sins and injustices and tyrannies on the way? Can a person think or utter these words from his mouth when he intends to go to meet a prostitute, or to visit a club for the purpose of drinking and gambling? Can a ruler, or a government official, or a merchant who has stepped out of his house with such thoughts and such words at his lips, usurp the rights of others when he reaches his destination? Can a soldier utter these words while boarding his aircraft or tank when he goes out to shed blood of the innocent and deprive the weak of their freedom? If not, then this one thing alone is enough to bar every movement undertaken for the commission of a sin.

وَجَعَلُوا لَهُۥ مِنْ عِبَادِهِۦ جُزْءًا ۚ إِنَّ ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ لَكَفُورٌ مُّبِينٌ ۚ ع 15

(43:15) Yet they have made some of His servants a part of Him.[15] Indeed man is most evidently thankless.

15. "Assign to some of His slaves a share with Him" implies declaring a servant of Allah His offspring, for an offspring inevitably is homogeneous with and a part of the father's body, and regarding somebody as Allah's son or daughter means that he or she is being made a partner in Allah's Being. Besides, another form of making a creature a part of Allah is that it should be regarded as possessor of the attributes and powers as are specifically Allah's own, and it should be invoked under the same concept, or rites of worship performed before it, or its sanctities observed and regarded as imperative and binding. For, in that case man divides divinity and provider between Allah and His servants and hands over a part of it to the servants.

أَمِ اتَّخَذَ مِمَّا يَخْلُقُ بَنَاتٍ وَأَصْفَاكُم بِالْبَنِينَ 16

(43:16) Has Allah taken for Himself daughters out of those whom He creates and has chosen you to have sons?[16]

16. Here, the folly of the polytheists of Arabia has been fully exposed. They said that the angels were the daughters of Allah. They had carved out their images as females, and these were their goddesses whom they worshiped. About this Allah says: In the first place, in spite of knowing and recognizing that the Creator of the earth and heavens is Allah and it is He Who has made this earth a cradle for you and it is He Who sends down the rain from the sky, and it is He Who has created these animals for your service, yet you have taken others as gods beside Him, whereas those whom you serve as deities are not God but creatures of God. Then, further more, you have made some of the servants associates of Allah not only in His attributes but in His Being as well, and invented the creed that they were Allah's offspring. Then, not resting content with this, you assigned to Allah that kind of the offspring which you regard as disgraceful for your own selves. When a daughter is born in your house, your face grows dark, you feel distressed, and sometimes you bury her alive. This offspring you assign to Allah and reserve for yourselves the sons, whom you regard as a source of joy and pride. Even then you claim that you believe in Allah.

وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُم بِمَا ضَرَبَ لِلرَّحْمَٰنِ مَثَلًا ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ 17

(43:17) (They believe so although when) any of them is given tidings of the birth of a female child the like of which he assigns to the Merciful One, his countenance darkens and he is choked with grief.

أَوَمَن يُنَشَّأُ فِي الْحِلْيَةِ وَهُوَ فِي الْخِصَامِ غَيْرُ مُبِينٍ 18

(43:18) Do they assign to Allah one who grows up amidst ornaments and is not well-versed in the art of disputation?[17]

17. In other words, You have assigned to Allah the offspring that is by nature delicate, weak and frail, and adopted for yourselves the offspring that is bold, courageous and fearless. This verse shows permissibility of the ornaments for the women, for Allah has mentioned the ornaments as a natural thing for them. The same is also confirmed by the Hadith. Imam Ahmad, Abu Daud and Nasai have related on the authority of Ali that the Prophet (peace be upon him) took silk in one hand and gold in the other and said that both were forbidden to be used in dress by the men of his Ummah. Tirmidhi and Nasai have related from Abu Musa Ashari a tradition, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Silk and gold have been forbidden for the men but made lawful for the women of my Ummah. Allama Abu Bakr al-Jassas has discussed this question in his Ahkam ai-Quran and related the following traditions:

Aishah says: Once Usamah, son of Zaid bin Harithah, was hurt and started bleeding. The Prophet (peace be upon him) loved him like his own children. He sucked his blood and spat

it out, and cheered him saying: Had Usamah been a daughter we would have adorned him with ornaments! Had Usamah been a daughter, we would have dressed him in fine clothes!

Abu Musa Ashari has related that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Wearing of silken clothes and ornaments of gold is unlawful for the men of my Unmah but lawful for the women.

Amr bin Aaas has related: Once two women came before the Prophet (peace be upon him), and they were wearing bracelets of gold. He said: Would you like that Allah should make you wear bracelets of the fire instead of these? They replied that they would not. Thereupon he said: Pay their dues, i.e. the zakat due on them.

Aisha has stated that there is no harm in wearing the ornaments if the zakat due on them is paid.

Umar wrote to Abu Musa Ashari: Order the Muslim women who live in the areas under your administrative control that they should pay the zakat dues on their ornaments.

Imam Abu Hanifah has related the following traditions on the authority of Amr bin Dinar: Aishah had arranged ornaments of gold for her sisters and Abdullah bin Umar for his daughters.

After citing all these traditions, Allama Jassas writes: The traditions that have been related from the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the companions about the permissibility and lawfulness of gold and silk for the women are better known and more common than those that are there about their unlawfulness, and the above verse also points to their lawfulness. Then the practice of the Muslims also from the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions till our time (i.e. till the latter part of the 4th century of hijrah) has been the same, and no one ever objected to it. In such matters, no objection can be admitted on the basis of the isolated reports (Akhbar ahab).

وَجَعَلُوا الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ عِبٰدُ الرَّحْمٰنِ اِنَاثًا ؕ اَشَهِدُوْا خَلْقَهُمْ ؕ سَتُكْتَبُ شَهَادَتُهُمْ وَيُسْـَٔلُوْنَ 19

(43:19) They claim that angels, who are Allah's chosen servants,[18] are females. Did they witness how their body is constituted?[19] Their testimony shall be written and they shall be called to account.

18. That is, who are free from this that they should be males or females.

19. Another translation can be: Were they present at the time of their creation?

وَقَالُوْا لَوْ شَآءَ الرَّحْمٰنُ مَا عَبَدْنٰهُمْ ؕ مَا لَهُمْ بِذٰلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ ۚ اِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا يَخْرُصُوْنَ ؕ 20

(43:20) They say: "Had the Merciful One so willed, we would never have worshipped these deities."[20] But they have no knowledge of the matter and are simply conjecturing.

20. This was their reasoning from destiny to cover up their deviation and error, and this has been the argument of the wrongdoers in every age. They argued that their worshiping the angels became possible only because Allah allowed them to do so. Had He not willed so they could not have done it; and then it had been a practice with them for centuries and no torment from Allah had descended on them, which meant that Allah did not disapprove of their this practice.

أَمْ آتَيْنَاهُمْ كِتَابًا مِّن قَبْلِهِ فَهُم بِهِ مُسْتَمْسِكُونَ 21

(43:21) Or did We bestow upon them a Book before on whose authority they are holding on (to angel-worship)?[21]

21. It means this: These ignorant people think that whatever is happening in the world has the approval of Allah for it, because it is happening according to His will. This argument, however, is wrong. For it is not only shirk which is being committed in the world, but countless other crimes like stealing, robbery, murder, bribery, etc. are also taking place, which nobody likes. Then, can it be said by the same reasoning that all such acts are lawful and good only because Allah is letting them happen in His world, and when He allows them to happen, He must have approved of them also? The means of knowing what Allah likes and what He hates are not the events that are happening in the world, but the Book of Allah, which comes through His Messenger and in which Allah Himself states as to what beliefs, what deeds and what morals He likes and what He dislikes. If these people have a Book, which came before the Quran, and which tells that Allah has appointed the angels also as deities beside himself and that they should worship them also, they should cite it. (For further explanation, see (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayats 107-112, 137, 148-149); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 28); (Surah Younus, Ayat 99); (Surah Hud, Ayats 118-119); (Surah Ar-Raad, Ayat 31); (Surah An-Nahl, Ayats 9, 35-36, 93); and (E.N. 20 of Surah Az-Zumar) and (E.N. 11 of Surah Ash-Shura).

بَلْ قَالُوا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم مُّهْتَدُونَ 22

(43:22) Nay; they simply claim: "We found our forefathers on a way, and we continue to find guidance in their footsteps."[22]

22. That is, they have no authority of any divine book. The only authority they have is that it has been the practice since the time of their forefathers. Therefore, they have taken the angels as goddesses in imitation of them.

وَكَذٰلِكَ مَآ اَرۡسَلۡنَا مِنۡ قَبۡلِكَ فِىۡ قَرۡيَةٍ مِّنۡ نَّذِيۡرٍ اِلَّا قَالَ مُتۡرَفُوۡهَآ اِنَّا وَجَدۡنَآ اٰبَآءَنَا عَلٰٓى
اُمَّةٍ وَّاِنَّا عَلٰٓى اٰثٰرِهِمۡ مُّقۡتَدُوۡنَ 23

(43:23) And thus it is: whenever We sent any warner to a city its affluent ones said: "We found our forefathers on a way and we continue to follow in their footsteps."[23]

23. Here, the point worth consideration is why only the well to do people of every community have resisted the Prophets and upheld the imitation of their forefathers in every age. Why have they alone been in the forefront to oppose the truth and to endeavor to maintain the established falsehood and to beguile and incite the common people against them? Its basic causes were two:

(1) The well to do and affluent people are so absorbed in making and enjoying the world of their own that they are not inclined to bother themselves about the useless debate (as they assume it to be) between the truth and falsehood. Their love of ease and mental lethargy renders them so heedless of religion and conservative that they want the established order, no matter whether it is based on truth or falsehood, to retrain in force so that they do not have to take the trouble of thinking about the new order at all for themselves.

(2) Their interests become so dependent on the established order that when they get the first glimpse of the order presented by the Prophets, they start feeling that if it came, it would not only put an end to their leadership but also would deprive them of the freedom to consume the lawful and commit the unlawful. (For further details, see Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 103; (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 66-70). 75, 88, 109, 127); (Surah Houd, Ayats 27-28); (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayat 16); (Surah Al-Muaminun, Ayats 24-33, 46); (Surah Saba, Ayat 34)and the corresponding E.Ns).

قٰلَ اَوَلَوۡ جِئۡتُكُمۡ بِاَهۡدٰى مِمَّا وَجَدۡتُّمۡ عَلَيۡهِ اٰبَآءَكُمۡ ؕ قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّا بِمَآ اُرۡسِلۡتُمۡ بِهٖ
كٰفِرُوۡنَ 24

(43:24) Each Prophet asked them: "Will you do so even if we were to show you a way better than the way of your forefathers?" They answered: "We disbelieve in the religion with which you have been sent."

فَانۡتَقَمۡنَا مِنۡهُمۡ فَانۡظُرۡ كَيۡفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الۡمُكَذِّبِيۡنَ ع 25

(43:25) Then We exacted retribution from them. So do consider the end of those who gave the lie (to the Prophets).

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرٰهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِۦٓ إِنَّنِى بَرَآءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ ۙ 26

(43:26) Call to mind when Abraham said to his father and his people:[24] "I totally disown all whom you serve

24. For details, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 124-133); (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayats 74-84); (Surah Ibrahim, Ayats 35- 41); (Surah Maryam, Ayats 41-50); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 51-73); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 69-89), (Surah Al-Ankabut, Ayats 16-27); (Surah As-Saaffat, Ayats 83-100) and the corresponding E.Ns.

إِلَّا ٱلَّذِى فَطَرَنِى فَإِنَّهُۥ سَيَهْدِينِ 27

(43:27) except the One Who created me; and, behold, it is He Who will direct me to the Right Way."[25]

25. In these words not only did the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) state his creed but also gave the argument for it. The reason for not having any connection with the other deities is that they neither have created nor they give right guidance in any matter, nor they can; and the reason for having a connection only with Allah Almighty is that He alone is the Creator and He alone gives, and can give the right guidance to mankind.

وَجَعَلَهَا كَلِمَةًۢ بَاقِيَةً فِى عَقِبِهِۦ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ 28

(43:28) And Abraham left behind this word[26] to endure among his posterity so that they may return to it.[27]

26. A word: the word that none but the Creator is worthy of worship in the world.

27. That is, whenever they swerve from the right path, this word should be there to guide them so that they return to it again. This event has been mentioned here in order to expose the foolishness of the disbelieving Quraish and to put them to shame, as if to say: When you have adopted obedience of your ancestors, you have selected the most depraved of them for the purpose instead of the most righteous and illustrious, who were the Prophets Abraham and Ishmael (peace be upon them). The basis of the leadership of the Quraish in Arabia was that they were the descendants of the Prophets Abraham and Ishmael (peace be upon them) and were the attendants of the Kabah built by them. Therefore, they should have followed them and not their ignorant forefathers who had given up the way of the Prophets and adopted polytheism from the neighboring idol-worshipers. Furthermore, by mentioning this event another error of those people has been pointed out. That is, if the blind imitation of the forefathers, without the distinction of good and evil had been the right thing, the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) should have done so in the first instance. But he had plainly told his father and his people that he could not follow their creed of ignorance in which they had abandoned the Creator and made those imaginary beings their deities, who were not the creator. This shows that the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) did not believe in following the forefathers, but his creed was that before one followed the forefathers one

should see whether they were following the right way or not, and if it became known by reason that they were following the wrong way, one should give up their way and adopt the way that was proved right.

بَلۡ مَتَّعۡتُ هَٰٓؤُلَآءِ وَاٰبَآءَهُمۡ حَتّٰى جَآءَهُمُ الۡحَقُّ وَرَسُوۡلٌ مُّبِيۡنٌ 29

(43:29) (Even when they began worshipping others than Allah We did not destroy them) but bestowed sustenance on them and on their forefathers until there came to them the Truth and a Messenger who clearly expounded things to them.[28]

28. Another meaning of the word rasulum-mubin can be: A Messenger whose being a Messenger was obvious and apparent: Whose life before and after the Prophethood clearly testified that he was certainly Allah's Messenger.

وَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمُ الۡحَقُّ قَالُوۡا هٰذَا سِحۡرٌ وَّاِنَّا بِهٖ كٰفِرُوۡنَ 30

(43:30) And when the Truth came to them they said: "This is just sorcery[29] and we reject it."

29. For explanation, see (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 3 and E.N. 5) on it, and (E.N. 5 of Surah Suad).

وَقَالُوۡا لَوۡلَا نُزِّلَ هٰذَا الۡقُرۡاٰنُ عَلٰى رَجُلٍ مِّنَ الۡقَرۡيَتَيۡنِ عَظِيۡمٍ 31

(43:31) They say: "Why was this Qur'an not sent down upon some great man from the two (main) cities?"[30]

30. The two towns: Makkah and Taif. What the disbelievers meant was: Had Allah really willed to send a messenger and intended to send down a book to him, He would have selected a great man from our these central cities for the purpose. For Allah could not have selected for this great mission a person who was born an orphan, who did not inherit much property, who passed his youth by tending goats, who even at present earned his living through business with his wife's money, and who was neither the chief of a tribe nor the head of a family. Were not there well known chiefs like Walid bin Mughirah and Utbah bin Rabiah in Makkah, and nobles like Urwah bin Masud, Habib bin Amr, Kinanah bin Abdi Amr and Ibn Abd Yalil in Taif? This was their reasoning in the first instance, they were also not inclined to believe that a man could be a Messenger. But when the Quran refuted this misconception by argument and reason and they were told that in the past only men had come as Messengers and a man only could be a Messenger for the guidance of the people, and not another kind of being and the Messenger who came did not descend suddenly from heavens but were born in the same ordinary dwellings, walked about in the streets, had children and families and stood in need of food and drink (see (Surah An-Nahl, Ayat 43); (Surah Bani Israil, Ayats 94-95); (Surah Yousuf, Ayat 109); (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayats 7, 20); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 7-8); (Surah Ar-Raad, Ayat 38), they took this stand, saying: Well, even if a human being, he should be a big man, who should be wealthy, influential and awe-

inspiring and having a large following. How could Muhammad bin Abdullah (peace be upon him) be fit for this appointment?

أَهُمْ يَقْسِمُونَ رَحْمَتَ رَبِّكَ ۚ نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَّعِيشَتَهُمْ فِي الْحَيَوٰةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَرَفَعْنَا
بَعْضَهُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجٰتٍ لِّيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا سُخْرِيًّا ۗ وَرَحْمَتُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا
يَجْمَعُونَ 32

(43:32) Is it they who distribute the Mercy of your Lord? It is We Who have distributed their livelihood among them in the life of this world, and have raised some above others in rank that some of them may harness others to their service.[31] Your Lord's Mercy is better than all the treasures that they hoard.[32]

31. This is the answer to their objection, which briefly mentions many important things:

First, it asks: Since when do these people become responsible for distributing the mercy of your Lord? Is it for them to decide whom Allah should favor with His mercy and whom He should not? (Here, by Allah's mercy is implied His general mercy from which everyone has a share).

Second, Allah says: Prophethood is a great blessing. We have even kept the distribution of the common means of life in the world in Our own hand, and have not entrusted it to anyone else. We create someone beautiful and another ugly, someone with a sweet voice and another with a harsh voice, someone robust and strong and another weak and frail, someone intelligent and another dull, someone with a strong memory and another forgetful, some with healthy limbs and another a cripple, or blind or deaf and dumb, someone in a rich family and another among the poor, someone in an advanced country and another in a backward community. No one can do anything about this destiny concerning birth. One is compelled to be what We have made him. And it is in no one's power to avert the impact his circumstances of birth have on his destiny. Then it is We our self Who are distributing provisions, power, honor, fame, wealth, government, etc. among men. No one can degrade the one whom We have blessed with good fortune, and no one can save from ruin the one whom We have afflicted with misfortune. All plans and schemes of man become ineffective against Our decrees. In this universal divine system, therefore, how can these people decide as to whom should the Master of the universe make His Prophet and whom He should not?

Thirdly, an abiding principle that We have kept in view in this divine system is that everything should not be given to one and the same person, or everything should not be given to everybody. If you look around carefully, you will see that great differences exist between the people in every respect. We have given one thing to one person but deprived him of another, and given the same to another one. This is based on the wisdom that no human being should become independent of others, but everyone should remain dependent on the other in one way or the other. Now if would be foolish on your part to think that We should have given the Prophethood also to the same person whom We had blessed with

wealth and nobility. Likewise, will you also say that wisdom, knowledge, wealth, beauty, power, authority and all other excellences should be assembled in one and the same person, and the one who has not been given one thing, should not be given anything else?

32. Your Lord's mercy: the Prophethood. It means: Your leaders and chiefs whom you regard as big people because of their wealth and dignity and chiefship, are not worthy of this wealth, which has been given to Muhammad bin Abdullah (peace be upon him). This wealth is far superior to that and for this the criterion is different. If you think that every noble and rich man is worthy of becoming a prophet, it would only show your own thinking. Why do you expect Allah to be so ignorant and simple?

وَلَوْلَآ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ النَّاسُ اُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً لَّجَعَلْنَا لِمَنْ يَّكْفُرُ بِالرَّحْمٰنِ لِبُيُوْتِهِمْ سُقُفًا مِّنْ فِضَّةٍ وَّمَعَارِجَ عَلَيْهَا يَظْهَرُوْنَ ۙ 33

(43:33) Were it not that all mankind would become a single community (and follow the same way), We would have provided for all those who disbelieve in the Merciful One silver roofs for their houses, and (silver) stairs on which to go up,

وَلِبُيُوْتِهِمْ اَبْوَابًا وَّسُرُرًا عَلَيْهَا يَتَّكِـُٔوْنَ ۙ 34

(43:34) and (silver) doors to their houses, and couches (of silver) upon which they would recline;[33]

33. That is, this silver and gold whose possession by somebody is the highest blessing and the very climax of good fortune in your sight, is so base and contemptible a thing in the sight of Allah that had there been no danger of all human beings being inclined towards unbelief, He would have made every disbeliever's house of gold and silver. Since when has the abundance of this worthless commodity become proof of man's nobility and his piety and his spiritual purity? This kind of wealth is even found in the possession of those foul and wicked people whose filthy characters make the whole society stink. And this you have made the criterion of man's greatness of character.

وَزُخْرُفًا ؕ وَاِنْ كُلُّ ذٰلِكَ لَمَّا مَتَاعُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ؕ وَالْاٰخِرَةُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ع 35

(43:35) or that they be made of gold. Surely all this is only the enjoyment of the life of the world. But (true prosperity) in the Hereafter with Your Lord is only for the God-fearing.

وَمَنْ يَّعْشُ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمٰنِ نُقَيِّضْ لَهٗ شَيْطٰنًا فَهُوَ لَهٗ قَرِيْنٌ 36

(43:36) He who is negligent to remember the Merciful One,[34] to him We assign a satan as his boon companion,

34. Dhikrir Rahman: His remembrance as well as His admonition and the Quran.

وَإِنَّهُمْ لَيَصُدُّونَهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ 37

(43:37) and these satans hinder them from the Right Path, while he still reckons himself to be rightly-guided.

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَنَا قَالَ يَا لَيْتَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ بُعْدَ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ فَبِئْسَ الْقَرِينُ 38

(43:38) But when he comes to Us, he will say (to his satan): "Would that there had been between me and you the distance as between the East and the West. How evil a companion you were!"

وَلَن يَنفَعَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ إِذ ظَّلَمْتُمْ أَنَّكُمْ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُشْتَرِكُونَ 39

(43:39) (He will then be told): "Today it will not benefit you the least that after your wrong-doing you and your satans now share the chastisement."[35]

35. That is, in this there is no aspect of consolation for you that the one who misguided you is being punished, for you are also receiving the same punishment for accepting and following the deviation.

أَفَأَنتَ تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ أَوْ تَهْدِي الْعُمْيَ وَمَن كَانَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ 40

(43:40) Can you, (O Prophet), then make the deaf hear, or direct to the Right Way the blind or one lost in manifest error?[36]

36. It means to say: Pay attention to those who are inclined to listen and have not closed their eyes to the realities, and do not consume yourself in showing the way to the blind and making the deaf to hear, nor consume yourself with the grief as to why your near and dear ones are not coming to the right path, and why they are making themselves worthy of Allah's torment.

فَإِمَّا نَذْهَبَنَّ بِكَ فَإِنَّا مِنْهُم مُّنتَقِمُونَ 41

(43:41) We shall inflict retribution on them, whether We take you away from the world (before We do that),

أَوْ نُرِيَنَّكَ الَّذِي وَعَدْنَاهُمْ فَإِنَّا عَلَيْهِم مُّقْتَدِرُونَ 42

(43:42) or make you see the end that We had promised them, for We have full power over them.[37]

37. This thing can be understood fully only by keeping in view the background in which it was said. The disbelievers of Makkah thought that the person of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had become a source of trouble for them. If they could somehow get rid of him, matters would become normal. On the basis of this evil thought they were holding consultations day and night and planning to kill him. At this, Allah addresses His Prophet (peace be upon him) so as to tell them indirectly: It doesn't make any difference whether you remain among them or not. If you live, you will see them meet their doom with your own eyes. If you are recalled from the world, they will be sent to their doom in your absence, because they cannot in any case escape the consequences of their misdeeds.

فَاسْتَمْسِكْ بِالَّذِيْٓ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيْكَ ۚ اِنَّكَ عَلٰي صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ 43

(43:43) So hold fast to what has been revealed to you. Surely you are on the Straight Way.[38]

38. That is, you should not worry as to what punishment do those who are resisting and opposing the truth with injustice and dishonesty receive and when. Nor should you worry whether Islam flourishes during your lifetime or not. For you this satisfaction is quite enough that you are on the right path. Therefore, you should go on fulfilling your mission unconcerned about the results, and leave it to Allah whether He defeats falsehood in front of you or after you.

وَاِنَّهٗ لَذِكْرٌ لَّكَ وَلِقَوْمِكَ ۚ وَسَوْفَ تُسْـَٔلُوْنَ 44

(43:44) Verily it is a great source of eminence for you and your people, and soon you will be called to account concerning that.[39]

39. That is, there can be no greater good fortune for a person than that Allah should choose him from among all men to become the recipient of His Book, and there can be no greater good fortune also for a nation than that Allah should raise His Prophet in it, apart from all other nations of the world, and should send down His Book in its tongue, and give it the opportunity to rise as the standard-bearer of divine message in the world. If the Quraish and the people of Arabia have no sense of this great honor, and spurn it, a time will come when they will be called upon to account for it.

وَسْـَٔلْ مَنْ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رُّسُلِنَآ اَجَعَلْنَا مِنْ دُوْنِ الرَّحْمٰنِ اٰلِهَةً يُّعْبَدُوْنَ ع 45

(43:45) Ask all Our Messengers whom We sent before you whether We had appointed any deities beside the Merciful One to be worshipped.[40]

40. Ask the Messengers: Find out from the Books brought by them. Just as the meaning of: "If there arises any dispute among you about anything, refer it to Allah and His Prophet," is not that the dispute should be taken before Allah and His Messenger, but that one should

turn to the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger for a decision, so "asking the Messengers" also does not mean that one should approach all the Messengers who have left the world and ask them, but the right meaning is: Discover what teachings the Messengers of Allah have left in the world as to which of them taught that another than Allah also is worthy of worship and service.

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مُوْسٰى بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَا۟ئِهٖ فَقَالَ اِنِّيْ رَسُوْلُ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ 46

(43:46) Indeed We[41] sent Moses with Our Signs[42] to Pharaoh and his nobles. He told them: "I am a Messenger of the Lord of the Universe."

41. This story has been narrated here for three objects:

(1) That when Allah sends His Prophet to a country and nation and affords it the opportunity which He has now given to the Arabs by appointing the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to Prophethood, and it, instead of taking advantage of this, commits the folly of Pharaoh and his people, it meets the same fate which has become an object lesson in history.

(2) That just as Pharaoh also on account of his arrogance and pride of kingdom and grandeur and wealth and possessions had belittled the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) as mean and contemptible, so the unbelieving Quraish are now regarding Muhammad (peace be upon him) as insignificant as against their chiefs. But God's judgment was different which ultimately proved who was really great.

(3) That to mock Allah's revelations and show stubbornness against His warnings is not a mere joke, but a very serious sin. If you do not learn a lesson from the fate of those who have been doomed on account of this, you also would go to your doom on account of the same.

42. This implies the signs with which the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had gone to the court of Pharaoh, i.e. the signs of the staff and the shining hand. (For explanation, see (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 107-108); (Surah TaHa, Ayats 20-22); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 32-33); (Surah An-Naml; Ayats 10-12), (Surah Al-Qasas; Ayats 31-32).

فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اِذَا هُمْ مِّنْهَا يَضْحَكُوْنَ 47

(43:47) Yet when he brought forth Clear Signs from Us, then lo, they burst into laughter.

وَمَا نُرِيْهِمْ مِّنْ اٰيَةٍ اِلَّا هِيَ اَكْبَرُ مِنْ اُخْتِهَا ۫ وَاَخَذْنٰهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ 48

(43:48) Every Sign that We showed them was greater than its predecessor; and then We seized them with Our chastisement so that they may return (to the Right Way).[43]

43. This implies the signs which Allah showed them through the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) afterwards, and these were the following:

(1) A public encounter of Allah's Prophet with the magicians, who believed after their defeat. For details, see (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 112-126); (Surah TaHa, Ayats 68-73); (Surah Ash Shuara, Ayats 37-51).

(2) A severe famine which hit the land of Egypt according to Prophet Moses' (peace be upon him) announcement and which left the country only by his prayer.

(3) Dreadful rain and hail-storms accompanied by lightning and thunder struck the country even as Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had announced, which destroyed the crops and dwellings and which also was removed only by his prayer.

(4) The sudden appearance of locusts in the land. This calamity was also not removed when Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) prayed to Allah.

(5) Lice and weevils spread throughout the country according to the announcement made by Moses (peace be upon him), which afflicted men and animals on the one hand, and destroyed granaries on the other. This torment was also averted when Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was requested to pray for its removal.

(6) Frogs appeared everywhere in the country according to the warning given by Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), which put the whole population to great distress. This calamity did not also retreat until Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) prayed for it.

(7) The torment of blood appeared precisely as foretold by Moses (peace be upon him), which turned the water of all canals, wells, springs, pools and cisterns into blood. The fish died and the water smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink from it for a full week. This evil was also averted when the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was asked to pray for its removal. For details, see (Surah Al- Aaraf, Ayats 130-136). (Surah An-Naml, Ayat 12) and (E.N. 37 of Surah Al-Mumin).

Chapters 7 to 10 of Exodus also contain the details of these calamities, but it is a combination of gossip and truth. It says that when the calamity of blood appeared, the magicians also worked a similar miracle, but when the calamity of the lice came, the magicians could not produce lice in response, and they said that it was God's work. Even more strange than this is that when the storm of the frogs came, the magicians also brought about frogs, but in spite of that Pharaoh requested only the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) to pray to God to take away the frogs. The question is when the magicians could produce frogs, why didn't Pharaoh get the frogs taken away through them? And how did it become known which of the frogs were Allah's work and which of the magicians' work? The same question arises about the blood. When according to the warning of Moses (peace be upon him) water became blood everywhere, which water did the magicians turn into blood? And how was it known that the water of a particular place had turned blood by the power of the magicians? Such are the things which show that the Bible does not consist of purely divine revelation, but the people who wrote it mixed up many things in it from their own imagination. The

pity, however, is that the authors also were people of ordinary intelligence, who did not even know how to invent a story.

وَقَالُوْا يٰٓاَيُّهَ السَّاحِرُ ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ عِنْدَكَ ۚ اِنَّنَا لَمُهْتَدُوْنَ 49

(43:49) (Whenever they faced an affliction) they would say: "O magician, pray for us to your Lord according to your station with Him. We shall certainly be guided to the Right Way."

فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابَ اِذَا هُمْ يَنْكُثُوْنَ 50

(43:50) But lo, each time We removed Our affliction from them, they would go back on their word.[44]

44. The stubbornness of Pharaoh and the chiefs of his people can be judged from the fact that when distressed by the torment they wanted the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) to pray for its removal, even then they did not recognize him as a Prophet but addressed him as a magician, whereas they were not unaware of the truth about magic, and they also knew that those miraculous things could not be brought about by the power of magic. The most that a magician can do is that in a limited area he can so influence the people present in front of him as to make them feel that water has become blood, or frogs are coming out in large numbers or swarms of locusts are advancing. And within this limited place also no water will actually become blood, but water will remain water as soon as it comes outside it; no frog will be produced in actual fact, but will prove to be an imaginary thing as soon as brought outside the circle; locusts also would be imaginary: they would not be able to destroy any crop. As for this that a famine appears throughout a country, or that the canals and springs and wells of the country are filled with blood, or that swarms of locusts spread over thousands of square miles and eat up crops growing over thousands of acres, this has neither been accomplished by a magician so far, nor can it ever happen by the power of magic. Should such magicians be there in the service of a king, he need not keep forces and fight wars; he could conquer the whole world by the power of magic. Even if the magicians possessed such power, they would not seek service under the kings, but would assume kingship themselves.

The commentators in general have been perplexed as to why Pharaoh and his courtiers addressed the Prophet Moses as "O sorcerer", when they requested him to pray for the removal of the calamity, for the one who seeks another's help in a hard time flatters him and does not condemn him. They have given the interpretation that sorcery in the Egypt of those days was held as a very respectable art, and when they addressed Moses as "O sorcerer" they did not condemn him, but honored him because it amounted to calling him as "O Learned man" But this interpretation is absolutely wrong on the ground that wherever at other places in the Quran Pharaoh's sayings have been cited in which he had called the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) a sorcerer and the miracles presented by him sorcery, the sense of condemnation and contempt becomes apparent, and it becomes manifestly clear that sorcery was false in his sight, which he imputed to the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) so as to prove his claim to the Prophethood to be false! Therefore, it cannot be

acceptable that suddenly at this time "sorcerer" became the title of an honorable and learned man in his sight. As for the question: Why did the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) accede to his request at all when even while requesting him for the prayer, Pharaoh insulted him publicly, the answer is that the object before the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was to strengthen the case against those people by Allah's command. Their request to him to pray for the removal of the torment by itself proved that in their hearts they had come to know why the torments were occurring, who was sending them and who could avert them. In spite of that, when they called him a "sorcerer" stubbornly, and went back on their word of following the right way as soon as the torment was averted, they in fact, did not do any harm to Allah's Prophet, but only caused the case and argument to be strengthened against themselves, which Allah at last decided against them with their total destruction. When they called him a sorcerer, this did not mean that they believed in their hearts as well that the torments against them were coming by the power of sorcery, but they realized it fully that those were Allah's signs and yet they denied them deliberately. The same thing has been said in (Surah An-Naml, Ayat 14): They rejected those signs out of sheer injustice and vanity, whereas in their hearts they were convinced.

وَنَادٰى فِرْعَوْنُ فِيْ قَوْمِهٖ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اَلَيْسَ لِيْ مُلْكُ مِصْرَ وَهٰذِهِ الْاَنْهٰرُ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِيْ ۚ اَفَلَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ ۭ 51

(43:51) And Pharaoh proclaimed among his people:[45] "My people, do I not have dominion over Egypt, and are these streams not flowing beneath me? Can't you see?[46]

45. Pharaoh probably sent heralds to the cities and towns throughout the country to proclaim what he said in his address to his ministers and courtiers in the capital. Pharaoh could not have availed of the services of a sycophantic press, controlled news agencies and official radio.

46. The words of the proclamation clearly show that ground was slipping from under the Pharaoh's feet. The miracles performed one after the other by the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had caused the common people's beliefs in their gods to waver and the Pharaoh's spell under which their dynasty was ruling over Egypt as representatives of the gods, was shattered. Thereupon, Pharaoh cried out: O wretched people, can't you see who is ruling over this land and under whose control are the canals which have been dug out from the Nile, upon which depends your whole economy? All these developments in this country have been brought about by me and my predecessors, but you are being devoted, charmed and fascinated by this pauper!

اَمْ اَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْ هٰذَا الَّذِيْ هُوَ مَهِيْنٌ ۙ وَّلَا يَكَادُ يُبِيْنُ 52

(43:52) Am I better or this contemptible man[47] who is scarcely able to express himself?[48]

47. Who is despicable: the person who has neither wealth, nor power, nor authority. This same objection had been raised by the disbelieving Quraish against the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

48. Some commentators have expressed the opinion that Pharaoh referred to the impediment of speech from which the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) suffered since childhood. But this is not a correct opinion. As has been mentioned in Surah TaHa above, when the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was being appointed to Prophethood, he had implored Allah Almighty to remove the defect from his tongue so that the people might understand his speech and at that very time his request had also been granted along with his other requests (verse 27-36). Moreover, orations of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) that have been cited at different places in the Quran, point to his perfect eloquence and fluency. Therefore, the basis of Pharaoh's objection was not any impediment of speech from which Moses (peace be upon him) might be suffering but what he meant was: This person talks confusedly, at least I have never been able to understand what he says.

فَلَوْلَآ أُلْقِيَ عَلَيْهِ أَسْوِرَةٌ مِّن ذَهَبٍ أَوْ جَآءَ مَعَهُ الْمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ مُقْتَرِنِينَ 53

(43:53) Why were bracelets of gold not bestowed upon him? Why did a retinue of angels not accompany him as attendants?"[49]

49. In the ancient times when a person was appointed to be governor of a land or sent as an ambassador to a foreign country, a robe of honor was conferred on him by the king, which also included bracelets of gold, and he was also accompanied by a contingent of soldiers and servants for over-awing the people and for showing the glory and grandeur of the king who had appointed him. What Pharaoh meant to say was: If the King of the heavens had really sent Moses (peace be upon him) as His ambassador to His counterpart on the earth, he should have been dressed in a robe of honor and come with several contingents of angels in attendance. How strange that a poor man should appear with a staff in his hand and say that he was the messenger of the Lord of the worlds!

فَاسْتَخَفَّ قَوْمَهُ فَأَطَاعُوهُ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَٰسِقِينَ 54

(43:54) He incited his people to levity and they obeyed him. Surely they were an iniquitous people.[50]

50. A tremendous reality has been expressed in this brief sentence. When a person wishes to become autocratic in a country and contrives every plan openly to achieve his object, he practices every deception and trick. He buys and sells consciences and persecutes and crushes ruthlessly those who cannot be purchased. He, in fact, shows by his actions, whatever he may say to the contrary, that he takes the people of the country to be light as regards to their intellect, morals and manliness, and has formed the impression that he can drive the foolish, unscrupulous and cowardly people wherever he likes. Then, when he has succeeded in his designs and the people have become his obedient servants, they prove by their conduct and behavior that they are actually what the wicked man had taken them to be, and the main cause of their depravity is that they are basically a sinful people. They are not

in the least concerned as to what is the truth and what is falsehood, what is justice and what is injustice, whether the noble traits of character are truthfulness and honesty or falsehood and dishonesty and meanness. Instead of this, only their personal interests are of real importance to them, for the sake of which they remain ever ready to cooperate with every wicked person, to yield to every tyrant, to accept every falsehood and to suppress every protest that is voiced in favor of the truth.

فَلَمَّآ اٰسَفُوْنَا انْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَاَغْرَقْنٰهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ۙ 55

(43:55) So when they incurred Our wrath, We exacted retribution from them, and drowned them all,

فَجَعَلْنٰهُمْ سَلَفًا وَّمَثَلًا لِّلْاٰخِرِيْنَ ع 56

(43:56) and made them a thing of the past and an example for those who would come after them.[51]

51. That is, they are a precedent for those who do not learn any lesson from their example, and an object lesson for those who are keen to learn a lesson.

وَلَمَّا ضُرِبَ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ مَثَلًا اِذَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْهُ يَصِدُّوْنَ 57

(43:57) No sooner the example of the son of Mary was mentioned than, lo and behold, your people raised a clamour

وَقَالُوْٓا ءَاٰلِهَتُنَا خَيْرٌ اَمْ هُوَ ۭ مَا ضَرَبُوْهُ لَكَ اِلَّا جَدَلًا ۭ بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ خَصِمُوْنَ 58

(43:58) and said: “Who is better, our deities or he?”[52] They said so only out of contentiousness. They are a disputatious people.

52. In (verse 45) above, it was said: You may ask all other Messengers whom We sent before you whether We had appointed any other gods to be worshiped beside the Merciful God. When this discourse was being presented before the people of Makkah, a person called Abdullah ibn az-Zibara in the traditions, put forward the objection: Well, is it not a fact that the Christians regard the son of Mary as the son of God and worship him? What is then wrong with our gods? This caused much laughter among the crowd of the disbelievers and they started clamoring for an answer to this objection. But at this foolish behavior, the continuity of the revelation was not broken, but was first completed and then the objection of the questioner was taken up. (It should be borne in mind that this incident has been reported in the books of commentaries in different ways which contain great variations, but after a study of the context and the traditions the real incident in our view is the same as we have mentioned above).

إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا عَبْدٌ أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلْنَاهُ مَثَلًا لِّبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ۖ 59

(43:59) He was no more than a servant (of Ours), one upon whom We bestowed Our favours and whom We made an example (of Our infinite power) for the Children of Israel.[53]

53. "We made him an example" implies causing the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) to be born without a father, and then granting him such miracles as had not been granted to anyone before him nor to anyone after him. He would make a bird of clay and then breathe into it and it would become a living bird; he would give sight to those born blind; he would cure the lepers; so much so that he would raise the dead back to life. What Allah means to say is: It is wrong to worship him as son of God and regard him as above servitude only because of his extraordinary birth and the great miracles granted to him. He was no more than a mere servant, whom We had blessed and made an example of Our power. (For details, see (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayats 42-49, 59); (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 156); (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayats 17,110); (Surah Maryam, Ayats 17-35); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 91); (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayat 50).

وَلَوْ نَشَاءُ لَجَعَلْنَا مِنكُم مَّلَائِكَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ يَخْلُفُونَ 60

(43:60) If We had so willed We could have made some of you into angels[54] to become your successors on earth.

54. Another translation can be: make some of you angels.

وَإِنَّهُ لَعِلْمٌ لِّلسَّاعَةِ فَلَا تَمْتَرُنَّ بِهَا وَاتَّبِعُونِ ۚ هَٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيمٌ 61

(43:61) Verily he [i.e., Jesus) is a portent of the Hour.[55] So be in no doubt concerning it and follow Me. This is the Straight Way.

55. Another translation of this sentence can be: He is a means of the knowledge of Resurrection. Here the question arises: What is implied by "he"? According to Hasan Basri and Saeed bin Jubair it implies the Quran. That is, one can learn from the Quran that Resurrection will come. But this commentary is irrelevant to the context. There is nothing in the context on the basis of which it may be said that it refers to the Quran. Other commentators almost unanimously have expressed the opinion that it implies the prophet Jesus Christ (peace be upon him), and this is suitable to the context. Now the question is: In what sense has Jesus Christ been called a sign or a means of the knowledge of Resurrection? Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, Ikrimah, Qatadah, Suddi, Dahhak, Abul Aliyah and Abu Malik say that this refers to the second coming of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) as has been foretold in a large number of the traditions, and the verse means that when he comes the second time to the world, it will become known that Resurrection is not far behind. But in spite of the great authority that these scholars hold it is difficult to believe that in this verse the second advent of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) has been called a sign of Resurrection, or a means of its knowledge. For it is contradicted by the next verse. His

second advent, indeed, can be a means of the knowledge of Resurrection only for those people who will be living in that future period or will be born after that. How could he be regarded as a means of the knowledge for the pagans of Makkah, who are being asked not to have any doubt about it? Therefore, the correct interpretation in our opinion is the one that has been given by some other commentators, according to which the Prophet Jesus' (peace be upon him) birth without a father and his making a bird out of clay and his raising the dead back to life has been presented as a proof of the possibility of Resurrection. So, the divine words would mean: Why do you think it is impossible for God to raise you and all mankind from death when He can create a child without a father and a servant of His can breathe life into an image of clay and raise the dead back to life by His permission?

وَلَا يَصُدَّنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ ۚ اِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ 62

(43:62) Let not Satan hinder you (from believing in the Hour),[56] for surely he is your open enemy.

56. Hinder you: hinder you from believing in Resurrection.

وَلَمَّا جَآءَ عِيْسٰى بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ قَالَ قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَلِاُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِىْ
تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ فِيْهِ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ 63

(43:63) When Jesus came with Clear Signs and said: "I have brought wisdom to you that I may make plain to you some of the things you differ about. So fear Allah and follow me.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ رَبِّىْ وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوْهُ ؕ هٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيْمٌ 64

(43:64) Allah is my Lord and your Lord; therefore, serve Him. That is the Straight Way."[57]

57. That is, the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) himself had never claimed that he was God or son of God, and that the people should worship him, but, on the contrary, his message was the same as of all other Prophets, the same as was now being conveyed to you through Muhammad (peace be upon him). (For explanation, see (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayats 50-51); (Surah An-Nisa, Ayats 171-172); (Surah Al- Maidah, Ayats 72, 116-117); (Surah Maryam, Ayats 30-36).

فَاخْتَلَفَ الْاَحْزَابُ مِنْۢ بَيْنِهِمْ ۚ فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا مِنْ عَذَابِ يَوْمٍ اَلِيْمٍ 65

(43:65) Then the factions fell apart among themselves.[58] So woe to the wrong-doers from the chastisement of a grievous Day.

58. That is, one group of the people denied him and in their antagonism went to the extent of accusing him of illegitimate birth and got him crucified as they thought. The other group believed in him but owing to exaggerated reverence made him son of God, and then the question of man's being God became such a riddle for it that every effort to resolve it caused it to be divided into countless sects. (For explanation, see (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 171), (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayats 17,77, 116-117)and the corresponding E.Ns).

هَلۡ يَنۡظُرُوۡنَ اِلَّا السَّاعَةَ اَنۡ تَاۡتِيَهُمۡ بَغۡتَةً وَّهُمۡ لَا يَشۡعُرُوۡنَ 66

(43:66) Are they awaiting anything other than the Last Hour that it should suddenly come upon them without their even perceiving it?

اَلۡاَخِلَّآءُ يَوۡمَئِذٍۢ بَعۡضُهُمۡ لِبَعۡضٍ عَدُوٌّ اِلَّا الۡمُتَّقِيۡنَ ؕ ع 67

(43:67) On that Day even bosom friends shall become enemies to one another, all except the God-fearing.[59]

59. In other words, only those friendships will remain unaffected which are based on righteousness and piety in the world. All other friendships will turn into enmities, and those who are cooperating with one another in deviation, tyranny and wickedness today, will on the Day of Resurrection, put the blame on others and try to escape. This subject has been treated repeatedly at many places in the Quran so that every person in this very world may fully realize with whom it would be beneficial for him to cooperate and with whom it is harmful.

يٰعِبَادِ لَا خَوۡفٌ عَلَيۡكُمُ الۡيَوۡمَ وَلَاۤ اَنۡتُمۡ تَحۡزَنُوۡنَ ۚ 68

(43:68) (It will be said to them): "My servants, today you have nothing to fear or regret,

اَلَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَكَانُوۡا مُسۡلِمِيۡنَ ۚ 69

(43:69) you who believed in Our Signs and had surrendered yourselves (to Us)!

اُدۡخُلُوا الۡجَنَّةَ اَنۡتُمۡ وَاَزۡوَاجُكُمۡ تُحۡبَرُوۡنَ 70

(43:70) Enter Paradise joyfully, both you and your spouses."[60]

60. The word azwaj as used in the original can be used both for the wives and for those people who are a person's close associates, friends and peers. This comprehensive word has been used so as to cover both the meanings. The believers will be accompanied both by their believing wives and by their believing friends in Paradise.

يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِصِحَافٍ مِّنْ ذَهَبٍ وَّاَكْوَابٍ ۚ وَفِيْهَا مَا تَشْتَهِيْهِ الْاَنْفُسُ وَتَلَذُّ الْاَعْيُنُ ۚ وَاَنْتُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ۚ 71

(43:71) Platters and cups of gold shall be passed around them, and there shall be all that they might desire and all that their eyes might delight in. (They shall be told): "Herein shall you abide for ever.

وَتِلْكَ الْجَنَّةُ الَّتِيْٓ اُوْرِثْتُمُوْهَا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ 72

(43:72) Such is the Paradise that you shall inherit by virtue of your good deeds in the life of the world.

لَكُمْ فِيْهَا فَاكِهَةٌ كَثِيْرَةٌ مِّنْهَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ 73

(43:73) Herein you will have abundant fruits of which you will eat."

اِنَّ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ فِيْ عَذَابِ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدُوْنَ ۚ 74

(43:74) But the evil-doers shall abide in the torment of Hell.

لَا يُفَتَّرُ عَنْهُمْ وَهُمْ فِيْهِ مُبْلِسُوْنَ ۚ 75

(43:75) Never will their torment be lightened for them. They shall remain in utter despair.

وَمَا ظَلَمْنٰهُمْ وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْا هُمُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ 76

(43:76) It is not We Who wronged them; rather, it is they who wronged themselves.

وَنَادَوْا يٰمٰلِكُ لِيَقْضِ عَلَيْنَا رَبُّكَ ۭ قَالَ اِنَّكُمْ مّٰكِثُوْنَ 77

(43:77) They shall call out: "O Malik,[61] let your Lord put an end to us." He will reply: "You must stay on in it.

61. Malik: a keeper of Hell as is evident from the context.

لَقَدْ جِئْنٰكُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَكُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كٰرِهُوْنَ 78

(43:78) We brought you the Truth; but to the truth most of you were averse."[62]

62. That is, We made the reality plain to you, but you were fond of the imaginary, and you had an aversion to the truth. Now, why do you lament at the fate of your foolish choice? It may be a part of the Hell-keeper's answer, and it may also be that his answer ended with: Here you must remain, and this second sentence as an addition by Allah. In the first case, the keeper's saying: We had brought the Truth to you, is just like an official's using the word "we" on behalf of his government, when he wants to say: Our government did this or gave such and such an order.

أَمْ أَبْرَمُوٓا۟ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّا مُبْرِمُونَ ۚ 79

(43:79) Have they contrived some scheme?[63] If so, We too will contrive a scheme.

63. The allusion is to the plans that the chiefs of the Quraish were devising in their secret assemblies in order to take a decisive action against the Prophet (peace be upon him).

أَمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّا لَا نَسْمَعُ سِرَّهُمْ وَنَجْوَىٰهُم ۚ بَلَىٰ وَرُسُلُنَا لَدَيْهِمْ يَكْتُبُونَ 80

(43:80) Or do they think that We do not hear their secret talks and their whispering counsels? Yes, indeed We do and Our messengers [i.e., angels) are with them, writing.

قُلْ إِن كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَٰنِ وَلَدٌ ۖ فَأَنَا أَوَّلُ ٱلْعَٰبِدِينَ 81

(43:81) Say: "If the Merciful One had a son, I would have been the first one to worship him."[64]

64. It means: My rejection of somebody's being God's offspring and my refusal to worship those whom you regard as His offspring is not due to any stubbornness and obduracy. My reason for the refusal is only this that God has no son or daughter, and your such beliefs are against the reality; otherwise I am such a faithful servant of my Lord that if at all the reality had been the same as you state I would have submitted myself in worship before you.

سُبْحَٰنَ رَبِّ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ رَبِّ ٱلْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ 82

(43:82) Exalted be the Lord of the heavens and the earth, the Lord of the Throne, above what they attribute to Him.

فَذَرْهُمْ يَخُوضُوا۟ وَيَلْعَبُوا۟ حَتَّىٰ يُلَٰقُوا۟ يَوْمَهُمُ ٱلَّذِى يُوعَدُونَ 83

(43:83) So leave them alone to indulge in their vanities and to frolic about until they encounter that Day of theirs against which they have been warned.

وَهُوَ الَّذِیْ فِی السَّمَآءِ اِلٰهٌ وَّفِی الْاَرْضِ اِلٰهٌ ؕ وَهُوَ الْحَكِیْمُ الْعَلِیْمُ 84

(43:84) He it is Who is God in the heavens and the earth. He is the Most Wise, the All-Knowing.[65]

65. That is, the gods of the heavens and the earth are not separate, but there is only One God of the entire universe. It is His wisdom that is working in the whole system of the universe and only He has the knowledge of all realities.

وَتَبٰرَكَ الَّذِیْ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَیْنَهُمَا ۚ وَعِنْدَهٗ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ ۚ وَاِلَیْهِ

تُرْجَعُوْنَ 85

(43:85) Blessed is He Who has dominion over the heavens and the earth and all that is between them.[66] With Him is the knowledge of the Hour; and to Him you shall all be sent back.[67]

66. That is, He is far above it that another should be His associate in Godhead and may have any share whatsoever in ruling this great universe. Whatever is there in the earth and the heavens, whether the Prophets, the saints, the angels, jinn, spirits, stars or planets, they are His servants and slaves and subjects. It is impossible for them to be characterized with a divine attribute or be possessed with a divine power.

67. That is, you may have taken anyone as your helper and patron in the world, but after death you will have to face only One God and render an account of your deeds before Him alone.

وَلَا یَمْلِكُ الَّذِیْنَ یَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِ الشَّفَاعَةَ اِلَّا مَنْ شَهِدَ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ یَعْلَمُوْنَ 86

(43:86) Those whom they call upon, instead of Allah have no power of intercession, except such that testify to the truth based on knowledge.[68]

68. This sentence has several meanings:

(1) Those whom the people have made their deities in the world, will not at all be their intercessors before Allah. Those of them who were wicked, will themselves be presented as culprits there. However, those who had borne witness to the truth by virtue of knowledge (and not unconsciously) will certainly be able to intercede for others.

(2) Those who will be permitted to intercede, will be able to do so only for those who had testified to the truth consciously (and not heedlessly). They will neither intercede of their own will, nor will have the permission to intercede for anyone who had gone and been led astray from the truth in the world, or had been affirming the faith in Allah as the only Deity unconsciously as well as serving other deities at the same time

(3) If a person says that those whom he has made gods necessarily possess the powers of intercession, and they wield such an influence with Allah that they can have anyone they like forgiven, irrespective of his beliefs and deeds, is totally wrong. No one enjoys such a position with Allah. If the one who claims that another has such powers of intercession can testify to the truth of this matter by virtue of knowledge, one should have the courage to say so. But if one is not in a position to bear such a testimony, and he is certainly not, it would be sheer folly to invent such a creed on the basis of mere hearsay or conjecture and risk his life Hereafter relying only on an imaginary support.

Incidentally, this verse also gives two important principles: First, it shows that bearing a testimony to the truth without knowledge may be reliable in the world, but it is not so before Allah. In the world, whoever affirms the faith verbally will be regarded as a Muslim and treated as such unless he openly commits an act expressly contradictory to belief. But as before Allah only such a one will be counted as a Muslim, who has uttered Lailaha illAllah consciously, with full understanding of what he is denying and what he is affirming according to his best knowledge. Secondly, it gives this principle of the law of evidence that knowledge is a pre-requisite of bearing the evidence. If the bearer of an evidence has no knowledge of the event to which he is bearing evidence, his evidence is meaningless. The same is borne out by a decision given by the Prophet (peace be upon him). He said to a witness: If you saw what happened with your own eyes as you are seeing the sun, then you may bear the witness, otherwise not. (Ahkam al- Quran by al Jassas).

وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُم مَّنْ خَلَقَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ فَأَنَّىٰ يُؤْفَكُونَ ۙ 87

(43:87) If you were to ask them: "Who created them?" they will surely say: "Allah."[69] Whence are they, then, being led astray?

69. This verse has two meanings:

(1) If you ask them who has created them, they will say: Allah.

(2) If you ask them who is the Creator of their gods, they will say: Allah.

وَقِيلِهِ يَا رَبِّ إِنَّ هَٰؤُلَاءِ قَوْمٌ لَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ ۘ 88

(43:88) We call to witness the cry of the Messenger: "O Lord, these are a people not wont to believe!"[70]

70. This is one of the most difficult verses of the Quran as it involves the complicated syntactic question of the kind of waw that has been used in wa qili-hi. From the translation of Shah Abdul Qadir it appears that the waw here is not conjunctive but for taking oath, and is related to fa-anna yu-fakun, and the pronoun in qili-hi turns to the Prophet (peace be upon him) of Allah. Therefore, the verse means this: By this saying of the Messenger: O my Lord, these are a people who would not believe. They are so utterly deluded that although they themselves admit that Allah alone is their Creator and Creator of their gods, yet they abandon the Creator and persist in worshiping His creatures.

The object of swearing by this saying of the Messenger is that the conduct of the people clearly shows that they are, in fact, stubborn, for the foolishness of their attitude is apparent from their own admission, and such an irrational attitude can be adopted only by such a person, who is resolved not to believe. In other words, the oath implies: The Messenger has rightly said so: indeed these people would not believe.

فَاصْفَحْ عَنْهُمْ وَقُلْ سَلٰمٌ ؕ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ع 89

(43:89) Indulge them, (O Prophet), and say to them: "Peace to you."[71] For soon they shall come to know.

71. That is, you should neither curse them for their scornful words and attitude of mockery and derision, nor respond with harsh words, just wish them well and take your leave.

44. Surah Ad Dukhan (The Smoke)

Name

The Surah takes its name from the word dukhan which occurs in verse 10.

Period of Revelation

Its period of revelation also could not be determined from any authentic tradition, but the internal evidence of the subject matter shows that this Surah too was sent down in the same period in which Surah Zukhruf and a few other earlier Surahs had been revealed. However, this Surah was sent down somewhat later. Its historical background is this: When the disbelievers of Makkah became more and more antagonistic in their attitude and conduct, the Holy Prophet prayed: O God, help me with a famine like the famine of Joseph. He thought that when the people would be afflicted with a calamity, they would remember God, their hearts would soften and they would accept the admonition. Allah granted his prayer, and the whole land was overtaken by such a terrible famine that the people were sorely distressed. At last, some of the Quraish chiefs among whom Hadrat Abdullah bin Masud has particularly mentioned the name of Abu Sufyan came to the Holy Prophet and requested him to pray to Allah to deliver his people from the calamity. On this occasion Allah sent down this Surah.

Subject Matter and Topics

The introduction to the address revealed on this occasion for the admonition and warning of the people of Makkah contained some important points, which are as follows:

1. "You, O People of Makkah, are wrong in thinking that the Quran is being composed by Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace). This Book by itself bears the clear testimony that it is not the composition of a man but of Allah, Lord of the worlds."
2. "You are making a wrong estimate of the worth of this Book. You think it is a calamity that has descended on you, whereas the Hour when Allah, out of sheer mercy, decided to send His Messenger and His Book to you was highly blessed."
3. "You are foolishly involved in the misunderstanding that you will fight this Messenger and this Book and will win, whereas the fact is that the Messenger has been raised and the Book sent down in that particular Hour when Allah decides the destinies, and Allah's decisions are not so weak that they may be changed to a person's liking, nor are they based on ignorance and folly that there may be the likelihood of a mistake or error or weakness in them. They are rather the firm and unalterable decisions of the Ruler of the Universe, Who is All Hearing, All Knowing and All Wise. Therefore, they cannot be treated lightly.
4. "You yourselves acknowledge that Allah alone is the Master and Lord of the earth and heavens and of everything in the Universe and also admit that life and death are only in His power, yet you insist on making others your deities, for which the only argument you offer is that that had been the practice since the time of your forefathers, whereas if a person has the conviction that Allah alone is the Master, Sustainer and Giver of life and death, he can never entertain the doubt that there can be other gods also beside Him, who can be worthy of worship. If your forefathers had committed

this folly, there is no reason why you also should continue committing it blindly. As a matter of fact, their Lord too was only One God, Who is your Lord, and they also should have worshiped only Him, Whom you should worship."

5. "The only demand of Allah's Providence and Mercifulness is not this that He should feed you, but also this that He should arrange guidance for you. For this very guidance He has sent His Messenger and His Book."

After this introduction, the question of the famine that was raging in Makkah has been discussed. As already mentioned, this famine had occurred on the Holy Prophet's prayer, and he had prayed for it so that when the calamity befell it would break the stubbornness of the disbelievers and then they would listen to the rebuke. It looked as if this expectation was being fulfilled to some extent, for some of the most stubborn enemies of the Truth, on account of the severities of the famine, had cried out: "O Lord, avert this torment from us and we will believe." At this, on the one hand, the Holy Prophet has been foretold :"These people will not learn any lesson from such calamities. When they have turned away from the Messenger, whose life, character, works and speech clearly show that he is Allah's true Messenger, how will a mere famine help remove their disbelief?" On the other, the unbelievers have been addressed, so as to say : "You lie when you say that you will believe as soon as the torment is removed from you. We shall just remove it to see how sincere you are in your promise. There is a graver disaster about to fall upon you. You need a much more crushing blow :minor misfortunes cannot set you right."

In this very connection, a reference has been made a little below to Pharaoh and his people, implying that those people also had met with precisely the same trial as the chiefs of the disbelieving Quraish are now afflicted. To them also a similar noble and honorable Messenger had come; they also had seen those express pointers and signs which clearly showed that he had been appointed by Allah; they also had gone on witnessing one sign after the other but they did not give up their stubbornness, till at last they made up their mind to put an end to the Messenger's life, and they met their doom, which has since become an object lesson for the people for ever.

After this the theme of the Hereafter has been taken up, which the disbelievers of Makkah vehemently denied. They said: "We have never seen anyone rising back to life after death. Raise our forefathers back to life if you are true in your claim about the life hereafter." In response to this, two arguments for the Hereafter have been presented briefly (1) That the denial of this creed has always proved destructive for the morals; and (2) that the universe is not a plaything of a thoughtless deity, but it is a wise system and no work of wisdom is ever vain or useless. Then the disbelievers demand to bring their forefathers back to life has been answered, thus : "This cannot be done every day to meet the demand of the individuals, but Allah has appointed a time when He will resurrect all mankind simultaneously and will subject them to accountability in His Court. If one has to protect oneself there, one should think about it here. For no one will be able to save himself there by his own power, nor by the power of any one else."

In connection with this Court of Allah, mention has been made of the fate of those who will be declared as culprits and of the rewards of those who will be declared as successful. The discourse has been concluded with this warning: "This Quran has been revealed in simple language in your own tongue so that you may understand it; yet if you do not understand it

and insist on seeing your evil end, you may wait; Our Prophet too is waiting. Whatever is to happen, will happen at its own appointed time."

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

حٰمٓ ۚ 1

(44:1) Ha'. Mim.

وَالۡکِتٰبِ الۡمُبِیۡنِ ۙ 2

(44:2) By the Clear Book.

اِنَّاۤ اَنۡزَلۡنٰہُ فِیۡ لَیۡلَۃٍ مُّبٰرَکَۃٍ اِنَّا کُنَّا مُنۡذِرِیۡنَ 3

(44:3) We revealed it on a Blessed Night, for We were intent on warning;[1]

1. The meaning of taking an oath by the lucid Scripture has been explained in (E.N.1 of Surah Az-Zukhruf). Here also what has been sworn by is that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is not the author of this Book but We are the author, and this Book by itself is enough to provide a proof of that. Furthermore, it has been said that the night in which it was revealed was full of blessings. That is, the foolish and ignorant people, who have no idea of their own well being or otherwise, regard the revelation of this Book as a disaster for themselves and are deeply anxious as how to get rid of it. But, as a matter of fact, the Hour when We decided to send down this Book to arouse the heedless, was highly blessed for them and for all mankind.

Some commentators have expressed the opinion that the meaning of sending down the Quran in that night is that its revelation began during that night, and some others think that the whole of the Quran was transferred from Umm-ul- Kitab and entrusted to the bearers of revelation (angels), and then revealed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) as and when required and demanded by the occasion and circumstances during 23 years. As to what actually happened Allah alone has the best knowledge.

The night implies the same night which has been called lailat-ul-qadr in (Surah Al-Qadr, Ayat 1), There it has been said: We sent it down in a night of glory, and here: We sent it down in a blessed night. It was the night of the month of Ramadhan, as it is said in(Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 185): Ramadhan is the month in which the Quran was revealed.

فِیۡہَا یُفۡرَقُ کُلُّ اَمۡرٍ حَکِیۡمٍ ۙ 4

(44:4) (We revealed it on the Night) wherein every matter is wisely determined[2]

2. The word amr-in-hakim as used in the text has two meanings:

(1) That the command is entirely based on wisdom: there is no likelihood of any error or weakness in it.

(2) That it is a firm and stable decision: it lies in no one's power to change it.

أَمْرًا مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا ۚ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ ۚ 5

(44:5) by Our command.[3] Verily, We were set to send a Messenger

3. In Surah Al-Qadr, this same thing has been expressed thus: The angels and the Spirit (Angel Gabriel) descend in it with every decree, by the leave of their Lord. This shows that it is such a night in the divine administration of Allah in which He decides the destinies of the individuals and nations and countries and entrusts His decisions to His angels, who then implement them accordingly. Some commentators among whom Ikrimah is most prominent, have been involved in the misunderstanding that this is the 15th night of Shaban, for in some traditions it has been said that the destinies of people are decided during that night. But Ibn Abbas, Ibn Umar, Mujahid, Qatadah, Hasan Basri, Saeed bin Jubair, Ibn Zaid, Abu Malik, Dahhak and many other commentators agree that this is the same night of Ramadan, which has been called lailat-ul-qadr, for the Quran itself has stated this, and where any Quranic statement exists, no other view can be formed on the basis of random reports. Ibn Kathir says: The traditions that Imam Zuhri has related from Uthman bin Muhammad that destinies are decided from one Shaban to the next Shaban is an indirect tradition and such traditions cannot be cited as against the clear texts of the Quran. Qadi Abu Bakr Ibn al-Arabi says: No Hadith in respect of the 15th of Shaban is reliable, either in respect of its merit, or about this that decisions with regard to the destinies are taken in it; therefore, they do not merit attention, (Ahkam ul-Quran).

رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ۙ 6

(44:6) as a Mercy from your Lord.[4] Surely He is All-Hearing, All-Seeing,[5]

4. That is, it was not only a demand of wisdom to send a Messenger with this Book but also of Allah's mercy, for He is the Provider, and Provider requires that not only should arrangements be made for nourishing the servants' bodies but they should also be afforded right guidance by knowledge, that they should be made aware of the distinction between right and wrong and that they should not be left wandering in darkness.

5. The object of mentioning these two attributes of Allah in this context is to warn the people of the truth that He alone can give correct knowledge for He alone knows all the realities. Not to speak of one man, even if all men join to determine a way of life for themselves, there can be no guaranty of its being the right way, for even the entire mankind together cannot become all-hearing and allknowing. It does not lie in its power to comprehend all those realities whose knowledge is essential for determining a correct way of life. This knowledge is only with Allah. He alone is All-Hearing and All-Knowing. Therefore, He alone can tell what is guidance for man and what is falsehood, what is the truth and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil.

رَبِّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ وَمَا بَيۡنَهُمَا ۘ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ مُّوۡقِنِيۡنَ 7

(44:7) the Lord of the heavens and the earth and of all that is between them: if you would only have sure faith.[6]

6. The Arabs themselves admitted that Allah alone is the Lord (Master and Provider) of the Universe and of everything in it. Therefore, it has been said to them: If you are not admitting only verbally but are really conscious of His being the Provider and are convinced of His being the Master, you should admit that:

(1) It is the very demand of His Mercifulness and Providence that He should send a Book and a Messenger for the guidance of man.

(2) It is His right as the Master and your duty as His servants that you should obey every guidance and submit to every command that comes from Him.

لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ يُحۡىٖ وَيُمِيۡتُ ؕ رَبُّكُمۡ وَرَبُّ اٰبَآئِكُمُ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ 8

(44:8) There is no god but He:[7] He gives life and causes death.[8] He is your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers of yore.[9]

7. The real God Who alone has the right that He should be worshiped and served.

8. That is, there is no god other than Allah, nor can there be. Therefore, it is against reason that you should disdain the worship of Him Who breathed life into dead matter and made you a living man. And Who possesses full powers to keep you alive as long as He likes and bring your life to an end whenever He likes. So, it is against reason that you serve any other than Him, or start worshiping others besides Him.

9. There is a subtle allusion in it to this: He is also Lord of those of your ancestors who took other gods besides Allah; they had not done the right thing by giving up their real Lord and serving others that you should be justified in imitating them and regard their conduct as an argument for the soundness of your creed. They ought to have served only Him, because He alone is their Lord.

بَلۡ هُمۡ فِىۡ شَكٍّ يَّلۡعَبُوۡنَ 9

(44:9) (But the fact is, they lack certainty) and frolic about in doubt.[10]

10. In this brief sentence an allusion has been made to an important truth. Even atheists or polytheists do come across occasions when their being from within says: There is somewhere some weakness in the creed that we have adopted. The atheist may apparently be very firm in his denial of God, his heart at one or the other time does bear the testimony that this wonderful and wise system which extends from the particle of dust to the galaxies and from a blade of grass to the creation of man, could not come into existence without an All-Wise Designer. Likewise, a polytheist may be deeply submerged in his polytheism, his

heart also sometimes cries out: Those whom you have adopted as deities cannot be God. But this testimony of the heart neither leads the atheist nor the polytheist to the conviction about the existence and Oneness of God, nor to conviction and satisfaction about their creed of atheism and polytheism itself. Instead, their religion, in fact, is based on doubt, no matter how convinced they might appear to be of its truth. As for the question: Why doesn't this doubt make them restless and why don't they seek the truth seriously so as to obtain a satisfactory ground for their convictions? The answer is: they lack seriousness in religious matters. What they really regard as important are the worldly earnings and acquisitions and their enjoyment, in search of which they expend all their powers and abilities of the heart and mind and body. As for the religious matters, they are in fact no more than fun, a mere pastime, amusement, or a mental diversion for them, for which they cannot spare even a few moments of serious study. Religious rites are being performed as an entertainment; discussions about denial and atheism are being engaged in as an amusement. No one can spare a few moments from his worldly pursuits to consider whether he has turned away from the truth, and if so, what would be its consequences.

فَارْتَقِبْ يَوْمَ تَأْتِي السَّمَآءُ بِدُخَانٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ۙ 10

(44:10) So watch for the Day when the sky will come down with a pall of smoke,

يَّغْشَى النَّاسَ ۭ هٰذَا عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ 11

(44:11) enveloping people. That will be a grievous scourge.

رَبَّنَا اكْشِفْ عَنَّا الْعَذَابَ اِنَّا مُؤْمِنُوْنَ 12

(44:12) (People will then say): "Our Lord, remove this scourge from us; we shall believe."

اَنّٰى لَهُمُ الذِّكْرٰى وَقَدْ جَآءَهُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ۙ 13

(44:13) But how will they take heed? Such are they that a Messenger[11] came to them clearly expounding the Truth,

11. Rasul-i-mubin has two meanings:

(1) His being a Messenger is quite evident from his character, his morals and his works.

(2) He has made every effort to make the truth plain and clear.

ثُمَّ تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوْا مُعَلَّمٌ مَّجْنُوْنٌ ۘ 14

(44:14) yet they turned away from him and said: "This is a well-tutored madman."[12]

12. What they meant was: this was a simple man, some others have incited and deceived him. They secretly forge and teach him verses of the Quran, and he comes and recites them before the people. They sit back in peace and leave him alone to receive the abuses and be pelted with stones. They would make a mockery of all the arguments, the admonitions and the serious teachings which the Prophet (peace be upon him) had been presenting since several years and was growing weary. Neither they paid any attention to the rational things being expressed in the Quran nor recognized the extraordinary character of the man who was presenting them, nor took any trouble to think what nonsense they were uttering when they imputed such things to the Prophet (peace be upon him). Obviously, if there had been another person who gave secret instruction to the Prophet (peace be upon him), he could not have remained hidden from Khadijah and Abu Bakr, Ali and Zaid bin Harithah and other early Muslims, who were the closest and constant companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Then, how it is that these very people only became his most devoted and dedicated followers, whereas if the business of prophethood had depended on the secret instruction of some other person, these very people would have been in the forefront to oppose him (For further explanation, see (Surah An-Nahl, Ayat 103); (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayats 4-6) and the corresponding E.Ns).

إِنَّا كَاشِفُوا الْعَذَابِ قَلِيلًا إِنَّكُمْ عَآئِدُونَ ۘ 15

(44:15) Yet We will hold the scourge back for a while, (but no sooner than We will do so) you will revert to your old ways.

يَوْمَ نَبْطِشُ الْبَطْشَةَ الْكُبْرَىٰ ۚ إِنَّا مُنتَقِمُونَ 16

(44:16) The Day when We shall seize them with a mighty seizing, that will be the Day on which We shall inflict upon you full retribution.[13]

13. The commentators have seriously disputed the meaning of these verses, and the difference of opinion existed even in the time of the companions. Masruq, the well-known student of Abdullah bin Masud, states: One day when we entered the mosque of Kufah, we saw a preacher addressing the people. He recited the verse: Yauma tatissama- u bidukhan-im-mubin, then asked: Do you know what kind of smoke it is? This smoke will appear on the Day of Resurrection and will make the disbelievers and the hypocrites blind and deaf, but the believers will be affected only to the extent as if they had caught cold. Hearing this commentary we went to Abdullah bin Masud and reported to him what the preacher had said. Abdullah at that time was lying down. On hearing this commentary he sat up startled and said: When a person does not have the knowledge, he should ask those who have it. The fact is that when the people of the Quraish went on refusing to accept Islam and continued to oppose the Prophet (peace be upon him), the Prophet (peace be upon him) prayed: O God, help me with a famine like the famine of Joseph (peace be upon him); consequently, a very severe famine overtook Makkah and the people were forced to eat bones, skins and carrion. The conditions became so bad that whoever looked up to the sky would see nothing but smoke due to intensity of hunger. At last, Abu Sufyan came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said: You tell the people to treat their kindred kindly, your own people are starving, kindly pray to God to remove this calamity. This was the time

when the people of the Quraish had started saying: O God, if You remove this torment from us, we will believe. This same event has been referred to in these verses; and the severest blow implies the calamity that was inflicted on the Quraish in the Battle of Badr. This tradition has been related by Imam Ahmad, Bukhari Tirmidhi, Nasai, Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Hatim from Masruq with several chains of authorities. Besides Masruq, Ibrahim Nakhai Qatadah, Asim and Amir have also related that Abdullah bin Masud had given the same commentary of this verse. Therefore there cannot be any doubt that Ibn Masud actually held this same opinion. Among the immediate followers of the companions, Mujahid, Qatadah. Abul Aliyah, Muqatil, Ibrahim Nakhai, Dahhak and Atiyyah al-Aufi and others have also concurred with Ibn Masud in this commentary.

On the contrary, scholars like Ali, Ibn Umar, Ibn Abbas, Abu Saeed Khudri, Zaid bin Ali, and Hasan Basri say that in these verses mention has been made of the time just before Resurrection, and the smoke that has been foretold will envelop the earth at that time. This commentary is further strengthened by the traditions that have been reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him). Hudhaifah bin Asid al-Ghifari says: One day when we were talking about Resurrection, the Prophet (peace be upon him) came out to us and said: Resurrection will not be established till ten signs have appeared one after the other: Rising of the sun in the west, smoke, the beast, emergence of Gog and Magog, descent of Jesus son of Mary, sinking of the earth in the East, in the West and in the Arabian Peninsula, and the appearance of a fire from Yemen, which will drive the people away. (Muslim) This is confirmed by Abu Malik Ashari's tradition which has been related by Ibn Jarir and Tabarani, and Abu Said Khudri's tradition which has been related by Ibn Abi Hatim. Both these traditions show that the Prophet (peace be upon him) regarded the smoke as one of the signs of Resurrection and also said that when that smoke will spread, it will affect the believer only like a cold, but will infuse every nerve of the disbeliever and come out from every part of his body.

A study of the verses under consideration can remove the disparity between the two commentaries. As for the commentary of Abdullah bin Masud, it is a fact that a severe famine had hit Makkah resulting from the Prophet's (peace be upon him) prayer and it had unnerved the disbelievers considerably and they had requested the Prophet (peace be upon him) to pray for its removal, as referred to at several places in the Quran. (See (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 43); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 94-95); (Surah Younus, Ayat 21); (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayats 75-77) and the corresponding E.Ns). In these verses also there is a clear pointer to the same conditions. The disbeliever are saying: Our Lord, remove this torment from us, we will believe. Allah is saying: How can they rid themselves of their heedlessness? Even when a manifest Messenger came to them, they paid no heed to him, and said: He is a madman taught by others. Then Allah is saying: Were We to remove the torment a little, you would revert to the same that you were doing before. All this can be relevant only if it refers to the conditions of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) time. To apply them to what will happen near the time of Resurrection, is not correct. Therefore, in view of this, Abdullah bin Masud's commentary seems to be correct, but its this part that "the smoke" also had appeared in that very time, in that when the people in their extreme state of hunger looked up to the sky, they could see nothing but smoke, does not seem to be correct. It also does not conform to the apparent words of the Quran and is against the traditions as well. The Quran does not say: The sky brought forth the smoke and it spread over the people; but it says:

Wait for the day when the sky will appear with a visible smoke, and it will envelop mankind. A study of the subsequent verses clearly points to this meaning: When you do not believe even after the Messenger's admonition, nor take heed from the warning given in the shape of the famine, then you should wait for Resurrection. At that time when you see your doom confronting you, you will fully realize what was the truth and what was falsehood. Therefore, as for the smoke, the correct view is that it has nothing to do with the time of the famine, but it is a sign of Resurrection and the same is also confirmed by the Hadith.

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَجَآءَهُمْ رَسُوْلٌ كَرِيْمٌ ۙ 17

(44:17) Indeed before that We subjected the Pharaonites to the same test. A noble Messenger[14] came to them

14. The words rasul-un karim in the original imply a man who is characterized with most noble traits of character and highly praiseworthy qualities.

اَنْ اَدُّوْٓا اِلَيَّ عِبَادَ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنِّيْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ اَمِيْنٌ ۙ 18

(44:18) (and said):[15] "Deliver to me Allah's servants.[16] I am a trustworthy Messenger to you,[17]

15. One should note that the sayings of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) being cited here, are not parts of a continuous address delivered by him at any one time, but they are a summary in a few sentences of what he said to Pharaoh and his courtiers on different occasions during many years. (For the details, see (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 103-136); (Surah Younus, Ayats 75-92); (Surah TaHa, Ayats 45-76); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 10-68); (Surah An-Naml, Ayats 7-14); (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayats 32-42); (Surah Al-Mumin, Ayats 23-46); (Surah Az-Zukhruf, Ayats 46-56); and the corresponding E.Ns.)

16. That is, leave the children of Israel to go with me. This demand is synonymous with the demand made in (Surah Al- Aaraf, Ayat 105); (Surah TaHa, Ayat 47)and (Surah Ash-Shurra, Ayat 17). Another translation that has been reported from Abdullah ibn Abbas is: Servants of Allah, fulfill my right, i.e. accept what I say, believe in me, follow my guidance. This is my right on you from Allah. The following sentence: I am a trustworthy Messenger to you is more in keeping with the second meaning.

17. That is, I am a reliable Messenger: I do not forge anything from myself, nor am I the one who would present something based on personal interest or desire, or forge a command or law, in the name of Allah. Rest assured that I shall convey to you intact only that which my Sender has commanded. It should be noted that these two sentences belong to the time when the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) first started preaching Allah's message.

وَّاَنْ لَّا تَعْلُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۚ اِنِّيْٓ اٰتِيْكُمْ بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ۚ 19

(44:19) and do not exalt yourselves in defiance of Allah. I have come to you with a clear authority[18] (as a Messenger).

18. In other words, it means: Your rebellion against me is in fact rebellion against Allah, for what annoys you is not what I say but what Allah says, and I only present those things as His Messenger. If you doubt whether I have really been sent by Hun or not, I present before you a clear authority of my appointment from Allah. This authority does not imply any one miracle but a long series of the miracles which the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) continued to show to Pharaoh and his people for years since the time he came in the court of Pharaoh till his last days in Egypt. Whatever sign they denied, was followed up by a greater sign of authority by him. (For explanation, see (E.Ns 42, 43 of Surah Az-Zukhruf).

وَإِنِّي عُذْتُ بِرَبِّي وَرَبِّكُمْ أَن تَرْجُمُونِ ﴿20﴾

(44:20) I have taken refuge with my Lord and your Lord lest you should attack me with stones.

وَإِن لَّمْ تُؤْمِنُوا لِي فَاعْتَزِلُونِ ﴿21﴾

(44:21) But if you do not believe what I say, leave me alone[19] (and desist from laying hands on me)."

19. This was said at the time when, as against all the signs presented by the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), Pharaoh was still showing stubbornness, but was feeling upset and confounded at the realization that all classes of the Egyptian society were rapidly being influenced by those signs. In that period, first of all he made the speech before his packed court as mentioned in (verses 51-53 of Surah Az- Zukhruf (see E.Ns 45 to 49)), then, when he felt the ground slipping from under his feet, he made up his mind to kill Allah's Messenger. At that time the Prophet (peace be upon him) said the words as mentioned in (Surah Al-Mumin, Ayat 27) to the effect: I have taken refuge in my Lord and your Lord against every arrogant person who does not believe in the Day of Reckoning. Here, the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) is referring to that same thing and telling Pharaoh and his chiefs: Look, I have sought Allah's refuge against all sorts of violence from you, now you cannot harm me. But if you wish yourselves well, do not harm me. If you do not want to believe what I say, you may not, but you should never lay your hands on me, otherwise you will meet with catastrophic consequences.

فَدَعَا رَبَّهُ أَنَّ هَٰؤُلَاءِ قَوْمٌ مُّجْرِمُونَ ﴿22﴾

(44:22) Then he called upon his Lord: "These are a criminal people."[20]

20. This is the final report that the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) presented before his Lord, saying: These are the people who are criminals. That is, their being the criminals has been confirmed finally and absolutely. They have exhausted every chance of concession and respite for reformation. It is time that the final fatal decision be passed against them.

فَأَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي لَيْلًا إِنَّكُم مُّتَّبَعُونَ ۙ 23

(44:23) (He was told): "Set out with My servants by night[21] for you will certainly be pursued.[22]

21. With my servants: With all those people who have believed, including both the Israelites and the Egyptian Copts who had become Muslims since the time of the Prophet Joseph till that of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon them), and those also who had been influenced by the signs shown by Moses (peace be upon him) and His preaching and accepted Islam from among the Egyptians. (For explanation, see (Surah Yousuf: E.N. 68).

22. This was the initial command given to the prophet Moses (peace be upon him) for the migration. (For explanation, see (Surah TaHa, Ayat 77); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 52-68) and the corresponding E.Ns).

وَاتْرُكِ الْبَحْرَ رَهْوًا ۖ إِنَّهُمْ جُندٌ مُّغْرَقُونَ 24

(44:24) And leave the sea behind you as calm as ever. Surely they are an army that is doomed to be drowned."[23]

23. This command was given when the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had crossed the sea along with his caravan and wanted that he should restore the sea to its former state by smiting it with the staff so that Pharaoh and his hosts should not pursue them on the dry path created by the miracle. At that times it was said: Leave the sea divided as it is, so that Pharaoh and his armies should descend into it. Then the sea will be restored and they will be drowned all together.

كَمْ تَرَكُوا مِن جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ۙ 25

(44:25) How many gardens did they leave behind, and how many fountains

وَزُرُوعٍ وَمَقَامٍ كَرِيمٍ ۙ 26

(44:26) and sown fields and splendid mansions,

وَنَعْمَةٍ كَانُوا فِيهَا فَاكِهِينَ ۙ 27

(44:27) and the life of ease in which they took delight!

كَذَٰلِكَ ۖ وَأَوْرَثْنَاهَا قَوْمًا آخَرِينَ 28

(44:28) Thus it was; and We made another people inherit all that.[24]

24. Hasan Basri says that "other people" here implies the children of Israel, whom Allah made heirs of the land of Egypt after Pharaoh's people, and Qatadah says it implies the other people who inherited Egypt after the people of Pharaoh, for the history does not make any mention that the Israelites ever returned to Egypt after the exodus and inherited it. This same point has been disputed by the later commentators also. (For a detailed discussion, see (Surah Ash Shuara, Ayats 57-59) and the E.Ns on it).

فَمَا بَكَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّمَآءُ وَالْاَرْضُ وَمَا كَانُوْا مُنْظَرِيْنَ ۧ 29

(44:29) Then neither the sky shed tears over them nor the earth.25 They were granted no respite.

25. That is, when they were the rulers, they were known for their glory and grandeur, hymns were sung of their praise, flatterers flattered them to such an extent as if the whole world was devoted to them for their excellences and indebted to them for their favors and there was none more popular in the world than they. But when they fell, there was none to shed a tear on their fall, rather the world felt relieved that a cause of distress had been removed. Obviously, they had neither done any good to the people that the dwellers of the earth might weep on them, nor anything for the sake of Allah's pleasure that the dwellers of the heavens might grieve over their ruin. As long as Allah continued to give them respite by His will, they enjoyed life as they pleased; but when they transgressed all limits in their crimes, they were cast aside like rubbish.

وَلَقَدْ نَجَّيْنَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِيْنِ ۙ 30

(44:30) Thus did We deliver the Children of Israel from the humiliating chastisement,

مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ عَالِيًا مِّنَ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ 31

(44:31) from Pharaoh26 who was most prominent among the prodigals.27

26. That is, Pharaoh by himself was an abasing torment for them and all other torments were indeed offshoots of the same great torment.

27. There is a subtle satire in it on the chiefs of the disbelieving Quraish. It means to say this: You do not enjoy any place of distinction among the transgressors against Allah. Pharaoh indeed was a rebel of the highest order who was ruling on the throne of the largest kingdom of the time as a god. When he was swept away like straw, how can you prevent the divine wrath?

وَلَقَدِ اخْتَرْنٰهُمْ عَلٰى عِلْمٍ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۚ 32

(44:32) We knowingly exalted them (i.e., the Children of Israel) above other peoples of the world28

28. That is, Allah was well aware both of the qualities and of the weaknesses of the children of Israel. He had not chosen them blindly. For when he chose them from among the contemporary nations to become the standard bearers of His message and His Tauhid, they were the most suitable people in His knowledge for the purpose.

وَاٰتَيْنٰهُمْ مِّنَ الْاٰيٰتِ مَا فِيْهِ بَلٰٓؤٌا مُّبِيْنٌ 33

(44:33) and bestowed upon them the Signs wherein lay an evident test for them.[29]

29. For explanation, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 49-74); (Surah An-Nisa, Ayats 153-160); (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayats 20-26); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 138-171); (Surah TaHa, Ayats 80-97) and the corresponding E.Ns.

اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ لَيَقُوْلُوْنَ ۙ 34

(44:34) Indeed these people say:

اِنْ هِيَ اِلَّا مَوْتَتُنَا الْاُوْلٰى وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُنْشَرِيْنَ 35

(44:35) "This is our first and only death, and we shall never be raised again.[30]

30. That is, when we die the first time, we shall be annihilated: there will be no other life after that.

فَاْتُوْا بِاٰبَآئِنَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ 36

(44:36) Bring back to us our fathers if you are truthful."[31]

31. This was their reasoning: We have never seen a dead person resurrected to life. Therefore, we believe that there will be no other life after death. If you claim that there will be another life, then resurrect our forefathers from their graves, so that we are convinced of the life after death. If you do not do this, we would think that your claim is false. This was, as they thought, a very strong argument for the refutation of life after death, whereas it was absurd. Nobody had told them that the dead would return to this very world after being raised back to life, nor the Prophet (peace be upon him), nor any Muslim had ever claimed that he could raise the dead back to life.

اَهُمْ خَيْرٌ اَمْ قَوْمُ تُبَّعٍ ۙ وَّالَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۭ اَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ ۡ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا مُجْرِمِيْنَ 37

(44:37) Are these better or the people of Tubba[32] and those who went before them? We destroyed them for they were a criminal people.[33]

32. Tubba was the title of the kings of the Himyarites, like the titles of Khosroes, Caesar, Pharaoh etc. which have been associated with the kings of different countries. They were a

branch of the Sabaeans, who attained domination over Saba in 115 B.C. and ruled it until 300 A.D. They have been a well known people of Arabia for centuries. (For details, see (E.N. 37 of Surah Saba).

33. This is the first answer to the disbelievers' objection; it means: Any individual group or nation which denies the Hereafter becomes criminal. Perversion of the morals is its inevitable result, and human history bears evidence that whichever nation adopted this view of life ultimately perished. As for the question: Are they better or the people of Tubba or the people before them? It means this: The disbelievers of Makkah have not been able to attain to the prosperity and splendor that became the lot of the people of Tubba and of the people of Saba and of the people of Pharaoh and others before them. But this material prosperity and worldly splendor could not save them from the consequences of their moral degeneration. How will then the chiefs of the Quraish be saved from destruction on the strength of their puny resources and wealth? (For details, see (E.Ns 25 to 36 of Surah Saba).

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لٰعِبِيْنَ 38

(44:38) It was not in idle sport that We created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them.

مَا خَلَقْنٰهُمَآ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ 39

(44:39) We did not create them except in Truth. But most of them do not know.[34]

34. This is the second answer to their objection; it means: Whoever denies life after death and the rewards and punishments of the hereafter, in fact, regards this world as a plaything. This is why he has formed the view that man, after raising all sorts of the storms in the world, will end up in the dust one day and none of his good or bad acts will bear any fruit. The fact, however, is that this universe is the creation of an All-Wise Creator and not of a frivolous being, and it cannot be expected from an All-Wise Creator that he would perform a useless and vain act. (For a detailed explanation, see (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 73); (Surah Younus, Ayats 5-6); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 16-18); (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayat 115); (Surah Ar-Room, Ayats 8-9)and the corresponding E.Ns).

اِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفَصْلِ مِيْقَاتُهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ۙ 40

(44:40) The Day of Final Decision is the appointed time for all;[35]

35. This is the answer to their demand: Bring back our forefathers if you are truthful. It means: Life-after-death is not a trivial matter, it cannot be that whenever somebody denies it, a dead person may he raised immediately from the graveyard and presented before him. For it a time has been fixed by the Lord of the worlds, when He will resurrect to life all the former and the latter generations, gather them together in His court and will decide their cases. You may believe in it or may not, but this will in any case happen on its own pre-ordained time. If you believe in it, it will be to your own advantage, for, being forewarned,

you will make preparations to fare well in that court. If you do not believe in it, you will incur loss for yourselves, for you will spend your whole life in the misunderstanding that good and evil are confined only to this worldly life; after death there is going to be no court where our good or bad deeds might have to be judged for any permanent results.

يَوْمَ لَا يُغْنِيْ مَوْلًى عَنْ مَّوْلًى شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ ۙ 41

(44:41) the Day when a friend shall be of no avail to his friend[36] nor shall they be helped,

36. The Arabic word maula is used for a person who supports another person either because of kinship, or friendship, or some other relationship.

اِلَّا مَنْ رَّحِمَ اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ۧ 42

(44:42) except those to whom Allah shows mercy. He is the Most Mighty, the Most Compassionate.[37]

37. These sentences portray the nature of the court that will be established on the Day of Decision. It will be a court where nobody's help or support will help rescue any culprit nor have his sentence reduced. All powers will rest with the real Sovereign Whose decisions cannot be withheld from being enforced nor influenced by any power. It will entirely depend on His own discretion whether He forgives somebody mercifully, or awards him a lesser punishment. It indeed behooves Him to exercise justice mercifully and not mercilessly, but whatever decision He gives in any case, will be enforced entirely and completely. After this portrayal of the nature of the divine court, in the following few sentences it has been stated what will be the fate of those who will be found guilty in that court, and what will be conferred on those about whom it will be established that they had been refraining from Allah's disobedience in the world out of fear of Him.

اِنَّ شَجَرَتَ الزَّقُّوْمِ ۙ 43

(44:43) The tree of al-Zaqqum[38]

38. For details of zaqqum, see (E.N. 34 of Surah As-Saaffat).

طَعَامُ الْاَثِيْمِ ۚ صلے 44

(44:44) shall be the food of the sinful.

كَالْمُهْلِ ۚ يَغْلِيْ فِي الْبُطُوْنِ ۙ 45

(44:45) Like dregs of oil,[39] it will boil in their bellies

39. The word al-muhl in the original has several meanings: molten metal, pus-blood, molten tar, lava, dregs of oil. These are the different meanings given by the lexicographers and commentators, but if this word is understood with reference to zaqqum (cactus), it may mean its juice which will probably be like the dregs of oil.

كَغَلْيِ الْحَمِيْمِ 46

(44:46) like boiling water.

خُذُوْهُ فَاعْتِلُوْهُ اِلٰى سَوَآءِ الْجَحِيْمِ ۝ صلے 47

(44:47) "Seize him and drag him to the middle of the Blazing Fire,

ثُمَّ صُبُّوْا فَوْقَ رَاْسِهٖ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْحَمِيْمِ ۝ ط 48

(44:48) then pour boiling water over his head as chastisement.

ذُقْ ۝ صلے اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْكَرِيْمُ 49

(44:49) Taste this, you are a person mighty and noble!

اِنَّ هٰذَا مَا كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تَمْتَرُوْنَ 50

(44:50) This is what you used to doubt."

اِنَّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ فِيْ مَقَامٍ اَمِيْنٍ ۙ 51

(44:51) Verily the God-fearing shall be in a secure place[40]

40. A secure place: A place safe from every kind of fear, grief, worry and danger, hardship and trouble. According to a Hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: It will be proclaimed to the dwellers of Paradise: You will remain in good health, will never fall ill, will live forever, will never die, will ever remain happy and prosperous and will never meet with a misfortune, will ever remain youthful, will never become old. (Muslim, on the authority of Abu Hurairah and Abu Saeed Khudri).

فِيْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّعُيُوْنٍ ۚ 52

(44:52) amidst gardens and springs.

يَّلۡبَسُوۡنَ مِنۡ سُنۡدُسٍ وَّاِسۡتَبۡرَقٍ مُّتَقٰبِلِيۡنَ ۚ 53

(44:53) Attired in silk and brocade,[41] they shall be arrayed face to face.

41. Sundus and istabraq in the original are fine silk cloth and thick silk cloth respectively.

كَذٰلِكَ ۟ وَزَوَّجۡنٰهُمۡ بِحُوۡرٍ عِيۡنٍ ؕ 54

(44:54) Thus shall it be: and We shall espouse them to fair, wide-eyed maidens.[42]

42. In the original, hur-un ein means fair complexioned, large-eyed women. (For further explanation, see (E.Ns 28 and 29 of Surah As-Saaffat).

يَدۡعُوۡنَ فِيۡهَا بِكُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ اٰمِنِيۡنَ ۙ 55

(44:55) While resting in security, they shall call for all kinds of fruit.[43]

43. That is, they will order the attendants in Paradise to bring anything they would like in any measure they would demand, and it will be presented before them. In this world, a man cannot ask for a thing in an inn, or even his own things in his own house, with the freedom and satisfaction as he will ask for these in Paradise. For, in the world nothing is found anywhere in unlimited measure, whatever man uses here, he has to pay for it. In Paradise, things will belong to Allah, and the servants will enjoy full freedom to use them. Neither will there be the danger of the failure of the supply, nor the necessity of a bill to pay.

لَا يَذُوۡقُوۡنَ فِيۡهَا الۡمَوۡتَ اِلَّا الۡمَوۡتَةَ الۡاُوۡلٰى ۚ وَوَقٰىهُمۡ عَذَابَ الۡجَحِيۡمِ ۙ 56

(44:56) They shall not taste death except the death in this world. And Allah will save them from the chastisement of Hell[44]

44. Two things are worthy of notice in this verse.

First, after mentioning the blessings of Paradise, special mention has been made of being secure from Hell separately whereas a person's entry into Paradise by itself amounts to his being safe from Hell. This is because man can feel the worth of the reward of obedience fully only when he is informed what end the disobedient people have met and from what evil end he himself has ban saved.

Secondly, Allah is mentioning those people's safety from Hell and their entry into Paradise as a result of His own grace. This is meant to warn man of the truth that this success cannot be achieved by any person unless he is blessed by Allah's grace. Although man will be rewarded for his own good deeds, in the first place he cannot do good unless favored by Allah's succor; then even the best deed that man is able to perform, cannot be absolutely perfect and none can claim that it is flawless and faultless. It is only Allah's bounty that He should overlook the servant's weaknesses and defects in his actions and accept his services

and bless him with rewards; otherwise if He resorts to minute accountability, no one can dare claim to win Paradise only on the strength of his own deeds. The same thing has been said by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in a Hadith to the effect: Act and try to act as righteously as you possibly can, but know that the action of a person alone will not make him enter Paradise. It was asked: What about your own action, O Messenger of Allah? He replied: Yes, even I won't enter Paradise on the strength of my actions, unless of course, my Lord covers me up in His mercy.

فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ 57

(44:57) as a favour from your Lord. That is the great triumph.

فَاِنَّمَا يَسَّرْنٰهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ 58

(44:58) (O Prophet), We have made this Book easy in your tongue so that they may take heed.

فَارْتَقِبْ اِنَّهُمْ مُّرْتَقِبُوْنَ ع 59

(44:59) Wait, then; they too are waiting.[45]

45. That is, if they do not accept the admonition even now, you should wait to see how they are visited by their doom; and they are also waiting to see what becomes of the message that you are giving them.

45. Surah At Jathiya (The Kneeling)

Name

It is derived from the sentence wa tartt kullu ummat- in jathiyat-un of verse 28, implying thereby that it is the Surah in which the word jathiyah has occurred.

Period of Revelation

The period of the revelation of this Surah also has not been mentioned in any authentic tradition, but its subject matter clearly shows that it was revealed consecutively after Surah Ad Dukhan. The close resemblance between the contents of the two Surahs makes them look like the twin Surahs.

Subject Matter and Topics

It answers the doubts and objections of the disbelievers of Makkah about Tauhid and the Hereafter and warns them for their attitude that they had adopted against the message of the Qur'an.

The discourse begins with the arguments for Tauhid. In this connection, reference has been made to the count- less Signs that are found in the world, from man's own body to the earth and heavens, and it is pointed out that everywhere around him man finds things which testify to Tauhid which he refuses to acknowledge. If man sees carefully the variety of animals, the day and night, the rainfall and the vegetation thereby, the winds and his own creation, and ponders over them intelligently, without prejudice, he will find these Signs sufficiently convincing of the truth that this universe is not Godless, nor under the control of many gods, but it has been created by One God, and He alone is its Controller and Ruler. However, the case of the person who is determined not to acknowledge and wants to remain involved in doubts and suspicions is different. He cannot be blessed with the faith and conviction from anywhere in the world.

A little below, in the beginning of the second section, it has been reiterated that the things man is exploiting in the world, and the countless forces and agencies that are serving his interests in the universe, did not come into being just accidentally, nor have they been provided by the gods and goddesses, but it is One God alone, Who has supplied and subjected these to him from Himself. If only a person uses his mind properly and rightly, his own intellect will proclaim that God alone is man's real Benefactor and He alone deserves that man should pay obeisance to Him.

After this, the disbelievers of Makkah have been taken to task and reproved for their stubbornness, arrogance, mockery and insistence on disbelief with which they were resisting the invitation of the Qur'an they have been warned that this Qur'an has brought the same blessing which had been granted to the children of Israel before, by virtue of which they became distinguished above all the people of the world. Then, when they failed to recognize the true worth of this blessing and disputed their religion and lost it, this blessing now has been sent to them. This is such a code of guidance which shows the clear highway of Religion to man. The people who would turn it down by their own folly, would only

prepare for their own doom, and only such people would become worthy of God's succour and mercy who would adopt obedience to it and lead a life of piety and righteousness.

In this connection, the followers of the Holy Prophet have been instructed that they should forbear and pardon the absurd and foolish behavior towards them of the people fearless of God, for if they showed patience God Himself would deal with their opponents and would reward them for their fortitude.

Then, there is a criticism of the erroneous ideas that the disbelievers hold about the Hereafter. They said that life was only this worldly life there was no life hereafter. Man dies in the course of time just as a watch stops functioning suddenly. The body is not survived by any soul, which might be seized and then breathed again into the human body some time in the future. In this regard, they challenged the Holy Prophet, saying: "If you lay a claim to this, then raise our dead forefathers back to life." In answer to this, Allah has given the following arguments:

1. "You do not say this on the basis of any knowledge but are uttering this grave thing on the basis of conjecture. Do you really have the knowledge that there is no other life after death, and the souls are not seized but are annihilated?"
2. "Your this claim rests mainly on this that you have not seen any dead person rising back to life and returning to the world. Is this basis strong enough for a person to make a claim that the dead people will never rise to life? When you do not experience and observe a thing, does it mean that you have the knowledge that it does not exist at all?
3. It is utterly against reason and justice that the good and the bad, the obedient and the disobedient, the oppressor and the oppressed, should be made equal ultimately. Neither a good act should bear a good result nor an evil act an evil result; neither the grievances of the oppressed be redressed nor the oppressor be punished, but everyone should meet with the same fate ultimately. Whoever has formed this view about the universe of God, has formed a patently wrong view. The unjust and wicked people adopt this view because they do not want to face the evil results of their deeds, but this world of God is not a lawless kingdom; it is rather a system based on the Truth, in which there can be no question of the injustice of regarding the good and the bad as equal.
4. That the creed of the denial of the Hereafter is highly destructive of morals. This is adopted only by such people as are the slaves of their lusts, and for the reason that they should have full freedom to serve their lusts. Then, when they have adopted this creed, it goes on making them more and more perverse till at last their moral sense becomes dead and all avenues of guidance are closed against them.

After giving these arguments Allah says most emphatically: "Just as you did not become living of your own accord, but became living by Our power, so you do not die of your own accord, but die when We send death on you. And a time is certainly coming when you will all be gathered together. If you do not believe in this because of your ignorance and folly today, you may not; when the time arrives, you will see for yourself that you are present before your God and your whole book of conduct is ready accurately, which bears evidence against each of your misdeeds. Then you will come to know how dearly has your denial of the Hereafter and your mockery of it cost you."

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

حٰمٓ ۚ 1

(45:1) Ha'. Mim.

تَنۡزِیۡلُ الۡکِتٰبِ مِنَ اللّٰہِ الۡعَزِیۡزِ الۡحَکِیۡمِ 2

(45:2) This Book is a revelation from the Most Mighty, the Most Wise.[1]

1. In this brief introduction to the Surah, the listeners have been warned of two things:

(1) That this Book is not the composition of Muhammad (peace be upon him) himself, but it is being sent down to him by Allah.

(2) That it is being sent down by that Allah Who is All- Mighty as well as All-Wise. His being the Almighty demands that man should not dare disobey His commands, for if he disobeys Him, he cannot escape His punishment. And His being the All-Wise demands that man should obey and follow His Guidance and His commands with full satisfaction and willingness of the heart, for there can be no possibility of His teachings being wrong or inadequate or harmful in any way.

اِنَّ فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّلۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ ؕ 3

(45:3) Behold, for those who believe[2] there are (myriad) Signs in the heavens and the earth

2. To begin the discourse like this after the introduction, indicates that in the background there are the objections of the people of Makkah, which they were raising against the teachings of the Prophet (peace be upon him). They said: After all, how can we believe this one man when he says that all those great beings to whose shrines we have been dedicated and devoted so far, are nothing and that Godhead belongs to only One God? About this it is being said that the world is replete with the signs of the reality to which they are being invited. If only they saw with open eyes, they would find those signs in themselves and outside them everywhere, which testify that this whole universe is the creation of One and only One God, and He alone is its Master and Ruler and Controller. It didn't need to be pointed out what was the nature of the signs in the earth and heavens, for the dispute at that time centered around the point that the polytheists were insisting on believing in other gods and deities besides Allah, and the Quran gave the message that there was neither a god nor a deity beside One God. Therefore, it was apparent by itself from the content that the signs were of the truth of Tauhid and of the refutation of shirk.

As for the sentence: The signs are for those who believe, it means that although the signs are meant for all human beings, only those people can reach the right conclusion from their observation, who are inclined to believe. As for the heedless people, who live like animals

and the stubborn people who are resolved not to believe, the existence and the non-existence of the signs is equal. The splendor and beauty of the garden is for those who can see. A blind man cannot perceive any splendor and beauty, for him even the existence of the garden is meaningless. 4

وَفِي خَلْقِكُمْ وَمَا يَبُثُّ مِن دَآبَّةٍ اٰيٰتٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّوْقِنُوْنَ ۙ 4

(45:4) and in your own creation; and in the animals which He spreads out over the earth too there are Signs for those endowed with sure faith;[3]

3. That is, the case of those who have made up their minds not to believe, or of those who have chosen for themselves to remain lost in the blind alleys of doubt, is different, but when those who have not locked up their hearts against belief and conviction, will consider seriously their own creation, the structure of their own body, and the variety of animals found on the earth, they will see countless signs as will leave no doubt in their minds that all this did not come into being without a God, or that it stood in need of more than one God for its creation. (For explanation, see (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayats 37-38); (Surah An-Nahl, Ayats 5,8); (Surah Al-Hajj, Ayat 57); (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayats 12-14); (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayat 54); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 78-81); (Surah An-Naml, Ayat 64); (Surah Ar-Room, Ayats 20-21, 54); (E.Ns 14 to 18 of Surah As-Sajdah); (Surah YaSeen, Ayats 71- 73); (Surah Az-Zumar, Ayat 6); and (E.Ns 97, 98, 110 of Surah Al-Mumin).

وَاخْتِلَافِ الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مِنْ رِّزْقٍ فَاَحْيَا بِهِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَتَصْرِيْفِ الرِّيٰحِ اٰيٰتٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ 5

(45:5) and in the succession of night and day,[4] and in the provision[5] that Allah sends down from the sky wherewith He gives life to the earth after it had been lifeless,[6] and in the change of the winds:[7] (in all these) there are Signs for people who use reason.

4. The difference of the night and day is a sign because one follows the other with full regularity, because one is bright and the other dark, because over a certain period the day goes on shortening and the night lengthening gradually till the two become equal in duration, then again the day goes on lengthening and the night shortening till the two again become equal in duration. These different kinds of variations found in the night and the day and the great aspects of wisdom that accrue from these, are a clear pointer to the fact that the Creator of the sun and the earth and of every thing on the earth is one and that one All-Powerful Being is keeping both these spheres under His control. Such a Being is not deaf and blind and unwise but All-Wise, Who has established this unalterable system and made His earth a suitable place for the countless species of life, which He has created here in the form of vegetables, animals and men. (For explanation, see (Surah Younus, Ayat 67), (Surah An Naml, Ayat 86); (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayats 71-73); (Surah Luqman, Ayat 29 and E.N. 50); (Surah YaSeen, Ayat 37 and E.N. 32).

5. Provision: Rainfall as becomes evident from the following sentence.

6. For explanation, see (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayats 18-20); (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayats 48-49); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayat 7); (Surah An-Naml, Ayat 61); (Surah Ar-Room, Ayats 24, 48), (Surah YaSeen: E.Ns 26 to 31).

7. The circulation of the winds implies the circulation of the different kinds of winds at different times, on different parts of the earth and at different heights, which cause change of the seasons. What deserves attention is not only that above the surface of the earth there is a thick atmosphere, which contains all those elements needed by living beings for breathing, and this thick covering has kept the earth's population safe from many of the heavenly calamities. Besides, another noteworthy thing is that the air is not just filled inertly in the atmosphere, but it blows occasionally in different ways. Sometimes a cool wind blows and sometimes a hot wind. Sometimes it stops blowing and sometimes it starts blowing. Sometimes it blows soft and sometimes strong, and sometimes it assumes the proportions of a storm. Sometimes a dry wind blows and sometimes a moist wind. Sometimes it brings the rain and sometimes it drives away the clouds. These different kinds of the winds do not blow without a purpose, but under a law and a system, which testifies that this arrangement is based on perfect wisdom, and it is serving great objectives. Then it is deeply related with coolness and heat, which go on increasing and decreasing according to the changing conditions and relationships between the earth and the sun. Furthermore, it has a deep relation with the seasonal changes and the distribution of the rain. All these facts proclaim that these arrangements have not been made haphazardly by some blind nature. Nor the sun and the earth and the air and water and vegetation and animals have separate controllers, but inevitably One God alone is the Creator of them all, and it is His Wisdom that has established this system for a great objective, and it is His power that it is functioning regularly according to a preordained law.

تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ اللّٰهِ نَتْلُوْهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ ۚ فَبِاَيِّ حَدِيْثٍۢ بَعْدَ اللّٰهِ وَاٰيٰتِهٖ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ 6

(45:6) These are Allah's Signs that We rehearse to you in Truth. In what kind of discourse after Allah and His Signs will they, then, believe?[8]

8. That is, when these people have not believed even after Allah's own arguments have been presented for His Existence and His Unity, what else can be there by which they will gain the faith? For Allah's Word is the final thing by which a person can attain to this blessing, and the maximum of the rational arguments that could possibly be given to convince someone of an unseen reality have been presented in this divine Word. In spite of this if a person is bent upon denial, he may persist in his denial, for his denial cannot change the reality.

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ اَفَّاكٍ اَثِيْمٍ ۙ 7

(45:7) Woe to every guilty impostor

يَّسۡمَعُ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ تُتۡلٰى عَلَيۡهِ ثُمَّ يُصِرُّ مُسۡتَكۡبِرًا كَاَنۡ لَّمۡ يَسۡمَعۡهَا ۚ فَبَشِّرۡهُ بِعَذَابٍ اَ

لِيۡمٍ 8

(45:8) who hears Allah's Signs being rehearsed to him, and yet persists in his pride, as though he had not heard it.[9]Announce to him, then, the tidings of a grievous chastisement.

9. In other words, there is a marked difference between the person who listens to Allah's revelations sincerely with an open mind and ponders over them seriously and the person who listens to them resolved that he would deny them, and then persists in the resolve already made without any serious thought. If the first person does not believe in the revelations immediately, it does not mean that he wants to remain an unbeliever, but because he wants to have greater satisfaction. Therefore, even if he is taking time to believe, it is just possible that another revelation might enter his heart and he might believe sincerely with full satisfaction. As for the other person, he would never believe in any revelation whatsoever, for he has already locked his heart up to every revelation of Allah. In this state such people generally are involved as are characterized by the following three qualities:

(1) They are liars; therefore, the truth does not appeal to them.

(2) They are wrongdoers; therefore, it is very hard for them to believe in a teaching or guidance that may impose moral restrictions on them.

(3) They are involved in the conceit that they know everything, and that none can teach them anything; therefore, they do not regard as worthy of attention and consideration Allah's revelations that are recited to them, and it is all the same for them whether they listen to them or not.

وَاِذَا عَلِمَ مِنۡ اٰيٰتِنَا شَيۡـًٔا اتَّخَذَهَا هُزُوًا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيۡنٌ ؕ 9

(45:9) Whenever he comes to know anything of Our Signs, he makes them an object of jest.[10] For such there awaits a humiliating chastisement.

10. That is, he does not rest content with mocking any one particular revelation, but mocks all the revelations. For example, when he hears that a particular thing has been mentioned in the Quran, he does not take it in its straightforward meaning, but first puts a crooked meaning on it in order to make it a subject of ridicule and mockery, then after making fun of it, says: These are strange things: one daily hears one or the other funny thing from them.

مِنۡ وَّرَآئِهِمۡ جَهَنَّمُ ۚ وَلَا يُغۡنِىۡ عَنۡهُمۡ مَّا كَسَبُوۡا شَيۡـئًا وَّلَا مَا اتَّخَذُوۡا مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ اَوۡلِيَآءَ ۚ وَلَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ عَظِيۡمٌ ۚ 10

(45:10) Hell is behind them.[11] Their worldly earnings shall not avail them, nor those whom they took as protectors instead of Allah.[12] An awesome chastisement lies in store for them.

11. The word wara is used for every such thing as is hidden from man, whether it is before him or behind him. Therefore, another translation can be: They have Hell behind them. In the first case, the meaning would be: They are unconsciously running on this way and have no idea that there is Hell in front of them in which they would fall; in the second case, it would mean: They are engaged in this mischief of theirs, thoughtless of the Hereafter, and they have no idea that Hell is in pursuit of them.

12. Here, the word wali (guardian) has been used in two meanings:

(1) For those gods and goddesses and living and dead guides about whom the polytheists thought that anybody who was devoted to them, would escape Allah's punishment, whatever he might have done in the world, for their intercession will save them from Allah's wrath.

(2) For those chiefs and leaders and rulers whom the people took as their guides and patrons independent of God and followed them blindly and tried to please them even if they had to displease God.

This verse warns all such people that when they will face Hell in consequence of this way of lift, neither of the two kinds of the guardians will come forward to save them from it. (For explanation, see (E.N.6 of Surah Ash- Shura).

هٰذَا هُدًى ۚ وَالَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمۡ لَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ مِّنۡ رِّجۡزٍ اَلِيۡمٌ ۚ 11

(45:11) This (Qur'an) is the true guidance. Those who deny the Signs of their Lord shall suffer the torment of a woeful scourge.

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِىۡ سَخَّرَ لَـكُمُ الۡبَحۡرَ لِتَجۡرِىَ الۡفُلۡكُ فِيۡهِ بِاَمۡرِهٖ وَلِتَبۡتَغُوۡا مِنۡ فَضۡلِهٖ وَلَعَلَّكُمۡ تَشۡكُرُوۡنَ ۚ 12

(45:12) Allah it is Who has subjected the sea to you so that ships may sail upon it at His bidding[13] and you may seek of His Bounty[14] and give thanks to Him.

13. For explanation, see (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayats 66-67); (Surah Ar-Room, Ayat 46 and the corresponding E.Ns), and (E.N. 55 of Surah Luqman); (E.N. 110 of Surah Al-Mumin) and (E.N. 54 of Surah Ash-Shura).

14. Seek His bounty: Seek lawful provisions by trade, fishing, diving, navigation and other means in the sea.

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا مِّنْهُ ۭ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ 13

(45:13) He has subjected to you all that is in the heavens and the earth,[15] all being from Him.[16] Verily there are Signs in this for those who reflect.[17]

15. For explanation, see (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 32 and E.N. 44)on it, and (E.N. 35 of Surah Luqman).

16. This sentence has two meanings:

(1) This gift and favor of Allah is not like the gift of the worldly kings, who favor their favorites with the wealth that they have collected from the people themselves, but, on the contrary, all the good things in the universe have been created by Allah Himself, and He has granted these to man from Himself.

(2) Neither is anyone a partner of Allah in the creation of these good things, nor has anyone anything to do in making them subservient to man. Allah alone is their Creator and He alone has granted these to man from Himself.

17. That is, in their subjection and in making them beneficial for man, there are many signs for those who think and reflect. These signs clearly point to the truth that the Creator and Master and Administrator of everything and of every power in the universe, from the earth to the heavens, is One God alone Who has subjected them to a law. And that God alone is Lord of man Who has made all these things and powers favorable and helpful for man's life his sustenance, his convenience, his development and his civilization and social life by His power and wisdom and mercy, and that God alone is worthy of man's service and gratitude and devotion and not some other beings, who have neither any share in creating the things and powers nor anything to do with subjecting them to man and making them beneficial for him.

قُلْ لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا يَغْفِرُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ لَا يَرْجُوْنَ اَيَّامَ اللّٰهِ لِيَجْزِيَ قَوْمًۢا بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ 14

(45:14) (O Prophet), tell the believers to indulge those who have no fear of any evil days coming upon them from Allah[18] so that Allah may Himself requite them for their deeds.[19]

18. Literally: Who do not except the days of Allah. But in Arabic usage on such occasions, ayyam does not merely mean days but those memorable days in which important historical events may have taken place. For example, the word ayyam-ul-Arab is used for the important events of the history of the Arabs and the major battles of the Arab tribes, which the later generations remember for centuries. Here, ayyam-Allah implies the evil days of a nation when the wrath of Allah may descend on it and ruin it in consequence of its misdeeds. That is: Those who do not fear the coming of evil days from Allah, i.e. those who do not fear that a day will come when they will be called to account for their actions and deeds, and this same fearlessness has made them bold and stubborn in acts of wickedness.

19. The commentators have given two meanings of this verse and the words of the verse admit of both:

(1) That the believers should pardon the excesses of this wicked group so that Allah may reward them for their patience and forbearance and nobility from Himself and recompense them for the persecutions they have suffered for His sake.

(2) That the believers should pardon these people so that Allah may Himself punish them for their persecutions of them.

Some other commentators have regarded this verse as repealed. They say that this command was applicable only till the Muslims had not been permitted to fight. Then, when they were permitted to fight, this command became abrogated. But a careful study of the words of the verse shows that the claim about abrogation is not correct. The word “pardon” is never used in the sense that when a person is not able to retaliate upon another for the latter’s excesses, he should pardon him, but on such an occasion the usual words are patience and forbearance. Instead of them, when the word “pardon” has been used here, it by itself gives the meaning that the believers, in spite of their ability for retaliation, should refrain from retaliating upon the people for their excesses, whom fearlessness of God has made to transgress all limits of morality and humanity. This command does not contradict those verses in which the Muslims have been permitted to fight. Permission to fight pertains to the condition when the Muslim government has a reasonable ground for taking military action against an unbelieving people, and the command concerning forgiveness and pardon pertains to the common conditions in which the believers have to live in contact with a people who are fearless of God and have to suffer persecutions by them in different ways. The object of this command is that the Muslims should keep their moral superiority and should not stoop to the level of the morally inferior people by indulging in disputes and wrangling with them and resort to retaliation for every frivolity. As long as it is possible to respond to an accusation or objection gently and rationally, or to defend oneself against an excess, one should not refrain from this, but when things seem to be crossing these limits, one should hold his peace and entrust the matter to Allah. If the Muslims themselves become involved in a fight or quarrel with them, Allah will leave them alone to deal with them; but if they pardon and forbear, Allah will Himself deal with the wicked people and reward the oppressed ones for their patience.

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ اَسَآءَ فَعَلَيْهَا ۗ ثُمَّ اِلٰى رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُوْنَ 15

(45:15) Whoever acts righteously, does so to his own good; and whoever commits an evil will suffer its consequence. All of you will then be sent back to your Lord.

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ وَرَزَقْنٰهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَفَضَّلْنٰهُمْ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۚ 16

(45:16) Indeed We endowed the Children of Israel with the Book and Wisdom[20] and Prophethood, and provided them with good things[21] as sustenance, and exalted them above the peoples of the whole world.

20. Hukm (judgment) implies three things:

(1) Knowledge and understanding of the Book and Religion.

(2) Wisdom to act according to the intention of the Book.

(3) Capability to give right decisions in disputes.

21. It does not mean that they were given preference over all the people of the world forever, rather it means: Allah had chosen the children of Israel from among all the contemporary nations of the world for the service that they should hold fast to the divine Book and should rise as the standard bearers of God worship in the world.

وَاٰتَيْنٰهُمْ بَيِّنٰتٍ مِّنَ الْاَمْرِ ۚ فَمَا اخْتَلَفُوْٓا اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ ۙ بَغْيًۢا بَيْنَهُمْ ۭ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِيْ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فِيْمَا كَانُوْا فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ 17

(45:17) We gave them clear directions in matters pertaining to religion. Yet they differed among themselves (not out of ignorance but) after knowledge had come to them; and they did so out of the desire to commit excesses against one another.[22] On the Day of Resurrection Allah will judge among them regarding what they had differed.

22. For explanation, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 213); (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 19) and (E.Ns 22, 23 of Ash-Shura).

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنٰكَ عَلٰى شَرِيْعَةٍ مِّنَ الْاَمْرِ فَاتَّبِعْهَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ 18

(45:18) And then We set you, (O Prophet), on a clear high road in religious matters.[23] So follow that and do not follow the desires of those who do not know.

23. It means: The mission that had been entrusted to the children of Israel before you has now been entrusted to you. They, in spite of receiving knowledge, created such differences in religion out of selfish motives and stirred up such divisions among themselves that they became disqualified to call the people to God's way. Now you have been set upon the clear pathway of religion so that you may perform the service which the children of Israel have failed to perform and became disqualified to perform it. (For further explanation, see (Ash-Shura, Ayats 13-15 and E.Ns 20 to 26).

إِنَّهُمْ لَن يُغْنُوا عَنكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا ۚ وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۖ وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ 19

(45:19) Surely they will be of no avail to you against Allah.[24] Indeed the wrong-doers are friends of each other, whereas Allah is the friend of the God-fearing.

24. That is, if you make any changes in Allah's religion only to please them, they will not be able to save you from Allah's accountability and punishment.

هَٰذَا بَصَائِرُ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ 20

(45:20) These are the lights of discernment for people and guidance and mercy for those endowed with sure faith.[25]

25. That is, this Book and this Shariah present such a light for all the people of the world, which distinguishes the truth from falsehood, but only such people receive any guidance from it who believe in its truth; for them only it is a mercy.

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ اجْتَرَحُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ أَن نَّجْعَلَهُمْ كَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَوَاءً مَّحْيَاهُمْ وَمَمَاتُهُمْ ۚ سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ 21

(45:21) Do[26] the evil-doers imagine that We shall make them equal to those who believe and do good, making their lives and deaths alike? How vile is their judgement![27]

26. After the invitation to Tauhid, the discourse now turns to the theme of the Hereafter.

27. This is the moral reasoning for the truth of the Hereafter. The difference of good and evil in morals and of goodness and wickedness in deeds necessarily demands that the good and the evil people should not meet with one and the same end, but the good should be rewarded for their good and the wicked punished for their evil deeds. Otherwise, if the

good and the evil end up similarly, the distinction of virtue and vice in morals becomes meaningless and God becomes unjust. The people who follow evil ways in the world do want that there should be no accountability and no rewards and punishments, for this concept goes against their enjoyment of life, but it is against the justice and wisdom of the Lord of the worlds that He should treat the good and the evil alike, and should not care to see how the righteous believer has lived his life in the world and how the sinful unbeliever has been enjoying it. One of them kept himself subjected to moral restrictions all his life, rendered the rights of those to whom they were due, restrained himself from the unlawful benefits and pleasures, and continued to incur losses for the sake of the truth. The other fulfilled his desires in every possible wary, neither recognized the rights of God nor hesitated from violating the rights of the people, but went on collecting benefits and good things of life in every possible way. Can it be expected of God that He would overlook the difference between the lives of the two kinds of men? If the end of both be the same, no greater injustice could be conceived. (For further explanation, see (Surah Younus, Ayat 4); (Surah Houd, Ayat 106); (Surah An-Nahl, Ayats 38,39); (Surah Al- Hajj, E.N. 9), (Surah An-Naml, E.N. 86), (Surah Ar-Rum, Ayat 7-8); (Surah Suad, Ayat 28;and E.N. 30) on it.

وَخَلَقَ اللّٰهُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَلِتُجْزٰى كُلُّ نَفْسٍۢ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ 22

(45:22) Allah created the heavens and the earth in Truth[28] that each person may be requited for his deeds. They shall not be wronged.[29]

28. That is, Allah has not created the earth and the heavens for mere sport, but it is a wise system with a purpose. In this system it is absolutely unimaginable that the people who may have accomplished good deeds by the right use of the powers and means and resources granted by Allah, and the people who may have spread mischief and wickedness by their wrong use, should end up ultimately in the dust after death, and there should be no life Hereafter in which their good and bad deeds should lead to good or bad results according to justice. If this were so, this universe would be the plaything of a thoughtless being, and not a purposeful system devised by a Wise Being. (For further explanation, see, (Surah Al-Anaam: 73); (Surah Younus, Ayats 5-6), (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 19), (Surah An-Nahl, Ayat 3), (Surah Al- Ankabut, Ayat 44 and E.Ns 75, 76); (Surah Ar-Room, Ayat 8 and E.N. 6) on it.

29. In this context the sentence clearly means: If the good people are not rewarded for their goodness, and the wicked are not punished for their wickedness, and the grievances of the oppressed are not redressed, it would be injustice. There cannot be such an injustice in the kingdom of God. Likewise, there cannot also be the other kind of injustice that a good man be given a lesser reward than what is due to him, or a bad man be given a greater punishment than what he deserves.

أَفَرَءَيْتَ مَنِ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَٰهَهُۥ هَوَىٰهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ ٱللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِۦ وَقَلْبِهِۦ وَجَعَلَ عَلَىٰ
بَصَرِهِۦ غِشَٰوَةً فَمَن يَهْدِيهِ مِنۢ بَعْدِ ٱللَّهِ ۚ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ 23

(45:23) Did you ever consider the case of him who took his desire as his god,[30] and then Allah caused him to go astray despite knowledge,[31] and sealed his hearing and his heart, and cast a veil over his sight?[32] Who, after Allah, can direct him to the Right Way? Will you not take heed?[33]

30. "Desire his god" implies that one should become a slave of his lusts and desires. He should do whatever he likes whether God has forbidden it, and should not do what he dislikes, whether God has made it obligatory. When a man starts obeying somebody like this, it means that his deity is not God but the one whom he is obeying without question, no matter whether he calls him his lord (with the tongue) or not, and carves out an image of him and worship him or not. For when he has worshiped him directly without question, it is enough to make him a deity and after this practical shirk one cannot be absolved from the guilt of shirk only because he did not call the object of his worship as his deity with the tongue, nor prostrated himself before it. The major commentators also have given the same commentary of this verse. Ibn Jarir says: The forbidden things by Allah are forbidden. He does not regard the things made lawful by Him as lawful. Abu Bakr al-Jassas gives this meaning: He obeys his desires as one should obey his God. Zamakhshari explains it, thus: He is obedient to the desires of his self. He follows his self wherever it beckons him, as if he serves him as one should serve his God. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 56 of Surah Al-Furqan); (E.N. 63 of Surah Saba); (E.N. 53 of Surah YaSeen), and (E.N. 38 of Surah Ash-Shura).

31. The words adalla hulla-huala ilm-in may either mean: The person in spite of being knowledgeable was driven astray by Allah, for he had become a slave of his desires; or Allah, by virtue of His knowledge that he had made his desires as his god, drove him astray.

32. For the commentary of letting a person go astray and setting a seal upon his heart and ears and a covering on his eyes, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 7, 18); (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 25 and E.N. 28); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 100); (Surah At- Taubah, Ayats 87, 93); (Surah Younus, Ayat 74 and E.N. 73); (Surah Ar-Raad, Ayat 27); (Surah Ibrahim, Ayats 4, 27); (Surah An-Nahl, Ayat 108); (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayat 46); (Surah Ar-Room, Ayat 59); (Surah Fatir, Ayat 8 and E.Ns 16, 17), and (E.N. 54 of Surah Al-Muminun).

33. From the context in which this verse occurs, it becomes obvious that only those people deny the Hereafter, who want to serve their desires and who regard belief in the Hereafter as an obstacle to their freedom. Then, once they have denied the Hereafter, their servitude of the self goes on increasing and they go on wandering further into deviation. They commit every kind of evil without feeling any qualms. They do not hesitate to usurp the rights of others. They cannot be expected to restrain themselves when there is an opportunity for them to commit an excess or injustice only because of a regard for justice and truth in their hearts. The events and incidents that can serve as a warning for a man are witnessed by them too, but they draw the wrong conclusion that whatever they are doing is right and

they should do the same. No word of advice moves them. No argument, which can stop a man from evil, appeals to them; but they go on devising and furnishing more and more arguments to justify their unbridled freedom, and their minds remain day and night engaged only in devising ways and means of fulfilling their own interests and desires in every possible way instead of engaging in a good thought. This is an express proof of the fact that the denial of the Hereafter is destructive for human morals. The only thing that can restrain man within the bounds of humanity is the feeling that man is not irresponsible but has to render an account of his deeds before God. Being devoid of this feeling, even if a person is highly learned, he cannot help adopting an attitude and behavior worse than that of the animals.

وَقَالُوْا مَا هِيَ اِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوْتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا يُهْلِكُنَآ اِلَّا الدَّهْرُ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمْ بِذٰلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ ۚ اِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا يَظُنُّوْنَ 24

(45:24) They say: "There is no life other than our present worldly life: herein we live and we die, and it is only (the passage of) time that destroys us. Yet the fact is that they know nothing about this and are only conjecturing.[34]

34. This is, there is no means of knowledge by which they might have known with certainty that after this life there is no other life for man, and that man's soul is not seized by the command of God, but he dies and perishes merely in the course of time. The deniers of the Hereafter say these things not on the basis of any knowledge but on mere conjecture. The maximum that they could say scientifically is: We do not know whether there is any life after death or not; but they cannot say: We know that there is no other life after this life. Likewise, they cannot make the claim of knowing scientifically that man's soul is not seized by God's command but he perishes after death just like a watch which suddenly stops functioning. The most they can say is just this: We do not know what exactly happens in either case. Now the question is: When to the extent of the means of human knowledge there is an equal possibility of there being life after death or there being no life after death, and the soul's being seized by Allah's command, or man's dying of himself in the course of time, what is the reason that these people abandon the probability of the possibility of the Hereafter and give their judgment in favor of its denial? Do they have any other reason than this that they, in fact, decide this question on the basis of their desire and not by any argument? As they do not like that there should be any life after death and death should mean total annihilation and not seizure of the soul by Allah's command, they make their heart's desire their creed and deny the other probability.

وَاِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتُنَا بَيِّنٰتٍ مَّا كَانَ حُجَّتَهُمْ اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوا ائْتُوْا بِاٰبَآئِنَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ 25

(45:25) And when Our Clear Signs are rehearsed to them,[35] their only contention is: "Bring back to us our fathers if you are truthful."[36]

35. "Our clear verses": the Revelations in which strong arguments have been given for the possibility of the Hereafter and in which it has been stated that its occurrence is the demand of both wisdom and justice, and its non-occurrence renders the whole system of the universe meaningless and absurd.

36. In other words, what they meant to say was: When somebody tells them that there is life after death, he must raise a dead person from the grave and present him before them. And if this is not done, they cannot believe that the dead would ever be raised to life once again at some time in the future, whereas nobody ever told them that the dead would be raised to life in this world as and when required separately, but what was said was: On the Day of Resurrection Allah will raise all human beings to life simultaneously and will subject them to accountability and punish and reward them accordingly.

قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُحۡيِيۡكُمۡ ثُمَّ يُمِيۡتُكُمۡ ثُمَّ يَجۡمَعُكُمۡ اِلٰى يَوۡمِ الۡقِيٰمَةِ لَا رَيۡبَ فِيۡهِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكۡثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿26﴾

(45:26) Tell them, (O Prophet): "It is Allah Who gives you life and then causes you to die,[37] and He it is Who will then bring all of you together on the Day of Resurrection, a Day regarding which there can be no doubt.[38] Yet most people do not know.[39]

37. This is the answer to their saying that death comes to man automatically in the course of time. It means: Neither you get life accidentally nor your death occurs automatically. It is God Who gives you life and it is He Who takes it away.

38. This is the answer to their demand: Bring back our forefathers if you are truthful. To this it has been said: This will not happen now separately for individuals, but a Day has been fixed for gathering all mankind together.

39. That is, it is lack of knowledge and right understanding which is the real cause of the people's denying the Hereafter; otherwise it is not its coming but its not coming which is against reason. If a person reflects rightly on the system of the universe and on his own self, he will himself realize that there can be no doubt about the coming of the Hereafter.

وَلِلّٰهِ مُلۡكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ؕ وَيَوۡمَ تَقُوۡمُ السَّاعَةُ يَوۡمَئِذٍ يَّخۡسَرُ الۡمُبۡطِلُوۡنَ ﴿27﴾

(45:27) Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth,[40] and on the Day when the Hour (of Resurrection) shall come to pass, the followers of falsehood shall be in utter loss.

40. In view of the context, this sentence by itself gives the meaning that it is not at all beyond the power of God Who is ruling over this great and marvelous universe that He should

bring the human beings whom He has created in the first instance back into existence once again.

وَتَرٰى كُلَّ اُمَّةٍ جَاثِيَةً ۚ كُلُّ اُمَّةٍ تُدْعٰٓى اِلٰى كِتٰبِهَا ؕ اَلْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ
تَعْمَلُوْنَ 28

(45:28) On that Day you shall see every people fallen on their knees.[41] Every people will be summoned to come forth and see its Record and will be told: "Today you shall be requited for your deeds.

41. That is, the dread and terror of the Plain of Resurrection and the awe of the divine court will be such that it will break the stubbornness of the most arrogant and boastful people, and everyone will be found fallen on his knees humbly.

هٰذَا كِتٰبُنَا يَنْطِقُ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ اِنَّا كُنَّا نَسْتَنْسِخُ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ 29

(45:29) This is Our Record which bears witness against you with truth; We used to record all what you did."[42]

42. The only possible way of getting a thing recorded is not by means of the pen and paper only. Man himself has discovered in this world several other forms of recording human words and actions and reproducing them exactly and accurately; and we cannot even imagine what other possibilities of it lie yet undiscovered, which man himself will discover and exploit in the future. Now, who can know how and by what means is Allah getting recorded man's every word, his every movement and action, even his hidden intentions and motives and desires and ideas, and how He will place before every man and every group and every nation his or its whole lifework accurately and exactly?

فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَيُدْخِلُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ فِيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ
الْمُبِيْنُ 30

(45:30) As for those who believe and act righteously, their Lord shall admit them to His Mercy. That indeed is the manifest triumph.

وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ۚ اَفَلَمْ تَكُنْ اٰيٰتِيْ تُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ وَكُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا
مُّجْرِمِيْنَ 31

(45:31) But those who denied the Truth, they shall be told: “Were My Signs not rehearsed to you? But you waxed proud[43] and became a guilty people.”

43. That is, you thought it was below your dignity to believe in Allah’s revelations and submit to them, and considered yourselves to be above subjection and servitude.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَالسَّاعَةُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا قُلْتُم مَّا نَدْرِي مَا السَّاعَةُ إِن
نَّظُنُّ إِلَّا ظَنًّا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُسْتَيْقِنِينَ 32

(45:32) And when it was said to them: “Surely Allah's promise is true, and there is no doubt regarding the Hour of Resurrection,” you were wont to say: “We do not know what the Hour (of Resurrection) is. We are simply making conjectures and are not at all certain.”[44]

44. The people mentioned in (verse 24)above were those who denied the Hereafter openly and absolutely, here those who are not sure of it although they do not deny its possibility because of conjecture. Apparently there is a vast difference between the two groups in that one of them denies the Hereafter absolutely and the other regards it as possible on the basis of conjecture. But as for the result and final end, there is no difference between them, for the moral consequences of the denial of the Hereafter and of lack of the faith in it are the same. A person, whether he disbelieves in the Hereafter or lacks faith in it, will in either case be inevitably devoid of the feeling of accountability before God, and this lack of feeling will necessarily involve him in the error and deviation of thought and action. Only faith and belief in the Hereafter can keep a man on the right track in the world. In the absence of it, both doubt and denial give him a similar attitude of irresponsibility, and since this same attitude of irresponsibility is the real cause of man’s being doomed in the Hereafter, therefore neither the denier of it can escape Hell nor the one who lacks faith in it.

وَبَدَا لَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا عَمِلُوا وَحَاقَ بِهِم مَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ 33

(45:33) (On that Day) the evil of their deeds will become apparent to them[45] and what they had mocked at will encompass them,

45. That is, there they will come to know that their ways of behavior, their practices and manners, and their actions and pastimes, which they regarded as very good in the world were, in fact, very bad: they had committed a basic mistake in thinking that they were not answerable to anyone, and this had rendered their entire lifework fruitless and vain.

وَقِيلَ الْيَوْمَ نَنسَاكُمْ كَمَا نَسِيتُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَٰذَا وَمَأْوَاكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُم مِّن
نَّاصِرِينَ 34

(45:34) and it will be said: “We will forget you today as you forgot the meeting of this Day of yours. The Fire shall now be your abode, and you shall have none to come to your aid.

ذٰلِكُمْ بِاَنَّكُمُ اتَّخَذْتُمْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ هُزُوًا وَّغَرَّتْكُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا ۚ فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يُخْرَجُوْنَ
مِنْهَا وَلَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُوْنَ 35

(45:35) You reached this end because you made Allah's Signs an object of jest and the life of the world deluded you.” So they shall not be taken out of the Fire nor shall they be asked to make amends (and thus please their Lord).[46]

46. This last sentence depicts the manner of a master who after rebuking some of his servants turns to others and says: Well, these wretched people now deserve such and such punishment!

فَلِلّٰهِ الْحَمْدُ رَبِّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَرَبِّ الْاَرْضِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ 36

(45:36) So all praise be to Allah, the Lord of the heavens, the Lord of the earth, the Lord of the whole Universe.

وَلَهُ الْكِبْرِيَآءُ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ع 37

(45:37) His is the glory in the heavens and the earth. He is the Most Mighty, the Most Wise.

46. Surah Al Ahqaf (The Wind Curved Sand Dunes)

Name

It is derived from the sentence idh andhara qauma-hu bil Ahqaf-i of verse 21.

Period of Revelation

It is determined by an historical event that has been mentioned in vv. 29-32. This incident of the visit of the jinn and their going back after listening to the Qur'an had occurred, according to agreed traditions of the Hadith and biographical literature, at the time when the Holy Prophet had halted at Makkah during his return journey from Ta'if to Makkah. And according to all authentic historical traditions he had gone to Ta'if three years before the Hijrah; therefore it is determined that this Surah was sent down towards the end of the 10th year or in the early part of the 11th year of the Prophethood.

Historical Background

The 10th year of the Prophethood was a year of extreme persecution and distress in the Holy prophet's life. The Quraish and the other tribes had continued their boycott of the Bani Hashim and the Muslims for three years and the Holy Prophet and the people of his family and Companions lay besieged in Shi'b Abi Talib. The Quraish had blocked up this locality from every side so that no supplies of any kind could reach the besieged people. Only during the Hajj season they were allowed to come out and buy some articles of necessity. But even at that time whenever Abu Lahab noticed any of them approaching the market place or a trading caravan he would call out to the merchants exhorting them to announce forbidding rates of their articles for them, and would pledge that he himself would buy those articles so that they did not suffer any loss. This boycott which continued uninterrupted for three years had broken the back of the Muslims and the Bani Hashim; so much so that at times they were even forced to eat grass and the leaves of trees.

At last, when the siege was lifted this year, Abu Talib, the Holy Prophet's uncle, who had been shielding him for ten long years, died, and hardly a month later his wife, Hadrat Khadijah, who had been a source of peace and consolation for him ever since the beginning of the call, also passed away. Because of these tragic incidents, which closely followed each other, the Holy Prophet used to refer to this year as the year of sorrow and grief.

After the death of Hadart Khadijah and Abu Talib the disbelievers of Makkah became even bolder against the Holy Prophet. They started treating him even more harshly. So much so that it became difficult for him to step out of his house. Of these days Ibn Hisham has related the incident that a Quraish scoundrel one day threw dust at him openly in the street.

At last, the Holy Prophet left for Ta'if with the intention that he should invite the Bani Thaqif to Islam, for even if they did not accept Islam, they might at least be persuaded to allow him to work for his mission peacefully. He did not have the facility of any conveyance at that time, and traveled all the way to Ta'if on foot. According to some traditions, he had gone there alone, but according to others, he was accompanied by Zaid bin Harithah. He stayed at Ta'if for a few days, and approached each of the chiefs and nobles of the Bani Thaqif and talked to him about his mission. But not only they refused to listen to him, but

plainly gave him the notice that he should leave their city, for they feared that his preaching might "spoil" their younger generation. Thus, he was compelled to leave Ta'if. When he was leaving the city, the chiefs of Thaqif set their slaves and scoundrels behind him, who went on crying at him, abusing him and petting him with stones for a long way from either side of the road till he became broken down with wounds and his shoes were filled with blood. Wearied and exhausted he took shelter in the shade of the wall of a garden outside Ta'if, and prayed:

"O God, to Thee I complain of my weakness, little resource, and lowliness before men. O Most Merciful, Thou art the Lord of the weak, and Thou art my Lord. To whom wilt Thou confide me? To one afar who will misuse me? Or to an enemy to whom Thou hast given power over me? If Thou art not angry with me I care not. Thy favor is more wide for me. I take refuge in the light of Thy countenance by which the darkness is illumined, and the things of this world and the next are rightly ordered, lest Thy anger descend upon me or Thy wrath light upon me. It is for Thee to be satisfied until Thou art well pleased. There is no power and no might save in Thee." (Ibn Hisham:A. Guillaume's Translation, p. 193).

Grieved and heart broken when he returned and reached near Qarn al-Manazil, he felt as though the sky was overcast by clouds. He looked up and saw Gabriel in front of him, who called out: "Allah has heard the way your people have responded. He has, therefore, sent this angel in charge of the mountains. You may command him as you please." Then the angel of the mountains greeted him and submitted :"If you like I would overturn the mountains from either side upon these people." The Holy Prophet replied : "No, but I expect that Allah will create from their seed those who will worship none but Allah, the One." (Bukhari, Dhikr al Mala'ikah; Muslim: Kitab al-Maghazi; Nasa'i :Al-Bauth).

After this he went to stay for a few days at Makkah, perplexed as to how he would face the people of Makkah, who, he thought, would be still further emboldened against him after hearing what had happened at Ta'if. It was here that one night when he was reciting the Qur'an in the Prayer, a group of the jinn happened to pass by and listened to the Qur'an, believed in it, and returned to their people to preach Islam. Thus, Allah gave His Prophet the good news that if the men were running away from his invitation, there were many of the jinn, who had become its believers, and they were spreading his message among their own kind.

Subject Matter and Topics

Such were the conditions when this Surah was sent down. Anyone who keeps this background in view, on the one hand, and studies this Surah, on the other, will have no doubt left in his mind that this is not at all the composition of Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace), but "a Revelation from the All Mighty, All Wise Allah." For nowhere in this Surah, from the beginning to the end, does one find even a tinge of the human feelings and reactions, which are naturally produced in a man who is passing through such hard conditions. Had it been the word of Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) whom the occurrence of personal griefs one after the other and the countless and the recent bitter experience at Ta'if had caused extreme anguish and distress, it would have reflected in some degree the state of the mind of the man who was the subject of these afflictions and griefs. Consider the prayer that we have cited above: it contains his own language its every word is

saturated with the feelings that he had at the time. But this Surah which was sent down precisely in the same period and was recited even by him under the same conditions, is absolutely free from every sign or trace of the time.

The subject matter of the Surah is to warn the disbelievers of the errors in which they were involved, and also resisted arrogantly, and were condemning the man who was trying to redeem them. They regarded the world as a useless and purposeless place where they were not answerable to anyone. They thought that invitation to Tauhid was false and stuck to the belief that their own deities were actually the associates of Allah. They were not inclined to believe that the Qur'an was the Word of the Lord of the worlds. They had a strange erroneous concept of apostleship on the basis of which they were proposing strange criteria of judging the Holy Prophet's claim to it. In their estimation one great proof of Islam's not being based on the truth was that their elders and important chiefs of the tribes and so called leaders of their nation were not accepting it and only a few young men, and some poor folks and some slaves had affirmed faith in it. They thought that Resurrection and life after death and the rewards and punishments of the Hereafter were fabrications whose occurrence was absolutely out of the question.

In this Surah each of these misconceptions has been refuted in a brief but rational way, and the disbelievers have been warned that if they would reject the invitation of the Qur'an and the Prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) by prejudice and stubbornness instead of trying to understand its truth rationally, they would only be preparing for their own doom.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

حٰمٓ 1

(46:1) Ha'. Mim.[1]

1. For explanation, see(E.N. 1 of Surah Az-Zumar); (E.N. 1 of Surah Al-Jathiyah) and also(E.N. 1 of Surah As-Sajdah)for understanding the true spirit of this introduction.

تَنۡزِيۡلُ الۡكِتٰبِ مِنَ اللّٰهِ الۡعَزِيۡزِ الۡحَكِيۡمِ 2

(46:2) The revelation of this Book is from Allah, the Most Mighty, the Most Wise.

مَا خَلَقۡنَا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضَ وَمَا بَيۡنَهُمَاۤ اِلَّا بِالۡحَـقِّ وَاَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ؕ وَالَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا

عَمَّاۤ اُنۡذِرُوۡا مُعۡرِضُوۡنَ 3

(46:3) We have created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in Truth and for an appointed term.[2]But those who disbelieve have turned away from what they were warned against.[3]

2. For explanation, see (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 73); (Surah Younus, Ayats 5-6); (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 19); (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayat 85); (Surah An-Nahl, Ayat: 3); (Surah AI-Anbiya, Ayats 16-18); (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayat 115); (Surah Al-Ankabut, Ayats 44); (Surah Ar-Room, Ayat 8 and the corresponding E.Ns).

3. That is, the fact is that this universe is not a purposeless plaything but a purposeful, wise system in which the decisions regarding the good and the bad, the oppressor and the oppressed, will necessarily be based on justice. The present system of the universe is not permanent and eternal, but it has a fixed term appointed for it on the expiry of which it will inevitably come to an end. For the court of Allah also there is a settled time and it will certainly be established when the time for it reaches its term. But the people who have refused to believe in Allah's Prophet (peace be upon him) and His Book, have an aversion to these truths. They are least mindful of this that a time has to come when they will have to render an account of their deeds. They think that the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah has done them a great wrong by warning them of these truths, whereas he has done them a great good by fore-warning them not only of the time when they will be subjected to accountability but also of what they will be questioned at that time so that they may prepare themselves accordingly.

To understand the following discourse it should be borne in mind that man's basic error is the one that he commits with regard to determining his belief about God. In this regard, the adoption of a creed carelessly on the basis of mere hearsay, without any serious and deep thought and investigation is a stupendous folly, which vitiates man's entire attitude towards life in the world and ruins his destiny for ever afterwards. But the reason why man becomes involved in this dangerous kind of heedlessness is that he regards himself as irresponsible and un-answerable and develops the misunderstanding that whatever creed he may adopt about God, it would make no difference, because either there is no life after death in which he might have to face accountability, or if there is any such life and he is also called to account, the beings of whom he is a devotee, will save him from any evil fate. This same lack of the sense of responsibility renders him frivolous in the selection of a religious creed, and on the basis of the same he fabricates all sorts of absurd creeds, from atheism to every form of polytheism, or adopts the creeds fabricated by others.

قُلْ أَرَءَيْتُم مَّا تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَرُونِى مَاذَا خَلَقُوا۟ مِنَ ٱلْأَرْضِ أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِى
ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ ۖ ٱئْتُونِى بِكِتَٰبٍ مِّن قَبْلِ هَٰذَآ أَوْ أَثَٰرَةٍ مِّنْ عِلْمٍ إِن كُنتُمْ صَٰدِقِينَ 4

(46:4) Tell them, (O Prophet): "Did you consider those whom you call upon beside Allah? Show me, which part of the earth they created? Or do they have any share in creating the heavens? Bring to me any Scripture earlier than this one, or any vestige of knowledge (in support of your belief) if you are truthful.[4]

4. As the addresses are a polytheistic people, they are being told the reality of the irrational creed in which they persisted carelessly due to lack of the sense of responsibility. Along with acknowledging Allah as the Creator of the universe they had made many other beings their deities. They invoked them, regarded them as fulfillers of their needs and removers of hardships, prostrated themselves and made offerings before them, and thought they had the powers of making and unmaking of their destinies. About the same beings, they are being asked: On what basis have you made them your deities? Obviously, there can be only two bases for regarding someone as an associate in worship along with Allah: Either man himself should know through some means of knowledge that his deity too has a share in making the earth and heavens, or Allah Himself may have stated that so and so also is His associate in the functions of Godhead. Now, if a polytheist can neither make the claim that he possesses direct knowledge of his deity's being an associate of God, nor he can show in a Book sent by God that God Himself has appointed somebody as His associate, his creed would inevitably be baseless.

In this verse, "a Book revealed before this" implies a Book sent by Allah before the Quran, and some remnant of knowledge, implies some part of the teachings of the Prophets and righteous men of the ancient times, which may have reached the later generations reliably. There is no tinge of shirk in whatever man has received through these two means. All the heavenly Books unanimously present the same Tauhid to which the Quran invites the people, and no existing remnant of the ancient lore bears evidence to this that some Prophet or saint or righteous man might have taught the people to serve and worship any other than God. Even if we do not take a Book to mean a divine Book and remnant of knowledge the knowledge bequeathed by the Prophets and righteous men, no authentic book or the research made by a scholar of religious or secular lore has pointed out that such and such a thing in the earth or the heavens has been created by such and such a saint or god, or a certain blessing of the blessings of life which man is benefiting from in the universe has been created by such and such a deity instead of God.

وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنْ يَّدْعُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَنْ لَّا يَسْتَجِيْبُ لَهٗٓ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَهُمْ عَنْ دُعَآئِهِمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ 5

(46:5) Who is farther strayed from the Right Path than he who calls upon others than Allah that cannot answer his call till the Day of Resurrection,[5] the while they are not even conscious that callers are calling upon them?[6]

5. "Cannot respond to him": Cannot answer the supplications of any one. That is, these gods do not possess the powers by virtue of which they could give decisions on the prayers and petitions of their devotees. (For further explanation, see(E.N. 33 of Surah Az-Zumar).

"Until the Day of Resurrection" means that as long as the world lasts they will get no answer to their supplications and prayers from their deities, but when Resurrection will have taken place, the deities will turn hostile to their worshipers themselves, as becomes explicit from the next verse.

6. That is, they do not even hear the supplications of the supplicants, neither through their own ears nor through any other means. This thing can be elaborated like this: The being whom the polytheists the world over have been invoking are divided into three categories:

(1) Lifeless and inanimate creation.

(2) The pious men who have passed away.

(3) The wicked men who had themselves gone astray, and who misled others and passed away.

As for the first category of the deities they will naturally remain unaware of the supplications of their worshipers. As for the deities of the second kind, who were favorites with their God, there are two reasons of their remaining unaware: (a) They are in the presence of Allah in a state where human voices cannot reach them directly; and (b) even Allah and His angels do not inform them that the people whom they had been teaching to invoke Allah alone in the world, were invoking them instead, for no information could cause them a greater shock than this, and Allah does not at all like to vex the souls of His righteous servants.

Now if we consider the case of the third kind of the deities, we shall see that there are two reasons also of their remaining unaware: (a) That they have been placed in confinement as the accused, and no voice from the world can reach them; and (b) that even Allah and His angels do not convey to them the news that their mission is flourishing in the world, and the people have set them up as deities, for this news would be a happy news for them, and Allah does not like to make the wicked people happy.

In this connection, one should also understand that Allah conveys to His righteous servants the greetings of peace and prayers of mercy from the people of the world, for these things are a source of joy and pleasure for them. Likewise, He informs the culprits of the curses, censures and condemnations of the people of the world, as the disbelievers killed in the Battle of Badr were made to hear the curse of the Prophet (peace be upon him) according to a Hadith, for it is a cause of anguish for them. But anything which might cause distress to the righteous people and joy to the culprits is not conveyed to them. This explanation makes the truth about the question of hearing by the dead plain and easy to understand.

وَإِذَا حُشِرَ النَّاسُ كَانُوا لَهُمْ أَعْدَآءً وَّكَانُوا بِعِبَادَتِهِمْ كٰفِرِيْنَ 6

(46:6) When all human beings will be gathered together those who had been called upon will become the enemies to their votaries and will disown their worship.[7]

7. That is, they will say: We had neither told the people to invoke us for help, nor are we aware that they used to invoke us. They themselves had presumed that we could fulfill their needs and so had started invoking us.

وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَايَٰتُنَا بَيِّنَٰتٍ قَالَ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ ۙ هَٰذَا سِحْرٌ
مُّبِينٌ ۖ 7

(46:7) When Our Clear Messages are rehearsed to them, the unbelievers exclaim about the Truth when it came to them: "This is plain sorcery."[8]

8. It means: When the revelations of the Quran were recited before the disbelievers of Makkah, they realized that the Quran was far superior to human speech. The compositions of their greatest poets, orators and literary men were no match with the un-paralleled eloquence, enchanting oratory, sublime themes and heart-moving style of the Quran. Above all, even the Prophet's (peace be upon him) own words and speech were not comparable with the discourses that were being sent down to him by God. Those who had known him since childhood knew well the vast difference that was there between his language and words and the words of the Quran, and it was not possible for them to believe that a man who had been living day and night among them for forty years would suddenly one day forge a speech whose diction and style would bear no resemblance with his familiar and known manner of speech and style. This thing made the truth plain before them, but since they were bent upon denial, they would say: This is plain magic, instead of acknowledging it as divine word after witnessing this manifest sign. (They regarded the Quran as magic from another aspect also, which we have explained in our commentary of (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 3) and (E.N. 5 of Surah Suad).

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ ٱفْتَىٰهُ ۖ قُلْ إِنِ ٱفْتَيْتُهُۥ فَلَا تَمْلِكُونَ لِى مِنَ ٱللَّهِ شَيْـًٔا ۖ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا
تُفِيضُونَ فِيهِ ۖ كَفَىٰ بِهِۦ شَهِيدًۢا بَيْنِى وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۖ وَهُوَ ٱلْغَفُورُ ٱلرَّحِيمُ 8

(46:8) Do they claim that the Messenger himself has fabricated it?[9] (If so), tell them: "If I have fabricated it, then you have no power to protect me from Allah's chastisement. He knows well the idle talk in which you indulge. He suffices as a witness between me and you.[10] He is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful."[11]

9. This interrogative tone expresses great surprise and amazement. It means to say: Are these people so shameless that they accuse Muhammad (peace be upon him) of fabricating the Quran himself? Whereas they know that it cannot be his word and their calling it magic is by itself an express proof that they regard it as an extraordinary word, which cannot be of human composition even according to themselves.

10. As it was quite evident that their accusation was baseless and motivated by stubbornness, there was no need to present arguments to refute it. Therefore, only this much was regarded as a sufficient response: If I have really fabricated something and committed a grave crime by imputing it to Allah, as you accuse me of, you will not be able to rescue me from Allah's punishment. But if it is really Allah's Word, and you are rejecting it by bringing false

accusations, Allah Himself will deal with you. For the reality is not hidden from Allah, and He is sufficient to decide between the truth and falsehood. If the whole world calls some one a liar, although he is truthful in Allah's knowledge, the final decision will be in his favor. On the country, if the whole world regards some one as truthful though he is a liar in the knowledge of Allah, he will be regarded as a liar in the final judgment. Therefore, do not confuse things but pay heed to your final end.

11. Here, this sentence gives two meanings:

(1) It is in fact Allah's mercy and His forbearance that these people are surviving in the world, although they have no hesitation in declaring Allah's Word as falsehood; otherwise if a merciless and cruel god had been the master of this universe, he would not have allowed such insolent people to live even for a moment in the world.

(2) O unjust people, if you give up your stubbornness even now, the door of God's mercy is still open for you, and whatever misdeeds you may have committed heretofore can be forgiven.

قُلۡ مَا كُنۡتُ بِدۡعًا مِّنَ الرُّسُلِ وَمَآ اَدۡرِىۡ مَا يُفۡعَلُ بِىۡ وَلَا بِكُمۡ‌ؕ اِنۡ اَتَّبِعُ اِلَّا مَا يُوۡحٰٓى اِلَىَّ وَمَآ اَنَا اِلَّا نَذِيۡرٌ مُّبِيۡنٌ 9

(46:9) Tell them: "I am not the first of the Messengers; and I do not know what shall be done with me or with you. I follow only what is revealed to me, and I am nothing but a plain warner."[12]

12. Its background is this: When the Prophet (peace be upon him) presented himself as Allah's Messenger, the people of Makkah raised different kinds of objections against it. They said: What kind of a Messenger he is who has a family, who moves about in the streets, eats and drinks and lives a common man's life. There is nothing special about him, which might distinguish him above the other people and therefore we may know that Allah has specially made this man His Messenger. Then they said: Had he ban appointed a Messenger by God, He would have sent an angel as an attendant with him who would have announced that he was God's Messenger, and would have punished with a scourge every such person who had behaved insolently towards him. How strange that God should appoint a person as His Messenger and then should leave him alone to roam the streets of Makkah and suffer every kind of humiliation. If nothing else Allah should at least have created a magnificent palace and a blooming garden for His Messenger. He should not have been left to depend on his wife's resources. Besides, these people demanded different kinds of miracles from him and asked news of the unseen. They thought that a person's being God's Messenger meant that he should possess supernatural powers so that mountains should move at his bidding and deserts at once turn into green fields. He should have the knowledge of the past and the future events and of everything hidden from others.

An answer to the same has been given in these sentences, and each sentence contains a world of meaning.

First, it is said: Tell them, I am not a novel Messenger. That is, my being appointed as a Messenger is not a novel event of its kind in the world so that you may have some confusion about the characteristics of a Messenger. Many Messengers have come to the world before me, and I am not any different from them. Never has a Messenger come, who did not have a family, who did not eat and drink, or who did not live a common man's life. Never has an angel descended as an attendant with a Messenger, heralding his prophethood and carrying a whip before him. Never have gardens and palaces been created for a Messenger and never has a Messenger been spared of the hardships which I am suffering. Never has a Messenger shown a miracle by his own power, or known everything by his own knowledge. Then, how is it that you are bringing forth these strange criteria only to judge my Prophethood?

Then it is said: Tell them also, I do not know what shall befall you tomorrow nor what shall befall me. I only follow that which is revealed to me. That is, I am not a knower of the unseen so that everything of the past and present and future should be known to me, and I should have the knowledge of everything in the world. Not to speak of your future, I do not even know my own future. I only know that of which I am given knowledge by revelation. More than that I have never claimed to know, nor has there ever been a Messenger in the world, who made that claim. It is not a Messenger's job to tell the whereabouts of the lost articles, or tell whether a pregnant woman will deliver a boy or a girl, or whether a sick patient will live or die. In conclusion, it is said: Say to them, I am no more than a plain warner. That is, I do not possess divine powers so that I may show you the wonderful miracles that you demand from me every next day. My only mission is that I should present the right way before the people, and should warn of an evil end those who do not accept it.

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ وَ كَفَرْتُمْ بِهٖ وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْۢ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ عَلٰى مِثْلِهٖ فَاٰمَنَ وَاسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ع 10

(46:10) Tell them, (O Prophet): "Did you consider (what would be your end) [13] if this Qur'an were indeed from Allah and yet you rejected it? And this even though a witness from the Children of Israel has testified to the like of it. But he believed, while you waxed arrogant.[14] Verily Allah does not guide such wrong-doers to the Right Way.

13. This same theme has been expressed in another way in (Surah HaMim As-Sajdah, Ayat 62) above. For explanation, see(E.N. 69 of that Surah).

14. A large number of the commentators have taken this witness to imply Abdullah bin Salam, who was a famous Jewish scholar of Madinah, and who believed in the Prophet (peace be upon him) after the migration. As this thing happened in Madinah, these commentators say that this verse was revealed at Madinah. This commentary is based on a statement of Sad bin Abi Waqqas according to which this verse was sent down in respect of Abdullah bin Salam (Bukhari, Muslim, Nasai Ibn Jarir); and on the same basis have several major commentators like Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, Qatadah, Dahhak, Ibn Sirin, Hasan Basri, Ibn Zaid and Auf bin Malik al-Ashjai accepted this commentary. But, on the other hand,

Ikrimah and Shabi and Masruq say that this verse cannot be about Abdullah bin Salam for this entire Surah was revealed at Makkah. Ibn Jarir Tabari also has preferred this view. He says: The whole previous discourse is an address directed to the pagans of Makkah and the following discourse also is directed to them. In this context it is not conceivable that a verse revealed at Madinah was inserted here. The later commentators who have accepted this second version, do not reject the tradition of Saad bin Abi Waqqas, but have opined that as this verse also applies to Abdullah bin Salam's affirmation of the faith, Saad expressed the opinion, in the tradition of the ancients, that it was sent down with regard to him. This does not, however, mean that when he believed, it was revealed then about him only, but that this verse precisely applied to him and his acceptance of Islam.

Apparently, this second view seems to be more correct and reasonable. Now, the question that remains to be answered is: Who is implied by this witness? Some of the commentators who have accepted the second view say that it implies the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), but the following sentence: He believed while you showed arrogance, bears no relevance to this explanation. What seems to be nearer the truth is that which the commentator Nisaburi and Ibn Kathir have stated. They say: Here, by a witness is not meant any particular person but a common Israelite. The meaning is this: The teachings that the Quran is presenting before you are not new so that you could deny them by offering the excuse that they were novel teachings which had never been presented before man in the past. Before this these very teachings have been similarly revealed and exist with the Israelites in the form of the Torah and other scriptures, and a common Israelite has already believed in them, and also admitted that Allah's revelation is a means of the coming down of these teachings. Therefore, you cannot make the claim that revelation and these teachings are incomprehensible. The only thing that hinders you from believing is your arrogance and baseless conceit.

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَوْ كَانَ خَيْرًا مَّا سَبَقُوْنَآ اِلَيْهِ ؕ وَاِذْ لَمْ يَهْتَدُوْا بِهٖ
فَسَيَقُوْلُوْنَ هٰذَآ اِفْكٌ قَدِيْمٌ 11

(46:11) The unbelievers say to the believers: If there was any good in this Book, others would not have beaten us to its acceptance."[15] But since they have not been guided to it, they will certainly say: "This is an old fabrication."[16]

15. This is one of those arguments that the chiefs of the Quraish employed to beguile and mislead the common people against the Prophet (peace be upon him). They said: If the Quran were really based on the truth and Muhammad (peace be upon him) were inviting towards a right thing, the chiefs and the elders and the noblemen of the community would have been in the forefront to accept it. How could it be that a few young boys and mean slaves only should accept a reasonable thing but the distinguished men of the nation, who are wise and experienced, and who have been held as reliable by others, would reject it? This was the deceptive reasoning by which they tried to make the common people believe that there was something wrong with the new message; that is why the elders of the people were not believing it. Therefore, they also should avoid it.

16. That is, they regard themselves as a criterion of the truth and falsehood. They think that whatever (guidance) they reject must be falsehood. But accepting them since thousands of years also were devoid of wisdom and knowledge, and the whole wisdom has now become these people's monopoly.

وَمِنْ قَبْلِهٖ كِتٰبُ مُوْسٰٓى اِمَامًا وَّرَحْمَةً ؕ وَهٰذَا كِتٰبٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّسَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّيُنْذِرَ
الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا ۖ وَبُشْرٰى لِلْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ۚ 12

(46:12) Yet before this the Book was revealed to Moses as a guide and a mercy. This Book, which confirms it, is in the Arabic tongue to warn the wrong-doers[17] and to give good tidings to those who do good.

17. To warn the wrongdoers: To warn of the evil end those who are being unjust to themselves and to the truth itself by disbelieving in Allah and serving others than Allah, and are involved because of this deviation of theirs in the evils of morals and deeds, which have filled human society with every kind of wickedness and injustice.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْا رَبُّنَا اللّٰهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوْا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ۚ 13

(46:13) Surely those who said: "Our Lord is Allah" and then remained steadfast shall have nothing to fear nor to grieve.[18]

18. For explanation, see(E.Ns 33 to 35 of Surah HaMim As- Sajdah).

اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۚ جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ 14

(46:14) They are the people of Paradise. They shall remain in it forever as a reward for their deeds.

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ اِحْسَانًا ؕ حَمَلَتْهُ اُمُّهٗ كُرْهًا وَّوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا ؕ وَحَمْلُهٗ
وَفِصٰلُهٗ ثَلٰثُوْنَ شَهْرًا ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا بَلَغَ اَشُدَّهٗ وَبَلَغَ اَرْبَعِيْنَ سَنَةً ۙ قَالَ رَبِّ اَوْزِعْنِيْٓ اَنْ
اَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِيْٓ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلٰى وَالِدَيَّ وَاَنْ اَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضٰىهُ وَاَصْلِحْ لِيْ فِيْ
ذُرِّيَّتِيْ ۚ اِنِّيْ تُبْتُ اِلَيْكَ وَاِنِّيْ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ 15

(46:15) We have enjoined man to be kind to his parents. In pain did his mother bear him and in pain did she give birth to him. The carrying of the child to his weaning is a period of thirty months.[19] And when he is grown to full maturity and reaches the age of forty, he prays: "My Lord, dispose me that I may give thanks for the bounty that You have bestowed upon me and my parents, and dispose me that I may do righteous deeds that would please You,[20] and also make my descendants righteous. I repent to You, and I am one of those who surrender themselves to You."

19. This verse tells that although the children should serve both the mother and the father, the mother's right is greater in importance on the ground that she undergoes greater hardships for the sake of the children. The same is borne out by a Hadith, which has been related with a little variation in wording in Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, Musnad Ahmad, and in Adab al- Mufrad of Imam Bukhari, to the effect that a person asked the Prophet (peace be upon him): Who has got a greater right to my service? The Prophet replied (peace be upon him): Your mother. He asked: Who after her? He replied: Your mother. He asked: Who after her? He replied: Your mother. He asked: Who after her? He replied: Your father. This Hadith precisely explains this verse, for in it also allusion has been made to the triple right of the mother: (1) His mother bore him with hardship. (2) She gave him birth with hardship. (3) His bearing and his weaning took thirty months.

Another legal point also is derived from this verse and (verse 14 of Surah Luqman) and(verse 233 of Surah Al- Baqarah), which was pointed out by Ali and Ibn Abbas in a law case and made Uthman change his decision. The story goes that during the caliphate of Uthman, a person married a woman from the Juhainah tribe, and just six months after the marriage she gave birth to a healthy and sound child. The man took the case before Uthman, who declared the woman to be an adulteress and ordered that she be stoned to death. On hearing this Ali immediately came to Uthman and asked: What sort of a decision have you given? He replied: She has given birth to a sound child six months after marriage. Is it not a clear proof of her being an adulteress? Ali did not agree, and recited the three above mentioned verses in their sequence. In Surah Al-Baqarah Allah says: The mothers shall suckle their children for two whole years, if the fathers desire the suckling to be completed. In Surah Luqman it is said: And his weaning took two years, and in Surah Al-Ahqaf: And his bearing and his weaning took thirty months. Now, if two years of suckling are taken away from 30 months, six months of bearing remain. This shows that the minimum period of pregnancy in which a sound child can be born is six months. Therefore, the woman who has given birth to a child six months after the marriage cannot be declared an adulteress. On hearing this reasoning of Ali, Uthman admitted that he had not considered that thing at all. Then he recalled the woman and changed his decision. According to another tradition, Ibn Abbas also supported the reasoning of Ali and then Uthman changed his decision. (Ibn Jarir, Ahkam al-Qur an by al-Jassas Ibn Kathir).

The following legal injunctions are derived from the three verses when they are read together: The woman who gives birth to a sound and complete child in less than six months after marriage (i.e. in a proper delivery and not abortion) will be declared an adulteress and her child's lineage from her husband will not be established.

(2) The woman who delivers a sound and complete child six months or more after marriage, cannot be accused of adultery only on the basis of the child birth, nor can her husband have the right to slander her, nor can he refuse to acknowledge fatherhood of the child. The child will certainly be recognized as his, and the woman will not be punished.

(3) The maximum period for fosterage is two years. If a woman has suckled a child after this age, she will not be regarded as his foster mother, nor will the injunctions pertaining to fosterage (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 23) be applicable to her. In this regard, Imam Abu Hanifah has out of caution proposed the period of two and a half years instead of two years so that there remains no chance of error in a delicate matter like the prohibition of the foster relations. (For explanation, see (E. N. 23 of Surah Luqman).

Here, it would be useful to know that according to the latest medical research a child needs at least 28 weeks to remain in the mother's womb to be developed and delivered as a living baby. This period amounts to a little more than 6 months. The Islamic law has allowed a concession of about half a month, because a woman's being declared an adulteress and a child's being deprived of lineage is a grave matter, and its gravity demands that maximum period be allowed to save both the mother and the child from its legal consequences. Furthermore, no physician and no judge, not even the pregnant woman herself and the man impregnating her, can know as to when exactly did the conception take place. This thing also demands that a few more days be allowed in determining the minimum legal period of pregnancy.

20. That is, O Lord, grant me the grace of such righteous deeds as may conform to Your law in the apparent form as well as be acceptable to You in their actual worth. If an action, however good in the sight of the people, does not conform to obedience to Allah's law, it cannot have any value in the sight of Allah, no matter how highly it is praised by the people. On the contrary, another action which conforms to the Shariah exactly and has no flaw or deficiency in its apparent form, becomes hollow from within, on account of an evil intention, conceit, arrogance and greed of the world, is worthless in the sight of Allah.

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ نَتَقَبَّلُ عَنْهُمْ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا وَنَتَجَاوَزُ عَن سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ فِي أَصْحَابِ الْجَنَّةِ ۖ وَعْدَ الصِّدْقِ الَّذِي كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ 16

(46:16) Such are those from whom We accept their best deeds and whose evil deeds We overlook.[21] They will be among the people of Paradise in consonance with the true promise made to them.

21. That is, their ranks in the Hereafter will be determined by the best deeds they would have done in the world, and their lapses and weaknesses and errors will be overlooked. It is just like a generous and appreciative master who determines the worth of his loyal and obedient servant not by the petty services that he renders but by some work of merit that he might accomplish or a feat of devotion and dedication that he might perform. He will not call his servant to account for his minor shortcomings and overlook his major services.

وَالَّذِیْ قَالَ لِوَالِدَیْهِ اُفٍّ لَّكُمَآ اَتَعِدٰنِنِیْٓ اَنْ اُخْرَجَ وَقَدْ خَلَتِ الْقُرُوْنُ مِنْ قَبْلِیْ ۚ وَهُمَا
یَسْتَغِیْثٰنِ اللّٰهَ وَیْلَكَ اٰمِنْ ۖ اِنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ ۚ فَیَقُوْلُ مَا هٰذَآ اِلَّآ اَسَاطِیْرُ
الْاَوَّلِیْنَ 17

(46:17) But he who says to his parents: "Fie on you! Do you threaten me that I shall be resurrected, although myriad generations have passed away before me (and not one of them was resurrected)?" The parents beseech Allah (and say to their child): "Woe to you, have faith. Surely Allah's promise is true." But he says: "All this is nothing but fables of olden times."

اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِیْنَ حَقَّ عَلَیْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ فِیْٓ اُمَمٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ
كَانُوْا خٰسِرِیْنَ 18

(46:18) It is against such that Allah's sentence (of punishment) has become due. They will join the communities of humans and jinn that have preceded them. Verily all of them will court utter loss.[22]

22. Here, two types of the character have been placed side by side and the listeners are asked the silent question as to which of them is better. At that time both these types of character practically existed in the society, and it was not at all difficult for the people to know where they could find the first type of the character and where the second. This is the answer to this saying of the chiefs of the Quraish: If it had been any good to believe in this Book, these few youngsters and slaves would not have believed in it before they did. In the light of this answer everyone could see for himself as to what was the character of the believers and what of the unbelievers.

وَلِكُلٍّ دَرَجٰتٌ مِّمَّا عَمِلُوْا ۚ وَلِیُوَفِّیَهُمْ اَعْمَالَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَا یُظْلَمُوْنَ 19

(46:19) Of these all have ranks according to their deeds so that Allah may fully recompense them for their deeds. They shall not be wronged.[23]

23. That is, neither will the good deeds and sacrifices of the good people be lost, nor the evildoers will be awarded a greater punishment than what they will actually deserve. If a good man is deprived of his reward and receives a lesser reward than what is actually his due, it is injustice. Likewise, if an evildoer is not punished appropriately for his evil deeds, or receives a greater punishment than deserved, it is also injustice.

وَيَوْمَ يُعْرَضُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا عَلَى النَّارِ ؕ اَذْهَبْتُمْ طَيِّبٰتِكُمْ فِيْ حَيَاتِكُمُ الدُّنْيَا
وَاسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهَا ۚ فَالْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ الْهُوْنِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ
الْحَقِّ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَفْسُقُوْنَ ع 20

(46:20) And on the Day when the unbelievers will be exposed to the Fire, they will be told: "You have exhausted your share of the bounties in the life of the world, and you took your fill of enjoyments. So, degrading chastisement shall be yours on this Day for you waxed arrogant in the earth without justification and acted iniquitously."[24]

24. "Punishment of humiliation", because of the arrogance that they showed. They thought they were big people and it was below their dignity to believe in the Messenger and join the poor and indigent believers. They were involved in the false pride that if the big people like them would believe in a thing which a few slaves and poor men had believed in, they would incur infamy. That is why Allah will disgrace them in the Hereafter and will destroy their pride.

وَاذْكُرْ اَخَا عَادٍ ؕ اِذْ اَنْذَرَ قَوْمَهٗ بِالْاَحْقَافِ وَقَدْ خَلَتِ النُّذُرُ مِنْۢ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهٖۤ
اَلَّا تَعْبُدُوْۤا اِلَّا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنِّيْۤ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ 21

(46:21) Recount to them the story of (Hud), the brother of (the tribe of) 'Ad. Hud warned his people beside the sand-dunes[25] and there have been other warners before him and since his time saying: "Serve none but Allah. Verily I fear that the chastisement of an awesome day shall come upon you."

25. As the chiefs of the Quraish had a false pride of their superiority and exulted in their wealth and prosperity, the story of Aad is being related to them about whom it was well known that they had been the mightiest people in Arabia.

Literally, Ahqaf (pl. of hiqf) are long dunes of sand less in height than mountains, but technically it is a name given to the southern-western part of the Arabian desert (Ar- Rubul-khali) which is wholly un-inhabited.

Ibn Ishaq says that the territory of Aad extended from Oman to Yaman, and the Quran tells us that they actually belonged to Al- Ahqaf from where they spread to the adjoining lands and subdued weak nations. 125 miles to the north of the present-day city of Makkah there is a place in Hadramaut, where the people have built a tomb to the Prophet Houd, and the place is well known as the grave of Houd. A religious festival is held there on the 15th of Shaban and thousands of people from different parts of Arabia gather there annually. Although it is not historically established, the grave's being built there and the southern

Arabs' visiting it in large numbers is at least a proof that local tradition regards this very territory as the land of Aad. Besides, there are several ruins in Hadramaut which the natives still call by the name of Dar-Aad (Abode of Aad).

From the present condition of Al-Ahqaf, no one can even imagine that this land might have been the home of a mighty people boasting of magnificent civilization. Probably it was a green and fertile land thousands of years ago, and then the change of climate might have turned it into a sandy desert. Today it is a vast, wind-swept desert, and no one can dare go into its interior. In 1843 A.D. a Bavarian soldier was able to reach its southern edge. He says that if one looks down from the northern plateau of Hadramaut one can see this desert about a thousand feet in the depression. Here and there in it there are white areas where if a thing falls it goes on sinking into the sand and decays. The Arab Beduins fear this land and are never willing to step into it at any cost. Once when the Bedouins were not ready to take him there, he went by himself. He says that the sand there is very fine powder, and when he threw a plummet into it from a distance, it sank into it within five minutes and the end of the line to which it was attached, also decayed.

For detailed information, see:

Arabia and The Isles, Harold Ingrams, London, 1946.

The Unveiling of Arabia, R H. Kirnan, London, 1937.

The Empty Quarter. Philby. London, 1933.

قَالُوْٓا اَجِئْتَنَا لِتَاْفِكَنَا عَنْ اٰلِهَتِنَا ۚ فَاْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَآ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ 22

(46:22) They said: "Have you come to us to turn us away from our gods? Then, bring upon us the scourge that you threaten us with. Do so if you are truthful."

قَالَ اِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ۖ وَاُبَلِّغُكُمْ مَّآ اُرْسِلْتُ بِهٖ وَلٰكِنِّيْٓ اَرٰىكُمْ قَوْمًا تَجْهَلُوْنَ 23

(46:23) He replied: "Allah alone knows about this.[26] I only convey to you the Message that I have been sent with. But I see that you are an ignorant people."[27]

26. That is, Allah alone knows as to when the torment will descend on you and for how long you will be granted respite.

27. That is, you are taking my warning as a joke in your ignorance and are demanding the torment for fun. You have no idea of how dreadful is God's torment and how near at hand it might have approached because of your misdeeds.

فَلَمَّا رَاَوْهُ عَارِضًا مُّسْتَقْبِلَ اَوْدِيَتِهِمْ ۙ قَالُوْا هٰذَا عَارِضٌ مُّمْطِرُنَا ؕ بَلْ هُوَ مَا
اسْتَعْجَلْتُمْ بِهٖ ۚ رِيْحٌ فِيْهَا عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ۙ 24

(46:24) When they saw the scourge advancing towards their valleys, they said: "This is a cloud that will bring much rain to us." "By no means;[28] it is what you had sought to hasten a wind-storm bearing a grievous chastisement

28. Here, there is no indication as to who gave them this answer. However, the style shows explicitly that this was the answer they were given by the existing conditions. They thought it was a cloud which was coming to give rain to their valleys, but in reality it was a windstorm that was coming on to completely exterminate them.

تُدَمِّرُ كُلَّ شَىْءٍۭ بِاَمْرِ رَبِّهَا فَاَصْبَحُوْا لَا يُرٰٓى اِلَّا مَسٰكِنُهُمْ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْقَوْمَ
الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ 25

(46:25) that will destroy everything by the command of its Lord." Thereafter nothing was left to be seen except their dwellings. Thus do We requite the wrong-doers.[29]

29. For the details of the story of Aad, see (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 65-72); (Surah Houd, Ayats 50-60); (Surah Al- Muminun, Ayats 31-41); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 123-140); (Surah Al-Ankabut, Ayat 40); (Surah HaMim-AsSajdah, Ayats 15-16 and the corresponding E.Ns).

وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنّٰهُمْ فِيْمَاۤ اِنْ مَّكَّنّٰكُمْ فِيْهِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ سَمْعًا وَّاَبْصَارًا وَّاَفْـِٕدَةً ۖ فَمَاۤ اَغْنٰى
عَنْهُمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَلَاۤ اَبْصَارُهُمْ وَلَاۤ اَفْـِٕدَتُهُمْ مِّنْ شَىْءٍ اِذْ كَانُوْا يَجْحَدُوْنَ ۙ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ
وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ۧ 26

(46:26) We had established them firmly in a manner We have not established you.[30] We had given them ears and eyes and hearts. But nothing availed them neither their ears, nor their eyes, nor their hearts, for they denied the Signs of Allah.[31] Then what they had mocked at encompassed them.

30. That is, you are no match for them as far as wealth, power, authority and other things are concerned: your sphere of authority is restricted to the bounds of the city of Makkah, but they had dominated a large part of the earth.

31. An important truth has been stated in this brief sentence. It is only the revelations of Allah which give the right knowledge and understanding of the truth and reality to man. If man has this understanding and knowledge he sees the right thing with his eyes, hears the right thing with his ears, thinks the right thing with his mind and intellect and takes the right decisions. But when he refuses to believe in the revelations of Allah, he fails to see the truth in spite of the eyes, becomes deaf to every word of admonition in spite of the ears, and misuses the blessings of the mind and intellect that God has granted him, and goes on drawing wrong conclusions one after the other, so much so that he starts using all his capabilities for his own destruction.

وَلَقَدْ اَهْلَكْنَا مَا حَوْلَكُمْ مِّنَ الْقُرٰى وَصَرَّفْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ 27

(46:27) Surely We destroyed many a town around you. We sent Our Messages to them repeatedly and in diverse forms that they may eschew (their evil ways) and return (to Allah).

فَلَوْلَا نَصَرَهُمُ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ قُرْبَانًا اٰلِهَةً ؕ بَلْ ضَلُّوْا عَنْهُمْ ۚ وَذٰلِكَ

اِفْكُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ 28

(46:28) So why did those whom they had set up as gods apart from Allah, hoping that they would bring them nearer to Him, not come to their aid?[32] Instead, they failed them. This was the end of the lie they had fabricated and the false beliefs they had invented.

32. That is, they had put faith in those things in the beginning with the idea that they were favorite servants of God and through them they would attain nearness to Him, but then gradually they made them their gods. They started invoking them for help; they formed the belief that they had the powers to change their destinies and could answer their prayers and remove their hardships. To deliver them from this error Allah sent His revelations through His Messengers over and over again in different ways to bring them to the right path, but they persisted in the worship of their gods, and continued to insist that they would still invoke them instead of Allah. Now consider this: When the torment of Allah visited these polytheists because of their deviation, where had their redressers of grievances and removers of hardships disappeared? Why didn't they come to their rescue at the time of affliction?

وَاِذْ صَرَفْنَآ اِلَيْكَ نَفَرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ يَسْتَمِعُوْنَ الْقُرْاٰنَ ۚ فَلَمَّا حَضَرُوْهُ قَالُوْٓا اَنْصِتُوْا ۚ فَلَمَّا

قُضِيَ وَلَّوْا اِلٰى قَوْمِهِمْ مُّنْذِرِيْنَ 29

(46:29) And call to mind when We sent to you a party of the jinn that they may listen to the Qur'an.[33] When they reached the place (where you were reciting the Qur'an), they said to one another: "Be silent (and listen)." And when the recitation ended, they went back to their people as warners.

33. The traditions that have been related from Abdullah bin Masud, Zubair, Abdullah bin Abbas, Hasan Basri, Saeed bin Jubair, Zarr bin Hubaish, Mujahid, Ikrimah and others in connection with the commentary of this verse concur that this incident of the first visit of the jinns, which has been mentioned in this verse, had occurred in the valley of Nakhlah. And according to Ibn Ishaq, Abu Nuaim Isfahaini and Waqidi, this incident occurred during the Prophet's (peace be upon him) return journey from Taif to Makkah. On the way, when he halted at Nakhlah, and was reciting the Quran in the Isha or the Fajr or the Tahajjud Prayer, a group of the jinns happened to pass by and stopped to listen to him. In this connection, all the traditions agree that on this occasion the jinns did not appear before the Prophet (peace be upon him), nor did he feel their presence, but Allah informed him afterwards by revelation that they had come and listened to the Quranic recitation.

The place where this incident took place was either Az- Zaimah or AsSayl-ul-Kabir, for both these places are situated in the valley of Nakhlah and at both water is available and are green; if the travelers from Taif have to halt in this valley, they can halt at either of the places.

قَالُوْا يٰقَوْمَنَآ اِنَّا سَمِعْنَا كِتٰبًا اُنْزِلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مُوْسٰى مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ يَهْدِيْٓ اِلَى الْحَقِّ وَاِلٰى طَرِيْقٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ 30

(46:30) They said: "Our people, We have heard a Scripture revealed after Moses, verifying the Scriptures revealed before it; it guides to the Truth and to the Straight Way.[34]

34. This shows that these jinns had already had faith in the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and in the divine Books. After hearing the Quran they felt that it gave the same teachings as the former Prophets had been preaching. Therefore, they believed in this Book forthwith and also in the Prophet (peace be upon him) who had brought it.

يٰقَوْمَنَآ اَجِيْبُوْا دَاعِيَ اللّٰهِ وَاٰمِنُوْا بِهٖ يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُنُوْبِكُمْ وَيُجِرْكُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ 31

(46:31) Our people, respond to the call of him who calls you to Allah and believe in him. Allah will forgive your sins and will protect you from a grievous chastisement."[35]

35. Authentic traditions show that after this several deputations of the jinns visited the Prophet (peace be upon him), one after the other, and met him face to face. When all the

traditions related in the collections of Hadith on this subject are read together, it appears that at least six deputations had visited him in Makkah before the Hijrah.

About one of these deputations, Abdullah bin Masud relates: One day the Prophet (peace be upon him) remained missing from Makkah for the whole night. We could not know his whereabouts and feared he might have been attacked by somebody. Early in the morning we saw him coming from the direction of Hira. On inquiring he said that a jinn had come to invite him and he had accompanied him and recited the Quran to a gathering of them there. (Muslim, Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Abu Daud).

Abdullah bin Masud has related another tradition, saying: Once the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked his companions in Makkah as to which of them would accompany him that night to meet the jinns. I became ready to go with him. At a place in the upper quarters of Makkah the Prophet (peace be upon him) drew a line and told me not to cross it. Then he went forward and stood and began to recite the Quran. I saw that a number of the people had gathered around him and they stood between me and him. (Ibn Jarir, Baihaqi: Dalail an-Nubuwwat, Abu Nuaim Isfahani: Dalail an-Nubuwuat).

On another occasion also during the night Abdullah bin Masud was with the Prophet (peace be upon him) when he decided a case of the jinns at Hajun in Makkah. Many years later Ibn Masud saw a group of the villagers at Kufa and said that the group of the jinns he had seen at Hajun closely resembled those people. (Ibn Jarir).

وَمَنْ لَّا يُجِبْ دَاعِيَ اللّٰهِ فَلَيْسَ بِمُعْجِزٍ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلَيْسَ لَهٗ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اَوْلِيَآءُ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ 32

(46:32) And[36] he who does not respond to the one who calls to Allah will not be able to frustrate Him on earth, nor will they have anyone to protect them from Allah. Such people are in manifest error.

36. This sentence might also be a part of the saying of the jinns, or it might be an addition by Allah to their saying. In view of the context the second view seems to be more reasonable.

اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَلَمْ يَعْيَ بِخَلْقِهِنَّ بِقٰدِرٍ عَلٰٓى اَنْ يُّحْيِۦَ الْمَوْتٰى ؕ بَلٰٓى اِنَّهٗ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ 33

(46:33) Do they not see that Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth and creating them did not wear Him out has the power to bring the dead back to life? Why not! He certainly has the power over everything.

وَيَوْمَ يُعْرَضُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا عَلَى النَّارِ ؕ اَلَيْسَ هٰذَا بِالْحَقِّ ؕ قَالُوْا بَلٰى وَرَبِّنَا ؕ قَالَ فَذُوْقُوا
الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ 34

(46:34) On the Day when the unbelievers will be brought within sight of the Fire, they will be asked: "Is this not the Truth?" and they will answer "Yes, by Our Lord (this is the Truth)." Allah will say: "Then suffer the chastisement as a requital for your disbelieving."

فَاصْبِرْ كَمَا صَبَرَ اُولُوا الْعَزْمِ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ وَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلْ لَّهُمْ ؕ كَاَنَّهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ مَا
يُوْعَدُوْنَ ۙ لَمْ يَلْبَثُوْٓا اِلَّا سَاعَةً مِّنْ نَّهَارٍ ؕ بَلٰغٌ ۚ فَهَلْ يُهْلَكُ اِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ع 35

(46:35) So bear with patience, (O Prophet), even as the Messengers endowed with firmness of resolve[37] (before you) bore with patience, and do not be hasty in their regard. The Day when they see what they had been warned against they will feel as though they had remained in the world no more than an hour of a day. (The Truth has been conveyed.) Will any, then, suffer perdition except those who disobey?

37. That is, just as the Prophets before you went on enduring with patience and ceaseless struggle the indifference, opposition, resistance and persecutions of their people for years, so should you also do the same, and do not entertain the idea that either the people should believe in you immediately or if they do not believe, Allah should visit them with His torment.

47. Surah Muhammad (The Praised One)

Name

The Surah derives its name from the sentence wa amanu bi-ma nuzzila ala Muhammad-in of verse 2, thereby implying that it is the Surah in which the holy name of Muhammad (upon wham be Allah's peace and blessings) has occurred. Besides, it has another well known name "al-Qital" also, which is derived from the sentence wa dhukira fi-hal-qital of verse 20.

Period of Revelation

The contents of this Surah testify that it was sent down after the hijrah at Madinah at the time when the fighting had been enjoined, though active fighting had not yet been undertaken. Detailed arguments in support of this view have been given in E. N. 8 below.

Historical Background

The conditions at the time when this Surah was sent down were such that the Muslims were being made the target of persecution and tyranny in Makkah in particular and in Arabia in general, and life had become miserable for them. Although the Muslims had emigrated to the haven of Madinah from every side, the disbelieving Quraish were not prepared to leave them alone and let them live in peace even there. Thus, the small settlement of Madinah was hemmed in by the enemy, who was bent upon exterminating it completely. The only alternative left with the Muslims were that either they should surrender to the forces of ignorance, giving up their mission of preaching the true Faith, or even following it in their private lives, or should rise to wage a war at the cost of their lives to settle finally and for ever whether Islam would stay in Arabia or the creed of ignorance. On this occasion Allah showed the Muslims the same way of resolution and will, which is the only way for the true believers. He first permitted them to fight in Surah Al Hajj 39 and then enjoined fighting in Al Baqarah 190. But at that time everyone knew fully well what it meant to wage a war in those conditions. There were only a handful of Muslims in Madinah, who could not muster even a thousand soldiers; yet they were being urged to take up the sword and clash against the pagan forces of the whole of Arabia. Then the kind of the weapons needed to equip its soldiers for war could hardly be afforded by the town in which hundreds of emigrants were still homeless and unsettled even by resort to starving its members at a time when it had been boycotted economically by the Arabs on all sides.

Theme and Subject Matter

Such were the conditions when this Surah was revealed. Its theme is to prepare the believers for war and to give them preliminary instructions in this regard. That is why it has also been entitled al-Qital. It deals with the following topics:

At the outset it is said that of the two groups confronting each other at this time, one has refused to accept the Truth and has become an obstruction for others on the way of Allah, while the other group has accepted the Truth which had been sent down by Allah to His servant, Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings). Now, Allah's final

decision is that He has rendered fruitless and vain all the works of the former group and set right the condition and affairs of the latter group.

After this, the Muslims have been given the initial war instructions they have been reassured of Allah's help and guidance: they have been given hope for the best rewards on offering sacrifices in the cause of Allah and they have been assured that their struggle in the cause of the Truth will not go to waste, but they will be abundantly rewarded both in this world and in the Hereafter.

Furthermore, about the disbelievers it has been said that they are deprived of Allah's support and guidance: none of their designs will succeed in their conflict with the believers, and they will meet a most evil fate both in this world and in the Hereafter. They thought they had achieved a great success by driving the Prophet of Allah out of Makkah, but in fact by this they had hastened their own doom.

After this, the discourse turns to the hypocrites, who were posing to be sincere Muslims before the command to fight was sent down, but were confounded when this command actually came down, and began to conspire with the disbelievers in order to save themselves from the hazards of war. They have been plainly warned to the effect that no act and deed is acceptable to Allah of those who adopt hypocrisy with regard to Him and His Prophet. There, the basic issue against which all those who profess the Faith are being tried is whether one is on the side of the Truth or Falsehood, whether one's sympathies are with Islam and the Muslims or with disbelief and the disbelievers, whether one keeps one's own self and interests dearer or the Truth which one professes to believe in and follow. One who fails in this test is not at all a believer; his Prayer and his Fasting and his discharging of the zakat deserve no reward from Allah.

Then the Muslims have been exhorted not to lose heart for being small in numbers and ill equipped as against the great strength of the disbelievers: they should not show weakness by offering peace to them, which might still further embolden them against Islam and the Muslims, but they should come out with trust in Allah and clash with the mighty forces of disbelief. Allah is with the Muslims: they alone shall triumph; and the might of disbelief will be humbled and vanquished.

In conclusion, the Muslims have been invited to spend their wealth in the cause of Allah. Although at that time they were economically very weak, the problem that they confronted was the very survival of Islam and the Muslims. The importance and delicacy of the problem demanded that the Muslims should not only risk their lives for safeguarding themselves and their Faith from the dominance of disbelief and for exalting Allah's Religion but should also expend their economic resources as far as possible in the preparations for war. Therefore, they were clearly warned to the effect. Anyone who adopted a niggardly attitude at the time, would not, in fact, harm Allah at all, but would result in his own destruction, for Allah does not stand in need of help from men. If one group of men shirked offering sacrifices in the cause of His Religion, Allah would remove it and bring another group in its place.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اَلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اَضَلَّ اَعْمَالَهُمْ 1

(47:1) Allah has caused the works of those who disbelieve[1] and hinder people from the way of Allah[2] to go to waste.[3]

1. Those who disbelieved: Those who refused to accept the teachings and guidance presented by Muhammad (peace be upon him).

2. The verb sadd (from which saddu of the original is derived) is used both as a transitive and as an intransitive verb in Arabic.

Therefore, the sentence would mean "they themselves refrained from adopting Allah's Way" as well as "they prevented others from adopting this way." There are several ways of preventing others from adopting Allah's Way:

(1) That one should forcibly prevent another from believing.

(2) That one should so persecute the believers that it should become difficult for them to remain steadfast on the faith and for others to embrace the faith in view of the dreadful conditions.

(3) That one should mislead the people against the religion and its followers in different ways and create doubts in the hearts so that the people may become suspicious of the religion itself. Besides, every disbeliever prevents others from the way of Allah in the sense that he brings up his children on the way of disbelief, and then it becomes difficult for his future generation to give up the ancestral faith and accept Islam. Likewise, every unbelieving society is an obstruction to the Way of Allah, for it creates obstacles in the way of the progress of the faith by its system of education and training, its government and its customs and prejudices.

3. The words adalla aamala-hum (led their deeds astray, let them go to waste) are very comprehensive in meaning. Their one meaning is: Allah deprived them of the grace that their efforts and their labors should be spent in the right way. Now, whatever they do, they will do that for wrong aims and objects in wrong ways. All their endeavors will be directed to the way of error and deviation instead of guidance. Their second meaning is: The works that they have been performing as pious deeds, e.g. guardianship of the Kabah, entertaining the guests, treating the kindred well and such other works, which are counted among religious services and noble actions morally, were rendered fruitless by Allah. They will get no reward for them, for when they refuse to accept Tauhid and to adopt the way of Allah's service and worship and also stop others from adopting Islam, none of their works can be acceptable to Allah. The third meaning is Allah rendered fruitless and vain the efforts they were making to obstruct the way of the truth and to keep their creed of disbelief alive in Arabia as against the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). All their designs and endeavors now are aimless, they will never attain their goals by these designs.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَاٰمَنُوْا بِمَا نُزِّلَ عَلٰى مُحَمَّدٍ وَّهُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ۙ كَفَّرَ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّاٰتِهِمْ وَاَصْلَحَ بَالَهُمْ 2

(47:2) As for those who attained to faith and did righteous works and believed in what was revealed to Muhammad[4] which indeed is the Truth from their Lord[5] Allah has remitted their evil deeds and has set their condition right.[6]

4. Although after saying alladhina amanu (those who believed) there was no need to say wa amanu bima nuzzila ala Muhammad-in (and accepted that which has been sent down to Muhammad), for belief by itself implies believing in the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and in the teachings sent down to him, yet making a separate mention of it is particularly meant to assert this. After the appointment of Muhammad (peace be upon him) to Prophethood, a person's belief in Allah and the Hereafter and the former Messengers and the Books cannot be beneficial until he also believes in him and the teachings brought by him. This explanation was necessary because after the emigration, the Muslims had also to deal with those people, who recognized and accepted all the requirements of the faith but refused to acknowledge and accept the Prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

5. This has two meanings:

(1) That Allah wiped off from their record all those sins which they had happened to commit in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance. Now, they will not at all be held accountable for them.

(2) That Allah removed from them the evils of creed, thought, morals and action in which they were involved. Now their minds were changed, their creed and ideas were changed. Now there was faith in their hearts instead of ignorance, and righteous acts instead of the immoral evil.

6. This also has two meanings:

(1) That Allah changed their previous condition and put them on the right path and improved and bettered their lives for them.

(2) That Allah has taken them out of the condition of weakness and helplessness and oppression in which they were placed till then. Now He has created for them such conditions in which instead of being persecuted they will defend themselves against the oppressors. Instead of living as subjects, they will now live and order their lives as free people, and will have the upper hand instead of being subdued and suppressed.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوا اتَّبَعُوا الْبَاطِلَ وَاَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّبَعُوا الْحَقَّ مِنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ؕ
كَذٰلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ اَمْثَالَهُمْ 3

(47:3) That is because those who disbelieved followed falsehood whereas those who believed followed the Truth that came to them from their Lord. Thus does Allah set forth to people parables showing their true state.[7]

7. That is, He makes both the parties aware of their positions. One party insists on following falsehood; therefore, Allah has brought all its endeavors to naught. And the other party has adopted obedience of the Truth; therefore, Allah has purified it of its evils and corrected its condition.

فَاِذَا لَقِيْتُمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا فَضَرْبَ الرِّقَابِ ؕ حَتّٰۤى اِذَاۤ اَثْخَنْتُمُوْهُمْ فَشُدُّوا الْوَثَاقَ ۙ
فَاِمَّا مَنًّا بَعْدُ وَاِمَّا فِدَآءً حَتّٰى تَضَعَ الْحَرْبُ اَوْزَارَهَا ۚ ۛ ذٰلِكَ ۬ؕ وَلَوْ يَشَآءُ اللّٰهُ لَانْتَصَرَ
مِنْهُمْ ۙ وَلٰكِنْ لِّيَبْلُوَا۠ بَعْضَكُمْ بِبَعْضٍ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ قُتِلُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَلَنْ يُّضِلَّ
اَعْمَالَهُمْ 4

(47:4) When you meet the unbelievers (in battle), smite their necks until you have crushed them, then bind your captives firmly; thereafter (you are entitled to) set them free, either by an act of grace, or against ransom, until the war ends.[8] That is for you to do. If Allah had so willed, He would have Himself exacted retribution from them. (But He did not do so) that He may test some of you by means of others.[9] As for those who are slain in the way of Allah, He shall never let their works go to waste.[10]

8. The words of this verse as well as the context in which it occurs clearly show that it was sent down after the revelation of the command for fighting and before the actual fighting began. The words, “So when you meet (in battle) those who disbelieve”, indicate that the fighting has not yet taken place and the Muslims are being instructed that when it does take place, what they should do.

The words of (verse 20)below testify that this Surah was sent down at a time when the command for fighting had already been given in (Surah Al-Hajj, Ayat 39) and (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 190), and the hypocrites of Madinah and the people of the weak faith had been so upset that it seemed as if they were actually facing death.

Besides,(verses 67-69 of the Surah Al-Anfal)also testify that this verse had been sent down before the Battle of Badr. There it has been said:

It does not behoove a Prophet to have captives until he has crushed down the enemies in the land. You desire the gains of this world, but Allah desires the Hereafter, and Allah is All-Powerful, All-Wise. Had not a decree already been issued by Allah, you would have incurred a severe chastisement in consequence of what you have done. So eat of what you have taken as spoils because it is lawful and pure.

A careful study of this passage shows that what had displeased Allah on this occasion was that before crushing down the enemy completely in the Battle of Badr, the Muslims had started taking the enemy soldiers as captives, whereas the instruction given to them in Surah Muhammad before the actual fighting was this: When you have crushed them completely, then bind the captives tight. However, as the Muslims had been permitted, among other things in Surah Muhammad, to accept ransom from the prisoners, Allah declared the money taken from the captives of Badr as lawful and did not punish them for that. The words: Had not the decree already been issued by Allah, are clearly pointing to the fact that the command for permission to accept ransom had already been given in the Quran before this event, and obviously, there is no other verse in the Quran beside this verse of Surah Muhammad, which contains this command. Therefore, it will have to be admitted that this verse had been sent down before the above cited verse of the Surah Al-Anfal (For explanation, see (E.N. 49 on Surah Al-Anfal).

This is the first verse of the Quran in which preliminary instructions have been given about the laws of war. Below is given a resume of the injunctions that are derived from this verse and the Prophet's (peace be upon him) and his companions' practice according to it and the juristic inferences as based on this verse and the Sunnah:

(1) The real aim of the Muslim army in war is to break the fighting power of the enemy until it is crushed and the war lays down its arms. Under no circumstances, should the Muslim's lose sight of this aim and start taking the enemy soldiers as captives. Captives should be taken after the enemy has been completely crushed and its numbers thinned down. The Arabs have been so instructed at the outset lest in the greed for ransom and taking slaves they should forget and overlook the real aim of the war.

(2) About the prisoners taken in war it has been said: You have the option whether you show them favor or accept ransom from them. This gives the general law that the prisoners of war should not be put to death. Abdullah bin Umar, Hasan Basri, Ata and Hammad bin Abi Sulaiman favor this view, which is quite valid. They say that a man can be killed only during the war. When the war is over and one has been made a prisoner, it is not lawful to kill him, Ibn Jarir and Abu Bakr alJassas have related that Hajjaj bin Yousuf handed over one of the prisoners of war to Abdullah bin Umar and commanded him to put him to death. He refused to obey and cited this verse and said: We are not allowed to kill a man when he is a prisoner. Imam Muhammad in As-Siyat al-Kabir also has related that Abdullah bin Amir had commanded Abdullah bin Umar to kill a prisoner of war, and he had refused to obey the command for this reason.

(3) But since in this verse it has neither been clearly forbidden to kill the prisoner, the Prophet (peace be upon him) understood this intention of Allah's command, and also acted accordingly, that if there was a special reason for which the ruler of an Islamic government regarded it as necessary to kill a particular prisoner (or prisoners), he could do so. This is

not the general law, but an exception to it, which would be applied only when necessary. Thus, the Prophet (peace be upon him) put to death only Uqbah bin Abi Muait and Nadr bin al-Harith from among the 70 prisoners taken at Badr, and only the poet Abu Azzah from the prisoners taken at Uhud. Since the Bani Quraizah had surrendered on the condition that they would accept whatever decision Hadrat Saad bin Muadh would give in their regard, and he had decreed that all the males of the Quraizah should be killed, the Prophet (peace be upon him) had them executed. From among the prisoners taken at Khaiber only Kinanah bin Abi al-Huqaiq was put to death because of his violating the agreement. At the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) commanded in respect of only a few particular persons from among all the inhabitants of Makkah that any one of them who was captured should be put to death. Apart from these exceptions, the Prophet (peace be upon him) never killed prisoners of war, and the same also continued to be the practice of the righteous Caliphs. During their times also killing of prisoners of war was rare, which was resorted to only for a special reason. Umar bin Abdul Aziz also during his caliphate put to death only one prisoner of war for the reason that he had persecuted the Muslims very cruelly. On this very basis the majority of the jurists have held the view that the Islamic government can put a prisoner to death if necessary. But it is for the government to take such a decision; a soldier is not permitted to kill any prisoner he likes. However, if there is the danger of a prisoner's running away or of his committing a dangerous mischief, the guard can kill him. In this connection, the jurists of Islam have also made three other points: (a) That if a prisoner accepts Islam, he cannot be killed; (b) that the prisoner can be killed only as long as he is in the government's custody; if he has been allotted to, or given in somebody else's possession by sale, he cannot be killed; and (c) that if the prisoner has to be killed, he should be killed in a straightforward way; he should not be tortured to death.

(4) The general command that has been given about the prisoners of war is: Show them favor, or accept ransom from them. Favor includes four things: (a) That they should be treated well as prisoners; (b) that instead of killing them or keeping them in captivity for lifetime, they should be handed over to the individual Muslims as slaves; (c) that they should be put under jizyah and made dhimmis; and (d) that they should be set free without ransom.

There are three ways of ransoming them: (a) That they should be set free on payment of a ransom; (b) that they should be set free after taking some special service from them; and (c) that they should be exchanged for the Muslim prisoners of war who are in the possession of the enemy. The Prophet (peace be upon him) and the companions at different times acted in one or the other way as the occasion demanded. The divine law has not bound the Islamic government to act in only one particular way. The government can take any action it deems appropriate on a particular occasion.

(5) The practice of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the companions confirms that as long as a prisoner of war is in the government's custody, the government will be responsible for his food and clothing, and his treatment if he is ill or wounded. Islamic law does not permit prisoners to be kept without food or clothing, or be subjected to torture. On the contrary, instructions also have been given to treat them well and generously, and precedents of this very practice are found in the Sunnah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) distributed the prisoners of Badr in the houses of different companions and gave the instruction: Teat these prisoners well. One of those prisoners, Abu Aziz, has reported: The

Ansar Muslims, in whose house I was kept, gave me bread in the morning and the evening, but as for themselves they had only dates to eat. About another prisoner; Suhail bin Amr, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was told: He is a fiery speaker, and has been making speeches against you: please have his teeth broken. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: If I have his teeth broken, Allah will break my teeth, although I am a Prophet. (Ibn Hisham). When Thumamah bin Uthal, the chief of Yamamah, was brought as a prisoner, he was provided with good food and milk on the Prophet's (peace be upon him) orders as long as he remained a captive. (Ibn Hisham). The same was the practice in the time of the companions. No precedent is found when a prisoner might have been mistreated in their time.

(6) Islam has not permitted that the prisoners be kept in captivity forever so that the government may subject them to forced labor as long as it likes. If they are not exchanged for other prisoners of war, or ransomed, the method enjoined of doing them favor is that they should be made slaves and given in possession of individuals, and their masters instructed to treat them well This method was acted upon during the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) as well as of the companions, and the jurists of Islam have unanimously upheld it as permissible. In this regard, it should be borne in mind that a person who might have accepted Islam before being taken as prisoner, and then is somehow made a prisoner, will be set free, but the acceptance of Islam by a person who accepts it after being taken prisoner, or after being given in possession of somebody, will not gain him freedom automatically. A tradition has been related in Musnad Ahmad, Muslim and Tirmidhi on the authority of Imran bin Husain that a person from among the Bani Uqail was brought as a prisoner and he said: I have accepted Islam. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: If you had said this when you were free, you would certainly have attained to success. The same thing was said by Umar: When a prisoner becomes a Muslim after falling into the hands of the Muslims as a captive, he will not be killed, but will remain a slave. Oh this very point, the jurists of Islam have unanimously ruled that the prisoner who becomes a Muslim after being taken captive cannot escape slavery. (Imam Muhammad, As-Siyar al-Kabir). And this also is quite reasonable. If our law had been that anyone, who embraced Islam after being taken a captive, would be set free, no prisoner would be so foolish as not to win his freedom by pronouncing the Kalimah.

(7) The third manner of doing favor with the prisoners according to the law of Islam is that they may be put under jizyah and made dhimmi subjects of the Islamic state and allowed to live as free citizens of dar-al-Islam (abode of Islam) just like the Muslims. Imam Muhammad writes in his As-Siyar alKabir: Any person who can be made a slave, can also be made a dhimmi and put under jizyah. At another place he says: "The ruler of the Muslims has the right to levy jizyah on them and a tax on their lands and set than absolutely free. This method has been practiced generally in the condition when the territory of the people who have been made prisoners, is conquered and annexed to the Islamic state. The Prophet (peace be upon him), for instance, practiced this method in the case of the people of Khaiber, and then Umar followed and practiced it extensively on the conquest of Iraq and other territories. Abu Ubaid writes in his Kitab-al-Amwal: After the conquest of Iraq a deputation of the leading men of that country came before Umar and submitted: O Commander of the Faithful, before this the people of Iran had subdued us: they subjected us to harsh treatment and committed all sorts of excesses against us. Then, when God sent you, we became very

pleased, and we neither put up any resistance against you nor participated in the war. Now, we hear that you want to make us slaves. Umar replied: You have the option either to become Muslims, or accept to pay jizyah and remain free. They agreed to pay the jizyah and they were granted full freedom. At another place in the same book. Abu Ubaid says: Umar wrote to Abu Musa al-Ashari: Set free every farmer and peasant from among the people who have been captured in the war.

(8) The fourth favor is that the prisoner be set free without ransom. This is a special concession that the Islamic government can give only in case the special conditions of a prisoner demand it, or when it is expected that the concession will win the prisoner's gratitude forever, and help turn him a friend from an enemy, or a believer from a disbeliever; otherwise, obviously it would in no way be a wise thing to set free a person of the enemy camp, who could again return to fight the Muslims. This is why the Muslim jurists generally have opposed it, and imposed the condition: If the ruler of the Muslims finds it expedient to set the prisoners, or some of them, free as a favor, there is no harm in doing so. (As-Siyat al-Kabir). Many precedents of this are found in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and in almost every case expediency seems to be the reason.

About the prisoners taken at Badr, he said: If Mutim bin Adi were alive, and had spoken to me in respect of these treacherous people, I would have let them go for his sake. (Bukhari, Abu Daud, Musnad Ahmad). The Prophet (peace be upon him) said this because when he had returned from Taif to Makkah, Mutim at that time had given him refuge, and his armed sons had escorted him to the Kabah. Therefore, he wanted to repay his debt of gratitude in this way.

According to Bukhari, Muslim and Musnad Ahmad, when Thumamah bin Uthal, the chief of Yamamah, was brought as a prisoner, the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked him: Thumamah, what do you say? He replied: If I am killed, then such a one would be killed, whose blood has some value: if I am shown favor, then favor would be shown to a person, who appreciates favor; and if you want wealth, ask for it, you will be given it. For three days the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked him the same thing and he gave the same reply. At last, the Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered that Thumamah be set free. On attaining freedom, he went to a nearby oasis, washed himself and came back, pronounced the kalimah and became a Muslim, saying: Before this day nobody was more detestable than you and no religion more odious than your religion in my sight, but now for me no man is more lovable than you and no religion more lovable than your religion. Then he went to Makkah for Umrah and gave the people of Quraish a notice to the effect: After this no grain will reach you from Yamamah unless Muhammad (peace be upon him) permits it. So, he stopped the grain supply and the people of Makkah had to request the Prophet (peace be upon him) that he should not stop the supply of grain for them from Yamamah.

From among the prisoners of the Bani Quraizah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) forgave Zabir bin Bata and Amr bin Saad (or Ibn Suda), the former because he had given refuge to Thabit bin Qais Ansari in the battle of Buath, in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance; therefore, he handed him over to Thabit that he may repay him for his favor. And he forgave Amr bin Sad because it was he who was exhorting his tribe not to be treacherous when the Bani Quraizah were committing breach of the trust with the Prophet (peace be upon him).

After the Battle of Bani-al-Mustaliq, when the prisoners were brought and distributed among the people, the Prophet (peace be upon him) paid Juwairiyah's ransom to the person to whom she was allotted to secure her freedom and then married her to himself. At this all the Muslims set their own prisoners free, saying: Now they have become the Prophet's relatives. Thus, the prisoners of a hundred families became free. (Musnad Ahmad, Tabaqat Ibn Saad, Ibn Hisham).

On the occasion of the treaty of Hudaibiyah, at about dawn, 80 men came from the direction of Tanim with the intention of launching a sudden attack on the Muslim camp, but were all captured, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) set all of them free lest it became a cause of war on that critical occasion. (Muslim, Abu Daud, Nasai, Tirmidhi, Musnad Ahmad).

At the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) forgave all the people of Makkah except only a few men, and did not kill more than three or four of even those who had been made an exception. The whole of Arabia was well aware of what atrocities the people of Makkah had committed against the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Muslims; yet he forgave them after attaining complete victory over them, gave the Arabs the satisfaction that they had not been overpowered by a tyrant but by a merciful, affectionate and generous leader. That is why after the conquest of Makkah the Arabian peninsula did not take longer than two years to be completely subdued.

After the Battle of Hunain, when the Hawazin deputation came to secure the freedom of their prisoners, the prisoners had already been distributed. The Prophet (peace be upon him) called the Muslims together and said: These people have come with repentance, and I am of the opinion that their men should be returned to them. He who would like to set the prisoner allotted to him free willingly without ransom, should set him free, and the one who would like to take ransom, shall be paid it out of the first income that is received in the Public Treasury. Thus, six thousand prisoners were set free, and those who wanted to take ransom, were given it by the government. (Bukhari, Abu Daud, Musnad Ahmad, Tabaqat Ibn Saad). This also shows that the government is not authorized to set the prisoners free after they have been distributed; this can be done by the willing approval of those in whose possession the prisoners have been given, or by paying them the ransom.

After the Prophet (peace be upon him), precedents of setting the prisoners free as a favor continue to be found throughout the period of the companions also. Abu Bakr set free Ashath bin Qais al-Kindi and Umar granted freedom to Hurmuzan and the prisoners of Manadhir and Maisan. (Abu Ubaid, Kitab alAmwal).

(9) The precedent of setting the prisoners free on payment of the ransom in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is found only on the occasion of Badr, when the prisoners were set free on payment of one thousand to four thousand dirhams each. (Tabaqat Ibn Saad, Kitab al- Amwal). No precedent of this is found in the time of the companions; and the jurists of Islam have generally disapproved it, for it means that we should take money and set a man free so that he may again rise against us with the sword. But since taking of ransom has been permitted in the Quran, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) also acted according to it once, it is not absolutely forbidden. Imam Muhammad writes in his As-Siyar al-Kabir that if the need arises the Muslims can free their prisoners on payment of the ransom.

(10) The criterion of freeing a prisoner for a service rendered is also found in connection with the battle of Badr. For those of the Quraish prisoners who had no ransom the Prophet (peace be upon him) imposed the condition that they should teach reading and writing to ten Ansar children each to win their freedom. (Musnad Ahmad, Tabaqat Ibn Saad, Kitab al-Amwal).

(11) Several instances of the exchange of prisoners are found in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Once he dispatched Abu Bakr on an expedition and he brought some captives, including a beautiful woman, who fell to the lot of Salamah bin Akwa. The Prophet urged him to give her back, then sent her to Makkah and had several Muslim prisoners released, in exchange for her. (Muslim, Abu Daud, Tahawi Kitab al-Amwal of Abi Ubaid, Tabaqat Ibn Saad). Imran bin Husain relates that once the tribe of Thaqif arrested two men of the Muslims. Some time later, a man of the Bani Uqail, who were allies of the Thaqif, was arrested by the Muslims. The Prophet (peace be upon him) sent him to Taif and got both the Muslims released in exchange for him. (Muslim, Tirmidhi, Musnad Ahmad). From among the jurists Imam Abu Yusuf, Imam Muhammad, Imam Shafai, Imam Malik and Imam Ahmad hold the exchange of the prisoners as permissible. A ruling of Imam Abu Hanifah is that exchange should not be practiced, but according to another ruling of his exchange can be practiced. However, there is a consensus that the prisoner who becomes a Muslim should not be handed over to the disbelievers for the purpose of exchange.

This explanation makes it abundantly clear that Islam has formulated a comprehensive code in respect of the prisoners of war, which contains provision for this problem in every age under all sorts of conditions. Those people who take this Quranic verse in its simple meaning that the prisoners of war should either be shown favor and set free or freed for ransom, do not know what different aspects the question of the prisoners of war has, and what problems it has been creating in different ages and can create in the future.

9. That is, if Allah had only wanted to crush the worshipers of falsehood, He did not stand in need of your help for this. He could have done this through an earthquake or a tempest in no time, But what He wills is that the followers of the truth among the people should enter into a conflict with the worshipers of falsehood and fight against them so that the qualities and characteristics of each are brought out clearly by means of the test and each is given the place and rank that he deserves according to his conduct.

10. It means this: A person's being slain in the way of Allah does not mean that he lost his life and as far as his person was concerned, all his lifework was wasted. It is wrong to think that the sacrifices of the martyrs are not beneficial for themselves but only for those who live after them in the world, and take advantage of their sacrifices. The fact is that even for the martyrs themselves it is a bargain of profit, not of loss at all.

سَيَهْدِيهِمْ وَيُصْلِحُ بَالَهُمْ ۚ 5

(47:5) He will guide them and set their condition right

وَيُدۡخِلُهُمُ الۡجَنَّةَ عَرَّفَهَا لَهُمۡ 6

(47:6) and will admit them to Paradise with which He has acquainted them.[11]

11. This is the profit that the martyrs falling in the way of Allah will gain. Its three grades have been stated:

(1) That Allah will guide them.

(2) That He will set their condition right.

(3) That He will admit them into the Paradise with which He has acquainted them beforehand.

Guidance here obviously implies guiding to Paradise; setting the condition right implies that before their entry into Paradise, Allah will adorn them with robes of honor and remove every filth which had polluted them in the life of the world; and the third stage means that even in this world they have been told through the Quran and the Prophet (peace be upon him) what kind of Paradise it is that has been prepared for them. When they enter that Paradise they will enter a place with which they will already be familiar and they will come to know that they have been blessed precisely with the same that had been promised to them in the world.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اِنۡ تَنۡصُرُوا اللّٰهَ يَنۡصُرۡكُمۡ وَيُثَبِّتۡ اَقۡدَامَكُمۡ 7

(47:7) Believers, if you aid Allah, He will come to your aid[12] and will plant your feet firmly.

12. If you help Allah: If you participate in the work of raising Allah's Word with your life and wealth. But this has a deeper meaning too, which we have explained in (E.N. 50 of Surah Aal-Imran). 8

وَالَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا فَتَعۡسًا لَّهُمۡ وَاَضَلَّ اَعۡمَالَهُمۡ 8

(47:8) As to those who disbelieve, perdition lies in store for them[13] and Allah has reduced their works to nought.

13. Literally, to stumble and fall down on the face.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمۡ كَرِهُوۡا مَاۤ اَنۡزَلَ اللّٰهُ فَاَحۡبَطَ اَعۡمَالَهُمۡ 9

(47:9) That was because they were averse to what Allah had revealed;[14] so He let their works go to waste.

14. That is, they preferred the whims, superstitions, customs and moral perversion of their former ignorance and did not like the teaching that Allah had revealed to guide them to the right way.

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ ۖ دَمَّرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ أَمْثَالُهَا 10

(47:10) Have they not journeyed through the land to see the end of those who went before them? Allah utterly destroyed them. These unbelievers are doomed to the same end.[15]

15. This sentence has two meanings:

(1) The same destruction that was met by those disbelievers now awaits these disbelievers, who are not accepting the invitation of Muhammad (peace be upon him).

(2) The ruin of those people does not end with the torment of the world; the same doom also awaits them in the Hereafter.

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ مَوْلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَأَنَّ الْكَافِرِينَ لَا مَوْلَىٰ لَهُمْ ۗ 11

(47:11) That is because Allah is the Protector of the believers whereas the unbelievers have none to protect them.[16]

16. After being wounded at Uhud when the Prophet (peace be upon him) was resting in a hill pass with a few companions, Abu Sufyan shouted: We have Uzza and there is no Uzza for you. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) told his companions to respond, saying: Our Protector and helper is Allah, and you have no protector and helper at all. This reply of the Prophet (peace be upon him) was derived from this very verse.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ۖ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَتَمَتَّعُونَ وَيَأْكُلُونَ كَمَا تَأْكُلُ الْأَنْعَامُ وَالنَّارُ مَثْوًى لَّهُمْ 12

(47:12) Allah shall admit those who believe and do righteous works to the Gardens beneath which rivers flow. As for the unbelievers, they enjoy the pleasures of this transient life and eat as cattle eat.[17] The Fire shall be their resort.

17. That is, just as an animal eats and does not think where from the food it eats has come, who has created it, and what rights of the creator are imposed on it for providing it with food, so are these people also eating and have no higher values or ideals beyond eating.

وَكَاَيِّنۡ مِّنۡ قَرۡيَةٍ هِىَ اَشَدُّ قُوَّةً مِّنۡ قَرۡيَتِكَ الَّتِىۡۤ اَخۡرَجَتۡكَ ۚ اَهۡلَكۡنٰهُمۡ فَلَا نَاصِرَ
لَهُمۡ 13

(47:13) (O Prophet), how many are the cities that had greater power than your city that drove you out? We destroyed them and there was none to protect them.[18]

18. The Prophet (peace be upon him) was sorely distressed on leaving Makkah. When he was compelled to emigrate, he had stood facing the city outside it and said: O Makkah, you are the most beloved city in the sight of Allah, and I have the greatest love for you out of all the cities of Allah. If the polytheists had not driven me out, I would never have left you. About this it has been said: After driving you out of the city the people of Makkah think that they have achieved a great success, whereas, in fact, they have hastened only their own ruin by this evil act. The style of the verse clearly indicates that it must have been revealed soon after the Hijrah.

اَفَمَنۡ كَانَ عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنۡ رَّبِّهٖ كَمَنۡ زُيِّنَ لَهٗ سُوۡٓءُ عَمَلِهٖ وَاتَّبَعُوۡۤا اَهۡوَآءَهُمۡ 14

(47:14) Then, can he, who is on a Clear Guidance from His Lord, be like him whose evil deeds have been embellished to him, and who pursued their lusts?[19]

19. That is, how is it possible that when the Prophet and his followers have been guided by God to a clear and straight path and they have started following it in the light of full knowledge and vision, they should walk along, with those who are still persisting in their ways of ignorance, who regard their deviation as guidance and their evildoing as a praiseworthy thing, and who judge on the basis of their personal desires, and not by argument as to what is the truth and what is falsehood. Now, neither can the lives of these two groups be alike in this world nor can their end be alike in the Hereafter.

مَثَلُ الۡجَنَّةِ الَّتِىۡ وُعِدَ الۡمُتَّقُوۡنَ ؕ فِيۡهَاۤ اَنۡهٰرٌ مِّنۡ مَّآءٍ غَيۡرِ اٰسِنٍ ۚ وَاَنۡهٰرٌ مِّنۡ لَّبَنٍ لَّمۡ يَتَغَيَّرۡ
طَعۡمُهٗ ۚ وَاَنۡهٰرٌ مِّنۡ خَمۡرٍ لَّذَّةٍ لِّلشّٰرِبِيۡنَ ۚ وَاَنۡهٰرٌ مِّنۡ عَسَلٍ مُّصَفًّى ؕ وَلَهُمۡ فِيۡهَا مِنۡ كُلِّ
الثَّمَرٰتِ وَمَغۡفِرَةٌ مِّنۡ رَّبِّهِمۡ ؕ كَمَنۡ هُوَ خَالِدٌ فِى النَّارِ وَسُقُوۡا مَآءً حَمِيۡمًا فَقَطَّعَ
اَمۡعَآءَهُمۡ 15

(47:15) Here is the parable of Paradise which the God-fearing have been promised: in it shall be rivers of incorruptible water,[20] rivers of milk unchanging in taste,[21]and rivers of wine, a delight to those that drink;[22] and rivers of pure honey.[23] In it they will

have every kind of fruit as well as forgiveness from their Lord.[24] Can such be like those who will abide in the Fire and will be given a boiling water to drink that will tear their bowels apart?

20. Literally, aasin is the taste and color of water which has changed, or which gives a bad smell. In the world the water of rivers and canals is generally muddy; its taste and color change due to the mixture of sand and dust and of different kinds of vegetation in it, and it also gives off a kind of bad smell. Therefore, the quality of the water of the rivers and canals of Paradise will be such that it will be pure and clear, without any adulteration.

21. In a Hadith directly reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him), it has been explained thus: It will not be the milk squeezed from the milk glands of animals. That is, it will be the milk which Allah will bring out in the form of springs from the earth and cause it to flow into canals of Paradise. About this natural milk it has been said: Its flavor will not change at all; that is, it will not give even the slightest offensive smell that is found in every kind of milk squeezed from the animal milk glands.

22. In another Hadith reported directly from the Prophet (peace be upon him), it has been explained, thus: This wine will not have been distilled from rotten fruit by beating and fermenting, like the wine in the world, but Allah will produce it also in the form of springs and cause it to flow into canals; then its quality will be such that it will be delightful for the drinkers. That is, it will not be bitter and foul-smelling like the wines of the world, which cannot be drunk even by the most habitual drinker without showing some distaste. In Surah As-Saffat, another quality of it has been described: Neither will the drinker be harmed physically thereby nor become drunk. (verse 47). In Surah Al-Waqiah it has been said: Which will neither cause them giddiness nor affect their sense. (verse 19). This shows that wine will not intoxicate, but will only give pleasure and delight.

23. In the Hadith it has been explained, thus: The honey will not have been drawn from the bees' bellies, but it will also come out from springs and flow into canals; therefore, it will not have wax, and pieces of the honey-comb and legs of dead bees mixed in it, but it will be absolutely pure.

24. The mention of forgiveness from Allah after the blessings of Paradise can have two meanings:

(1) That the greatest blessing by far will be that Allah will forgive them.

(2) That the errors and faults that they happened to commit in the world, will not even so much as be mentioned before them, but Allah will cover them up forever so that they are not put to shame in Paradise.

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَّسْتَمِعُ اِلَيْكَ ۚ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا خَرَجُوْا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ قَالُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ مَاذَا

قَالَ اٰنِفًا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ طَبَعَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ وَاتَّبَعُوْٓا اَهْوَآءَهُمْ 16

(47:16) Among them some give ear to you. But no sooner do they leave your presence than they ask those endowed with knowledge: "What is it that he said just now?"[25] Such are those whose hearts Allah has sealed and who pursue their lusts.[26]

25. This is concerning those disbelievers and hypocrites and unbelieving followers of the former Books, who sat in the assemblies of the Prophet (peace be upon him), listened to his discourses, or the verses of the Quran, but since in their hearts they were averse to the themes presented by him, they would understand nothing in spite of listening to him. Therefore, when they came out, they would ask the Muslims: What was he saying just now?

26. This was the real reason because of which their ears had become deaf to the teachings of the Prophet (peace be upon him). They were the slaves of their lusts, and the teachings that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was presenting fell against their lusts. Therefore, if ever they sat in the assemblies of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and listened to him, they would understand nothing.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اهْتَدَوْا زَادَهُمْ هُدًى وَّاٰتٰىهُمْ تَقْوٰىهُمْ 17

(47:17) As for those who were led to the Guidance,[27] Allah increases them in their guidance and causes them to grow in God-fearing.[28]

27. That is, the same revelations about which the disbelievers and hypocrites ask: What was the Prophet (peace be upon him) saying just now? become a cause of further guidance for the rightly guided people, and from the same assembly from which these unfortunate people rise without gaining anything, the fortunate ones return with a new treasure of knowledge and insight.

28. That is, Allah grants them the grace to develop in themselves the kind of piety taqwa that they have the capability to develop.

فَهَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّا السَّاعَةَ اَنْ تَاْتِيَهُمْ بَغْتَةً ۚ فَقَدْ جَآءَ اَشْرَاطُهَا ۚ فَاَنّٰى لَهُمْ اِذَا جَآءَتْهُمْ ذِكْرٰىهُمْ 18

(47:18) Are they waiting, then, for anything else than the Last Hour to suddenly come upon them?[29] Already some of its tokens have come.[30] But when it does actually come upon them, where will any time be left for them to take heed?

29. That is, as far as the explanation and clarification of the truth is concerned; it has been explained well by argument and reasoning, the miraculous discourses of the Quran, the pure character of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the revolution in the lives of his companions. Now, are these people awaiting that Resurrection itself should take place and then only they will believe?

30. The portents of Resurrection imply those signs which indicate that its approach is near. One such important sign is the advent of God's last Prophet after whom no other prophet

will come till Resurrection. Traditions have been related in Bukhari, Muslim. Tirmidhi and Musnad Ahmad on the authority of Anas, Sahl bin Saad As-Saidi and Buraidah, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) raised his index finger and the middle finger and said: My advent and Resurrection are like these two fingers. That is, Just as there is no other finger between these two fingers, so no other prophet will be raised between me and Resurrection; after me only Resurrection now will occur.

فَاعْلَمْ اَنَّهٗ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنْۢبِكَ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ
مُتَقَلَّبَكُمْ وَمَثْوٰىكُمْ ع 19

(47:19) Know, therefore, (O Prophet), that there is no god but Allah, and ask forgiveness for your shortcomings and also for (the shortcomings of) believing men and believing women.[31] Allah knows the places where you move about and where you dwell.

31. One of the morals taught to man by Islam is also this: However hard and sincerely may man be trying to serve and worship his Lord and fighting and struggling in the cause of His Religion, he should never be involved in the misunderstanding that he has done and accomplished whatever he was required to do. Rather, on the contrary, he should have the feeling that he has not been able to do full justice to what was expected of him by his Lord and Master. Therefore, he should confess his errors constantly and pray to Allah saying Lord, forgive me for whatever fault and error I may have committed in Your service. This is indeed the essence of Allah's command: O Prophet, ask forgiveness for your fault. This does not mean that God forbid, the Prophet (peace be upon him) had actually committed an error willfully, but its correct meaning is that it did not even behoove the servant who was the greatest worshiper of his Lord that he should harbor even a tinge of the pride of accomplishment in his heart, but his true position also was that in spite of all his great and glorious services he should continue confessing his shortcomings before his Lord. It was under this state of the mind that the Prophet (peace be upon him) often implored his Lord for forgiveness. According to Abu Daud and Nasai, the Prophet (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: I implore Allah for forgiveness one hundred rimes every day.

وَيَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَتْ سُوْرَةٌ ۚ فَاِذَآ اُنْزِلَتْ سُوْرَةٌ مُّحْكَمَةٌ وَّذُكِرَ فِيْهَا الْقِتَالُ ۙ
رَاَيْتَ الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ يَّنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَيْكَ نَظَرَ الْمَغْشِيِّ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ ؕ فَاَوْلٰى
لَهُمْ ۚ 20

(47:20) The believers used to say: "Why is a surah (that would ordain fighting) not revealed?" But when a definitive surah was revealed wherein fighting was mentioned,

you saw that those in whose hearts there was a sickness looked at you as though they were about to faint at the approach of death.[32] Pity on them!

32. That is, in view of the conditions through which the Muslims were passing and the attitude that the disbelievers had adopted towards Islam and the Muslims at that time, the believers were generally of the opinion that they should be permitted to fight even before fighting was actually enjoined by Allah. Rather they were asking Allah's command in this regard impatiently and were asking again and again: Why are we not permitted to fight these wicked people? But the condition of the people who had joined the ranks of the Muslims hypocritically was quite different from that of the believers. They held their lives and their properties as dearer to themselves than Allah and His religion, and were not prepared to risk them at any cost. Therefore, as soon as fighting was enjoined, they were clearly sorted out from the true believers. Until the time when fighting had not been enjoined, the hypocrites and the common believers could not be distinguished one from the other. The hypocrites offered the Prayer just as the true believers did, they observed the Fast just like them, and practiced every article of the faith as made no demand of a sacrifice on them. But when the time came for making the supreme sacrifice of life for the sake of Islam, their hypocrisy was exposed and their veil of false display of the faith was rent asunder. In Surah An-Nisa, their this state has been described thus: Have you marked those to whom it was said: Withhold your hands a while and establish the salat and pay the zakat? Now that the fighting has been enjoined for them, some of them fear the people as they should fear Allah, or even more than that. They say: Our Lord, why have You enjoined fighting for us? Why have You not given us a brief respite? (verse 77)

طَاعَةٌ وَّقَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوْفٌ ۚ فَاِذَا عَزَمَ الْاَمْرُ ۚ فَلَوْ صَدَقُوا اللّٰهَ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ ۚ 21

(47:21) (They keep affirming their) obedience and saying good words. But when a course of action was clearly determined, it would have been better for them if they had proved true to Allah.

فَهَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ اِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ اَنْ تُفْسِدُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَتُقَطِّعُوْٓا اَرْحَامَكُمْ 22

(47:22) Now, if you were to turn away,[33] what else can be expected but that you will work corruption in the land and fly at each other's throats?[34]

33. Another translation of the words in the original can be: If you became rulers over the people,

34. Its one meaning is: If at this time you shirk supporting and defending Islam and refrain from fighting with your life and wealth for the cause of the great reformist revolution which the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions are struggling to bring about. There will be no other consequence of this than that you would return to the same system of ignorance in which you have been cutting each other's throat since centuries, burying your children alive and filling God's earth with injustice and wickedness. Its other meaning is: You are a people of depraved character. You are not at all sincere in your claim of having affirmed the faith, because you are not prepared to make any sacrifice in its cause.

Now, if Allah gives you power in the land and entrusts the affairs of the world to you when morally you are unsound and unreliable, what else can be expected of you than that you would commit tyranny and mischief and resort to killing of your own near and dear ones.

This verse clearly points out that Islam forbids severing of relations with the kindred. On the other hand, in positive terms also, at several places in the Quran, treating the relatives kindly and well has been enjoined and counted among the major virtues. (For instance, see (Surah Al- Baqarah, Ayats 83, (177); (Surah An-Nisa, Ayats 8, (36); (Surah An-Nahl, Ayat 90); (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 26); (Surah An- Noor, Ayat 22) . The word rahm in Arabic is used for kinship and relationship by blood metaphorically. All the relations of a person, whether near or distant, are his kinsmen, dhwil-arham. The nearer the relationship the greater the right one has upon the other and greater the sin of severing the ties of blood. To treat the kindred well implies that one should do his utmost in doing whatever good he possibly can to his relative. As well as, he should avoid doing any ill or harm to him. Reasoning from this very verse Umar had forbidden as unlawful selling of the slave girl who had given birth to a child from her master, and the companions had concurred with him in this. Hakim in his Musradrik has related on the authority of Buraidah that one day when he was sitting among the audience of Umar, suddenly a clamor arose in the street. On inquiring it was known that a slave girl was being sold and her daughter was crying. Umar immediately got the Ansar and the Muhajirin together and put before them the question: Do you find in the religion that Muhammad (peace be upon him) has brought any room for severing of relations between the blood relationships? Everybody replied in the negative. Thereupon, Umar said: Then, how is it that in your houses a mother is being separated from her daughter? Could there be a greater and more serious instance of the cutting of these relationships? Then he recited this verse. The people said: You may adopt whatever measure you deem fit to stop this practice. At this Umar issued this decree for enforcement in all the Islamic territories: No slave-girl who has given birth to a child from her master is to be sold because this is breaking of kinship ties which is not lawful.

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ فَأَصَمَّهُمْ وَأَعْمَىٰ أَبْصَارَهُمْ 23

(47:23) It is these upon whom Allah has laid His curse: so He made them deaf and deprived them of their sight.

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا 24

(47:24) Do they, then, not reflect on the Qur'an? Or are there locks on their hearts?[35]

35. That is, either these people do not ponder over the Quran at all, or if they try to ponder over it, its teachings and meaning do not enter into their hearts, because they have put locks on them. As for this; “are there locks upon their hearts” means: There are such locks for them as are specially meant for the hearts which are not susceptible to the truth.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ارْتَدُّوا عَلَىٰ أَدْبَارِهِم مِّن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْهُدَى ۙ الشَّيْطَانُ سَوَّلَ لَهُمْ ۖ
وَأَمْلَىٰ لَهُمْ 25

(47:25) Certainly those who have turned their backs on the True Guidance after it became manifest to them, Satan has embellished their ways for them and has buoyed them up with false hopes.

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لِلَّذِينَ كَرِهُوا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ سَنُطِيعُكُمْ فِي بَعْضِ الْأَمْرِ ۖ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ
إِسْرَارَهُمْ 26

(47:26) This, because they said to those who are averse to the faith that Allah has revealed: "In some matters we shall obey you."[36] Allah has full knowledge of their secret parleys.

36. That is, in spite of professing the faith and being counted among the Muslims, they went on conspiring secretly with the enemies of Islam and even pledged to support them in certain matters.

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا تَوَفَّتْهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَضْرِبُونَ وُجُوهَهُمْ وَأَدْبَارَهُمْ 27

(47:27) But how will they fare when angels will take their souls at death and will carry them, striking their faces and backs?[37]

37. That is, in the world they adopted this attitude so that they may safeguard their interests and may protect themselves from the dangers of the conflict between Islam and infidelity, but how will they escape Allah's wrath after death? At that time, no device of theirs will prove helpful for them to remain safe from the punishment by the angels.

This verse also is one of those verses that point to the torment of barzakh (i.e. torment of the grave). It clearly shows that the unbelievers and hypocrites start being afflicted with the torment right from the time of death, and this torment is different from the punishment which they will get on Resurrection after their cases will have been decided by Allah. (For further explanation, see(Surah An- Nisa, Ayat 97); (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayats 93-94); (Surah Al- Anfal, Ayat 50); (Surah An-Nahl, Ayats 28, 32); (Surah Al- Muminun, Ayats 99-100); (Surah YaSeen, Ayats 26-27 and E.Ns 22, 23); (Surah Al-Mumin, Ayat 46 and E.N. 63).

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمُ اتَّبَعُوا مَا أَسْخَطَ اللَّهَ وَكَرِهُوا رِضْوَانَهُ فَأَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالَهُمْ ۝ 28

(47:28) That is because they have followed a way that angered Allah, and have been averse to His good pleasure. So He reduced all their works to nought.[38]

38. This refers to all those works that they performed as Muslims. Their Prayers, their Fasting, their payments of the Zakat, and all other acts of worship and virtue, which in appearance and form are counted among good works, were rendered void, for they failed to adopt the attitude of sincerity and loyalty towards Allah and Islam and the Muslim community, even though they professed to be Muslims. But, on the contrary, they went on conspiring with the enemies of Islam for the sake of small worldly gains, and started devising schemes to save themselves from any possible risks as soon as time came for Jihad in the cause of Allah. These verses are absolutely decisive and conclusive in this regard that in the conflict between Islam and un-Islam the faith of the person whose sympathies are not with Islam and the Muslims, or are with disbelief and the disbelievers, cannot at all be reliable, not to speak of any of his works being acceptable before Allah.

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ أَن لَّن يُخْرِجَ اللَّهُ أَضْغَانَهُمْ 29

(47:29) Or do they, in whose hearts there is a sickness, believe that Allah will not bring their failings to light?

وَلَوْ نَشَاءُ لَأَرَيْنَاكَهُمْ فَلَعَرَفْتَهُم بِسِيمَاهُمْ ۚ وَلَتَعْرِفَنَّهُمْ فِي لَحْنِ الْقَوْلِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ أَعْمَالَكُمْ 30

(47:30) If We were to so will, We could have shown them to you so that you would recognise them by their faces, and you would certainly know them by the manner of their speech. Allah knows all your deeds.

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ حَتَّىٰ نَعْلَمَ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ مِنكُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ ۙ وَنَبْلُوَ أَخْبَارَكُمْ 31

(47:31) We shall certainly test you until We know those of you who truly strive and remain steadfast, and will ascertain about you.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَشَاقُّوا الرَّسُولَ مِن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْهُدَىٰ لَن يَضُرُّوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا ۚ وَسَيُحْبِطُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ 32

(47:32) Those who disbelieved and barred others from Allah's Way and opposed the Messenger after the True Guidance had become manifest to them, they shall not be able to cause Allah the least harm; rather, Allah will reduce all their works to nought.[39]

39. This sentence has two meanings:

(1) That Allah will render vain and fruitless all those works which they had performed as good works, and they will get no reward whatever for them in the Hereafter.

(2) That all the devices that they are adopting to obstruct the way of Allah and His Messenger's (peace be upon him) religion will prove ineffective and fruitless.

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوا الرَّسُوْلَ وَلَا تُبْطِلُوْٓا اَعْمَالَكُمْ 33

(47:33) Believers, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and do not cause your works to be nullified.40

40. In other words, the deeds being beneficial and yielding of good results depends wholly on one's obedience to Allah and His Messenger. After one has turned away from obedience, no deed remains a good deed so that one may deserve any reward for it.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ مَاتُوْا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَنْ يَّغْفِرَ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ 34

(47:34) Verily Allah shall not forgive those who disbelieved and barred others from Allah's Way and clung to their unbelief until their death.

فَلَا تَهِنُوْا وَتَدْعُوْٓا اِلَى السَّلْمِ ۖ صلے ق وَاَنْتُمُ الْاَعْلَوْنَ ۖ صلے ق وَاللّٰهُ مَعَكُمْ وَلَنْ يَّتِرَكُمْ اَعْمَالَكُمْ 35

(47:35) So, be not faint-hearted and do not cry for peace.41 You shall prevail. Allah is with you and will not bring your works to nought.

41. Here, one should bear in mind the fact that when this discourse was revealed only a handful of the Muslims consisting of a couple of hundreds of the Muhajirin and Ansar living in the small town of Madinah were upholding the standard of Islam and they were not only faced by the powerful Quraish but also by the whole of pagan Arabia. Such were the conditions when they were exhorted not to show weakness and not to beg (the enemy) for peace, but to make preparations for the decisive conflict. This does not mean that the Muslims should never negotiate for peace, but it means that in a state like this it is not right to initiate peace negotiations when it shows the Muslims' weakness, for it will still further embolden the enemy. The Muslims should first establish their superiority in power and strength; then if they negotiate peace there will be no harm.

إِنَّمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَّلَهْوٌ ؕ وَاِنْ تُؤْمِنُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا يُؤْتِكُمْ اُجُوْرَكُمْ وَلَا يَسْـَٔلْكُمْ

اَمْوَالَكُمْ 36

(47:36) The life of this world is but sport and amusement.[42] If you believe and are God-fearing, He will grant you your reward, and will not ask you for your possessions.[43]

42. That is, as against the Hereafter, this world is no more than a means of temporary entertainment. The success or failure here is not anything real and enduring, which might in any way be important. The real life is the life Hereafter, and its success should be man's main concern. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 102 of Surah Al-Ankabut).

43. That is, Allah is Self-Sufficient: He does not need taking anything from you for His own self. If He tells you to expend something in His way, He does so not for Himself but only for your own good.

اِنْ يَّسْـَٔلْكُمُوْهَا فَيُحْفِكُمْ تَبْخَلُوْا وَيُخْرِجْ اَضْغَانَكُمْ 37

(47:37) If He were to ask you for your possessions and press you (in that regard), you would have grown niggardly, and Allah would have brought your failings to light.[44]

44. That is, He does not put you to any severe trial that may bring out your weaknesses.

هٰۤاَنْتُمْ هٰۤؤُلَآءِ تُدْعَوْنَ لِتُنْفِقُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۚ فَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يَّبْخَلُ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّبْخَلْ فَاِنَّمَا

يَبْخَلُ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ الْغَنِيُّ وَاَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَآءُ ۚ وَاِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْا يَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ۙ

ثُمَّ لَا يَكُوْنُوْۤا اَمْثَالَكُمْ ع 38

(47:38) Behold, you are those who are called upon to spend in Allah's Way, but some of you are niggardly. Whoever is niggardly is in fact niggardly to himself. For Allah is All-Sufficient, whereas it is you who are in need of Him. If you turn away, He will replace you by a people other than you, and they will not be like you.

48. Surah Al Fath (The Victory)

Name

It is derived from the words Inna fatah-na laka fat-han mubina of the very first verse. This is not only a name of the Surah but also its title in view of the subject matter, for it deals with the great victory that Allah granted to the Holy Prophet and the Muslims in the form of the Truce of Hudaibiyah.

Period of Revelation

Traditions concur that it was sent down in Dhil-Qadah, A. H. 6, at a time when the Holy Prophet was on his return journey to Madinah after concluding the Truce of Hudaibiyah with the disbelievers of Makkah.

Historical Background

The events in connection with which this Surah was sent down began like this: One day the Holy Prophet saw in a dream that he had gone to Makkah with his Companions and had performed the umrah there. Obviously, the Prophet's dream could not be a mere dream and fiction for it is a kind of Divine inspiration as Allah Himself has confirmed in verse 27 below and said that He Himself had shown that dream to His Messenger. Therefore, it was not merely a dream but a Divine inspiration which the Holy Prophet had to obey and follow.

Apparently, there was no possible way of acting on this inspiration. The disbelieving Quraish had debarred the Muslims from proceeding to the Ka'bah for the past six years and no Muslim had been allowed during that period to approach the Kabah for the purpose of performing hajj and umrah. Therefore, it could not be expected that they would allow the Holy Prophet to enter Makkah along with a party of his Companions. If they had proceeded to Makkah in the pilgrim garments with the intention of performing umrah, along with their arms, this would have provoked the enemy to war, and if they had proceeded unarmed, this would have meant endangering his own as well as his Companions' lives. Under conditions such as these nobody could see and suggest how the Divine inspiration could be acted upon.

But the Prophet's position was different. It demanded that he should carry out whatever Command his Lord gave fearlessly and without any apprehension and doubt. Therefore, the Holy Prophet informed his Companions of his dream and began to make preparations for the journey. Among the tribes living in the suburbs also he had the public announcement made that he was proceeding for umrah and the people could join him. Those who could only see the apparent conditions thought that he and his Companions were going into the very jaws of death none of them therefore was inclined to accompany him in the expedition. But those who had true faith in Allah and His Messenger were least bothered about the consequences. For them this information was enough that it was a Divine inspiration and Allah's Prophet had made up his mind to carry it into effect. After this nothing could hinder them from accompanying the Messenger of Allah. Thus, 1,400 of the Companions became ready to follow him on this highly dangerous journey.

This blessed caravan set off from Madinah in the beginning of Dhil Qa'dah, A. H. 6. At Dhul Hulaifah they entered the pilgrims robe with the intention of umrah, took 70 camels with

collars round their necks indicating that they were sacrificial animals; kept only a sword each in sheaths, which the pilgrims to the Kabah were allowed to carry according to the recognized custom of Arabia, but no other weapon. Thus, the caravan set out for the Ka'bah, the House of Allah, at Makkah, chanting the prescribed slogan of Labbaik, Allahuma Labbaik.

The nature of the relations between Makkah and Madinah in those days was known too well to every Arab. Just the previous year, in Shawwal A. H. 5, the Quraish mustering the united strength of the Arab tribes had invaded Madinah and the well known Battle of the Trench had taken place. Therefore, when the Holy Prophet along with such a large caravan set off for the home of his blood-thirsty enemy, the whole of Arabia looked up with amazement, and the people also noticed that the caravan was not going with the intention to fight but was proceeding to the House of Allah in a forbidden month in the pilgrims garb carrying sacrificial animals and was absolutely unarmed.

The Quraish were confounded at this bold step taken by the Holy Prophet. Dhil-Qa'dah was one of those forbidden months which had been held as sacred for pilgrimage in Arabia for centuries. Nobody had a right to interfere with a caravan which might be coming for hajj or umrah in the pilgrims garb in this month; so much so that even an enemy tribe could not hinder it from passing through its territory according to the recognized law of the land. The Quraish therefore were caught in a dilemma, for if they attacked this caravan from Madinah and stopped it from entering Makkah, this would arouse a clamor of protest in the whole country, and all the Arab tribes would have the misgiving that the Quraish had monopolized the Ka'bah as exclusively their own, and every tribe would be involved in the mistrust that now it depended on the will of the Quraish to allow or not to allow anyone to perform hajj or umrah in the future and that they would stop any tribe with which they were angry from visiting the Ka'bah just as they had stopped the Madinese pilgrims. This they thought would be a grave mistake, which would cause the entire Arabia to revolt against them. But, on the other hand, if they allowed Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) and his large caravan to enter their city safely, they would lose their image of power in Arabia and the people would say that they were afraid of Muhammad. At last, after a great deal of confusion, perplexity and hesitation they were overcome by their false sense of honor and for the sake of their prestige they took the decision that they would at no cost allow the caravan to enter the city of Makkah.

The Holy Prophet had dispatched a man of the Bani Ka'b as a secret agent so that he may keep him fully informed of the intentions and movements of the Quraish. When the Holy Prophet reached Usfan, he brought the news that the Quraish had reached Dhi Tuwa with full preparations and they had sent Khalid bin Walid with two hundred cavalry men in advance towards Kura'al-Ghamim to intercept him. The Quraish wanted somehow to provoke the Holy Prophet's Companions into fighting so that they may tell the Arabs that those people had actually come to fight and had put on the pilgrims garments for umrah only to deceive others.

Immediately on receipt of this information the Holy Prophet changed his route and following a very rugged, rocky track reached Hudaibiyah, which was situated right on the boundary of the sacred Makkan territory. Here, he was visited by Budail bin Warqa the chief of the Bani Khuza'ah, along with some men of his tribe. They asked what he had come

for. The Holy Prophet replied that he and his Companions had come only for pilgrimage to the House of Allah and for going round it in worship and not for war. The men of Khuza'ah went and told this to the Quraish chiefs and counseled them not to interfere with the pilgrims. But the Quraish were obstinate. They sent Hulays bin Alqamah, the chief of the Ahabish, to the Holy Prophet to persuade him to go back. Their object was that when Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) would not listen to Hulays, he would come back disappointed and then the entire power of the Ahabish would be on their side. But when Hulays went and saw that the whole caravan had put on the pilgrims garments, had brought sacrificial camels with festive collars round their necks, and had come for doing reverence to the House of Allah and not to fight, he returned to Makkah without having any dialogue with the Holy Prophet and told the Quraish chiefs plainly that those people had no other object but to pay a visit to the Ka'bah; if they debarred them from it, the Ahabish would not join them in that, because they had not become their allies to support them if they violated the sacred customs and traditions.

Then the Quraish sent `Urwah bin Mas'ud Thaqafi; he had lengthy negotiations with the Holy Prophet in an effort to persuade him to give up his intention to enter Makkah. But the Holy Prophet gave him also the same reply that he had given to the chief of the Khuza'ah, that they had not come to fight but to do honor to the House of Allah and carry out a religious duty. Urwah went back and said to the Quraish: "I have been to the courts of the Caesar and Khosroes, and the Negus also, but by God, never have I seen any people so devoted to a king as are the Companions of Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) to him. If Muhammad makes his ablutions they would not let the water thereof fall on the ground but would rub it on their bodies and clothes. Now you may decide as to what you should do."

In the meantime when the messages were coming and the negotiations were going on, the Quraish tried again and again to quietly launch sudden attacks on the Muslim camp in order to provoke the Companions and somehow incite them to war, but every time they did so the Companions' forbearance and patience and the Holy Prophet's wisdom and sagacity frustrated their designs. On one occasion forty or fifty of their men came at night and attacked the Muslim camp with stones and arrows. The Companions arrested all of them and took them before the Holy Prophet, but he let them go. On another occasion 80 men came from the direction of Tan'im right at the time of the Fajr Prayer and made a sudden attack. They were also caught, but the Holy Prophet forgave them, too. Thus, the Quraish went on meeting failure after failure in every one of their designs.

At last, the Holy Prophet sent Hadrat Uthman (may Allah be pleased with him) as his own messenger to Makkah with the message that they had not come to fight but only for pilgrimage and had brought their sacrificial camels along, and they would go back after performing the rite of pilgrimage and offering the sacrifice. But the Quraish did not agree and withheld Hadrat Uthman in the city. In the meantime a rumor spread that Hadrat Uthman had been killed; and when he did not return in time the Muslims took the rumor to be true. Now they could show no more forbearance. Entry into Makkah was different for there was no intention to use force. But when the ambassador was put to death, the Muslims had no alternative but to prepare for war. Therefore, the Holy Prophet summoned all his Companions together and took a solemn pledge from them that they would fight to death. In view of the critical occasion it was not an ordinary undertaking. The Muslims numbered

only 1400 and had come without any weapons, were encamping at the boundary of Makkah, 250 miles away from their own city, and the enemy could attack them in full strength, and could surround them with its allies from the adjoining tribes as well. In spite of this, none from the caravan except one man failed to give his pledge to fight to death, and there could be no greater proof of their dedication and sincerity than that in the cause of Allah. This pledge is well known in the history of Islam as the pledge of Ridwan.

Later it was known that the news about Hadrat Uthman was false. Not only did he return but under Suhail bin 'Amr from the Quraish also arrived a deputation to negotiate peace with the Holy Prophet. Now, the Quraish no more insisted that they would disallow the Holy Prophet and his Companions to enter Makkah. However, in order to save their face they only insisted that he went back that year but could come the following year to perform the umrah. After lengthy negotiations peace was concluded on the following terms:

1. War would remain suspended for ten years, and no party would indulge in any hostility, open or secret, against the other.
2. If any one during that period from among the Quraish went over to Muhammad, without his guardian's permission, he would return him to them, but if a Companion of Muhammad came over to the Quraish, they would not return him to him.
3. Every Arab tribe would have the option to join either side as its ally and enter the treaty.
4. Muhammad and his men would go back that year and could come the following year for umrah and stay in Makkah for three days, provided that they brought only one sheathed sword each, and no other weapon of war. In those three days the Makkans would vacate the city for them (so that there was no chance of a clash), but they would not be allowed to take along any Makkan on return.

When the conditions of the treaty were being settled, the whole of the Muslim army was feeling greatly upset. No one understood the expedience because of which the Holy Prophet was accepting the conditions. No one was far sighted enough to foresee the great benefit that was to result from this treaty. The disbelieving Quraish looked at it as their victory, and the Muslims were upset as to why they should be humiliated to accepting those mean conditions. Even a statesman of the caliber of Hadrat Umar says that he had never given way to doubt since the time he had embraced Islam but on this occasion he also could not avoid it. Impatient he went to Hadrat Abu Bakr and said "Is he (the Holy Prophet) not Allah's Messenger, and are we not Muslims, and are they not polytheists? Then, why should we agree to what is humiliating to our Faith?" He replied "O Umar, he is surely Allah's Messenger, and Allah will never make him the loser." Unsatisfied he went to the Holy Prophet himself and put the same questions to him, and he also gave him the same replies as Hadrat Abu Bakr had given. Afterwards Hadrat Umar continued to offer voluntary prayers and give aims so that Allah may pardon his insolence that he had shown towards the Holy Prophet on that occasion.

Two things in the treaty were highly disturbing for the Muslims first, the second condition, about which they said that it was an expressly unfair condition, for if they had to return a fugitive from Makkah, why should not the Quraish return a fugitive from Madinah? To this the Holy Prophet replied: "What use would be he to us, who fled from us to them? May Allah keep him away from us! And if we return the one who flees to us from them, Allah

will create some other way out for him." The other thing that was rankling in their minds was the fourth condition. The Muslims thought that agreeing to it meant that they were going back unsuccessful and this was humiliating. Furthermore, the question that was causing them feel upset was that they had accepted the condition of going back without performing the pilgrimage to the Ka'bah, whereas the Holy Prophet had seen in the vision that they were performing tawaf at Makkah. To this the Holy Prophet replied that in his vision the year had not been specified. According to the treaty conditions, therefore, they would perform the tawaf the following year if it pleased Allah.

Right at the time when the document was being written, Suhail bin 'Amr's own son, Abu Jandal, who had become a Muslim and been imprisoned by the pagans of Makkah somehow escaped to the Holy Prophet's camp. He had fetters on his feet and signs of violence on his body. He implored the Holy Prophet that he help secure his release from imprisonment. The scene only increased the Companions' dejection, and they were moved beyond control. But Suhail bin 'Amr said the conditions of the agreement had been concluded between them although the writing was not yet complete; therefore, the boy should be returned to them. The Holy Prophet admitted his argument and Abu Jandal was returned to his oppressors.

When the document was finished, the Holy Prophet spoke to the Companions and told them to slaughter their sacrificial animals at that very place, shave their heads and put off the pilgrim garments, but no one moved from his place. The Holy Prophet repeated the order thrice but the Companions were so overcome by depression and dejection that they did not comply. During his entire period of apostleship on no occasion had it ever happened that he should command his Companions to do a thing and they should not hasten to comply with it. This caused him a great shock, and he repaired to his tent and expressed his grief before his wife, Hadrat Umm Salamah. She said, "You may quietly go and slaughter your own camel and call the barber and have your head shaved. After that the people would automatically do what you did and would understand that whatever decision had been taken would not be changed." Precisely the same thing happened. The people slaughtered their animals, shaved their heads or cut their hair short and put off the pilgrim garb, but their hearts were still afflicted with grief.

Later, when this caravan was returning to Madinah, feeling depressed and dejected at the truce of Hudaibiyah, this Surah came down at Dajnan (or according to some others, at Kura' al-Ghamim), which told the Muslims that the treaty that they were regarding an their defeat, was indeed a great victory. After it had come down, the Holy Prophet summoned the Muslims together and said: "Today such a thing has been sent down to me, which is more valuable to me than the world and what it contains." Then he recited this Surah, especially to Hadrat Umar, for he was the one who was feeling most dejected.

Although the believers were satisfied when they heard this Divine Revelation, not much longer afterwards the advantages of this treaty began to appear one after the other until every one became fully convinced that this peace treaty indeed was a great victory:

1. In it for the first time the existence of the Islamic State in Arabia was duly recognized. Before this in the eyes of the Arabs the position of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) and his Companions was no more than of mere rebels against the Quraish and other Arab tribes, and they regarded them as the outlaws.

Now the Quraish themselves by concluding this agreement with the Holy Prophet recognized his sovereignty over the territories of the Islamic State and opened the way for the Arab tribes to enter treaties of alliance with either of the political powers they liked.

2. By admitting the right of pilgrimage to the House of Allah for the Muslims, the Quraish also admitted that Islam was not an anti-religious creed, as they had so far been thinking, but it was one of the admitted religions of Arabia, and like the other Arabs, its followers also had the right to perform the rites of hajj and umrah. This diminished the hatred in the Arabs hearts that had been caused by the propaganda made by the Quraish against Islam.
3. The signing of a no-war pact for ten years provided full peace to the Muslims, and spreading to every nook and corner of Arabia they preached Islam with such spirit and speed that within two years after Hudaibiyah the number of the people who embraced Islam far exceeded those who bad embraced it during the past 19 year or so. It was all due to this treaty that two years later when in consequence of the Quraish's violating the treaty the Holy Prophet invaded Makkah, he was accompanied by an army 10,000 strong, whereas on the occasion of Hudaibiyah only 1,400 men had joined him in the march.
4. After the suspension of hostilities by the Quraish the Holy Prophet had the opportunity to establish and strengthen Islamic rule in the territories under him and to turn the Islamic society into a full fledged civilization and way of life by the enforcement of Islamic law. This is that great blessing about which Allah says in verse 3 of Surah Al-Ma'idah: "Today I have perfected your Religion for you and completed My blessing on you and approved Islam as the Way of Life for you." (for explanation, see Introduction to Surah Al-Ma'idah and its E. N. 15).
5. Another gain that accrued from the truce with the Quraish was that being assured of peace from the south the Muslims overpowered all the opponent forces in the north and central Arabia easily. Just three months after Hudaibiyah, Khaiber, the major stronghold of the Jews, was conquered and after it the Jewish settlements of Fadak, Wad-il Qura, Taima and Tabuk also fell to Islam one after the other. Then all other tribes of central Arabia, which were bound in alliance with the Jews and Quraish, came under the sway of Islam. Thus, within two years after Hudaibiyah the balance of power in Arabia was so changed that the strength of the Quraish and pagan gave way and the domination of Islam became certain.

These were the blessings that the Muslims gained from the peace treaty which they were looking upon as their defeat and the Quraish as their victory. However, what had troubled the Muslims most in this treaty, was the condition about the fugitives from Makkah and Madinah, that the former would be returned and the latter would not be returned. But not much long afterwards this condition also proved to be disadvantageous for the Quraish, and experience revealed what far reaching consequences of it had the Holy Prophet fore seen and then accepted it. A few days after the treaty a Muslim of Makkah, Abu Basir, escaped from the Quraish and reached Madinah. The Quraish demanded him back and the Holy Prophet returned him to their men who had been sent from Makkah to arrest him. But while on the way to Makkah he again fled and went and sat on the road by the Red Sea shore, which the trade caravans of the Quraish took to Syria. After that every Muslim who succeeded in escaping from the Quraish would go and join Abu Basir instead of going to

Madinah, until 70 men gathered there. They would attack any Quraish caravan that passed the way and cut it into pieces at last, the Quraish themselves begged the Holy Prophet to call those men to Madinah, and the condition relating to the return of the fugitives of itself became null and void.

The Surah should be read with this historical background in view in order to fully understand it.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اِنَّا فَتَحۡنَا لَکَ فَتۡحًا مُّبِیۡنًا ۙ 1

(48:1) (O Prophet), surely We have granted you a clear victory[1]

1. When after the treaty of Hudaibiyah, this good news of the victory was announced, the people wondered as to how the treaty could be called a victory. The Muslims did believe in this divine revelation as true on the basis of their faith, but no one could understand what aspect of the victory it had. On hearing this verse, Umar asked: Is it a victory, O Messenger of Allah? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Yes. (lbn Jarir) Another companion came before the Prophet (peace be upon him) and he also put the same question; whereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: By Him in Whose hand is the life of Muhammad, this indeed is a victory. (Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud). On arriving at Al-Madinah still another person said to his companions: What sort of a victory is it? We were debarred from the House of Allah; our sacrificial camels also could not go to their right places; the Messenger of Allah had to halt at Hudaibiyah, and in consequence of this truce two of our oppressed brothers (Abu Jandal and Abu Basir) were handed over to their oppressors. When this thing reached the Prophet, he said: A very wrong thing has been uttered, it indeed is a great victory. You reached the very home of the polytheists, and they had to persuade you to go back by soliciting you to perform Umrah the following year. They themselves expressed the desire to suspend hostilities and have peace with you, whereas their malice and enmity against you is too well known. Allah has granted you the upper hand over them. Have you forgotten the day when you were fleeing from Uhud and I was calling you back from behind? Have you forgotten the day when the enemy had descended on us from every side in the battle of the Trench and the hearts were coming up to the throats? (Baihaqi on the authority of Urwah bin Zubair). But not long after this, the truce's being a victory began to become manifest, and everyone realized that the triumph of Islam had begun with the treaty of Hudaibiyah. Almost one and the same thing has been related from Abdullah bin Masud, Jabir bin Abdullah and Bara bin Azib. They are reported to have said: The people look upon the conquest of Makkah as the victory, but we regard the truce of Hudaibiyah as the real victory. (Bukhari, Muslim, Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Jarir).

لِّيَغۡفِرَ لَكَ ٱللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِن ذَنۢبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعۡمَتَهُۥ عَلَيۡكَ وَيَهۡدِيَكَ صِرَٰطٗا مُّسۡتَقِيمٗا ٢

(48:2) so that Allah may forgive you your shortcomings, whether earlier or later,[2] and may complete His favours upon you[3] and guide you to the Straight Way,[4]

2. If the context in which this sentence occurs is kept in view, one will certainly feel that the faults referred to here imply those shortcomings and weaknesses that had remained in the struggle that the Muslims had been making for the success and victory of Islam, under the leadership of the Prophet (peace be upon him), for the past nineteen years or so. These shortcomings are not known to any one because the intellect is absolutely helpless to find out any weakness in that struggle. But according to the highest standards of perfection in the sight of Allah there had remained some such weakness in it because of which the Muslims could not attain a decisive victory so soon over the pagans of Arabia. What Allah means to say is this: If you had carried on your struggle along with those weaknesses, it would have taken you much longer to subdue Arabia, but We have overlooked all those weaknesses and shortcomings and compensated for them only through Our grace, and opened for you at Hudaibiyah the door to victory and conquest which you could not have achieved only by your ordinary endeavors.

Here, this thing also should be understood well that for the weaknesses that might occur and remain in the struggle and endeavor that a group might be making for an object, the leader and guide of the group only is addressed. This does not mean that the weaknesses are the leader's personal weaknesses. Those are, in fact, the weaknesses of the struggle that the group is making as a whole; but the address is made to the leader to tell him that his work suffers from such and such a weakness.

However, as the address is directed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and declared that Allah has forgiven him all his former and latter faults, the general words also give this meaning that Allah pardoned all the shortcomings (which were the shortcomings in view of his high position) of His Messenger (peace be upon him). That is why when the companions saw that he took extraordinary pains over his worship, they would say: Why do you subject yourself to such hardships when all your former and latter errors and shortcomings have been pardoned? the Prophet (peace be upon him) would reply: Should I not behave as a grateful servant? (Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud).

3. "Perfection His favor" implies that the Muslims should become free to live their lives in accordance with Islamic civilization, Islamic law and commandments, secure from every fear, every resistance and every external interference, and they should also be blessed with the power that they may uphold Allah's Word throughout the world. Dominance of disbelief and wickedness which may be a hindrance in the way of Allah's worship and an obstacle in the struggle in propagating Allah's Word, is the greatest calamity for the believers. The Quran calls it fitnah (mischief). Delivered and freed from this calamity when they arc able to achieve an abode of Islam (darul-Islam) in which the divine religion is enforced in its entirety, and along with that they are also provided with the means and

resources by which they may establish faith and righteousness on Allah's earth in place of disbelief and wickedness, this would be the perfection of Allah's blessing on them. As this blessing was achieved by the Muslims only through the Prophet (peace be upon him), Allah addressed only him and said: We willed to complete Our blessing on you; therefore we have granted this victory to you.

4. "The straight path", the way to conquest and success. In other words, it implies that by causing the treaty to be concluded at Hudaibiyah, Allah paved the way for and inspired the Prophet (peace be upon him) with the plan by which he could subdue all the forces that were resisting Islam.

وَّيَنْصُرَكَ اللّٰهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيْزًا 3

(48:3) and that Allah may bestow upon you a mighty help.5

5. Another translation can be: "Bestow on you an unprecedented victory," for the word aziz in the original may mean mighty as well as unprecedented and unparalleled. According to the first meaning, the sentence means: By means of this treaty Allah has helped you in a way as to make your enemies helpless; and according to the second, it means: Seldom has this novel method ever been adopted to help somebody, that a thing which apparently is a mere peace treaty, and that too a treaty concluded from a weak position, would turn into a decisive victory.

هُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْزَلَ السَّكِيْنَةَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ لِيَزْدَادُوْٓا اِيْمَانًا مَّعَ اِيْمَانِهِمْ ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ جُنُوْدُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ۙ 4

(48:4) He it is Who bestowed inner peace on the hearts of the believers6 so that they may grow yet more firm in their faith.7 To Allah belong the legions of the heavens and the earth; Allah is All-Knowing, Most Wise.8

6. Sakinat in Arabic is calmness and tranquility and peace of mind. Here Allah calls its being sent into the hearts of the believers an important factor in the victory that Islam and the Muslims achieved at Hudaibiyah. From a study of the conditions of the time, one comes to know what kind of a Sakinat it was that was sent down into the hearts of the Muslims during that period and how it became a source of victory. If at the time when the Prophet (peace be upon him) expressed his intention to go for Umrah to Makkah, the Muslims had become terror-stricken and started behaving like the hypocrites as if they were going into the very jaws of death, or if at the time when they heard the news on the way that the disbelieving Quraish were coming out in great strength to fight them, they had been alarmed as to how they would face the enemy un-armed, and thus become panic-stricken, obviously no benefits would have resulted from Hudaibiyah at all. Then, if at the time when at Hudaibiyah the disbelievers had stopped the Muslims from going any further, and when they had tried to provoke them by launching against them repeated sudden attacks, and when the rumor of Uthman's martyrdom had spread, and when Abu Jandal had appeared

on the scene as the very image of oppression and persecution, the Muslims had actually become provoked and broken the discipline that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had instilled in them, the result would have been disastrous. Above all, if at the time when the Prophet (peace be upon him) was going to conclude the treaty on the conditions which were unacceptable to the entire party of the Muslims, the Muslims had happened to disobey him, the great victory of Hudaibiyah would have turned into a humiliating defeat. Thus, it was all because of Allah's bounty that on all these critical moments the Muslims were blessed with full peace of mind with regard to the leadership and guidance of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the truth of Islam and the truthfulness of their mission. This is why they decided with a cool mind that they would face and accept whatever hardships they would encounter in the way of Allah. That is why they remained safe from fear, confusion, provocation and despair; that is why perfect discipline continues to prevail in the camp; and that is why, in spite of being deeply grieved at the conditions of peace, they submitted to the decision taken by the Prophet (peace be upon him). This was the sakinat that Allah had sent down into the hearts of the Muslims, and it was all because of this that the dangerous step of undertaking a journey for performing Umrah became the prelude to a unique victory.

7. That is, one faith they already had before they set out on this expedition; they attained the additional faith when they remained steadfast on the way of sincerity, piety and obedience in every trial that they faced in connection with the expedition. This verse is one of those verses which show that faith is not a static state which is incapable of growth, but it develops as well as decays and deteriorates. After embracing Islam till death the believer at every step in his life continues to be confronted with such tests and trials in which he has to take a decision whether in following the divine religion he is prepared to sacrifice his life, his wealth, his sentiments, desires, time, comforts and interests or not. If at the time of every such trial, he adopts the way of sacrifice, his faith progresses and develops, and if he turns away, his faith decays and deteriorates till a time may also come when the initial state of the faith with which he had entered Islam is even endangered to be lost and destroyed. (For further explanation. see(E.N.2 of Surah Al- Anfal)and (E.N. 38 of Surah Al-Ahzab).

8. It means this: Allah has such hosts by which He can destroy and exterminate the disbelievers completely whenever He wills, but He has deliberately and by wisdom only placed this responsibility on the believers that they should enter a conflict with the disbelievers and struggle to make the religion of Allah prevail and prosper in the world. In this way alone does a door to the enhancement of their ranks and successes in the Hereafter open as is being indicated in the following verse.

لِّيُدْخِلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا وَيُكَفِّرَ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّاٰتِهِمْ ۭ وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ فَوْزًا عَظِيْمًا ۙ 5

(48:5) (He did this) to admit the believers, both men and women,[9] to Gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they shall abide, and to efface their evil deeds from them.[10] That, in Allah's sight, is the supreme triumph.

9. In the Quran generally mention of the rewards for the believers is made collectively and separate mention is not made of the rewards for the men and the women. But here, since the general mention of giving the rewards could cause the doubt that this reward may perhaps be only meant for the men. Allah has made a separate mention of the believing women, saying that they too would be equal partners in this reward with the believing men. The reason is obvious. Those God-fearing women who encouraged their husbands, sons, brothers and fathers to proceed on the dangerous journey instead of stopping them from it and discouraging them by crying and wailing, who looked after their houses, their properties, their honor and children in their absence faithfully, who did not even feel the alarm lest at the sudden departure of 1,400 of the companions the disbelievers and hypocrites of the surrounding areas would attack the city, should certainly have become equal partners with their men in the reward of jihad although they stayed behind in their homes.

10. That is, that He may pardon whatever errors they might have committed because of human weaknesses, remove every trace and mark of the errors from them before admitting them into Paradise so that they may enter Paradise absolutely free from every evil that may cause them embarrassment.

وَّيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِيْنَ وَالْمُشْرِكٰتِ الظَّآنِّيْنَ بِاللّٰهِ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ ؕ
عَلَيْهِمْ دَآئِرَةُ السَّوْءِ ۚ وَغَضِبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَنَهُمْ وَاَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ وَسَآءَتْ
مَصِيْرًا 6

(48:6) (He also did this) to chastise the hypocrites, both men and women, and those who associate others in His Divinity, both men and women, and who harbour evil thoughts about Allah.[11] They shall be afflicted with misfortune,[12] Allah is wroth with them. He has laid His curse upon them and has prepared for them Hell. What an evil end!

11. The hypocrites living in the suburbs of Al-Madinah were thinking, as has been stated in (verse 12) below, that the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions would not return alive from that journey. As for the polytheists of Makkah and their pagan companions, they were thinking that they had successfully put to rout the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions by preventing them from performing Umrah. In fact, whatever these two groups had thought, they had this misunderstanding about Allah that He would not help His Messenger (peace be upon him). And in the conflict between the truth and falsehood, He would allow falsehood to defeat and frustrate the truth.

12. That is, they were encompassed by the same evil fate which they wanted to avoid and against which they had devised all those plans, and their same plans caused the evil fate to be hastened.

وَلِلّٰهِ جُنُوْدُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَزِيْزًا حَكِيْمًا 7

(48:7) To Allah belong the legions of the heavens and the earth. Allah is Most Mighty, Most Wise.[13]

13. Here the theme of(verse 4)has been reiterated for another object. There, the object was to state that Allah, instead of employing His supernatural hosts to fight the disbelievers, had employed the believers for it only because He willed to favor them. Here, the theme has been repeated to say that in order to punish the one whom Allah wills to punish He can employ whichever of His countless hosts He likes for the purpose; no one has the power to avert His punishment by his own plans.

اِنَّاۤ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ شَاهِدًا وَّمُبَشِّرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا ۙ 8

(48:8) (O Prophet), We have sent you forth as a witness,[14] as a bearer of good news, and as a warner[15]

14. Shah Waliyullah has translated shahid as a bearer of witness to the truth, and other translators translate it as a bearer of the witness. The word shahadat comprehends both these meanings. For explanation, sec (E.N. 82 of Surah Al-Ahzab).

15. For explanation, see(E.N. 33 of Surah Al-Ahzab).

لِّتُؤْمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَتُعَزِّرُوْهُ وَتُوَقِّرُوْهُ ؕ وَتُسَبِّحُوْهُ بُكْرَةً وَّاَصِيْلًا 9

(48:9) so that (all of) you may all believe in Allah and His Messenger, and support him, and revere him, and celebrate Allah's glory, morning and evening.[16]

16. According to some commentators the verse means: “And help the Messenger, and honor him, and glorify Allah morning and evening”, and according to others: “And help Allah, and honor Him and glorify Him morning and evening.”

Glorifying Allah morning and evening does not mean glorifying Him only in the morning and the evening but at all times. It is just like saying about something that it is well-known in the east and the west when one actually means to say that it is well-known everywhere in the world.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُبَايِعُوْنَكَ اِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُوْنَ اللّٰهَ ؕ يَدُ اللّٰهِ فَوْقَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ ۚ فَمَنْ نَّكَثَ فَاِنَّمَا
يَنْكُثُ عَلٰى نَفْسِهٖ ۚ وَمَنْ اَوْفٰى بِمَا عٰهَدَ عَلَيْهُ اللّٰهَ فَسَيُؤْتِيْهِ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ۧ 10

(48:10) Those who swore fealty to you, (O Prophet),[17] in fact swore fealty to Allah. The Hand of Allah is above their hands.[18] So whoever breaks his covenant breaks it to his

own hurt; and whoever fulfils the covenant that he made with Allah,[19] He will bestow on him a great reward.

17. The reference is to the pledge that the Prophet (peace be upon him) took from his companions at Hudaibiyah at the rumor that Uthman had been killed at Makkah. According to some traditions it was a pledge unto death, and according to others it was an undertaking that they would not turn away from the battlefield. The first thing has been reported from Salamah bin Akwa and the second from Ibn Umar, Jabir bin Abdullah and Maqil bin Yasar. The purport of both is the same. The companions had pledged allegiance on the Prophet's (peace be upon him) hand with the express object that if the news of Uthman's martyrdom proved to be true, they would settle the matter with the Quraish there and then even if they were cut to pieces in the clash. As on this occasion it was not yet certain whether Uthman actually had been killed or was still living, the Prophet (peace be upon him) placed one of his own hands on the other and pledged allegiance on his behalf, and thus bestowed a unique honor on Uthman in that he made Uthman a partner in the pledge by making his own sacred hand represent the hand of Uthman. The Prophet's (peace be upon him) taking the pledge of allegiance on his behalf necessarily meant that he had full confidence that if Uthman had been present he would certainly have pledged the allegiance.

18. That is, the hand on which the Muslims were swearing allegiance was not the hand of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) person but of Allah's representative, and this allegiance was in fact being sworn to Allah through His Messenger.

19. Here, instead of alaih-illah the words used in the original are alaih-ullah, which is a departure from the general rule of Arabic. Allama Alusi has given two reasons for the unusual use of the vowel points here. First, the object on this special occasion is to express the great glory, eminence and majesty of the Being to Whom the pledge was being sworn for which alaih-u is more appropriate than alaih-i; second, the ha in alaih-i actually represents vowel, therefore, adhering here to the vowel points of the original goes well with the theme of the allegiance.

سَيَقُوْلُ لَكَ الْمُخَلَّفُوْنَ مِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ شَغَلَتْنَآ اَمْوَالُنَا وَاَهْلُوْنَا فَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا ۚ يَقُوْلُوْنَ
بِاَلْسِنَتِهِمْ مَّا لَيْسَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ ۭ قُلْ فَمَنْ يَّمْلِكُ لَكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـــًٔا اِنْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ
ضَرًّا اَوْ اَرَادَ بِكُمْ نَفْعًا ۭ بَلْ كَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا 11

(48:11) (O Prophet), the bedouins who were left behind say to you:[20] "We were occupied with our goods and families. So ask forgiveness for us." They say with their tongues what is not in their hearts.[21] Say to them: "Who can be of any avail to you against Allah if He should intend to cause you any harm or confer upon you any benefit?" Allah is well aware of all that you do.[22]

20. This refers to the people living in the suburbs of Al- Madinah whom the Prophet (peace be upon him) had invited to accompany him in his march out for Umrah, but they had not

left their homes in spite of their claim to faith just because they were afraid of death. Traditions show that these were the people of the tribes of Aslam, Muzainah, Juhainah, Ghifar, Ashja, Dil and others.

21. This has two meanings:

(1) That after your returning to Madinah the excuse that these people will present for not going out with you, would only be a lame excuse, because they know in their hearts why they had stayed behind.

(2) That their imploring the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah for a prayer of forgiveness would only be an empty word of mouth, for in fact, they are neither feeling remorse for their failure to accompany you, nor have they any feeling that they committed a sin by not going out with the Messenger (peace be upon him), nor are they seeking forgiveness sincerely.

As for themselves they think that they did a wise thing by not going on the dangerous journey; had they any desire for Allah and His forgiveness, they would not have stayed behind at home.

22. That is, Allah's decision will be on the basis of the knowledge that He has about the reality of your actions. If your actions deserve the punishment and I pray for your forgiveness, my prayer will not save you from Allah's punishment. And if your actions do not deserve the punishment, and I do not pray for your forgiveness, my failure to pray will not do any harm to you. Everything is in Allah's control, not mine, and no one's empty words can deceive Him. Therefore, even if I accept as true what you say and then also pray for your forgiveness on its basis, it will be vain and without result.

بَلْ ظَنَنْتُمْ اَنْ لَّنْ يَّنْقَلِبَ الرَّسُوْلُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِيْهِمْ اَبَدًا وَّزُيِّنَ ذٰلِكَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ وَظَنَنْتُمْ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ ۖ وَكُنْتُمْ قَوْمًۢا بُوْرًا 12

(48:12) (But the truth is not what you say.) You had imagined that the Messenger and the believers would never return to their families, and this notion was embellished in your hearts.[23] You harboured an evil thought, and you are an immensely evil people."[24]

23. That is, you were delighted to think that you had saved yourselves from the danger into which the Messenger (peace be upon him) and his believing supporters were going. You thought you had done so by dint of your great wisdom; and you also did not feel any compunction in rejoicing at the thought that the Messenger (peace be upon him) and the believers would not return alive from their expedition. You did not feel uneasy in spite of your claim to the faith but were pleased to think that you did not put yourselves in the danger by accompanying the Messenger (peace be upon him).

24. The word ba-ir (pl. bur in the original) has two meanings:

(1) A sinful, perverted and evil-minded person who is incapable of doing anything good.

(2) One who is doomed to an evil end and is following the path of destruction.

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يُؤْمِنْۢ بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ فَاِنَّاۤ اَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ سَعِيْرًا 13

(48:13) As for those who do not believe in Allah and His Messenger, for such unbelievers We have prepared a Blazing Fire.[25]

25. Here, Allah in clear words is declaring all such people disbelievers and devoid of the faith, who are not sincere with regard to Allah and His religion, who shirk endangering their interests, their lives and wealth for the sake of Allah's religion when the time comes of their trial and test. But one should remember that this is not the sort of disbelief on the basis of which somebody in the world may be regarded as excommunicated from Islam, but this is the disbelief because of which he will be declared a disbeliever in the Hereafter. The reason is that the Prophet (peace be upon him) even after the revelation of this verse did not regard as outside Islam those people in respect of whom it was sent down, nor treated them like the disbelievers.

وَلِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ يَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا

رَّحِيْمًا 14

(48:14) To Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He forgives whom He pleases and chastises whom He pleases. He is Most Forgiving, Most Compassionate.[26]

26. The mention of Allah's being All-Forgiving and All- Merciful, after the foregoing warning, contains in it a subtle aspect of admonition. It means this: Even now if you give up your insincere attitude and way of life and adopt sincerity, you will find Allah All-Forgiving and All- Merciful. He will forgive you your previous shortcomings and will treat you according to the quality of your sincerity in the future.

سَيَقُوْلُ الْمُخَلَّفُوْنَ اِذَا انْطَلَقْتُمْ اِلٰى مَغَانِمَ لِتَاْخُذُوْهَا ذَرُوْنَا نَتَّبِعْكُمْ ۚ يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ

يُّبَدِّلُوْا كَلٰمَ اللّٰهِ ؕ قُلْ لَّنْ تَتَّبِعُوْنَا كَذٰلِكُمْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ فَسَيَقُوْلُوْنَ بَلْ

تَحْسُدُوْنَنَا ؕ بَلْ كَانُوْا لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا 15

(48:15) When you press forth for the spoils, those who were left behind will say: "Let us accompany you."[27] They want to change the command of Allah.[28] Say to them (in

clear words): “You shall not accompany us. Thus has Allah already said.”[29] Then they will say: “Nay; but you are jealous of us.” The truth is that they understand little.

27. That is, the time is approaching when these very people who were shirking accompanying you on the dangerous journey, would see you going on an expedition in which there would be the possibility of attaining easy victory and much booty. Then they would come running and request you to take them also along. Such a time came just three months after the truce of Hudaibiyah, when the Prophet (peace be upon him) marched to Khaiber and took it easily. At that time everyone could see that after the truce with the Quraish not only Khaiber but the Jewish settlements of Taima, Fadak, Wadi-al-Qura and also others from northern Arabia would not be able to withstand the might of the Muslims and would easily fall to the Islamic State. Therefore, Allah in these verses forewarned the Prophet (peace be upon him) that the opportunists of the suburbs of Al-Madinah would come up to take part in and receive their share when they would see easy victories being attained, and that he should tell them plainly: You will never be allowed to take part in these, because only those who had gone forth to offer their lives in the conflict at Hudaibiyah regardless of every danger would be entitled o them.

28. Allah’s Word implies the decree that only those people would be allowed to accompany the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the expedition to Khaiber, who had taken part in the expedition to Hudaibiyah and sworn the pledge there, for Allah has reserved the spoils of Khaiber exclusively for them, as has been stated clearly in verse 18 below.

29. The words “Thus did Allah say before” caused the people the misunderstanding that this refers to some other command bearing upon the same subject that might have been sent down before this verse, and since no such command is found in this Surah before this verse, they started looking for it at other places in the Quran till they found (verse 84 of Surah At-Taubah), in which this very subject has been dealt with for another occasion. But that verse, in fact, does not apply to this, for it was sent down in connection with the Battle of Tabuk, and its period of revelation is three years after the period of revelation of Surah Al-Fatah. The fact of the matter is that this verse refers to(verses 18-19) of this Surah itself, and Allah’s already having said this does not mean its having been said before this verse but its having been said to the laggards before this conversation. This conversation with the laggards about which advance instructions are being given to the Prophet (peace be upon him) was to take place at the time of the expedition to Khaiber, and this whole Surah, including (verses 18-19), had been sent down three months earlier on return from Hudaibiyah on the way. A careful study of the context shows that Allah here is giving this instruction to His Messenger: When after your return at Al-Madinah the laggards come to you with their excuses, you should give them this reply, and when they express their desire to accompany you in the expedition to Khaiber, you should tell them this.

قُلْ لِّلْمُخَلَّفِيْنَ مِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ سَتُدْعَوْنَ اِلٰى قَوْمٍ اُولِيْ بَاْسٍ شَدِيْدٍ تُقَاتِلُوْنَهُمْ اَوْ
ج ج
يُسْلِمُوْنَ فَاِنْ تُطِيْعُوْا يُؤْتِكُمُ اللّٰهُ اَجْرًا حَسَنًا وَاِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْا كَمَا تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ
يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا 16

(48:16) Say to the bedouins who were left behind: "You will be called against those who possess great might and be asked to fight against them unless they surrender.[30] If you obey (the command to fight), Allah will bestow upon you a goodly reward. But if you turn away, as you turned away before, He shall inflict upon you a grievous chastisement."

30. The words au-yuslimuna in the original can have two meanings and both are implied: (1) That they should accept Islam. (2) That they should submit to the Islamic rule.

لَيْسَ عَلَى الْاَعْمٰى حَرَجٌ وَّلَا عَلَى الْاَعْرَجِ حَرَجٌ وَّلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيْضِ حَرَجٌ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ
ج
وَرَسُوْلَهٗ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّ يُعَذِّبْهُ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ع 17

(48:17) There is no blame on the blind, nor on the lame, nor on the sick (if they do not go forth to fight).[31] Allah will admit those who obey Allah and His Messenger to the Gardens beneath which rivers flow and will inflict a grievous chastisement on those who turn away.

31. That is, the one who has a genuine excuse for not joining jihad is not accountable, but if the able-bodied, strong people make excuses for not joining it, they cannot be regarded as sincere with regard to Allah and His religion, and they cannot be given the opportunity to take advantage of the gains as members of the Muslim community, but when time comes for making sacrifices for Islam, they should lag behind and seek the safety of their lives and properties.

Here, one should know that two kinds of the people have been exempted from jihad duty by the Shariah:

(1) Those who are not physically fit for jihad, e.g. young boys, women, the insane, the blind and such patients as cannot perform military duties, and such disabled people as cannot take part in war.

(2) Those for whom it may be difficult to join jihad for other sound reasons, e.g. the slaves, or those persons who may be ready for jihad but may not afford weapons of war and other necessary equipment, or such debtors who may have to pay their debts at the earliest

opportunity and the creditors may not be willing to allow them more time, or such people whose parents (or a parent) might be alive, who stand in need of the children's help.

In this regard, it should also be known that the children should not join jihad without the permission of their parents if they are Muslims, but if they (the parents) are non-Muslims, it is not permissible for a person to stay away from jihad in case they refuse permission.

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اِذْ يُبَايِعُوْنَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ فَعَلِمَ مَا فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَاَنْزَلَ
السَّكِيْنَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَاَثَابَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيْبًا ۙ 18

(48:18) Allah was much pleased with the believers when they swore fealty to you under the tree.[32] He knew what was in their hearts. So He bestowed inner peace upon them[33] and rewarded them with a victory near at hand

32. Here again the pledge taken from the companions at Hudaibiyah has been mentioned. This is called Baiat Ridwan. For, Allah in this verse has given the good news that he became well pleased with those who on this dangerous occasion did not show the least hesitation in offering their lives for the cause of Islam and gave an express proof of their being true in their faith by taking the pledge on the hand of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The Muslims at this time were equipped only with a sword each, numbered only 1,400, were unprepared for warfare, but were donning the pilgrim garments, were away from their military headquarters (Al-Madinah), while the enemy's stronghold (Makkah) where from it could get any kind of help was just 13 miles off. Had these people been lacking in their sincerity of Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) and His religion in any degree, they would have abandoned the Messenger (peace be upon him) on this extremely dangerous occasion, and Islam would have been vanquished forever. Apart from their own sincerity there was no external pressure under which they might have been compelled to take the pledge. Their becoming ready at that time to fight in the cause of Allah's religion regardless of the dangers, is a clear proof that they were true and sincere in their faith and loyal to the cause of Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) in the highest degree. That is why Allah honored them with this certificate of His good pleasure. Now if someone becomes angry with them after they have been honored with this certificate of Allah's good pleasure, or slanders and vilifies them, his enmity is with Allah, not with them. Those who say that at that time when Allah honored them with this certificate of His good pleasure, they were sincere, but afterwards they became disloyal to Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him), perhaps harbor a mistrust about Allah that while sending down this verse He was unaware of their future; therefore, He awarded them this warrant only in view of their state at that time, and probably due to the same unawareness inscribed this verse in His Holy Book as well so that afterwards also, when those people have turned disloyal, the world should continue reading this verse about them and praising the knowledge of the unseen of that Allah Who, God forbid, had granted these faithless and disloyal people the warrant of His good pleasure.

About the tree under which this pledge was taken, a tradition by Ibn Umar's slave Nafi has generally been related, saying that the people had started visiting it and offering prayers by

it, so that when Umar came to know of it, he rebuked and warned the people and ordered it to be cut down. (Tabaqat Ibn Saad, vol. II, p. l00). But there are several other traditions which contradict it. A tradition from Nafi himself has been reported in Tabaqat of Ibn Saad to the effect that many years after the Baiat Ridwan the companions looked for the tree but they could not recognize it and differed as to which tree it was. (p. 106). The second tradition has been reported in Bukhari, Muslim, and Tabaqat on the authority of Saeed bin alMusayyab. He says that his father was one of those who had participated in the Baiat Ridwan. He told him that when they had gone for Umrah al-Qada the following year, they had forgotten the tree, and they could not locate it even after looking for it. The third tradition is from lbn Jarir. He says that when Umar, during his caliphate, passed by Hudaibiyah, he inquired about the tree under which the pledge had been sworn. Someone pointed to one tree and another one to another tree. At this Umar told the people to forget it as there was no real need to bother about it.

33. Here, sakinat means that state of the heart on whose strength a man throws himself into dangers with complete calm and peace of mind for the sake of a great objective and resolves without fear and consternation to undertake it regardless of the consequences.

وَّمَغَانِمَ كَثِيْرَةً يَّاْخُذُوْنَهَا ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَزِيْزًا حَكِيْمًا 19

(48:19) and with abundant spoils which they shall acquire.[34] Allah is Most Mighty, Most Wise.

34. The reference is to the conquest of Khaiber and its rich spoils and this verse expressly points out that Allah had reserved this reward only for those people who had taken part in the Baiat Ridwan; apart from them no one else was entitled to take part in the victory and have a share in the spoils. That is why when the Prophet (peace be upon him) marched out to attack Khaiber in Safar, A.H. 7, he took only those people with him. No doubt afterwards, he gave some of the spoils of Khaiber to those emigrants also who returned from Habash and to some companions from the Dus and Ashar tribes as well, but this was given either from Khums (one fifth of the spoils of war given into the public treasury), or with the approval of the companions who had taken the pledge of Ridwan; no one else was given any share of it.

وَعَدَكُمُ اللّٰهُ مَغَانِمَ كَثِيْرَةً تَاْخُذُوْنَهَا فَعَجَّلَ لَكُمْ هٰذِهٖ وَكَفَّ اَيْدِيَ النَّاسِ عَنْكُمْ ۚ
وَلِتَكُوْنَ اٰيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيْمًا ۙ 20

(48:20) Allah has promised you abundant spoils which you shall acquire.[35] He has instantly granted you this (victory)[36] and has restrained the hands of people from you[37] that it may be a Sign for the believers[38] and He may guide you to a Straight Way.[39]

35. This refers to the other victories that the Muslim achieved successively after Khaiber.

36. This implies the treaty of Hudaibiyah which has been described as a manifest victory in the beginning of the Surah.

37. That is, He restrained the disbelieving Quraish from attacking you at Hudaibiyah although from all appearances they were in a much better position and yours was a much weaker side militarily. Furthermore, it also implies that no enemy power could muster courage to attack Al-Madinah in those days, whereas after the departure of 1,400 soldiers the Al-Madinah front had become very weak, and the Jews, the polytheists and hypocrites could take advantage of the situation.

38. Sign of this as to how Allah helps the one who remains steadfast on obedience to Allah and His Messenger and comes out to support and defend the truth and righteousness with his trust and faith in Allah.

39. To a straight path: To the path of greater insight and faith so that you may remain steadfast on obedience to Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) in the future and may go on marching on the way of truth with trust in Allah, and may learn this lesson from these experiences that the believer should take practical steps to do whatever is demanded by Allah's religion with his trust in Him, and should not overestimate either his own strength or the strength of the unbelievers.

وَّاُخۡرٰی لَمۡ تَقۡدِرُوۡا عَلَیۡهَا قَدۡ اَحَاطَ اللّٰهُ بِهَا ؕ وَکَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰی کُلِّ شَیۡءٍ قَدِیۡرًا 21

(48:21) He also promises you other spoils which you have not yet taken, but Allah has encompassed them.[40] Allah has power over everything.

40. Most probably this is a reference to the conquest of Makkah. The same is the opinion of Qatadah and Ibn Jarir. It seems to mean this: Though Makkah has not yet fallen to you, Allah has encircled it, and as a result of this victory at Hudaibiyah, it will also fall to you.

وَلَوۡ قٰتَلَکُمُ الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا لَوَلَّوُا الۡاَدۡبَارَ ثُمَّ لَا یَجِدُوۡنَ وَلِیًّا وَّلَا نَصِیۡرًا 22

(48:22) Had the unbelievers fought against you at that time, they would have turned their backs (in flight), and would have found none to protect or help them.[41]

41. That is, Allah did not prevent fighting at Hudaibiyah because there was a possibility of your being defeated there, but there were other reasons for it, which are being stated in the following verses. Had that factor not been there and Allah had allowed the war to take place, the disbelievers would surely have been routed and Makkah would have fallen to you at that very time.

سُنَّةَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِیۡ قَدۡ خَلَتۡ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ ۚۖ وَلَنۡ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللّٰهِ تَبۡدِیۡلًا 23

(48:23) Such is Allah's Way that has come down from the past.[42] Never shall you find any change in the Way of Allah.

42. Here, "the way of Allah" means: Allah disgraces the disbelievers who fight His Messenger (peace be upon him) and helps him.

وَهُوَ الَّذِیْ كَفَّ اَیْدِیَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ وَاَیْدِیَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ بِبَطْنِ مَكَّةَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اَنْ اَظْفَرَكُمْ عَلَیْهِمْ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِیْرًا 24

(48:24) He it is Who restrained their hands from you, and your hands from them in the valley of Makkah, even though He had made you victorious against them. Allah was watching all that you did.

هُمُ الَّذِیْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَصَدُّوْكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْهَدْیَ مَعْكُوْفًا اَنْ یَّبْلُغَ مَحِلَّهٗ ؕ وَلَوْلَا رِجَالٌ مُّؤْمِنُوْنَ وَنِسَآءٌ مُّؤْمِنٰتٌ لَّمْ تَعْلَمُوْهُمْ اَنْ تَطَـُٔوْهُمْ فَتُصِیْبَكُمْ مِّنْهُمْ مَّعَرَّةٌۢ بِغَیْرِ عِلْمٍ ۚ لِیُدْخِلَ اللّٰهُ فِیْ رَحْمَتِهٖ مَنْ یَّشَآءُ ۚ لَوْ تَزَیَّلُوْا لَعَذَّبْنَا الَّذِیْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِیْمًا 25

(48:25) They are the ones who disbelieved and barred you from the Inviolable Mosque and prevented the animals you had designated for sacrifice from reaching the place of their offering.[43] If it had not been for the believing men and believing women (who lived in Makkah and) whom you did not know, and had there not been the fear that you might trample on them and unwittingly incur blame on their account, (then fighting would not have been put to a stop. It was stopped so that) Allah may admit to His Mercy whomsoever He pleases. Had those believers been separated from the rest, We would certainly have inflicted a grievous chastise-ment on those of them [i.e. the Makkans) who disbelieved.[44]

43. That is, Allah was seeing the sincerity and the selfless devotion with which you had become ready to lay down your lives in the cause of the true faith and were obeying the Prophet (peace be upon him) without asking any question. Allah was also seeing that the disbelievers were being unfair. The demand of this situation was that they should have been punished there and then through you, but in spite of that, Allah restrained your hands from them and their hands from you.

44. This was the reason why Allah did not allow fighting to take place at Hudaibiyah. This has two aspects:

That at that time there were quite a number of the Muslim men and women living in Makkah, who were either hiding their faith, or were being persecuted because of their faith

as they had no means to emigrate. Had there been fighting and the Muslims had pushed back the disbelievers and entered Makkah, these Muslims would also have been killed in ignorance along with the disbelievers. This would not only have grieved the Muslims but the Arab polytheists also would have gotten an opportunity to say that the Muslims did not even spare their own brethren in faith during wartime. Therefore, Allah took pity on the helpless Muslims and averted the war in order to save the companions from grief and infamy. The other aspect of the expedience was that Allah did not will that Makkah should fall to the Muslims as a result of the defeat of the Quraish after a bloody clash but He willed that they should be encircled from all sides so that within two years or so they should become absolutely helpless and subdued without offering any resistance, and then the whole tribe should accept Islam and enter Allah's mercy as it actually happened on the conquest of Makkah.

Here the juristic dispute has arisen that if during a war between the Muslims and the disbelievers, the disbelievers should bring out some Muslim men and women, children and old men, in their possession and put them in the forefront as a shield for themselves, or if there is some Muslim population also in the non-Muslim city under attack by the Muslim forces, or if on a warship of the disbelievers, which is within gunfire, the disbelievers have also taken some Muslims on board, can the Muslim army open fire on it? In answer to it the rulings given by different jurists are as follows:

Imam Malik says that in such a case fire should not be opened, and for this he cites this very verse as an argument. He contends that Allah prevented the war at Hudaibiyah only in order to save the Muslims. (Ibn al-Arabi, Ahkam al Quran). But this in fact is a weak argument. There is no word in the verse which may support the view that launching an attack on the enemy in this case is unlawful and forbidden. At the most what one can say on the basis of this verse is that the launching of an attack in such a case should be avoided in order to save the Muslims, provided that it does not put the disbelievers in an advantageous position against the Muslims militarily, or does not diminish the Muslims' chances of gaining an upper hand in the conflict.

Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Abu Yusuf, Imam Zufar and Imam Muhammad say that it is lawful to open fire in such a case; so much so that even if the disbelievers use the children of the Muslims as a shield by putting them in the forefront, there is no harm in shooting at them, and it is not obligatory for the Muslims to expiate and pay any bloodmoney for the Muslims thus killed, (Al-Jassas, Ahkam al- Quran; Imam Muhammad, Kitab as-Siyar).

Imam Sufyan Thauri also in this case regards opening of the fire as lawful, but he says that although the Muslims will not pay the blood-money of the Muslims thus killed, it is obligatory for them to expiate the sin. (Al-Jassas, Ahkam al-Quran).

Imam Auzai and Laith bin Saad say that if the disbelievers use the Muslims as a shield, fire should not be opened on them. Likewise, if it is known that in their warship our own prisoners also are on board, it should not be sunk. But if we attack a city of theirs and we know that there are also Muslims in the city, it is lawful to open fire on the city, for it is not certain that our shells will only hit the Muslims, and if a Muslim becomes a victim of this shelling, it will not be willful murder of a Muslim but an inadvertent accident. (Al-Jassas, Ahkam alQur an).

Imam Shafei holds the view that in such a case if it is not inevitable to open fire. It is better to try to save the Muslims from destruction; although it is not unlawful to open fire in this case, it is undesirable. But if it is really necessary and it is feared that in case fire is not opened it will put the disbelievers in a better position militarily against the Muslims, it is lawful to resort to shelling, but even then every effort should be made to save the Muslims as far as possible. Furthermore, Imam Shafei also says that if during a conflict the disbelievers put a Muslim in front as a shield and a Muslim kills him, there can be two possible alternatives: either the killer knew that the murdered person was a Muslim, or he did not know that he was a Muslim. In the first case, he will be under obligation to pay compensation for manslaughter as well as do expiation; in the second case he will only do expiation. (Mughni alMuhtaj).

إِذْ جَعَلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْحَمِيَّةَ حَمِيَّةَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَىٰ
رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَلْزَمَهُمْ كَلِمَةَ التَّقْوَىٰ وَكَانُوا أَحَقَّ بِهَا وَأَهْلَهَا ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ
شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا ۝ 26

(48:26) (This is why) when the unbelievers set in their hearts a fierce bigotry the bigotry of ignorance[45] Allah bestowed inner peace upon His Messenger and upon the believers[46] and made the word of piety binding on them. They were more deserving and worthier thereof. Allah has knowledge of everything.

45. The words hamiyyat al-jahiliyyah mean that a man should willfully do something unworthy and improper only for the sake of his honor and prestige. The disbelievers of Makkah themselves acknowledged and admitted that everybody had a right to visit the Kabah for performing Hajj and Umrah, and that they had no right to stop anyone from this duty. This was an ancient admitted law of Arabia. But in spite of knowing that they were absolutely in the wrong and the Muslims in the right. They prevented the Muslims from performing Umrah only for the sake of their prestige. The righteous, even among the polytheists, were also saying that preventing the people, who had come in the pilgrim garbs along with sacrificial camels, from performing pilgrimage was an improper act. Yet the Quraish leaders persisted in their resistance only with the idea that if Muhammad (peace be upon him) entered Makkah along with a large number of his followers, it would mean loss of prestige for them among the Arabs. This was their arrogance.

46. Here, sakinat means the patience and dignity with which the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Muslims resisted the disbelievers rancor and spirit of paganism. They did not get provoked at their stubborn and insolent behavior and did not do anything which might have violated the spirit of truth and righteousness, or which might have further complicated the situation instead of settling it amicably.

لَقَدْ صَدَقَ اللّٰهُ رَسُوْلَهُ الرُّءْيَا بِالْحَقِّ ۚ لَتَدْخُلُنَّ الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ اِنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ اٰمِنِيْنَ ۙ
مُحَلِّقِيْنَ رُءُوْسَكُمْ وَمُقَصِّرِيْنَ ۙ لَا تَخَافُوْنَ ؕ فَعَلِمَ مَا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوْا فَجَعَلَ مِنْ دُوْنِ ذٰلِكَ
فَتْحًا قَرِيْبًا 27

(48:27) Allah indeed showed His Messenger the true vision,[47] one fully in accord with reality. If Allah so wills[48] you shall certainly enter the Inviolable Mosque, in full security,[49] you will shave your heads and cut your hair short,[50] and do so without any fear. He knew what you did not know, and He granted you a victory near at hand even before (the fulfilment of the vision).

47. This is the answer to the question that was constantly agitating the minds of the Muslim. They said: The Prophet (peace be upon him) had seen in his vision that he had entered the Masjid al-Haram and went around the Kabah in worship. Then how is it that they were returning without performing Umrah? In answer to this, although the Prophet (peace be upon him) had told them that in his vision he had not seen that they would perform the Umrah that very year, still there remained some suspicion in the hearts. Therefore, Allah Himself explained that it was He Who had shown the vision and it was a true vision and it would certainly be fulfilled.

48. Here, about the words Insha-Allah (if Allah so wills), which Allah Himself has used with His promise, one can raise the objection that when Allah Himself is making this promise, what is the meaning of making it conditional upon His own willing it? The answer is: Here the words Insha- Allah have not been used in the sense that if Allah does not will, He will not fulfill His promise, but in fact these relate to the background in which this promise was made. The presumption on the basis of which the disbelievers of Makkah had played the drama of preventing the Muslims from umrah was that only he whom they would allow would perform umrah, and would perform it only when they would allow it. At this Allah has said: This depends on Our, not on their, will. The reason why umrah has not been performed this year is not because the disbelievers of Makkah did not allow it to be performed, but because We did not will it to be performed. In the future umrah will be performed if We will, no matter whether the disbelievers allow it or disallow it. Besides, these words also contain the meaning that the Muslims too, will perform umrah not by their own power but because We would will that they should perform it. Otherwise, if We do not will, they do not possess any power to perform it by themselves.

49. This promise was fulfilled in the following year in Dhil- Qadah A.H.7. This Umrah is well known in history as Umrah al-Qada.

50. The words clearly point out that it is not obligatory to get the head shaved in umrah and Hajj, but it is also right to get the hair cut short. However, it is better to have the head shaved, for Allah has mentioned it first and then mentioned having the hair cut short.

هُوَ الَّذِیۡۤ اَرۡسَلَ رَسُوۡلَهٗ بِالۡهُدٰی وَدِیۡنِ الۡحَقِّ لِیُظۡهِرَهٗ عَلَی الدِّیۡنِ کُلِّهٖ ؕ وَکَفٰی بِاللّٰهِ
شَهِیۡدًا ؕ 28

(48:28) He it is Who sent His Messenger with the True Guidance and the Religion of Truth that He may make it prevail over every religion. Sufficient is Allah as a witness (to this).[51]

51. The reason why this thing has been mentioned here is that when at Hudaibiyah the peace treaty was going to be written down, the disbelievers had objected to the use of the words Rasul-Allah (Messenger of Allah) with the name of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and on their insistence the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself had removed these words from the document. At this Allah says: Our Messenger's being a Messenger is a reality which remains unaffected whether someone believes in it or not. If some people do not believe in it, they may not, for Allah is enough for a witness over it. Their denial will not change the reality, but the guidance and the true faith which this Messenger (peace be upon him) has brought from Us, shall prevail over all religion, no matter how hard the deniers try to obstruct its progress.

"All religions" implies all those ways of life which include the nature of deen (religion). We have explained it in details in (E.N. 3 of Surah Az-Zumar) and(E.N. 20 of Surah Ash-Shura). Here what Allah has stated in clear words is: The purpose of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) appointment as a Prophet was not merely to preach this religion but to make it prevail over all others. In other words, he did not bring this religion so that it might survive in a limited compartment of life, while the rest of the spheres of life, by and large, should remain under the relentless control of some false religion (way of life). But he had brought it so that it should be the dominant way of life and any other religion should survive, if at all it survives, only within the limits in which it allows it to survive. For further explanation, sec (E.N. 48 of Surah Az-Zumar).

مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُوۡلُ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَالَّذِیۡنَ مَعَهٗۤ اَشِدَّآءُ عَلَی الۡکُفَّارِ رُحَمَآءُ بَیۡنَهُمۡ تَرٰىهُمۡ رُکَّعًا
سُجَّدًا یَّبۡتَغُوۡنَ فَضۡلًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِضۡوَانًا ۫ سِیۡمَاهُمۡ فِیۡ وُجُوۡهِهِمۡ مِّنۡ اَثَرِ السُّجُوۡدِ ؕ ذٰلِکَ
مَثَلُهُمۡ فِی التَّوۡرٰىةِ ۚۖ وَمَثَلُهُمۡ فِی الۡاِنۡجِیۡلِ ۚۛ کَزَرۡعٍ اَخۡرَجَ شَطۡـَٔهٗ فَاٰزَرَهٗ فَاسۡتَغۡلَظَ
فَاسۡتَوٰی عَلٰی سُوۡقِهٖ یُعۡجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِیَغِیۡظَ بِهِمُ الۡکُفَّارَ ؕ وَعَدَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا
وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنۡهُمۡ مَّغۡفِرَةً وَّاَجۡرًا عَظِیۡمًا ع 29

(48:29) Muhammad is Allah's Messenger, and those who are with him are firm with the unbelievers[52] but compassionate with one another.[53] You see them occupied in bowing and prostrating and in seeking Allah's bounty and good pleasure. They are distinguished[54] from others by the marks of prostration on their faces. Thus are they described in the Torah.[55] And their parable in the Gospel is that of[56] a tilth that puts forth its shoot, then strengthens it so that it becomes stout and stands firmly on its stem. This is a sight pleasing to the sowers and one by which the unbelievers will be enraged. As for those who believe and do righteous deeds, Allah has promised them forgiveness and a great reward.[57]

52. The companions (of the Prophet) are hard against the disbelievers: They are not such that the disbelievers may mold them as they like. They can neither be cowed nor purchased by any inducement. The disbelievers have no power to turn them away from the great objective for the sake of which they have joined and followed the Prophet (peace be upon him) even at the cost of their lives.

53. That is, whatever their hardness and severity, it is only for the disbelievers, not for the believers. As regards the believers they are soft, merciful, affectionate, sympathetic and compassionate. Their unity of aim and object has produced in them love and harmony and complete accord among themselves.

54. This does not imply the mark that appears on the forehead of some people on account of prostrations, but it implies the marks and traces of the fear of God, munificence, nobility and goodness of manner that naturally appears on the face of a person on account of bowing down before God. Man’s face is an open book on the pages of which different states of a man’s self can be seen easily. A vain and arrogant person’s face is different from the face of a humble, modest and unassuming person; an immoral person’s face is clearly distinguished from the face of a righteous and well mannered person; and there is a marked difference between the facial appearance of a wicked man and of a noble and virtuous man. What Allah means to say is: The companions of Muhammad (peace be upon him) are such that one can recognize them on first sight to be the best of mankind, because their faces shine forth with the light of God worship and God consciousness. This is the same thing about which Imam Malik has said that when the armies of the companions entered Syria, the Syrian Christians remarked: These people possess the very same qualities and characteristics of the disciples of the Prophet Jesus Christ (peace be upon him).

55. The allusion probably is to Deuteronomy, 33: 2-3, in which the Holy Prophet’s (peace be upon him) advent has been foretold and the word saints has been used for his companions. Apart from this, if some other quality of the companions has been mentioned in the Torah, it is not found in the existing, corrupted Torah.

56. This parable is found in a sermon of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) that has been reported in the New Testament, thus:

And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground: And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the

sickle, because the harvest is come. And he said, Where unto shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sewn in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth. But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shouted out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

The last portion of this sermon is also found in Matthew, 13: 31-32.

57. A section of the Muslims translates this verse, thus: Allah has promised forgiveness and a great reward to those from among these people who have believed and done good works. Thus, they invent a way to vilify and slander the companions, and claim that according to this verse many people among the companions were not believers and righteous. But this commentary goes against verses (4, 5, 18 and 26)of this very Sarah, and does not even accord with the initial sentences of this verse itself. In(verses 4-5), Allah has made mention of sending down sakinat (tranquility) and of effecting increase in the faith of all those companions who were present with the Prophet (peace be upon him) at Hudaibiyah, and given them without any exception the good news of admission into Paradise. In (verse 18), Allah has expressed His good pleasure for all those who took the pledge to the Prophet (peace be upon him), and in this also there is no exception. In (verse 26), Allah has also used the word muminin (believers) for all the companions, has mentioned of sending down His sakinat to them, and obliged them to be righteous and pious, for they were most worthy and deserving of all mankind. Here also, it was not said that the news was being given only abut those who were believers among them. Then also in the initial sentences of this verse itself the characteristics mentioned are of all those people who were with the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The words are to the effect that all the people who are with him have this quality and characteristic. After this, suddenly in the last sentence there could be no excuse to say that some of them were the believers and others were not.

49. Surah Al Hujaraat (The Private Apartments)

Name

The Surah takes its name from verse 4 in which the word hujurat has occurred.

Period of Revelation

Traditions show and the subject matter of the Surah also supports the same that this Surah is a collection of the commandments and instructions sent down on different occasions, which have been put together because of the relevancy of the theme. Moreover, the traditions also show that most of these commandments were sent down during the final stage of the Holy Prophet's life at Madinah. For instance, about verse 4 the commentators state that it was sent down concerning the Bani Tamim whose deputation had arrived in Madinah and started calling out to the Holy Prophet from outside the apartments (hujurat) of his wives, and according to all biographical books on the Holy Prophet's life this deputation had visited Madinah in A. H. 9. Likewise, about verse 6 a large number of the traditions of Hadith confirm that it was sent down concerning Walid bin Uqbah whom the Holy Prophet had sent to collect the zakat from the Bani al-Mustaliq, and it is well known that Walid bin Uqabah had become a Muslim on the conquest of Makkah.

Subject Matter and Topics

The subject matter of this Surah is to teach the Muslims the manners worthy of true believers.

In the first five verses they have been taught the manners they should observe with regard to Allah and His Messenger.

Then, they have been given the instruction that it is not right to believe in every news blindly and to act according to it, without due thought. If information is received about a person, a group or a community, it should be seen carefully whether the means of the information is reliable or not. If the means is not reliable, it should be tested and examined to see whether the news is authentic or not before taking any action on it.

Then, it has been told what attitude should the other Muslims adopt in case two groups of the Muslims fall to mutual fighting.

Then the Muslims have been exhorted to safeguard against the evils that corrupt collective life and spoil mutual relationships. Mocking and taunting each other, calling others by nicknames, creating suspicions, prying into other people's affairs and back biting are the evils which are not only sins in themselves but they also corrupt society. Allah has mentioned all these evils separately and forbidden them as unlawful.

After this, the national and racial distinctions that cause universal corruption in the world have been condemned. Nations and tribes and families pride of Ancestry and their looking down upon others as inferior to themselves and their pulling down others only for the sake of establishing their own superiority is an important factor that has filled the world with injustices and tyranny. Allah in a brief verse has cut at the root of this evil by stating that all

men are descendants of the same one pair and their division into tribes and communities is only for the sake of recognition, not for boasting and pride, and there is no lawful basis of one man's superiority over the other except on the basis of moral excellence.

In conclusion, the people have been told that the real thing is not the verbal Profession of the Faith but to believe in Allah and His messenger truly, to obey them in practical life and to exert sincerely with one's self and wealth in the cause of Allah. True believers are only those who adopt this attitude. As for those who profess Islam merely orally without affirmation by the heart and then adopt an attitude as if they had done someone a favor by accepting Islam, may be counted among the Muslims in the world, may even be treated as Muslims in society, but they cannot be counted as believers in the sight of Allah.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

یٰۤاَیُّہَا الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا لَا تُقَدِّمُوۡا بَیۡنَ یَدَیِ اللّٰہِ وَ رَسُوۡلِہٖ وَ اتَّقُوا اللّٰہَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ سَمِیۡعٌ عَلِیۡمٌ 1

(49:1) Believers, do not advance before Allah and His Messenger,[1] and fear Allah. Verily Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.[2]

1. This is the foremost and basic demand of the faith. If the person who regards Allah as his Lord and accepts Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) as his guide and leader, is true in his belief, he can never have the attitude that he should give his own opinion and view precedence over the decision of Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him), or should adopt an independent opinion in the matters, and pass his own judgments without caring to find out whether Allah and His Messenger have given any guidance in those matters or not, and if they have given it, what it is. That is why it has been said: O you who believe, do not put (yourselves) before Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him). That is, do not go ahead of them, but follow behind. Do not precede them, but be subordinate to them.

This command is, in its application and effect, a step further to (verse 36 of Surah Al-Ahzab). There it was said: It does not behoove a believing man and a believing woman that when Allah and His Messenger have given their decision in a matter, they should exercise an option in that matter of theirs, and here it is said that the believers should not decide their matters on their own whims, but should look for guidance in Allah's Book and His Prophet's (peace be upon him) sunnah concerning those matters. This command it not confined only to individual matters of the Muslims but it also applies to their collective affairs. This is in fact the fundamental article of the Islamic law, which can neither be set aside nor ignored by a Muslim government, or by a Muslim court, or by a parliament. A tradition has been reported in Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah, with authentic chains of transmitters, saying that when the Prophet (peace be upon him) was sending Muadh bin Jabal to Yaman as a judge, he asked him: By what will you decide the matters? He submitted: By the Book of Allah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: If you do not find the command concerning a matter in the Book of Allah, what will you turn to?

He replied: To the sunnah of Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him). The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked: If this also fails you? He replied: Then I shall exert and find out a solution by myself. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) placed his hand on Muadh's chest and said: Thank God Who has helped His Messenger's deputy to adopt the way that is approved by His Messenger. This giving of precedence to the Book of Allah and the sunnah of His Messenger over one's own exercise to find out a solution and to turn to them first to obtain guidance is the thing that marks the distinction between a Muslim judge and a non-Muslim judge. Likewise, in the matter of legislation also there is absolute consensus that the first and foremost source of the law is the divine Book and after it the sunnah of the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah. Even the consensus of the entire ummah cannot go against or remain independent of them, not to speak of the individual Muslim's reasoning and endeavor to interpret the law.

2. That is, if ever you adopted an attitude of independence as against Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him), or gave priority to your own opinion and view over their command, you should know that you have to deal with that God Who is hearing whatever you utter and is even aware of your secret intentions.

يَاأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا لَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ
كَجَهْرِ بَعْضِكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ أَنْ تَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ 2

(49:2) Believers, do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet and when speaking to him do not speak aloud as you speak aloud to one another,[3] lest all your deeds are reduced to nothing without your even realising it.[4]

3. This is the etiquette that was taught to the people who sat among the audience of the Prophet (peace be upon him) or came to visit him. Its intention was that the believers should treat the Prophet (peace be upon him) with the highest respect and reverence when visiting him and talking to him. Nobody should raise his voice louder than his. The people should not be unmindful of the fact that they are addressing the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah, and not a common man, or a person of equal rank. Therefore, there should be a marked difference between one's tone of conversation with the common people and one's tone of conversation with the Prophet (peace be upon him), and no one should talk to him in a voice louder than his.

Although this etiquette was taught for sitting in the Prophet's (peace be upon him) assembly and its addressees were the people who were living in his time, the people of the later ages should also observe the same respect and reverence on the occasion when the Prophet's name is mentioned, or a command of his is stated, or his sayings are explained. Besides, this verse also points out what attitude the people should adopt when talking to persons of a higher rank and status than themselves. A person's talking before the men of a higher rank in a way as he talks before his friends or the common men, is in fact a sign that he has no respect for them in his heart, and he does not recognize any difference between them and the common people.

4. This shows what high position the person of the Prophet (peace be upon him) occupies in Islam. No one, whatever his rank and status, has a position so that his unmannerly behavior towards the Prophet (peace be upon him), would not deserve in the sight of Allah the same punishment as the punishment for disbelief. In respect of ordinary people it is at the most a sort of rudeness, an uncivilized conduct, but in respect of the Prophet (peace be upon him) a little lack of reverence is such a grave sin as can destroy all the services of one's lifetime. For the reverence of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is indeed reverence of that God Who has sent him as His Messenger and lack of reverence for him amounts to lack of reverence of God Himself.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَغُضُّونَ أَصْوَاتَهُمْ عِندَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ امْتَحَنَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ 3

(49:3) The ones who lower their voices in the presence of the Messenger of Allah are those whose hearts Allah has tested for God-fearing.[5] Theirs shall be forgiveness and a great reward.

5. That is, only those people give due reverence to the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah, who have passed successfully through the tests and trials set by Allah and proved by their steadfastness that their hearts indeed possess taqwa (piety). From this, it follows automatically that the heart which is devoid of reverence for the Prophet (peace be upon him) is, in fact, devoid of taqwa, and a person's raising his voice louder than the Prophet's (peace be upon him) is not only an uncivilized act outwardly but also a sign of the absence of taqwa in his heart.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُنَادُونَكَ مِن وَرَاءِ الْحُجُرَاتِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ 4

(49:4) Surely most of those who call out to you, (O Prophet), from behind the apartments, are devoid of understanding.

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ صَبَرُوا حَتَّىٰ تَخْرُجَ إِلَيْهِمْ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ 5

(49:5) If they were patient until you went out to them, that would have been better for them.[6] Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.[7]

6. The people who in the blessed time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) had received training in Islamic etiquette and manners under the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself had a full regard for his person. They fully realized how busy he remained in performing the mission entrusted to him by Allah. They also understood well that during those tiresome activities he must necessarily have some time for rest, time for his important occupations and also time for attending to his domestic affairs. Therefore, they would come to visit him only at the time when he was available outside his house, and if ever they did not find him outside his living quarters among his companions, they would sit and await his emergence

and would avoid giving him the trouble of coming out of his house unless there was a special need for it. But many a time it so happened that the people from far flung areas, who had had no opportunity to receive training in good manners, would come to visit the Prophet (peace be upon him) with the idea that the one who invited others to Allah and was working for the reformation of the people had no right to have rest at any time, and they had the right to visit and see him any time they pleased in the day or night and it was his duty that whenever they happened to arrive, he should be ready to receive them. Some of these people who came to see the Prophet (peace be upon him) from different parts of Arabia were so uncouth and impolite that they would not take the trouble to inform him of their arrival through some attendant, but would start shouting from outside the apartments of his wives to call him out. Several such incidents have been reported by the companions in the Hadith. This sort of behavior troubled him much, but he was tolerant on account of his natural clemency. At last, Allah had to intervene, Who reproved the people for their uncivilized behavior and gave this instruction: Whenever they came to see the Prophet (peace be upon him) and did not find him, they should wait for him patiently until he came out to them himself, instead of shouting to call him out, from the house.

7. This is, whatever had happened until then will be overlooked and forgiven by Allah and He will not hold those people accountable for the trouble they had been causing to His Messenger (peace be upon him) on account of His mercy and kindness, but they should not repeat such behavior in the future.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ إِن جَآءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌۢ بِنَبَإٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوٓا۟ أَن تُصِيبُوا۟ قَوْمًۢا بِجَهَٰلَةٍ فَتُصْبِحُوا۟ عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَٰدِمِينَ 6

(49:6) Believers, when an ungodly person brings to you a piece of news, carefully ascertain its truth, lest you should hurt a people unwittingly and thereafter repent at what you did.[8]

8. Most of the commentators have expressed the view that this verse was sent down concerning Walid bin Uqbah bin Abi Muait. Its background is this: When the tribe of the Bani al-Mustaliq embraced Islam, the Prophet (peace be upon him) sent Walid bin Uqbah to collect the Zakat from them. When he arrived in their territory, he became fearful due to some reason and without visiting the people of the tribe returned to Al-Madinah and complained to the Prophet (peace be upon him) that they had refused to pay the Zakat and had even wanted to kill him. On hearing this, the Prophet (peace be upon him) became very angry and he made up his mind to dispatch a contingent to punish those people. According to some traditions he had dispatched the contingent, and according to others, he was about to dispatch it. In any case, all agree that in the meantime the chief of the Bani al-Mustaliq, Harith bin Dirar, father of Juwairiyah, wife of the Prophet (peace be upon him), arrived at the head of a deputation, and submitted: By God, we did not at all see Walid; therefore, there could be no question of refusing to pay the Zakat and wanting to kill him. We are steadfast to the faith and have no intention to withhold the Zakat. At this, this verse was sent down. With a little variation in wording this incident has been related by Imam Ahmad,

Abi Hatim, Tabarani, and Ibn Jarir, on the authority of Abdullah bin Abbas, Harith bin Dirar, Mujahid, Qatadah, Abdur Rehman bin Abi Laila, Yazid bin Ruman, Dahhak and Muqatil bin Hayyan. In the tradition reported by Umm Salamah this whole story has been related likewise but there is no reference to the name of Walid.

On this critical occasion when on account of believing in a baseless report a grave blunder was about to be committed, Allah gave the Muslims this guiding principle to be followed on receipt of news: Whenever you receive important news bearing upon a vital matter, you should not accept it immediately but should first examine the man who has brought it. If he is an evil man whose report is not authentic normally, you should inquire into it carefully to ascertain the truth instead of accepting it and acting on it immediately. From this divine command an important legal principle is deduced, the sphere of application of which is very vast. According to it, it is not permissible for a Muslim government to take any action against a person or a group or a nation on the basis of the reports provided by the secret agents whose character might be doubtful. On the basis of this very principle the traditionalists introduced the art of critical appraisal in the science of Hadith in order to determine the value and worth of the people through whom traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) reached the later generations. And the jurists established this principle in the law of evidence that in a matter from which a Shariah value can be deduced, or a duty imposed on a person; the evidence of an evil man would be unacceptable. However, all scholars agree that as far as the common worldly matters are concerned it is not necessary to ascertain the truth of every news and the reliability of every informer. For the word used in the verse is naba, which does not apply to every news but only to the news of consequence. That is why the jurists say that this principle does not apply in the case of ordinary matters. For example, if a person goes to visit somebody and seeks permission to enter the house, and a person comes out and conveys the permission, he can enter the house accordingly no matter whether the one conveying the permission from the master of the house was good or bad. Likewise, the scholars also agree that the evidence, as well as the report, of the people whose evil does not relate to lying and immorality, but they are regarded as unrighteous only on account of false beliefs, will also be acceptable. Only the falsehood of heir creed cannot be a hindrance to accepting their evidence or reports.

وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ فِيْكُمْ رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ ؕ لَوْ يُطِيْعُكُمْ فِيْ كَثِيْرٍ مِّنَ الْاَمْرِ لَعَنِتُّمْ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ
حَبَّبَ اِلَيْكُمُ الْاِيْمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهٗ فِيْ قُلُوْبِكُمْ وَكَرَّهَ اِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوْقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ ؕ
اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الرّٰشِدُوْنَ ۙ 7

(49:7) Know that Allah's Messenger is among you. Were he to follow you in many an affair, you yourselves would suffer.[9] But Allah has endeared faith to you and has embellished it in your hearts, and has made unbelief and evil-doing and disobedience abhorrent to you. Such are those who are rightly guided,

9. This is evident from the context as well as understood by several commentators from this verse that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was hesitant to take any military action against the Bani al-Mustaliq on the report given by Walid bin Uqbah, but some of the people insisted that they should be attacked at once. At this those people were warned that they should not forget that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was present among them, who understood them (Bani al-Mustaliq) better than they did. Therefore, their thinking that the Prophet (peace be upon him) should act according to their counsel in important matters was misplaced boldness. For if he started acting according to what they counseled it would generally lead to blunders for which they themselves would have to suffer.

فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَنِعْمَةً ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ 8

(49:8) by Allah's favour and bounty.10 Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.11

10. It means this: The whole community of the believers has not committed the error that was committed by those few people who wanted the Prophet (peace be upon him) to act as they counseled, and the believing community is remaining steadfast on the right path was due to the reason that Allah by His bounty and grace had endeared to them the path of the faith and made unbelief, wrongdoing and disobedience abhorrent to them. The addressees in the two parts of this verse are two separate groups. The sentence beginning with lau yutiukum is not addressed to the entire class of the companions but only to those particular companions who were insisting that the Bani al-Mustaliq should be attacked at once, and the sentence beginning with wa lakin-nallaha, is addressed to the general class of the companions who would never dare insist on their own opinion and view before the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah, but had full faith in his leadership and remained steadfast on the path of obedience, which is, and should be, the demand of true faith. From this it cannot be concluded that those who had insisted on their own opinion were devoid of the love of the faith, but what becomes obvious from this is that they had become forgetful of this demand of the faith because of which they made the error of insisting on their own opinion in the presence of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Therefore, Allah first warned them of their error, then of its evil consequences, and finally stated that the right attitude for a believer was the one that had been adopted by the generality of the companions.

11. That is, Allah does not bestow His bounty and favor blindly, but He grants this great blessing to whomever He grants on the basis of wisdom and His knowledge that he is worthy of it.

وَاِنْ طَآئِفَتٰنِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اقْتَتَلُوْا فَاَصْلِحُوْا بَيْنَهُمَا ۚ فَاِنْۢ بَغَتْ اِحْدٰىهُمَا عَلَى
الْاُخْرٰى فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِيْ تَبْغِيْ حَتّٰى تَفِيْٓءَ اِلٰٓى اَمْرِ اللّٰهِ ۚ فَاِنْ فَآءَتْ فَاَصْلِحُوْا بَيْنَهُمَا
بِالْعَدْلِ وَاَقْسِطُوْا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِيْنَ 9

(49:9) If two parties of the believers happen to fight,[12] make peace between them.[13] But then, if one of them transgresses against the other, fight the one that transgresses[14] until it reverts to Allah's command.[15] And if it does revert, make peace between them with justice,[16] and be equitable for Allah loves the equitable.[17]

12. Instead of saying: When two factions of the believers fight mutually, it has been said: If two factions of the believers should fight. From these words, it follows that mutual fighting is not the character of the Muslims, nor should it be. It is not expected that being the believers they would fight mutually. However, if such a thing ever happens, the procedure that follows should be adopted. Moreover, the word taifah has been used for a group instead of firqah: the words taifah and firqah in Arabic are used for a small group and a large group respectively. This also shows that it is indeed a highly offensive state in the sight of Allah in which large groups of the Muslims cannot be expected to be involved.

13. The recipients of this command are all those Muslims who may not be a party to either of the groups and for whom it may be possible to try to make peace between them. In other words, Allah does not approve that the other Muslims should just sit and watch the clash when two groups of their own community have fallen to mutual fighting. But whenever such a sad situation arises all the believers should become concerned and should do whatever they can to bring about peace and reconciliation between the parties. They should urge the parties to desist from fighting; they should exhort them to fear God. Their influential people should go and talk to the responsible men of the two sides, should find out the causes of the dispute and do whatever they can to effect reconciliation between them.

14. That is, The Muslims also should not allow the aggressor to continue his aggression and leave the victim alone, or, still worse, join hands with the aggressor. But their duty is that if all their efforts at reconciliation between the parties fail, they should find out as to who is in the right and who is the aggressor. Then they should join hands with the one who is in the right and fight the aggressor. As this fighting has been enjoined by Allah, it is obligatory and comes under jihad, it is not the fitnah (mischief) about which the Prophet (peace be upon him) has said: It is a situation in which the one standing is better than the one moving, and the one sitting is better than the one standing. For, that fitnah implies the mutual fighting of the Muslims in which the parties might be fighting out of bigotry, or for a false sense of honor and worldly possessions and neither may be having the truth on its side. As for the fight that is undertaken in support of the group who is in the right against the aggressor, it is not taking part in the fitnah but carrying out Allah’s command. All the jurists agree on its being an obligation. And there was no difference of opinion among the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) companions about its being obligatory. (AIJassas, Ahkamal-Quran). Some jurists even regard it as superior to jihad itself and their reasoning is that Ali spent the entire period of his caliphate in fighting against the rebels instead of performing jihad against the disbelievers. (Ruhal-Maani). If a person argues that it was not obligatory because Abdullah bin Umar and some other companions had not participated in the wars fought by Ali, he would be in the wrong. Ibn Umar himself says: I have never been so much grieved at heart on anything as on account of this verse as to why I did not fight the rebels as enjoined by Allah. (Hakim, al-Mustadrik).

The command to fight the aggressor does not necessarily mean that he should be fought with the weapons and killed, but it implies the use of force against him, the real object being

the removal of his aggression. For this object whatever force is necessary should be used, and no more and no less force should be used than what is absolutely necessary.

The addressees of this command are the people who have the power to repel the aggression by the use of force.

15. This shows that the fighting is not meant to punish the rebel (the aggressing party) for his rebellion (aggression), but to force him to return to the command of Allah. Allah's command implies that the rebel group should submit to what is right according to the Book of Allah and the sunnah of the Messenger of Allah, and should give up the attitude and conduct that amounts to aggression according to this criterion of the truth. As soon as a rebel group becomes ready and willing to follow this command, use of force against it should be stopped, for this is the actual object of the fighting and its target. The one who commits an excess after this would himself become the aggressor. As for this as to what is the truth and what is the aggression in a dispute according to the Book of Allah and the sunnah of His Messenger, its determination is inevitably the job of those people of the ummah, who have the ability to carry out research by virtue of their knowledge and insight.

16. The command is not only to make peace but to make peace with justice and equity. This shows that in the sight of Allah the peace (and reconciliation) which is brought about only to stop fighting, overlooking the distinction between the truth and falsehood, and in which pressure is used against the party that is in the right to come to terms with the aggressor, is not commendable. True peace is that which is based on justice. This alone can avert disaster and mischief; otherwise the inevitable result of pressing those in the right and encouraging the aggressors would be that the real causes of the evil would remain as they were, rather would go on adding up, and cause the mischief to appear and re-appear over and over again.

17. This verse forms the actual basis of the Islamic law about the mutual fighting between the Muslims. No explanation of this law is found in the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him) except one Hadith which we shall discuss below. For, in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), no war took place between the Muslims; hence nothing is found in his practice and sayings that could throw light on the commandments concerning it. Afterwards, when during the caliphate of Ali wars took place between the Muslims themselves, authentic explanation of this law became possible. At that time since a large number of the companions were still living, a detailed code of this aspect of the Islamic law was compiled in the light of their practice and statements. Ali's personal example in particular has been the real source in this matter for all the jurists. Below we give a brief resume of this code:

(1) There are several forms of mutual fighting between Muslims and each has its own separate injunctions:

(a) When both the fighting groups may be the subjects of a Muslim government: In this case it is the duty of the government to make peace between them, or to decide as to who is the aggressor between them, and to compel him by use of force to revert to the truth.

(b) When the parties may be two powerful groups, or two Muslim governments, and both may be fighting for the sake of the worldly gain: In this case, the believers should absolutely refrain from taking part in the fitnah and should exhort the parties concerned to fear God and desist from fighting.

(c) When one of the belligerent parties as mentioned above may be right and the other the aggressor, who may not be listening to counsel nor be inclined to make peace: In this case believers should side with and support the party that is in the right against the aggressor.

(d) When one of the parties may be the subjects, who may have revolted against the government, i.e. the Muslim government: The jurists use the term baghi (rebel) for this very party which is guilty of rebelling.

(2) The rebels against the government may also be of several kinds:

(a) Those who may have risen only to create chaos and confusion, and may have no legal ground for their revolt. There is consensus that against such people it is lawful for the government to wage war, and it is obligatory for the believers to side with it, no matter whether it is a just government or not.

(b) Those who may revolt against a government in order to depose it from power, and may have no legal ground for this, and may also appear to be unjust and evil. In this case, if the government is just, it is obligatory to side with it without any question, but even if it is unjust, it is obligatory to fight in order to sustain it, for there is peace and order in the country because of it.

(c) Those who may revolt against a government on the basis of a legal ground, but their ground may be false and their belief vicious and perverse, e.g. the Khwarij. In this case also a Muslim government whether it is just or unjust, has a lawful right to fight them and it is obligatory to side with it.

(d) Those who may revolt against a just government when its head might have assumed power lawfully. In this case whether they have a legal ground or do not have any, the government in any case is justified to wage war against them and it is obligatory to side with it.

(e) Those who may revolt against an unjust government, which might have come to power by coercion and whose leaders might be wicked and the rebels might have risen to establish justice and enforce articles of the divine law, and they might appear to be righteous. In this case, acute difference of opinion has appeared among the jurists as to whether they should be declared the rebels (i.e. transgressors) and whether it is obligatory to fight against them or not. This we state below briefly:

The generality of the jurists and the Ahl-al-Hadith hold the view that it is unlawful to rise in revolt against a ruler whose government has once been established and there is complete peace and order in the land under him, no matter whether he is just or unjust, and he has come to power in any way whatever, except in case he commits disbelief openly. Imam Sarakhsi writes: In a case when the Muslims agree on a ruler and they enjoy peace under him and the roads are safe, if a group of the Muslims rises in revolt against him, everyone

who has power is under obligation to side with the ruler of the Muslims and wage war against the rebels. (Al-Mabsut, Bab-al-Khwarij) Imam Nawawi writes in his commentary of Sahih Muslim: It is forbidden to rise in revolt and fight against the Imams (i.e. the Muslim rulers) even if they are wicked and unjust. Imam Nawawi claims that there is consensus on this.

But this claim of the consensus is not correct. A large group of the jurists of Islam which includes some major scholars, declares those rising in revolt as rebels only in case they rise in revolt against a just ruler. They do not regard as rebellion in the Quranic terminology the rising in revolt of the righteous against the unjust and wicked rulers, nor declare the waging of war against them as obligatory. The view of Imam Abu Hanifah about fighting against unjust rulers is well known among the scholars. Abu Bakr al Jassas clearly writes in his Ahkam-al-Quran that the Imam regarded this fighting not only as permissible but as obligatory in favorable conditions. (Vol. I, p. 81; Vol. II, p. 39). In Zaid bin Ali's revolt against the Umayyads, he not only provided financial help but urged others also to do the same. (AI-Jassas, Vol I, p. 81). In Nafs-al-Zakiyahs revolt against Mansur he went on earnestly supporting Nafs-al- Zakiyah, and he declared this war as superior to a war against the disbelievers. (Al-jassas, Vol. I, p. 81; AIKardari, Manaqib Abi Hanifah, Vol. II, pp. 71-72). Then the consolidated opinion of the Hanafi thinkers is not the same as Imam Sarakhsi has stated. Ibne Humam writes in Fath al-Qadir (commentary of Hedaya) that a rebel is one who is disobedient to a rightful ruler. From amongst the Hanbalis Ibn Aqil and Ibn al-Jawzi declare struggle against a non-just ruler proper and on this point show solidarity with the revolt of Hussain (Al-Infaf, Vol. X, Bab Qital Ahl-al-Baghyi). Imam Shafei in his Kitab al-Um regards as rebel the one who fights against a just ruler (Vol. IV, p. 135). Imam Malik's view as cited in Al- Mudawwanah is: If the rebels come out to fight against a just ruler, they should be forcibly opposed. (Vol. I, p. 407). Qadi Abu Bakr Ibn al-Arabi has cited his this view in Ahkam al-Quran: When a person rises in revolt against a just ruler like Umar bin Abdul Aziz, it is obligatory to resist and repel him; as for some other kind of ruler, he should be left alone. Allah will punish him through some other unjust person and then both of them through some third unjust person. Another saying of Imam Malik that has been cited is: When the pledge has been sworn to a ruler, and then his brothers rise in revolt against him, they will be fought against, if he is a just ruler. As for the rulers of our time, there is no pledge for them, for pledge to them has been taken by coercion. Then the view of the Maliki scholars that Qadi has cited with reference to Sahnun is: Fighting will be undertaken only for under the just ruler, whether the just ruler is the former (being rebelled against) one or the one who has risen in revolt against him, but if neither is just, one should keep away from both. However, if one's own self is attacked, or the Muslims are being subjected to tyranny, one should put up resistance. After citing these different views, Qadi Abu Bakr says: We will not fight except on the side of the just ruler, whom the truth loving people have made their head of their own free will.

(3) If those rising in revolt are small in number, and may have no large party on their back, nor be possessing any substantial war equipment, the law of rebellion will not be applied against them, but they will be proceeded against under the common penal law, i.e. if they kill, they will be subjected to the law of retaliation, and if they damage property, they will be required to pay the penalties. The law of sedition is applied only against those rebels who

might be powerful, and rise in revolt in large numbers and with substantial military equipment.

(4) As long as those rising in revolt only express their false and perverse beliefs or hostile and seditious ideas against the government or its head, they cannot be killed or imprisoned. War will be waged against them only when they actually rise in armed revolt and start shedding blood. (Al-Mabsut, Bab al-Khwarij; Fath al-Qadir, Bab al-Bighat, al-Jassas, Ahkam al-Qur an).

(5) Before starting war against the rebels they will first be invited, according to the Quranic instructions, to give up the way of rebellion and adopt the way of justice. If they have some doubts and objections, effort will be made to remove them; even then if they do not listen, and fighting begins from their side, force will be used to deal with them. (Fath al-Qadir, al Jassas, Ahkam al-Quran).

(6) The code of regulations that has to be observed in the war against the rebels is based on the Prophet's (peace be upon him) following command that has been related by Hakim, Bazzar and al-Jassas on the authority of Abdullah bin Umar.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked Abdullah bin Masud: O Ibn Umm Abd: Do you know what is Allah's command concerning the rebels of this Ummah? He replied: Allah and His Messenger have the best knowledge. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Their wounded ones will not be laid hands on and their captives will not be killed, and the one who flees, will not be pursued, and their properties will not be distributed as spoils.

The second source of this code which has been held as trust-worthy by all the jurists is the word and deed of Ali. After attaining victory in the battle of the Jamul, he announced: Do not pursue him who flees; do not attack the wounded; do not kill the captives; give shelter to him who surrenders; do not make forcible entry into the people's houses; and do not raise your hands at the women even if they are abusing and cursing you. Some of his soldiers made the demand that the opponents and their family members be taken prisoners and distributed. At this he became furious and said: Who among you will take Aisha, mother of the faithful, as his share.

(7) The injunction concerning the properties of the rebels as derived from the good example of Ali is that no part of it, whether it is found on the battlefield or left behind in their houses, and whether they are living or have been killed, will be declared as the spoils nor distributed among the army. However, no compensation will be necessary for the properties that have been damaged or destroyed. As soon as the war comes to an end and rebellion has been put down, their properties and belongings will be returned to them. Their weapons and conveyances, if seized during the war, will be used against them, but will not be made the possession of the victors and distributed as the spoils; and if there is no more fear of a rebellion from them, then these things also will be returned to them. Only Imam Abu Yusuf has expressed the opinion that the government will declare them to be the spoils, (Al-Mabsut; Fath al-Qadir, Al- Jassas).

(8) Their prisoners of war, after they have pledged not to rise in rebellion again, will be set free (Al-Mabsut).

(9) To cut off the heads of the slain rebels and to take them on the streets is a highly undesirable thing, for this is mutilation which the Prophet has strictly forbidden. When the head of a Roman patriarch was brought before Abu Bakr, he expressed great displeasure at it, and said: We are not here to imitate the Romans and Persians. When it is not allowed to mete out such a treatment to the unbelievers, how much more so should it be with regard to the Muslims. (Al-Mabsut).

(10) Whatever damage might have been caused to life and property by the rebels during the war, no retaliation and recompense for it will be imposed on them after the war has come to an end and peace has been restored. Neither will there be any retaliation for a slain person nor any recompense for the lost property, so as to avoid any chance of the recurrence of the sedition. This same law was observed in the mutual fighting between the companions. (Al-Mabsut: al-Jassas; Ibn al-Arabi, Ahkam al-Quran).

(11) After the government has recaptured the territories which had gone under the rebels and where they had established their rule and order and collected the zakat and other taxes, it will not demand the zakat and the taxes from the people once again. If the rebels have spent the money thus collected lawfully, the payers will be deemed to have paid them off lawfully in the sight of Allah as well. But if the rebels have spent the money unlawfully, it will be a matter between the payers and their God; if they so like they may pay their zakat dues once again. (Fath al-Qadir, al-Jassas; Ibn al-Arabi).

(12) The decisions of the judges, who may be just and may have given the decisions according to the Shariah in the courts established by the rebels in the territories under them, will be upheld although the ones who appointed them might be guilty of sedition. However, if their decisions are against the Shariah and they are brought before the courts of the government after the rebellion has been put down, they will not be enforced. Moreover, no warrant or summons issued by the courts established by the rebels will be acceptable in the courts of the government. (Al-Mabsut; al-Jassas).

(13) The evidence of the rebels will not be acceptable in the Islamic courts, for it is iniquitous to fight against the just. Imam Muhammad says: As long as they do not fight and actually rise in revolt against the people of justice, their evidence will be acceptable, but when they have already fought, I will not accept their evidence (Al-Jassas).

From these rulings it becomes plain as to what is the difference between the law of fighting against the disbelievers and of fighting against the Muslim rebels

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ۝ 10

(49:10) Surely the believers are none but brothers unto one another, so set things right between your brothers,[18] and have fear of Allah that you may be shown mercy.

18. This verse establishes a universal brotherhood of all the Muslims of the world, and it is by virtue of this that the sort of fraternity that exists among the Muslims exists among the followers of no other religion and creed. The importance of this command, and its demands,

has been explained by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in many of his traditions from which one can understand its full significance and spirit.

Jarir bin Abdullah says: The Prophet (peace be upon him) took a pledge from me on three things: That I will establish the Prayer, that I will continue to pay the zakat, and that I will remain a well-wisher of every Muslim. (Bukhari: Kitab-al-Iman). According to Abdullah bin Masud, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: To abuse a Muslim is sinful and to fight him a disbelief. In Musnad Ahmad a tradition bearing on the same subject has also been related by Saeed bin Malik on the authority of his father.

Abu Hurairah relates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The life, property and honor of every Muslim is forbidden to every other Muslim. (Muslim: Kitab-al-Birr was Silah; Tirmidhi: Abwab-al-Birr was-Silah). Abu Saeed Khudri and Abu Hurairah say that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: A Muslim is a brother to the other Muslim: he does not treat him unjustly, he does not leave him alone and he does not dishonor him. There is no greater evil than that one should hold a Muslim in contempt. (Musnad Ahmad).

Sahl bin Saad as-Saidi has related this saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him): A believer's relation with the community of the believers is just like the head's relation with the body. He feels their afflictions as the head feels the pain of every part of the body. (Musnad Ahmad). In another Hadith bearing on the same subject the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The believers' example in the matter of their mutual love, relationship and compassion with one another is of the state of the body that when a part of it is afflicted, the whole of it is afflicted with fever and restlessness. (Bukhari, Muslim).

In another Hadith he is reported to have said: The believers are with one another like the bricks of a wall so that each is strengthened by the other. (Bukhari: Kitab al- Adab; Tirmidhi; Abwab al-Birr was-Silah).

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ لَا يَسۡخَرۡ قَوۡمٞ مِّن قَوۡمٍ عَسَىٰٓ أَن يَكُونُواْ خَيۡرٗا مِّنۡهُمۡ وَلَا نِسَآءٞ مِّن
نِّسَآءٍ عَسَىٰٓ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيۡرٗا مِّنۡهُنَّۖ وَلَا تَلۡمِزُوٓاْ أَنفُسَكُمۡ وَلَا تَنَابَزُواْ بِٱلۡأَلۡقَٰبِۖ بِئۡسَ
ٱلِٱسۡمُ ٱلۡفُسُوقُ بَعۡدَ ٱلۡإِيمَٰنِۚ وَمَن لَّمۡ يَتُبۡ فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلظَّٰلِمُونَ 11

(49:11) Believers,[19] let not a group (of men) scoff at another group, it may well be that the latter (at whom they scoff) are better than they; nor let a group of women scoff at another group, it may well be that the latter are better than they.[20] And do not taunt one another,[21] nor revile one another by nicknames.[22] It is an evil thing to gain notoriety for ungodliness after belief.[23] Those who do not repent are indeed the wrong-doers.

19. In the preceding two verses after giving necessary instructions about the Muslim people's mutual fighting, the believers were made to realize that by virtue of the most sacred relationship of the faith they were brothers to one another, and they should fear God

and try to keep their mutual relations right. Now, in the following two verses, they are being enjoined to avoid and shun those major evils which generally spoil the mutual relationships of the people in a society. Slandering and taunting the people and harboring suspicions and spying on others are, in fact, the evils that cause mutual enmities and then lead to grave mischief. In this connection, from the commandments that are being given in the following verses and the explanations of these found in the Hadith a detailed law of libel can be compiled. The western law pertaining to libel in this regard is so defective that a person who sues another under this law may well cause some loss to his own honor. The Islamic law, on the contrary recognizes a basic honor for every person and gives nobody the right to attack it, no matter whether the attack is based on reality or not, and whether the person who has been attacked has a reputation of his own or not. Only the fact that a person has debased and humiliated the other person is enough to declare him a criminal unless, of course, it is proved that the humiliation caused had a legal ground for it.

20. Mocking does not only imply mocking with the tongue but it also includes mimicking somebody, making pointed references to him, laughing at his words, or his works, or his appearance, or his dress, or calling the people's attention to some defect or blemish in him so that others also may laugh at him. All this is included in mocking. What is actually forbidden is that one should make fun of and ridicule another, for under such ridiculing there always lie feelings of one's own superiority and the other's abasement and contempt, which are morally unworthy of a gentleman. Moreover, it hurts the other person, which causes mischief to spread in society. That is why it has been forbidden.

To make mention of the men and the women separately does not mean that it is lawful for the men to mock the women or the women to mock the men. The actual reason for making a separate mention of the two sexes is that Islam does not at all believe in mixed society. Ridiculing each other generally takes place in mixed gatherings and Islam does not permit that non-mahram males and females should meet in such gatherings and make fun of each other. Therefore, in a Muslim society it is inconceivable that the men would mock a woman, or the women would mock a man in an assembly.

21. The word lamz as used in the original is very comprehensive and applies to ridiculing, reviling, deriding, jeering, charging somebody or finding fault with him, and making him the target of reproach and blame by open or tacit references. As all such things also spoil mutual relationships and create bad blood in society, they have been forbidden. Instead of saying: Do not taunt one another, it has been said: Do not taunt yourselves, which by itself shows that the one who uses taunting words for others, in fact, taunts his own self. Obviously, a person does not use invectives against others unless he himself is filled with evil feelings and is almost in a state of bursting like a volcano. Thus, the one who nourishes such feelings has made his own self a nest of evils before he makes others a target, Then, when he taunts others, it means that he is inviting others to taunt him. It is a different matter that the other person may evade his attacks because of a gentle nature, but he himself has opened the door to mischief so that the other may treat him likewise.

22. This command requires that a person should not be called by a name or a title which may cause him humiliation, e.g. calling somebody a sinner or a hypocrite, or calling someone a lame or blind one, or one-eyed, or giving him a nickname containing a reference to some defect or blemish in him, or in his parents, or in his family, or calling a person a Jew

or a Christian even after his conversion to Islam, or giving such a nickname to a person, or a family, or a community, or a group, which may bring condemnation or disgrace on it. Only those nicknames have been made an exception from this command, which though apparently offensive, are not intended to condemn the persons concerned, but they rather serve as a mark of recognition for them. That is why the traditionists have allowed as permissible names like Suleman al-Amash (the weak-eyed Suleman) and Wasil al-Ahdab (the hunchbacked Wasil) among the reporters of the Hadith. If there are several men of the same name and a particular man among them may be recognized only by a particular title or nickname of his, the title or nickname can be used, even though the title by itself may be offensive. For instance, if there are several men called Abdullah, and one of them is blind, he may be called Abdullah the blind, for his recognition. Likewise, those titles also are excluded from this command, which though apparently offensive, are in fact, given out of love and the people who are called by those titles themselves approve them, like Abu Hurairah (father of the kitten) and Abu Turab (father of the dust).

23. That is, it is very shameful for a believer that in spite of being a believer he should earn a name for using abusive language and for immodest behavior. If a disbeliever earns reputation for himself for mocking the people, or taunting them, or for proposing evil and offensive titles for others, it may not be a good reputation from the point of view of humanity, but it at least goes well with his disbelief. But if a person after affirming the faith in Allah and His Messenger and the Hereafter earns reputation on account of these base qualities, it is simply regrettable.

يَاأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَب بَّعْضُكُم بَعْضًا ۚ أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ 12

(49:12) Believers, avoid being excessively suspicious, for some suspicion is a sin.[24] Do not spy,[25] nor backbite one another.[26] Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother?[27] You would surely detest it. Have fear of Allah. Surely Allah is much prone to accept repentance, is Most Compassionate.

24. What is forbidden is not conjecture as such but excessive conjecture and following every kind of conjecture, and the reason given is that some conjectures are sins. In order to understand this command, we should analyze and see what are the kinds of conjecture and what is the moral position of each.

One kind of conjecture is that which is morally approved and laudable, and desirable and praiseworthy from religious point of view, e.g. a good conjecture in respect of Allah and His Messenger and the believers and those people with whom one comes in common contact daily and concerning whom there may be no rational ground for having an evil conjecture.

The second kind of conjecture is that which one cannot do without in practical life, e.g. in a law court a judge has to consider the evidence placed before him and give his decision on the basis of the most probable conjecture, for he cannot have direct knowledge of the facts of the matter, and the opinion that is based on evidence is mostly based on the most probable conjecture and not on certainty. Likewise, in most cases when one or the other decision has to be taken, and the knowledge of the reality cannot possibly be attained, there is no way out for men but to form an opinion on the basis of a conjecture.

The third kind of conjecture, which is although a suspicion, is permissible in nature, and it cannot be regarded as a sin. For instance, if there are clear signs and pointers in the character of a person (or persons), or in his dealings and conduct, on the basis of which he may not deserve to enjoy one's good conjecture, and there are rational grounds for having suspicions against him, the Shariah does not demand that one should behave like a simpleton and continue to have a good conjecture about him. The last limit of this lawful conjecture, however, is that one should conduct himself cautiously in order to ward off any possible mischief from him; it is not right to take an action against him only on the basis of a conjecture.

The fourth kind of conjecture which is, in fact, a sin is that one should entertain a suspicion in respect of a person without any ground, or should start with suspicion in forming an opinion about others, or should entertain a suspicion about the people whose apparent conditions show that they are good and noble. Likewise, this also is a sin that when there is an equal chance of the evil and goodness in the word or deed of a person, one should regard it as only evil out of suspicion. For instance, if a gentleman while leaving a place of assembly picks up another one's shoes, instead of his own, and we form the opinion that he has done so with the intention of stealing the shoes, whereas this could be possible because of oversight as well, there is no reason for adopting the evil opinion instead of the good opinion except the suspicion.

This analysis makes it plain that conjecture by itself is not anything forbidden; rather in some cases and situations it is commendable, in some situations inevitable, in some permissible up to a certain extent and un-permissible beyond it, and in some cases absolutely unlawful. That is why it has not been enjoined that one should refrain from conjecture or suspicion altogether but what is enjoined is that one should refrain from much suspicion. Then, to make the intention of the command explicit, it has been said that some conjectures are sinful. From this warning it follows automatically that whenever a person is forming an opinion on the basis of conjecture, or is about to take an action, he should examine the case and see whether the conjecture he is entertaining is not a sin, whether the conjecture is really necessary, whether there are sound reasons for the conjecture, and whether the conduct one is adopting on the basis of the conjecture is permissible. Everyone who fears God will certainly take these precautions. To make his conjecture free and independent of every such care and consideration is the pastime of only those people who are fearless of God and thoughtless of the accountability of the Hereafter.

25. "Do not spy": Do not grope after the secrets of the people: do not search for their defects and weaknesses: do not pry into their conditions and affairs. Whether this is done because of suspicion, or for causing harm to somebody with an evil intention, or for satisfying one's own curiosity, it is forbidden by the Shariah in every case. It does not behoove a believer

that he should spy on the hidden affairs of other people, and should try to peep at them from behind curtains to find out their defects and their weaknesses. This also includes reading other people's private letters, listening secretly to private conversation, peeping into the neighbor's house, and trying to get information in different ways about the domestic life or private affairs of others. This is grave immorality which causes serious mischief in society. That is why the Prophet (peace be upon him) once said in an address about those who pry into other people's affairs:

O people, who have professed belief verbally, but faith has not yet entered your hearts: Do not pry into the affairs of the Muslims, for he who will pry into the affairs of the Muslims, Allah will pry into his affairs, and he whom Allah follows inquisitively, is disgraced by Him in his own house. (Abu Daud).

Muawiyah says that he himself heard the Prophet (peace be upon him) say: If you start prying into the secret affairs of the people, you will pervert them, or at least drive them very near perversion. (Abu Daud). In another he said: When you happen to form an evil opinion about somebody, do not pry about it. (Al-Jassas, Ahkam al-Quran).

According to still another Hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The one who saw a secret affair of somebody and then concealed it is as though he saved a girl who had been buried alive. (Al-Jassas).

This prohibition of spying is not only applicable to the individuals but also to the Islamic government. The duty of forbidding the people to do evil that the Shariah has entrusted to the government does not require that it should establish a system of spying to inquire too curiously into the people's secret evils and then punish them, but it should use force only against those evils which are manifested openly. As for the hidden evils spying is not the way to reform them but it is education, preaching and counseling, collective training of the people and trying to create a pure social environment. In this connection, an incident concerning Umar is very instructive. Once at night he heard the voice of a person who was singing in his house. He became curious and climbed the wall. There he saw wine as well as a woman present. He shouted at the man, saying: O enemy of God, do you think you will disobey Allah, and Allah will not expose your secret? The man replied: Do not make haste, O commander of the faithful: if I have committed one sin, you have committed three sins: Allah has forbidden spying, and you have spied; Allah has commanded that one should enter the houses by the doors, and you have entered it by climbing over the wall; Allah has commanded that one should avoid entering the other people's houses without permission, and you have entered my house without my permission. Hearing this reply Umar confessed his error, and did not take any action against the man, but made him to promise that he would follow the right way in future. (Abi Bakr Muhammad bin Jafar al- Kharaiti, Makarim al-Akhlaq). This shows that it is not only forbidden for the individuals but also for the Islamic government itself to pry into the secrets of the people and discover their sins and errors and then seize them for punishment. The same thing has been said in a Hadith in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) has said: When the ruler starts searching for the causes of suspicions among the people he perverts them. (Abu Daud).

The only exception from this command are the special cases and situations in which spying is actually needed. For instance, if in the conduct of a person (or persons) some signs of

corruption are visible and there is the apprehension that he is about to commit a crime, the government can inquire into his affairs; or, for instance, if somebody sends a proposal of marriage in the house of a person, or wants to enter into business with him, the other person can, inquire and investigate into his affairs for his own satisfaction.

26. Ghibat (back-biting) has been defined thus: It is saying on the back of a person something which would hurt him if he came to know of it. This definition has been reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself. According to a tradition which Muslim, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Nasai and others have related on the authority of Abu Hurairah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) defined ghibat as follows:

It is talking of your brother in a way irksome to him. It was asked: What, if the defect being talked of is present in my brother? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: If it is present in him, it would be ghibat; if it is not there, it would be slandering him.

In another tradition which Imam Malik has related in Muwatta, on the authority of Muttalib bin Abdullah. A person asked the Prophet (peace be upon him): What is ghibat? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: It is talking of your brother in a way irksome to him. He asked: Even if it is true, O Messenger of Allah? He replied: If what you said was false, it would then be a calumny.

These traditions make it plain that uttering a false accusation against a person in his absence is calumny and describing a real defect in him ghibat; whether this is done in express words or by reference and allusion, in every case it is forbidden. Likewise, whether this is done in the lifetime of a person, or after his death, it is forbidden in both cases. According to Abu Daud, when Maiz bin Malik Aslami had been stoned to death for committing adultery, the Prophet (peace be upon him) on his way back heard a man saying to his companion: Look at this man: Allah had concealed his secret, but he did not leave himself alone till he was killed like a dog! A little further on the way there was the dead body of a donkey lying rotting. The Prophet (peace be upon him) stopped, called the two men and said: Come down and eat this dead donkey. They submitted: Who will eat it, O Messenger of Allah? The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: A little while ago you were attacking the honor of your brother: that was much worse than eating this dead donkey.

The only exceptions to this prohibition are the cases in which there may be a genuine need of speaking in of a person on his back, or after his death, and this may not be fulfilled without resort to backbiting, and if it was not resorted to, a greater evil might result than backbiting itself. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has described this exception as a principle, thus: The worst excess is to attack the honor of a Muslim unjustly. (Abu Daud). In this saying the condition of unjustly points out that doing so with justice is permissible. Then, in the practice of the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself we find some precedents which show what is implied by justice and in what conditions and cases backbiting may be lawful to the extent as necessary.

Once a desert Arab came and offered his Prayer under the leadership of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and as soon as the Prayer was concluded, walked away saying: O God, have mercy on me and on Muhammad, and make no one else a partner in this mercy beside the two of us. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to the companions: What do you say: who

is more ignorant, this person or his camel? Didn't you hear what he said? (Abu Daud). The Prophet (peace be upon him) had to say this in his absence, for he had left soon after the Prayer was over. Since he had uttered a wrong thing in the presence of the Prophet (peace be upon him), his remaining quiet at it could cause the misunderstanding that saying such a thing might in some degree be lawful; therefore, it was necessary that he should contradict it.

Two of the companions, Muawiyah and Abu Jahm, sent the proposal of marriage to a lady, Fatimah bint Qais. She came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and asked for his advice. He said: Muawiyah is a poor man and Abu Jahm beats his wives much. (Bukhari, Muslim). In this case, as there was the question of the lady's future and she had consulted the Prophet (peace be upon him) for his advice, he deemed it necessary to inform her of the two men's weaknesses.

One day when the Prophet (peace be upon him) was present in the apartment of Aishah, a man came and sought permission to see him. The Prophet (peace be upon him) remarked that he was a very bad man of his tribe. Then he went out and talked to him politely. When he came back into the house, Aishah asked: You have talked to him politely, whereas when you went out you said something different about him. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, On the day of Resurrection the worst abode in the sight of Allah will be of the person whom the people start avoiding because of his abusive language. (Bukhari, Muslim). A study of this incident will show that the Prophet (peace be upon him) in spite of having a bad opinion about the person talked to him politely because that was the demand of his morals; but he had the apprehension lest the people of his house should consider the person to be his friend when they would see him treating him kindly, and then the person might use this impression to his own advantage later. Therefore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) warned Aishah telling her that he was a bad man of his tribe. Once Hind bint Utbah, wife of Abu Sufyan, came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said: Abu Sufyan is a miserly person: he does not provide enough for me and my children's needs. (Bukhari, Muslim). Although this complaint from the wife in the absence of the husband was backbiting, the Prophet (peace be upon him) permitted it, for the oppressed one has a right that he or she may take the complaint of injustice to a person who has the power to get it removed.

From these precedents of the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the jurists and traditionalists have deduced this principle: Ghibat (backbiting) is permissible only in case it is needed for a real and genuine (genuine from the Shariah point of view) necessity, and the necessity may not be satisfied without having resort to it. Then on the basis of the same principle the scholars have declared that ghibat is permissible in the following cases:

(1) Complaining by an oppressed person against the oppressor before every such person who he thinks can do something to save him from the injustice.

(2) To make mention of the evils of a person (or persons) with the intention of reform before those who can be expected to help remove the evils.

(3) To state the facts of a case before a legal expert for the purpose of seeking a religious or legal ruling regarding an unlawful act committed by a person.

(4) To warn the people of the mischief of a person (or persons) so that they may ward off the evil, e.g. it is not only permissible but obligatory to mention the weaknesses of the reporters, witnesses and writers, for without it, it is not possible to safeguard the Shariah against the propagation of false reports, the courts against injustices and the common people or the students against errors and misunderstandings. Or, for instance, if a person wants to have the relationship of marriage with somebody, or wishes to rent a house in the neighborhood of somebody, or wants to give something into the custody of somebody, and consults another person, it is obligatory for him to apprise him of all aspects so that he is not deceived because of ignorance.

(5) To raise voice against and criticize the evils of the people who may be spreading sin and immorality and error or corrupting the people's faith and persecuting them.

(6) To use nicknames for the people who may have become well known by those names, but this should be done for the purpose of their recognition and not with a view to condemn them. (For details, see Fathal-Bari, vol. X, p. 362; Sharh Muslim by An-Nawawi; Riyad us-Salihin; al-Jassas, Ahkam al-Quran; Ruh al-Maani commentary on verse wa la yaghtab ba-dukum badan).

Apart from these exceptions it is absolutely forbidden to speak ill of a person behind his back. If what is spoken is true, it is ghibat; if it is false, it is calumny. And if it is meant to make two persons quarrel, it is malicious. The Shariah has declared all these as forbidden. In the Islamic society it is incumbent on every Muslim to refute a false charge made against a person in his presence and not to listen to it quietly, and to tell those who are speaking ill of somebody, without a genuine religious need, to fear God and desist from the sin. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has said: If a person does not support and help a Muslim when he is being disgraced and his honor being attacked, Allah also does not support and help him when he stands in need of His help; and if a person helps and supports a Muslim when his honor is being attacked and he is being disgraced, Allah Almighty also helps him when he wants that Allah should help him. (Abu Daud).

As for the backbiter, as soon as he realizes that he is committing this sin, or has committed it, his first duty is to offer repentance before Allah and restrain himself from this forbidden act. His second duty is that he should compensate for it as far as possible. If he has backbitten a dead person, he should ask Allah's forgiveness for the person as often as he can. If he has backbitten a living person, and what he said was also false, he should refute it before the people before whom he had made the calumny. And if what he said was true, he should never speak ill of him in future, and should ask pardon of the person whom he had backbitten. A section of the scholars has expressed the opinion that pardon should be asked only in case the other person has come to know of it; otherwise one should only offer repentance, for if the person concerned is unaware and the backbiter in order to ask pardon goes and tells him that he had backbitten him, he would certainly feel hurt.

27. In this sentence Allah by likening backbiting to eating the dead brother's flesh has given the idea of its being an abomination. Eating the dead flesh is by itself abhorrent; and when the flesh is not of an animal, but of a man, and that too of one's own dead brother, abomination would be added to abomination. Then, by presenting the simile in the interrogative tone it has been made all the more impressive, so that every person may ask

his own conscience and decide whether he would like to eat the flesh of his dead brother. If he would not, and he abhors it by nature, how would he like that he should attack the honor of his brother-in-faith in his absence, when he cannot defend himself and when he is fully unaware that he is being disgraced. This shows that the basic reason of forbidding backbiting is not that the person being backbitten is being hurt but speaking ill of a person in his absence is by itself unlawful and forbidden whether he is aware of it, or not, and whether he feels hurt by it or not. Obviously, eating the flesh of a dead man is not forbidden because it hurts the dead man; the dead person is wholly unaware that somebody is eating of his body, but because this act by itself is an abomination. Likewise, if the person who is backbitten also does not come to know of it through any means, he will remain unaware throughout his life that somebody had attacked his honor at a particular time before some particular people and on that account he had stood disgraced in the eyes of those people. Because of this unawareness he will not feel at all hurt by this backbiting, but his honor would in any case be sullied. Therefore, this act in its nature is not any different from eating the flesh of a dead brother.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنَّا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ وَّاُنْثٰى وَجَعَلْنٰكُمْ شُعُوْبًا وَّقَبَآئِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوْا ؕ اِنَّ
اَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اَتْقٰىكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ خَبِيْرٌ 13

(49:13) Human beings, We created you all from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Verily the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most God-fearing of you.[28] Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.[29]

28. In the preceding verses the Muslims were addressed and given necessary instructions to safeguard the Muslim community against social evils. In this verse the whole of mankind has been addressed to reform it of the great evil that has always been causing universal disruption in the world, that is, the prejudices due to race, color, language, country, and nationality. On account of these prejudices man in every age has generally been discarding humanity and drawing around himself some small circles and regarding those born within those circles as his own people and those outside them as others. These circles have been drawn on the basis of accidental birth and not on rational and moral grounds. In some cases their basis is the accident of being born in a particular family, tribe, or race, and in some particular geographical region, or in a nation having a particular color or speaking a particular language. Then the discrimination between one's own people and others is not only confined to this that those who are looked upon as one's own people are shown greater love and cooperation than others, but this discrimination has assumed the worst forms of hatred, enmity, contempt and tyranny. New philosophies have been propounded for it, new religions invented, new codes of law made and new moral principles framed; so much so that nations and empires have made this distinction a permanent way of life with them and practiced it for centuries. The Jews on this very basis regarded the children of Israel as the chosen people of God and even in the practice of their religious rites looked upon the non-Jews as inferior to the Jews in rights and rank. This very discrimination gave birth to class distinctions (varnashrama) among the Hindus according to which superiority of the

Brahmins was established, all other human beings came to be regarded as inferior and unclean and the shudras cast into the depths of disgrace and degradation. Every person can see for himself even in this 20th century what atrocities have been committed against the colored people in Africa and America on account of the distinction between the white and the black. The treatment that the Europeans meted out to the Red Indian race in America and to the weak nations of Asia and Africa had the same concept underlying it. They thought that the rights and property and honor of all those who had been born outside the frontiers of their own land and nation were lawful for them and they had the right to plunder and take them as their slaves and exterminate them if need be. The worst examples of how the nationalism of the western nations has turned one nation against the others and made it their bloodthirsty enemy have been seen in the wars of the recent past and are being seen even in the present time. In particular, if what was manifested by the racism of the Nazi Germany and the concept of the superiority of the Nordic race in the last World War is kept in view. One can easily judge how stupendous and devastating is the error for whose reform this verse of the Quran was revealed.

In this brief verse, Allah has drawn the attention of all mankind to three cardinal truths:

(1) The origin of all of you is one and the same. Your whole species has sprung up from one man and one woman. All your races that are found in the world today are, in fact, the branches of one initial race that started with one mother and one father. In this process of creation there is no basis whatsoever for the divisions and distinctions in which you have involved yourselves because of your false notions. One God alone is your Creator. Different men have not been created by different gods. You have been made from one and the same substance. It is not so that some men have been made from some pure and superior substance and some other men from some impure and inferior substance. You have been created in one and the same way; it is not also so that different men have been created in different ways. And you are the offspring of the same parents; it is not so that in the beginning there were many human couples which gave birth to different populations in the different regions of the world.

(2) In spite of being one in origin, it was natural that you should be divided into nations and tribes. Obviously, all the men on the earth could not belong to one and the same family. With the spread of the race it was inevitable that countless families should arise, and then tribes and nations should emerge from the families. Similarly, it was inevitable that after settling in different regions of the earth, there should be differences of colors, features, languages and ways of living among the people, and it was also natural that those living in the same region should be closer in affinity and those living in remote regions not so close. But this natural difference never demanded that distinctions of inequality, of high and low, of noble and mean, should be established on its basis, that one race should claim superiority over the other, the people of one color should look down upon the people of other colors, and that one nation should take preference over the other without any reason. The Creator had divided the human communities into nations and tribes for that was a natural way of cooperation and distinction between them. In this way alone could a fraternity, a brotherhood, a tribe and a nation combine to give birth to a common way of life and to cooperate with each other in the affairs of the world. But it was all due to satanic ignorance that the differences among mankind created by Allah to be a means of recognition, were

turned into a means of mutual boasting and hatred, which led mankind to every kind of injustice and tyranny.

(3) The only basis of superiority and excellence that there is, or can be, between man and man is that of moral excellence. As regards birth, all men are equal, for their Creator is One, their substance of creation is one, and their way of creation is one, and they are descended from the same parents. Moreover, a person's being born in a particular country, nation, or clan is just accidental. Therefore, there is no rational ground on account of which one person may be regarded as superior to the other. The real thing that makes one person superior to others is that one should be more God-conscious, a greater avoider of evils, and a follower of the way of piety and righteousness. Such a man, whether he belongs to any race, any nation and any country, is valuable and worthy on account of his personal merit. And the one who is reverse of him in character is in any case an inferior person whether he is black or white, born in the east or the west.

These same truths that have been stated in this brief verse of the Quran have been explained in greater detail by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in his addresses and traditions. In the speech that he made on the conquest of Makkah, after going round the Kabah, he said:

Thank God Who has removed from you the blemish of ignorance and its arrogance. O people, men are divided into classes: the pious and righteous, who are honorable in the sight of Allah, and the sinful and vicious, who are contemptible in the sight of Allah, whereas all men are the children of Adam and Adam had been created by Allah from clay. (Baihaqi, Tirmidhi).

On the occasion of the Farewell Pilgrimage, in the midst of the Tashriq days, he addressed the people, and said:

O people, be aware: your God is One. No Arab has any superiority over a non-Arab, and no non-Arab any superiority over an Arab, and no white one has any superiority over a black one, and no black one any superiority over a white one, except on the basis of taqwa (piety). The most honorable among you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most pious and righteous of you. Say if I have conveyed the Message to you? And the great congregation of the people responded, saying: Yes, you have, O Messenger of Allah. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Then let the one who is present convey it to those who are absent. (Baihaqi).

In a Hadith he has said: You are all the children of Adam, and Adam was created from the dust. Let the people give up boasting of their ancestors, otherwise they will stand more degraded than a mean insect in the sight of Allah. (Bazzar).

In another Hadith the Prophet(peace be upon him) said: Allah will not inquire about your lineage on the Day of Resurrection. The most honorable in the sight of Allah is he who is most pious. (Ibn Jarir). In still another Hadith he said: Allah does not see your outward appearances and your possessions but He sees your hearts and your deeds. (Muslim, lbn Majah).

These teachings have not remained confined to words only but Islam has practically established a universal brotherhood of the believers on the basis, which does not allow any distinction on account of color, race, language, country and nationality which is free from every concept of high and low, clean and unclean, mean and respectable, which admits all human beings with equal rights, whether they belong to any race and nation, any land or region. Even the opponents of Islam have to admit that no precedent is found in any religion and any system of the success with which the principle of human equality and unity has been given practical shape in the Muslim society, nor has it ever been found. Islam is the only religion which has welded and combined innumerable races and communities scattered in all corners of the earth into one universal ummah.

In this connection, a misunderstanding also needs to be removed. In the case of marriage, the importance that Islamic law gives to kufv (likeness of status) has been taken by some people in the sense that some brotherhoods are noble and some mean, and matrimonial relations between them are objectionable. But this, in fact, is a wrong idea. According to the Islamic law, every Muslim man can marry every Muslim woman, but the success of the matrimonial life depends on maximum harmony and conformity between the spouses as regards habits, characteristics and ways of life, family traditions and economic and social status, so that they may get on well with each other. This is the real object of being equal and alike. Where there is unusual difference and disparity between the man and the woman in this regard, lifelong companionship will be difficult. That is why the Islamic law disapproves of such intermarriages, and not for the reason that one of the spouses is noble and the other mean, but for the reason that in case there is a clear and apparent difference and distinction in status, there would be a greater possibility of the failure of the matrimonial life if the marriage relationship was established.

29. That is, this is only known to Allah as to who is really a man of high rank and who is inferior in respect of qualities and characteristics. The standards of high and low that the people have set up of their own accord, are not acceptable to and approved by Allah. May be that the one who has been regarded as a man of high rank in the world is declared as the lowest of the low in the final judgment of Allah, and maybe that the one who has been looked upon as a very low person here, attains to a very high rank there. The real importance is not of the honor and dishonor of the world but of the honor and dishonor that one will receive from Allah. Therefore, what man should be most concerned about is that he should create in himself those real qualities and characteristics which make him worthy of honor in the sight of Allah.

قَالَتِ الْاَعْرَابُ اٰمَنَّا ؕ قُلْ لَّمْ تُؤْمِنُوْا وَلٰكِنْ قُوْلُوْٓا اَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْاِيْمَانُ فِيْ
قُلُوْبِكُمْ ؕ وَاِنْ تُطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ لَا يَلِتْكُمْ مِّنْ اَعْمَالِكُمْ شَيْـًٔا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ

رَّحِيْمٌ 14

(49:14) The Bedouins say: "We believe."(O Prophet),[30] say to them: "You do not believe; you should rather say: 'We have submitted'";[31] for belief has not yet entered your hearts. If you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not diminish anything from the reward of any of your deeds. Surely Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Compassionate.

30. This does not imply all the desert Arabs but only a few particular groups of the Bedouins who had become Muslims, seeing the increasing power of Islam, thinking that they would not only remain safe from any attack by the Muslims but would also gain materially from the Islamic conquests. These people had not embraced Islam sincerely but had professed faith only verbally in order to be counted among the Muslims, and their inner state became exposed whenever they would come before the Prophet (peace be upon him) with different sorts of demands and would enumerate and mention their rights as if they had done him a great favor by accepting Islam. Traditions mention several of such tribal groups, e.g. Muzainah, Juhainah, Aslam, Ashja, Ghifar, etc. About the Bani Asad bin Khuzaimah in particular. Ibn Abbas and Saeed bin Jubair have stated that once during a drought they came to Madinah and making a demand for financial help, they said to the Prophet (peace be upon him) again and again: We became Muslims without any conflict, we did not fight against you as have such and such other tribes fought. By this they clearly meant to point out that their refraining from fighting against the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah and their accepting Islam was a favor for which they must be rewarded by the Messenger (peace be upon him) and the Muslims. It was this same attitude and conduct of the Bedouin group living around Al- Madinah, which has been commented upon in these verses. One can understand this appraisal better if one reads it together with verses(90-110 of Surah At-Taubah)and (verses 11-17 of Surah Al-Fatha).

31. Another translation of the words qulu aslamna can be; Say: We have become Muslims. From these words some people have concluded that in the language of the Quran, Mumin and Muslim are two opposite terms. A Mumin is he who has believed sincerely and a Muslim he who might have accepted Islam only verbally without true faith. But, in fact, this is an absolutely wrong idea. No doubt the word iman here has been used for sincere affirmation by the heart and the word Islam for only outward and external submission but to understand them as two independent and mutually contradictory terms of the Quran is not correct. A study of the Quranic verses in which the words Islam and Muslim have been used, shows that in the Quranic terminology of Islam is the name of the Faith, which Allah has sent down for mankind. It comprehends the faith and obedience both, and a Muslim is he who believes with a sincere heart and obeys the commands practically. This is borne out by the following verses:

Indeed, Islam is the only right way of life in the sight of Allah. (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 19).

And whoever adopts any other than this way of submission (Islam), that way shall not be accepted from him. (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 85).

And I have approved Islam as the way of life for you. (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 3).

Whomever Allah wills to guide aright, He makes his breast wide open to Islam. (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 125).

Obviously, in these verses Islam does not imply obedience without the faith. Here are some other verses: Say (O Prophet): I have been enjoined to be the first one to affirm (faith in) Islam. (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 14).

If they have surrendered (to Islam), they are rightly guided. (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 20).

All the Prophets, who were Muslims, judged the cases according to the Torah. (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 44).

Here, and at scores of other places, acceptance of Islam cannot mean adopting obedience without the faith. Likewise, here are a few verses in which the word Muslim has occurred signifying the meaning in which it has been used repeatedly in the Quran: O you who have believed, fear Allah as He should truly be feared and see that you do not die save as true Muslim. (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 102).

Allah had called you Muslims before this and has called you (by the same name) in this Quran, too. (Surah Al-Hajj, Ayat 78).

Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was a Muslim, sound in the faith. (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 67).

And remember that when Abraham and Ishmael were raising the walls of this House, they prayed: Lord, make us Thy Muslims and also raise from our offspring a community which should be Muslim. (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 128).

(The Prophet Jacob's will for his children): O my children, Allah has chosen the same way of life for you, hence remain Muslims up to your last breath. (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 132).

After a study of these verses who can say that in these the word Muslim implies a person who does not believe sincerely but has accepted Islam only outwardly? Therefore, to make the claim that in the Quranic terminology Islam implies obedience without the faith and the Muslim in the language of the Quran is he who accepts Islam only outwardly is absolutely wrong. Likewise, this claim also is wrong that the words iman and mumin have been used in the Quran necessarily in the sense of believing sincerely. No doubt, at most places these words have occurred to express the same meaning, but there are many places where these words have also been used for outward affirmation of the faith, and all those who might have entered the Muslim community with verbal profession have been addressed with, "O you who have believed", no matter whether they are the true believers, or people with a weak faith, or mere hypocrites. For a few instances of this, see (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 156); (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 135); (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 54); (Surah Al-Anfaal, Ayats 20-27); (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 38), (Surah Al-Hadid, Ayat 28); (Surah As-Saff, Ayat 2).

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ 15

(49:15) Indeed the ones possessed of true faith are those who believed in Allah and His Messenger and then they did not entertain any doubt and strove hard in the Way of Allah with their lives and their possessions. These are the truthful ones.

قُلْ اَتُعَلِّمُوْنَ اللّٰهَ بِدِيْنِكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ

شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ 16

(49:16) Say, (O Prophet), (to these pretenders to faith): "Are you apprising Allah of your faith? Allah knows all that is in the heavens and the earth. Allah has full knowledge of everything."

يَمُنُّوْنَ عَلَيْكَ اَنْ اَسْلَمُوْا ؕ قُلْ لَّا تَمُنُّوْا عَلَيَّ اِسْلَامَكُمْ ۚ بَلِ اللّٰهُ يَمُنُّ عَلَيْكُمْ اَنْ

هَدٰىكُمْ لِلْاِيْمَانِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ 17

(49:17) They count it as a favour to you that they accepted Islam. Say: "Do not regard your (accepting) Islam as a favour to me; rather, Allah has bestowed a favour on you by guiding you to faith, if you are truthful (in your claim to be believers).

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ع 18

(49:18) Surely Allah knows every hidden thing of the heavens and the earth. Allah sees all that you do.

50. Surah Qaf

Name

The Surah derives its name from the initial letter Qaf, thereby implying that it is the Surah which opens with the alphabetic letter Qaf.

Period of Revelation

There is no authentic tradition to show as to when exactly this Surah was sent down. A study of the subject matter, however, reveals that its period of revelation is the second stage of the Holy Prophet's life at Makkah, which lasted from the third year of the Prophethood till the fifth year. We have given the characteristics of this period in the Introduction to the Sarah Al-An'am. In view of those characteristics it can be said that this Surah might have been sent down in about the 5th year, when the antagonism of the disbelievers had become quite intense but had not yet assumed tyrannical proportions.

Theme and Topics

Authentic traditions show that the Holy Prophet used to recite this Surah generally in the Prayer on the Eid days. A woman named Umm Hisham bin Harithah, who was a neighbor of the Holy Prophet, says that she was able to commit Surah Qaf to memory only because she often heard it from the Holy Prophet in the Friday sermons. According to some other traditions he often recited it in the Fajr Prayer. This makes it abundantly clear that this was an important Surah in the sight of the Holy Prophet. That is why he made sure that its contents reached as many people as possible over and over again.

This reason for this importance can be easily understood by a careful study of the Surah. The theme of the entire Surah is the Hereafter. When the Holy Prophet started preaching his message in Makkah what surprised the people most was the news that people would be resurrected after death, and they would have to render an account of their deeds. They said that that was impossible; human mind could not believe that that would happen. After all, how could it be possible that when the body had disintegrated into dust the scattered particles would be reassembled after hundreds of thousands of years to make up the same body once again and raised up as a living body, Allah in response sent down this discourse. In it, on the one hand, arguments have been given for the possibility and occurrence of the Hereafter in a brief way, in short sentences, and, on the other, the people have been warned, as if to say: "Whether you express wonder and surprise, or you regard it as something remote from reason, or deny it altogether, in any case it cannot change the truth. The absolute, un-alterable truth is that Allah knows the whereabouts of each and every particle of your body that has scattered away in the earth, and knows where and in what state it is. Allah's one signal is enough to make all the scattered particles gather together again and to make you rise up once again as you had been made in the first instance. Likewise, your this idea that you have been created and left free to yourselves in the world and that you have not been made answerable to anyone, is no more than a misunderstanding. The fact is that not only is Allah Himself directly aware of each act and word of yours, even of the ideas that pass in your mind, but His angels also are attached to each one of you, who are preserving the record of whatever you do and utter. When the time comes, you will come

out of your graves at one call just as young shoots of vegetable sprout up from the earth on the first shower of the rain. Then this heedlessness which obstructs your vision will be removed and you will see with your own eyes all that you are denying today. At that time you will realize that you had not been created to be irresponsible in this world but accountable to all your deeds the meeting out of the rewards and punishments, the Hell and Heaven, which you regard as impossible and imaginary things, will at that time become visible realities for you in consequence of your enmity and opposition to the Truth you will be cast into the same Hell which you regard as remote from reason today and the ones who fear the Merciful God and return to the path of righteousness, will be admitted to the same Paradise at whose mention you now express wonder and surprise.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

قٓ ۚ وَالۡقُرۡاٰنِ الۡمَجِیۡدِ ۚ 1

(50:1) Qaf. By the glorious Qur'an.[1]

1. The word majeed is used for expressing two meanings in Arabic: for expressing the high rank, status, honor and dignity of a person, and for saying that somebody is highly generous, charitable and beneficent. This word has been used for the Quran in both these meanings. The Quran is great and glorious in the sense that no book of the world can be brought up against it. It is a miracle both in its language and literary excellence and in its teaching and wisdom. Humans were helpless to produce the like of it at the time when it was sent down and are likewise helpless even today. Nothing of it could ever be proved wrong in any age, nor can anything of it be proved wrong in the present age. Falsehood can neither attack it from the front nor from the rear nor can defeat it. And it is generous and beneficent in the sense that the more a man goes on trying to gain guidance from it, the more of guidance it goes on giving him. And the more he follows and obeys its commands and instructions, the more he continues to be blessed with good things of the world and the Hereafter. There is no limit to its benefits and advantages where a man may become independent of it, and where it may cease to be beneficial and useful for him.

بَلۡ عَجِبُوۡۤا اَنۡ جَآءَهُمۡ مُّنۡذِرٌ مِّنۡهُمۡ فَقَالَ الۡکٰفِرُوۡنَ هٰذَا شَیۡءٌ عَجِیۡبٌ ۚ 2

(50:2) Nay; they wondered that a warner should have come to them from among themselves.[2] The unbelievers said: “This indeed is a strange thing.

2. This sentence is a unique example of eloquence. In it a vast subject has been compressed into a few brief words. The object for which an oath has been sworn by the Quran has not been mentioned. Instead, a subtle gap has been left and the sentence is resumed with “but”. If one thinks a little and also keeps in view the background in which this has been said, one comes to know what is the subject of the gap that has been left between the oath and “but”. In fact, what has been sworn of is this: The people of Makkah have not refused to acknowledge the Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) for any sound reason but for the highly unsound reason that a member of their own kind and an individual of

their own nation has come to them as a Warner from God and this is something highly surprising for them. Whereas what would actually be surprising was if God had remained unconcerned about the well being and adversity of His servants and made no arrangement whatsoever to warn them; or had sent a nonhuman to warn the human beings; or a non Arab to warn the Arabs. Therefore, this basis of the denial is absolutely unsound, and a reasonable person cannot but admit that there must exist some arrangement from God to warn the servants, and in the form that the Warner himself should be a person from among the people to whom he is sent. As for the question whether Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the person whom God has sent on this mission, no other evidence is needed to settle it but this glorious and beneficent Quran, which he is presenting; this is by itself enough to provide a proof of it. This explanation shows that in this verse an oath has been sworn by the Quran to impress the point that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is really the Messenger of Allah and the disbelievers' surprise and wonder about his apostleship is misplaced, and the fact of the Quran's being majeed is a proof of this claim

ءَإِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ رَجْعٌۢ بَعِيدٌ 3

(50:3) What! When we are dead and reduced to mere dust, (shall we be raised to life)? Such a return is far-fetched."[3]

3. This was the second cause of their surprise, the first being that a member of their own kind and clan had arisen with the claim that he had come as a warner to them from God. They were further surprised that the person was warning them to the effect that all men will be raised back to life after death and they will be produced all together in the court of Allah where their deeds will be subjected to accountability and they will be rewarded and punished accordingly.

قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا تَنقُصُ ٱلْأَرْضُ مِنْهُمْ ۖ وَعِندَنَا كِتَٰبٌ حَفِيظٌۢ 4

(50:4) (Thus do they imagine, although) We know well what the earth takes away from them. With Us is a Record that preserves everything.[4]

4. That is, if it cannot be comprehended by intellect, it is their own narrow mind to blame. It does not mean that Allah's knowledge and power also should be narrow. They think that it is in no way possible to collect the scattered particles of the bodies of the countless human beings who have died since the beginning of creation and will die till Resurrection. But the fact is that Allah directly knows each of those particles in whatever form and in whichever place they are. Furthermore, a full record of this is being maintained in the Register of Allah, which has not left out any particle un-recorded.

This verse also is one of those verses which point out that the life Hereafter will not only be a physical lift as it is in this world, but the body of every person also will be the same which he had in this world. If it were not so, it would be meaningless to tell the disbelievers: We know very well whatever the earth consumes of their bodies and We have a Book which preserves everything. (For further explanation, see(E.N. 25 of Surah Ha Mim As-Sajdah).

بَلۡ كَذَّبُوۡا بِالۡحَقِّ لَمَّا جَآءَهُمۡ فَهُمۡ فِىۡۤ اَمۡرٍ مَّرِيۡجٍ 5

(50:5) They gave the lie to the Truth when it came to them. So they are now in a state of great perplexity.[5]

5. In this brief sentence a vast subject has been compressed. It means: These people did not rest content only with expressing wonder and declaring the thing to be far removed from reason, but when the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) presented his message of the truth, they denied it as falsehood without any hesitation. Its inevitable result was, and the same only could follow from it, that they do not agree on any one position with regard to the invitation and the Messenger who has presented it. Sometimes they brand him a poet, sometimes a sorcerer, and sometimes a madman. Sometimes they say that he is a magician and sometimes that he is bewitched. Sometimes they say that he has fabricated this thing by himself in order to establish his superiority. Therefore, leaving it aside, detailed reasoning is now being presented about the authenticity of the second thing which those people regarded as strange and far removed from reason and intellect.

اَفَلَمۡ يَنۡظُرُوۡۤا اِلَى السَّمَآءِ فَوۡقَهُمۡ كَيۡفَ بَنَيۡنٰهَا وَزَيَّنّٰهَا وَمَا لَهَا مِنۡ فُرُوۡجٍ 6

(50:6) Did they[6] never observe the sky above them: how We built it and beautified it;[7] and it has no cracks;[8]

6. Here, by the sky is implied the whole firmament that man finds spread over him, day and night, in which the sun shines in the day and the moon and countless stars glitter at night, which amazes him even when he sees it with the bare eye, but which appears as a vast, limitless universe when he looks at it through the telescope.

7. This universe seems to be starting from nowhere and ending nowhere. Millions of times larger planets than our earth are moving in it like tiny balls; thousands of times brighter stars than our sun are shining in it our this entire solar system is located in a corner of its only one galaxy; only in this one galaxy there exist at least three thousand million other stars like our own sun, and man's observation has so far discovered one million such galaxies. Out of the millions of galaxies our nearest, neighboring galaxy is so distant from us that its light reaches the earth in ten million years traveling at the speed of 186,000 miles per second. This shows the vastness of that part of the universe which has so far been observed and explored by man. As to how vast is the entire universe of God we have no means to estimate and judge. May be that the known universe of man does not bear with the entire universe even that ratio which a drop of water bears with the ocean. If about the God Who has brought this huge and wonderful universe into being, this tiny talking animal, called man, who creeps on the earth, asserts that He cannot recreate him once again after death, it would be due to narrowness of his own mind. The power of the Creator of the universe would not at all be affected by it.

8. That is, in spite of its amazing vastness the wonderful order of the universe is so coherent and firm and its composition so perfect that there is no crack or cleft in it, and its continuity breaks nowhere. This can be understood by an example. Radio astronomers of the present

age have observed a galactic system which they have named Source 3C 295. They think that its rays which are now reaching us might have left it more than four thousand million years ago. The question is: How could it be possible for the rays to reach the earth from such a distant source had the continuity and coherence of the universe between the earth and the galaxy been broken somewhere and its composition been split at some point. Allah, in fact, alludes to this reality and puts this question before man: When you cannot point out even a small breach in this system of My universe, how did the concept of any weakness in My power enter your mind, that after the respite of your test is over, if I like to bring you back to life to subject you to accountability before Me, would I not be able to do so?

This is not only a proof of the possibility of the Hereafter but also a proof of Tauhid. These rays' reaching the earth from a distance of four thousand million light years and being detected by the man made instruments expressly point to the fact that from the galaxy to the earth the entire world has been made up of one and the same substance continuously, one and the same kind of the forces are working in it, and they are functioning according to the same laws without any difference and disparity. Were it not so, the rays could neither have reached here, nor detected by the instruments which man had made after understanding the laws working on the earth and its surroundings. This proves that One God alone is the Creator of this whole universe and its Master and Ruler and Controller.

وَالْاَرْضَ مَدَدْنٰهَا وَاَلْقَيْنَا فِيْهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَاَنْۢبَتْنَا فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍۢ بَهِيْجٍ ۙ 7

(50:7) and We have spread out the earth, and have set upon it firm mountains, and have caused it to bring out plants of all beauteous kinds?[9]

9. For explanation, see (E.Ns 12-14 of Surah An-Nahl); (E.Ns 73-74 of Surah An-Naml); and (E.N. 7 of Surah Az-Zukhruf).

تَبْصِرَةً وَّذِكْرٰى لِكُلِّ عَبْدٍ مُّنِيْبٍ 8

(50:8) All these are to serve as eye openers and as a lesson to every being who is prone to turn (to the Truth).

وَنَزَّلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً مُّبٰرَكًا فَاَنْۢبَتْنَا بِهٖ جَنّٰتٍ وَّحَبَّ الْحَصِيْدِ ۙ 9

(50:9) We also sent down blessed water from the heaven, wherewith We caused gardens and harvest-grain to grow,

وَالنَّخْلَ بٰسِقٰتٍ لَّهَا طَلْعٌ نَّضِيْدٌ ۙ 10

(50:10) and tall palm-trees with their thickly-clustered spathes;

رِّزْقًا لِّلْعِبَادِ ۙ وَأَحْيَيْنَا بِهِ بَلْدَةً مَّيْتًا ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ الْخُرُوجُ 11

(50:11) all this as sustenance for Our servants. And thus We do bring the dead land back to life with water.[10] Such shall be the coming forth (of human beings from the earth).[11]

10. For explanation, set (E.Ns 73, 74, 81 of Surah An-Naml), (E.Ns 25, 33, 35 of Surah Ar-Room) and (E.N. 29 of Surah YaSeen).

11. The reasoning is this: Your conjecture about God Who made this sphere of the earth a suitable home for living creatures and Who by combining the lifeless clay of the earth with the lifeless water from the sky produced such a fine vegetable life that you witness flourishing in the form of your gardens and crops, and Who made the vegetation a means of sustenance for both man and beast, that He has no power to resurrect you after death, is a foolish and absurd conjecture. You witness almost daily the phenomenon that a land is lying barren and lifeless; then as soon as it receives a shower of rain, it gives birth to an endless chain of life all of a sudden, the roots lying dead for ages sprout up and a variety of insects emerge playfully from the layers of the earth. This is a manifest proof that life after death is not impossible. When you cannot deny this express observation of yours, how can you deny that when Allah wills, you too will sprout up from the earth as the vegetation sprouts up. In this connection, one may note that in many parts of Arabia it does not sometimes rain for as long as five years at a stretch and sometimes even for longer periods the land does not receive even a drop of rain. For such long intervals in the burning deserts it is not conceivable that the roots of grass and the insects of the earth would survive. In spite of this when a little of the rain falls at some place, grass sprouts up and the insects of the earth return to life. Therefore, the inhabitants of Arabia can understand this reasoning much better than those people who do not have to experience such long periods of drought.

كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَّأَصْحَابُ الرَّسِّ وَثَمُودُ ۙ 12

(50:12) In the past Noah's people, and the people of Rass[12] and Thamud gave the lie (to Messengers),

12. Before this the people of Rass (Ashab ar-Rass) have been mentioned in (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayat 38), and now here, but at both places they have been only referred to as of those nations who rejected the Prophets. No other detail about them has been given. In the traditions of Arabia two places are well known by the name of ar-Rass, one in the Najd and the other in northern Hejaz. Of these ar-Rass of the Najd is better known and has been referred to more often in the pre-Islamic poetry of Arabia. Now it is difficult to determine which of these was the home of the Ashab ar- Rass. No reliable detail of their story is found in any tradition either. The most that one can say with certainty is that it was a nation which had thrown its Prophet into a well. But from the mere allusion that has been made to them in the Quran, one is led to think that in the time of the revelation of the Quran the Arabs were generally aware of this nation and its history, but the traditions about them could not be preserved in historic records.

وَعَادٌ وَّفِرْعَوْنُ وَاِخْوَانُ لُوْطٍ ۙ 13

(50:13) and so did 'Ad, and Pharaoh[13] and Lot's brethren,

13. Only the Pharaoh has been mentioned instead of the people of Pharaoh, for he had so dominated his people that they had been left with no independent opinion and will of their own, apart from him. They followed him wherever he led them. That is why he alone was held responsible for the deviation and degeneration of his people. Wherever there exists the freedom of will and action for a nation, it by itself bears the burden of its deeds, and wherever one man's dictatorship may have rendered a nation powerless the one man alone takes on his shoulders the burden of the sins of entire nation. This doesn't mean that the nation becomes absolved from its duty and responsibility when the one man alone has burdened himself with the responsibility. This is not so. The nation in such a case becomes responsible for the moral weakness shown by it in that why it allowed a man to overpower and dominate it so completely. The same thing has been alluded to in (Surah Az-Zukhruf, Ayat 54), thus: Pharaoh took his people to be light, and they obeyed him, for they were indeed a sinful people. (For explanation, see(E.N. 50 of Surah Az-Zukhruf).

وَّاَصْحٰبُ الْاَيْكَةِ وَقَوْمُ تُبَّعٍ ؕ كُلٌّ كَذَّبَ الرُّسُلَ فَحَقَّ وَعِيْدِ 14

(50:14) and the people of Aykah, and the people of Tubba'.[14] [15] They all gave the lie to the Messengers.[16] Thereafter My threat of chastisement against them was fulfilled.[17]

14. For explanation, see (E.N. 37 of Surah Saba); (E.N, 32 of Surah Dukhan).

15. That is, they all denied the apostleship of their Messengers as well as the news given by them that they will be raised back to life after death.

16. Although every nation denied only the Messenger who was sent to it, as it denied the news which all the Messengers have been presenting unanimously, denying one Messenger, therefore, amounted to denying all of them. Moreover, these nations did not merely deny the apostleship of the Messenger who had come to them, but they were not at all inclined to believe that a mere human could be appointed by Allah for the guidance of other men. Therefore, they denied apostleship itself, and .the crime of no one was confined to belying and rejecting any one Messenger only.

17. This is a reasoning from history for the Hereafter. In the preceding six verses, arguments were given for the possibility of the Hereafter; in these the historical end of the nations of Arabia and the adjoining lands has been presented as an argument to prove that the doctrine of the Hereafter which all the Prophets have been presenting, is the very truth, for whichever nation denied it became involved in the moral degeneration of the worst kind with the result that the torment of God descended on it and eliminated it from the world. This necessary result of the denial of the Hereafter and moral perversion which one can witness throughout history, is an express proof of the fact that man has not been created to be irresponsible in this world, but he has necessarily to render an account of his deeds as soon as the time limit for action at his disposal comes to an end. That is why whenever he

works in the world irresponsibly, his whole lift pattern is set on the path of ruin. If evil and wrong results go on following a course of action successively, it is a clear proof that that course of action is in conflict with the truth.

أَفَعَيِينَا بِالْخَلْقِ الْأَوَّلِ ۖ بَلْ هُمْ فِي لَبْسٍ مِّنْ خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ۚ 15

(50:15) Did We, then, become worn out by the first creation? Not at all; but they are in doubt about a fresh creation.[18]

18. This is a rational argument for the Hereafter. The person who is not a denier of God and is also not so foolish as to regard this excellently ordered universe and the creation of man in it as a mere accident, cannot help but admit that God alone has created man and this whole universe. Now this fact that we exist alive in this world and this great workhouse of the earth and heavens is functioning before us, by itself is an obvious proof that God is in no way powerless in creating us and this universe. Yet if a man says that after bringing about Resurrection the same God will not be able to bring about a new world order and will not be able to create us once again, he says an irrational thing. Had God been powerless, He would not have been able to create all this in the first instance. When He has created the universe in the first instance and we ourselves came into existence by virtue of that act of creation, what can then be the rational ground for assuming that He will become powerless to re-make the dismantled thing originally made by Himself?

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنسَانَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ ۖ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ 16

(50:16) Surely We[19] have created man, and We know the promptings of his heart, and We are nearer to him than even his jugular vein.[20]

19. After presenting the arguments for the Hereafter, it is being stated: Whether you believe in the Hereafter, or deny it, it has to come in any case, and it is such a reality which will certainly come about in spite of your denial. If you heed the warning given by the Prophets in advance and prepare for it, you will be doing good to yourselves. If you do not believe in it, you will be inviting your own doom. Your denial will not prevent the Hereafter from taking place and God's law of justice will not became suspended.

20. That is, Our power and Our knowledge has so encompassed man from within and without that Our power and knowledge is closer to him than his own jugular-vein. We do not have to travel from a distance to hear what he says, but We directly know every thought that arises in his heart. Likewise, when We shall want to seize him, We will not have to seize him after covering a distance, for wherever he is, he is in Our grasp; and whenever We will, We will seize him.

إِذْ يَتَلَقَّى الْمُتَلَقِّيَانِ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ قَعِيدٌ 17

(50:17) Moreover, there are two scribes, one each sitting on the right and the left, recording everything.

مَا يَلْفِظُ مِن قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ 18

(50:18) He utters not a word, but there is a vigilant watcher at hand.[21]

21. That is, on the one hand, We directly know man's actions and movements, even his hidden thoughts; on the other hand, every man has two angels appointed over him, who are recording whatever he does and says; none of his actions or words is left unrecorded. This means that when man is produced in the court of Allah, Allah at that time Himself will also be knowing what each person has done in the world. Besides, there will also be two witnesses who will produce documentary evidence of the person's actions and deeds. As to what will be the nature of this documentary evidence, it is difficult for us to have a precise concept of it. But from the facts that we are witnessing today, it seems certain that the voices and pictures and marks of man's actions and movements are being preserved and imprinted on every particle of the environment in which he lives and works, and each one of these can be reproduced in exactly the same form and voice so as to leave no difference whatsoever between the original and its copy. Man is doing this on a very limited scale with the help of his inventions, but the angels of God neither stand in need of these machines nor are bound by any limitation. Man's own body and everything around it is their tape and their film upon which they can record every voice and every image along with its minutest and most delicate detail precisely and exactly, and can make man hear, on the Day of Resurrection, with his own ears, in his own voice, those very things which he talked in the world, and can make him see, with his own eyes, the pictures of all his misdeeds, whose genuineness he would not possibly be able to deny.

Here, one should also understand that in the court of the Hereafter, Allah will not punish anybody only on the basis of His own knowledge, but will punish him after fulfilling all the requirements of justice. That is why an exhaustive record is being prepared of every person's words and deeds in the world so that a complete proof with undeniable evidence becomes available of everyone's life work and activity.

وَجَاءَتْ سَكْرَةُ الْمَوْتِ بِالْحَقِّ ۖ ذَٰلِكَ مَا كُنتَ مِنْهُ تَحِيدُ 19

(50:19) Lo, the agony of death has indeed come with the Truth.[22] That is what you had sought to avoid.[23]

22. "Come with the truth" implies that the agony of death is the starting point when the reality which had remained concealed in the world, begins to be uncovered. At this point man starts seeing clearly the other world of which the Prophet had forewarned him. Here, man also comes to know that the Hereafter is the very truth, and also this whether he is entering this second stage of life as favored or damned.

23. That is, this is the same reality which you refused to believe. You desired that you should live and go about as an unbridled rogue in the world, and there should be no other life after death, in which you may have to suffer for the consequences of your deeds. That is why you shunned the concept of the Hereafter and were not at all inclined to believe that this next world would ever be established. Now, you may see that the same next world is unveiling itself before you.

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ ۖ ذَٰلِكَ يَوْمُ الْوَعِيدِ 20

(50:20) And then the Trumpet was blown.24 This is the day of the promised chastisement.

24. This implies that blowing of the Trumpet at which all dead men will rise back to life in their own physical bodies. For explanation, see (E.N. 47 of Suarh Al-Anaam); (E.N. 57 of Suarh Ibrahim); (E.N. 78 of Suarh TaHa); (E.N.1 of Suarh Al- Hajj); (E.Ns 46,47 of Suarh YaSeen), and (E.N. 79 of Suarh Az-Zumar).

وَجَاءَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّعَهَا سَائِقٌ وَشَهِيدٌ 21

(50:21) Everyone has come, each attended by one who will drive him on, and another who will bear witness.25

25. Most probably this implies the same two angels who had been appointed for compiling the record of the words and deeds of the person in the world. On the Day of Resurrection, when every man will rise from his grave on the sounding of the Trumpet, the two angels will come forth immediately and take him into their custody. One of them will drive him to the divine court and the other will be carrying his record.

لَقَدْ كُنتَ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هَٰذَا فَكَشَفْنَا عَنكَ غِطَاءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ 22

(50:22) You were heedless of this. Now We have removed your veil and so your vision today is sharp.26

26. That is, you can clearly see that everything of which the Prophets foretold is present here.

وَقَالَ قَرِينُهُ هَٰذَا مَا لَدَيَّ عَتِيدٌ ۖ 23

(50:23) His companion said:“ Here is he who was in my charge.”27

27. Some commentators say that the companion implies the angel who has been referred to as a witness in(verse 21). He will say: I have this person’s record ready with me here. Some other commentators say that the companion implies the satan who was attached to the person in the world. He will say: This person whom I was controlling and preparing for Hell, is now presented before You. But the commentary that is more relevant to the context

is the one that has been reported from Qatadah and Ibn Zaid. They say that the companion implies the angel who drove and brought the person to Allah's court. He will say: Here is the person who had been given in my charge

أَلْقِيَا فِي جَهَنَّمَ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ عَنِيدٍ ۙ 24

(50:24) The command was given: "Cast into Hell[28] every hardened, stubborn unbeliever,[29]

28. As the context shows this command will be given to the two angels who had taken the culprit into their custody as soon as he had risen from the grave, and then brought him before the court.

29. The word kaffar as used in the text means an ungrateful person as well as a denier of the truth.

مَّنَّاعٍ لِّلْخَيْرِ مُعْتَدٍ مُّرِيبٍ ۙ 25

(50:25) who hinders good,[30] exceeds the limits,[31] is immersed in doubts,[32]

30. Khair in Arabic is used both for wealth and for goodness. According to the first meaning, the sentence means that he paid no one his dues from his wealth, neither the dues of Allah nor of the people. According to the second meaning, it would mean that he did not only withhold himself from the path of goodness but forbade others also to follow it. He had become a hindrance for the people in the way of goodness and exerted his utmost to see that goodness did not spread.

31. That is, he transgressed the bounds of morality in everything he did. He was ever ready to do anything and everything for the sake of his interests, his desires and his lusts. He amassed wealth by unlawful means and spent it in unlawful ways. He usurped the people's rights, had neither control over his tongue nor over his hands, and committed every injustice and excess. He did not rest content with creating hindrances in the way of goodness but harassed those who adopted goodness and persecuted those who worked for it.

32. The word murib as used in the original has two meanings: a doubter and the one who puts others in doubt, and both are implied here. It means that he was not only himself involved in doubt but also created doubts in the hearts of others. He held as doubtful the Being of Allah and the Hereafter and the angels and the Prophethood and revelation and every other truth of religion. Anything that was presented by the Prophets as a truth was held as unbelievable by him, and the same disease he spread to other people. Whomsoever he came in contact with, he would create one or the other doubt, one or the other evil thought in his mind.

ٱلَّذِى جَعَلَ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ فَاَلْقِيٰهُ فِى الْعَذَابِ الشَّدِيْدِ 26

(50:26) and has set up another deity with Allah. Hurl him into the grievous torment."[33]

33. Allah, in these verses, has enumerated the qualities that make a man worthy of Hell:

(1) Denial of the truth.

(2) Ingratitude to Allah.

(3) Enmity for the Truth and the followers of the truth.

(4) To become a hindrance in the way of goodness.

(5) Failure to fulfill the rights of Allah and the people from his wealth.

(6) To transgress the bounds in his affairs.

(7) To commit injustices and excesses against others.

(8) To doubt the truths of religion.

(9) To create doubts in the hearts of the people.

(10) To hold another as an associate in the Godhead of Allah.

قَالَ قَرِيْنُهٗ رَبَّنَا مَآ اَطْغَيْتُهٗ وَلٰكِنْ كَانَ فِىْ ضَلٰلٍۢ بَعِيْدٍ 27

(50:27) His companion said:" I did not incite him to rebel; he was far gone into error of his own accord."[34]

34. Here by companion is meant the satan who was attached to the disobedient person in the world. And this also becomes evident from the style that both the person and his satan are disputing between themselves in the court of Allah. He says: My Lord, this wretched one pursued me in the world and did not leave me until he succeeded in misleading me, therefore he alone should be punished. And the satan replies: Lord, I had no power over him. Had he not himself willed to become rebellious, I could not have seduced him forcibly. This wretched person himself fled from goodness and was fascinated by evil. That is why he did not like anything that the Prophets presented and went on yielding to every temptation and inducement presented by me.

قَالَ لَا تَخْتَصِمُوْا لَدَىَّ وَقَدْ قَدَّمْتُ اِلَيْكُمْ بِالْوَعِيْدِ 28

(50:28) (It was said): "Do not remonstrate in My presence. I had warned you.[35]

35. That is, I had warned both of you as to what punishment will be given to the one who beguiles and what punishment will be suffered by him who is beguiled. In spite of this warning when you did not desist from committing your respective crimes, there is no use quarreling now. Both, the one who beguiled and the one who was beguiled have to be punished for the crimes committed by them.

مَا يُبَدَّلُ الْقَوْلُ لَدَيَّ وَمَا أَنَا بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيدِ ع 29

(50:29) My Word is not changed;[36] and never do I inflict the least wrong upon My servants."[37]

36. That is, it is not My way to change the decisions once taken. The decision that I have taken to cast you into Hell cannot be withdrawn, nor can the law that I had announced in the world be changed that the punishment for misleading and for being misled will be awarded in the Hereafter.

37. The word zallam as used in the original means the one who is highly unjust. It does not mean: I am unjust to My servants but not highly unjust. But it means: If I were unjust to My own servants being their Creator and Sustainer, I would be highly unjust. Therefore, I am not at all unjust to My servants. This punishment that I am giving you is precisely the same punishment which you have made yourselves worthy of. You are not being punished an iota more than what you actually deserve, for My court is a court of impartial justice. Here, no one can receive a punishment which he does not actually deserve, and for which his being worthy has not been proved by certain and undeniable evidence.

يَوْمَ نَقُولُ لِجَهَنَّمَ هَلِ امْتَلَأْتِ وَتَقُولُ هَلْ مِن مَّزِيدٍ 30

(50:30) On that Day We shall ask Hell: "Are you full?" And it will reply: "Are there any more?"[38]

38. This can have two meanings:

(1) There is no room in me for more men.

(2) Bring all other culprits who may be there.

According to the first meaning the scene depicted would be that Hell has been so stuffed up with culprits that it cannot hold any more; so much so that when it was asked: Are you full? It cried out, alarmed: Are there still more culprits to come? According to the second meaning, the scene depicted before the mind is that the wrath of Hell is so flared up against the culprits that it is constantly demanding more and more of them to be cast into it so that no culprit escapes un-punished.

Here, the question arises: What is the nature of Allah Almighty's addressing Hell and its reply? Is it only something metaphoric, or is Hell actually a living and intelligent being which may be spoken to and it may respond and give replies? In this regard nothing can, in fact, be said with certainty. Maybe the meaning is metaphoric and only for the purpose of

depicting the actual scene of the state of Hell it may have been described in the form of the question and answer, just as one may ask a motor car: Why don't you move forward? And it may say: There is no fuel in me. But this also is quite possible that this conversation is based on reality. Therefore, it is not correct to assume about the things which are lifeless and mute for us in the world that they would be lifeless and mute for Allah as well. The Creator can have communication with any of His creatures and each of His creatures can respond to Him, no matter how incomprehensible its language may be to us.

وَأُزْلِفَتِ الْجَنَّةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ غَيْرَ بَعِيدٍ 31

(50:31) And when Paradise shall be brought close to the God-fearing, and will no longer be far away,[39]

39. That is, as soon as the judgment will be passed about a person from the court of Allah that he is righteous and worthy of Paradise, he will immediately find Paradise in front of him. He will not have to travel a distance on foot or by a conveyance to reach to it. There will be no interval between the pronouncement of the judgment and his entry into the Paradise. From this it can be judged how different the concept of space and time is between this world and the Hereafter. The concept of space and time that we are familiar in this world will become meaningless there.

هَٰذَا مَا تُوعَدُونَ لِكُلِّ أَوَّابٍ حَفِيظٍ ۚ 32

(50:32) it will be said: "This is what you were promised, a promise made to everyone who turned much (to Allah)[40]and was watchful of his conduct,[41]

40. The word awwab is very extensive in meaning. It implies the person who might have adopted the way of obedience and Allah's goodwill instead of the way of disobedience, who gives up everything that is disapproved by Allah and adopts everything that is approved by him, who gets alarmed as soon as he swerves a little from the path of worship and obedience, and repents and returns to the path of worship and obedience, who remembers Allah much and turns to Him in all matters of life.

41. The word hafeez means the one who guards. This implies the person who takes care of the bounds and duties enjoined by Allah, who guards the trusts imposed by Allah and avoids the things forbidden by him, who keeps watch over his time, energies and activities to see that none of these is being misemployed or misused, who offers repentance, remains steadfast and keeps it strong and intact, who examines himself over and over again to see that he is not disobeying his Lord anywhere in word or deed.

مَنْ خَشِيَ الرَّحْمَٰنَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَجَاءَ بِقَلْبٍ مُّنِيبٍ ۖ 33

(50:33) to everyone who feared the Merciful One though He is beyond the reach of perception,[42] to everyone who has come with a heart ever wont to turn (to Him).[43]

42. That is, although he could not see the Merciful God and could not perceive Him by his senses in any way, yet he feared His disobedience. His heart was more dominated by the fear of the unseen Merciful God than the fear of other perceptible powers and visible and mighty beings, and in spite of knowing that He is All-Merciful, he did not become a sinner, trusting His Mercy, but feared His displeasure in whatever he said and did. Thus, this verse points to two of the believer's important and basic characteristics: First, that he fears God although he cannot see and perceive Him; second, that he does not persist in sin in spite of his full awareness of God's quality of mercy. These very two characteristics make him worthy of honor in the sight of Allah. Besides, there is another subtle point also in it, which Imam Razi has pointed out. In Arabic, there are two words for fear, khauf and khashiyyat, which have a difference in their shade of meaning. The word khauf is generally used for the fear that a man feels in his heart on account of his sense of weakness as against someone's superior power and strength, and the word khashiyyat is used for the dread and awe with which a man is filled and inspired because of somebody's glory and grandeur and greatness. Here, the word khashiyyat has been used instead of khauf, which is meant to point out that a believer does not fear Allah only on account of the fear of His punishment, but it is the sense of Allah's glory and greatness that keeps him awe inspired at all times.

43. The word munib in the original is derived from inabat, which means to turn to one direction and to turn to the same again and again, just like the needle of the compass that points to the magnetic north persistently, however one may try to turn it away from that direction. Therefore, qalb-i-munib would mean such a heart as has turned away from every other direction and turned towards One Allah alone and then kept on turning towards Him again and again throughout life. The same sense has been conveyed by the devoted heart. This shows that in the sight of Allah the man of real worth is he who remains attached and devoted to Allah alone not merely verbally but also truly and sincerely.

ٱدۡخُلُوهَا بِسَلَٰمٍۖ ذَٰلِكَ يَوۡمُ ٱلۡخُلُودِ 34

(50:34) Enter this Paradise in peace."[44] That will be the Day of Eternity.

44. If the word salam in udkhuluha bi-salamin is taken in the meaning of peace and security, it would mean: Enter this Paradise safe and secure from every kind of grief, sorrow, anxiety and affiliation; and if it is taken in the meaning of salam itself, it would mean: Enter this Paradise you are welcomed here with the greeting of peace by Allah and his angels.

In these verses Allah has mentioned the qualities because of which a person makes himself worthy of Paradise, and they are:

(1) Taqwa (piety),

(2) Turning towards Allah.

(3) Watching over and guarding his relationship with Allah.

(4) Fearing Allah although he has not seen Him, and has full faith in His quality of mercy.

(5) Coming into His presence with a devoted and captivated heart, i.e. remaining constant on the way of devotion and dedication till death.

لَهُمْ مَّا يَشَآءُوْنَ فِيْهَا وَلَدَيْنَا مَزِيْدٌ 35

(50:35) Therein they shall get whatever they desire; and with Us there is even more.[45]

45. That is, they will certainly get whatever they desire, but in addition We will also give them that which they have never conceived and, therefore, could not desire.

وَكَمْ اَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْنٍ هُمْ اَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ بَطْشًا فَنَقَّبُوْا فِي الْبِلَادِ ؕ هَلْ مِنْ مَّحِيْصٍ 36

(50:36) How many a nation did We destroy before them that were stronger in prowess than these. They searched about the lands of the world.[46] But could they find a refuge?[47]

46. That is, they were not only powerful and strong in their own land but had also made incursions into other lands and brought under their sway far off lands as well.

47. That is, could their power and might save them when the time appointed by Allah came for their seizure? And could they find shelter and refuge anywhere? Now, on what trust do you hope that you will get refuge somewhere in the world when you have rebelled against Allah?

اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَذِكْرٰى لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهٗ قَلْبٌ اَوْ اَلْقَى السَّمْعَ وَهُوَ شَهِيْدٌ 37

(50:37) Verily there is a lesson in this for everyone who has a (sound) heart and who listens with an attentive mind.[48]

48. In other words, either one should have so much of native intelligence that one may think right of his own accord, or if not so, he should be so free from prejudice and neglect that he may listen with attention when another person tries to make one understand the truth.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِيْ سِتَّةِ اَيَّامٍ ۖ صلے ق وَّمَا مَسَّنَا مِنْ لُّغُوْبٍ 38

(50:38) We created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six days,[49] and weariness did not even touch Us.

49. For explanation, see (E.Ns 11 to 15 of the commentary of Surah HaMim As-Sajdah).

فَاصْبِرْ عَلٰى مَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوْعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ الْغُرُوْبِ ۚ 39

(50:39) Hence bear with patience whatever they say,[50] and celebrate your Lord's glory before the rising of the sun and before its setting;

50. That is, the fact of the matter is that We have made this entire universe in six days and We did not become weary at the end so that We might be powerless to reconstruct it Now, if these ignorant people mock you when they hear the news of the life-after-death from you and call you a madman, have patience at it, listen to whatever nonsense they utter with a cool mind, and continue to preach the truth that you have been appointed to spread.

In this verse, there is a subtle taunt on the Jews and the Christians as well, whereas in the Bible the story has been fabricated that God made the earth and the heavens in six days and rested on the seventh day (Gen. 2:2). Although the Christian priests are now feeling shy of it and have changed rested into "ceased from working" in their translation of the Bible, yet in King James authorized version of the Bible, the words "and He rested on the seventh day" are still there, and the same words are also found in the translation that the Jews have published from Philadelphia in 1954. In the Arabic translation also the words are: fastraha ft! yaum as-sebi.

وَمِنَ الَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْهُ وَاَدْبَارَ السُّجُوْدِ 40

(50:40) and in the night, too, celebrate His glory, in the wake of prostration.[51]

51. This is the means by which man gets the power and energy to continue his struggle to raise the word of the truth and to call the people towards righteousness throughout life with full determination even though he may have to pass through heart-breaking and soul-destroying conditions and his efforts may seem to be bearing no fruit. Praising and glorifying the Lord implies the Prayer here, and wherever in the Quran the praise and glorification has been associated with specific times, it implies the Prayer. The Prayer before sunrise is the Fajr Prayer, and the Prayers before sunset are the Asr and the Zuhr Prayers. The Prayers in the night are the Maghrib and the Isha Prayers, and the third, the Tahajjud Prayer, is also included in the glorification of the night. (For explanation, see (E.N. 111 of TaHa); (E.Ns 23, 24 of Surah Ar-Room). As for the glorification that has been commanded after being free from prostrations, it may imply the after-Prayer devotions as well as the offering of the voluntary prayers at the end of the prescribed obligatory Prayers. Umar, Ali, Hasan bin Ali, Abu Hurairah, Ibn Abbas, Shabi, Mujahid, Ikrimah, Hasan Basri, Qatadah, Ibrahim Nakhai and Auzai say that it implies the two rakats after the Maghrib Prayer. Abdullah bin Amr bin Aas, and according to a tradition, Abdullah bin Abbas also, held the opinion that it implies the after-Prayer devotions, and Ibn Zaid says that the object of this command is that voluntary Prayers should also be offered after the prescribed obligatory Prayers.

According to a tradition reported in Bukhari and Muslim, on the authority of Abu Hurairah, once the poor emigrants from Makkah came before the Prophet (peace be upon him), and said: O Messenger of Allah, the rich people have attained high ranks for themselves. The

Prophet (peace be upon him) asked: What has happened? They said: They offer the Prayers as we offer, and they observe the fasts as we observe; but they practice charity, which we cannot, and they set the slaves free which we cannot. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Should I tell you a thing which if you practiced, you would surpass all others, except those who practiced the same that you practiced? It is this that you should pronounce Subhan-Allah, Al-Hamdu-lillah and Allahu-Akbar, 33 times each after every Prayer. After some time, the same people came and said: Our rich brothers also have heard this and they too have started practicing, it. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: This is Allah's bounty and He bestows it on whomever He wills. According to a tradition these devotional words have to be repeated ten times each instead of 33 times each. Zaid bin Thabit has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) instructed his companions that they should pronounce Subhan-Allah and AlHamdu-lillah 33 times each and Allahu-Akbar 34 times after every Prayer. Afterwards, an Ansar companion submitted: I have seen in a vision that somebody was telling me that it would be better if I pronounced these three devotional words 25 times each and then Lailaha illAllah 25 times. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Well, you may do likewise. (Ahmad, Nasai, Darimi).

Abu Saeed Khudri says: I have heard the Prophet (peace be upon him) pronounce the following words when he would return after the Prayers were over: Subhana Rabbika Rabbil-izzati anima yasifun wasalam-un alal-mursalin, walhamdu lillahi Rabb-il alamin. (Jassas Ahkam al-Quran).

Besides these, several other forms of the after-Prayer devotional pronouncements also have been reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him). Those who wish to act on this instruction of the Quran may select the one they find suitable from Mishkat. Bab adh-dhik-as-Salat, commit it to memory and practice it. Nothing can be better than what the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself has taught in this regard. But what one should bear in mind is that the real object of the devotional pronouncements is not to utter these words only as a matter of course but to refresh and fix their meaning in the mind. Therefore, the meaning of whatever devotions one pronounces should be understood well and then practiced with full consciousness of the meaning.

وَاسْتَمِعْ يَوْمَ يُنَادِ الْمُنَادِ مِنْ مَّكَانٍ قَرِيبٍ ۙ 41

(50:41) Hearken on the Day when the caller will call from a place nearby,[52]

52. That is, wherever a dead person would be lying, or wherever his death had occurred is the world, the cry of the caller shall reach him there, which will urge him to rise and go before his Lord to render his account. This cry will be such that everybody who rises from death anywhere on the surface of the earth will feel as though the caller had called him from a nearby place. Simultaneously will this cry be heard everywhere on the globe equally clearly. From this also one can judge how different will be the concepts of space and time in the next world from what they are in this world, and what forces will be working there in accordance with the new laws.

يَوۡمَ يَسۡمَعُوۡنَ الصَّيۡحَةَ بِالۡحَقِّ ؕ ذٰلِكَ يَوۡمُ الۡخُرُوۡجِ 42

(50:42) the Day when they shall hear the Blast in truth. That will be the Day (for the dead) to come forth.[53]

53. The words yasmaun-as-saihata bil haqqi can have two meanings:

(1) That all the people will be hearing the cry of the right command.

(2) That they will be hearing the cry rightly.

In the first case the sentence will mean that the people will be hearing the same right command with their ears, which they were not inclined to accept in the world, which they had persistently refused to believe, and mocked the Prophets who had brought it. In the second case it will mean that they will certainly hear this cry, and they will realize that it is no fancy but indeed the cry of Resurrection; they will be left with no doubt that the Day of Resurrection of which they had been forewarned had arrived and the cry that was being raised was of the same.

اِنَّا نَحۡنُ نُحۡىٖ وَنُمِيۡتُ وَاِلَيۡنَا الۡمَصِيۡرُ ۙ 43

(50:43) Surely it is We Who give life and cause death, and to Us shall all return

يَوۡمَ تَشَقَّقُ الۡاَرۡضُ عَنۡهُمۡ سِرَاعًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ حَشۡرٌ عَلَيۡنَا يَسِيۡرٌ 44

(50:44) on the Day when the earth will be rent asunder and people, rising from it, will hasten forth. To assemble them all will be easy for Us.[54]

54. This is the answer to the saying of the disbelievers that has been reproduced in verse 3 above. They said: How can it be that when we are dead and become dust, we shall be raised back to life once again. This resurrection is far removed from reason. In reply it has been said: This gathering together, i.e. raising back to life and gathering all the people of the former and latter times together, is very easy for Us. It is not at all difficult for Us to know as to where the dust of one particular person lies and where of the other. We shall also face no difficulty in knowing as to which are the particles of one and which of the other among the scattered particles of the dust. Gathering together all these particles separately and remaking each and every man's body once again and then creating in that body the same very personality which had lived in it before, is not a task that may require any hard labor from Us, but all this can be accomplished immediately at one signal from Us. All those human beings who have been born in the world since the time of Adam till Resurrection can be brought together by one command of Ours. If your petty mind thinks it is far off, it may think so, but it is not beyond the power of the Creator of the Universe.

نَحۡنُ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَا يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ وَمَاۤ اَنۡتَ عَلَيۡهِمۡ بِجَبَّارٍ‌ ؕ فَذَكِّرۡ بِالۡقُرۡاٰنِ مَنۡ يَّخَافُ وَعِيۡدِ ع 45

(50:45) (O Prophet), We are well aware of what they say;[55] and you are not required to force things on them. So exhort with the Qur'an all those who fear My warning.[56]

55. In this sentence there is consolation for the Prophet (peace be upon him) as well as a threat for the disbelievers. Addressing the Prophet (peace be upon him) it has been said: Do not care at all about what these foolish people utter about you. We are hearing everything and it is for Us to deal with it. The disbelievers are being warned to the effect: The taunting remarks that you are passing against Our Prophet will cost you dearly. We are hearing everything that you utter and you will have to suffer for its consequences.

56. This does not mean that the Prophet (peace be upon him) wanted to compel the people into believing and Allah stopped him from this. But, in fact, although the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been addressed, the disbelievers are being warned, as if to say: Our Prophet has not been sent as a dictator over you. He is not there to compel you to become believers even if you did not wish to believe. His only responsibility is that he should recite the Quran and make the truth plain to the one who would take the warning. Now, if you do not accept his invitation, We will deal with you, not he.

51. Surah Adh Dhariyat (The Winds)

Name

It is derived from the very first word wadh-dhariyat, which implies that it is a Surah which begins with the word adh-dhariyat.

Period of Revelation

The subject matter and the style clearly show that it was sent down in the period when although the Holy Prophet's invitation was being resisted and opposed with denial and ridicule and false accusations stubbornly, persecution had not yet started. Therefore, this Surah also seems to have been revealed in the same period in which the Surah Qaf was revealed.

Subject Matter and Topics

The Surah mostly deals with the Hereafter, and in the end it presents the invitation to Tauhid. In addition, the people have also been warned that refusal to accept the message of the Prophets and persistence in the concepts and creeds of ignorance have proved to be disastrous for those nations themselves which have adopted this attitude and way of life in the past.

About the Hereafter what this Surah presents in short but pithy sentences is this: The people's different and conflicting beliefs about the end of human life are themselves an express proof that none of these beliefs and creeds is based on knowledge; everyone by himself has formed an ideology on the basis of conjecture and made the same his creed. Someone thought that there would be no life-after-death; someone believed in the life- after-death, but in the form of the transmigration of souls someone believed in the life hereafter and the meting out of the rewards and punishments but invented different sorts of props and supports to escape retribution. About a question of such vital and fundamental importance a wrong view of which renders man's whole life-work wrong and waste and ruins his future for ever, it would be a disastrous folly to build an ideology only on the basis of speculation and conjecture, without knowledge. It would mean that man should remain involved in a grave misunderstanding, pass his whole life in the heedlessness of error, and after death should suddenly meet with a situation for which he had made no preparation at all. There is only one way of forming the right opinion about such a question, and it is this: Man should seriously ponder over the knowledge about the Hereafter that the Prophet of Allah is conveying to him from Him, and should study carefully the system of the earth and heavens and his own existence: and should see whether the evidence of that knowledge's being sound and correct is afforded by everything around him or not. In this regard, the arrangement of the wind and rain, the structure of the earth and the creatures found on it, man's own self, the creation of the heavens and of everything in the world in the form of pairs have been presented as evidence of the Hereafter, and instances have been cited from human history to show that the temper of the empire of the Universe requires that the law of retribution must operate here.

After this, giving the invitation to Tauhid briefly, it has been said : "Your Creator has not created you for the service of others but for His own service. He is not like your false gods, which receive sustenance from you and godhead of which cannot function without your help, but He is a God Who is the Sustainer of all, Who does not stand in need of sustenance from anyone and Whose Godhead is functioning by His own power and might.

In this very connection, it has also been stated that whenever the Prophets of Allah have been opposed and resisted, they have not been opposed and resisted on the basis of any rational ground but on the basis of the same obduracy and stubbornness and false pride that is being shown against the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and there is no other motive for it than rebellion and arrogance. Then the Holy Prophet has been instructed not to bother about the rebels but to go on performing his mission of invitation and admonition, for it is useful and beneficial for the believers although it may not be so for the other people. As for the wicked people who still persist in their rebellion, they should know that their predecessors who followed the same way of life, have already received their shares of the punishment, and these people's share of the punishment has been made ready for them.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

وَالذّٰرِيٰتِ ذَرۡوًا ۙ 1

(51:1) By the winds which scatter dust,

فَالۡحٰمِلٰتِ وِقۡرًا ۙ 2

(51:2) which carry clouds laden with water,[1]

1. All the commentators agree that adh-dhariyat implies the winds that disperse and raise up the dust, and al-hamilati wiqran implies the winds that lift up millions of tons of water vapors from the oceans in the form of clouds. This same commentary has been reported from Umar, Ali, Abdullah bin Abbas, Abdullah bin Umar, and also from Mujahid, Saeed bin Jubair, Hasan Basri, Qatadah, Suddi and other scholars.

فَالۡجٰرِيٰتِ يُسۡرًا ۙ 3

(51:3) which then smoothly speed along,

فَالۡمُقَسِّمٰتِ اَمۡرًا ۙ 4

(51:4) and execute the great task of apportioning (rainfall):[2]

2. The commentators have disputed the commentary of aljariyati yusran and al-muqassimati amran. One group has preferred the view, or held this meaning as admissible, that by these

two also are meant the winds; that is, the same very winds then transport the clouds, and spreading over different parts of the earth, distribute the water as and where required according to Allah's command, The other group holds that al-jariyati yusran implies fast moving boats, and al-muqassimati amran implies the angels who distribute among the creatures their shares of the provisions according to Allah's command. According to a tradition, Umar explained this very meaning of these two sentences and said: Had I not heard this from the Prophet (peace be upon him), I would not have mentioned it. On this very basis, Allama Alusi has expressed the opinion that it is not permissible to take any other meaning of these sentences than this, and those who have taken any other meaning, have taken undue liberties. But Hafiz Ibn Kathir says that this tradition has weak links of the transmitters and on its basis it cannot be said with absolute certainty that the Prophet (peace be upon him) might himself have given this commentary of these sentences. There is no doubt that from a good number of the companions and their immediate followers only this second commentary has been reported, but a good number of the commentators have given the first commentary also, and it fits in better with the context. Shah Rafiuddin, Shah Abdul Qadir and Maulana Mahmud-ul-Hasan also have preferred the first meaning in their translations of the Quran.

إِنَّمَا تُوعَدُونَ لَصَادِقٌ ۙ 5

(51:5) surely what you are being warned against[3] is true,

3. The word used in the original is toadoona. If it is derived from waad, the meaning would be: That which you are promised; and if it is from waid, it would mean: That which you are threatened with. As regards the context, the second meaning is preferable, for the addressees are the people who were lost in disbelief, polytheism and sin, and were not prepared to believe that they would be held accountable some time in the future and would be rewarded or punished accordingly. That is why we have taken toadoona in the meaning of waid (threaten) and not of waad (promise).

وَإِنَّ الدِّينَ لَوَاقِعٌ ۝ 6

(51:6) and the Judgement shall doubtlessly take place.[4]

4. This is the thing for which the oath has been sworn. The oath implies this: The unique order and regularity with which the wonderful system of the rain is functioning before your eyes, and the wisdom and good reasons which clearly underlie it, testify to the reality that this world is not a meaningless and useless toy-house where the great drama of life is being presented at random since millions and millions of years. But, it is, in fact, a wise system of the highest order in which everything that happens has a purpose and reason behind it. In this system it is not possible that a creature like man should have been given intellect, senses and the powers to exploit things to advantage, should have been granted moral sense to distinguish the good and evil, right and wrong deeds and then might have been left alone foolishly and meaninglessly in the world to behave as he pleased. And that he should never be questioned as to how he had used and employed the powers of the heart and mind and body, the vast means placed at his disposal to work in the world, and the power and

authority granted to him to employ the countless creatures of God to his advantage. In this system of the universe where everything is purposeful, how can the creation of a unique being like man only be purposeless? In a system where everything is based on wisdom, how can the creation of man only be useless and futile? The purpose of the creation of those things which do not possess consciousness and intellect is fulfilled in this very physical world. Therefore, it would be right and reasonable if they were destroyed after they had reached the end of their life term, for they have not been granted any powers and authority for which they might have to be called to account. But a creature which possesses intellect and consciousness and authority, whose activities are not confined only to the physical world, but are also moral in nature, and whose actions entailing moral consequences do not take place only till the end of life, but continue to register their moral effects on it even after death, cannot be destroyed like plants and animals just after it has fulfilled the function of its physical existence. Whatever good or evil act he has committed by his own will and choice, he must get the reward or suffer the punishment for it justly and equitably. For, this is the basic requirement of the factor under which, contrary to other creatures, he has been endowed with the freedom of choice and will. If he is not held accountable, if he is not rewarded or punished according to his moral acts, and if he is also destroyed at the conclusion of his physical life like the creatures which have been given no freedom of will and choice, his creation would inevitably be altogether futile, and a Wise Being cannot be expected to indulge in a futile exercise.

Besides, there is also another reason for swearing an oath by these four phenomena of the Universe regarding the occurrence of the Hereafter and the meting out of rewards and punishments. The ground on which the deniers of the Hereafter regard the life after death as impossible is this: When we are mixed up with dust after death and our particles have scattered away in the earth, how can it be possible that all these scattered particles of the body are reassembled and we are made to rise up again? The error of this apprehension is by itself removed when we consider deeply the four phenomena of the Universe, which have been presented as an argument for the Hereafter. The rays of the sun have their effect on all the collections of water on the surface of the earth, where their heat reaches. In this process countless drops of water evaporate from the collection, but they do not become extinct, and every drop remains preserved in the air as vapors. When Allah commands, the same wind gathers the same vapors of the drops together, combines them into thick clouds, spreads those clouds on different parts of the earth and precisely at the time appointed by Allah causes each single drop to fall back to the earth in the form as it was in the beginning. This phenomenon that is occurring before the eyes of man daily testifies that the particles of the bodies of the dead men can also gather together at one command by Allah and the men can be raised up in the shape in which they lived before. Whether these particles are in the dust, or in the water, or in the air, in any case they remain preserved in this very earth and its atmosphere. Why should it be difficult for the God Who gathers together the vapors of water after they had dispersed in the air, by means of the same air, and then causes them to rain as water, to gather together the scattered particles of the human bodies from the air, water and earth and then combine them in their original form and shape?

وَالسَّمَآءِ ذَاتِ الْحُبُكِ ۙ 7

(51:7) By the heaven with its numerous forms:[5]

5. The word hubuk in the original is also used for the paths and for the waves which are produced on the sand of the desert and the surface of stagnant water by the wind; it is also spoken for the curls in wavy hair. Here, the sky has been characterized by hubuk either because the sky is often overcast with clouds of different shapes, which go on changing because of the wind, and no shape lasts nor resembles any other, or because at night one sees the stars scattered in the sky in many different combinations and no combination resembles any other combination.

إِنَّكُمْ لَفِي قَوْلٍ مُّخْتَلِفٍ ۙ 8

(51:8) surely you are at variance (about the Hereafter);[6]

6. The oath has been sworn by the sky of various appearances on this difference of views because of the similarity. That is, just as the clouds and the clusters of stars in the sky have different appearances and there is uniformity among them, so are also your views about the Hereafter, each different from the other. Someone says that this world is eternal and no Resurrection can take place. Another says that this system is not eternal and can come to an end in the course of time, but whatever becomes extinct, including man, cannot possibly be resurrected. Another one regards resurrection as possible but holds the belief that man, in order to be requited for his good and evil deeds, is born and reborn again and again in this very world. Someone believes in Hell and Heaven but combines the transmigration of the souls also with it. He thinks that the sinner goes to Hell to suffer the punishment as well as is born and reborn in this world for the sake of the punishment. Someone says that the life in the world is in itself an agony; as long as man's self remains attached to physical life, he goes on dying and taking birth again and again in this very world, and his real salvation is that he should attain annihilation. Someone believes in the Hereafter and Hell and Heaven, but says that God by giving death to His only son on the cross had atoned for the original sin of man, and man will escape the evil consequences of his evil acts by believing in the son. Some other people generally believe in the Hereafter and the meting out of the rewards and punishments but at the same time regard certain holy men as the intercessors, who are such favorites of Allah, or wield such influence with Him, that anyone who attaches himself to them as a disciple can escape the punishment whatever he may do in the world. About these holy men there is also no agreement among their devotees; every group of them has its own separate intercessor. This difference of the views itself is a proof that whenever man has formed an opinion about his own and the world's end, independent of revelation and Prophethood, he has formed it without knowledge; otherwise if man in this regard really had some direct means of knowledge there would not have arisen so many different and contradictory beliefs.

يُؤْفَكُ عَنْهُ مَنْ أُفِكَ ۘ 9

(51:9) though only those who are averse to the Truth will turn away from (believing in it).[7]

7. The pronoun of anhu in this sentence either turns to the meting out of the rewards and punishments, or to various views. In the first case, it means: The meting out of the rewards has to take place, in spite of your holding different beliefs about it; but only such a person is perverted from it who has turned away from the truth. In the second case, the meaning is: Only such a one is misled by these different views, who has turned away from the truth.

قُتِلَ الْخَرّٰصُوْنَ ۙ 10

(51:10) Doomed are the conjecturers[8]

8. Here the Quran is warning man of an important truth. To judge or make an estimate on the basis of conjecture and speculation in the ordinary matters of worldly life may be useful to some extent, although it would be no substitute for knowledge, but it would be disastrous to make estimates and give judgments merely according to one's own conjectures and speculations in a question of such fundamental nature and importance as whether we are, or are not, responsible and accountable to anyone for the deeds and actions of our lifetime, and if we are, to whom are we accountable, when and what shall be the accountability, and what will be the consequences of our success and failure in that accountability. This is not a question on which man may form an estimate merely according to his conjecture and speculation and then stake his entire life capital on the gamble. For if the conjecture proves to be wrong, it would mean that the man has doomed himself to utter ruin. Furthermore, this question is not at all included among those questions about which one may form a right opinion by the exercise of analogy and conjecture, For conjecture and analogy can work only in those matters which are perceptible for man, whereas this is a question which does not come under perception in any way. Therefore, it is not at all possible that a conjectural and analogical judgment about it may be right and correct. As for the question: What is the right way for man to form an opinion about the matters which are no perceptible and incomprehensible in nature? this has been answered at many places in the Quran, and from this Surah also the same answer becomes obvious, and it is this:

(1) Man himself cannot reach the reality directly.

(2) Allah gives the knowledge of the reality through His Prophets.

(3) Man can ascertain the truth of that knowledge in this way: he should study deeply the countless signs that are found in the earth and heavens and in his own self, then consider seriously and impartially whether those signs testify to the reality that the Prophet bas presented, or to the different ideologies that the other people have presented in this regard.

This is the only method of scientific investigation about God and the Hereafter that has been taught in the Quran. Doomed would be the one who discarded this method and followed his own analogies and conjectures.

الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ فِيْ غَمْرَةٍ سَاهُوْنَ ۙ 11

(51:11) who are steeped in ignorance and heedlessness.[9]

9. That is, they do not know what fate they are heading for on account of their wrong conjectures, whereas every way that is adopted with a wrong view of the Hereafter only leads to ruin. He who is a denier of the Hereafter is not at all preparing himself for any accountability and is engrossed in the thought that there would be no life after death, whereas the time would suddenly come when against all this expectations he would open his eyes in the new life and he would realize that there he has to render an account of each of his acts and deeds. The person who is spending his life under the idea that he would come back to this very world after death, will come to know as soon as he dies that all doors of return are closed, that there is no chance of compensating for the misdeeds of the previous life by any new actions, and that there is another life ahead in which he has to meet with and suffer the consequences of his worldly life for ever after. The person who commits suicide in the hope that after he has destroyed his self and its desires he would escape the agony of life in the form of total annihilation, will find as soon as he passes through the gate of death that there is an everlasting life ahead and not mortality, where he has to explain as to why he had been straining every nerve to destroy the self that he had been blessed with instead of developing and adorning it in every possible way. Likewise, the one who continued committing disobedience of Allah throughout life, placing, reliance upon some son of Allah's becoming an atonement or some holy one's becoming an intercessor, will come to know as soon as he appears before Allah that there is neither any atoner there nor anyone wielding such influence and power that he may save him from Allah's grasp and punishment by means of his own power and influence. Thus, all these conjectural creeds are, in fact, an opiate under the intoxication of which these people are lying senseless, and do not know where they are being misled by the ignorance which they have adopted by rejecting the true knowledge given by God and His Prophets.

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَ اَيَّانَ يَوْمُ الدِّيْنِ ؕ 12

(51:12) They ask: "When will the Day of Judgement be?"

يَوْمَ هُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ يُفْتَنُوْنَ 13

(51:13) It will be the Day when they shall be scourged by the Fire[10]

10. The disbelievers did not ask the question: "When will be the Resurrection" for the sake of seeking knowledge but for the purpose of taunt and ridicule. That is why they have been given such an answer. It is just like the taunting reaction of the wicked person who is admonished to desist from his immoral deeds, otherwise he would meet with the evil consequences of those deeds one day, and he asks in jest: When will that day be? Obviously, such a question is not asked to know the date of the occurrence of the evil end but to make fun of the admonition. Therefore, its right answer is that it will occur when the evildoers will meet with their doom. Besides, one should also understand well that if a denier of the Hereafter is discussing the question of the Hereafter sensibly, he can dispute the arguments in favor and against it, but he can never ask the question: On what date will the Hereafter occur, unless he has lost all reason. Whenever he puts such a question, it will only be as a taunt and ridicule. For it does not at all affect the real discussion whether the date of the occurrence of the Hereafter is stated or not. No one can deny the Hereafter only because the

year and the month and the day of its occurrence have not been given, nor can one believe in it on hearing that it will occur on such and such a day of such and such a month and year. The date is no argument that may cause a denier to be convinced of its coming, for after that the question will arise: How can one believe whether on that particular day the Hereafter will actually occur?

ذُوْقُوْا فِتْنَتَكُمْ ؕ هٰذَا الَّذِیْ كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَ 14

(51:14) (and be told): "Taste your ordeal![11] This is what you were seeking to hasten."[12]

11. The word fitnah gives two meanings here:

(1) Taste this torment of yours.

(2) Taste the mischief that you had created and spread in the world.

12. The disbelievers asking: When will the Day of Retribution be, implied: Why is it being delayed. That is, when we have denied it and have deserved the punishment for belying it, why doesn't it overtake us immediately. That is why when they will be burning in the Hell-fire, at that time it will be said to them: This is that which you sought to be hastened. This sentence by itself gives the meaning: It was Allah's kindness that He did not seize you immediately on the occurrence of disobedience from you and went on giving you respite after respite to think and understand and mend your ways. But the foolish people that you were, you did not take advantage of the respite but demanded that your doom should be hastened for you instead. Now you may see for yourself what it was that you were seeking to be hastened?

اِنَّ الْمُتَّقِیْنَ فِیْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّ عُیُوْنٍ ۙ 15

(51:15) As for the God-fearing,[13] they shall be in the midst of gardens and fountains,

13. In this context the word muttaqi (the righteous) clearly implies those people who believed in the Hereafter when they were given the news of it by the Book of Allah and His Messenger, and adopted the attitude and way of life that they were taught for success in the life hereafter, and refrained from the way about which they had been told that it would involve man in the torment of God.

اٰخِذِیْنَ مَاۤ اٰتٰىهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَبْلَ ذٰلِكَ مُحْسِنِیْنَ ؕ 16

(51:16) joyously receiving what their Lord will have granted them.[14] Verily they did good works before (the coming of this Day):

14. Literally: "Receiving what their Lord has given them", but in this context receiving does not merely mean to receive but to receive joyfully. Obviously, when a person is given something of his own choice and liking, his receiving it will naturally have the meaning of accepting and receiving it joyfully.

كَانُوا قَلِيلًا مِّنَ الَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ 17

(51:17) they used to sleep but little by night,[15]

15. Some commentators have given this meaning of this verse: Seldom did it so happen that they spent the whole night sleeping and did not spend a part of it, in the beginning of the night or in the middle or in the end of it, awake in the worship of Allah. This commentary with a little variation in wording has been related from lbn Abbas, Anas bin Malik, Muhammad al-Baqir, Mutrif bin Abdullah, Abul Aliyah, Mujahid, Qatadah, Rabi bin Anas and others. According to some other commentators, it means this: They spent the major part of their nights in the worship of Allah Almighty and slept little. This meaning has been reported from Hasan Basri, Ahnaf bin Qais, and Ibn Shihab Zuhri, and the later commentators and translators have preferred this, for this appears to be in better agreement with the words of the verse and the context.

وَبِالْأَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ 18

(51:18) and would ask for forgiveness at dawn,[16]

16. That is they did not belong to those who spent their nights in immoral and indecent acts and even then never thought of seeking Allah's forgiveness. On the contrary, they spent a major part of the nights in the worship of Allah and then in the early hours of dawn sought His forgiveness, saying that they did not do full justice to the worship that was due from them. The words humyastaghfirun also contain an allusion to this that it befitted and suited them alone that they should exert their utmost in the service of their Lord and then, at the same time, should implore Him humbly for the forgiveness of their errors and shortcomings instead of exulting at and waging proud of their good acts. This could not be the way of those shameless, wicked people who committed sin and behaved arrogantly as well.

وَفِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ لِّلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ 19

(51:19) and in their wealth there was a rightful share for him who would ask and for the destitute.[17]

17. In other words, on the one hand, they recognized the right of their Lord and duly discharged it; on the other hand, they did not think that whatever Allah had given them, whether little or much, was wholly their own and their children's right, but they had the sense that in their possessions there was the right and share of every such person who was indigent and needy. They did not render help to the people as a charity so as to earn their gratitude for the favor done, but they regarded it as the people's right and discharged it as their own duty. Then their this service to mankind was not only confined to those who came to them for seeking help as beggars but anyone about whom they came to know that he had been left destitute, they would become anxious to render him necessary help of their own accord. There was no orphan who might have been left helpless, no widow who might have had no breadwinner, no disabled person who might be unable to earn a living, no one who

might have lost his job, or whose taming might not be sufficing his needs, nobody who might have been hit by a calamity and might be unable to compensate for the loss by himself. In short, there was no needy one whose condition they might have known and yet might have withheld their help when they could have rendered him necessary help and support.

The following are the three qualities on the basis of which Allah regards them as the righteous doers of good, and says that these very qualities have made them worthy of Paradise: (1) That they believed in the Hereafter and refrained from every act and conduct which Allah and His Messenger had stated to be disastrous for the life-after-death. (2) That they executed their utmost to do full justice to the service of Allah and still sought Allah's forgiveness instead of exulting at their acts of piety. (3) That they served Allah's servants not as a favor to them but as their own duty and their right due from them.

Here, one should also know and understand another thing; The right of the needy ones that has been mentioned here in the wealth of the believers does not imply the zakat, which has been imposed as religious duty on them. But this is the right that a well-to-do believer himself feels there is in his possessions of the needy even after he has paid off the zakat, and he discharges it willingly even if it has not been made obligatory by the Shariah. lbn Abbas, Mujahid, Zaid bin Aslam and other scholars have understood this very meaning of this verse. In fact, the real spirit of this divine command is that a pious and virtuous person is never involved in the misunderstanding that he has become relieved of his duty of discharging the right of Allah and His servants that there was in his possessions after he has paid the zakat, and now he is not bound to help every needy and destitute person whom he comes across. Contrary to this, every servant of Allah, who is really pious and righteous, remains ever ready to do whatever good he can do willingly, does not let slip any opportunity when he could do some good to the people in the world. He is not of the way of thinking that he has done whatever good he had been enjoined to do and now no more good is required to be done by him. The one who has recognized the true value of goodness, does not perform it as a burden but tries to earn more and more of it, greedily as a bargain to his own advantage, in his own interest.

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ اٰيٰتٌ لِّلْمُوْقِنِيْنَ ۙ 20

(51:20) There are many Signs on earth for those of sure faith,[18]

18. The signs imply those proofs which testify to the possibility and necessity of the Hereafter. The earth's own body and its structure, its having been placed at a suitable distance from the sun at a particular angle, the arrangement of heat and light and of different seasons on it, the provision of air and water on it, and of countless different kinds of treasures in its belly, covering its surface with a fertile crest and causing to grow in it an endless variety of vegetables, generating countless races of the animals of the land and water and air, providing suitable food and proper conditions for the life of every species, creating and making available all those means and resources on it even before the creation of man, so as to meet and suit his ever increasing needs in every stage of history as well as accord with the development of his civilization and way of living, these and countless other signs can be seen in the earth and its surroundings by every discerning eye. The case of the

one who has closed the doors of his heart to belief and faith is different. He will see in these every thing else but not any sign that may point to the reality. But an un-prejudiced person who has an open mind, will never form the idea after observing these signs that all this has come about as the result of an accidental explosion, that had occurred suddenly in the universe millions of years ago; he will rather be convinced that this wise and perfect work of art is the creation of an Omnipotent and Omniscient God. And that God Who has made this earth cannot be helpless to resurrect man after death, nor can He be so unwise as to leave a sensible and intelligent being like man after granting him powers and authority to roam at will in His earth. The fact that man has been granted powers and authority by itself demands that he should be accountable; otherwise it would be against wisdom and justice; and the Creator's being allpowerful (Omnipotent) is by itself a proof that after the human species has fulfilled its function in the world, He can raise all its members back to life and gather them together from wherever they are lying dead in the earth for the purpose of accountability.

وَفِيٓ أَنفُسِكُمۡۚ أَفَلَا تُبۡصِرُونَ 21

(51:21) and also in your own selves.[19] Do you not see?

19. That is, you may not look outside yourself; look within your own self, and you will find countless signs testifying to the same truth. You will see how your creation was begun by combining a microscopic sperm with a microscopic egg in a corner of the mother's body; how you were blessed with a body of unique structure and a self endowed with wonderful powers and abilities; how you were brought out from the dark world of your mother's womb, as soon as your structure became complete, into this vast world, equipped with an automate machine within yourself, which goes on functioning by itself from the day you take birth till your maturity and old age, to assimilate food, produce blood and circulate it in the veins, discharge waste matter, prepare new parts in place of the wasted and worn out parts of the body, resisting the internal and the external hazards to the body and compensating for the losses, even for sending you to peaceful sleep after exhaustion, without any effort required to be made by you towards these basic needs of life. A wonderful brain has been placed under your skull in whose complicated layers lies filled an invaluable wealth of intellect, thought, imagination, consciousness, discrimination, will, memory, desire, feeling and emotions. Inclinations and trends, and other mental abilities. You have been provided with numerous means of knowledge which supply you with every kind of informational through the eye, nose, cars and skin. You have been given the tongue and the power of speech by which you can express your thoughts and feelings. And then your ego has been placed as a ruler over the entire kingdom of your body so that it may employ all the powers and abilities and form opinions and decide as in what ways you have to spend and employ your time and labor and efforts, what you have to reject and what you have to accept, what should be your objective in life and what you should shun and avoid.

Thus equipped when you were brought into the world, you saw what provisions had been made ready here for your nourishment, development and the progress and perfection of your self by virtue of which you reached a particular stage of life when you became able to use the powers and authority you had been endowed with.

For using these powers you were given means in the earth, provided with opportunities, and given ability to control and employ many of the things as you pleased. You had all the ways of disbelief and faith, sin and obedience, justice and injustice, good and evil, truth and falsehood, open before you; there were those who invited to each of these ways and there were the means to lead to each one of them. Whoever among you selected one particular way did so on his own responsibility, for he had the power to decide and choose endowed in himself. Depending on the choice made by each one and taking advantage of the opportunities thus afforded of employing his powers of will and intention someone became a good man and another a bad man; someone adopted the way of belief and faith and another the way of disbelief, polytheism or atheism; someone withheld himself from unlawful desires, and another did whatever he wanted in obedience to his self; someone became an oppressor and another the oppressed; someone carved out his duties and another usurped the rights of others; someone continued to do good till his last breath, another went on committing evil till his last moment of lift; someone exerted himself to raise the word of the truth, another went on oppressing the followers of the truth in order to cause falsehood to flourish.

Now can a person, unless he is absolutely blind and senseless, say that a being such as this has appeared on the earth just by an accident? That there is no wisdom and no plan working behind his creation? That the storms that he is raising on the earth are without a purpose and will end up without entailing any consequence? That there will be no reward for a good act and no punishment for an evil act? And that injustice will not be redressed and the unjust will not be brought to book? Such things may be said by a person who has lost his reason, or by the one who is resolved not to acknowledge at all the wisdom of a Wise Being working behind the creation of man. But an unprejudiced, sensible person cannot help but admit that the creation of man, the powers and abilities he has been given, and the position he has been granted here, is certainly a grand, wise plan, and the wisdom of the God Whose plan it is, inevitably demands that man should be questioned about his actions and deeds; and it cannot be right to entertain the doubt about the powers of God that He will not be able to recreate man whom He has brought up to this noble position of honor from a mere microscopic cell.

وَفِي السَّمَآءِ رِزۡقُكُمۡ وَمَا تُوعَدُونَ 22

(51:22) And in heaven is your provision and also what you are being promised. [20]

20. By the heaven here is meant the heavens, by provision, all that man is given for his survival and functioning in the world, and by that which you are promised, Resurrection, gathering together, accountability, meting out of rewards and punishments, and Hell and Heaven, which have been foretold and promised in all divine Books and now in the Quran. The verse means to say: The decisions, as to who should be given what and how much in the world, are taken in heavens, and also the decision as to when should any of you be recalled for the purpose of accountability and dispensation of the rewards and punishments.

فَوَرَبِّ السَّمَآءِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ اِنَّهٗ لَحَقٌّ مِّثۡلَ مَاۤ اَنَّكُمۡ تَنۡطِقُوۡنَ ع 23

(51:23) So, by the Lord of the heaven and the earth, this is certainly true, as true as the fact of your speaking.

هَلۡ اَتٰىكَ حَدِيۡثُ ضَيۡفِ اِبۡرٰهِيۡمَ الۡمُكۡرَمِيۡنَ ۘ 24

(51:24) (O Prophet), did[21] the story of Abraham's honoured guests reach you?[22]

21. Now, from here to the end of verse 46, brief allusions have been made, one after the other, about Allah's Prophets and some of the nations of the past, which are meant to impress two things:

First, that in human history God's law of retribution has been working constantly, in which precedents are found of the rewards for the righteous and of punishments for the wicked people continuously. This is a clear evidence of the fact that even in the life of this world the Creator's relationship with man is not merely based on the physical law but the moral law also is working side by aide with it. And when the temper of the kingdom of the universe is such that the creation which has been given an opportunity to act morally while living in a physical body, should not only be dealt with on the basis of physical laws, like animals and plants, but the moral law also should be applied to its moral acts. This by itself points to the truth that a time must come in this kingdom when on the completion of man's role in the physical world, full results of his moral acts should also appear strictly in accordance with the moral law because in the physical world they do not appear fully.

The second thing that has been impressed by these historical allusions is that the nations which did not believe in the Prophets of Allah and based the conduct and attitude in life on the denial of the Oneness of Allah, the Prophethood and the Hereafter, were ultimately doomed to destruction. This continuous experience of history testifies that God's law of morality that was conveyed through the Prophets, and on the basis of which man will be subjected to accountability in the Hereafter, is entirely based on the truth. For whichever nation determined its conduct and attitude in the world independent of this law, considering itself irresponsible and unaccountable, has gone straight to its doom.

22. This story has been narrated at three places in the Quran, in (Surah Hood, Ayats 69-73); (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 51-56) and (Surah Al-Ankabut, Ayat 31).

اِذۡ دَخَلُوۡا عَلَيۡهِ فَقَالُوۡا سَلٰمًا ؕ قَالَ سَلٰمٌ ۚ قَوۡمٌ مُّنۡكَرُوۡنَ ۘ 25

(51:25) When they came to him, they said: "Peace"; he said: "Peace also be to you; (you seem to be) a group of strangers."[23]

23. In view of the context in which this sentence has occurred, it can have two meanings:

(1) That the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) himself said to the guests: I have never had the chance to see you before, you are perhaps new-comers in this land.

(2) That after responding to their salutation, the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) said these words to himself, or to his servants, while going inside the house for arranging the

feast: They appear to be strangers, people of their noble nature and appearance have not been seen before in this land.

فَرَاغَ إِلَىٰٓ أَهۡلِهِۦ فَجَآءَ بِعِجۡلٖ سَمِينٖ ٢٦

(51:26) Then he went back to his family[24] and brought a fat roasted calf[25]

24. That is, he did not tell his guests that he was going to arrange food for them, but after they were seated he went quietly into the house to arrange a feast for them, so that the guests should not refuse it out of formality.

25. In Surah Hood, the words are ijlin hanidh, a roasted calf; here bi-ijlin samin: a fatted calf that he got roasted.

فَقَرَّبَهُۥٓ إِلَيۡهِمۡ قَالَ أَلَا تَأۡكُلُونَ ٢٧

(51:27) and laid it before them, saying: "Will you not eat?"

فَأَوۡجَسَ مِنۡهُمۡ خِيفَةٗۖ قَالُواْ لَا تَخَفۡۖ وَبَشَّرُوهُ بِغُلَٰمٍ عَلِيمٖ ٢٨

(51:28) Then he became afraid of them.[26] They said: "Fear not," and announced to him the good news of (the birth of) a boy endowed with knowledge.[27]

26. That is, when they did not stretch out their hands for food, the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) became afraid in his heart. The reason for this fear could be that in tribal life the strangers' going to a house and avoiding food used to be an indication that they had come with an evil design. But most probably when they refrained from food the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) realized that they were angels, who had come in human guise; and since the angels came in human guise only on extraordinary occasions, he became afraid that they must have come in that guise on some dreadful mission.

27. According to(Surah Hood, Ayat 71), this was the good news of the birth of the Prophet Isaac and this also contained the good news that through the Prophet Isaac he would have a grandson like the Prophet Jacob (peace be upon them all).

فَأَقۡبَلَتِ ٱمۡرَأَتُهُۥ فِي صَرَّةٖ فَصَكَّتۡ وَجۡهَهَا وَقَالَتۡ عَجُوزٌ عَقِيمٞ ٢٩

(51:29) So hearing his wife went forth shouting. She struck her face and exclaimed: "A barren old woman am I."[28]

28. That is, I am not only old but barren too. How shall a child be born to me? According to the Bible, the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) at that time was a hundred years old and Sarah was ninety (Gen. 17: 17).

قَالُوْا كَذٰلِكِ ۙ قَالَ رَبُّكِ ۭ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْحَكِيْمُ الْعَلِيْمُ 30

(51:30) They said: "So has your Lord said (that you shall have a boy). Surely He is Most Wise, All-Knowing."[29]

29. The object of this story is to tell that Allah will certainly reward His servant, who did full justice to the rights of His worship in the world, handsomely in the Hereafter. But even in this world he rewarded him well by giving him children at an age when according to the common physical laws he could not beget children and his aged wife having remained childless throughout life had completely despaired of ever bearing children; and then He granted him such extraordinary children as have not been granted to any one else in the world. There has been no other man in history in whose line four Prophets might have been born in succession. It was the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) alone whose line continued to be blessed with Prophethood for three generations, and the illustrious Prophets like Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph (peace be upon them) emerged from his house.

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ اَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ 31

(51:31) Abraham said: "Envoys (of Allah), what is your errand?"[30]

30. As the angels come in human guise only on highly important occasions, the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) used the word khatb to find out the purpose of their visit; the word khatb in Arabic is used for an errand of same extraordinary nature.

قَالُوْٓا اِنَّآ اُرْسِلْنَآ اِلٰى قَوْمٍ مُّجْرِمِيْنَ ۙ 32

(51:32) They replied: "Behold, we have been sent to a wicked people[31]

31. That is, to the people of the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him). The epithet of a criminal people was enough to tell which people were meant in view of the gravity of their crimes. They have already been mentioned in the Quran in (Surah Al-Araf, Ayats 80-84); (Surah Hood, Ayats 74-83); (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 58-79); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 74-75); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 160-175); (Surah An-Naml, Ayats 54-58); (Surah As-Saaffat, Ayats 133-137).

لِنُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِّنْ طِيْنٍ ۙ 33

(51:33) that we may unleash a shower of clay-stones

مُّسَوَّمَةً عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُسْرِفِيْنَ 34

(51:34) marked by your Lord upon those who go beyond the limits."[32]

32. That is, each stone has been marked by your Lord's command to show for which culprit it is meant. According to the details given in the Quran, in Surahs Hood and AlHijr, their towns were turned upside down, and then showered with stones of baked clay. From this one can understand that the entire land was overturned by a severe earthquake and the people who tried to escape were showered with brimstone and destroyed.

فَأَخْرَجْنَا مَنْ كَانَ فِيهَا مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۚ 35

(51:35) Then[33] We evacuated there from all the believers

33. As to what happened between them and the people of the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) when the angels reached his house after their meeting with the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon them), has been left out. The details have been given in the Surahs Hood, Al-Hijr and Al Ankabut. Here mention is being made only of the time when they were going to be visited by the scourge.

فَمَا وَجَدْنَا فِيهَا غَيْرَ بَيْتٍ مِّنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ۚ 36

(51:36) – and We did not find there any, apart from a single house of Muslims [34] –

34. That is, among the entire nation and in the entire land there was only one house that shone with the light of the faith and Islam, and it was no other but the house of the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) himself. The rest of the nation was sunk deep in sin and wickedness and its whole country was brimming over with filth and immorality. Therefore Allah rescued the people of that one house and then sent down the torment on the land, which did not spare any one of the wicked people. In this verse three important themes have been discussed:

(1) That Allah's law of retribution does not decree the total destruction of a nation as long as there remains a considerable element of good in it. As against the majority of the bad people if it still contains a small element of those who continue trying to invite others to the right way, Allah gives it an opportunity to work, and goes on increasing the respite of the nation which is not yet wholly devoid of goodness. But in case there remains no element of goodness at all in the nation, Allah's law is that He somehow rescues by His power and grace some of the good people, who might have become weary and helpless fighting evil in its settlements, and deals with the rest as every sensible master would deal with his rotten fruit.

(2) That Muslim is not the name only of the people who are the followers of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) but of all the Prophets before him and their followers who were also Muslims. Their religions were not mutually exclusive that one might be the religion of the Prophet Abraham, another of the Prophet Moses and still another of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon them all), but they all were Muslims and their religion was this same Islam. This truth has been explained at several places in the Quran and there is no room for ambiguity in this regard. For instance, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 128, 131-132);

(Surah Aal- Imran, Ayat 67); (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayats 44, 111); (Surah Younus, Ayats 72, 84); (Surah Yousuf, Ayat 101); (Surah Al- Aaraf, Ayat 126); (Surah An-Naml, Ayats 31,42, 44).

(3) That the words Mumin and Muslim have been used as synonyms in this verse. If this verse is read with (verse 14 of Surah Al-Hujurat), the error of the thinking of those people becomes obvious, who regard Mumin and Muslim as two independent terms of the Quran, which have been used in one and the same meaning every where, and Muslim is necessarily used for the person who might have entered the fold of Islam by professing the faith only verbally, without true faith. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 31 of Surah Al-Hujurat).

وَتَرَكْنَا فِيهَآ اٰيَةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ يَخَافُوْنَ الْعَذَابَ الْاَلِيْمَ ؕ 37

(51:37) and We left therein a Sign for those who fear the grievous chastisement. [35]

35. A sign: the Dead Sea, southern part of which still presents the signs of a great disaster. The archaeologists have expressed the opinion that the principal cities of the people of Lot were probably sunk underground and the waters of the Dead Sea spread over them. For that part of this sea which is situated to the south of the small peninsula called Al-Lisan clearly seems to be a later development, and the signs of the ruins of the Dead Sea found to the north of this peninsula are very different from those found in the south. From this it is concluded that the southern part was once higher than the sea level. At some later time it sank and went under water. The period of its sinking also seems to be about 2000 B.C. and the same precisely is the time of the Prophets Abraham and Lot (peace be upon them) historically. In 1965 an American archaeological research party discovered a large graveyard at Al-Lisan which contains more than twenty thousand graves. From this one is led to think that nearby it there must have existed a large city. But no ruins of any such city are found in the adjoining area, which might have given rise to such a big graveyard. This fact also strengthens the doubt that the city whose graveyard it was has sunk under the sea. The area to the south of the sea still abounds in the ruins and the underground stocks of sulfur, resin, tar and natural gas found in this area lead one to believe that hell must have been let loose at this place at some time by the eruption of lava and the play of lightning. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 114 of Surah Ash-Shuara).

وَفِيْ مُوْسٰٓى اِذْ اَرْسَلْنٰهُ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ 38

(51:38) There is also a Sign for you in the story of Moses when We sent him with a clear authority to Pharaoh.[36]

36. A clear authority: such miracles and clear evidences which made it absolutely manifest that he had been appointed as a Messenger by the Creator of the earth and heavens.

فَتَوَلّٰى بِرُكْنِهٖ وَقَالَ سٰحِرٌ اَوْ مَجْنُوْنٌ 39

(51:39) But Pharaoh turned away, showing arrogance on account of his power, and said (about Moses): “He is either a sorcerer or a madman.”[37]

37. That is, they called him sometimes a sorcerer and sometimes a madman.

فَاَخَذْنٰهُ وَجُنُوْدَهٗ فَنَبَذْنٰهُمْ فِى الْيَمِّ وَهُوَ مُلِيْمٌ ۟ 40

(51:40) So We seized him and his hosts, and cast them into the sea. He became an object of much blame.[38]

38. A whole history has been compressed into this brief sentence. To understand it well one should know that Pharaoh was the absolute ruler of the greatest center of civilization and culture of the world in those days and the people of the adjoining lands were overawed by his power and might. Obviously, when he might have sunk suddenly one day in the sea along with his armies, the event must have become well known not only in Egypt but among all the neighboring nations as well. At this, except for those whose kith and kin had sunk, there was no one else among their own people, or in the other nations of the world who would mourn them or write an elegy on them, or would at least express sorrow and say that good and noble people had become a victim of the disaster. Instead of this, as the world had become fed up with their wickedness and injustices, every person heaved a sigh of relief at their exemplary fate, everyone cursed them, and anyone who heard this news exclaimed that the wicked people had deserved the fate justly. In Surah Ad-Dukhan, the same thing has been expressed, thus: Then neither did the heavens weep on them nor the earth. (For explanation, see (E.N. 26 of Surah Ad-Dukhan).

وَفِىْ عَادٍ اِذْ اَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّيْحَ الْعَقِيْمَ ۙ 41

(51:41) There is also a Sign for you in (the story of) Ad, when We let loose upon them an ominous wind

مَا تَذَرُ مِنْ شَىْءٍ اَتَتْ عَلَيْهِ اِلَّا جَعَلَتْهُ كَالرَّمِيْمِ ۟ 42

(51:42) that left nothing that it came upon without reducing it to rubble.[39]

39. The word used for this wind is aqim, which is used for a barren woman, though literally it means dry. If the literal meaning is taken it would mean that it was such an intensely hot and dry wind that whatever it blew on, it caused it to become absolutely dry; and if it is taken in the idiomatic sense it would mean that like a barren woman it was a wind without any benefit: neither it was pleasant, nor it brought rain, nor fertilized the trees, nor contained any other benefit for which the wind blows. At other places it has been stated that this wind was not only useless and dry but it blew so violently that it swept the people off the ground and it continued to rage for eight days and seven nights continuously, till it laid the entire land of the Aad to a waste. (For explanation, see (E.Ns 20, 21 of Surah HaMim As-Sajdah), and (E.Ns 25 to 28 of Surah Al-Ahqaf).

وَفِىْ ثَمُوْدَ اِذْ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ تَمَتَّعُوْا حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ 43

(51:43) There is also a Sign for you in (the story of) Thamud. They were told: "Enjoy yourselves for a while."[40]

40. The commentators have disputed as to which respite it implies. Qatadah says that it alludes to that verse of Surah Houd in which it has been stated that when the Thamud killed the she camel of the Prophet Salih (peace be upon him), they were warned by Allah that they had three more days to enjoy life after which they would be overtaken by the torment. Contrary to this, Hasan Basri has expressed the opinion that this thing had been said by the Prophet Salih (peace be upon him) to his people in the beginning of his mission and by this he meant that if they would not adopt the way of repentance and faith, they would be granted a respite to enjoy life in the world only till an appointed time, and then they would be overtaken by the torment. The second of these two commentaries seems to be more correct, for the following verse (But they defied the command of their Lord) indicates that the respite being mentioned here had been given before the defiance and they committed it after the warning. On the contrary, the three days respite mentioned in Surah Houd had been given after the wicked people had committed the final defiance which became decisive in their case and sealed their doom forever afterwards.

فَعَتَوۡا عَنۡ اَمۡرِ رَبِّهِمۡ فَاَخَذَتۡهُمُ الصّٰعِقَةُ وَهُمۡ يَنۡظُرُوۡنَ 44

(51:44) But they brazenly disobeyed their Lord's command, and then a sudden chastisement[41] overtook them while they looked on.

41. Different words have been used for this torment at different places in the Quran. Somewhere it has been called rajafah (a frightful and shocking calamity), somewhere saihah (a crashing and thundering disaster), somewhere taghiyah (a most severe affliction) and here it has been described as saiqah (a calamity that strikes like a thunderbolt). Probably this torment was like an earthquake which was also accompanied by a terrible noise.

فَمَا اسۡتَطَاعُوۡا مِنۡ قِيَامٍ وَّمَا كَانُوۡا مُنۡتَصِرِيۡنَ ۙ 45

(51:45) They were unable even to stand up or protect themselves.[42]

42. Intisar from which the word muntasirun in the original is derived means to save oneself from an attack by somebody as well as to avenge oneself on the attacker.

وَقَوۡمَ نُوۡحٍ مِّنۡ قَبۡلُ ؕ اِنَّهُمۡ كَانُوۡا قَوۡمًا فٰسِقِيۡنَ ۚ 46

(51:46) Before all these We destroyed the people of Noah: they were a wicked people.

وَالسَّمَآءَ بَنَيۡنٰهَا بِاَيۡىدٍ وَّاِنَّا لَمُوۡسِعُوۡنَ 47

(51:47) And heaven – We[43] made it with Our Own Power and We have the Power to do so.[44]

43. After presenting historical arguments for the Hereafter, now arguments from the universe are being presented in proof of the same.

44. The word musi (pl. musiun) may mean the one who possesses power and means, and also the one who can extend and expand something. According to the first meaning, the verse would mean: We have built this heaven by Our own might and not with somebody else's help, and its erection was in no way beyond Us. Then how can you ever conceive that We shall not be able to recreate it? According to the second meaning, it would mean: This huge universe that We have created, is not a finished work, but We are expanding it continuously, and new and ever new manifestations of Our creation are appearing in it every moment. How do you then think that such a marvelous Creator would not be able to repeat His creation.

وَالْأَرْضَ فَرَشْنٰهَا فَنِعْمَ الْمٰهِدُوْنَ 48

(51:48) And the earth – We spread it out, and how well have We smoothed it![45]

45. For explanation, see E.N. 18 above. For further explanation, see (E.N. 74 of Surah An-Naml), (E.N. 29 of Surah YaSeen) and (E.Ns 7 to 10 of Surah Az-Zukhruf).

وَمِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَا زَوْجَيْنِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ 49

(51:49) And of everything We have created pairs;[46] perhaps you will take heed.[47]

46. That is, everything in the world has been created on the principle of the pairs. The whole system of the universe is functioning on the principle that certain things are complementary and matching to certain others, and their combination brings into being countless new forms and combinations. Nothing here is so unique as may have no match, for the fact is that a thing becomes productive only after it has combined with its matching partner. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 31 of Surah YaSeen), and (E.N. 12 of Surah Az-Zukhruf).

47. That is, the erection of the whole universe on the principle of the pairs and the existence of all things in the world in couples is a reality that testifies expressly to the necessity of the Hereafter. If you consider it deeply you will yourself come to the conclusion that when everything in the world has a partner and nothing becomes productive without combining with its partner, how can the life of the world be without a match and partner? Its match and partner necessarily is the Hereafter. Without that partner it would be absolutely fruitless.

To understand what follows one should also understand that the discussion heretofore centers around the Hereafter, but this very discussion and argument afford a proof of the Oneness of God. Just as the argument of the rain, the structure of the earth, the creation of the heavens, man's own existence, the wonderful working of the law of pairs in the universe, testify to the possibility and necessity of the Hereafter, so they are also testifying that neither is this Godless nor it has many gods, but One All-Wise and All- Powerful God alone is its Creator and Master and Controller. That is why in the following verses the invitation to the

Oneness of God is being presented on the basis of these very arguments. Furthermore, the inevitable result of believing in the Hereafter is that man should give up his attitude of rebellion against God and should adopt the way of obedience and servitude. He remains turned away from God as long as he remains involved in the false belief that he is not accountable before anyone and that he will not have to render an account of his deeds of the worldly life to anyone. Whenever this misunderstanding is removed, man immediately comes to the realization that he was committing a grave error by regarding himself as irresponsible, and this realization compels him to return to God. That is why immediately after concluding the arguments for the Hereafter, it has been said: So flee unto Allah.

فَفِرُّوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنِّيْ لَكُمْ مِّنْهُ نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ۚ 50

(51:50) Flee, therefore, to Allah. Surely I am a clear warner to you from Him;

وَلَا تَجْعَلُوْا مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ ؕ اِنِّيْ لَكُمْ مِّنْهُ نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ۚ 51

(51:51) and do not set up any deity with Allah. Surely I am a clear warner to you from Him.[48]

48. Though these sentences are the Word of Allah, the speaker here is not Allah but the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). In fact, Allah has made his Messenger say: Flee unto Allah, I am to you from Him a clear warner. An instance of this style is found in the very first Surah of the Quran, Surah Al-Fatihah, where the Word is of Allah, but the speakers are the servants, who say: Iyyaka na budu wa lyyaka nastain; ihdi-nas siratal-mustaqim. Thee alone we worship and to Thee alone we ask for help, show us the straight path. Just as there it has not been said: O believers, pray to your Lord thus, but the context itself shows that it is a supplication which Allah is teaching His servants, so here also it has not been said: O Prophet, say to these people, but the context itself indicates that it is an invitation to the Oneness of God, which the Prophet (peace be upon him) is presenting according to Allah's command. Besides Surah Al-Fatihah, there are also several other instances of this style in the Quran, where though the word is of Allah, the speakers somewhere are the angels and somewhere the Prophet, and the context shows as through whom Allah is speaking at that particular place. For instance, see (Surah Maryam, Ayats 64-65); (Surah As-Saaffat, Ayats 159-167); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayat 10).

كَذٰلِكَ مَآ اَتَى الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنْ رَّسُوْلٍ اِلَّا قَالُوْا سَاحِرٌ اَوْ مَجْنُوْنٌ ۚ 52

(51:52) Thus has it been (in the past): never did a Messenger come to the nations that preceded them but they said: "(He is) a sorcerer, or a mad-man."[49]

49. That is, this has not happened for the first time that the people are calling the Messenger sent by Allah a sorcerer and a madman when they heard the news of the Hereafter and the invitation to the Oneness of Allah from him. The whole history of Prophethood bears evidence that ever since the Messengers started coming for the guidance of mankind, ignorant people have been repeating the same folly in the same manner. Whichever

Messenger came and gave them the warning that they were not the servants of many gods but One God alone is their Creator and Deity and Master of their destinies, ignorant people said that he was a sorcerer, who wanted to beguile and misguide them by his sorcery. Whichever Messenger came and warned them that they had not been created and left irresponsible in the world, but that at the conclusion of their life-work they would have to present themselves before their Creator and Master and render an account of their deeds and in consequence thereof they will be rewarded or punished accordingly, the foolish people cried out that he was a madman and had lost his reason because no one could be resurrected after death.

أَتَوَاصَوْا بِهِ ۚ بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ طَاغُونَ ۚ 53

(51:53) Have they arrived at a common understanding concerning this? No; but they are a people given to transgression.[50]

50. That is, the fact that the people of different countries and nations adopted the same attitude as against the invitation of the Prophets and opposed them in the same manner in different ages for thousands of years could not be due to the reason that all the former and the latter generations had settled in a conference that whenever a prophet came with his message, he should be given such and such an answer. Then, what could be the reason for the uniformity of their attitude and behavior? There could be no other reason for this than that rebellion and transgression was their common characteristic. As all the ignorant people of every age have been desirous of living a life free of Allah's service and fearless of His accountability, whoever called them to the service of Allah and to lead a God-conscious life, they gave him one and the same fixed answer.

This also throws light on an important truth and it is that: The motives that man has been naturally endowed with for adopting error and guidance, goodness and evil, justice and injustice, and similar other conducts, have been appearing in every age and in every corner of the world in the like manner no matter how different might have been their forms due to advancement of means and resources. Whether the man of today fights by means of the tanks and aircraft and hydrogen bombs and the man of the ancient time fought with stones and sticks, the basic motives for fighting between men have always been the same. Likewise, the atheist of today might heap up his arguments for atheism as he likes, his motives for following that creed are precisely the same as had been of an atheist six thousand years ago and in his reasoning also he is not basically any different from his predecessor.

فَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ فَمَا أَنْتَ بِمَلُومٍ ۖ 54

(51:54) So turn your attention away from them; you shall incur no blame.[51]

51. In this verse a method of the preaching of religion has been taught which should be well understood. When a preacher of the truth has presented his message clearly before a person with rational arguments, and has also removed his doubts and objections and answered his arguments, he becomes relieved of his duty of making the truth plain. Even after this if the other person persists in his belief and creed, the responsibility for it does not lie on the

preacher of the truth. It is no more necessary that he should pursue the same person, should go on spending his time in discussing things with him, and should make it a point that he has somehow to convince the same one man of the truth. The preacher, in fact, has done his duty; if the other man is not convinced, leave him alone. If the preacher does not any more attend to him, he cannot be blamed for letting a person remain involved in error, because the other person himself is responsible for his deviation and error.

وَّذَكِّرْ فَاِنَّ الذِّكْرٰى تَنْفَعُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ 55

(51:55) Do, however, keep exhorting them; for exhortation benefits those endowed with faith.[52]

52. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has not been addressed here to be taught this method because, God forbid, in his preaching he unnecessarily pursued the people and Allah wanted to stop him from this fact, the real reason for stating this method is that when a preacher of the truth has done his best to make the people understand his message in a rational way and then seeing the signs of stubbornness in them withdraws from them, the people inveigh against him and start accusing him of indifference and inattention whereas, they, as they say, want to discuss things in order to understand his message. The fact, however, is that they do not intend to understand anything but only to involve the preacher in disputation and waste his time. Therefore, Allah Himself said in clear words: Turn away from them, you are not at all to blame for showing any indifference towards them. After this nobody could blame the Prophet (peace be upon him) that, according to the Book that he had brought, he had been appointed to make them understand his religion, then why he did not answer their objections.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْاِنْسَ اِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوْنِ 56

(51:56) I created the jinn and humans for nothing else but that they may serve Me;[53]

53. That is, I have not created them for the service of others but for My own service. They should serve Me, for I am their Creator. When no one else has created them, no one else has the right that they should serve him; and how can it be admissible for them that they should serve others instead of Me, their Creator? Here, the question arises that Allah Almighty is not the Creator only of the jinn and men but of the entire universe and of everything in it. Then, why has it been said only about the jinn and men that He has not created them for the service of others but of Himself? Whereas every single creature is there to serve Allah. The answer is: Only the jinn and men have been granted the freedom that they may serve Allah within their sphere of choice if they so like; otherwise they can turn away from Allah's service as well as serve others beside Him. The rest of the creatures in the world do not have this kind of freedom. They do not have any choice whatsoever that they may not worship and serve Allah, or may serve any other. Therefore, only about the jinn and men it has been said here that by turning away from the obedience and servitude of their Creator within the bounds of their option and choice and by serving others than the Creator, they are fighting their own nature. They should know that they have not been created for the service of any other but the Creator, and for them the right way is that they should not abuse the freedom

granted to them, but also within the bounds of this freedom they should serve God voluntarily just as every particle of their body is serving Him involuntarily in the sphere where they have not been granted any freedom.

The word ibadat (service, worship) in this verse has not been used in the sense of only Prayer, Fasting and other kinds of such worship so that one may understand that the jinn and men have been created only for performing the Prayer, observing the Fast and for praising and glorifying Allah. Although this sense also is included in it, this is not its complete sense. Its complete sense is that the jinn and men have not been created for the worship, obedience and carrying out of the orders of any other but Allah. They are not there to bow to any other, to carry out the orders of any other, to live in fear of any other, to follow the religion enjoined by any other, to look upon any other as the maker and destroyer of ones destiny, and to supplicate to any other than Allah for help. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 63 of Surah Saba); (E.N. 2 of Surah Az-Zumar); (E.N. 30 of Surah Al-Jathiyah).

Another thing that incidentally becomes quite obvious from this verse is that the jinn are a separate and independent creation from men. This brings out the error of the thinking of those people, who assert that some people from among mankind have been called the jinn in the Quran. This same thing is also confirmed and testified by the following verses of the Quran: (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayats 100, 128); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 38, 179); (Surah Houd, Ayat 119); (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 27 to 33); (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 88); (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayat 50); (Surah As-Sajdah, Ayat 13); (Surah Saba, Ayat 41); (Surah Suad, Ayats 75, 76); (Surah HaMim As-Sajdah, Ayat 25); (Surah Al-Ahqaf, Ayat 18); (Surah ArRahman, Ayats 15, 39,56). (For a complete discussion of this question, see (E. N. 21 of Surah Al-Anbiya), (E.Ns 23, 45 of Surah An-Naml), (E.N. 24 of Surah Saba).

مَآ أُرِيدُ مِنۡهُم مِّن رِّزۡقٖ وَّمَآ أُرِيدُ أَن يُطۡعِمُونِ 57

(51:57) I desire from them no provision, nor do I want them to feed Me.[54]

54. That is, I do not stand in need of any kind of help from the jinn and men: that My Godhead would not function if they did not worship Me: that I would be no more God if they turned away from My service. I indeed do not stand in need of their service, but it is the demand of their own nature that they should serve Me. They have been created for this very object, and fighting nature would be to their own detriment. And in saying: I do not ask any sustenance of them nor do I ask them to feed Me, there is a subtle hint to this. Those whom the people, who have turned away from God worship in the world, worship, they indeed stand in need of these their worshipers. If they do not help sustain their godhead, it would not function even for a day. The gods do not provide for the worshipers but the worshipers provide for the gods instead. The gods do not feed them but they feed the gods instead. The gods do not protect them but the worshipers protect the gods instead. The worshipers, in fact, are their army through whom their godhead functions. Wherever the worshipers of the false gods have ceased to exist, or the worshipers have given up their worship, the gods have lost all their pomp and glory and the world has seen how helpless they have become. Of all the deities Allah Almighty is the only real Deity Whose Godhead is functioning by His own power and might, Who does not take anything from His servants, but He alone gives His servants everything.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الرَّزَّاقُ ذُو الْقُوَّةِ الْمَتِينُ 58

(51:58) Surely Allah is the Bestower of all provision, the Lord of all power, the Strong.[55]

55. The word mateen as used in the original means strong and stable whom nobody can shake and move.

فَإِنَّ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ذَنُوبًا مِّثْلَ ذَنُوبِ أَصْحَابِهِمْ فَلَا يَسْتَعْجِلُونِ 59

(51:59) The wrong-doers[56] shall receive a portion of the chastisements as their fellows (of yore). So let them not rush Me.

56. Those who have wronged: Those who have violated the reality and the truth and their own nature. The context itself shows that those who have done wrong, here implies the people who are serving others than the Lord of the universe, who disbelieve in the Hereafter, who regard themselves as irresponsible in the world, and have denied those Prophets who have tried to make them understand the reality.

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِن يَوْمِهِمُ الَّذِي يُوعَدُونَ ع 60

(51:60) Woe, then, betide those who disbelieved in that Day of theirs which they are being asked to hold in dread.

52. Surah At Tur (The Mount)

Name

It is derived from the very first cord "Wat Tur-i."

Period of Revelation

From the internal evidence of the subject matter it appears that this Surah too was revealed in the same stage of the Holy Prophet's life at Makkah in which the Surah Adh-Dhariyat was revealed. While going through it one can clearly feel that during the period of its revelation the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was being showered with objections and accusations but there is no evidence yet to show that severe persecution of the Muslims had started.

Subject Matter and Topics

The subject matter of its first section (vv. 1-28) is the Hereafter. As arguments for its possibility, necessity and occurrence had already been given in Surah Adh-Dhariyat, these have not been repeated here. However, swearing an oath by some realities and signs which testify to the Hereafter, it has been stated most emphatically that it will surely come to pass, and none has the power to prevent its occurrence. Then, it has been stated as to what will be the fate of those who deny it when it actually occurs, and how will those who believe in it and adopt the way of piety and righteousness accordingly, be blessed by Allah.

Then, in the second section (vv. 29-49) the Quraish chiefs' attitude towards the message of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah he upon him) has been criticized. They called him a sorcerer, a madman, or a poet, and would thus mislead the common people against him so that they should not pay any serious attention to the message he preached. They looked upon him as a calamity that had suddenly descended on them and would openly wish that he met with a disaster so that they were rid of him. They accused him of fabricating the Qur'an by himself and of presenting it in the name of Allah, and this was, God forbid, a fraud that he was practicing. They would often taunt him, saying that God could not have appointed an ordinary man like him to the office of Prophethood. They expressed great disgust at his invitation and message and would avoid him as if he was asking them for a reward for it. They would sit and take counsels together to devise schemes in order to put an end to his mission. And while they did all this they never realized what creeds of ignorance they were involved in and how selflessly and sincerely was Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) exerting himself to deliver them from their error. While criticizing them for this attitude and conduct, Allah has put them certain questions, one after the other, each of which is either an answer to some objection of theirs, or a criticism of some error. Then, it has been said that it would absolutely be of no avail to show them a miracle in order to convince them of his Prophethood, for they were such stubborn people as would misinterpret anything they were shown only to avoid affirming the faith.

In the beginning of this section as well as in its end, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has been given the instruction that he should persistently continue giving his invitation and preaching his message in spite of the accusations and objections of

his opponents and enemies, and should endure their resistance patiently till Allah's judgment comes to pass. Besides, he has been consoled, as if to say "Your Lord has not left you alone to face your enemies, after raising you as a Prophet, but He is constantly watching over you. Therefore, endure every hardship patiently till the Hour of His judgment comes, and seek through praising and glorifying your Lord the power that is required for exerting in the cause of Allah under such conditions.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

وَالطُّوۡرِ ۙ 1

(52:1) By the Mount,[1]

1. Toor means a mountain, and at-Toor the particular mountain on which Allah had blessed the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) with the Prophethood.

وَكِتٰبٍ مَّسۡطُوۡرٍ ۙ 2

(52:2) and the Book inscribed

فِىۡ رَقٍّ مَّنۡشُوۡرٍ ۙ 3

(52:3) on fine parchment;[2]

2. In ancient times the books and writings which were meant to be preserved for long were written on the skin of deer instead of the paper. This skin was especially prepared for writing as a thin and fine parchment and was called raqq terminologically. The Jews and Christians in general wrote the Torah, Psalms, the Gospels and the Prophets' Books on this same raqq so that they would endure. Here, by Scripture inscribed is implied the same collection of the holy scriptures which the followers of the Book possessed. It has been described as unrolled because it was not extinct; it was read and one could easily find out what was written in it.

وَالۡبَيۡتِ الۡمَعۡمُوۡرِ ۙ 4

(52:4) by the much-frequented House,[3]

3. According to Hasan Basri, the inhabited House implies the House of Allah, the Kabah, which is never without its visitors and pilgrims at any time of the day and night. However, Ali, Ibn Abbas, Ikrimah, Mujahid, Qatadah, Dahhak, Ibn Zaid and other commentators have stated that it implies the Bait-al-mamur (the inhabited House) which the Prophet (peace be upon him) referred to in connection with his Miraj (Ascension), against the wall of which he had seen the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) reclining. Mujahid, Qatadah and Ibn Zaid say that just as the Kabah is the center and place of refuge for all God-worshipers, so is

there in every heaven a similar Kabah for its dwellers which occupies a similar central position for the worshipers of Allah there. One of these Kabahs was the one against the wall of which the Prophet (peace be upon him) had seen the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) reclining on the occasion of the Miraj; and with it the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) had a natural affinity, for he himself was the founder of the Kabah of the earth. In view of this explanation, this second commentary does not go against the commentary given by Hasan Basri, but if both are read together, we can understand that here the oath has not been sworn only by the Kabah of the earth, but it also includes an oath by all the Kabahs that are there in the entire universe.

وَالسَّقْفِ الْمَرْفُوْعِ ۙ 5

(52:5) by the elevated canopy;[4]

4. The roof exalted: the sky which seems to be spread over the earth like a vault; here this word has been used for the entire universe. (For explanation, see(E.N. 7 of Surah Qaf).

وَالْبَحْرِ الْمَسْجُوْرِ ۙ 6

(52:6) and by the swelling sea:[5]

5. Several meanings have ban given of the word al-bahrilmasjur as used in the original. Some commentators have taken it in the meaning of full of fire; some take it in the sense of empty and unoccupied, the water of which might have sunk into the earth; some take it in the meaning of restricted and confined by which they imply that the ocean has been restrained so that its water neither sinks into the earth nor spreads over the land to drown all its dwellers. Some have taken it in the meaning of mixed and blended because in it sweet and saline, warm and cold, water is mixed together; and some take it in the meaning of brimful and surging. The first two of these meanings bear no relevance to the context. These two states of the oceansplitting of the bottom of the ocean and sinking of its water into the earth and then its being filled with fire will appear on the Day of Resurrection, as mentioned in (Surah At- Takweer, Ayat 6) and (Surah Al-Infitar, Ayat 3). These states of the future do not exist at present and therefore cannot be sworn by to convince the people of today of the occurrence of the Hereafter. Therefore, here al-bahril-masjur can be taken only in the meaning of confined, mixed, brimful and surging.

اِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ لَوَاقِعٌ ۙ 7

(52:7) verily your Lord's chastisement shall come to pass,

مَّا لَهٗ مِنْ دَافِعٍ ۙ 8

(52:8) none can avert that.[6]

6. This is that truth for which an oath has been sworn by the five things. "The punishment of your Lord" implies the Hereafter, for it will be a torment for those who deny that it will come. That is why it has been called "the punishment of your Lord" instead of the Resurrection, or the Hereafter, or the Day of Retribution. Now let us consider how the five things by which an oath has been sworn point to its occurrence.

Mount Toor is the place where a decision was taken to exalt an oppressed nation and to abase an oppressive nation, and this decision was taken not on the basis of a physical law but on the basis of a moral law and the law of retribution. Therefore, Mount Toor has been presented as a symbol for the Hereafter. It implies that the decision of exalting a helpless nation like the children of Israel and the drowning of a powerful and mighty ruler like the Pharaoh along with his hosts, which was taken in a quiet and lifeless night on the Mount Toor, is proof of the fact how the nature of the kingdom of the universe demands that man who has been endowed with powers and authority, should be subjected to moral accountability and rewarded and punished accordingly, and for meeting this demand adequately a Day of Reckoning is necessary when the entire mankind should be gathered together and called to account for its deeds. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 21 of Surah Adh- Dhariyat).

The holy scriptures have been sworn by because all the Prophets who came to the world from the Lord of the universe and the Books they brought gave the same one news in every age which the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is giving, i.e. that all humans of the former and latter generations will one day be resurrected and presented before their God and rewarded and punished according to their deeds. Every heavenly Book proclaimed that this life is not the only life. And that, after death, man will not end up in the dust forever, and that there will be both accountability and reckoning.

"The inhabited House" has been sworn by for the reason that in those days the building of the Kabah was a great sign, particularly for the Arabs, which pointed to the truthfulness of Allah's Prophets and to the fact that they were supported by Allah Almighty's far-reaching wisdom and great power. 2,500 years before the revelation of these verses a person happens to visit these barren and uninhabited mountains, without any army or worldly provision, leaving behind a wife and a suckling child devoid of material support. Then, some time later the same man returns and builds at this desolate place a house for the worship of Allah and gives a call to the people to come and visit that house as pilgrims. This same structure and the call are so fervently received that the House becomes the center of the entire population of Arabia. People respond to the call enthusiastically and are drawn from every corner of the country to the House in a spirit of devotion and dedication. For 2,500 years this House continues to remain such a sanctuary of peace that while blood is shed in the country around it, none can dare raise his hand against another as soon as people enter its sacred boundaries; and then because of this very House, Arabia is blessed with four months of such total peace every year when caravans travel in full safety, trade flourishes and markets are held. Then the House inspired such awe that during this whole period no tyrant could ever look towards it with an evil intention, and whoever dared do so was so seized by Allah's wrath that he became an object of warning for others. Such a miracle had been witnessed by the people themselves only 45 years before the revelation of these verses, and many of those who had witnessed it were still present and living in the city at the time when these verses were being recited to the people of Makkah. What greater proof could be there of the fact

that the Prophets of God never uttered empty words? They see with their eyes that which others do not see; they talk freely of such realities as cannot be comprehended by others by intellect; they engage at times in works which might be viewed as madness by the contemporary world but which might strike with amazement the people coming centuries afterwards. When men of such caliber have unanimously been giving in every age the news that Resurrection shall occur and accountability shall take place, it would be sheer madness to dub it as the bragging of the insane.

The exalted roof (the sky) and the surging ocean have been sworn by, for both of these are a pointer to Allah's wisdom and His power, and the same wisdom and power prove both the possibility of the Hereafter and its occurrence and necessity. As for the sky's being a pointer we have already explained it in (E. N. 7 of Surah Qaf). As for the ocean, anyone who considers it deeply with an unbiased mind will testify that the provision of water in such abundance on the earth is by itself such an amazing work which cannot be the result of an accident or chance. This also proves that it is not possible that such a perfect system could come into being by chance and the bodies of each species could be made precisely according to the depth in which it has to live. Its water has been made saline so that the bodies of the millions of the animals which die in it daily do not rot. Its water has been restrained at a particular level in such a way that it neither sinks into the earth's belly passing through its cracks and holes, nor it spreads over the land to submerge it, but has been checked at the same level for millions of years. Because of the existence of this great store of water the rainfall is arranged on the dry parts of the earth, in which the heat of the sun and the circulation of the winds cooperate with full regularity. Then the ocean's being inhabited with life and the creation in it of the various kinds of creatures has given man the advantage that he obtains from it his food and other necessities in large quantities. Then its being checked and restrained to a limit has given birth to the continents and islands which are the home of man, and became of its adhering to and following some fixed laws has it become possible that man may navigate his ships in it. Such an arrangement could not have possibly existed without the wisdom of an All-Wise Being and the power of an Absolute Ruler, nor could this deep relationship that binds the interests of man and other creatures of the earth to the arrangement of the ocean be established at random. Now, if this is undeniable evidence that an All-Wise and All-Powerful God has also created a vast and surging, brackish ocean besides making countless other arrangements for the purpose of settling man on the earth, then that person would be foolhardy, who expects that the All-Wise God would make arrangements for man that he should water his crops from the ocean and provide him sustenance thereby but would never question him as to how he returned thanks after eating His provisions. And that He would grant man the power that he should run his ships on the surface of the ocean but would never question him as to whether he had run the ships for the sake of the truth, righteousness and justice, or had committed robberies. Likewise, it would also be sheer folly to imagine that the Absolute Sovereign, Who has checked and restrained this vast store of water on this suspended globe which is moving in space, Who has dissolved a huge quantity of salt in it, Who has created countless varieties of creatures in it, and has arranged their sustenance therein, Who carries billions of tons of water from it every year by means of the wind and causes it to fall regularly as rain on millions of square miles of dry land, becomes so helpless and powerless after creating man that He could not resurrect him again.

يَوْمَ تَمُوْرُ السَّمَآءُ مَوْرًا ۙ 9

(52:9) (It shall come to pass) on the Day when the heaven will convulse in a great convulsion,[7]

7. The word maur in the original is used for turning round, boiling, fluttering, rotating, swinging and moving forward and backward. The object of depicting the condition of the heavens on the Day of Resurrection in these words is to give the idea that the system of the heavens on that Day will be wholly upset, and when an observer will look up to the sky, he will feel that the constant pattern and order that it always used to present, has been broken and there is disorder, confusion and chaos on every side.

وَّتَسِيْرُ الْجِبَالُ سَيْرًا ؕ 10

(52:10) and the mountains shall violently fly about.[8]

8. In other words, the pull of the earth which is keeping the mountains in place, will become loose, they will be uprooted and start floating about in space like clouds.

فَوَيْلٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ۙ 11

(52:11) Woe, then, on that Day to those who give the lie (to this Message)

الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ فِيْ خَوْضٍ يَّلْعَبُوْنَ ۘ 12

(52:12) and amuse themselves with vain argumentation.[9]

9. It means that they are mocking and ridiculing the news of Resurrection, Hereafter, Heaven and Hell when they hear it from the Prophet (peace be upon him), and instead of considering it seriously they are disputing it only for fun and amusement. Their discussions of the Hereafter are not meant to understand the reality, but only to amuse themselves, and they do not at all realize the fate for which they arc destined.

يَوْمَ يُدَعُّوْنَ اِلٰى نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ دَعًّا ؕ 13

(52:13) On the Day when they shall be thrust into Hell with a violent thrust (and shall be told):

هٰذِهِ النَّارُ الَّتِيْ كُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُوْنَ 14

(52:14) “This is the Hell which you used to give the lie to.”

أَفَسِحْرٌ هٰذَآ أَمْ أَنتُمْ لَا تُبْصِرُونَ ۚ 15

(52:15) Is this, then, any feat of magic or are you unable to see?[10]

10. That is, when the Messengers in the world warned you of this Hell. you said that it was only by magic that they were fooling you. Now say: Is this Hell which you are facing mere magic, or you still do not see that you have actually met with the same Hell which was being foretold to you?

اِصْلَوْهَا فَاصْبِرُوٓا أَوْ لَا تَصْبِرُوا ۚ سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ۖ إِنَّمَا تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ 16

(52:16) Go now and burn in it. It is all the same whether you bear it patiently or do not bear it with patience. You are only being recompensed for your deeds."

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِى جَنَّٰتٍ وَنَعِيمٍ ۙ 17

(52:17) Surely the God-fearing[11] shall be in Gardens and bliss,

11. "The righteous": the people who believed in the news given by the Prophets and who safeguarded themselves in the world itself and refrained from thoughts and deeds that doom man to Hell.

فَٰكِهِينَ بِمَآ ءَاتَىٰهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ ۚ وَوَقَىٰهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ 18

(52:18) enjoying what Allah will have endowed them with; and their Lord will have saved them from the torment of the Blazing Fire.[12]

12. There seems to be no need to mention a person's being saved from Hell after it has been said that he will be admitted to Heaven, but at several places in the Quran these two things have been mentioned separately because a person's being saved from Hell is by itself a great blessing. And the words, "and their Lord saved them from the punishment of Hell", is an allusion to the truth that man's being saved from Hell is possible only through Allah's grace and bounty; otherwise human weaknesses cause such flaws to occur in everyone's work that if Allah does not overlook them by His grace and instead decides to subject him to accountability, none can save himself from His punishment. That is why although entry into Paradise is a great bounty from Allah, his being saved from Hell is no less a mercy.

كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا هَنِيٓـًٔا بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ۙ 19

(52:19) (They will be told): "Eat and drink to your hearts'[13] content as a reward for your deeds."

13. Here, the word "with relish" contains vast meaning in itself. In Paradise whatever a man receives, he will have it without any labor and toil. There will be no question of its

sustenance in short supply. Man will not have to spend anything for it. It will be precisely according to his desire and choice and taste. In whatever quantity and whenever he will desire it, it will be made available. He will not be staying there as a guest that he may feel shy of asking for something, but everything will be the reward of his lifelong deeds and the fruit of his own labors. His eating and drinking anything will not cause any illness nor will he eat for satisfying hunger or for survival but only for the sake of enjoyment. Man will be able to obtain as much pleasure from it as he pleases without the fear of indigestion, and the food eaten will not produce any filth. Therefore, the meaning of eating and drinking with relish in Paradise is much more vast and sublime than what is understood by it in the world.

مُتَّكِـِٔيْنَ عَلٰى سُرُرٍ مَّصْفُوْفَةٍ ۚ وَزَوَّجْنٰهُمْ بِحُوْرٍ عِيْنٍ 20

(52:20) The God-fearing shall be reclining on couches facing each other, and We shall wed them to maidens with large, beautiful eyes.[14]

14. For explanation, see (E. Ns. 20, 29 of Surah As-Saaffat), and (E. N. 42 of Surah Ad-Dukhan).

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَاتَّبَعَتْهُمْ ذُرِّيَّتُهُمْ بِاِيْمَانٍ اَلْحَقْنَا بِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَمَآ اَلَتْنٰهُمْ مِّنْ عَمَلِهِمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ ۭ كُلُّ امْرِۍٕ بِمَا كَسَبَ رَهِيْنٌ 21

(52:21) We shall unite the believers with those descendants of theirs who followed them in their faith, and shall not deny them any part of the reward for their good deeds.[15] Every person is pledged to what he did.[16]

15. This theme has already been mentioned in (Surah Ar- Raad, Ayat 23) and (Surah Al-Momin, Ayat 8), but here a greater good news has been given. In the verse of Surah Ar-Raad only this much was said: They will enter into them (Gardens) along with the righteous from among their forefathers, wives and descendants, and in Surah Al-Mmin: The angels ask forgiveness for the believers; they say Our Lord... (admit therein also) of their parents and wives and children who are righteous. Here, what has been said in addition is: If the children had been following in the footsteps of their forefathers in faith, they will be joined with them in Paradise even though they might not deserve, on the basis of their deeds, the same high rank which the elders would attain on the basis of their superior faith and deeds, and this joining will not be of the nature of occasional visits and meetings but they will be lodged permanently with them in Paradise as is borne out by the words: alhaqna bi-him. For the sake of further satisfaction it has been stated: In order to be joined with their offspring the parents will not be lowered and reduced in rank, but in order to be joined with their elders the rank of the children will be enhanced and exalted.

Here, it should be borne in mind that this news has been given in respect of the children who on reaching maturity voluntarily decided to affirm faith and of their own free will followed in the footsteps of their righteous forefathers. As for those of the children of a believer, who might have died even before reaching maturity, there cannot be any question

of belief or disbelief, obedience or disobedience, for they will be admitted to Paradise automatically and will be lodged along with their parents to be a comfort of the eyes for them.

16. Here, the metaphor of rahn (pledge) is very meaningful. If a person takes a loan from somebody, and the creditor keeps some article belonging to the debtor as a pledge with himself as a guarantee for the payment of his right, the debtor cannot redeem his pledge unless he pays off the debts; and if he does not redeem his pledge within the fixed time limit, the pledged article stands forfeited. The nature of the affair between man and God has been compared here to this very situation. The provisions, powers, capabilities and authority that God has granted man in the world are a debt that the Master has given to His servant, and as a guarantee for this debt the self of man is a pledge with Allah. If man by employing the provisions and the powers and authority in the right way earns the good by which the debt can be paid off, he will redeem the pledged thing, i.e. his own self, otherwise it will be forfeited. This thing has been said immediately after the preceding verse because even though the righteous believers may themselves be the people of a very high rank, their children cannot redeem their pledge unless they redeem their self by their own labor and effort. The earning of the forefathers cannot redeem the children. However, if the children are able to redeem themselves by virtue of their faith in some degree by following their righteous forefathers in their footsteps, it would then be Allah's grace and bounty that in Paradise He may exalt them from lower ranks to be joined with their parents in the higher ranks. The good done by the forefathers can benefit the children only so far, but if by their own deeds they deserve Hell, it is not possible that they may be admitted to Paradise for the sake of the forefathers. Another thing that can be deduced from this verse is that the less righteous children's being joined with their more righteous forefathers is not in reality the result of the lifework of the children but of their forefathers'. They by virtue of their deeds will deserve the grace that their children be joined with them in order to be a comfort of the eyes for them. That is why Allah will not lower their ranks to join them with their children but will exalt the children's ranks to be joined with them, so that the perfection of Allah's blessings on them is not marred by the distress that they may suffer on account of the remoteness of their children far away.

وَأَمْدَدْنٰهُمْ بِفَاكِهَةٍ وَّلَحْمٍ مِّمَّا يَشْتَهُوْنَ 22

(52:22) We shall provide them in abundance with all kinds of fruit and meat, [17] whatever they may desire.

17. In this verse, there is the mention of providing the dwellers of Paradise with every kind of meat generally, and in Surah Al-Waqiah it has been said: They will be served with the flesh of fowls. We do not know what exactly will be the nature of this flesh. But just as in some expressions of the Quran and in some Ahadith it has been said about the milk of Paradise that it will not have been drawn from the udders of animals, and about the honey of Paradise it has been said that it will not have been produced by the bees, and about the wine of Paradise it has been said that it will not have been distilled froth rotten fruit, but these things will flow out of the springs into the canals by the power of Allah, so it can be argued by analogy that this flesh too will not be obtained from slaughtered animals but this too will be a natural product. The God Who can produce milk and honey and wine directly

from earthly substances can also produce tasty flesh of every kind from the same substances, which should even surpass the flesh of animals in taste and delight. (For further explanation, see(E.N. 25 of Surah As- Saaffat), (E.Ns 21 to 23 of Surah Muhammad).

يَتَنَازَعُونَ فِيهَا كَأْسًا لَّا لَغْوٌ فِيهَا وَلَا تَأْثِيمٌ 23

(52:23) They shall pass on to one another a cup that will incite neither levity nor sin.[18]

18. That is, the wine of Paradise will not intoxicate that they should get drunk and talk nonsense, or use abusive language, or conduct and behave indecently as drunkards. (For further explanation, see(E.N. 27 of Surah As-Saaffat).

وَيَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ غِلْمَانٌ لَّهُمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ لُؤْلُؤٌ مَّكْنُونٌ 24

(52:24) Youths as fair as hidden pearls will be set apart to wait upon them; they will be running to and fro to serve them.[19]

19. Here, the word used is ghilman-ul lahum and not ghilman-u-hum. If ghilman-u-hum had been used, it would have meant that their servants in the world would be made their servants in Paradise too; whereas whoever from the world goes to Paradise, will go there on the basis of his own work and entitlement, and there is no reason that after his entry in Paradise he may be made a servant of the same master whom he had been serving in the world. But it can also be that a servant on account of his deeds may attain a higher rank than his master in Paradise. Therefore, by using ghilman-ul-lahum no room has been left for this suspicion. This word provides the explanation that these will be the boys who will be exclusively appointed for their service in Paradise. (For further explanation, see(E.N. 26 of Surah As-Saffat).

وَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ 25

(52:25) They will turn to one another and ask (regarding the past events).

قَالُوا إِنَّا كُنَّا قَبْلُ فِي أَهْلِنَا مُشْفِقِينَ 26

(52:26) They will say: “When we were living before among our kinsfolk we lived in constant fear (of Allah's displeasure).[20]

20. That is, we were not heedless and living a care-free life of ease and comfort, but we were always on our guard lest we should commit an evil for which we may be held accountable before God. Here, the mention of “we were among our people, in fear and dread,” in particular, has been made for the reason that man commits evil mostly when he is deeply engrossed in arranging ease and comfort for his children and trying to make their future secure and happy. For the same purpose, he earns forbidden things by forbidden means, usurps the rights of others and makes evil plans. That is why the dwellers of Paradise will

say to one another: That which particularly saved us from the evil of the Hereafter was that while living among our families we did not think so much of arranging the pleasures of life and a splendid future for them as for avoiding for their sake those methods and means that might ruin our life in the Hereafter and that we should not lead our children also on to the way that might make them worthy of the torment of Allah.

فَمَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْنَا وَوَقٰنَا عَذَابَ السَّمُوْمِ 27

(52:27) Then Allah graced us with His favour and saved us from the chastisement of the scorching wind.[21]

21. The word samum in the original means hot, scorching wind; here it implies the waves of hot wind that will be arising from Hell.

اِنَّا كُنَّا مِنْ قَبْلُ نَدْعُوْهُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْبَرُّ الرَّحِيْمُ ع 28

(52:28) Formerly we had always prayed to Him. Surely He is Most Benign, Most Compassionate."

فَذَكِّرْ فَمَآ اَنْتَ بِنِعْمَتِ رَبِّكَ بِكَاهِنٍ وَّلَا مَجْنُوْنٍ ؕ 29

(52:29) So exhort (them, O Prophet), for by your Lord's Grace, you are neither a soothsayer nor a madman.[22]

22. After depicting a scene of the Hereafter the address now turns to the obduracy of the disbelieves of Makkah with which they were resisting the message of the Prophet (peace be upon him). This verse though apparently addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) is actually meant for the disbelievers through him. Whenever he spoke of Resurrection and the gathering together of mankind, and accountability, and meting out of rewards and punishments, and Heaven and Hell and recited the verses of the Quran in support thereof, with the claim that he received that information from Allah and that it was Allah's Word that had been revealed to him, their leaders and religious guides and depraved people neither listened to him seriously themselves nor wanted that the other people should pay any attention to him. Therefore, they would sometimes taunt him saying that he was a sorcerer, or that he was a poet, or that he was a madman, or that he fabricated those strange things himself and presented them as Revelations from Allah only in order to impress the people. They thought that by passing such remarks against him, they would be able to create suspicions among the people about him and would thus render his preaching ineffective and vain. About this it is being said: O Prophet (peace be upon him), the truth in fact is the same that has been presented from the beginning of the Surah to this point. If these people call you a sorcerer and a madman on account of these things, you should not take it to heart but should go on arousing the people from their heedlessness and warning them of the reality, for by the grace of God you are neither.

The word kahin (sorcerer) in Arabic is used for an astrologer, fortune teller and a wise man. In the pre-Islamic days of ignorance it was a full-fledged profession. The sorcerers claimed, and the credulous people thought and believed, that they knew the destinies of the people, or they had a special link with the spirits, devils and jinn through whom they come to know of the unseen realities. If a thing was lost, they could tell where it lay; if a theft occurred somewhere, they could tell who the thief was; and they could foretell destinies. People came to there, and they would tell them unseen things in exchange for gifts and offerings. They would sometimes visit the towns and villages and would cry about their profession so that the people might approach them. They had a way and manner and appearance of their own by which they became easily recognizable. The language they used also differed from the common speech of the people. They would utter rhymed and rhythmical sentences with a peculiar accent and modulation and generally used vague and ambiguous sentences from which every person could draw his own meaning. The Quraish chiefs in order to deceive the common people accused the Prophet (peace be upon him) of sorcery only for the reason that he was giving the news of the realities that are hidden and his claim was that an angel from God came to reveal that news to him, and the Word of God that he was presenting was also rhymed. But no one in Arabia could be deceived by this accusation because no one was unaware of the sorcerers' profession and their general way and appearance and their language and business. Everyone knew what they did, why the people visited them, what they told them, what sort of modulated sentences they uttered and what subject-matter they contained. Then, above all, it could not be that a sorcerer would rise with a creed that went against the prevalent beliefs of the nation and would exert himself preaching it continuously at his own risk. Therefore, this accusation of sorcery did not apply to the Prophet (peace be upon him) at all and no one in Arabia who had any common sense could be deceived by it.

Likewise, the disbelievers of Makkah also accused him of madness only for their own satisfaction, just as some shameless Western scholars of the present day in order to satisfy their malice and enmity against Islam, claim that, God forbid, the Prophet (peace be upon him) had epileptic fits and whatever he uttered during those fits was taken as divine revelation by the people. No sensible person in those days regarded such absurd accusations as worthy of any attention, nor can anyone today, who reads the Quran and studies the wonderful facts of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) leadership and guidance, believe that these were the product of epileptic fits.

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ شَاعِرٌ نَّتَرَبَّصُ بِهِ رَيْبَ الْمَنُونِ 30

(52:30) Or do they say: "He is a poet for whom we await an adverse turn of fortune."[23]

23. That is, we are waiting for him to be afflicted with calamity so that we get rid of him. Probably they thought that since Muhammad (peace be upon him) was opposing their deities and denying their supernatural powers, he would fall under the curse of some deity, or some bold devotee of a god would put an end to him.

قُلْ تَرَبَّصُوا فَإِنِّي مَعَكُم مِّنَ الْمُتَرَبِّصِينَ ۖ 31

(52:31) Tell them: “Wait; I too am waiting with you.”[24]

24. This can have two meanings: (1) I would also see whether this desire of yours is fulfilled or not. (2) I am also waiting to see who goes to his doom, you or me.

اَمۡ تَاۡمُرُهُمۡ اَحۡلَامُهُمۡ بِهٰذَاۤ اَمۡ هُمۡ قَوۡمٌ طَاغُوۡنَ ۚ 32

(52:32) Do their minds prompt them to say such things, or are they a people immersed in transgression?”[25]

25. In these two sentences, the opponents’ entire propaganda has been nailed, and they have been completely exposed. The reasoning briefly is this: These Qaraish chiefs and elders pose as very wise people, but does their intellect tell them that they should call a person a poet when he is not a poet, and call him a madman when he is well-known for his wisdom among the people, and dub him a sorcerer when he does not have the remotest association with sorcery? Then, if you are passing these judgments only on the basis of intellect and reason, you should have passed one judgment, and not so many contradictory judgments simultaneously. After all, how can one and the same man be a poet and a madman and a sorcerer at one and the same time? If he is mad, he can then neither be a sorcerer nor a poet. If he is a sorcerer, he cannot be a poet, and if he is a poet, he cannot be a sorcerer, for the language and diction and themes of poetry are quite different from the language and themes of sorcery. The one who knows the distinctions between poetry and sorcery cannot possibly call and regard the same discourse both as poetry and as sorcery at one and the same time. Therefore, it is evident that these contradictory things are being said against the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) not on the basis of intellect and reason but only due to obduracy and stubbornness, and the big chiefs of the nation blinded by their prejudice and enmity are leveling absurd charges which no serious person can regard as worthy of any attention. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 104 of Surah Al-Aaraf); (E.N. 3 of Surah Younus); (E.Ns 53, 54, of Surah Bani-Israil); (E.Ns 130, 131, 140, 142-144 of Surah Ash-Shuara).

اَمۡ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ تَقَوَّلَهٗ ۚ بَلۡ لَّا يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ۚ 33

(52:33) Do they say: “He has himself fabricated the Qur'an?” No; the truth is that they are altogether averse to believing.[26]

26. In other words, it means this: The Quraish who think that Muhammad (peace be upon him) himself is the author of the Quran know deep down in their hearts that it cannot be his word, and those others also whose mother tongue is Arabic not only clearly feel that it is far more sublime and superior to human speech but any one of them who knows Muhammad (peace be upon him) personally cannot ever suspect that this is actually his own word and speech. Therefore, the thing plainly is that those who ascribe the authorship of the Quran to the Prophet (peace be upon him) do not, in fact, wish to affirm faith. That is why they are inventing false excuses one of which is this excuse. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 21 of Surah Younus); (E N. 12 of Surah Al-Furqan); (E N. 64 of Surah Al-Qasas); (E.Ns 88, 89 of

Surah Al-Ankabut); (E.Ns 1 to 4 of Surah As-Sajdah); (E.N. 54 of Surah HaMim As-Sajdah); (E.Ns 8 to 10 of Surah Al-Ahqaf).

فَلْيَأْتُوا بِحَدِيثٍ مِّثْلِهِ إِن كَانُوا صَادِقِينَ ۝34

(52:34) (If they are truthful in this), then let them produce a discourse of similar splendour.[27]

27. That is, not only is the Quran not the word of Muhammad (peace be upon him) but the truth is that it is not human at all; it is beyond the power of man to compose and produce it. If you think it is human, you are challenged to produce the like of it, which should also be human. This challenge had been given not only to the Quraish but to all the disbelievers of the world first of all in this verse. Then it was repeated thrice in Makkah and then finally in Madinah. (Please see (Surah Younus, Ayat 38); (Surah Houd, Ayat 13); (Surah Bani-Israil, Ayat 88); (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 23). But no one could dare meet this challenge of the Quran at that time, nor has anyone else had so far the ability to compose and produce a man-made work like the Quran.

Some people, because of lack of understanding the real nature of this challenge, say that not to speak of the Quran, no one has the power to write prose or compose poetry in the style of another person. Homer, Rumi, Shakespeare, Goethe, Ghalib, Tagore, Iqbal, all are unique in their styles. It lies in no one's power to produce poetry like theirs by imitation. Those who give this answer to the challenge of the Quran are, in fact, involved in the misunderstanding that the meaning of "let them produce a statement like it", is a challenge to man to compose and write a book like the Quran, in the style of the Quran; whereas it does not imply any resemblance in literary style but it implies this: Bring a book of the same sublimity and quality and rank, not only in Arabic but in any language of the world, that may be regarded as a match for the Quran in respect of the characteristics for which the Quran is a miracle. The following are in brief some of the main characteristics because of which the Quran has been a miracle before as it is a miracle today:

(1) The Quran is the highest and most perfect model of the literature of the language in which it was revealed. No word and no sentence in the entire Book is sub-standard. Whatever theme has been presented in it, has been presented in the most appropriate words and in the most suitable style. One and the same theme has been presented over and over again but every time in a new style avoiding the defect of repetition everywhere. The entire Book, from the beginning to the end, is set in the choicest words, like chiseled and polished gems, that cannot be replaced. The discourses are so impressive that no one who knows the language, even if he is a disbeliever, can help being moved to ecstasies on hearing them. Even after 1,400 years this Book is still the model of Arabic literature and no other Arabic book can approach it in literary excellence not to speak of equaling it. Not only this, this Book has so controlled the Arabic language that even after the passage of 14 centuries the standard of this language's beauty and eloquence is the same that had been set by it; whereas in such long periods languages change out of recognition. No other language of the world has remained in the same state in so far as its spelling and diction, idiom, rules of language and usages are concerned. But it is only the power of the Quran that has held the Arabic language in place each idiom of it is still in use in Arabic literature; its literature is

still the standard literature of Arabic; and in writing and speech still the same language is regarded as good Arabic that had been used in the Quran 1,400 years ago. Is there any man-made book in any language of the world that bears the same characteristics?

(2) This is the one single Book in the world, which has so extensively and so universally influenced mankind's thoughts, morals, civilization and way of life as has no precedent in history. In the first instance, its impact changed one nation; then that nation rose and changed a major part of the world. No other Book has proved to be so revolutionary. This Book has not remained confined to writing on paper but in the practical world its each word has formed and molded ideas and thoughts and built up a lasting civilization. Its influence has continued being operative for 1,400 years and its circle of influence and impact is still expanding every day.

(3) The theme that this Book discusses is the most extensive theme which comprehends the whole universe, from eternity to eternity. It deals with the reality of the universe, its beginning and end, its system and law. It tells as to who is the Creator and Controller and Disposer of this universe, what are His attributes, what are His powers, and what is that essence and basis on which He has established this entire system of the world. It specifies man's position and his place which he cannot change. It tells what is the right and correct way of thought and action for man in view of this place and position, which corresponds to the reality, and what are the wrong ways which clash with the reality. Then to prove why the right way is right and the wrong way is wrong, it presents countless arguments from various phenomena of the earth and heavens, from different aspects of the system of the universe, from man's own self and existence and from man's own history. Besides, it also tells how and for what reasons man adopts the wrong ways, by what means he can find out the right way, which has always been one and shall remain one, and how he has been guided to it in every age. It does not merely point to the right way but presents a plan of the complete system of life for following that way, which contains a detailed and systematic code concerning beliefs, morals, purification of self, worship, social life, civilization, economy, politics, justice, law and every other aspect of human life. Furthermore, it also tells in full detail what are the results of following this right way and of adopting the wrong ways in this world and what consequences of this will appear in the next world after the present system of the world has come to an end. It depicts fully the coming to an end of the present world and of the establishment of the new world; it gives every detail of the process of change; it portrays the next world and describes fully how man will find a totally new life there, how his deeds from worldly life will be subjected to accountability, what things he will be questioned about, how his complete record, which lie will not be able to deny or dispute, will be placed before him, what strong evidence will be produced in proof thereof, why the culprits will be punished and the righteous rewarded, what rewards will be bestowed on the righteous and in what forms will the culprits suffer the evil consequences of their misdeeds. The way this vast theme has been dealt with in this Book is not of the nature of some conclusions that its author might have reached from some syllogistic premises but its nature is that its author has the direct knowledge of the reality.

He sees everything happening from eternity to eternity. All the realities are manifest for Him and the entire universe is like an open book before Him. He sees the entire life of mankind, from its origin to its end, even beyond the present life into the second life simultaneously, and He is guiding man not on the basis of conjecture and speculation but on

the basis of knowledge. Not a single truth that He presents as knowledge has been proved to be wrong so far. The concept of the universe and man that He presents fully explains all the phenomena and events and can become the basis of research in every branch of knowledge. His Word contains the answers to all the ultimate problems of philosophy and natural and social sciences, and they are so coherent and consistent logically that a perfect, consistent and comprehensive system of thought can be built on their basis. Then from the practical aspect the guidance that He has given to man about various spheres of life is not only highly rational and pure but countless men have been living according to it in a real fact in different parts of the earth for 1,400 years and have found it by experience to be the only valid way. Is there any man made book of this unique quality present in the world, or has ever been, which may be produced to match this Book?

(4) This Book was not composed and written all at once and presented before the world, but a reformatory movement was started with some basic and initial instructions and then for 23 years as the movement passed through different stages of its development its parts were presented by the tongue of the leader, sometimes as lengthy discourses and sometimes as brief sentences, as the conditions and requirements of the occasion demanded. Then, when the mission was brought to completion, these parts that had been issued at different times were compiled in the form of a complete Book which has been known by the name of the Quran. The leader of the movement states that these discourses and sentences are not his original work but were sent down to him by the Lord of all Creation. If a person asserts that they are the original work of the leader himself, he should produce a precedent from history to prove his contention. He should show whether it is possible that the speeches made and the instructions given by a man at different times while leading a powerful collective movement for years continuously by himself in different capacities, sometimes as a preacher and teacher of morals, sometimes as a leader of an oppressed class, sometimes as the ruler of a state, sometimes as the commander of a fighting army, sometimes as a victor, sometime as a lawgiver and legislator, could form a complete and consistent and comprehensive system of thought and action, which should be free from every contradiction and inconsistency, which should appear to be dominated by the same central idea and pattern of thought, which should show that the leader has been building up a universal system of belief and action on the basis of the same foundation of his message with which he had started his work, and which should be a system each clement and part of which is in perfect harmony and consistency with the other parts, Then the one who reads this collection of the discourses with a discerning eye cannot help realizing that the founder of the movement at the outset had a full plan of the movement in view till the last stage, and it never happened that a new idea might have struck him at some later stage, which was unknown to him before, or which he had to change later. If ever there has been a man of this caliber, his name should be made known to the world.

(5) The leader who had been made to give these discourses and speak these sentences did not suddenly emerge from a hidden place to present these before the people nor would disappear after he had done so. He had lived his life in full view of society before he started his movement as well as continued to live in the same society after that till his last breath. The people were well aware of the language and style of his conversation and speech. Hadith still presents a major part of it and by going through it the people who know Arabic can easily find out even today what was the leader's own style of speech and conversation.

His contemporaries who spoke his language felt then and those who know Arabic feel today that the language and the style of this Book is very different from the language and style of that leader. So much so that whenever in the midst of a sermon delivered by the leader there occurs a sentence or two of this Book, the distinction between the two becomes all too obvious. The question is: Has a man in the world ever had the power, or can he have the capability, that he should go on conversing in two absolutely different styles consistently for years at a stretch and it should never become known that the two separate styles are, in fact, of one and the same person? It is possible that one may succeed in such affectation temporarily but it is not at all possible that for twenty-three years continuously a person should have a different diction and style when he recites the revelations from Allah and a wholly different diction and style when he speaks in his personal capacity.

(6) The leader while leading and guiding the movement met with different sorts of conditions. Sometimes he became the target of ridicule, humiliation and severe persecution of his fellow-countrymen and the people of his own tribe and clan; sometimes his companions were so harshly treated that they were compelled to emigrate from the country; sometimes the enemies plotted against his life; sometimes he himself had to leave his home and city; sometimes he had to pass through extreme poverty and starvation; sometimes he had to fight wars successively in which he suffered defeats as well as won victories; sometimes he overcame the enemies and the same enemies who had persecuted him, came before him humbled; sometimes he achieved such power which few people in the world have been able to achieve. Under all such conditions a person's feelings obviously cannot remain the same. When on these different occasions the leader spoke in his personal capacity, his words, and speeches carried the clear impression of his personal feelings. which naturally arise in the heart of a man on such occasions. But the discourses that were heard from him as Allah's revelations in these different conditions, are wholly devoid of human feelings. At no place can even an acute observer and critic point out the play of human feelings in them. The vast and comprehensive knowledge that is contained in this Book, is not possessed even by any of the distinguished learned people of this 20th century, not to speak of the people of Arabia and Rome and Greece and Iran of those days. The condition today is that after a man has spent his whole lifetime studying a branch of philosophy or a natural or social science, he comes to know what ultimate problems of his field of study are, but when he studies the Quran seriously he comes to know that this Book contains a clear answer to those problems. This thing is not confined to any one branch of knowledge but holds good in respect of all those sciences which have anything to do with the universe and man. How can one believe that 1,400. years ago an unlettered man in the Arabian desert possessed such deep insight into every branch of knowledge, and he had thought over every basic problem and thought out an absolute and final answer to it?

Although there are several other aspects also of the Quran's being a miracle, if a man ponders over these few aspects only, he will realize that the Quran's being a miracle is far more evident today than it was at the time when it was revealed and, if Allah so wills, it will go on becoming more and more evident and manifest as time passes till the Day of Resurrection.

أَمْ خُلِقُوا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ أَمْ هُمُ الْخَالِقُونَ ۝ 35

(52:35) Did they come into being without any creator? Or were they their own creators?

أَمْ خَلَقُوا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۚ بَل لَّا يُوقِنُونَ ۝36

(52:36) Or is it they who created the heavens and the earth? No; the truth is that they lack sure faith.[28]

28. The questions asked before this were meant to make the disbelievers of Makkah realize that whatever they were saying to belie the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) claim to prophethood was highly irrational. Now in this verse the question put before them is: What is that in the message of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) which you find so embarrassing for yourselves? He just says that Allah is your Creator and you should only serve Him. Why are you annoyed at it? Are you your own creators? Or, has this vast universe been created by you? If neither of these is true, and you admit that your Creator as well as the Creator of the universe is Allah alone, why do you then feel angry with the person who tells you that Allah alone is worthy of your service and worship? What you should actually feel angry about is that you worship him who is not your Creator instead of Him Who is your real Creator. You admit with the tongue that Allah alone is your Creator as well as of the whole universe, but if you really had faith in this, you would not have so maligned the person who was calling you to Allah's service.

This was such a pungent and stinging question that it shook the polytheistic faith to the root. Bukhari and Muslim have related that after the Battle of Badr, Jubair bin Mutim came to Al-Madinah to negotiate release of the Quraish prisoners of war on behalf of the people of Makkah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) at that time was leading the Maghrib Prayer, and he recited this Surah at-Toour in it. Mutim himself has stated that when the Prophet (peace be upon him) reached this place, his heart seemed to be leaving his breast. One main reason of his embracing Islam afterwards was that Islam had taken root in his heart on hearing these very verses on that day.

أَمْ عِندَهُمْ خَزَآئِنُ رَبِّكَ أَمْ هُمُ الْمُصَيْطِرُونَ ۝37

(52:37) Or do they have your Lord's treasures in their keeping? Or have absolute authority over them?[29]

29. This is an answer to the objection of the disbelievers of Makkah who said: Why had Muhammad (peace be upon him), son of Abdullah, only been appointed a Messenger? The answer implies this: Somebody in any case had to be appointed a Messenger in order to deliver the people from their error of serving others than Allah. Now the question is: Who should decide whom Allah should appoint His Messenger and whom He should not? If these people refuse to accept the Messenger appointed by Allah, it means that either they regard themselves as the masters of the world or they presume that the world may belong to Allah, but it should be ruled by them.

أَمْ لَهُمْ سُلَّمٌ يَّسْتَمِعُوْنَ فِيْهِ ۚ فَلْيَاْتِ مُسْتَمِعُهُمْ بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ۭ 38

(52:38) Or do they have a ladder whereon they can climb and attempt to listen (to what is transpiring in the Higher Realm)? Then, let any of them who has listened to it produce a clear proof of it.

أَمْ لَهُ الْبَنٰتُ وَلَكُمُ الْبَنُوْنَ ۭ 39

(52:39) Or does Allah have daughters whereas you have sons?[30]

30. A detailed reasoning has been compressed into these brief sentences. It means to say: If you deny what the Prophet (peace be upon him) says, then what other means do you have to know the reality? Has any of you had access to the heavens where he found out directly from Allah or His angels that the beliefs on which you have based your religion are absolutely in accord with the reality? If someone makes this claim, he should come forward and tell as to when and how he had access to the heavens and what knowledge he has brought from there. If you do not make any such claim, then consider how ridiculous is your creed that you assign children to Allah, Lord of the worlds, and that too daughters, whom you regard as disgraceful for yourselves. Without knowledge you are wandering in the darkness of such errors and turning hostile to the person who brings to you the light of knowledge from God.

أَمْ تَسْـَٔلُهُمْ اَجْرًا فَهُمْ مِّنْ مَّغْرَمٍ مُّثْقَلُوْنَ ۭ 40

(52:40) Or is it that you ask of them any recompense so that they should fear to be weighed down under the burden of debt?[31]

31. The question is actually directed to the disbelievers. It means: If the Messenger had a selfish motive and had been exerting only for a personal gain from you, there would be a rational ground for you to avoid him. But you yourselves know that he is absolutely selfless in his invitation and is exerting himself only for your own benefit and well-being. Then, how is it that you are not even inclined to listen to him with a cool mind? There is also a subtle hint in this question. Like the self-styled guides and guardians of religious shrines of the world, the religious guides, priests and scholars of the polytheists of Arabia also were engaged in a religious business. In view of the same, this question was put before them: On the one hand, these dealers in religion are openly receiving gifts and offerings and fees for every religious service from you; on the other hand, a person who has ruined his trading business, is trying to show you the right way with highly rational arguments, absolutely selflessly. Is it not sheer senselessness that you shun him but run after them?

أَمْ عِنْدَهُمُ الْغَيْبُ فَهُمْ يَكْتُبُوْنَ ۭ 41

(52:41) Or is it that they have access to (the Truths in) the realm beyond sense-perception which they are writing down?[32]

32. That is, what particular knowledge do you have to refute the truths that the Messenger (peace be upon him) is presenting before you, which you may present with the claim that you directly know the realities hidden behind the phenomenal world? Do you really have the knowledge that God is not One, but all those whom you have set up as deities also possess godly attributes and powers? Have you really seen the angels and found that they are girls, and, God forbid, are begotten of God? Do you really know that the revelation has neither come to Muhammad (peace be upon him), nor it can come to any man, from God? Do you really have the knowledge that no Resurrection will take place, that there is going to be no life after death, that there will be no Hereafter when man will be subjected to accountability and rewarded or punished according to his deeds? If you claim to possess any such knowledge, can you give in writing that you are belying what the Prophet (peace be upon him) says about the unseen realities on the ground that you have peeped into the hidden realities and seen that the truth is not that which the Prophet (peace be upon him) presents. Here, one may express the misgiving that if in response to this, those people had given this in writing, in their stubbornness, will not this reasoning have become meaningless? But this misgiving is misplaced because even if they had given this in writing on account of their stubbornness, the common people of society in which this challenge had been given openly were not blind: everyone of them would have understood that the writing had been given out of sheer stubbornness, and no one, in fact, was refuting what the Prophet (peace be upon him) said on the basis that he had the knowledge that it was false.

أَمْ يُرِيدُونَ كَيْدًا ۖ فَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هُمُ الْمَكِيدُونَ ۖ 42

(52:42) Or are they contriving a stratagem against you?[33] If so, that stratagem will rebound against the unbelievers.[34]

33. The allusion is to the secret plots that the disbelievers of Makkah used to devise in their meetings in order to defeat the mission of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and to kill him.

34. This is one of the clear prophecies of the Quran. In the initial stage at Makkah when the Prophet (peace be upon him) had no apparent power and support with him except a handful of the ill-equipped Muslims and the whole nation was opposing and resisting him relentlessly, the confrontation between Islam and disbelief appeared to be utterly unequal. No one at that time could imagine that after a few years the tables would be turned on disbelief. Rather, the superficial observer could safely predict that the strong opposition of the Quraish and entire Arabia would at last put an end to the message of Islam. But even under those conditions, a challenge was thrown to the disbelievers and they were told in clear terms: You may devise whatever plots you wish in order to frustrate this message, they will all recoil upon you, and you will never succeed in defeating and putting an end to it.

أَمْ لَهُمْ إِلَٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ ۚ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ۖ 43

(52:43) Do they have any god other than Allah? Exalted be Allah above whatever they associate (with Him in His Divinity).[35]

35. That is, the fact of the matter is that chose whom they have set up as deities, are not in fact the deities, and shirk is wholly an unreal thing. Therefore, the person who has risen with the message of Tauhid has the power of the truth with him; and those who are supporting shirk are indeed fighting for the imaginary. How will then shirk win in this conflict?

وَإِنْ يَّرَوْا كِسْفًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ سَاقِطًا يَّقُوْلُوْا سَحَابٌ مَّرْكُوْمٌ 44

(52:44) (So obstinate are they that) even if they were to see some fragments of the sky falling down they would still say: "It is only a mass of cloud."[36]

36. This is meant to expose the stubbornness of the Quraish chiefs on the one hand; and to console the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions, on the other. The Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions wished that those people should be shown such a miracle by Allah as should convince them of the truth of his Prophethood. At this, it has been said: Whatever miracle they might see with their eyes, they will in any case misinterpret it and invent an excuse for persisting in disbelief, for their hearts are not at all inclined to believe. At several other places also in the Quran their this stubbornness has been mentioned, e.g. in (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 111), it has been said: Even if we had sent down the angels to them and made the dead speak to them and ranged all the things of the world before them (as a proof thereof), they would still have disbelieved, and in(Surah Al-Hijr, Ayat 15): Even if We had opened a gate for them in heaven, and they had begun to ascend through it during day time, they would have said: Our eyes have been dazzled; nay, we have been bewitched.

فَذَرْهُمْ حَتّٰى يُلٰقُوْا يَوْمَهُمُ الَّذِيْ فِيْهِ يُصْعَقُوْنَ ۙ 45

(52:45) So leave them alone until they encounter that Day of theirs when they shall be struck down,

يَوْمَ لَا يُغْنِيْ عَنْهُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ ۭ 46

(52:46) when their stratagem shall be of no avail to them, nor shall they be succoured.

وَاِنَّ لِلَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا عَذَابًا دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ 47

(52:47) Surely a chastisement awaits the wrong-doers even before the coming of that Day; but most of them do not know.[37]

37. This is a repetition of the same theme that has already occurred in (Surah As-Sajdah, Ayat 21): Even in this world We shall make them taste (one or the other) lesser torment before that greater torment; maybe they desist (from their rebellious attitude). That is, We

shall send down personal and national disasters from time to time in the world to remind that there is above them a superior power which is deciding their destinies and none has the power to change its decisions. But the people who are involved in ignorance have neither learned any lesson from these events before not will learn any lesson in the future. They do not understand the meaning of the disasters and calamities occurring in the world. Therefore, they explain them away in every such way as takes them further and further away from the reality, and their mind never turns to any explanation, which might make the error of their atheism or polytheism manifest to them. This same thing has been explained by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in a Hadith, thus: The example of a hypocrite who falls ill and then gets well, is of the camel whom the masters tied, but it did not understand why they had tied him, and when they untied him, it did not understand why they had untied him. (Abu Daud: Kitab al-Janaiz). For further explanation, see (E.N. 45 of Surah Al-Anbiya); (E.N. 66 of Surah An-Naml); (E.Ns 72. 73 of Surah Al-Ankabut).

وَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ فَإِنَّكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ حِينَ تَقُومُ ۙ 48

(52:48) Be patient, then, (O Prophet), until the judgement of your Lord comes.[38] For surely you are before Our eyes.[39]And celebrate the praise of your Lord when you rise,[40]

38. Another meaning can be: Remain firm and steadfast in carrying out the command of your Lord.

39. That is, We are watching over you and have not left you alone.

40. There can be several meanings of this and possibly all may be implied:

First, whenever you rise from a meeting, you should rise glorifying and praising Allah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself acted upon this as well as instructed the Muslims that they should glorify and praise Allah when they rose from a meeting. Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Nasai and Hakim have related, on the authority of Hadrat Abu Hurairah, that the Prophet said: If a person sat in a meeting in which much controversy took place, and he pronounced the following words before rising, Allah would forgive whatever passed in the meeting: subhanaka Allahumma wa bi-hamdika, ashhadu-al la-ilaha illa Anta, astaghfiruka wa utubu ilaika: O Allah, I glorify You with Your praises: I bear witness that there is no deity but You: I seek Your forgiveness and offer repentance before You.

The second meaning is: When you get up from bed, glorify your Lord with His praise. The Prophet (peace be upon him) acted upon this himself and had also taught his companions that they should pronounce the following words when they got up after sleep: la ilaha ill-Allah wahda-hu la sharika lahu, lahul mulku wa lahul-hamdu wa haws ala kulli shai In Qadir. Subhan-Allah-i wal-hamdulillahi wa la ilaha ill-Allah, wallahu Akbar, wa la hauls wa la quwwata-illa-billah. (Musnad Ahmad, Bukhari, on the authority of Ubadah bin as-Samit).

Its third meaning is: When you stand up for the Prayer, begin it with the praise and glorification of Allah. Accordingly, the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught that the Prayer should be begun, after the first takbir, with the following words: Subhanak-Allahumma wa

bi-hamdi-ka wa tabarak asmuka wa taaIa jadduka wa la ilaha ghairuka: Glory be to You, O Allah, and I praise You. Blessed is Your name, and You are exalted. There is no god other than You.

Its fourth meaning is: When you rise to invite others to Allah, begin your invitation with the praise and glorification of Allah. That also was the Prophet's (peace be upon him) constant practice, and he always began his addresses with the praise and glorification of Allah Almighty.

Commentator Ibn Jarir has given still another meaning of it, and it is this: When you get up after the midday nap, offer the Prayer and this implies the Zuhr Prayer.

وَمِنَ الَّيۡلِ فَسَبِّحۡهُ وَاِدۡبَارَ النُّجُوۡمِ ع 49

(52:49) and also celebrate His praise at night,[41] and at the retreat of the stars.[42]

41. This implies the Maghrib, the Isha and the Tahajjud Prayers as well as the recital of the Quran and the remembrance of Allah.

42. Setting of the stars implies the early hours of the morning when the stars set and they lose their luster on the appearance of dawn. This is the time of the Fajr Prayer.

53. Surah An Najm (The Star)

Name

The Sarah derives its name from the very first word *wan Najm*. This title also does not relate to the subject matter, but is a name given to the Surah as a symbol.

Period of Revelation

According to a Tradition related by Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Da'ud and Nasai, on the authority of Hadrat Abdullah bin Mas'ud, the first Surah in which a verse requiring the performance of a *sajdah* (prostration) as sent down, is Surah An-Najm. The parts of this *Hadith* which have been reported by Aswad bin Yazid, Abu Ishaq and Zubair bin Mu'awiyah from Hadrat Ibn Mas'ud, indicate that this is the first Surah of the Qur'an, which the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had publicly recited before an assembly of the Quraish (and according to Ibn Marduyah, in the Ka'bah) in which both the believers and the disbelievers were present. At the end, when he recited the verse requiring the performance of a *sajdah* and fell down in prostration, the whole assembly also fall down in prostration with him, and even those chiefs of the polytheists who were in the forefront of the opposition to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) could not resist falling down in prostration. Ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) says that he saw only one man, Umayyah bin Khalaf, from among the disbelievers, who did not fall down in prostration but took a little dust and rubbing it on his forehead said that that was enough for him. Later, as Ibn Mas'ud relates, he saw this man die in the state of disbelief.

Another eye witness of this incident is Hadrat Muttalib bin Abi Wada'ah, who had not yet become a Muslim. Nasai and Musnad Ahmad contain his own words to the effect: "When the Holy Prophet recited the Surah An-Najm and performed the *sajdah* and the whole assembly fell down in prostration along with him, I did not perform the *sajdah*. Now to compensate for the same whenever I recite this Surah I make sure never to abandon its performance."

Ibn Sad says that before this, in the Rajab of the 5th year of Prophethood, a small group of the Companions had emigrated to Abyssinia. Then, when in the Ramadan of the same year this incident took place the news spread that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had recited Surah An-Najm publicly in the assembly of the Quraish and the whole assembly, including the believers as well as the disbelievers, had fallen down in prostration with him. When the emigrants to Abyssinia heard this news they formed the impression that the disbelievers of Makkah had become Muslims. Thereupon, some of them returned to Makkah in the Shawwal of the 5th year of Prophethood, only to learn that the news was wrong and the conflict between Islam and disbelief was raging as furiously as before. Consequently, the second emigration to Abyssinia took place, in which many more people left Makkah.

Thus, it becomes almost certain that this Surah was revealed in the Ramadan of 5th year of Prophethood.

Historical Background

The details of the period of revelation as given above point to the conditions in which this Surah was revealed. During the first five years of his appointment as a Prophet, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had been extending invitation to Allah's Religion by presenting the Divine Revelations before the people only in private and restricted meetings and assemblies. During this whole period he could never have a chance to recite the Quran before a common gathering openly, mainly because of the strong opposition and resistance from the disbelievers. They were well aware of how magnetic and captivating was the Holy Prophet's personality and his way of preaching and how impressive were the Revelations of the Qur'an. Therefore, they tried their best to avoid hearing it them- selves and to stop others also from hearing it and to suppress his invitation by false propaganda by spreading every kind of suspicion against him. For this object, on the one hand, they were telling the people that Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had gone astray and was now bent upon misleading others as well; on the other hand, they would raise on uproar whenever he tried to present the Qur'an before the people so that no one could know what it was for which he was being branded as a misled and misguided person.

Such were the conditions when the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) suddenly stood up one day to make a speech in the sacred precincts of the Ka'bah, where a large number of the Quraish had gathered together. Allah at that time made him deliver this discourse, which we have now in the form of the Surah An-Najm with us. Such was the intensity of the impression that when the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) started reciting it the opponents were so completely overwhelmed that they could not think of raising any disorder, and when at the conclusion he fell down in prostration, they too fell down in prostration along with him. Later they felt great remorse at the weakness they had involuntarily shown. The people also started taunting them to the effect that whereas they had been forbidding others to listen to the Qur'an, that day not only had they themselves listened to it, with complete absorption but had even fallen down in prostration along with Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). At last, they had to invent a story in order to get rid of the people's taunt and ridicule. They said "After he had recited *afara'ait-ul Lata wal Uzza wa Manat ath-thalitha-al ukhra*, we heard from Muhammad the words: *tilk al-gharaniqa- tal-'ula, wa anna shafa'at-u-hunna latarja*: 'They are exalted goddesses: indeed, their intercession may be expected.' From this we understood that Muhammad had returned to our faith." As a matter of fact, only a mad person could think that in the context of this Surah the sentences they claimed to have heard could have any place and relevance.(For details, please see E. N.'s 96 to 301 of Surah Al Hajj).

Subject Matter and Topics

The theme of the discourse is to warn the disbelievers of Makkah about the error of the attitude that they had adopted towards the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

The discourse starts in a way as if to say: "Muhammad is neither deluded nor gone astray, as you are telling others in your propaganda against him, nor has he fabricated this teaching of Islam and its message, as you seem to think he has. In fact, whatever he is presenting is

nothing but Revelation which is sent down to him. The verities that be presents before you, are not the product of his own surmise and speculation but realities of which he himself is an eye witness. He has himself seen the Angel through whom this knowledge is conveyed to him. He has been directly made to observe the great Signs of his Lord: whatever he says is not what he has himself thought out but what he has seen with his own eyes. Therefore, your disputing and wrangling with him is just like the disputing and wrangling of a blind man with a man of sight over a thing which the blind man cannot see but he can see."

After this, three things have been presented in their successive order:

First, the listeners have been made to understand that: "The religion that you are following is based on mere conjecture and invented ideas. You have set up a few goddesses like Lat and Manat and Uzza as your deities, whereas they have no share whatever in divinity. You regard the angels as the daughters of Allah, whereas you regard a daughter as disgraceful for your own selves. You think that these deities of fours can influence Allah in your favor, whereas the fact is that all the angels together, who are stationed closest to Allah, cannot influence Him even in their own favor. None of such beliefs that you have adopted, is based on knowledge and reason, but are wishes and desires for the sake of which you have taken some whims as realities. This is a grave error. The right and true religion is that which is in conformity to the reality, and the reality is never subject to thee people's wishes and desires so that whatever they may regard as a reality and truth should become the reality and truth. Speculation and conjecture cannot help to determine as to what is according to the truth and what is not; it is knowledge. When that knowledge is presented before you, you turn away from it, and brand the one who tells you the truth as misguided. The actual cause of your being involved in this error is that you are heedless of the Hereafter. Only this world is your goal. Therefore, you have neither any desire for the knowledge of reality, nor you bother to see 'whether the beliefs you hold are according to the truth or not.

Secondly, the people have been told that: Allah is the caster and Sovereign of the entire Universe. The righteous is he who follows His way, and the misguided he who has turned away from His way. The error of the misguided and the righteousness of the righteous are not hidden from Him. He knows whatever everyone is doing: He will requite the evil with evil and the good with good. The final judgment will not depend on what you consider yourself to be, and on tall claims you make of your purity and chastity but on whether you are pious or impious, righteous or unrighteous, in the sight of God. If you refrain from major sins, He in His mercy will overlook your minor errors.'' .

Thirdly, a few basic principles of the true Religion which had been presented hundreds of years before the revelation of the Qur'an in the Books of the Prophets Abraham and Moses have been reiterated so that the people did not remain involved in the misunderstanding that the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had brought some new and novel religion, but they should know that these are the fundamental truths which the former Prophets of Allah have always been presenting in their respective ages. Besides, the same Books have been quoted to confirm the historical facts that the destruction of the 'Ad and the Thamud and of the people of the Prophets Noah and Lot was not the result of accidental calamities, but Allah has destroyed them in consequence of the same wickedness and rebellion from which the disbelievers of Makkah were not inclined to refrain and desist in any case.

After presenting these themes and discourses the Surah has been concluded, thus: "The Hour of Judgment has approached near at hand, which no one can avert. Before the occurrence of that Hour you are being warned through Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the Quran in the like manner as the former people had been warned before. Now, is it this warning that you find novel and strange? Which you mock and ridicule? Which you turn away from and cause disorder so that no one else also is able to hear what it is ? Don't you feel like weeping at your folly and ignorance? Abandon this attitude and behavior, bow down to Allah and serve Him alone!"

This was that impressive conclusion hearing which even the most hardened deniers of the Truth were completely overwhelmed, and when after reciting these verses of Divine Word the Holy Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) fell down in prostration, they too could not help falling down in prostration along with him.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

وَالنَّجۡمِ اِذَا هَوٰى ۙ 1

(53:1) By the star when it sets:[1]

1. In the original the word an-najm has been used. Ibn Abbas, Mujahid and Sufyan Thauri opine that it implies the Pleides. Ibn Jarir and Zamakhshari have held this same interpretation as preferable, for in Arabic when the word an-najm is used absolutely, it usually implies the Pleides. Suddi says that it implies Venus; and Abu Ubaidah, the grammarian, holds that here the word an-najm has been used generically so as to express this idea: When the day dawned, and the stars set. In view of the context we are of the opinion that this last interpretation is more preferable.

مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمۡ وَمَا غَوٰى ۚ 2

(53:2) your companion[2] has neither strayed nor is he deluded;[3]

2. Your companion: implies the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and the addressees are the Quraish. The word Sahib as used in the original means a friend, a companion, a close associate. Here, making mention of the Prophet by the word Sahib-u-kum (your companion) instead of Our Messenger is very meaningful. This is meant to make the people of the Quraish realize: The person being mentioned is no stranger to you. He is not an outsider whom you may not be knowing or recognizing already. He is a man of your own clan and tribe. He lives and moves among you; even your children know who and what he is, what his character is, what are his dealings, what are his ways and habits and characteristics, and how he has passed his life among you so far. If sameone of you were to say an improbable thing about him, there would be a thousand men among you who knew him, who could see for themselves whether what was said actually applied to him or not.

3. This is the thing for which an oath has been sworn by the setting star or stars. Going astray means a person's adopting a wrong way being unaware of the right way, and being deluded means his adopting the wrong way knowingly and consciously. The verse means: Muhammad (peace be upon him) is a well-known man among you. Your accusation that he has gone astray, or is misguided, is utterly wrong. In fact, he is neither gone astray nor misguided. Here, the propriety of swearing by the setting stars is that in the darkness of the starry night a person cannot see the things of his surroundings clearly, and from their vague appearances can form wrong judgments about them, e.g. he may take a tree for a ghost in the dark, a string for a snake, a rock in the sand for a beast of prey. But when the stars have set and the day has dawned, everything appears before man in its real form and shape, and there remains no doubt whatsoever about the reality of things. The same is also the case of Muhammad (peace be upon him) among you. His life and personality is not hidden in darkness, but is manifest like the bright dawn. You are aware that this companion of yours is a rightminded, wise and sagacious man. How can somebody from among the Quraish have the misunderstanding that he has gone astray? You also know how well-intentioned and honest and righteous person he is. How can one of you form the view that he has knowingly adopted a crooked way not only for himself but has started inviting others also to the same falsehood?

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوٰى ۭ 3

(53:3) nor does he speak out of his desire.

اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُّوْحٰى ۙ 4

(53:4) This is nothing but a revelation that is conveyed to him,[4]

4. It means this: The things for which you accuse him of having gone astray or been misled and deceived, have neither been fabricated by himself nor motivated by any selfish desire on his part, but they have been sent down, and are being sent down, to him by God. He did not intend to become a Prophet of his own desire so that he might have laid a claim to Prophethood in order to satisfy his desire, but when Allah appointed him to that office through revelation, then only did he rise to preach his mission and to tell you that he had been appointed God's Messenger to you. Likewise, this invitation to Islam, this teaching of the doctrine of Tauhid, this news about the gathering together of all mankind on the Day of Resurrection and their accountability, the truths that he is presenting about the universe and man and the principles of leading a pure life, are not a philosophy propounded by himself, but the knowledge of all this has been bestowed on him by revelation. Likewise, this Quran that he recites before you, is also not of his own composition but it is divine word which is sent down to him by revelation. "He does not speak of his own desire; It is not but a revelation that is revealed."

Here, the question arises: Which of the words spoken by the Prophet (peace be upon him) are Allah's Words: Do they apply to everything that he spoke, or to some of his words and not to others? The answer is: As far as the Quran is concerned, the divine words apply to it

most completely. As for the other words, apart from the Quran, which the Prophet (peace be upon him) spoke, they could inevitably be of three kinds:

First, those words which he employed for preaching religion and inviting others to Allah, and for explaining the themes, teachings and commands of the Quran, or for giving admonition and instruction to the people to fulfill the object for which the Quran was revealed. In this regard, obviously nobody can have the doubt that, God forbid, he fabricated these things from his own mind. In these matters, his position, in fact, was of the official interpreter of the Quran and of Allah's authorized representative. Although these things were not revealed to him literally as the Quran was revealed; yet these were necessarily based on the same knowledge that he had been given by revelation. The only difference between the Quran and these was that the Quran, both in word and in meaning, was entirely from Allah, and in these other things the meanings were those taught by Allah and the words those which he himself employed to express those meanings. On the basis of this very distinction, the Quran has been described as wahi-jali (manifest revelation) and the Prophet's (peace be upon him) other sayings as wahi-khafi (concealed revelation).

The second kind of the words were those which the Prophet (peace be upon him) spoke in connection with the struggle of raising Allah's Word and his services for establishing Islam. In this regard, he had to perform countless duties of different kinds as the leader and guide of the Muslim community. In this many a time he took counsel with his companions as well, and followed their advice instead of his own view. On being asked he sometimes told them that he was expressing a particular view not under Allah's command but as his personal opinion, and on several occasions it so happened that he said something on the basis of his own opinion and later an instruction came down against it from Allah. None of the things of this nature that he said or did could be based on a selfish motive. As for the question whether these sayings were based on divine inspiration, the answer is that except for the things in regard to which he made it explicit that they were not based on divine command, or about which he took counsel with his companions and accepted their advice, or with regard to a thing against which Allah sent down an instruction after he had said or done something on the basis of his personal judgment, all other things were based on concealed revelation (wahi-khafi) just like the things of the first kind. For the office of the leader and guide of the Islamic movement and the chief of the believing community and the ruler of the Islamic State, which he held, was not self-invented or bestowed by the people, but he had been appointed to it by Allah, and whatever he said and did in carrying out the duties of this office, his position in it was of the representative of divine, will. In this matter, whatever he said on the basis of his personal judgment, his judgment in those matters was approved by Allah, and was, derived from the light of the knowledge which Allah had blessed him with. That is why whenever his personal judgment was even slightly turned away from Allah's pleasure, it was immediately rectified by manifest revelation (wahi-jali). This rectification of some of his personal judgments is itself a proof that all the rest of his religious judgments and interpretations were precisely in accordance with divine will.

The third kind of the things were those he said concerning common matters of life as a man, which had nothing to do with the duties of Prophethood, which he said before being appointed a Prophet as well as continued saying even after having been appointed a Prophet. About this kind of the things it should be understood at the outset that there was no dispute with the disbelievers concerning them. They had not accused him of being a

misled and misguided person because of these but because of the first two kinds of the things. These things were not disputed and therefore could not become the cause of a verse from Allah. But although they were not the subject of any dispute, yet the fact is that in this private aspect of his life also never did the Prophet (peace be upon him) utter a word that was opposed to the truth, but at all times, under all conditions, his words and deeds remained within the bounds that Allah had prescribed for living his life as a Prophet (peace be upon him) and righteous man. Therefore, the light of revelation shone in that sphere as well. This same thing has been reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him) in some authentic Ahadith. In Musnad Ahmad a tradition has been related on the authority of Abu Hurairah, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) once said: I never say anything but what is true and right. A companion said: O Messenger of Allah, you say things sometimes in jest also. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Indeed, I never say anything but the truth. According to Musnad Ahmad and Abu Daud, Abdullah bin Amr bin Aas is reported to have said: I used to write down whatever I heard from the sacred tongue of the Prophet (peace be upon him) so as to preserve it. The people of the Quraish forbade me to do this, saying: You are writing down everything whereas the Prophet (peace be upon him) is a man: he sometimes says things in the state of anger too. At this I gave up writing. Afterwards when I mentioned this before the Prophet (peace be upon him), he said: You should continue writing: By Him in Whose hand is my life, never have I said anything but the truth. (For a complete discussion of this question, see my book Tafhimat vol. 1, Article: Prophethood and its Injunctions).

عَلَّمَهٗ شَدِيْدُ الْقُوٰى ۙ 5

(53:5) something that a very powerful one has imparted to him,[5]

5. That is, there is no human being who teaches him this, as you seem to think, but he obtains this knowledge through a supernatural source. According to some people, mighty in power implies Allah Himself, but a great majority of the commentators agree that it implies the Angel Gabriel. This same view has been reported from Abdullah bin Masud, Aishah, Abu Hurairah, Qatadah, Mujahid and Rabi bin Anas. Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir, Razi, Alusi and others also have adopted this very view. Shah Waliyullah and Ashraf Ali Thanwi also have followed this same view in their translations. And the fact is that from the other explanations of the Quran, this very thing is also confirmed. In Surah Takweer it has been said: This indeed is the word of a noble Messenger, who has great power and high rank with the Owner of the Throne: there he is obeyed and held as trustworthy. And (O people of Makkah), your companion is not mad. He has seen that Messenger on the bright horizon. (verses 19-23). Then, in (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 97), the Angel has been mentioned by name through whom this teaching had been revealed on the heart of the Prophet (peace be upon him): Say to them, whoever is enemy to Gabriel should understand that he has, by Allah's command, revealed to your heart the Quran. If these verses are read with this verse of Surah An-Najm, there remains no doubt that here mighty in power implies the Angel Gabriel and not Allah.

Here, some people express the doubt as to how the Angel Gabriel can be regarded as the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) teacher. For this would mean that he was the teacher and the Prophet (peace be upon him) his pupil, and this would place him above the

Prophet (peace be upon him) in rank. But this suspicion is misplaced, because Gabriel did not impart instruction to the Prophet (peace be upon him) from any personal knowledge of his own, which might give him superiority over the Prophet (peace be upon him). Allah, in fact, had made him a means of conveying knowledge to the Prophet (peace be upon him), and he was the Prophet's (peace be upon him) teacher in the metaphoric sense for being only a medium of instruction. That does not give him any superiority whatever. To quote an example: After the Prayer was prescribed five times a day, Allah sent Gabriel to teach the Prophet (peace be upon him) the correct times of the Prayers, and he led him in the Prayers five times daily for two days. This has been related in Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi and Muwatta and other collections of the Ahadith, with authentic chains of reporters, and in this the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself has explained that he was the follower and Gabriel his leader in the Prayers. But his being made the leader only for the purpose of instruction does not mean that he was superior to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in rank.

ذُوْ مِرَّةٍ ؕ فَاسْتَوٰى ۙ 6

(53:6) one endowed with immense wisdom.[6] He came forth and stood poised,

6. Ibn Abbas and Qatadah take dhu mirra-tin of the text in the meaning of beautiful and grand. Mujahid, Hasan Basri, Ibn Zaid and Sufyan Thauri say that it means: strong and powerful. Saeed bin Musayyab has expressed the opinion that it means wise. In a Hadith the Prophet (peace be upon him) has used this word in the sense of healthy and sound. In Arabic usage this word is used in the meaning of sound in judgment, wise and learned also. Allah has chosen this word for Gabriel here because he possesses both intellectual and physical powers to the highest degree.

وَهُوَ بِالْاُفُقِ الْاَعْلٰى ؕ 7

(53:7) being on the higher horizon.[7]

7. The horizon means the eastern edge of the sky where the sun rises and the day dawns. The same has been referred to as ufuq-mubin (bright horizon) in(Surah Takweer, Ayat 23). Both the verses make it explicit that when the Prophet (peace be upon him) saw Gabriel for the first time, he had appeared on the eastern horizon of the sky; and there are several authentic traditions which show that at that time he was in his real shape in which Allah has created him. We shall quote all such traditions below.

ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلّٰى ۙ 8

(53:8) Then he drew near and hung above suspended,

فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ اَوْ اَدْنٰى ۚ 9

(53:9) until he was two bows' length away, or nearer.[8]

8. That is, After appearing on the uppermost edge of the sky, Gabriel started advancing towards the Prophet (peace be upon him) till he reached and hung suspended about him in mid air. Then he bent down to him and came within just two bow-lengths or even closer. The commentators generally have taken qaba-qausain in the meaning of two bow-lengths, but Abdullah bin Abbas and Abdullah bin Masud have taken qaus in the meaning of a dhira (an armlength, cubit), and have interpreted the words kama qaba qausain, saying that the distance between them was reduced to only two arm-lengths. And since all bows are not equal in length, the approximate distance has been expressed by two bow-lengths away or even closer.

فَاَوۡحٰۤى اِلٰى عَبۡدِهٖ مَاۤ اَوۡحٰى ؕ 10

(53:10) Then he revealed to Allah's servant whatever he had to reveal.[9]

9. The sentence faauha ila abdihi ma auha of the text can have two translations:

(1) He (Gabriel) revealed to His (Allah's) servant whatever he revealed.

(2) He (Allah) revealed to His own servant whatever He revealed.

According to the first translation, the meaning would be: Gabriel revealed to the servant of Allah whatever he had to reveal; according to the second: Allah revealed through Gabriel to His servant whatever He had to reveal. The commentators have given both these meanings; the first meaning, however, fits in better with the context, and the same has been reported from Hasan Basri and lbn Zaid. Here, the question may be asked: How can the pronoun of abd-i-hi turn to Allah instead of to the subject of auha, whereas Allah has nowhere been mentioned from the beginning of the Surah to this place? The answer is that wherever it becomes apparent from the context that the antecedent of a pronoun refers to a particular person, the pronoun turns to him automatically whether it has been mentioned before or not. There are several instances of this available in the Quran itself. In Surah Al-Qadr, Ayat 1, Allah says: We have sent it down in the night of glory. There is no mention of the Quran in this sentence, but the context explicitly shows that the antecedent of the pronoun is the Quran. At another place Allah says: If Allah were to seize the people because of their misdeeds, He would not leave any creature (unpunished) on its back. In this sentence there is no mention of the earth anywhere, but the context clearly shows that its back implies the earth's back. In (Surah YaSeen, Ayat 69), it has been said: We have not taught him poetry, nor does poetry behoove him. Here, there is no mention of the Prophet (peace be upon him), neither before this sentence nor after it, yet the context is explicit that the antecedent of the pronouns is the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself. In (Surah Ar-Rahman, Ayat 26), it has been said: Whatever exists on it shall perish. There is no mention of the earth either before or after it, but the style clearly shows that the pronoun of alaiha turns to it. In Surah (Al-Waqiah, Ayat 35), it has been said: We shall have created them especially. There is no noun or pronoun before or after it to which the pronoun of hunna may be referring. It is apparent from the context that it signifies the women of Paradise. Thus, as auha ila abdi hi cannot at all mean that Gabriel revealed to his servant, the meaning necessarily would be that Gabriel revealed to the servant of Allah, or that Allah revealed to His own servant through Gabriel.

مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأٰى 11

(53:11) His heart added no untruth to what he saw.[10]

10. That is, as the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) observed all this in broad daylight in the waking condition, with open eyes, his heart did not deem it was a delusion, or that it was a jinn or a devil, who had appeared before him, or that it was an imaginary figure, or a vision that he was seeing while awake. His heart fully confirmed what his eyes saw that it was the Angel Gabriel and the message he was conveying was indeed God's revelation to him.

Here, the question arises: How is it that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not entertain any doubt at all concerning such a wonderful and extraordinary observation, and he confirmed with full faith that whatever his eyes saw was a real face and not an imaginary figure, nor a jinn nor devil? When we consider this question deeply we are led to five reasons for it:

First, that the external conditions in which this observation was made, testified to its truth and validity. The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not observe this in darkness, or in a state of meditation, or in a vision, or in a sleep-like condition, but the day had dawned and he was fully awake, and he was seeing the whole scene in the broad daylight in the open with his own eyes precisely in the way as one sees the other things in the world. If doubt is cast on this, then whatever we see in the day time, e.g. rivers, mountains, men, houses, etc., also would become doubtful and illusory.

Second, that the Prophet's (peace be upon him) own internal condition also testified to its validity. He was in his full senses. He had no idea whatever in his mind that he should observe, or that he was going to observe such a thing. His mind was absolutely free from such a thought and any longing for it, and in this state he met with this experience suddenly. There was no room for doubting that the eyes were seeing an actual scene, but that an imaginary thing had appeared before his eyes.

Third, that the being who had appeared before him in that condition was so marvelous and magnificent, so beautiful and bright, that neither had he ever had any concept of such a being before that he could take it for a product of his own imagination, nor could a jinn or a devil have such an appearance that he would have taken him for a being other than an angel. Abdullah bin Masud has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: I saw Gabriel in the shape that he had six hundred wings. (Musnad Ahmad). In another tradition, Ibn Masud has further explained that each single wing of Gabriel was so extensive that it seemed to be covering the whole horizon. (Musnad Ahmad). Allah Himself has described him as shadid al-quwa (one mighty in power) and dhu-mirra (one endowed with great wisdom).

Fourth, that the teaching that the being was imparting also testified to the validity of the observation. The Prophet (peace be upon him) had no concept of the knowledge that he received suddenly through him, a knowledge that comprehended the realities and truths of the whole universe. About it he could not have the doubt that it consisted of his own ideas

which were being set and arranged by his own mind. Likewise, there was no ground for thinking either that it was Satan who was imparting that knowledge to him and thus deluding him, for it is not for Satan that he should teach, nor can he ever teach, the doctrine of Tauhid to man as against polytheism and idolworship, that he should warn of the accountability of the Hereafter, that he should create contempt against ignorance and its practices, that he should invite people to moral excellences, and should exhort a person not only to accept that teaching himself but should also rise to eradicate polytheism, injustice, wickedness and sin from the world and replace these evils by the virtues of Tauhid, justice, equity and piety.

The fifth and by far the most important reason is that when Allah chooses a certain person for His Prophethood, He cleanses his heart of doubts and suspicions and evil suggestions and fills it with faith and conviction. In that state no hesitation or vacillation is caused in his mind about the validity of whatever his eyes see and his ears hear. He accepts with complete satisfaction of the heart every truth that is revealed to him by his Lord, whether it is in the form of an observation that he is made to witness with the eyes, or in the form of knowledge which he is inspired with, or in the form of a revelation that is recited to him literally. In all these cases the Prophet is fully aware that he is absolutely safe and secure against Satanic interference of every kind, and whatever he is receiving in any form is precisely and definitely from his Lord. Like all God-given feelings this sense and feeling of the Prophet also is a certainty which does not admit of any misunderstanding. Just as the fish has a God-given sense of being a swimmer, the bird of being a bird, and the man of being a man, and there can be no likelihood of any misunderstanding in this regard, so has the Prophet also a God given sense of his being a Prophet. He does not even for a moment entertain the doubt that he has perhaps been involved in the misunderstanding of being a Prophet.

أَفَتُمٰرُوْنَهٗ عَلٰى مَا يَرٰى 12

(53:12) Are you, then, going to contend with him regarding what he sees with his eyes?

وَلَقَدْ رَاٰهُ نَزْلَةً اُخْرٰى ۙ 13

(53:13) Indeed he saw him a second time,

عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهٰى 14

(53:14) by the lote-tree at the farthest boundary,

عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَاْوٰى ؕ 15

(53:15) near which is the Garden of Abode.[11]

11. This is about the Holy Prophet's second meeting with Gabriel in which he appeared before him in his real shape and nature. The place where this meeting took place has been described as Sidrat-al-muntaha, along with which it has been said that nearby it is located Jannat-al-mava (Garden of Repose).

Sidrah in Arabic means the lote-tree and muntaha the extreme edge or limit. Thus, literally, sidrat-al-muntaha means the lote-tree that is situated on the extreme edge or limit. Allama Alusi in his Ruh al-Maani has explained it thus: At this the knowledge of every learned man comes to an end; whatever is beyond it is known to none but Allah. Almost the same explanation of it has been given by Ibn Jarir in his commentary, and by Ibn kathir in An-Nihayah fi Gharib alHadith wal-Athar. It is difficult for us to know what kind of a lote-tree it is that is situated at the farthest end of this physical world and what is its nature and state. These are the mysteries of the divine universe which are incomprehensible for us. In any case, it is some such thing for which there was no more appropriate word than sidrah in human language, in the sight of Allah.

Jannat al-mava literally means the Jannat (Garden) that is to be an abode. Hasan Basri says that this is the same Jannat which the believers and righteous will be given in the Hereafter, and from this same verse he has argued that that Jannat is in the heavens. Qatadah says that this is the Jannat in which the souls of the martyrs are kept, it does not imply the Jannat that is to be given in the Hereafter. Ibn Abbas also says the same but adds that the Jannat to be granted to the believers in the Hereafter is not in the heavens but here on the earth.

إِذْ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشَىٰ 16

(53:16) (This was) when the lote-tree was covered with that which covered it. 12

12. That is, its splendor and glory exceeds all description. The divine glory and effulgence was such as can neither be conceived by man nor can any human language depict it adequately.

مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَىٰ 17

(53:17) His eye did not waver, nor did it stray,13

13. That is, on the one hand, the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah was so firm and steadfast that even in the presence of the great divine splendor and glory his sight was not dazzled and he went on gazing at it with great composure. On the other hand, he was in such complete control of himself and so exclusively attentive that he kept his mind and his sight focused upon the object for which he had been summoned, and he did not let his sight wander to any side like a spectator's to have a glimpse of the wonderful objects present there. This can be understood by the example of a person who gets an opportunity to be present in the court of a mighty and powerful king, where he comes across such glory and splendor that had never even been conceived by him before. Now, if he be a shallow person, he would be struck with amazement, and if he be un-initiated in the court etiquette, he would become heedless of the royal presence and would turn his gaze to every side to look

at the embellishments of the court. But a noble, reverent and dutiful person will neither be stupefied and confounded, nor will become lost in witnessing the court, but will present himself with full dignity and will keep his mind concentrated on the object for which he had been summoned in the royal court. This very virtue and quality of the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been esteemed in this verse.

لَقَدْ رَاٰى مِنْ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرٰى 18

(53:18) and he certainly saw some of the greatest Signs of His Lord.[14]

14. This verse clearly states that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had not seen Allah but His wonderful sings. Even according to the context, this second meeting also took place with the same being with whom the first meeting had taken place. Therefore, one will have to admit that neither the one whom he had first seen on the uppermost horizon was Allah nor he whom he saw afterwards by the farthest lote-tree was Allah. Had he seen Allah Almighty on either occasion it would have been a great thing and must certainly have been mentioned here explicitly. About the Prophet Moses it has been said in the Quran that he had besought to see Allah And the reply given was: Lan tarani You cannot sec Me. (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 143). Now, obviously this honor was not granted to the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). Had it been granted to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), it would by itself have been such an important thing which must have been stated in clear words. But we see that nowhere in the Quran has it been said that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had seen his Sustainer and Lord. But in Surah Bani-Israil also, where mention has been made of the event of Miraj (Ascension), it has been said that: We had transported Our servant...so that We may show him some of Our signs, (linuriya- hu min ayat-ina), and here also in connection with his visit at sidrat al-muntaha, it has been said: He saw of the greatest signs of His Lord (laqad ra a min ayat-i Rabb-i-hil kubra).

In view of these reasons apparently there was no ground for the dispute whether the Prophet (peace be upon him) on both these occasions had seen Allah Almighty or the Angel Gabriel. But, the reason that has given rise to this dispute is that the traditions of Hadith differ on this question. Below we reproduce in their sequence the Ahadith that have been reported from the different companions in this regard:

(1) Traditions of Aishah:

Masruq, as stated in Kitab at-Tafsir of Bukhari, asked Aishah: O mother of the faithful. Had Muhammad (peace be upon him) seen his Lord and Sustainer? She replied: Your question has terrified me. Why do you forget that if a person lays claim to three of the things, he would lay a false claim? (The first of these things that Aishah mentioned was): Whoever among you says that Muhammad (peace be upon him) had seen his Lord and Sustainer, tells a lie. Then Aishah recited these verses: La tudriku-hul-absar: Eyes cannot comprehend Him; and: Makanali-bashar-in anyyukallima-hullah-u ills wahy-an au min-wara-i-hijab-in au yursila rasul an fayu-hia bi-idhni hi ma yasha-u: It is not given to any mortal that Allah should speak to him, face to face; He, speaks either through revelation (secret instruction), or from behind a curtain, or He sends a messenger (an angel), who by Allah's command,

reveals whatever He wills. (Surah Ash-Shura, Ayat 51). Then she said: The Prophet (peace be upon him) in fact had seen Gabriel in his real shape twice.

A part of this Hadith is also found in Bukhari (chapter 4 of Kitab atTauhid) And in the tradition that Bukhari has cited from Masruq in Kitab Bida aI-Khalq, he states: Hearing this thing from Aishah, I asked: What would then Allah's words, Thumma dana fa-tadalla, fa-Kana qaba qausain-i au adha: mean? She replied: This refers to Gabriel; he always appeared before the Prophet (peace be upon him) in human shape, but on this occasion he had appeared before him in his real shape and nature and the whole horizon was filled with him.

In Muslim (Kitab al-Iman, Babu fi Dhikr Sidrat almuntaha) this conversation between Aishah and Masruq has been related in greater detail, its most important part being this: Aishah said: The one who claims that Muhammad (peace be upon him) had seen his Lord and Sustainer imputes a lie to Allah. Masruq says: I was leaning back. Hearing this I sat up and said: Mother of the faithful, do not make haste: Has not Allah said: wa laqad raa-hu biufuq- i mubin? and laqad raa-hu nazlat-an ukhra. Aishah replied: I was the first one in this ummah who inquired of the Prophet (peace be upon him) about this. He had replied: It was Gabriel. I have never seen him in his real shape and form in which Allah has created him except on these two occasions. On these two occasions I saw him descending from the heavens and his great presence was covering the whole space between the earth and the heavens.

Ibn Marduyah has related this tradition of Masruq, thus: Aishah said: I was indeed the first person who asked the Prophet (peace be upon him): Did you ever see your Lord and Sustainer? He replied: No, I had only seen Gabriel descending from the heavens.

(2) Traditions of Abdullah bin Masud: Bukhari (Kitab at-Tafsir), Muslim (Kitab al Iman) and Tirmidhi (Abwab at-Tafsir) contain a tradition on the authority of Zirr bin Hubaish, saying that Abdullah bin Masud gave this commentary of fa-kana qaba qausain-i au adha: The Prophet (peace be upon him) saw Gabriel in the shape that he had six hundred wings.

In the other traditions of Muslim, Zirr bin Hubaish has reported this very commentary of Ma kadhab al-fu adu ma raa and laqad ra a min ayat-i Rabbi-hil kubra from Abdullah bin Masud.

In Musnad Ahmad this commentary of Ibn Masud has been reported by Abdur Rahman bin Yazid and Abu Wail also besides Zirr bin Hubaish. Furthermore, in Musnad Ahmad two more traditions of Zirr bin Hubaish have been related in which Abdullah bin Masud commenting upon wa laqad raa-hu nazlat-an ukhra, inda-sidrat-ilmuntaha stated: The Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah said that he saw Gabriel by the lote-tree, he had six hundred wings. Imam Ahmad has also cited a tradition on the same subject, on the authority of Shaqiq bin Salamah, in which he states that he heard Abdullah bin Masud saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself had said that he had seen Gabriel in that shape at sidrat al-muntaha.

(3) When Ata bin Abi Rabah asked Abu Hurairah the meaning of the verse laqad raa-hu nazlat-an ukhra, he replied: The Prophet (peace be upon him) had seen Gabriel. (Muslim: Kitab al lman).

(4) Imam Muslim has related in kitab al-Iman two traditions of Abdullah bin Shaqiq on the authority of Abu Dharr Ghifari, in one of which he says that he asked the Prophet (peace be upon him): Did you ever see your Lord? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Nur-un anna ara-hu; and in the other he says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave this answer to his question: Raaitu nur-an. Of the first answer of the Prophet (peace be upon him), Ibn al-Qayyim has given this meaning in his Zadal-Maad: Between me and the sight of my Lord there was Light, and of the second this: I did not see my Lord but only a Light.

Nasai and Ibn Abi Hatim have reported the saying of Abu Dharr, thus: The Prophet (peace be upon him) had seen his Lord with the heart (mind), not with the eyes.

(5) Imam Muslim in his Kitab al-Iman has related this tradition from Abu Musa al-Ashari: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The sight of no one from among His creatures has reached Allah Almighty.

(6) Traditions of Abdullah bin Abbas:

According to Muslim, when Abdullah bin Abbas was asked the meaning of: Ma kadhab al-fu adu ma ara, wa laqad raa hu nazlat-an ukhra, he said: The Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah saw his Lord twice with his heart. This tradition is also contained in Musnad Ahmad.

Ibn Marduyah has cited this saying of Ibn Abbas, on the authority of Ata bin Abi Rabah: The Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah had not seen Allah with the eyes but with the heart.

Nasai contains a tradition from Ikrimah saying that Ibn Abbas said: Do you wonder at this that Allah made the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) His friend, blessed Moses (peace be upon him) with His Word and honored Muhammad (peace be upon him) with His sight? Hakim also has cited this tradition and held it as authentic.

In Tirmidhi, there is a tradition from Shabi to the effect that Ibn Abbas said in a gathering: Allah had distributed His sight and His Word between Muhammad (peace be upon him) and Moses (peace be upon him). He spoke to Moses twice, and Muhammad saw Him twice. Hearing these very words of lbn Abbas, Masruq had approached Aishah with the question: Had Muhammad (peace be upon him) seen his Lord? She had replied: What you have said has made my hair stand on end. After this the same dialogue that we have cited above under the tradition of Aishah took place between Aishah and Masruq.

In one of the traditions reported in Tirmidhi from lbn Abbas, he says: The Prophet had seen Allah Almighty. In yet another he says: He had seen Him twice, and in a third one: He had seen Him with the heart.

In Musnad Ahmad, a tradition from Ibn Abbas is to the effect: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: I saw my Lord, the blessed, the exalted. In another tradition he says: The Messenger of Allah said: Tonight my Lord came to me in the best shape. I think that by this the Prophet (peace be upon him) meant that he saw Allah Almighty in a vision.

Tabarani and Ibn Marduyah have related this tradition also from Ibn Abbas: The Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah had seen his Lord twice, once with the eyes and the second time with the heart.

(7) Muhammad bin Kab al-Qurzi states that when some of the companions asked the Prophet (peace be upon him): Did you ever see your Lord? He replied: I have seen Him twice with my heart. (Ibn Abi Hatim). Ibn Jarir has related this very tradition, thus: He said: I have not seen Him with the eye, but with the heart twice.

(8) A tradition of Anas bin Malik which Imam Bukhari has cited in his Kitab at-Tauhid in connection with the event of the Miraj, on the authority of Sharik bin Abdullah, contains words to the effect: When the Prophet (peace be upon him) reached sidrat al-muntaha, Allah Almighty drew near him and hung suspended above him till there remained between the Prophet (peace be upon him) and Him a distance equal to two bow-lengths or even less. Then, what Allah revealed to him included the command for 50 Prayers. But, besides the objections that Imam Khattabi, Hafiz lbn Hajar, Ibn Hazm and Hafiz Abdul Haq (author of Al-Jam bain al-Sahihain) have raised in respect of the authenticity and subject-matter of this tradition, the main objection against it is that it clearly contradicts the Quran, for the Quran mentions two separate occasions when the experience of the vision took place, the first initially at the uppermost horizon to which reference has been made in: Dane fa-tadalla, fa-kana qaba qausain-i au adna, and a second time near sidrat al muntaha. But this tradition mixes up the two occasions and presents them both as one occasion of the vision. Therefore, because of its being contradictory to the Quran, it cannot be acceptable in any case.

As for the other traditions that we have cited above, the weightiest among them are those that have been related from Abdullah bin Masud and Aishah, for both of them have unanimously reported this saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself that on neither occasion he had seen Allah but Gabriel, and these traditions fully conform to the explanations and allusions of the Quran. Furthermore, they are also confirmed by the sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him) which Abu Dharr and Hadrat Abu Musa al-Ashari have reported from him. On the contrary the traditions that have been cited from Abdullah bin Abbas in the books of Hadith are self-contradictory. In some he regards both the experiences as a vision with the eyes, in some both as a vision with the heart, in some one with the eyes and the other with the heart, and in some he wholly negates the vision with the eyes. In none of these traditions he has cited any saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself and where he has cited such a saying, it contains no mention of either of the two experiences stated in the Quran; besides, the explanation of one of his traditions given by the other indicates that the Prophet at some time had seen Allah Almighty not in the waking condition but in a vision during sleep. Therefore, in fact, for the commentary of these verses the traditions ascribed to Abdullah bin Abbas cannot be held as reliable. Likewise, although the traditions of Muhammad bin Kaab al-Qurzi cite a saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him), they do not mention the names of the companions who might have heard this thing from the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself. Moreover, in one of them it has been said that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had clearly denied having seen Allah with the eyes.

أَفَرَءَيْتُمُ اللَّٰتَ وَالْعُزَّىٰ ١٩

(53:19) Have you ever thought about al-Lat and al-Uzza,[15]

15. That is, you regard the teachings being given to you by Muhammad (peace be upon him) as erroneous and falsehood, whereas he is being given this knowledge by Allah, and Allah has made him see with his own eyes the verities to which he is testifying before you. Now consider it for yourself as to how irrational are the beliefs that you are following persistently and as to whom you are causing loss by opposing and resisting the person who is guiding you to the right way. In this connection, especially the three goddesses that were worshiped generally by the people of Makkah, Taif and other parts of Hejaz have been taken as an example. About them, they have been asked: Have you ever considered rationally whether they could have even the slightest role in the affairs of the Godhead of the earth and heavens? Or could they bear any relationship whatever with the Lord of the Universe?

The shrine of Lat was in Taif and the Bani Thaqif were so devoted to it that when Abraha was advancing to Makkah with his army of elephants to destroy the Kabah, the people only in order to save the temple of their deity had provided the wicked man with guides to lead him to Makkah so that he should spare Lat, whereas like all the Arabs the people of Thaqif also believed that the Kabah is Allah's House. Scholars have disputed the meaning of Lat. According to Ibn Jarir Tabari, it is the feminine gender of Allah, i.e. originally this word was allahatun which became al-Lat. According to Zamakhshari, it is derived from hva yalvi, which means to turn to or bow to somebody. As the polytheists turned to it for worship and bowed to it and circumambulated it, it began to be called Lat. Ibn Abbas reads it as Latt (with a stress on t) and holds it is derived from latt yalittu, which means to churn and mix together. He and Mujahid state that this, in fact, was a man, who lived on a rock near Taif, and used to entertain the pilgrims to Makkah with barley drinks and food. When he died the people built a shrine to him on the same rock and began to worship him. But this explanation of Lat, in spite of having been reported on the authority of scholars like Ibn Abbas and Mujahid, is not acceptable for two reasons. First, that in the Quran it has been called Lat and not Latt; second, that the Quran describes all the three as goddesses, and according to this tradition Lat was a man, not a woman.

Uzza is derived from izzat, and it means the one (female) enjoying veneration and respect. This was the special goddess of the Quraish and her shrine was situated at Hurad in the valley of Nakhlah, between Makkah and Taif. The people of Bani Shaiban, who were the allies of the Bani Hashim, were its attendants. The Quraish and the people of other tribes paid visits to it and presented offerings and made sacrifices to it. As for the Kabah, sacrificial animals were driven to it also and it was held in the highest esteem. Ibn Hisham relates that when Abu Uhaihah was on the point of death, Abu Lahab paid him a visit and found him weeping. Abu Lahab asked, Why do you weep, Abu Uhaihah? Are you afraid of death? And death is the destiny of everybody. He said: By God, I do not weep because of the fear of death, but I am grieved to think as to how Uzza will be worshipped after me. Abu Lahab said: It was neither worshipped for your sake in your lifetime, nor will it be given up after you have left the world. Abu Uhaihah said: Now I am satisfied that there are people who will take my place after me.

The shrine of Manat was situated at Qudaid by the Red Sea between Makkah and Madinah, and the people of Khuzaah and Aus and Khazraj were in particular its great devotees. People visited it as pilgrims, circumambulated it and made offerings and sacrifices before it. In the Hajj months as soon as the pilgrims became free from their visit to the Kabah and the religious services at Mina and Arafat, they would start raising cries of labbaik, labbaik even there for the purpose of visiting Manat, and the people who intended to go on this second hajj did not run between the Safa and the Marwah.

وَمَنٰوةَ الثَّالِثَةَ الْاُخْرٰى 20

(53:20) and about the third deity, al-Manat?

اَلَكُمُ الذَّكَرُ وَلَهُ الْاُنْثٰى 21

(53:21) Shall you have the male issues, and He the female issues?[16]

16. That is, you held these goddesses as daughters of Allah, Lord of the worlds, and did not consider while inventing this absurd creed that as for yourselves you regarded the birth of a daughter as disgraceful, and desired to have only male children, but as for Allah you assign to Him only daughters.

تِلْكَ اِذًا قِسْمَةٌ ضِيْزٰى 22

(53:22) That is indeed an unfair division!

اِنْ هِيَ اِلَّآ اَسْمَآءٌ سَمَّيْتُمُوْهَآ اَنْتُمْ وَاٰبَآؤُكُمْ مَّآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطٰنٍ ؕ اِنْ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ
اِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْاَنْفُسُ ۚ وَلَقَدْ جَآءَهُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمُ الْهُدٰى ؕ 23

(53:23) These are nothing but names that you and your forefathers have invented, for which Allah has sent down no authority.[17] They are merely following their conjectures and their carnal desires[18] although guidance has come to them from their Lord.[19]

17. That is, those whom you call gods and goddesses are neither gods nor goddesses, nor do they possess any attribute of divinity, nor any share whatever in the powers of Godhead. You have of your own whim made them children of God and deities and associates in Godhead. Allah has sent down no authority which you may produce as a proof in support of your presumptions.

18. In other words, the basic causes of their deviation are two: First, that they do not feel any need for the knowledge of reality for the purpose of adopting a creed and religion, but make a supposition on the basis of a mere conjecture and then put belief in it as though it were the reality, Second, that they have, in fact, adopted this attitude in order to follow the desires of

their souls: they desire that they should have such a deity as should help them attain their aims and objects in the world, and if at all there is to be a Hereafter, it should take the responsibility to have them granted forgiveness there too, But it should not impose any restriction of the lawful and the unlawful on them nor should bind them in any discipline of morality. That is why they do not feel inclined to worship One God as taught by the Prophets, and only like to worship these invented gods and goddesses.

19. That is, in every age the Prophets appointed by Allah have been guiding these wicked people to the truth, and now Muhammad (peace be upon him) has come to tell them as to whom belongs Godhead in reality in the universe.

أَمْ لِلْإِنسَانِ مَا تَمَنَّىٰ ۖ ﷺ 24

(53:24) Does man imagine that whatever he wishes for is right for him?20

20. Another meaning of this verse can be: Is man entitled to take anyone he pleases as his god? Still another meaning can be: Can the desire of man to have his prayers answered by these gods ever be fulfilled?

فَلِلَّهِ الْآخِرَةُ وَالْأُولَىٰ ع 25

(53:25) To Allah belong both the Next World and the present.

وَكَم مِّن مَّلَكٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ لَا تُغْنِي شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْئًا إِلَّا مِن بَعْدِ أَن يَأْذَنَ اللَّهُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَرْضَىٰ 26

(53:26) Numerous are the angels in the heavens; yet their intercession shall be of no avail, except in regard to those whom He grants the leave of intercession and whose plea He is pleased to accept.21

21. That is, even if all the angels together intercede for a person, it cannot be beneficial for him not to speak of the intercession by these invented deities of yours, which can do no one any good. All the powers of Godhead rest with Allah. Even the angels cannot dare intercede for somebody before Him unless He permits it and is pleased to hear their intercession in his behalf.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ لَيُسَمُّونَ الْمَلَائِكَةَ تَسْمِيَةَ الْأُنثَىٰ 27

(53:27) Those who do not believe in the Hereafter give angels the names of females,22

22. That is, their first folly is that they have taken these powerless angels who cannot even intercede for anyone before Allah as their deities. Their second folly is that they regard them

as female and daughters of Allah. The basic reason for these errors is that they do not believe in the Hereafter. For, had they been believers in the Hereafter, they would never have behaved so irrationally and irresponsibly. Their denial of the Hereafter has made them heedless of their end, and they think that believing or disbelieving in God, or believing in a thousand gods, does not make any difference, for none of these creeds seems to entail any good or bad result in the present life of the world. Whether the people are deniers of God, or believers in many gods, or in One God, their crops ripen as well as fail, they fall ill as well as recover from illness, and they pass through all kinds of circumstances, good as well as bad. Therefore it is not at all an important and serious matter for them that man should or should not take some one as a deity, or should take as many deities or of any kind as he likes of his choice. When according to them the decision as to what is truth and what is falsehood is to take place in this very world, depending on the results thereof appearing here, obviously the results here do not decide absolutely that one creed is true and another false. Therefore, the adoption of one creed and rejection of another is a matter of mere whim with these people.

وَمَا لَهُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ عِلْمٍ ؕ اِنْ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ ۚ وَاِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِىْ مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْـًٔا ۚ 28

(53:28) although they have no knowledge regarding that. They only follow their conjecture[23] and conjecture can never take the place of the Truth.

23. That is, they have not adopted this creed about the angels on the ground that they had found through some means of knowledge that they were females and daughters of God, but they have presumed this on mere conjecture and have set up these shrines at which they pray for fulfillment of desires, make offerings and pay tributes.

فَاَعْرِضْ عَنْ مَّنْ تَوَلّٰى ۙ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَلَمْ يُرِدْ اِلَّا الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا ؕ 29

(53:29) So leave alone those who turn away from the remembrance of Us[24] and who seek nothing but the life of the world[25] –

24. Dhikr here may imply the Quran as well as mere admonition; it may also mean that he does not like that even God be mentioned before him.

25. That is, you should not waste your time in making him understand the truth, for such a person will never be inclined to accept any invitation which is based on Godworship, which calls to objects and values higher than the material benefits of the world, and according to which the real aim of life may be the eternal success and well-being of the Hereafter. Instead of spending your time and energy on such a materialistic and ungodly person, you should devote attention to the people who are inclined to heed the remembrance of Allah and are not involved in the worship of the world.

ذٰلِكَ مَبۡلَغُهُمۡ مِّنَ الۡعِلۡمِ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَنۡ ضَلَّ عَنۡ سَبِيۡلِهٖ ۙ وَهُوَ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَنِ
اهۡتَدٰى 30

(53:30) that[26] being the utmost of their knowledge.[27] Surely your Lord fully knows those who have strayed away from His Path and He also fully knows those who are rightly guided.

26. This is a parenthetical sentence which has been inserted here as an explanation of the preceding verse.

27. That is, these people neither know nor can think anything beyond the world and its immediate gains; therefore, it is futile merely to spend time and energy on them.

وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ ۙ لِيَجۡزِىَ الَّذِيۡنَ اَسَآءُوۡا بِمَا عَمِلُوۡا وَيَجۡزِىَ الَّذِيۡنَ
اَحۡسَنُوۡا بِالۡحُسۡنٰى ۚ 31

(53:31) To Allah alone belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth.[28] He will[29] requite the evil-doers for their deeds and bestow a goodly reward on those who have done good,

28. In other words, neither the question whether a person is gone astray or is on right guidance, is to be decided in this world, nor has its decision been left to the judgment of the people of the world; the decision rests with Allah. He alone is the Master of the earth and heavens and He alone knows which way, out of the different ways being followed by the people of the world, is the way of guidance and which of error and deviation. Therefore, you should least bother if the polytheistic Arabs and the Makkan disbelievers think you are deluded and misguided and regard their own ignorance as truth and guidance. Leave them alone if they wish to remain lost in their falsehood. You need not waste your time in disputing with them.

29. The theme is resumed here and connected as a continuous whole with verse 29. Without the parenthesis, it would read: Leave him alone so that Allah may requite the evildoers for their evil deeds.

اَلَّذِيۡنَ يَجۡتَنِبُوۡنَ كَبٰٓئِرَ الۡاِثۡمِ وَالۡفَوَاحِشَ اِلَّا اللَّمَمَ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ وَاسِعُ الۡمَغۡفِرَةِ ؕ هُوَ اَعۡلَمُ
بِكُمۡ اِذۡ اَنۡشَاَكُمۡ مِّنَ الۡاَرۡضِ وَاِذۡ اَنۡتُمۡ اَجِنَّةٌ فِىۡ بُطُوۡنِ اُمَّهٰتِكُمۡ ۚ فَلَا تُزَكُّوۡۤا
اَنۡفُسَكُمۡ ؕ هُوَ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقٰى ع 32

(53:32) on those who avoid grave sins[30] and shameful deeds,[31] even if they may sometimes stumble into lesser offences.[32] Surely your Lord is abounding in His Forgiveness.[33] Very well is He aware of you since He produced you from the earth, and while you were still in your mothers' wombs and not yet born. So do not boastfully claim yourselves to be purified. He fully knows those that are truly Godfearing.

30. For explanation, see(E.N. 53 of Surah An-Nisa).

31. For explanation, see (E.N. 130 of Surah Al-Anaam) and (E.N. 89 of Surah An-Nahl).

32. The word lamam as found in the original is used for a small quantity of something, or its slight effect, or its mere closeness, or its existence for a short time. This word is used to express the sense that a person did not commit an act but was very near to committing it.

On the basis of its usages some commentators have taken the word lamam in the meaning of minor sins. Some others have taken it in the meaning that a person should practically reach very near a grave sin but should desist from actually committing it. Still others take it in the sense of a person's remaining involved in a sin temporarily and then desisting from it. And according to some it implies that a person should think of, or wish, or intend to commit a sin but should rake no practical steps towards it. In this regard, the views of the companions and their immediate followers are as follows:

Zaid bin Aslam and Ibn Zaid opine, and a saying of Abdullah bin Abbas is also to the same effect, that it signifies those sins which the people had committed in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance, then after embracing Islam they refrained from them.

Another view of Ibn Abbas is, and the same is also the view of Abu Hurairah, Abdullah bin Amr bin Aas, Mujahid, Hasan Basri and Abu Salih, that it implies a person's being involved in a grave sin or indecency temporarily, or occasionally, and then giving it up.

Abdullah bin Masud, Masruq and Shabi say, and the same has also been reported from Abu Hurairah and Abdullah bin Abbas in authentic traditions, that this implies a person's approaching the very point of a grave sin and crossing all its preliminaries but then restraining himself at the final stage, e.g. a person goes out with the intention of stealing but refrains from it in the end, or has close association with other women, but refrains from committing adultery.

Abdullah bin Zubair, Ikrimah, Qatadah and Dahhak say that this signifies those minor sins for which no punishment has been prescribed in the world nor any threat of punishment held out in the Hereafter.

Saeed bin al-Musayyab says that this implies one's thinking of a sin in the mind but restraining himself from committing it practically.

These are the different explanations which have been reported in the traditions from the companions and their immediate followers. The majority of the later commentators and doctors of law and jurists are of the opinion that this verse and verse 31 of Surah An-Nisa classify sins into two main kinds: the major sins and the minor sins, and these two verses give man the hope that if he abstains from the major sins and open indecencies, Allah will overlook his minor errors. Although some distinguished scholars have also opined that no sin is minor and the disobedience of Allah is by itself a major sin, yet as stated by Imam Ghazali the distinction between the major and the minor sins is something which cannot be denied, for the sources of knowledge of the Shariah values and injunctions all point to this.

As for the question, what is the distinction between the major and the minor sins, and what kinds of sins are major and what kinds of them minor? we are satisfied that: Every such act is a major sin which has been forbidden by a clear ordinance of the divine Book and the Shariah of the Prophet (peace be upon him), or for which Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) have prescribed a punishment in the world, or have held out a threat of punishment in the Hereafter, or have cursed the one guilty of committing it, or given the news of infliction of punishment on those guilty of committing it. Apart from this class of sins all other acts which are disapproved by the Shariah, come under the definition of minor sins. Likewise, the mere desire for a major sin, or an intention to commit it, is also not a major sin but a minor sin; so much so that even crossing all the preliminaries of a major sin does not constitute a major sin unless one has actually committed it. However, even a minor sin becomes a major sin in case it is committed with a feeling of contempt for religion and of arrogance against Allah, and the one guilty of it does not consider the Shariah that has declared it an evil worthy of any attention and reverence.

33. That is, the forgiveness for the one guilty of minor sins is not for the reason that a minor sin is no sin, but for the reason that Allah Almighty does not treat His servants narrow-mindedly and does not seize them on trifling faults; if the servants adopt piety and abstain from major sins and indecencies, He will not seize them for their minor errors and will forgive them magnanimously on account of His infinite mercy.

أَفَرَءَيْتَ الَّذِى تَوَلَّىٰ ۙ 33

(53:33) (O Prophet), did you see him who turned away (from the Path of Allah),

وَأَعْطَىٰ قَلِيلًا وَأَكْدَىٰٓ 34

(53:34) who gave a little, and then stopped?[34]

34. The reference is to Walid bin Mughirah who was one of the prominent chiefs of the Quraish. According to Ibn Jarir Tabari, this person had first become inclined to accept the invitation of the Prophet (peace be upon him), but when a polytheist friend of his came to know of his intention to become a Muslim, he counseled him not to give up his ancestral faith, and asked him that if he was afraid of the punishment of the Hereafter, he should pay him a certain amount of money and he would take the responsibility to suffer the punishment on his behalf. Walid accepted the offer and turned away from Allah's way. Then he paid only a little of the amount that he had promised to his polytheist friend and withheld the rest, The allusion to this incident was meant to toll the disbelievers of Makkah what kind of errors and follies they were involved in because of their heedlessness of the Hereafter and their ignorance of the divine religion.

أَعِندَهُۥ عِلۡمُ ٱلۡغَيۡبِ فَهُوَ يَرَىٰٓ 35

(53:35) Does he have any knowledge of the world beyond the ken of sense-perception, and therefore, clearly sees (the Truth)?35

35. That is, does he know that this conduct is in any way beneficial for him? Does he know that a person can save himself even in this way from the punishment of the Hereafter?

أَمۡ لَمۡ يُنَبَّأۡ بِمَا فِي صُحُفِ مُوسَىٰ 36

(53:36) Has he not been informed of what is in the Scrolls of Moses,

وَإِبۡرَٰهِيمَ ٱلَّذِي وَفَّىٰٓ 37

(53:37) and of Abraham, who lived up to the trust?36

36. In the following verses a resume is being given of the teachings sent down in the Books of the Prophets Abraham and Moses (peace be upon them). The Books of Moses (peace be upon him) signify the Torah. As for the Books of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) they have become extinct and no mention of them is found even in the holy scriptures of the Jews and Christians. Only in the Quran at two places have some parts of the teachings contained in the Books of the Prophet Abraham been cited, here and in the concluding verses of Surah Al-Ala.

أَلَّا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٞ وِزۡرَ أُخۡرَىٰ 38

(53:38) "That no bearer of a burden shall bear the burden of another,37

37. From this verse three cardinal principles are derived:

(1) That every person is responsible for himself for what he does.

(2) That the responsibility of one man's act cannot be transferred to another unless he has a share in the commission of the act.

(3) That even if a person wishes he cannot take on himself the responsibility of another man's act, nor can the actual culprit be let off on the ground that another person is willing to suffer the punishment on his behalf.

وَأَن لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَىٰ 39

(53:39) and that man shall have nothing but what he has striven for,[38]

38. From this verse also three important principles are derived:

(1) That every person will get only the fruit of his own deeds.

(2) That the fruit of one man's deeds cannot be given to another unless he has a share in that deed.

(3) That none can attain anything without striving for it.

Some people wrongly apply these three principles to the economic problems of the world and conclude that no person can become the lawful owner of anything except of his own earned income. But this conclusion clashes with several laws and injunctions given by the Quran itself, e.g. the law of inheritance, according to which many individuals inherit a person and are regarded as his lawful heirs, whereas the heritage is not their earned income. As for a suckling for instance, it cannot be proved by any stretch of imagination that its labor had any share in the wealth left by its father. Likewise, there are the injunctions about the zakat and voluntary charities according to which the wealth of one man is transferred to others only on the basis of their legal and moral entitlement and they become its lawful owners, whereas in the production of this wealth they did not make any contribution at all. Thus, it is against the intention of the Quran to take a verse of it and derive from it such conclusions as clash with the other teachings of the Quran itself.

Some other people regard these principles as concerning the Hereafter and raise the question whether, according to these principles, the deeds of one man can in some way be also beneficial for the other person, and whether the deeds of a person which he does for another person, or on his behalf, can be accepted from him, and whether it is also possible that a person may transfer the reward of his act to another. If the answer to these questions be in the negative, the sending of spiritual rewards (isal thawab) for the dead and performing Hajj on behalf of another, would be inadmissible; even the prayer of forgiveness for the other person would be meaningless, for this prayer also is not the concerned person's own act and deed. However, this extreme point of view has been adopted by none among the followers of Islam except the Mutazilites. Only they take this verse in the meaning that one man's acts and deeds can in no case be beneficial for the other. On the contrary, the followers of the sunnah are unanimous that the prayer of one man is beneficial for the other because it is confirmed by the Quran; however, they differ only in details, and not in principles, as to whether the sending of spiritual rewards for another and doing a good work on behalf of another is beneficial or not.

(1) The term isal-thawab means that after a person has performed a good act, he may pray to Allah to grant its rewards to another. In this regard, Imam Malik and Imam Shafei have expressed the opinion that the rewards of the pure bodily acts of worship, e.g. the Prayer, the Fasting and recitals of the Quran, etc. cannot reach the other person; however, the rewards of one's monetary acts of worship, e.g. charities, or Hajj, which is a combination of the monetary and bodily worships, can reach the other, for the principle is that one man's act should not be beneficial for the other. But since according to authentic Ahadith the rewards of charities can be conveyed, and Hajj on behalf of another also can be performed, they admit the permissibility of conveying of rewards to the extent of this kind of the acts of worship only. On the contrary, the Hanafi viewpoint is that a man can send the reward of each of his virtuous acts as a gift to the other, whether it is the Prayer, or the Fast, or the recitation of the Quran, or remembrance of Allah, or charity, or Hajj and Umrah. The argument is that just as a man after carrying out a piece of work can tell the master to pay the wages to such and such other person instead of him, so after performing a good deed also he can pray to Allah to grant its rewards to such and such other person instead of him. In this there is no rational ground for making exception of some kinds of virtues and keeping it restricted to some other kinds of virtues. The same is confirmed by a large number of the traditions:

A tradition, on the unanimous authority of Aishah, Abu Hurairah, Jabir bin Abdullah. Abu Rafi, Abu Talhah Ansari and Hudhaifah bin Usaid al-Ghifari has been reported in Bukhari, Muslim. Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Majah, Tabari, in Awsat, Musradrik and Ibn Abi Shaibah, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) got two rams and sacrificed one on behalf of himself and his family and the other on behalf of his ummah.

Muslim, Bukhari, Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud and Nasai have related a tradition from Aishah to the effect that a person said to the Prophet (peace be upon him): My mother has died suddenly. I think if she had a chance to speak, she would have asked me giving away something in charity. Now, if I give away something in charity on her behalf, will she get a reward for it? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Yes, she will.

In Musnad Ahmad there is a tradition from Abdullah bin Amr bin Aas to the effect, that his grandfather, Aas bin Wail, had vowed in the pre Islamic days of ignorance to sacrifice 100 camels. His uncle, Hisham bin Aas, sacrificed fifty camels of his own share. Amr bin Aas, asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) as to what he should do. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: If your father had affirmed faith in the Oneness of God, you may observe fasts on his behalf or give something in charity, this would be beneficial for him.

A tradition has been reported in Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud, Nasai and Ibn Majah, on the authority of Hasan Basri, to the effect that Saad bin Ubadah asked the Prophet (peace be upon him): My mother has died. Should I give something in charity on her behalf? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied in the affirmative. Several other traditions bearing on the same subject also have been related in Bukhari, Muslim, Musnad Ahmad, Nasai, Tirmidhi, Abu Daud, Ibn Majah, etc. on the authority of Aishah, Abu Hurairah and Ibn Abbas. According to which the Prophet (peace be upon him) permitted giving away of something in charity on behalf of the deceased person describing it as beneficial for him.

According to Daraqutni, a person said to the Prophet (peace be upon him): I have been serving my parents while they were alive, what should I do now when they are dead? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: This would also be their service if you offered the Prayer on their behalf along with your own Prayers, and observed the Fast on their behalf along with your own Fast. Another tradition in Daraqutni has been related from Ali according to which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: If a person passing by the graveyard recites: Qul huwallahu ahad eleven times and gives away its reward for the dead, all the dead ones will be granted their due shares of the rewards.

This large number of the traditions which support one another explicitly state that the transfer of the spiritual rewards is not only possible but rewards of all kinds of acts of worship and virtuous deeds can be sent and conveyed and in it there is no specification of any particular kind of acts and deeds. In this connection, however, four things should be understood well:

First, that the reward of that act only can be transferred, which may have been performed purely for the sake of Allah and according to the Shariah injunctions; otherwise obviously an act which is performed for the sake of another than Allah, or in contravention of the Shari ah injunctions, cannot even entitle its doer himself to any reward, nothing to say of its transfer to another person.

Secondly, the gift of the rewards will certainly reach to those righteous persons who are staying as guests with Allah, but no rewards are expected to reach to those culprits who are placed in confinement there. The gift can reach the guests of Allah but the criminals of Allah cannot be expected to receive it. If a person sends his rewards to him because of a misunderstanding, it will not go waste but instead of reaching the culprit it will return to the actual worker himself just like the money order which returns to the sender in case it does not reach the one to whom it has been sent.

Thirdly, the transfer of the reward is possible but not the transfer of punishment. That is, it is possible that one may do a good deed and may willingly transfer its reward to the other and it reaches him, but it is not possible that one may commit a sin and transfer its punishment to the other and it reaches him.

The fourth thing is that a virtuous act is beneficial in two ways: First, on account of its those results which accrue to the soul and morality of the doer himself because of which he becomes worthy of a reward in the sight of Allah; Second, on account of the reward which Allah grants him as a gift and favor. The transfer of the spiritual reward does not concern the first but only the second. This can be understood by an example. A person tries to attain proficiency in the art of wrestling by constant practice. The strength and skill thus gained is in any way specially meant for his own self; it cannot be transferred to another. Similarly, if he is attached to a royal court, and there is a stipend fixed for him as a wrestler, he alone will receive it and no one else. However, in respect of the prizes and gifts that his patron may like to grant him as an appreciation for his creditable performance, he may request that they may be given to his coach, or parents, or some other benefactor, on his behalf. The same is the case with the virtuous deeds: their spiritual benefits are not transferable and their rewards also cannot be transferred to another, but as for their rewards and gifts he can pray to Allah that these may be granted to a near and dear one, or a benefactor of his. That is why

it is termed as isal thawab (conveying of spiritual rewards) and not as isal jaza (conveying of material reward).

(2) Another form of a person's work being beneficial for another is that one should either do a virtuous deed on the desire or beckoning of another, or without his desire or beckoning, on his behalf, which, in fact, was obligatory for him to carry out, but which he was unable to carry out himself. In this regard, the Hanafi jurists say that the acts of worship are of three kinds: purely physical, e.g. the Prayer; purely monetary, e.g. the zakat; and the compound acts of bodily and monetary worship, e.g. Hajj. As for the first kind, nobody can act as an agent of another. As for the second kind, one can act as an agent of the other, e.g. the husband can pay the zakat due on the ornaments of the wife. As for the third kind, one can act as an agent of the other only in case the actual person on whose behalf the act is being performed, is permanently, and not just temporarily, unfit to carry out his obligation himself. For example, Hajj can be performed on behalf of another only in case the person concerned is unable to go for Hajj himself, nor may have the hope that he would ever be able to perform it himself. The Malikis and the Shafei is also concur on, this. However, Imam Malik lays down the condition that if the father has willed that his son should perform Hajj after him, on his behalf, the son can perform Hajj on his father's behalf, otherwise not, But the traditions in this regard are very explicit. Whether the father has expressed the desire, or made a will or not, the son can perform Hajj on his behalf.

Ibn Abbas has related that a woman from the tribe of Khatham said to the Prophet (peace be upon him): The command for Hajj reached my father at a time when he has become very old: he cannot even sit on the camel's back. The Prophet replied (peace be upon him): You then may perform Hajj on his behalf. (Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, Tirmidi, Nasai). A tradition bearing on the same subject has also been related by AIi. (Ahmad, Tirmidhi).

Abdullah bin Zabair has made mention of a man of the same tribe of Khatham, who also put a similar question to the Prophet (peace be upon him) concerning his aged father. The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked: Are you his eldest son? He answered in the affirmative. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: If your father had left behind a debt and you paid it off, would it stand paid on his behalf? He replied that it would. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Then you should likewise perform Hajj also on his behalf. (Ahmad, Nasai). Ibn Abbas relates that a woman from the tribe of Juhainah came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said: My mother had vowed to perform Hajj but she died before performing her vow. Now, can I perform Hajj on her behalf? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: If your mother had left behind a debt, would you not have paid it? Likewise, you should also discharge the vow made to Allah, and Allah has a greater right that the vows made to Him be performed. (Bukhari, Nasai). Bukhari and Musnad Ahmad contain another tradition to the effect that a man came and put the same question to the Prophet (peace be upon him) concerning his sister as has been mentioned above, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave him also the same answer.

These traditions provide a clear proof that so far as the compound acts of bodily and monetary worships are concerned, one can act on behalf of another. As for the purely bodily acts of worship, there are some Ahadith which prove the permissibility of acting on behalf of another in this kind of worship as well. For example, Ibn Abbas has related that a woman from the tribe of Juhainah asked the Prophet (peace be upon him): My mother had vowed to

observe the Fast and she died without performing her vow. Now, can I observe the Fast on her behalf? The Prophet replied (peace be upon him): Observe the Fast on her behalf. (Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, Abu Daud). And Buraidah's tradition that a woman asked concerning her mother: She had one month's (according to another tradition two months) Fasts to observe; can I observe those Fasts on her behalf? The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that she could. (Muslim, Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Abu Daud). And Aishah's tradition that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: If a person dies and he had some Fasts to observe, his guardian should observe those Fasts on his behalf. (Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad). In the tradition related by Bazzar the Prophet's (peace be upon him) words are to the effect: If his guardian may so like, he may observe those Fasts on his behalf). On the basis of these very traditions the Ashab al-Hadith and Imam Auzai and the Zahiris have formed the view that one is also permitted to perform bodily acts of worship on behalf of the other. But Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik, Imam Shafei and Imam Zaid bin Ali have given the ruling that a fast cannot be observed on behalf of a dead person, and Imam Ahmad, Imam Laith and Ishaq bin Rahawaih opine that this can be done only in case the deceased person might have so vowed but might not have been able to perform his vow. Those who oppose this give the argument that the reporters of the Ahadith, which prove its permissibility, have themselves given their rulings against it. Ibn Abbas's ruling has been related by Nasai, thus: No one should offer a Prayer or observe a Fast on behalf of another. And Aishah's ruling, according to Abdur Razzaq, is: Do not observe the Fast on behalf of your dead ones; feed (the needy) instead. The same has also been related from Abdullah bin Umar by Abdur Razzaq that the Fast should not be observed on behalf of the deceased person. This shows that in the beginning it was permissible to perform acts of bodily worship on behalf of others, but the practice that became established in the end was that it was not permissible to do so; otherwise it was not possible that those who have reported these Ahadith from the Prophet (peace be upon him), should have themselves given rulings against them.

In this connection, it should be understood well that fulfillment of an obligation on behalf of another can be beneficial only to those people who have themselves been keen and desirous of fulfilling their obligations and might have been unable to do so being rendered helpless by circumstances. But a person who deliberately shirked going for Hajj although he had the necessary means for it and had no feeling whatever of this obligation in his heart either, cannot be benefited even if several Hajj be performed on his behalf afterwards. This would be analogous to the case of a person who deliberately avoided paying his debts and had no intention to pay them till the last. Afterwards even if every penny is paid off on his behalf, he would remain a debtor in the sight of Allah. The payment of the debts by another can relieve only such a person who in his lifetime was desirous of paying off his debts but was unable to do so due to straitened circumstances.

وَاَنَّ سَعۡيَهٗ سَوۡفَ يُرٰى ۖ 40

(53:40) and that (the result of) his striving shall soon be seen,[39]

39. That is, in the Hereafter the people's deeds shall be examined and judged in order to see what provisions they have brought with them. As this sentence occurs immediately after the preceding sentence, it by itself indicates that the preceding sentence relates to the rewards and punishments of the Hereafter, and the view of those who present it as an economic

principle relating to this world is not correct. To interpret a verse of the Quran in a way as is irrelevant to the context as well as clashes with the other ordinances of the Quran cannot be right.

ثُمَّ يُجْزٰىهُ الْجَزَآءَ الْاَوْفٰى ۙ 41

(53:41) and that he shall then be fully recompensed,

وَاَنَّ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ الْمُنْتَهٰى ۙ 42

(53:42) and that the final end is with your Lord,

وَاَنَّهٗ هُوَ اَضْحَكَ وَاَبْكٰى ۙ 43

(53:43) and that He it is Who causes people to laugh and to cry,[40]

40. That is, Allah provides the means both for joy and for grief. He controls good and ill luck. There is no one else in the universe, who may have anything to do with making or marring of destinies.

وَاَنَّهٗ هُوَ اَمَاتَ وَاَحْيَا ۙ 44

(53:44) and that He it is Who causes death and grants life,

وَاَنَّهٗ خَلَقَ الزَّوْجَيْنِ الذَّكَرَ وَالْاُنْثٰى ۙ 45

(53:45) and He it is Who created the two kinds, the male and the female,

مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ اِذَا تُمْنٰى ۖ 46

(53:46) from a drop of sperm when it was emitted,[41]

41. For explanation, see(E.Ns 27 to 30 of Surah Ar-Room); (E.N. 77 of Surah Ash-Shura).

وَاَنَّ عَلَيْهِ النَّشْاَةَ الْاُخْرٰى ۙ 47

(53:47) and that it is for Him to grant the second life,[42]

42. When this verse is read with the two preceding verses, the sequence by itself seems to provide the argument for the life-after-death also. The God Who has the power to give death and grant life and the God who brings about a creature like man from an insignificant sperm-drop, rather brings about two separate sexes - male and female - from the same

substance and by the same method of creation, cannot be helpless to resurrect man once again.

وَأَنَّهُۥ هُوَ أَغۡنَىٰ وَأَقۡنَىٰ ٤٨

(53:48) that He it is Who bestowed wealth and riches,[43]

43. Different meanings have been given by the lexicographers and commentators of the word aqna as used in the original. According to Qatadah, Ibn Abbas took it in the meaning of arda (pleased), and according to Ikrimah in the meaning of qannaa (satisfied). According to Imam Razi, whatever is given to a person over and above his need and requirement is aqna. Abu Ubaidah and several other lexicographers have expressed the view that aqna is derived from qunya-tun, which means lasting and secured property, e.g. the house, lands, gardens, cattle, etc. Ibn Zaid, however, has given quite a different meaning of it. He says that aqua here has been used in the sense of afqara (made penniless), and the verse means: He made whomever He pleased rich and whomever He pleased penniless.

وَأَنَّهُۥ هُوَ رَبُّ ٱلشِّعۡرَىٰ ٤٩

(53:49) that He is the Lord of Sirius,[44]

44. Shiera is the brightest star in the heavens, which is also known by the names of Mirzam al-Jawza, al-Kalb al-Akbar, al-Kalb al-Jabbar, Ash-Shira al-Abur, etc. In English it is called Sirius, Dog Star and Canis Majoris. It is 23 times as luminous as the Sun, but as it shines over eight light-years away from the earth, it appears to be smaller and less luminous than the Sun. The Egyptians worshiped it, for it made its appearance at about the time of the season when the annual floods were beginning in the Nile; the Egyptians believed that Sirius caused the Nile floods. The pagan Arabs also held the belief that this star influenced human destinies. That is why they worshiped it as a deity, and the Bani Khuzaah, the neighboring tribe of the Quraish, were particularly well-known for being its devotees. What Allah says means: Your destinies are not made and controlled by Shiera but by the Lord of Shiera.

وَأَنَّهُۥٓ أَهۡلَكَ عَادًا ٱلۡأُولَىٰ ٥٠

(53:50) that He it is Who destroyed the ancient 'Ad,[45]

45. Aad Ula signifies the ancient Aad to whom the Prophet Houd (peace be upon him) had been appointed as a Prophet. When those people were inflicted with the torment in consequence of denying the Prophet Houd (peace be upon him), only the believers escaped the punishment. Their descendants are called Aad Ukhra, or the latter Aad, in history.

وَثَمُودَا۟ فَمَآ أَبۡقَىٰ ٥١

(53:51) and Thamud, leaving no trace of them,

وَقَوْمَ نُوْحٍ مِّنْ قَبْلُ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا هُمْ اَظْلَمَ وَاَطْغٰى ؕ 52

(53:52) and that He it is Who destroyed the people of Noah before for they were much given to iniquity and transgression.

وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَةَ اَهْوٰى ۙ 53

(53:53) And He brought perdition upon the subverted cities

فَغَشّٰىهَا مَا غَشّٰى ۚ 54

(53:54) and caused them to be covered with that which He covered them with.[46]

46. "The subverted settlements": the settlements of the people of Lot, and "covered them that which did cover" probably imply the waters of the Dead Sea, which spread over their settlements after they had sunk underground, and covered the region even till this day.

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكَ تَتَمَارٰى 55

(53:55) So,[47] which of your Lord's bounties will you doubt?"[48]

47. According to some commentators this sentence is also a part of the resume of the Books of the Prophets Abraham and Moses, (peace be upon them) and according to others it ended with Fa ghashsha-ha ma ghashsha, and with this begins a new theme. According to the context, however, the first view seems to be preferable, for the following words This is a warning of the warnings already given, point out that the whole preceding passage is "of the warnings already given", which had been sent down in the Books of the Prophets Abraham and Moses (peace be upon them).

48. The word tatamara, as used in the text, means both to doubt and to wrangle. The address is directed to every listener. To every person who may be listening to this discourse, it is being said: Even after witnessing what has been the fate in human history of denying the bounties of Allah and of wrangling with the Prophets concerning them, will you still commit the same folly? What the former peoples had doubted was whether the bounties and blessings they were enjoying in the world, had been bestowed by One God, or by other associates of His, or by no one, but had become available by themselves. On account of this they wrangled with the Prophets. The Prophets asserted that all these blessings had been granted to them by God, and by One God alone; therefore, they should be grateful to Him and should serve Him alone; but the people did not believe this and wrangled with the Prophets on this very account. Now, O man: Don't you see in history what fate these nations met for entertaining this doubt and for their wrangling? Will you entertain the same doubt and indulge in the same wrangling as proved disastrous for others?

In this connection, one should also bear in mind that the Aad and the Thamud and the people of Noah had passed long before the Prophet Abraham, and the people of Lot had met with the torment during his own lifetime. Therefore, there can be no difficulty in regarding this passage as a part of the resume of the Prophet Abraham's Books.

هٰذَا نَذِيرٌ مِّنَ النُّذُرِ الْأُولَىٰ 56

(53:56) This is a warning among the warnings of yore.[49]

49. The words in the original are: Hadha nadhir-un-minan- nudhur-il-ula. The commentators have expressed three points of view in the explanation of this sentence. First, that nadhir here implies the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him); second, that it implies the Quran; third, that it implies the fate of the peoples already destroyed, which has been referred to in the foregoing verses. In view of the context, we are of the opinion that this last commentary is preferable.

أَزِفَتِ الْآزِفَةُ ۚ 57

(53:57) The imminent Hour has drawn near,[50]

50. That is, do not be under the delusion that there is yet enough time for thinking and consideration; therefore, you may not give immediate and serious attention to these things and may not decide that you should accept them without further delay. Nay: no one among you knows how much of the respite of life is left to him. Anyone of you can die at any time and the Last Hour can also take place suddenly. Therefore, do not think that the Hour of Judgment is yet far off. Whoever has any concern for the Hereafter, should mend his ways forthwith, for one may not have a chance to take a second breath after the present breath.

لَيْسَ لَهَا مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ كَاشِفَةٌ ۖ 58

(53:58) and none but Allah can avert it.[51]

51. That is, when the Hour of Judgment does arrive, you will not be able to stop it, nor your deities other than Allah have the power to avert it. Allah alone can stop it but He will not.

أَفَمِنْ هٰذَا الْحَدِيثِ تَعْجَبُونَ ۙ 59

(53:59) Will you, then, wonder at this?[52]

52. The word hadh-al-Hadith as used in the original, signifies the whole teaching that was being presented in the Quran through the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and marvel implies the marvel that man expresses on hearing a novel and incredible thing. The verse means this: That to which Muhammad (peace be upon him) is inviting you is the same that you have already heard. Now, is it this very thing at which you marvel and feel

alarmed, and express wonder as if something very strange and novel was being presented before you?

وَتَضۡحَكُوۡنَ وَلَا تَبۡكُوۡنَ ۙ 60

(53:60) Will you laugh at it rather than weep?[53]

53. That is, instead of weeping at your ignorance and deviation you, on the contrary, are mocking, the truth.

وَاَنۡتُمۡ سٰمِدُوۡنَ 61

(53:61) Will you occupy yourselves simply in merriment?[54]

54. Two meanings have been given of the word samidun by the lexicographers.

Ibn Abbas, Ikrimah and Abu Ubaidah, the grammarian, are of the view that in the Yarnanite tongue sumud means singing and playing, and the verse alludes that the disbelievers of Makkah, in order to suppress the recitation of the Quran and to divert the people's attention away from it, would start singing in a loud voice.

The other meaning of it given by lbn Abbas and Mujahid is: Sumud means bending down the head out of arrogance; when the disbelievers of Makkah passed by the Prophet (peace be upon him), they would pass by him angrily with their faces lifted up. Raghib Isphahani in his Mafradat also has adopted the same meaning; accordingly, Qatadah has translated samidun into ghafilun and Saed bin Jubair into muridun.

فَاسۡجُدُوۡا لِلّٰهِ وَاعۡبُدُوۡا ۩ ع 62

(53:62) Prostrate yourselves before Allah, and serve Him.[55]

55. According to Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Shafei and many other scholars, it is obligatory to perform a sajdah on the recitation of this verse. Although Imam Malik himself used to perform a sajdah here (as cited by Qadi Abu Bakr ibn al-Arabi in Ahkam al-Quran), yet he held the view that it was not obligatory to perform a sajdah here, the basis of his view being this tradition of Zaid bin Thabit: I recited Surah an-Najm before the Prophet (peace be upon him), and he did not perfom a sajdah. (Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Abu Daud, Nasai). But this Hadith does not negate the incumbency of the prostration here, for it is likely that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not perform the sajdah then due to some reason but might have performed it later. Other traditions on the subject are explicit that the prostration was always performed on this verse. Abdullah bin Masud, Ibn Abbas and Muttalib bin Abi Wadaah have unanimously stated that when the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited this Surah for the first time in the Kabah, he had prostrated himself and along with him the whole assembly of the believers and the disbelievers had also fallen down prostrate. (Bukhari, Ahmad, Nasai). Ibn Umar has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited Surah an-Najm in the Prayer and prostrated himself and lay long in that state.

(Baihaqi, Ibn Marduyah). Saburat al-Juhani states that Umar recited Surah an-Najm in the Fajr Prayer and performed a sajdah, then stood up, recited Surah al-Zilzal and performed the ruku. (Saed bin Mansur). Imam Malik himself has related this act of Umar in his Muwatta (Bab Maja fi Sajud al- Quren).

54. Surah Al Qamar (The Moon)

Name

The Surah takes its name from the very first verse Wan shaqq al-Qamar, thereby implying that it is a Surah in which the word al-Qamar has occurred.

Period of Revelation

The incident of the shaqq-al-Qamar (splitting of the moon) that has been mentioned in it, determines its period of revelation precisely. The traditionists and commentators are agreed that this incident took place at Mina in Makkah about five years before the Holy Prophet's hijrah to Madinah.

Theme and Subject Matter

In this Surah the disbelievers of Makkah have been warned for their stubbornness which they had adopted against the invitation of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). The amazing and wonderful phenomenon of the splitting of the Moon was a manifest sign of the truth that the Resurrection, of which the Holy Prophet was giving them the news, could take place and that it had approached near at hand. The great sphere of the Moon had split into two distinct parts in front of their very eyes. The two parts had separated and receded so much apart from each other that to the onlookers one part had appeared on one side of the mountain and the other on the other side of it. Then, in an instant the two had rejoined. This was a manifest proof of the truth that the system of the Universe was neither eternal nor immortal, it could be disrupted. Huge stars and Planets could split asunder, disintegrate, collide with each other, and everything that had been depicted in the Quran In connection with the description of the details of Resurrection, could happen. Not only this : it was also a portent that the disintegration of the system of the Universe had begun and the time was near when Resurrection would take place. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) invited the people's attention to this event only with this object in view and asked them to mark it and be a witness to it. But the disbelievers described it as a magical illusion add persisted in their denial. For this stubbornness they have been reproached in this Surah.

At the outset it has been said: "These people neither believe in the admonition, nor learn a lesson from history, nor affirm faith after witnessing manifest signs with their eyes. Now they would believe only when Resurrection has taken place and they would be rushing out of their graves towards the Summoner on that Day."

Then, the stories of the people of Noah and of 'Ad and Thamud and of the peoples of Lot and the Pharaoh have been related briefly and they have been reminded of the terrible punishments that these nations suffered when they belied and disregarded the warnings given by the Prophets of God. After the narration of each story the refrain that has been provided is : "This Qur'an is an easy means of admonition, which if a nation takes to heart and thereby takes the Right Way, the torment that descended on the former nations could be avoided. But it would indeed be a folly if instead of heeding the admonition through this

easy means, one persisted in heedlessness and disbelieved until one was overtaken by the torment itself."

Likewise, after citing admonitory precedents from the history of the former nations, the disbelievers of Makkah have been addressed and warned to this effect: "If you too adopt the same attitude and conduct for which the other nations have already been punished, why will you not be punished for it? Are you in any way a superior people that you should be treated differently from others? Or, have you received a deed of amnesty that you will not be punished for the crime for which others have been punished? And if you feel elated at your great numbers, you will soon see that these very numbers of yours are put to rout (on the battlefield) and on the Day of Resurrection you will be dealt with even more severely."

In the end, the disbelievers have been told that Allah does not need to make lengthy preparations to bring about Resurrection. No sooner does He give a simple command for it than it will take place immediately. Like everything else the Universe and mankind also have a destiny. According to this destiny everything happens at its own appointed time. It cannot be so that whenever somebody gives a challenge, Resurrection is brought about in order to convince him. If you adopt rebellion because you do not see it coming, you will only be adding to your own distress and misfortune. For your record which is being prepared by Divine agents, has not left any misdeed of yours, great or small, unrecorded.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اِقۡتَرَبَتِ السَّاعَۃُ وَانۡشَقَّ الۡقَمَرُ ۱

(54:1) The Hour of Resurrection drew near and the moon split asunder.[1]

1. That is, the splitting of the Moon asunder is a portent that the Hour of Resurrection of which you are being foretold, has drawn near at hand, and the order of the universe has begun to be disrupted. Moreover, the incident that a great sphere like the moon has split into two distinct parts is a specific proof of the fact that Resurrection of which you are being forewarned can take place. Obviously, when the Moon can split, the earth can also split, the orbits of the stars and planets can also change and the whole system of the heavens can also be disturbed. There is nothing eternal and everlasting and stable here so that Resurrection may be improbable.

Some people have taken this sentence to mean: The Moon will split. Although according to Arabic usage it is possible to take this meaning, the context clearly rejects it. In the first place, if this were the meaning, the first sentence would become meaningless. If the moon had not actually split at the time when this revelation was made, but it was going to split some time in the future, it would be absurd to say on the basis of this that the Hour of Resurrection had approached near at hand. After all, how can an incident that is to take place in the future, be regarded as a sign of Resurrection's being near at hand, and how can such a testimony be put forward as a rational argument? Second, with this meaning in mind when we read the following verses, they appear to be altogether incoherent. The verses that follow clearly show that the people at that time had witnessed a sign that was a manifest portent of the

possibility of Resurrection, but they rejected it as a magical illusion, and persisted in their belief that Resurrection was not possible. In this context, the words inshaqq-al-Qamar can be meaningful only if they are taken to mean: The moon split asunder. If they are taken to mean: The moon will split asunder, the entire following theme becomes disjointed. It will look like this:

The Hour of Resurrection has drawn near and the moon will split asunder. Yet whatever sign these people may see, they turn away and say: This is current magic! They have denied and followed only their own lusts.

Therefore, the truth is that the incident of the splitting of the moon is confirmed explicitly by the words of the Quran and it is not dependent upon the traditions of the Hadith. However, the traditions supply its details, and one comes to know when and how it had taken place. These traditions have been related by Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ahmad, Abu Uwanah, Abu Daud Tayalisi, Abdur Razzaq, Ibn Jarir, Baihaqi, Tabarani, Ibn Marduyah, and Abu Nuaim Tsfahani with many chains of transmitters on the authority of Ali, Abdullah bin Masud, Abdullah bin Abbas, Abdullah bin Umar, Hudhaifah, Anas bin Malik and Jubair bin Mutim. Three of these authorities, viz, Abdullah bin Masud, Hudhaifah, and Jubair bin Mutim state that they were the eye-witnesses of this event; two of them cannot be its eye-witnesses, for this event took place before the birth of one (i.e. Abdullah bin Abbas) and at a time when the other (i.e. Anas bin Malik) was yet a child. But since both these scholars were companions, obviously they must have reported this event after they had heard it from the aged companions who had direct knowledge of it.

The information that one gathers from the various traditions is that this incident occurred about five years before the Hijrah. It was the 14th night of the lunar month; the moon had just risen when it suddenly split and its two parts were seen on either side of the hill in front. Then after a moment or so they rejoined. The Prophet (peace be upon him) at that time was at Mina. He told the people to mark it and be witnesses to it. The disbelievers said that Muhammad (peace be upon him) had worked magic on them; therefore, their eyes had been deceived. The other people said: Muhammad could have worked magic on us but not on all the people. Let the people from other places come, we shall ask them if they also had witnessed this incident. When the people from other places came, they bore evidence that they also had witnessed the same phenomenon.

Some traditions which have been related from Anas give rise to the misunderstanding that the incident of the splitting of the moon had happened twice. But, in the first place, no one else from among the companions has stated this; second, in some traditions of Anas himself also the words are marratain (twice), and in some firqatain and shaqqatain (two pieces); third, the Quran mentions only one incident of the moon's splitting asunder. The correct view therefore is that this incident happened only once. As for the stories which are current among the people that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had made a gesture towards the moon and it split into two parts and that one part of the moon entered the breast of the garment of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and went out of the sleeve, have no basis whatsoever.

Here, the question arises: What was the real nature of this incident. Was it a miracle that the Prophet (peace be upon him) performed on the demand of the disbelievers of Makkah as a

proof of his Prophethood? Or, was it only an accident that occurred on the moon by the power of Allah and the Prophet (peace be upon him) had only called the peoples' attention to it and warned them to mark it as a sign of the possibility and nearness of Resurrection? A large group of the Muslim scholars regards it as among the miracles of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and holds the view that it had been shown on the demand of the disbelievers. But this view is based only on some of those traditions which have been related from Anas. Apart from him no other companion has stated this. According to Fath al Bari, Ibn Hajar says: Apart from the narration by Anas, in no other narration of this story have I come across the theme that the incident of the splitting of the moon had taken place on the demand of the polytheists. (Bab Inshiqaq al-Qamar). Abu Nuaim Isfahani has related a tradition on this subject in Daleil an-Nubuwwat, on the authority of Abdullah bin Abbas also, but it has a weak chain of transmitters and none of the traditions that have been related with strong chains of transmitters in the collections of Hadith on the authority of Abdullah bin Abbas, contains any mention of this. Furthermore, neither Anas nor Abdullah bin Abbas was a contemporary of this incident. On the contrary, none of the companions, from among Abdullah bin Masud, Hudhaifah, Jubair bin Mutim, Ali, Abdullah bin Umar, who were contemporaries of the incident, has stated that the pagans of Makkah had demanded a sign from the Prophet (peace be upon him) to testify to his Prophethood on which he might have shown the miracle of the splitting of the moon. Above all, the Quran itself is also presenting this event not as a sign of the Prophethood but as a sign of the nearness of Resurrection. However, this was indeed conspicuous proof of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) truthfulness because it testified to the news that he was giving to the people of the coming of Resurrection.

The critics raise two kinds of objections against it. In the first place, they say it is impossible that a great sphere like the moon should split asunder into two distinct parts, which should get hundreds of miles apart and then rejoin. Secondly, they say if it had so happened, it would be a wellknown event in the world and would have found mention in the books of History and Astronomy. But, in fact, both these objections are flimsy. As for the discussion of its possibility, it could perhaps find credibility in the ancient days but on the basis of what man has come to know in the present day about the structure of the planets, it can be said that it is just possible that a sphere may burst because of its internal volcanic action and its two parts may be thrown far apart by the mighty eruption, and then may rejoin under the magnetic force of their center. As for the second objection, it is flimsy because the event had taken place suddenly and lasted a short time only. It was not necessary that at that particular moment the world might be looking at the moon. There was no explosion either that might have attracted the people's attention; there was no advance information of it that the people might be awaiting its occurrence and looking up at the sky. It could not also be seen everywhere on the earth but only in Arabia and the eastern lands where the moon had risen and was visible at that time. The taste and art of writing history also had not yet developed so that the people who might have witnessed it, should have made a record of it and then some historian might have gathered the evidence and preserved it in some book of History. However, in the Histories of Malabar mention has been made of a native ruler who had witnessed this phenomenon that night. As for the books of Astronomy and Calendars, this event might have been mentioned in them only if the event had affected the movement of the moon, its orbit and the times of its rising and setting. As no such thing happened, it did not attract the ancient astronomers' attention. The observatories were also not so

developed that they might have taken notice of everything happening in the heavens and preserved a record of it.

وَإِن يَرَوْا آيَةً يُعْرِضُوا وَيَقُولُوا سِحْرٌ مُّسْتَمِرٌّ 2

(54:2) (Regardless of any Signs these people see), they turn away and say: "This is an ongoing sorcery."[2]

2. The words sihr-um mustamirr of the text can have several meanings:

(1) That, God forbid, this magical illusion also is one of those magical performances that Muhammad (peace be upon him) has been performing day and night.

(2) That this certainly is a work of magic which has been performed with great expertise.

(3) That just as other works of magic have passed, so will this also pass without leaving any lasting effect behind.

وَكَذَّبُوا وَاتَّبَعُوا أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَكُلُّ أَمْرٍ مُّسْتَقِرٌّ 3

(54:3) They also gave the lie to (the splitting asunder of the moon) and only followed their desires.[3] Yet everything is destined to reach an end. [4]

3. That is, they still persisted in the same decision that they had made of denying the Hereafter and have not changed their mind even after having witnessed this manifest sign, mainly because it clashed with their desires of the flesh.

4. That is, it cannot be so endlessly that Muhammad (peace be upon him) should go on inviting you to the truth while you persist in your falsehood stubbornly and his truth and your falsehood should never be established. All affairs ultimately have to reach an appointed end. Likewise, inevitably this conflict between you and Muhammad (peace be upon him) has also to reach an end. A time will certainly come when it will be clearly established that he had been in the right and you in the wrong throughout. Likewise, the worshipers of the truth shall one day see the result of their worshiping the truth and the worshipers of falsehood of their worshiping the falsehood.

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُم مِّنَ الْأَنبَاءِ مَا فِيهِ مُزْدَجَرٌ ۙ 4

(54:4) Surely there came to them narratives (of the ancient nations) that should suffice to deter (them from transgression),

حِكْمَةٌ بَالِغَةٌ ۖ فَمَا تُغْنِ النُّذُرُ ۙ 5

(54:5) narratives that are full of consummate wisdom. But warnings do not avail them.

فَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ ۘ يَوْمَ يَدْعُ الدَّاعِ إِلَىٰ شَيْءٍ نُّكُرٍ ۙ 6

(54:6) So turn away from them, (O Prophet).[5] On the Day when a caller shall call them to a thing most terrible,[6]

5. In other words, leave them to themselves. When every effort has been made to make them understand the truth in the most rational ways, when instances have been cited from history to show them the evil results of the denial of the Hereafter, when the dreadful fates suffered by the other nations in consequence of their rejecting the Prophetic messages have been brought to their notice and yet they are disinclined to give up their stubbornness, they should be left alone to gloat over their follies. Now, they would believe only when after death they arise from their graves to see with their own eyes that the Resurrection of which they were being forewarned and exhorted to adopt the truth, had actually taken place.

6. Another meaning can be "an unknown thing", a thing which they never could imagine, of which they never had any concept and no idea whatever that it also could occur.

خُشَّعًا أَبْصَارُهُمْ يَخْرُجُونَ مِنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ كَأَنَّهُمْ جَرَادٌ مُّنتَشِرٌ ۙ 7

(54:7) with down-cast eyes they shall go forth from their graves,[7][8] as though they were scattered locusts.

7. "Graves" do not signify only those pits in the earth in which a person might have been properly buried, but he would rise up from wherever he had died, or from wherever his dust lay, on the call of the Caller to the plain of Resurrection.

8. Literally: Their looks will be downcast. This can have several meanings:

(1) That they will appear terror-stricken.

(2) That they will be reflecting disgrace and humiliation, for as soon as they arise out of their graves they would realize that it was indeed the same second life which they had been denying, for which they had made no preparation, and in which they would have to present themselves before their God as culprits.

(3) That with awe-struck looks they would be watching the dreadful scenes before them, from which they would not be able to avert their eyes.

مُّهْطِعِينَ إِلَى الدَّاعِ ۖ يَقُولُ الْكَافِرُونَ هَٰذَا يَوْمٌ عَسِرٌ 8

(54:8) They shall be hurrying forth towards the caller, and the unbelievers (who had once denied this Day), will say: "This is a woeful Day."

كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ فَكَذَّبُوا عَبْدَنَا وَقَالُوا مَجْنُونٌ وَازْدُجِرَ 9

(54:9) Before them Noah's people also gave the lie (to his Message).[9] They rejected Our servant as a liar, saying: "He is a madman"; and he was rebuffed.[10]

9. That is, they denied that the Hereafter has to take place when man will have to render an account of his deeds; they denied the Prophethood of the Prophet who was making his people aware of this truth; and they denied the teaching of the Prophet, which taught them what to believe and what creed and conduct they should adopt in order to pass the reckoning of the Hereafter.

10. That is, the people not only belied the Prophet but also branded him as a madman; they uttered threats against him, showered him with curses and abuses; and did whatever possibly they could to stop him from preaching the truth, and thus made life extremely difficult for him.

فَدَعَا رَبَّهٗٓ اَنِّيْ مَغْلُوْبٌ فَانْتَصِرْ 10

(54:10) Then he called upon His Lord: "Verily I am vanquished; so come You to my aid."

فَفَتَحْنَآ اَبْوَابَ السَّمَآءِ بِمَآءٍ مُّنْهَمِرٍ ۖ صلے 11

(54:11) Thereupon We opened the gates of the sky for water to pour down,

وَّفَجَّرْنَا الْاَرْضَ عُيُوْنًا فَالْتَقَى الْمَآءُ عَلٰٓى اَمْرٍ قَدْ قُدِرَ ۚ 12

(54:12) and We made the earth burst forth with springs,[11] and all this water converged to fulfil that which had been decreed.

11. That is, the earth so burst forth with springs at the command of Allah that it was no longer earth but presented a scene of the springs all around.

وَحَمَلْنٰهُ عَلٰى ذَاتِ اَلْوَاحٍ وَّدُسُرٍ ۙ 13

(54:13) And We bore Noah on the vessel built of planks and nails,[12]

12. This signifies the Ark which the Prophet Noah had built under Allah's care and guidance even before the coming of the Flood.

تَجْرِيْ بِاَعْيُنِنَا ۚ جَزَآءً لِّمَنْ كَانَ كُفِرَ 14

(54:14) which sailed on under Our supervision: a reward for him who had been shown ingratitude.[13]

13. Literally: This was a vengeance for the sake of him whose kufr had been committed. If kufr be taken in the sense of denial, it would mean: Whose message had been denied and rejected; and if it is taken in the meaning of ingratitude for a blessing, it would mean: Who was indeed a blessing for the people, but had been ungratefully rejected.

وَلَقَد تَّرَكنٰهَآ اٰيَةً فَهَل مِن مُّدَّكِرٍ 15

(54:15) And We left the Ark as a Sign.[14] Is there, then, any who will take heed?

14. It may also mean: We left this dreadful punishment as a sign of warning, but in our opinion the preferable meaning is that the Ark was left as a sign of warning. Its resting and existence on a high mountain continued to warn the later generations of the wrath of God for thousand of years and kept on reminding them how the people who had disobeyed God on this earth had met their fall, and how the believers had been rescued from it. Imam Bukhari, Ibn Abi Hatim, Abdur Razzaq and Ibn Jarir have related traditions on the authority of Qatadah saying that at the time the Muslims conquered Iraq and al-Jazirah, this Ark still existed on Mount Judi (and according to a tradition, near the settlement of Baqirda), and the early Muslims had seen it. In the modern times also some people during their flights in the airplanes have sighted an Ark-like object on a peak in this region, which is suspected to be the Ark of Noah, and on the basis of the same, expeditions have been sent from time to time to search it out. (For further details, see (E.N. 47 of Surah Al-Aaraf); (E.N. 46 of Surah Houd), and (E.N. 25 of Surah Al-Ankabut).

فَكَيفَ كَانَ عَذَابِى وَنُذُرِ 16

(54:16) So how awesome were My chastisement and My warnings!

وَلَقَد يَسَّرنَا القُراٰنَ لِلذِّكرِ فَهَل مِن مُّدَّكِرٍ 17

(54:17) We have made this Qur'an easy as a reminder.[15] Is there, then, any who will take heed?

15. Some people have misconstrued the words yassarnal- Quran to mean that the Quran is an easy Book; no knowledge is required to understand it so much so that a person even without the knowledge of the Arabic language, can write a commentary on it, and can deduce any injunctions he likes from its verses independent of the Hadith and Islamic Law, whereas the context in which these words occur, indicates that they are meant to make the people realize this: One means of the admonition are the dreadful torments that descended upon the rebellious nations, and the other means is this Quran, which guides you to the right path by argument and instruction. Obviously, this means of admonition is by far the easier one; then, why don't you take advantage of it and insist on meeting with the torment instead? It is indeed Allah's bounty that He has sent this Book through His Prophet and is warning you that the ways you are following lead only to destruction and your well-being lies only in following this way. This method of admonition has been adopted so that you are rescued even before you fall into the pit of destruction. Now, who could be more foolish

than the one who does not believe in the admonition and realizes his error only after he has fallen into the pit.

كَذَّبَتْ عَادٌ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِي وَنُذُرِ 18

(54:18) 'Ad also gave the lie (to Hud). So how awesome were My chastisement and My warnings!

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا فِي يَوْمِ نَحْسٍ مُّسْتَمِرٍّ 19

(54:19) We sent a tumultuous wind against them on a day of unremitting misfortune,[16]

16. That is, on a day the ill omen of which continued to rage for several days. In Surah HaMim As-Sajdah, Ayat 16, the words are: fi ayyam in nahisat, in a few ill-omened days, and in (Surah Al-Haqqah, Ayat 7), it has been said: This wind storm continued to rage for seven nights and eight days. It is said that the day on which the storm started was Wednesday. From this the idea spread that Wednesday was a day of ill-luck, and no work should be started on this day. Some very weak traditions also have been cited to support this view, which have further strengthened the idea that this day is ill-omened. For example, there is Ibn Marduyah and Khatib al-Baghdadi's tradition that the last Wednesday of the month is ill-omened, the ill-omen of which is endless. Ibn Jauzi regards this tradition as fabricated and Ibn Rajab as unauthentic. Hafiz Sakhavi says that all the methods through which this tradition has been reported, are weak. Likewise, Tabarani's tradition (Wednesday is a day of perpetual ill-luck) also has been declared as weak by the scholars of Hadith. In some other traditions one is also forbidden to start a journey, to do business transactions, to pare the nails, or to visit the sick on a Wednesday. They also say that leprosy starts on this day. But all these traditions are weak and these cannot be made the basis of any belief. The scholar Munawi says: To abandon Wednesday, taking it as ill-omened and to entertain the astrologer's whims in this regard is forbidden, strictly forbidden. For, all days belong to Allah. no day is beneficial by itself nor harmful. Allama Alusi says: All days are equal, Wednesday has no peculiarity about it. There is no hour in the night or day which might be good for one person and bad for another. It is Allah Who creates favorable conditions for some people and adverse for others.

تَنزِعُ النَّاسَ كَأَنَّهُمْ أَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ مُّنقَعِرٍ 20

(54:20) which tore people away and hurled them as though they were trunks of uprooted palm-trees.

فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِي وَنُذُرِ 21

(54:21) So how awesome were My chastisement and My warnings!

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْاٰنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ ۧ 22

(54:22) We have made the Qur'an easy to derive lessons from. Is there, then, any who will take heed?

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُوْدُ بِالنُّذُرِ 23

(54:23) Thamud gave the lie to the warnings,

فَقَالُوْٓا اَبَشَرًا مِّنَّا وَاحِدًا نَّتَّبِعُهٗٓ ۙ اِنَّآ اِذًا لَّفِيْ ضَلٰلٍ وَّسُعُرٍ 24

(54:24) saying: "Are we to follow a single mortal,[17] one from among ourselves? If we do that, we shall surely be in error and folly.

17. In other words, there were three reasons for their refusal to obey and follow the Prophet Salih:

(1) He is a human being and not a super-human person so that we may regard him as superior to ourselves.

(2) He is a member of our own nation, he is in no way superior to us.

(3) He is a single man, one from among ourselves. He is not a prominent chief with a large following, or an army of soldiers. Or a host of attendants so that we may acknowledge his superiority. They wanted that a Prophet should either be a superman, or if he be a common man, he should not have been born in their own land and nation, but should have descended from above, or sent from another land, and if nothing else, he should at least have been a rich man, whose extraordinary splendor should make the people believe why Allah had selected him alone for the leadership of the nation. This same was the error of ignorance in which the disbelievers of Makkah were involved. They also refused to acknowledge the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a Prophet on the basis that he was a man who moved about in the streets like the common men, had been born among them only the other day and now was claiming that God had appointed him as a Prophet.

ءَاُلْقِيَ الذِّكْرُ عَلَيْهِ مِنْۢ بَيْنِنَا بَلْ هُوَ كَذَّابٌ اَشِرٌ 25

(54:25) Was there none but he to whom the Reminder could be vouchsafed excluding all others? Nay; he is an insolent liar."[18]

18. The word ashir of the original means a conceited, insolent person given to bragging of his own superiority over others.

سَيَعْلَمُوْنَ غَدًا مَّنِ الْكَذَّابُ الْاَشِرُ 26

(54:26) (We told Our Messenger): "Tomorrow they shall know who is the insolent liar.

إِنَّا مُرْسِلُوا النَّاقَةِ فِتْنَةً لَّهُمْ فَارْتَقِبْهُمْ وَاصْطَبِرْ ۝27

(54:27) We shall send the she-camel as a trial for them; so watch their end with patience.

وَنَبِّئْهُمْ أَنَّ الْمَاءَ قِسْمَةٌ بَيْنَهُمْ ۖ كُلُّ شِرْبٍ مُّحْتَضَرٌ ۝28

(54:28) Let them know that the water should be divided between them and the she-camel, each availing their turn."[19]

19. This explains the verse: We are sending the she-camel as a trial for them. The trial was that suddenly a she-camel was produced before them and they were told that one day she would drink the water all by herself and the next day they would be allowed to have water for themselves and their cattle. On the day of her turn neither would any of them himself come to any of the springs and wells to take water nor bring his cattle for watering. This challenge was given on behalf of the person about whom they themselves admitted that he had no army and no hosts to support him.

فَنَادَوْا صَاحِبَهُمْ فَتَعَاطَىٰ فَعَقَرَ ۝29

(54:29) Eventually, they summoned their companion, and he undertook the (outrageous) task and hamstrung the she-camel.[20]

20. These words by themselves indicate that the she-camel roamed at will in their settlements for a long period of time. No one could dare approach a source of water on the day of her turn. At last, they called out to a haughty chief of theirs who was well known for his courage and boldness, and urged him to put an end to her. Emboldened by the false encouragement, he took up the responsibility and killed the she-camel. This clearly means that the people were very frightened. They felt that she had extraordinary power, and so they dared not touch her with an evil intention. That is why the killing of a mere she-camel especially when the Prophet who had presented her, did not possess any army that could be a deterrent for them, amounted to undertaking a dangerous and difficult task. (For further details. see (E.N 58 of Surah Al-Aaraf) and (E.Ns 104. 105 of Surah Ash-Shuara).

فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِي وَنُذُرِ ۝30

(54:30) So how awesome were My chastisement and My warnings!

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً فَكَانُوا كَهَشِيمِ الْمُحْتَظِرِ ۝31

(54:31) Behold, We sent a single Blast against them, and they became like the trampled twigs of a sheep pen-builder.[21]

21. The crushed and rotten bodies of the people of Thamud have been compared to the trampled and trodden twigs and pieces of bush lying around an enclosure for cattle.

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْاٰنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ 32

(54:32) Surely We have made this Qur'an easy as a reminder. Is there, then, any who will take heed?

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوْطٍۢ بِالنُّذُرِ 33

(54:33) Lot's people also gave the lie to the warnings,

اِنَّآ اَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حَاصِبًا اِلَّآ اٰلَ لُوْطٍ ؕ نَجَّيْنٰهُمْ بِسَحَرٍ ۙ 34

(54:34) and behold, We let loose upon them a tempest which rained stones upon them, except upon Lot's household whom We rescued in the last hours of the night

نِّعْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِيْ مَنْ شَكَرَ 35

(54:35) as a favour from Us. Thus do We reward those who give thanks.

وَلَقَدْ اَنْذَرَهُمْ بَطْشَتَنَا فَتَمَارَوْا بِالنُّذُرِ 36

(54:36) Surely Lot warned his people that We shall seize them (with Our chastisement), but they doubted the warnings.

وَلَقَدْ رَاوَدُوْهُ عَنْ ضَيْفِهٖ فَطَمَسْنَآ اَعْيُنَهُمْ فَذُوْقُوْا عَذَابِيْ وَنُذُرِ 37

(54:37) Then they even solicited his guests from him, whereupon We blotted out their eyes, (telling them): “Now have a taste of My chastisement and My warnings.” [22]

22. The details of this story have been given in (Surah Houd, Ayats 77-83) and (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 61-74), a resume of which is as follows: When Allah decided to punish those people with a torment, He sent a few angels in the guise of handsome boys as guests in the house of the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him). When the people saw such handsome guests in Lot’s house, they rushed to it and demanded that they be handed over to them for the gratification of their lust. The Prophet Lot implored them to desist from their evil intention, but they did not listen and tried to enter his house to take hold of the guests forcibly. At this stage suddenly their eyes were blinded. Then the angels told Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) that he and his household should leave the city before dawn; then as soon as they had

left a dreadful torment descended on the people. In the Bible also this event has been described. The words are: And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door. But the men (i.e. the angels) put forth their hand and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door. And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door. (Gen. 19: 9-11).

وَلَقَدْ صَبَّحَهُمْ بُكْرَةً عَذَابٌ مُّسْتَقِرٌّ ۚ 38

(54:38) Indeed an abiding chastisement came upon them in the morning.

فَذُوْقُوْا عَذَابِيْ وَنُذُرِ 39

(54:39) So have a taste of My chastisement and My warnings.

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْاٰنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ ۚ 40

(54:40) Surely We have made this Qur'an easy as a reminder. Is there, then, any who will take heed?

وَلَقَدْ جَآءَ اٰلَ فِرْعَوْنَ النُّذُرُ ۚ 41

(54:41) Warnings also came to the Pharaonites,

كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا كُلِّهَا فَاَخَذْنٰهُمْ اَخْذَ عَزِيْزٍ مُّقْتَدِرٍ 42

(54:42) but they gave the lie to Our Signs, to all of them. Thereupon We seized them with the seizing of the Most Mighty, the Most Powerful.

اَكُفَّارُكُمْ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ اُولٰٓئِكُمْ اَمْ لَكُمْ بَرَآءَةٌ فِي الزُّبُرِ ۚ 43

(54:43) Are your unbelievers (of Makkah) any better than they?[23] Or have you been granted any immunity in the Scriptures?

23. The address here is directed to the Quraish, as if to say: When the other nation have been punished for adopting disbelief and showing stubbornness and denying the truth, why would you not be punished if you adopted the same attitude and conduct. For, you are not a special people in any way.

اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ نَحْنُ جَمِيْعٌ مُّنْتَصِرٌ 44

(54:44) Or do they say: “We are a strong legion, strong enough for victory?”

سَيُهۡزَمُ الۡجَمۡعُ وَيُوَلُّوۡنَ الدُّبُرَ 45

(54:45) Soon shall this legion be routed and shall turn their backs and flee. [24]

24. This is a specific prophecy that was made five years before the hijrah, saying that the hosts of the Quraish who waxed proud of their strength would soon be put to rout by the Muslims. At that time no one could imagine how such a revolution would take place in the near future. Such was the helplessness of the Muslims that a group of them had already left the country and taken refuge in Habash and the rest of the believers lay besieged in Shiab Abi Talib, and were being starved by the Quraish boycott and siege. Under such conditions no one could imagine that only within next seven years the tables were going to turn. A pupil of Ahdullah bin Abbas has related that Umar used to say: When this verse of Surah Al-Qamar was sent down. I wondered what hosts it is that would be routed. But when in the Battle of Badr the pagan Quraish were routed and they were fleeing from the battlefield, I saw the Messenger of Allah in his armor rushing forward and reciting this verse: Sa-yuhzam-al -jamu yuwallun-ad-dubur. Then only did I realize that this was the defeat that had been foretold. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim).

بَلِ السَّاعَةُ مَوۡعِدُهُمۡ وَالسَّاعَةُ اَدۡهٰى وَاَمَرُّ 46

(54:46) Nay; the Hour of Doom is their appointed time, and the Hour shall be more calamitous and bitter.

اِنَّ الۡمُجۡرِمِيۡنَ فِىۡ ضَلٰلٍ وَّسُعُرٍ ؕ 47

(54:47) The evil-doers are victims of error and madness.

يَوۡمَ يُسۡحَبُوۡنَ فِى النَّارِ عَلٰى وُجُوۡهِهِمۡ ؕ ذُوۡقُوۡا مَسَّ سَقَرَ 48

(54:48) There shall come a Day when they will be dragged on their faces into the Fire and will be told: “Now taste the flame of Hell.”

اِنَّا كُلَّ شَىۡءٍ خَلَقۡنٰهُ بِقَدَرٍ 49

(54:49) We have created everything in a determined measure.[25]

25. That is, nothing in the world has been created at random but with a purpose and destiny. A thing comes into being at an appointed time, takes a particular form and shape, develops to its fullest extent, survives for a certain period, and then decays and dies at an appointed time. Even according to this universal principle this world too has a destiny in accordance with which it is functioning till an appointed time and will come to an end at an appointed tune. It will neither come to an end a moment earlier than its appointed time of end nor

survive a moment longer; it has neither existed since eternity nor will exist till eternity, nor is it the plaything of a child which he may destroy as and when he likes.

وَمَآ اَمۡرُنَاۤ اِلَّا وَاحِدَةٌ كَلَمۡحٍۢ بِالۡبَصَرِ 50

(54:50) Our command consists of only one Word which is carried out in the twinkling of an eye.[26]

26. That is, We shall not have to make any lengthy preparations for bringing about Resurrection, nor will it take long to come. For no sooner will a command be issued forth from Us, it will take place in the twinkling of an eye.

وَلَقَدۡ اَهۡلَكۡنَاۤ اَشۡيَاعَكُمۡ فَهَلۡ مِنۡ مُّدَّكِرٍ 51

(54:51) We did indeed destroy many like you.[27] Is there, then, any who will heed?

27. That is, if you think that the world is not the kingdom of a Wise and Just God but the lawless empire of a blind ruler, in which man may behave and conduct himself as he likes, without any fear of accountability, history is proof and an eye-opener for you, which shows that the nations that adopted such a way of life, have been sent to their doom, one after

وَكُلُّ شَىۡءٍ فَعَلُوۡهُ فِى الزُّبُرِ 52

(54:52) All their deeds are recorded in the Scrolls;

وَكُلُّ صَغِيۡرٍ وَّكَبِيۡرٍ مُّسۡتَطَرٌ 53

(54:53) everything large or small, is duly inscribed.[28]

28. That is, these people should not be under the delusion that whatever they did in the world has become extinct; nay, they should know that full record of the deeds of every person, every group and every nation lies preserved and it will be presented before them at the appropriate time.

اِنَّ الۡمُتَّقِيۡنَ فِىۡ جَنّٰتٍ وَّنَهَرٍ ۙ 54

(54:54) Surely those who shun disobedience will dwell amidst Gardens and running streams

فِىۡ مَقۡعَدِ صِدۡقٍ عِنۡدَ مَلِيۡكٍ مُّقۡتَدِرٍ ع 55

(54:55) where they will be honourably seated in the presence of a King, Mighty in Power.

55. Surah Ar Rahman (The Most Merciful)

Name

This Surah is entitled Ar Rahman, the word with which it begins. This title, however, deeply relates to the subject matter of the Surah too, for in it, from the beginning to the end, the manifestations and fruits of Allah's attribute of mercy and grace have been mentioned.

Period of Revelation

The commentators generally hold the view that this is a Makki Surah, though according to some traditions which have been cited on the authority of Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas, Ikrimah and Qatadah, it was revealed at Madinah. But, firstly, there are also some other traditions from these very authorities, which contradict this view; secondly, its subject matter bears a closer resemblance with the Makki Surahs than with the Madani Surahs; rather it appears to belong to the very early Makkah period. However, there are several authentic traditions which testify that it had been revealed in Makkah itself many years before the hijrah.

Musnad Ahmad contains a tradition from Hadarat Asma, daughter of Abu Bakr (may Allah bless them both), to the effect: "I saw the Messenger of Allah offering his Prayers in the sacred precincts of the Ka'bah facing the corner in which the "Black Stone" is fixed. This relates to the time when the Divine Command, fasda bi-ma tumar ("So, proclaim publicly, O Prophet, what you are being commanded") had not yet been revealed. The polytheists at that time were hearing the words, Fa-biayyi alaa'i Rabbi kuma tukadhdhi ban, being recited by him in the Prayer." This shows than this Surah had been sent down even before Surah Al-Hijr.

Al-Bazzar, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Al- Mundhir, Daraqutni (in Al Afrad), Ibn Marduyah and Ibn Al Khatib (in Al- Tarikh) have related, on the authority of Hadrat Abdullah bin Umar, that once the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) recited Surah Ar-Rahman himself, or heard it recited before him : then he said to the people: How is it that I am not hearing from you the kind of good answer that the jinn had given to their Lord?When the people asked what it was he replied: "As I recited the Divine Words, Fa bi- ayyi alaa'i Rabbi-kuma tukadhdhiban, the jinn in response would repeat the words La bi shai'in min ni'mati Rabbi- na nukadhdhib: "We do not deny any of our Lord's blessings."

A similar theme has been related by Tirmidhi, Hakim and Hafiz Abu Bakr al-Bazzar from Hadrat Jabir bin Abdullah. Their tradition contains these words: "When the people kept silent on hearing the Surah Ar-Rahman, the Holy Prophet said 'I recited this very Surah before the jinn in the night when they had gathered together to hear the Qur'an. They responded to it better than you have. As I recited the Divine Words, Fa bi ayyi alaa'i Rabbikuma tukadhdhiban ("O jinn and men, which blessings of your Lord will you deny?") they would respond to it, saying: O our Lord, do not deny any of your blessings Praise is for You alone'!"

This tradition indicates that on the occasion of the incident that bas been related in Surah Al Ahqaf(vv. 29- 32) of the jinn's hearing the Qur'an from the Holy Prophet (peace and

blessings of Allah be upon him) he was reciting Surah Ar Rahman in the Prayer. This happened in the 10th year of the Prophethood when the Holy Prophet had halted at Makkah on his way back from Ta'if. Although in some other traditions it has been reported that the Holy Prophet did not know then that the jinn were hearing him recite the Qur'an, but afterwards Allah had informed him of this, it is not unreasonable to suppose that just as Allah had informed him of the jinn's hearing the Qur'an so also Allah Himself might have told him as to what answer they were giving on hearing Surah Ar Rahman.

These traditions only indicate that Surah Ar Rahman had been revealed even before Surahs Al-Hijr and Al-Ahqaf. Besides, we come across another tradition which shows that it is one of those Surahs which were the earliest Revelations at Makkah. Ibn Ishaq has related this on the authority of Hadrat Urwah bin Zubair: The Companions one day said to one another: "The Quraish have never heard any one recite the Qur'an publicly to them, and who would read out the Divine Word aloud to them Hadrat Abdullah bin Masud said that he would. The Companions expressed the apprehension that he might be subjected to a harsh treatment and said that it should better be done by a person of a powerful family, who would protect him if the Quraish tried to subject him to violence. Hadrat Abdullah said: 'Let me alone : my Protector is Allah.' So early next morning he went to the Ka'bah while the Quraish chiefs were sitting in their respective conferences. Hadrat Abdullah arrived at the Maqam (station of Abraham) and began to recite Surah Ar- Rahman raising his voice as he did so. The Quraish first tried for a while to understand what he was saying. Then, when they realized that it was the Word that Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was representing as the Word of God, they fell upon him and began to hit him in the face. But Hadrat Abdullah was not deterred : he continued to receive the slaps and to read the Qur'an as long as he could, At last, when he returned with a swollen face, the Companions said that they apprehended the same. He replied: 'God's enemies were never so light for me as they were today. If you say I'll recite the Qur'an to them again tomorrow.' They all said, 'No, you have done enough; you have made them listen to what they didn't want to bear.'" (Ibn Hisham, vol. 1, p. 336).

Theme and Subject Matter

This is the only Surah of the Qur'an in which besides men the jinn also, who are the other creation of the earth endowed with freedom of will and action, have been directly addressed, and both men and jinn have been made to realize the wonders of Allah's power, His countless blessings, their own helplessness and accountability before Him, and have been warned of the evil consequences of His disobedience and made aware of the best results of His obedience. Although at several other places in the Qur'an there are clear pointers to show that like the men the jinn too are a creation who have been endowed with freedom of will and action and are accountable, who have been granted the freedom of belief and unbelief, of obedience and disobedience, and among them too there are the believers and the unbelievers, the obedient and the rebellious, as among human beings, and among them too there exist such groups as have believed in the Prophets sent by God and in the Divine Books, this Surah clearly points out that the message of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the Qur'an is meant both for men and for jinn and that his Prophethood is not restricted to human beings alone.

Although in the beginning of the Surah the address is directed only to human beings, for to them only belongs the vicegerency" of the earth, among them only have the Messengers of Allah been raised, and in their tongues only have the Divine Books been revealed, yet from verse 13 onward both the men and the jinn have been addressed and one and the same invitation has been extended to both.

The themes of the Surah have been couched in brief sentences in a specific sequence:

In vv. 1-4 it has been stated that the teaching of the Qur'an is from Allah Almighty and it is the very demand of His mercy that He should provide guidance to mankind through this teaching, for it is He Who has created man as a rational and intelligent being.

In vv. 5-6 it has been said that the whole system of the Universe is functioning under Allah's Sovereignty and everything in the earth and heavens is subject to His Command alone.

In vv. 7-9 another important truth that has been expressed is that Allah has established the entire system of the Universe precisely and equitably on justice, and the nature of this system requires that those who dwell in it also should adhere to justice within the bounds of their authority and should not disturb the balance.

In vv. 10-25 besides mentioning the wonders and excellences of Allah's might, references have been made to His those bounties from which the jinn and men are deriving benefit.

In vv.26-30 both the men and the jinn have been reminded of the truths that in this Universe no one except One God is immortal and imperishable, and there is none, from the lowest to the highest, who does not stand in need of God for his survival and other requirements. Whatever is happening here, from the earth to the heavens, is happening under His administration and control.

In vv. 31-36 both the groups have been warned that the time is fast approaching when they will be called to account, which they will not be able to avoid, for God's Kingdom is encircling them from every side; it is not in their power to flee it; if they are involved in the misunderstanding that they can, they may try to do so.

In vv. 37-38 it has been said that this accountability will be held on the Day of Resurrection.

In vv. 39-45 the evil end of the guilty ones, from among men and jinn, who have been disobeying Allah in the world has been mentioned.

And from verse 46 to the end of the Surah mention has been made of those rewards and blessings which will be granted to the righteous men and jinn who have led pious lives in the world and lived with a clear understanding that they will have to appear before their Lord one day and render an account of their deeds and actions.

This whole discourse is couched in oratorical language. It is a spirited and eloquent address in the course of which after mentioning each of the wonders of Allah's great power, and each of the blessings bestowed by Him, and each of the manifestations of His Sovereignty and dominion, and each of the details of His punishment and rewards, the jinn and men have been over and over again questioned: "Which then of the bounties and favors of your

Lord will you deny ?" Below we shall explain that alaa is a word with many shades of meaning, which has been used in different senses at different places in this discourse, and this question to the jinn and men bears its own special meaning at every place according to the context.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اَلرَّحۡمٰنُ ۙ 1

(55:1) The Merciful One

عَلَّمَ الۡقُرۡاٰنَ ؕ 2

(55:2) has taught the Qur'an,[1]

1. That is, the teaching of this Quran is not the production of a man's mind but its Teacher is the Merciful God Himself. Here, there was no need to tell as to whom Allah had imparted this Quranic teaching for the people were hearing it from the tongue of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Therefore, the situation by itself made it evident that the teaching had been imparted to Muhammad (peace be upon him).

To begin the discourse with this sentence is meant, first of all, to tell that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) himself is not its author, but its Teacher is Allah Almighty. Furthermore, there is another object also to which the word Rahman (Merciful) is pointing. If the purpose was only to say that that teaching is from Allah, and not the production of the Prophet's mind, there was no need to use an attribute of Allah instead of His proper name, and for that purpose any attribute from among the divine attributes could have been adopted, But when, instead of saying that Allah, or the Creator, or the Provider, has taught this, it was said: The Merciful (Ar- Rahman) has taught this Quran, it by itself gave the meaning that the revelation of the Quran for the guidance of mankind was nothing but Allah's mercy and grace, As He is most kind and Merciful to His creation, He did not like that He should leave them wandering in the darkness, and His mercy demanded that He should send down this Quran to bless them with the knowledge on which depends their right guidance and conduct in the world and their success and well-being in the Hereafter,

خَلَقَ الۡاِنۡسَانَ ۙ 3

(55:3) has created man,[2]

2. In other words, as Allah is the Creator of man, and it is the Creator's responsibility to provide guidance to His creation and show it the way by following which it may fulfill the object of its creation, the revelation of this Quranic teaching from Allah is not only the demand of Allah's mercifulness but also the necessary and natural demand of His being the Creator. Who else would provide guidance to the creation if not the Creator. And if the Creator did not provide guidance, who else could. And what greater defect could there be

for a creator that he should not teach his creation the method of fulfilling the object, for which it has been created? Thus, in fact, the arrangement and provision of the teaching for man by Allah is not anything strange; it would be strange if no such arrangement had been made at all. Allah has not just left alone whatever He has created in the Universe, but has given it the most appropriate structure by which it may play its role in the system of nature and has taught it the method of playing that role effectively and successfully. Thus, each single hair and each single cell of man's own body has been born with the knowledge of how it has to carry out the task in the human body for which it has been created, Then, after all how could man himself remain deprived and independent of his Creator's teaching and guidance. This theme has been presented in the Quran at different places in different ways, In (Surah Al-lail, Ayat 12), it has been said: Indeed, it is for Us to tell the way. In(Surah An-Nahl, Ayat 9), it is said that Allah has taken upon Himself to show the right way, when there exist crooked ways too. In(Surah TaHa, Ayats 47-50), it has been stated that when the Pharaoh heard the prophetic message from the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and asked who was his Lord who had sent him as a Messenger to him, the Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Our Lord is He Who has given a distinctive form to everything and then guided it aright. That is, He has taught it the method by which it could carry out and fulfill the object of its creation in the system of existence. This is the reasoning by which an unbiased mind is satisfied that the coming of the Prophets and the Books from Allah for the instruction of man is the very demand of nature.

عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ 4

(55:4) and has taught him articulate speech.[3]

3. One meaning of the word bayan, as used in the original, is the expressing of one's own mind, i.e. speaking and expressing one's thoughts and intentions. Its other meaning is to make distinction between things, which here signifies the distinction between good and evil, virtue and vice. According to those two meanings this brief sentence completes the above reasoning. Speech is the distinctive quality which distinguishes man from the animals and other earthly creatures, It is not merely the power of speech, but there are working behind it the faculties of reasoning and intellect, understanding and discernment, will and judgment, and other mental powers without which man's power of speech could not operate at all. Therefore, speech is in fact an express symbol of man's being an intelligent being who has been endowed with freedom and authority, and when Allah has blessed man with this distinctive quality, evidently the nature of instruction for him also cannot be the same as would be suitable for the guidance of other creatures. Likewise, another distinctive quality of vital importance in man is that Allah has placed in him moral sense by virtue of which he can naturally distinguish between good and evil, truth and falsehood, justice and injustice, right and wrong, and this intuition and sense does not leave him even when he degrades himself to the lowest state of error and ignorance. The inevitable demand of these two distinctive qualities is that the method of instruction for man's conscious and voluntary life should be different from the innate, natural mode of instruction under which the fish has been taught to swim, the bird to fly, and the eye in the human body itself to wink and see, the ear to hear and the stomach to digest. Man in this sphere of his life himself recognizes the means like the teacher, the book, the school, the verbal and written instruction and reasoning and discussion as the modes of instruction, and does not regard the innate

knowledge and intelligence as sufficient. Why should it then appear strange that for fulfilling the responsibility that falls upon the Creator of educating man, He has made the Messenger and the Book the means of his education and instruction? The mode of education has to suit the nature of the creation, And very rationally so. The Quran alone can be the means of educating the creation that has been taught bayan (speech) and not by other means that might suit the creatures which have not been taught the speech.

اَلشَّمۡسُ وَالۡقَمَرُ بِحُسۡبَانٍ ۬ۖ 5

(55:5) The sun and the moon follow a reckoning,[4]

4. That is, It is a powerful law and unalterable system that binds the great planets together. Man is able to calculate and measure time, days, dates, and crops and seasons only because no change takes place in the rule that has been laid down for the rising and setting of the sun and of its passing through different stages. The innumerable creatures found on the earth are staying alive only because the sun and the moon have been accurately and precisely placed at particular distances from the earth and any increase or decrease in this distance is made in the right measure, in a particular order, otherwise if their distance from the earth increased or decreased haphazardly, no one, could possibly survive here. Likewise, the perfect relationship and harmony that has been established between the movements of the moon around the earth and the sun, has made the moon a universal calendar, which announces the lunar date every night to the whole world with perfect regularity.

وَّالنَّجۡمُ وَالشَّجَرُ يَسۡجُدٰنِ 6

(55:6) and the stars[5] and the trees all prostrate themselves, [6]

5. The word used in the original is an-najm, the wellknown meaning of which is the star; but in the Arabic lexicon this word is also used for the plants and creepers which do not have a stem, e.g. vegetable, melons, water melons, etc. The commentators disagree about the sense in which this word has been used here. Ibn Abbas, Saed bin Jubair, Suddi, and Sufyan Thauri have taken it in the meaning of stemless vegetation, for just after it the word ash-shajar (the tree) has been used and this meaning is more relevant to it. On the contrary, Mujahid, Qatadah and Hasan Basri have expressed the opinion that an-najm here does not imply the plants of the earth, but the stars of the sky, as this is its well-known meaning. On hearing this word, the mind first turns to this very meaning, and the mention of the sun and the moon has been followed by the stars very naturally and relevantly. Though the majority of the commentators and translators have preferred the first meaning, and it cannot be held wrong either, we hold Hafiz Ibn Kathir's this opinion as sound that in view of both the language and the subject-matter the second meaning seems to be preferable. At another place in the Quran (Surah Al- Hajj, Ayat 18) mention has also been made of the stars and the trees prostrating themselves, and there the word nujum (pl. of najm) cannot be taken in any other meaning than of the stars. The words of the verse are: Alam tara annallaha yasjudu lahu man fis smawati wa man fil ardi wash-shamsu wal-qamaru wanujumu wal jibalu wash-shajaru wad-da wabbu wa kathirum-min-annasi. In this verse nujum (stars) have been

mentioned along with shams (sun) and qamar (moon), and shajar (trees) along with mountains and animals and it has been said that they all bow down to Allah.

6. That is, the stars of the heavens and the trees of the earth, all are subject to Allah's command and obedient to His law. They cannot exceed the rule that has been set for them. What is meant to be impressed in these two verses is that the whole system of the universe has been created by Allah and is functioning in His obedience. Nothing from the earth to the heavens is independent, nor functioning under another's godhead, nor has anyone any share in God's kingdom, nor has anyone the position that it should be made a deity. All are servants and slaves: the Master is One Almighty Lord alone. Hence, Tauhid alone is the truth which is being taught by this Quran. Apart from this, any one who is involved in polytheism and denial of God is, in fact, at war with the whole system of the universe.

وَالسَّمَآءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيْزَانَ ۙ 7

(55:7) and He has raised up the heaven and has set a balance[7]

7. Almost all the commentators have interpreted mizan (balance) to mean justice, and "set the balance" to imply that Allah has established the entire system of the universe on justice. Had there been no harmony and balance and justice established among the countless stars and planets moving in space, and the mighty forces working in this universe, and the innumerable creatures and things found here, this life on earth would not have functioned even for a moment. Look at the creatures existing in the air and water and on land for millions and millions of years on this earth. They continue to exist only because full justice and balance has been established in the means and factors conducive to life; in case there occurs a slight imbalance of any kind, every tract of life would become extinct.

اَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِي الْمِيْزَانِ 8

(55:8) that you may not transgress in the balance,

وَاَقِيْمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيْزَانَ 9

(55:9) but weigh things equitably and skimp not in the balance.[8]

8. That is, as you are living in a balanced universe, whose entire system has been established on justice, you should also adhere to justice. For if you act unjustly within the sphere in which you have been given authority, and fail to render the rights of others, you would indeed be rebelling against the nature of the universe; for the nature of this universe does not admit of injustice and perversion and violation of the rights. Not to speak of a major injustice, even if a person fraudulently deprives another of an ounce of something, by giving him short measure, he disturbs the balance of the entire universe. This is the second important part of the Quranic teaching that has been presented in these three verses. The first teaching is Tauhid and the second is justice. Thus, in a few brief sentences the people

have been told what teaching has been brought by the Quran which the Merciful God has sent for the guidance of man.

وَالْأَرْضَ وَضَعَهَا لِلْأَنَامِ ۙ 10

(55:10) And He[9] has set up the earth for all beings.[10]

9. Now from here to verse 20, mention is being made of the blessing and bounties of God and of those manifestations of His Might by which both man and jinn are benefiting, and whose natural and moral demand is that although they have the option to believe or not to believe, they should adopt the way of their Lord's service and obedience willingly by their own free choice.

10. The word wada in the original means to compose, make, prepare, keep and inscribe, and anaam the creatures, which includes man and all other living things. According to Ibn Abbas, anaam includes everything which has a soul. Mujahid takes it in the meaning of the living creatures. Qatadah, Ibn Zaid and Shabi say that all living things are anaam. Hasan Basri says that both the men and the jinn are included in its meaning. The same meanings have been given by the lexicographers. This shows that the people who deduce from this verse the command of making land the state property are in error. This is an ugly attempt to introduce alien theories forcibly into the Quran which are neither supported by the words of the verse nor by the context. Anaam is not used only for human society but it includes all other creatures of the earth as well and setting of the earth for anaam does not mean that it should be the common property of all. Besides, the context here also does not indicate that the object of the verse is to state some economic principle. This, in fact, is meant to impress the truth that Allah made and prepared this earth in such a way that it became a fit abode for every kind of living being. It has not become so by itself, but by the Will and Power of the Creator. He in His wisdom placed it at a suitable distance and created such conditions on it which made it possible for the different species to exist and stay alive on it. (For explanation, see (E.Ns 73, 74 of Surah An- Naml), (E.Ns 29, 32 of Surah YaSeen), (E.Ns 90, 91 of Surah Al-Mumin), (E.Ns 11 to 13 of Surah HaMim As-Sajdah), (E.Ns 7 to 10 of Surah Az-Zukhruf), (E.N. 7 of Surah Al-Jathiyah).

فِيهَا فَاكِهَةٌ ۙ وَالنَّخْلُ ذَاتُ الْأَكْمَامِ ۖ 11

(55:11) Therein are fruit and palm-trees with their dates in sheaths,

وَالْحَبُّ ذُو الْعَصْفِ وَالرَّيْحَانُ ۚ 12

(55:12) and a variety of corn with both husk and grain.[11]

11. That is, grain for men and husk for the animals.

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ 13

(55:13) Which of the bounties of your Lord[12] will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?[13]

12. The word alaa as repeated over and over again in the subsequent verses has been translated differently at different places. Therefore, it would be useful to understand at the outset how vast this word is in meaning and what are the different shades of meaning it contains.

The lexicographers and commentators generally have explained alaa to mean blessings and bounties. The translators also have given this same meaning of this word, and the same has been reported from Ibn Abbas, Qatadah and Hasan Basri. The major argument that supports this meaning is the Prophet's (peace be upon him) own statement that the jinn on hearing this verse being recited would respond to it, saying La bi-shai in-min-ni maatika Rabba-na nukadhdhib: O our Lord, we do not deny any of Your blessings. Therefore, we do not subscribe to the view of some present-day scholars, who say that alaa is never used in the meaning of the blessing.

Another meaning of this word is power and wonders of power, or excellent manifestations of power. Ibn Jarir Tabari has reported that Ibn Zaid took the words fabi-ayyi alaa i Rabbikuma in the meaning of fabi-ayyi qudrat-Allah. Ibn Jarir himself has taken alaa in the meaning of power and might in his commentary of verses 37-38. Imam Razi has also made this observation in his commentary of verses 14-16: These verses do not describe the blessings but the powers of Allah, and in the commentary of verses 22-23, this: These describe the wonders of power and not the blessings.

Its third meaning is virtue, praiseworthy qualities, and perfections. Though this meaning has not been mentioned by the lexicographers and commentators, this word has often been used in this meaning in Arabic poetry.

Thus, we have taken this word in its vastest meaning and translated it suitably keeping in view the context in which it occurs. However, at some places the word alaa may have several senses in one and the same place, but due to limitations of translation we have had to adopt only one meaning. For example, in this verse after making mention of the creation of the earth and of making the best arrangements for the supply of provisions to the creatures, it has been said: Which of the alaa of your Lord will you deny?" Here, alaa has not been used in the meaning of the blessings only but also in the meaning of the manifestations of Allah Almighty's Power and His praiseworthy attributes. It is a wonder of His Might that He fashioned this earth in such a marvelous manner that countless species of creatures live here and an endless variety of fruits and grain are grown on it. And it is due to His praiseworthy qualities that He not only created these creatures but also made arrangements for their sustenance and the supply of provisions for them; and the arrangements also so perfect that their food is not only nutritious but also pleasing to the taste and sight. In this connection, reference has been made to only one excellence of Allah Almighty's workmanship for the sake of example, viz., the creation of the date-palm fruit in sheaths. Keeping this one example in view one may consider what excellences of art have been

devised and shown in the packing of banana, pomegranates, orange, coconut and other fruits, and how each of the different sorts of the grains and pulses which we so thoughtlessly cook and eat, are produced finely packed and covered in ears and pods and clusters.

13. Denying implies the several attitudes that the people adopt in respect of Allah Almighty's blessings and manifestations of His Might and His praiseworthy attributes. For example, some people do not at all admit that the Creator of all things is Allah Almighty. They think that all this is a mere byproduct of the matter, or an accidental happening, which is un-related with any wisdom and skill and workmanship. This is open denial.

Some other people do admit that the Creator of these things is Allah, but regard others beside Him also as associates in Godhead: they render thanks to others for His blessings: they adore others although they eat His provisions. This is another form of denial. Obviously, it would be the height of ingratitude if a person while admitting that a certain person had done him a favor rendered thanks to another, who had not in fact done him that favor, for this act of his would be an express proof that he regarded the other person as his benefactor whom he was rendering the thanks.

There are still others who acknowledge Allah alone as the Creator of all things and the Bestower of all blessings, but do not admit that they should obey the commands of their Creator and Sustainer and follow His injunctions. This is another form of ingratitude and denial of the blessings, for the person who behaves so denies the right of the Bestower of the blessing although he acknowledges the blessing itself.

Some other people neither disavow the blessing nor deny the right of the Bestower of the blessing, but in practice there is no appreciable difference between their conduct and the conduct of a denier. This is not verbal denial but denial in practice.

خَلَقَ الْإِنسَانَ مِن صَلْصَالٍ كَالْفَخَّارِ ۙ 14

(55:14) He has created man from dry, rotten clay like the potter's,[14]

14. The order of the initial stages of the creation of man, as given at different places in the Quran seems to be as follows:

(1) Turab, i.e. earth or dust.

(2) Teen, i.e. clay made by mixing water with earth.

(3) Teen-i-lazib: sticky clay, i.e. a clay which becomes sticky when left alone for a long time.

(4) Hama in musnun, i.e. clay with a stink in it.

(5) Salsal-im-min hema in masnun kalfakhkhar, i.e. the rotten clay which when dried becomes like baked pottery.

(6) Bashar, i.e. the one who was made from this last form of the earth, in whom Allah breathed of His Spirit, to whom the angels were commanded to bow down, and from whose species his mate was created.

(7) Thumma jaala naslahu min sulalatin-min-main mahin: Then spread his progeny by means of an extract of the nature of a despicable water, for which the word nutfah has been used at other places.

For these stages one may look up the following verses of the Quran in sequence: kamasali Adam khalaqa-hu min turab (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 59); badaa khalqal-insani min tin (Surah As-Sajdah, Ayat 7); Inna khalaqna hum min tinillazib (Surah As-Saaffat, Ayat 11): the fourth and fifth stages have been described in the verse being explained, and the later stages in the following verses: Inni khaliq-un basharan min teen. Faidha sawwaitu-hu wa nafakhtu-fihi min-ruhi faqau-lahu sajidin. (Surah Suad, Ayats 71-72); khalaqa-kum min-nafsin wahidatin wa khalaqa min-ha zaujaha wabaththa minhuma rijalan kathiran wa nisaan. (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 1); thumma Jaala naslahu min sulalatin-min mmaa-in-mahin. (Surah As-Sajdah, Ayat 8); fa-inna khalaq-na-kum min turabin thumma min nutfa-tin. (Surah Al-Hajj, Ayat 5).

وَخَلَقَ الْجَآنَّ مِنْ مَّارِجٍ مِّنْ نَّارٍ ۚ 15

(55:15) and has created the jinn from the flame of fire.[15]

15. The words in the original are: mim-marij-im-min-nar. Nar signifies fire of a special nature and not the fire which is produced by burning wood or coal and marij means a pure, smokeless flame. The verse means that just as the first man was created out of earth, then passing through various stages of creation, the clay model adopted the shape of a living man of flesh and blood, and then his progeny spread by means of the sperm-drop, so was the first jinn created from a pure flame of fire, or a fire free of smoke, and then the species of jinn spread from his progeny. The position of the first jinn among the jinn is the same as of Adam (peace be upon him) among human beings. After taking the shape of a living man, the body of Adam and the human beings born of his progeny retained no relationship with the dust from which they were originally created. Though even now our body is entirely a compound of the earthly substances, these substances have taken the from of flesh and blood and after being made a living body it has become quite a different thing from a mere lump of clay. The same also is true of the jinn. Their being also is essentially fiery. But just as we are not a mere lump of earth, so also they are not a mere flame of fire.

This verse proves two things. First, that the jinn are not simply spirit, but are material beings of a special nature, but since they have been composed of pure fiery substances, they remain invisible to human beings who have bean created of earthly substances. The same has been referred to in this verse: Satan and his party see you from where you cannot see them. (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 27). Likewise, the jinn's being fast-moving, their adopting different shapes and forms easily and their penetrating into different places imperceptibly where things made of earthly substances cannot penetrate, or if they do, their penetration becomes perceptible, all these things are possible and understandable only because they are essentially a fiery creation.

The other thing that we come to know from this verse is that the jinn are not only a creation of a wholly different nature from human beings, but the substance of their creation also is absolutely different from that of man, animal, vegetable and solid matter. This verse explicitly points out the error of the viewpoint of those people who regard the jinn as a kind of human beings. According to their interpretation, the meaning of creating man of the dust and the jinn of the fire is to describe the difference of the temperamental nature of the two kinds of the people; one kind of them are humble by nature, and they are men in the true sense, and the other kind of the people are wicked by nature and fiery in temper, who may better be called devils. This is, however, no commentary of the Quran but its distortion. In E.N. 14 above we have shown in detail how the Quran itself has fully described the meaning of creating man from the earth. After reading all these details, can a reasonable person understand that the object of all this is only to define the humility of the good men? Moreover, how can a sound-minded person understand that the meaning of creating man of rotten, dry clay and the jinn of the flame of pure fire is the difference of the separate moral characteristics of the two individuals or groups with different temperaments belonging to the same human species? (For further explanation, see (E.N. 53 of Surah Adh-Dhariyat).

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ 16

(55:16) Which of the wonders of your Lord's power[16] will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?

16. Here, in view of the context, It is more appropriate to translate alaa as "wonders of power", but in this the aspect of the blessing is also present. Just as it is a wonderful manifestation of Allah's power to have brought into existence marvelous creatures like man from the dust and the jinn from the flame of fire, so for both these creatures this is also a great blessing that Allah not only granted them a body but gave each such a structure and endowed each with such powers and capabilities that they became able to perform unique works in the world. Though we do not know much about the jinn, man is present before us. Had he been given the body of a fish or a bird or a monkey along with the human brain, he could not have used, with that body, the mental powers to any advantage. Then, is it not a supreme blessing of Allah that He blessed man with the most suitable body also, so that he may exploit the mental powers granted to him efficiently? Consider the hands, the feet, the eyes, the ears, the tongue and the erect stature as against the intellect and reason, and the capabilities of workmanship and artistic skill, and one will feel that the Creator has provided a deep relationship and harmony between them without which the human body would have remained useless. Then, the same thing points out Allah's praiseworthy qualities too. How could the men and jinn of such quality and rank be brought into existence without knowledge, wisdom, mercy and a profound creative power? For such miracles of creation cannot be performed by accidents and automatic blind and deaf laws of nature.

رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ وَرَبُّ الْمَغْرِبَيْنِ ۚ 17

(55:17) Lord of the two easts and of the two wests is He.[17]

17. "The two Easts and the two Wests" may mean the two points of sunrise and the two points of sunset on the shortest day of winter and the longest day of summer as well as the easts and the wests of the two hemispheres of the earth. On the shortest day of winter the sun rises and sets making a small acute angle. On the contrary, on the longest day of summer it rises and sets making a wide obtuse angle. Between them its points of rising and setting go on shifting every day, for which at another place in the Quran (Surah Al-Maarij, Ayat 40) the words Rabbul-mashariq walmagharib have been used. Likewise, at the time the sun rises in one hemisphere of the earth, it sets in the other hemisphere, thus producing two easts and two wests of the earth. There are several meanings of calling Allah Lord of the two Easts and the two Wests. First, that it is by His command that the system of the rising and setting of the sun and their changing pattern during the year is functioning. Second, that Allah alone is the Master and Ruler of the earth and the sun; had they their own separate lords, this regular system of the rising and setting of the sun on the earth could not have functioned and continued to function permanently. Third, that the Master and Sustainer of both the Easts and both the Wests is One Allah alone; to Him belong the creations living between them. He alone is nourishing them, and it is for their sustenance that He has established this wise system of the rising and setting of the sun on the earth.

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ 18

(55:18) Which of the powers of your Lord[18] will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?

18. Here also, although in view of the context, power seems to be a more conspicuous meaning of alaa, yet, besides, the aspect of blessing and praiseworthy qualities is also present in it. It is a great blessing that Allah Almighty has prescribed the rule of the rising and setting of the sun, for by means of it the changes of the crops and seasons arc regulated with which countless interests of the men and animals and vegetables are attached. Likewise, it is Allah's mercy and providence and wisdom that He has made these arrangements by His power to meet the respective needs and requirements of the creatures He has created on the earth.

مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيٰنِ ۙ 19

(55:19) He unleashed the two seas so that they merge together,

بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخٌ لَّا يَبْغِيٰنِ ۚ 20

(55:20) and yet there is a barrier between them which they may not overstep.[19]

19. For explanation see(E. N. 68 of Surah Al-Furqan).

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ 21

(55:21) Which of the wonders of your Lord will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?

يَخْرُجُ مِنْهُمَا اللُّؤْلُؤُ وَالْمَرْجَانُ ۚ 22

(55:22) From these seas come forth pearls[20] and coral.[21]

20. According to Ibn Abbas, Qatadah, Ibn Zaid and Dahhak, marjan implies small pearls, but according to Abdullah bin Masud, this word is used for corals in Arabia.

21. Literally: From both these seas come out pearls and corals. The objectors say that pearls and corals come out only from salt waters. How is it then that they are stated to come out from both the sweet and salt waters? The answer is that the seas contain both the sweet and the salt waters; therefore, whether it is said that these things come out from the combination of both, or from both kinds of waters, it would be one and the same thing. And it may well be that further investigations might reveal that both these things originate in the sea at the place where springs of sweet water gush outs from the sea bed; and in their birth and development combination of both kinds of the water plays its part. Near Bahrain which has been famous for its pearl fisheries for centuries, there exist springs of sweet water at the bottom of the Gulf.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ 23

(55:23) Which of the wonders of your Lord's power will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?[22]

22. Here also though the aspect of power in alaa is conspicuous, the aspect of the blessing and praiseworthy qualities is also not hidden. It is a blessings of God that these valuable things come out from the sea, and it is His Providence that for the satisfaction of the aesthetic taste of the creatures whom He had blessed with the taste for beauty and the love and longing for adornment, He created all sorts of these beautiful things in His world.

وَلَهُ الْجَوَارِ الْمُنْشَئَاتُ فِي الْبَحْرِ كَالْأَعْلَامِ ۚ 24

(55:24) His are the ships,[23] towering on the sea like mountains.

23. His are the ships: Ships became possible only by His power. It is He Who blessed man with the capability and skill that he may build ships for crossing the oceans. It is He Who created on the earth the material from which ships could be built, and it is He Who subjected water to the laws by which it became possible for the mountain-like ships to sail on the surface of the surging oceans.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ۚ 25

(55:25) Which of the favours of your Lord will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?[24]

24. Here, the aspect of the blessing; and bounty is conspicuous in alaa, but the explanation given above shows that the aspect of power and good qualities is also present in it.

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ ۚ صلے 26

(55:26) All[25] that is on earth will perish,

25. From here to verse 30, the jinn and the men have been informed of two realities:

First, neither you are immortal nor the provisions that you are enjoying in this world everlasting. Immortal and everlasting is the Being of the High and Supreme God alone Whose greatness this universe testifies, and by Whose grace and kindness you have been favored with these bounties. Now, if some one among you behaves arrogantly, it would be due to his own meanness. If a foolish person assumes haughtiness in his tiny sphere of authority, or becomes god of a few helpless men who fall into his hand, this farce would not last long. A godhead that lags for a mere score or two score years in a corner of the earth whose size in this limitless universe is not even equal to a pea seed, and then becomes a legend of the past, is not something of which one may feel proud and arrogant.

The other important truth of which both these creations have been warned is: None of those whom you have set up as deities and removers of hardships and fulfiller of needs, apart from Allah, whether they are angels or prophets or the moon and the sun, or some other creation, can fulfill any of your needs. These helpless creatures and things themselves stand in need of Allah's help for their needs and requirements. They themselves pray to Him for help. When they are not able to remove their own hardships, how will they remove your hardships? Whatever is happening in this limitless universe, from the earth to the heavens, is happening under the command of One God alone. No one else has any share in His Godhead. No one therefore can influence anyone else's destiny in any way.

وَيَبْقَىٰ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ ۚ 27

(55:27) only the Person of your Lord, full of majesty and splendour, will endure.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ 28

(55:28) So which of the wonders of your Lord will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?[26]

26. Here, as the context itself shows, the word alaa has been used in the sense of excellences and perfections. Whoever of the mortal creatures is involved in vanity and self-arrogance and struts about thinking that his false godhead is everlasting, disavows Lord of the world's glory and majesty by his conduct, if not by his tongue. His pride and arrogance by itself is a denial of Allah Almighty's greatness and glory. Whatever claim he may make to an

excellence by his tongue, or arrogate to himself such an excellence, it is indeed a disavowal of the rank and station of the real possessor of excellences and perfections.

يَسْـَٔلُهٗ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ هُوَ فِيْ شَاْنٍ ۚ 29

(55:29) All in the heavens and the earth entreat Him for their needs; a new, mighty task engages Him each day.[27]

27. That is, He is continuously and endlessly functioning in this universe and creating countless new things with new and yet new forms and designs and qualities, He is giving death to one and life to another, exalting one and debasing another, causing one to recover and another to remain ill, rescuing a drowning one and drowning a floating one. He is providing sustenance to countless creatures in a variety of ways, His world never stays in the same state: it is changing every moment and its Creator arranges it in a new state and fashion every time, which is different from every previous form and fashion and state.

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ 30

(55:30) Which of your Lord's laudable attributes will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?[28]

28. Here, alaa seems to have been used in the sense of qualities and glories. Every person who commits polytheism of any kind, in fact, disavows one or the other of Allah's attributes, A person's saying that such and such a saint has removed his disease, in fact, amounts to saying that Allah is not the Remover of disease and Restorer of health but the saint, Another one's saying that such and such a holy one has gotten him a job, in fact, amounts to saying that Allah is not the Sustainer and Lord but the particular holy person is his lord. Still another one's saying that his prayer has been answered at a particular shrine, in fact, amounts to saying that the command governing the world is not Allah's but the shrine's. In short, every polytheistic belief and utterance, in the final analysis, leads up to the disavowal of the divine attributes. Polytheism is nothing but that one should ascribe the divine attributes of being All-Hearing and All-Seeing, Almighty and All- Powerful, etc. to others than Allah, and should deny that Allah alone is the possessor of all these attributes.

سَنَفْرُغُ لَكُمْ اَيُّهَ الثَّقَلٰنِ ۚ 31

(55:31) O you twain, who are a burden (on the earth),[29] We shall attend to you and call you to account.[30]

29. Thaqalan is derived from thiql which means a burden, and thaqal is the burden loaded on a conveyance. Thaqalan (dual) therefore would mean: two loaded burdens. Here this word refers to the jinn and men; who are both loaded on the earth. As the addressees here are those jinn and men who have turned away from the service and obedience of their Lord and Sustainer, they have been addressed as: O burdens of the earth, In other words, the

Creator is warning these two unworthy groups of His creation, saying: You who have become a burden for My earth, I am soon going to take you to task.

30. This does not mean that Allah at this time is too busy to call the disobedient servants to account, but it means that Allah has arranged a special time-table according to which He will first bring into existence generation after generation of the jinn and men in the world till an appointed time, and will provide them with an opportunity to work in this examination center of the world; then at a specific hour the examination will be suddenly brought to a close, and all the jinn and men living at that time will be given death simultaneously. Then at another time which is preordained with Allah for calling the jinn and men to account, all the former and the latter generations of both the species will be resurrected and mustered at one and the same time. In view of this time-table the two species have been warned, as if to say: We are yet busy with the work of the first period, and the time for the second period has not yet come, not to speak of embarking on the work of the third period. But you may rest assured. The time is fast approaching when We shall be free to take you to task. This lack of leisure does not mean that Allah is too occupied with one kind of work to attend to another kind of work. But its nature is analogous to the occupation of a person who has set a time-table for different sorts of the works and in respect of a work whose time has not yet arrived according to the time-table, he may say that he at the moment is not free for it.

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ 32

(55:32) (We shall then see), which of the favours of your Lord will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?[31]

31. Here, alaa can also be taken in the meaning of powers. In view of the context, each meaning seems to be appropriate in its own way. According to the first meaning, it would mean: Today you are being ungrateful for Our blessings and are being treacherous and disloyal by adopting the different attitudes of disbelief, polytheism, atheism, sin and disobedience, but tomorrow when the time comes for accountability, We shall see which of Our blessings you prove to be the result of a mere accident, or the fruit of your own ability, or manifestation of the kindness of a god or goddess or saint. In the second case, the meaning would be: Today you are mocking the doctrine of Resurrection and the gathering together of all mankind and jinn on the Day of Judgment and the accountability and the Heaven and Hell, and are harboring the misunderstanding that such things are not at all possible, but when We gather you together for accountability and all that you deny today will appear before you, then We shall see which of Our powers you deny.

يٰمَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ اِنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ اَنْ تَنْفُذُوْا مِنْ اَقْطَارِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ
فَانْفُذُوْا ؕ لَا تَنْفُذُوْنَ اِلَّا بِسُلْطٰنٍ ۚ 33

(55:33) O company of jinn and men, if you have the power to go beyond the bounds of the heavens and the earth, go beyond them! Yet you will be unable to go beyond them for that requires infinite power.[32]

32. The heavens and the earth: The universe or the kingdom of God. The verse means to impress this: It is not in your power to escape Allah's grasp. When the time for the accountability of which you are being foretold comes, you will be seized and brought before God in any case wherever you may be. To go out of God's reach you will have to flee from the universe of God for which you do not have the required power. If you feel that you have the power, then you may use that power if you so will.

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ 34

(55:34) Which of your Lord's powers will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?

يُرْسَلُ عَلَيْكُمَا شُوَاظٌ مِّنْ نَّارٍ ۙ وَّنُحَاسٌ فَلَا تَنْتَصِرٰنِ ۚ 35

(55:35) (If you so venture) a flame of fire and smoke[33] shall be lashed at you, which you shall be unable to withstand.

33. The word shuwaz, as used in the original, means the pure, smokeless flame, and nuhas is the gross smoke without a flame. These two things, one after the other, will be let loose upon the men and jinn, when they try to escape the accountability of Allah.

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ 36

(55:36) Which of your Lord's powers will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?

فَاِذَا انْشَقَّتِ السَّمَآءُ فَكَانَتْ وَرْدَةً كَالدِّهَانِ ۚ 37

(55:37) (What will happen) when the heaven will be split asunder and will become crimson like leather?[34]

34. This refers to the Day of Resurrection. Bursting of the heavens implies loosening of the discipline of the heavens, scattering of the celestial bodies, upsetting of the system of the heavens. And the meaning of reddening like red leather is that during that great upheaval anyone, who looks up towards the sky, will feel as though the entire heavens were on fire.

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ 38

(55:38) Which of your Lord's powers will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?[35]

35. That is, today you deem Resurrection impossible; you think Allah has no power to bring it about. But when it will have taken place and you see with your eyes all that you are being foretold, which of the powers of Allah will you then deny.

فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَّا يُسْـَٔلُ عَن ذَنۢبِهِۦٓ إِنسٌ وَلَا جَآنٌّ ۚ 39

(55:39) On that Day there will be no need to ask either men or jinn about their sins.[36]

36. This is being explained by the subsequent sentence: The culprits there shall be recognized by their faces. It means that in that great assembly where all the former and the latter generations will have gathered together, there will be no need to ask as to who are the culprits, nor will any man or jinn need be asked whether he is a culprit or not. The dejected faces of the culprits, their terror-stricken eyes, their disturbed and alarmed countenances will themselves be enough to expose the secret that they are the culprits. When a crowd comprising both the guilty and the innocent people, is encircled by the police, the calm and tranquil of the innocent people and the bewildered and disturbed state of the guilty ones tell at one glance as to who in the crowd is the culprit and who is innocent. This general rule is in most cases belied in the world, because the worldly police do not enjoy the reputation of being fair and just, rather on many an occasion they have turned out to be more bothersome for the gentle and innocent people than for the culprits. Therefore, here it is possible that when encircled by the police the gentle and innocent people might become even more terror-stricken than the criminals, but in the Hereafter, when every noble person will have complete faith in the justice of Allah, bewilderment will afflict only those whose conscience will be conscious of their being the culprits themselves, and who on their very arrival in the Court of God will become certain of their doom, which they had regarded as impossible or doubtful in the world and so had been committing every heinous sin and crime.

فَبِأَيِّ ءَالَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ 40

(55:40) (We shall see) which of the favours of your Lord will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?[37]

37. The real basis of the crime according to the Quran is that the servant, who is benefiting by the blessings of his Sustainer, should harbor the misunderstanding that the blessings have been bestowed by no one, but have reached to him of their own accord, or that the blessings are not the gift of God but the fruit of his own ability or good fortune, or that they are the gift of God, but God has no right on His servants, or that God Himself has not done him those favors but some other being has gotten these done for him. These are the wrong concepts on account of which man becomes independent of God and being free from His obedience and service performs acts which He has forbidden, and avoids acts which He has enjoined. Seen in this light every crime and every sin is, in reality, a disavowal of the favors of Allah whether a person denies them by the word of mouth or not. But the person who, in fact, has no intention of the denial, but acknowledges the favors from the depths of his heart, commits an error occasionally because of human weakness, he shows repentance on it and tries to avoid it. This saves him from being included among the deniers. Apart from this, all other culprits are, in fact, beliers of Allah's blessings and deniers of His favors. That is why

it has been said: When you will have been seized as culprits, then We shall see as to which of Our favors you deny. In Surah At-Takathur, Ayat 8, the same thing has been put thus: On that Day you will certainly be called to account for the blessings you had been granted. That is, it will be asked: Had We granted you these blessings or not. Then, what attitude did you adopt towards your Benefactor, and in what ways did you use His blessings.

يُعْرَفُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ بِسِيْمٰهُمْ فَيُؤْخَذُ بِالنَّوَاصِيْ وَالْاَقْدَامِ ۚ 41

(55:41) The culprits shall be known by their marks, and shall be seized by their forelocks and their feet.

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ 42

(55:42) Which of the powers of your Lord, will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?

هٰذِهٖ جَهَنَّمُ الَّتِيْ يُكَذِّبُ بِهَا الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ۙ 43

(55:43) (It will be said): "This is the Hell that the culprits had cried lies to.

يَطُوْفُوْنَ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَ حَمِيْمٍ اٰنٍ ۚ 44

(55:44) They will keep circling around between Hell and boiling water.[38]

38. That is, in Hell they will feel oppressed with thirst again and again. and will rush towards the springs of water, but will find only boiling water, which will not satisfy their thirst, and they will thus continue to wander to and fro between Hell and the springs for ever and ever.

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۚ 45

(55:45) Which of your Lord's powers will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?[39]

39. That is, will you even at that time be able to deny that God can bring about Resurrection, can give you another life after death, can call you to account, and can also make this Hell in which you are suffering punishment today.

وَلِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهٖ جَنَّتٰنِ ۚ 46

(55:46) For any who fears to stand before his Lord[40] are two Gardens.[41]

40. Who fears...Lord: who fears God in whatever he does in the world, and dreads his accountability before Him in the Hereafter. Whoever holds this belief will inevitably avoid

serving the lusts of his self, will avoid following every path blindly, will distinguish between the truth and falsehood, justice and injustice, pure and impure, and the lawful and the unlawful, and will not turn away deliberately from following the commands of God. This is the real ground for the reward that is being mentioned below.

41. Jannat actually means a garden. At some places in the Quran the entire world in which the righteous people will be kept, has been called Jannat, as though the whole of it was a garden. And at others it has been said that they will have Jannaat (Gardens) under which canals will be flowing. This means that that big Garden will comprise countless other gardens; and here precisely it has been stated that every pious man will be given two gardens in that big Garden, which will be particularly meant for him; it will have his own palaces in which he will live with his family and attendants like a king, and in it he will be provided with all that is being mentioned below.

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۙ 47

(55:47) Which of your Lord's favours will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?[42]

42. From here till the end, the word alaa has been used both for the blessings and for the powers, and there is an aspect of the praiseworthy qualities too in it. If we take the first meaning, the meaning of repeating the refrain in this context will be: If you like to deny the blessings of Allah, you may do so. The righteous will certainly receive these blessings from their Lord. In the second case the meaning would be: If you think it is impossible for Allah to create the Garden and bless His righteous servants with these bounties in it, you may think so. Allah certainly has the power to do this work and He will surely accomplish it. According to the third meaning, it means: You think that after having created this big world Allah now doesn't bother whether a person behaves unjustly here or justly, works to promote the truth or falsehood, spreads evil or good, He will neither punish the oppressor nor redress the grievances of the oppressed, will neither appreciate good nor abhor evil, then, as you think, He is helpless too. He can build the heavens and the earth but cannot prepare Hell for punishing the wicked and cannot make Heaven for rewarding the followers of the truth. Thus, you may deny His praiseworthy attributes as you may, but tomorrow when He hurls the evildoers into Hell and blesses the worshipers of the truth in Heaven, will you even then be able to deny His these attributes.

ذَوَاتَآ اَفْنَانٍ ۚ 48

(55:48) These Gardens will abound in green, blooming branches.

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ 49

(55:49) Which of your Lord's favours will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?

فِيۡهِمَا عَيۡنٰنِ تَجۡرِيٰنِ ۚ 50

(55:50) In each of the two Gardens are two flowing springs.

فَبِاَىِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ 51

(55:51) Which of your Lord's favours will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?

فِيۡهِمَا مِنۡ كُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ زَوۡجٰنِ ۚ 52

(55:52) In both these is a pair of every fruit.[43]

43. This can have two meanings:

(1) The fruits of the two gardens will have their own special flavors and tastes. In one garden he will find one kind of the fruit clustering on its branches, and in the other, another kind.

(2) In each garden there will be two kinds of fruit; one kind of the familiar fruit known and tasted in the world, though much superior to that found in the world, and the other kind of the rare fruit never imagined and tasted before.

فَبِاَىِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ 53

(55:53) Which of your Lord's favours will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?

مُتَّكِـِٔيۡنَ عَلٰى فُرُشٍۢ بَطَآئِنُهَا مِنۡ اِسۡتَبۡرَقٍ ؕ وَجَنَى الۡجَنَّتَيۡنِ دَانٍ ۚ 54

(55:54) They shall recline on couches lined with brocade,[44] and within reach shall hang the fruits of the two Gardens.

44. That is, when their lining will be of such superior quality, you may imagine what will be the quality of the outer layer of the carpets.

فَبِاَىِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ 55

(55:55) Which of your Lord's favours will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?

فِيۡهِنَّ قٰصِرٰتُ الطَّرۡفِ ۙ لَمۡ يَطۡمِثۡهُنَّ اِنۡسٌ قَبۡلَهُمۡ وَلَا جَآنٌّ ۚ 56

(55:56) In the midst of these shall be maidens with modest, restrained glances;[45] maidens whom no man or jinn has ever touched before.[46]

45. This is the real character of the woman. She should neither be shameless nor immodest, but should have modesty in her looks. That is why Allah while making a mention of women among the blessings of Paradise has first of all praised their modesty and chastity and not their beauty and physical charms. Beautiful women can get together in mixed clubs and film studios and beauty contests where only the beautiful women are admitted, but a person of only low taste and mentality can show any interest in them. No noble person can find any charm in the beauty that attracts every evil look and is ready to fall in every lap.

46. This means that in the worldly life whether a woman died a spinster, or as the wife of somebody, or died young, or as an old woman, in the Hereafter when all the righteous women enter Paradise, they will be made young and virgins. And any of the women who is made a life-partner of a righteous man, will not have been possessed by anyone before that husband, in Paradise.

This verse also shows that the righteous jinn too will enter Paradise like the righteous men. Men will have women from their own kind and the jinn their wives from their own kind: both the kinds will have their mates from their own particular kind. No person of one kind will be made a partner of a member of another kind with whom he cannot live as husband or wife naturally. The words of the verse "...whom neither man nor jinn will have touched before them," do not mean that the women there will only be of human species and they will not have been touched by any man or jinn before their husbands, but its real meaning is: In Paradise there will be women of both the jinn and the human species; they all will he modest and untouched: neither a jinn female will have been touched by a jinn male before her husband in Paradise, nor a human female will have been touched by a human male before her husband in Paradise.

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۚ 57

(55:57) Which of your Lord's favours will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?

كَاَنَّهُنَّ الْيَاقُوْتُ وَالْمَرْجَانُ ۚ 58

(55:58) Lovely as rubies and pearls.

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ 59

(55:59) Which of the favours of your Lord will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?

هَلْ جَزَآءُ الْاِحْسَانِ اِلَّا الْاِحْسَانُ ۚ 60

(55:60) Can the reward of goodness be any other than goodness?[47]

47. That is, how, after all, is it possible that Allah should allow to go waste the sacrifices of those righteous servants and should deny them their rewards, who kept themselves subjected to restrictions throughout their lives for the sake of Allah, who avoided the unlawful and remained content with the lawful, who performed their duties faithfully and sincerely, rendered the rights of those to whom rights were due, and endured hardships against evil and upheld good?

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ 61

(55:61) Which of the laudable attributes of your Lord will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?48

48. Obviously, the person who is a denier of Paradise and its rewards, actually denies many of Allah Almighty's praiseworthy attributes. Even if he believes in Allah, he holds a bad opinion about Him. In his view, He is a perverse ruler in whose lawless kingdom doing good is an exercise in futility. He is either blind or deaf and is, therefore, wholly unaware as to who in his kingdom is making sacrifices of life, wealth and labor for His sake. He is un-appreciative and cannot distinguish between good and evil. Or as he seems to think, He is helpless and powerless. He may be very appreciative of the good but is unable to reward the doer of it. That is why it has been said: When in the Hereafter good will be rewarded with good in front of your very eyes, will you even then disavow the praiseworthy attributes of your Lord.

وَمِنْ دُوْنِهِمَا جَنَّتٰنِ ۚ 62

(55:62) And besides these two there shall be two other Gardens.49

49. The word doon as used in min doon-i-hima Jannatan is employed in three different meanings in Arabic:

(1) To be situated at a lower level than another thing.

(2) To be inferior to something of better and nobler quality.

(3) To be over and above something else.

On account of this difference in meaning, one probable meaning of these words is that every dweller of Paradise will be given two more gardens besides the two previously mentioned. Another probable meaning is that these two gardens will be inferior in quality and rank to both the first mentioned gardens: that is, the first two gardens will either be situated at a higher level than these two, or the first two gardens will be of a superior kind and these two of an inferior kind as compared to them. If the first probability is adopted, it would mean that these two additional gardens also will be for those dwellers of Paradise, who have been mentioned above, And in case the second probability is adopted, the meaning would be that the first two gardens will be for those nearest to Allah, and these two for the people of the right hand. This second probability is strengthened by the two kinds of the righteous men as mentioned in Surah Al-Waqiah. First, the foremost, who have also been called the

muqarrabun; second, the people of the right hand, who have also been entitled ashab almaimanah; and for both these separate qualities of the two kinds of the gardens have been mentioned. Furthermore, this probability is also strengthened by the Hadith which Abu Bakr has related on the authority of his father, Abu Musa al-Ashari. In this he says: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Two jannaat (gardens) will be for the foremost among the righteous (or the muqarrabin), in which the utensils and articles of decoration will be of gold, and two jannaat for the followers (or the ashab al yamin), in which everything will be of silver. (Fath al-Bari, Kitab at- Tafsir: Surah Ar-Rahman).

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۙ 63

(55:63) Which of the favours of your Lord will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?

مُدْهَآمَّتٰنِ ۚ 64

(55:64) Two Gardens, dark green and fresh.[50]

50. The word madhammatan has been used in praise of these gardens. Mudhamma is such luxuriant vegetation which because of its extreme luxuriance assumes a darkish hue.

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۚ 65

(55:65) Which of the favours of your Lord will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?

فِيْهِمَا عَيْنٰنِ نَضَّاخَتٰنِ ۚ 66

(55:66) In them will be two gushing springs.

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ 67

(55:67) Which of the favours of your Lord will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?

فِيْهِمَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَّنَخْلٌ وَّرُمَّانٌ ۚ 68

(55:68) Therein will be fruits and dates and pomegranates.

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۚ 69

(55:69) Which of the favours of your Lord will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?

فِيهِنَّ خَيْرَاتٌ حِسَانٌ ۚ 70

(55:70) In the midst of these will be maidens, good and comely.

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ۚ 71

(55:71) Which of the favours of your Lord will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?

حُورٌ مَّقْصُورَاتٌ فِي الْخِيَامِ ۚ 72

(55:72) There shall be maidens sheltered in tents.[51]

51. For the explanation of hoor see (E.Ns 28, 29 of Surah As-Saaffat) and (E.N. 42 of Surah Ad-Dukhan). The pavilions probably will be similar to those pitched for the nobles and rich people in the public parks. Most probably the wives of the dwellers of Paradise will live with them in their palaces, and in their parks there will be tents pitched here and there in which there will be the hoors to entertain them. Our this presumption is based on this that in the foregoing verses beautiful and chaste wives have been mentioned; now, here, mention of the hoors signifies that they will be a different kind of women from the wives. This presumption is further strengthened by the Hadith which Umm Salamah has reported. She says: I asked: O messenger of Allah, who are better, the women of the world or the hoors. The Prophet replied (peace be upon him), the women of the world are superior to the hoors in the same way as the outer layer of a garment is superior to its lining. I asked: On what grounds? He replied: On the ground that the women have offered their Prayers, observed their Fasts, and performed other devotions. (Tabarani). This shows that the wives of the dwellers of Paradise will be the women who affirmed the faith in the world and left the world while they practiced good and right. They will enter Paradise in consequence of their faith and good deeds, and will deserve the blessings of Paradise on merit. They would either become the wives of their previous husbands of their own free will and choice if they (the previous husbands) too happened to be dwellers of Paradise. Otherwise, Allah will wed them to some other dweller of Paradise, if the two would like to live together as husband and wife. As for the hoors, they will not be entitled to dwell in Paradise as a result of any righteous deed of their own, but Allah will create them as young, beautiful women and bestow them also as a blessing among the other blessings on the dwellers of Paradise so that they may enjoy their companionship. But they will not in any case be creatures of the kind of the jinn and fairies, for man cannot cohabit with a kind other than his own. Therefore, most probably these would be those innocent girls who died immature and Allah will recreate them as young and beautiful women.

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۚ 73

(55:73) Which of the favours of your Lord will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?

لَمْ يَطْمِثْهُنَّ اِنْسٌ قَبْلَهُمْ وَلَا جَآنٌّ ۚ 74

(55:74) No man or jinn ever touched them before.

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۚ 75

(55:75) Which of the favours of your Lord will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?

مُتَّكِـِٕيْنَ عَلٰى رَفْرَفٍ خُضْرٍ وَّعَبْقَرِيٍّ حِسَانٍ ۚ 76

(55:76) They shall be reclining on green cushions and splendid carpets.[52]

52. The word abqari in the original is from abqar, the capital city of the jinn in the legends of the pre-Islamic Arabia. It was on that account that the Arabs called every fine and rare thing abqari as if it belonged to the fairyland and had no match in the material world. So much so that in their idiom the man who possessed extraordinary abilities and who performed wonderful works was also called abqari. The English word genius also is spoken in the same sense and is also derived from genii which is a synonym of jinn. That is why the word abqari has been used here to give an idea of the extraordinary exquisiteness of the provisions of Paradise to the

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ 77

(55:77) Which of the favours of your Lord will you twain – you men and jinn – then deny?

تَبٰرَكَ اسْمُ رَبِّكَ ذِى الْجَلٰلِ وَالْاِكْرَامِ ۧ 78

(55:78) Blessed be the name of your Lord, the Lord of Majesty and Glory.

56. Surah Al Waqia (The Inevitable Event)

Name

The Surah takes its name from the word al-waqi`ah of the very first verse.

Period of Revelation

According to the chronological order that Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas has given of the Surahs, first Surah Ta Ha was sent down, then Al-Waqi'ah and then Ash-Shu`ara'(Suyuti: Al-Itqan). The same sequence has been reported from Ikrimah (Baihaqi: Dala'il an Nubuwwat).

This is supported also by the story that Ibn Hisham has related from Ibn Ishaq about the affirmation of the Faith by Hadrat Umar (may Allah be pleased with him). It says that when Hadarat Umar entered his sister's house, Surah Ta Ha was being recited. Hearing his voice the people of the house hid the pages of the Qur'an. Hadrat Umar first seized his brother-in-law and then his sister rose in defense of her husband, he hit her also and wounded her on the head. When Umar saw blood on his sister, he was sorry for what he had done, and said to her: "Show me the manuscript that you have concealed so that I may see what it contains." The sister said: "You are unclean because of your polytheism: wa anna-hu la yamassu-ha ill-at-tahir: "Only a clean person can touch it." So, Hadrat Umar rose and washed himself, and then took up the manuscript to read it. This shows that Sarah Al-Waqi'ah had been sent down by that time for it contains the verse: La yamassu hu ill al mutahharun; and it had been established historically that Hadrat Umar embraced Islam after the first migration to Habash, in the fifth year of the Prophethood.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is the Hereafter, Tauhid and refutation of the Makkan disbelievers' suspicions about the Qur'an. What they regarded as utterly incredible was that Resurrection would ever take place, then the entire system of the earth and heavens would be upset, and when all the dead would be resurrected and called to account, after which the righteous would be admitted to Paradise and the wicked cast into Hell. They regarded all this as imaginary, which could not possibly happen in actual fact. In answer to this, it was said: "When the inevitable event will take place, there will be none to belie its happening, nor will anyone have the Power to avert it, nor prove it to, be an unreal happening. At that time all peoples will be divided into three classes: (1) The foremost in rank and position; (2) the common righteous people and (3) those who denied the Hereafter and persisted in disbelief and polytheism and major sins till the last." How these three classes of the people will be rewarded and punished has been described in detail in vv. 7-56.

Then, in vv. 57-74 arguments have been given, one after the other, to prove the truth of the two basic doctrines of Islam, which the disbelievers were refusing to accept, viz. the doctrines of Tauhid and the Hereafter. In these arguments, apart from every thing else that exists in the earth and heavens, man's attention has been drawn to his own body and to the food that he eats and to the water that he drinks and to the fire on which he cooks his food, and he has been invited to ponder the question : What right do you have to behave

independently of, or serve any other than, the God Whose creative power has brought you into being, and Whose provisions sustain you And how can you entertain the idea that after having once brought you into existence He has become so helpless and powerless that He cannot recreate you once again even if he wills to?

Then, in vv. 75-82 their suspicions in respect of the Qur'an have been refuted and they have been made to realize how fortunate they are that instead of deriving any benefit from the great blessing that the Qur'an is, they are treating it with scant attention and have set only this share of theirs in it that they deny it. If one seriously considers this matchless argument that has been presented in two brief sentences about the truth of the Qur'an, one will find in it the same kind of firm and stable system as exists among the stars and planets of the Universe, and the same is the proof of the fact that its Author is the same Being Who has created the Universe. Then the disbelievers have been told that this Book is inscribed in that Writ of Destiny which is beyond the reach of the creatures, as if to say "You think it is brought down by the devils to Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), whereas none but the pure angels has any access to the means by which it reaches Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) from the well guarded Tablet."

In conclusion, man has been warned, as if to say: "You may brad and boast as you like and may shut your eyes to the truths in your arrogance of independence, but death is enough to open your eyes. At death you become helpless: you cannot save your own parents; you cannot save your children; you cannot save your religious guided and beloved leaders. They all die in front of your vary eyes while you look on helplessly. If there is no supreme power ruling over you, and your this assumption is correct that you are all in all in the world, and there is no God, then why don't you restore to the dying person his soul? Just as you are helpless in this, so it is also beyond your power to stop Allah from calling the people to account and mete out rewards and punishments to them. You may or may not believe it, but every dying person will surely see his own end after death. If he belongs to those nearest to God, he will see the good end meant for them if he be from among the righteous, he will see the end prepared for the righteous; and if he be from among the deniers of the truth, he will see the end destined for the criminals.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

اِذَا وَقَعَتِ الۡوَاقِعَةُ ۙ 1

(56:1) When the Event will come to pass

لَيۡسَ لِوَقۡعَتِهَا كَاذِبَةٌ ۘ 2

(56:2) – and then there will be no one to deny its occurrence[1] –

1. Opening the discourse with this sentence by itself signifies that this is an answer to the objections that were being raised in the disbelievers' conferences against Resurrection. This was the time when the people of Makkah had just begun to hear the invitation to Islam from

the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). In it what seemed most astonishing and remote from reason to them was that the entire system of the earth and heavens would one day be overturned and then another world would be set up in which all the dead, of the former and the latter generations, would be resurrected. Bewildered they would ask: This is just impossible! Where will this earth, these oceans, these mountains, this moon and sun go? How will the centuries-old dead bodies rise up to life? How can one in his senses believe that there will be another life after death and there will be gardens of Paradise and the fire of Hell? Such were the misgivings that were being expressed at that time everywhere in Makkah. It was against this background that it was said: When the inevitable event happens, there shall be no one to belie it.

In this verse the word waqiah (event) has been used for Resurrection, which nearly means the same thing as the English word inevitable, signifying thereby that it is something that must come to pass. Then, its happening has been described by the word waqiah, which is used for the sudden occurrence of a disaster. Laisa li-waqati-ha kadhibat-un can have two meanings:

(1) That it will not be possible that its occurrence be averted, or stopped, or turned back; or, in other words, there will be no power to make it appear as an unreal event.

(2) That there will be no living being to tell the lie that the event has not taken place.

خَافِضَةٌ رَّافِعَةٌ ۙ 3

(56:3) (a calamitous Event) that shall turn things upside down:[2]

2. Literally: That which causes something or somebody to rise and to fall. Its one meaning can be that it will upset every order and it will turn things upside-down. Another meaning can also be that it will exalt the lowly and bring low the high and mighty; that is, on its advent the decision as to who is noble and who is ignoble among the people will be made on quite a different basis. Those who posed as honorable people in the world would become contemptible and those who were considered contemptible would become honorable.

إِذَا رُجَّتِ الْأَرْضُ رَجًّا ۙ 4

(56:4) when the earth will suddenly shake with a terrible shaking,[3]

3. That is, it will not be a local earthquake that may occur in a restricted area, but it will shake the whole earth to its depths all of a sudden, and it will experience a tremendous jolt and tremors all through.

وَبُسَّتِ الْجِبَالُ بَسًّا ۙ 5

(56:5) and the mountains will crumble

فَكَانَتْ هَبَآءً مُّنۢبَثًّا ۙ 6

(56:6) and will scatter abroad into fine dust.

وَّكُنْتُمْ اَزْوَاجًا ثَلٰثَةً ؕ 7

(56:7) You shall then become three groups.[4]

4. Although the address apparently is directed to the people to whom this discourse was being recited, or who may read it or hear it read now, in fact the entire mankind is its addressee. All human beings who have been born since the first day of creation and will be born till the Day of Resurrection will ultimately he divided into three classes.

فَاَصْحٰبُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ ۙ مَآ اَصْحٰبُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ ؕ 8

(56:8) The People on the Right:[5] and how fortunate will be the People on the Right!

5. The word maintanah in ashab-al-maimanah, in the original, may have been derived from yamin, which means the right hand, and also from yumn, which means good omen. If it is taken to be derived from yamin, then ashab-almaimanah would mean: Those of the right hand. This, however, does not imply its lexical meaning, but it signifies the people of exalted rank and position. The Arabs regarded the right hand as a symbol of strength and eminence and honor, and therefore would seat a person whom they wished to do honor, on the right hand, in the assemblies. And if it is taken as derived from yumn, ashabal- maimanah would mean fortunate and blessed people.

وَاَصْحٰبُ الْمَشْئَمَةِ ۙ مَآ اَصْحٰبُ الْمَشْئَمَةِ ؕ 9

(56:9) And the People on the Left:[6] and how miserable will be the People on the Left!

6. The word mashamah in ashab-al-mashamah, in the original, is from shum which means misfortune, ill-luck and bad omen. In Arabic the left hand also is called shuma. The Arabs regarded shimal (the left hand) and shum (bad omen) as synonyms, the left hand being a symbol of weakness and indignity. If a bird flew left on the commencement of a journey, they would take it as a bad omen; if they made a person sit on their left, it meant they regarded him as a weak man. Therefore, ashab-almashamah implies ill-omened people, or those who would suffer disgrace and ignominy, and would be made to stand on the left side in the court of Allah.

وَالسّٰبِقُوْنَ السّٰبِقُوْنَ ۙ ۚ 10

(56:10) As for the Foremost, they will be the foremost![7]

7. Sabiqoon (the foremost) implies the people who excelled others in virtue and love of the truth and in good works and responded to the call of Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) before others. They were also in the forefront in their response to the call for jihad, for spending their wealth for the sake of the needy and for public services, or for inviting others to virtue and truth. In short, they are ever ready for spreading the good and wiping out evil and making sacrifices and exerting themselves whenever there was need for it. On this very basis, in the Hereafter too, they will be placed in the forefront.

Thus, mankind, so to say, will be ranged in Allah's court like this: On the right hand, there will be the righteous, on the left the wicked, and in the forefront (nearest in divine presence) the Sabiqoon (the foremost in faith and good deeds). According to a Hadith reported by Aishah the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked the people: Do you know who, on the Day of Resurrection, will he the first to be accommodated under the divine shade? The people said Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) only had the best knowledge. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Those who were such that when the truth was presented before them, they accepted it forthwith; when a right was asked of them, they discharged it gracefully; and their decision in respect of others was the same as in respect of their own selves. (Musnad Ahmad).

أُولَٰئِكَ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ ۚ 11

(56:11) They shall be near-stationed (to their Lord),

فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ 12

(56:12) in the Gardens of Bliss.

ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ ۙ 13

(56:13) A throng of the ancients,

وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنَ الْآخِرِينَ ۖ 14

(56:14) and a few from later times.[8]

8. The commentators have differed as to who are implied by the former And the latter people.

One group of them has expressed the view that the former people were the communities that passed away since the time of the Prophet Adam (peace be upon him) till the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and the people of the latter day are those who will have lived in the world since the advent of the Prophet (peace be upon him) till the Day of Resurrection. Accordingly the verse would mean: The number of the Sabiqoon (the foremost in faith and good deeds) among the people who passed away during the thousands of years before the advent of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)

would be greater, and the number of those who would attain to the rank of the Sabiqoon among those people who have been born since the advent of the Prophet (peace be upon him), or will be born till the Day of Resurrection, will be less.

The second group says that the former and the latter in this verse imply the former and the latter people of the Holy Prophet's (peace be upon him) own ummah itself. That is, in his ummah the people belonging to the earliest period were the former among whom the number of the Sabiqoon will be greater, and the people of the later periods are the latter among whom the number of the Sabiqoon will be smaller.

The third group holds the view that this implies the former and the latter people of every Prophet's own ummah. That is, there will be numerous Sabiqoon among the earliest followers of every Prophet, but among his later followers their number will decrease. The words of the verse bear all the three meanings, and possibly all three ate implied, for there is no contradiction between them. Besides, they give another meaning also and that too is correct: Every early period of a Prophet's following the proportion of the Sabiqoon in human population would be greater and in the later period less, for the number of the workers of good and right does not increase at the rate of increase of the human populations. They may be more numerous as against the Sabiqoon of the earliest period. But on the whole their number as against the world population goes on becoming less and less.

عَلٰى سُرُرٍ مَّوْضُوْنَةٍ ۙ 15

(56:15) They (will be seated) on gold-encrusted couches,

مُّتَّكِـِٕيْنَ عَلَيْهَا مُتَقٰبِلِيْنَ 16

(56:16) reclining on them, arrayed face to face;

يَطُوْفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وِلْدَانٌ مُّخَلَّدُوْنَ ۙ 17

(56:17) immortal youths shall go about them[9]

9. This implies boys who will ever remain boys and stay young. Ali and Hasan Basri say that these will be those children who died before reaching their maturity; therefore, they will neither have any good works to their credit for which they may be rewarded, nor any evil deeds for which they may be punished, But obviously, this could imply those people who would not deserve Paradise. For, as for the true believers, about them Allah has guaranteed in the Quran that their children will be joined with them in Paradise (Surah At-Toor, Ayat 21). This is also supported by the Hadith, which Abu Daud, Tayalisi, Tabarani and Bazzar have related on the authority of Anas and Samurah bin Jundub, according to which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that the children of the polytheists will be attendants of the people of Paradise. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 26 of Surah As-Saaffat) and (E.N. 19 of Surah At-toor).

بِأَكْوَابٍ وَّأَبَارِيقَ ۙ وَكَأْسٍ مِّن مَّعِينٍ ۙ 18

(56:18) with goblets and ewers and a cup filled with a drink drawn from a running spring,

لَّا يُصَدَّعُونَ عَنْهَا وَلَا يُنزِفُونَ ۙ 19

(56:19) a drink by which their minds will not be clouded nor will it cause drunkenness;[10]

10. For explanation, see (E.N. 27 of Surah As-Saaffat); (E.N. 22 of Surah Muhammad) and(E.N. 18 of Surah At-Toor).

وَفَاكِهَةٍ مِّمَّا يَتَخَيَّرُونَ ۙ 20

(56:20) they will also go about them with the fruits of which they may choose,

وَلَحْمِ طَيْرٍ مِّمَّا يَشْتَهُونَ ۚ 21

(56:21) and with the flesh of any fowl that they may desire to eat;[11]

11. For explanation,(see E.N. 17 of Surah At-toor).

وَحُورٌ عِينٌ ۙ 22

(56:22) and there shall be wide-eyed maidens,

كَأَمْثَالِ اللُّؤْلُؤِ الْمَكْنُونِ ۚ 23

(56:23) beautiful as pearls hidden in their shells.[12]

12. For explanation, see (E.Ns 28, 29 of Surah As-Saaffat); (E.N. 42, of Surah Ad-Dukhan) and (E.N. 51 of Surah Ar- Rahman).

جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ 24

(56:24) All this shall be theirs as a reward for their deeds.

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا وَّلَا تَأْثِيمًا ۙ 25

(56:25) There they shall hear no idle talk nor any sinful speech.[13]

13. This is one of the major blessings of Paradise, which has been mentioned at several places in the Quran, viz. that in Paradise human ears will remain secure against idle and frivolous talk, lying, backbiting slander, invective, boasting and bragging, taunts and mockery, satire and sarcasm. It will not be a society of foul-mouthed, indecent people who will throw mud at each other, but a society of noble and civilized people free of such frivolities. A person who has been blessed with some decency of manner and sense by Allah can very well feel what an agony it is in worldly life, a hope of deliverance from which has been given to man in Paradise.

إِلَّا قِيلًا سَلٰمًا سَلٰمًا 26

(56:26) All talk will be sound and upright.14

14. Some commentators and translators have taken the words, illa qilan salam-an salama, to mean that in Paradise one will hear only the greeting of Peace, peace on every side; the correct view, however, is that it implies healthy and wholesome speech, i.e. such speech as may be free of the vices and blemishes, faults and evils, that have been mentioned in the preceding sentence. Here the word salam has been used nearly in the same sense as the English word sane.

وَأَصْحٰبُ الْيَمِيْنِ ۙ مَآ أَصْحٰبُ الْيَمِيْنِ ۙ 27

(56:27) As for the People on the Right, how fortunate shall be the people on the Right!

فِيْ سِدْرٍ مَّخْضُوْدٍ ۙ 28

(56:28) They shall be in the midst of thornless lote trees,15

15. That is, lote-trees without thorns on them. This will be a superior kind of the lote-tree to be only found in Paradise, and its fruit likewise will be much superior to that found in the world.

وَّطَلْحٍ مَّنْضُوْدٍ ۙ 29

(56:29) and flower-clad acacias,

وَّظِلٍّ مَّمْدُوْدٍ ۙ 30

(56:30) and extended shade,

وَّمَآءٍ مَّسْكُوْبٍ ۙ 31

(56:31) and gushing water,

وَّفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيْرَةٍ ۙ 32

(56:32) and abundant fruit,[16]

16. The word fakiha of the text means: This fruit will neither be seasonal that its supply may fail when the season is over, nor its production will cease as it happens in a garden after its fruits has been picked. But in Paradise every kind of fruit will remain available in abundance in every season and will continue to be produced and supplied no matter how much of it is consumed. And la mamnuah means that there will be no prohibition or hindrance in obtaining fruit as it is in the gardens of the world, nor will it be out of reach because of thorns or height.

لَّا مَقْطُوْعَةٍ وَّلَا مَمْنُوْعَةٍ ۙ 33

(56:33) never-ending and unforbidden.

وَّفُرُشٍ مَّرْفُوْعَةٍ ؕ 34

(56:34) They shall be on upraised couches,

اِنَّاۤ اَنْشَاْنٰهُنَّ اِنْشَآءً ۙ 35

(56:35) and their spouses We shall have brought them into being afresh,

فَجَعَلْنٰهُنَّ اَبْكَارًا ۙ 36

(56:36) and shall have made them virgins,[17]

17. This signifies the virtuous women of the world, who will enter Paradise on the basis of their faith and good works. Allah will make them young no matter how aged they might have died in the world; will make them beautiful whether or not they were beautiful in the world; and will make them virgins whether they died virgins in the world or after bearing children. If their husbands also entered Paradise with them, they would be joined with them. Otherwise, Allah will wed them to another dweller in Paradise. This very explanation of this verse has been reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him) in several Ahadith. According to Shama ile Tirmidhi, an old woman requested the Prophet (peace be upon him) to pray for her admission to Paradise. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: No old woman will enter Paradise. Hearing this the woman went back crying. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to the people: Tell her that she will not enter Paradise as an old woman, for Allah says: We shall create them anew and make them virgins. Ibn Abi Hatim has related, on the authority of Salamah bin Yazid, that he heard the Prophet (peace be upon him) explain this verse, thus: This implies the women of the world; whether they

died virgins or married. Tabarani contains a lengthy tradition related from Umm Salamah according to which she asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) the meaning of the several references in the Quran to the women of Paradise. In answer, he explained this very verse and said: These are the women who died as aged and decayed women, with sticky eyes and gray hair; after this old age Allah will again make them young and virgins. Umm Salamah asked: If a woman had several husbands in the world, one after the other, to whom will she belong in Paradise? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: She will he asked to make her own choice, and she will choose the one who had the best moral character. She will say: O my Lord, make me his wife, for he was the best in his conduct and dealings with me. O Umm Salamah, good moral conduct has carried off all the good of this world and the Hereafter. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 51 of Surah Ar-Rahman).

عُرُبًا أَتۡرَابًا ۙ 37

(56:37) intensely loving[18] and of matching age.[19]

18. The word uruban is used for the best feminine qualities of the woman in Arabic. This signifies a woman who is graceful and elegant, well-mannered and eloquent, and brimful of feminine feelings, who loves her husband with all her heart, and whose husband also loves her with all his heart.

19. This can have two meanings:

(1) That they will be of equal age with their husbands.

(2) That they will be of equal age among themselves; i.e. all the women in Paradise will be of the same age and will eternally stay young.

Both of these meanings may be correct at one and the same time, i.e. these women may be of equal age among themselves and their husbands also may be made of equal age with them. According to a Hadith: When the dwellers of Paradise enter it, their bodies will be without hair, their mustaches will be just appearing, but will yet he beardless, they will be handsome and fair-complexioned, with sturdy bodies and collyrium stained eyes; they will all be 33 years of age. (Musnad Ahmad: Marwiyat Abi Hurairah). Almost the same theme has been related in Tirmidhi by Muadh bin Jabal and Abu Saeed Khudri also.

لِّأَصۡحَٰبِ ٱلۡيَمِينِ ۖ 38

(56:38) All this will be for the People on the Right;

ثُلَّةٞ مِّنَ ٱلۡأَوَّلِينَ ۙ 39

(56:39) a large throng from the ancients,

وَثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْاٰخِرِيْنَ ؕ ع 40

(56:40) and also a large throng from those of later times.

وَاَصْحٰبُ الشِّمَالِ ۙ مَآ اَصْحٰبُ الشِّمَالِ ؕ 41

(56:41) As for the People on the Left: how miserable will be the People on the Left!

فِيْ سَمُوْمٍ وَّحَمِيْمٍ ۙ 42

(56:42) They will be in the midst of scorching wind and boiling water,

وَّظِلٍّ مِّنْ يَّحْمُوْمٍ ۙ 43

(56:43) and a shade of thick, pitch-black smoke,

لَّا بَارِدٍ وَّلَا كَرِيْمٍ 44

(56:44) which will neither be cool nor soothing.

اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَبْلَ ذٰلِكَ مُتْرَفِيْنَ ۚ صلے 45

(56:45) Surely they had lived before in luxury,

وَكَانُوْا يُصِرُّوْنَ عَلَى الْحِنْثِ الْعَظِيْمِ ۚ 46

(56:46) and had persisted in the Great Sin.[20]

20. That is, their prosperity had an adverse effect on them. Instead of being grateful to Allah Almighty, they had become deniers of His blessings. Lost in pleasure-seeking they had forgotten God and persisted in heinous sinning. Heinous sinning includes disbelief, polytheism and atheism as well as every grave sin of morality and conduct.

وَكَانُوْا يَقُوْلُوْنَ ۙ اَئِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَّعِظَامًا ءَاِنَّا لَمَبْعُوْثُوْنَ ۙ 47

(56:47) They used to say: “What! Once we are dead and are reduced to dust and bones, shall we still be raised to a new life from the dead?

اَوَاٰبَآؤُنَا الْاَوَّلُوْنَ 48

(56:48) (We) and our fore-fathers of yore?”

قُلْ اِنَّ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ وَالْاٰخِرِيْنَ ۙ 49

(56:49) Tell them, (O Prophet): “The earlier ones and the later ones

لَمَجْمُوْعُوْنَ ۙ اِلٰى مِيْقَاتِ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُوْمٍ 50

(56:50) shall all be brought together on an appointed Day.

ثُمَّ اِنَّكُمْ اَيُّهَا الضَّآلُّوْنَ الْمُكَذِّبُوْنَ ۙ 51

(56:51) Then you, the erring ones and those that gave the lie to the Truth,

لَاٰكِلُوْنَ مِنْ شَجَرٍ مِّنْ زَقُّوْمٍ ۙ 52

(56:52) shall all eat from the Tree of al-Zaqqum,[21]

21. For the explanation of zaqqum, sec (E.N. 34 of Surah As- Saaffat).

فَمٰلِـُٔوْنَ مِنْهَا الْبُطُوْنَ ۚ 53

(56:53) filling your bellies with it;

فَشٰرِبُوْنَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْحَمِيْمِ ۚ 54

(56:54) and thereupon you shall drink boiling water,

فَشٰرِبُوْنَ شُرْبَ الْهِيْمِ ؕ 55

(56:55) drinking it as thirsty camels do.”

هٰذَا نُزُلُهُمْ يَوْمَ الدِّيْنِ ؕ 56

(56:56) Thus shall they be entertained on the Day of Recompense.

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنٰكُمْ فَلَوْلَا تُصَدِّقُوْنَ 57

(56:57) We have created you,[22] then why would you not confirm it?[23]

22. The arguments from here to verse 74 provide the reasoning to prove both the doctrines of Tauhid and of Hereafter rationally. For it was there two basic doctrines of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) teaching that the people of Makkah were debating and objecting to at that time.

23. That is, why don't you confirm that We alone are your Lord and God and We have the power to create you once again.

أَفَرَءَيْتُم مَّا تُمْنُونَ ۝58

(56:58) Did you ever consider the sperm that you emit?

ءَأَنتُمْ تَخْلُقُونَهُۥٓ أَمْ نَحْنُ ٱلْخَٰلِقُونَ ۝59

(56:59) Do you create a child out of it, or are We its creators?[24]

24. In this brief sentence a very important question has been put before man. Apart from all other things in the world, if man only considers as to how he himself has come into being, he can then neither have any doubts left about the doctrine of Tauhid presented by the Quran nor about its doctrine of the Hereafter. The process of man's own creation starts when the male has conveyed his sperm to the womb of the female. But the question is: Has the sperm by itself become endowed with the capability of producing a child, and necessarily a human child? Or, has it been created by man himself, or by someone other than God? And, is it in the power of the man, or of the woman, or of another agency in the world, to cause conception by this sperm? Then, who is responsible for the gradual formation and development of the fetus in the mother's womb, its shaping and molding into a unique child, the provision in a particular proportion of different mental and physical powers and qualities in each child so that it develops into a unique person, except One God? Does someone, other than God, have any role to play in this? Is it done by the parents themselves? Or, by a doctor? Or, by the prophets or saints, who were themselves created in this very way? Or, by the sun and the moon and the stars, which are themselves subject to a law? Or, by nature, which is devoid of any knowledge, wisdom, will and authority? Then, is it also in the power of someone other than God to decide whether the child is to be a boy or a girl? Whether it is to be beautiful or ugly, strong or weak, blind and deaf and a cripple or sound bodied, intelligent or stupid? Then, is it someone other than God who decides as to people of what caliber, good or bad, are to be created in a particular nation at a particular time, who would cause its rise or fall? If a person is not obdurate and stubborn, he will realize that no rational answer can be given to these questions on the basis of polytheism and atheism. Their rational answer is only one and it is this. Man is wholly and entirely the creation of God; and when the truth is this, what right has this man, the creation of God, to claim freedom and independence as against his Creator, or serve someone else beside Him.

As it is for Tauhid, so it is with regard to the Hereafter too. Man is created from a germ which cannot be seen without a powerful microscope. This germ combines in the darkness of the mother's body with the ovum (female germ) which is like itself an insignificant microscopic germ. Then by their combination a tiny living cell comes into being, which is

the starting-point of human life. This cell also is too small to be seen without a microscope. Allah develops this insignificant cell in the mother's womb for nine months or so into a living human, and when its development and formation becomes complete, the mother's body itself pushes it out to be raised in the world. All human beings have been born into the world in this very way and are witnessing day and night this phenomenon of the birth of human beings like themselves. After this, only a foolish person could assert that the God Who is creating human beings in this way today would not be able to create the human beings created by Himself in some other way tomorrow.

نَحْنُ قَدَّرْنَا بَيْنَكُمُ الْمَوْتَ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوقِينَ ۙ 60

(56:60) It is We Who ordained death upon you[25] and We are not to be frustrated.

25. That is, like your birth your death is also under Our control. We decide as to who is to die in the mother's womb itself, who is to die soon after birth, and who is to die at a later stage. No power in the world can cause death to a person before the time appointed for his death by Us, nor can keep him alive after it even for a moment. The dying ones die in big hospitals even before the eyes of eminent doctors; and the doctors themselves also die at their appointed time. Never has anyone been able to know the time of death in advance, nor has anyone been able to avert the approaching death, nor to find out as to how and where and by what means will a certain person die.

عَلَىٰ أَن نُّبَدِّلَ أَمْثَالَكُمْ وَنُنشِئَكُمْ فِي مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ 61

(56:61) Had We so wished, nothing could have hindered Us from replacing you by others like yourselves, or transforming you into beings you know nothing about.[26]

26. That is, just as We were not powerless to create you in your present form and appearance, so We are also not powerless to change the method of your creation and bring you into being in another form and shape with another set of qualities and characteristics. Today the method We have adopted for your creation is that conception takes place by the sperm then you are gradually formed and developed in your mother's womb, and then you are brought out as a child. This method of creation also has been devised by Us. But this is not the only method We know. On the Day of Resurrection, We can create you in the form of the man of the same age at which you died. Today We have set one particular measure for your sight and hearing and other faculties. But this is not the only measure that We have for man, which We may not have the power to change. On the Day of Resurrection, We shall change it so much so that you will be able to see and hear things which you cannot see or hear today. Today your skin and your limbs and your eyes do not possess the power of speech. But, it is We Who have given the tongue the power of speech; so We are not powerless to cause your every limb and every part of the skin of your body to speak by Our command on the Day of Resurrection. Today you live up to a certain age and then die. Your, this living and dying also is controlled by a law ordained by Us. Tomorrow We can make another law to control your life under which you may never die. Today you can endure punishment only to a certain extent: you cannot survive if the punishment is increased beyond it. This rule has also been made by Us. Tomorrow We can make another rule for you

under which you will be able to suffer much severer punishments endlessly, and death would not come to you even if you were given the severest torment. Today you cannot imagine that an old man could return to youth, that he could never become ill, that a young man could never be old and that he could stay young for ever and ever. But youth here changes into old age according to the biological laws made by Us. Tomorrow We can make some other laws for your life under which every old man may become young as soon as he entered Paradise and stay young and healthy eternally.

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ النَّشْاَةَ الْاُوْلٰى فَلَوْلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ 62

(56:62) You are well aware of the first creation; then, do you learn no lesson from it?[27]

27. That is, you already know how you were created in the first instance, how the sperm was transferred from the loins of the father by which you came into being, how you were nourished in the mother's womb, which was no less dark than the grave, and formed into a living human being, how an insignificant speak was developed and endowed with the heart and brain, eyes and ears, and hands and feet, and how it was blessed with the wonderful faculties of intellect and sense, knowledge and wisdom, workmanship and inventiveness, etc. Is this miracle in any way less wonderful than raising the dead back to life? And when you are witnessing this wonderful miracle with your own eyes and are yourselves a living evidence of it in the world, why don't you then learn the lesson that the same God Who by His power is causing this miracle to take place day and night, can also cause the miracle of life after death, Resurrection and Hell and Heaven to take place by the same power.

اَفَرَءَيْتُمْ مَّا تَحْرُثُوْنَ ؕ 63

(56:63) Have you considered the seeds you till?

ءَاَنْتُمْ تَزْرَعُوْنَهٗۤ اَمْ نَحْنُ الزّٰرِعُوْنَ 64

(56:64) Is it you or We Who make them grow?[28]

28. The above question drew the people's attention to the truth that they have been developed and nourished by Allah Almighty and have come into being by His act of creation. Now this second question draws their attention to this important truth that the provisions which sustain them are also created only by Allah for them, as if to say: Just as in your own creation human effort has nothing more to do than that your father may cast the sperm in your mother, so in the supply of the provisions for you also human effort has nothing more to do than that the farmer should sow the seed in the soil. The land in which cultivation is done was not made by you. The power of growth to the soil was not granted by you. The substances in it that become the means of your food are not provided by you. The seed that you sow is not made capable for growth by you. The capability in every seed that from it should sprout up the tree of the same species of whose seed it is has not been created by you. The process for changing this cultivation into blooming crops that is working under the soil and of arranging the required kind of weather and air and water

above it does not owe anything in any way to your planning and skill. All this is the manifestation of Allah's power and providence. Then, when you have come into being only by His act of creation and are being sustained by His provision, how can you then have the right to pose yourself as independent of Him, or have someone other than Him as your deity.

Although apparently this verse reasons out Tauhid, yet if one considers its theme a little more deeply, one finds in it the argument for the Hereafter, too. The seed that is sown in the soil is by itself dead, but when the farmer buries it under the soil, Allah infuses it with plant life, which puts out sprouts and blooms into spring. Thus, these countless bodies are rising from the dead in front of our eyes daily. Is this miracle in any way less wonderful so that a person may regard the other wonderful miracle of the life hereafter, which is being foretold by the Quran, as impossible? 6

لَوۡ نَشَآءُ لَجَعَلۡنٰهُ حُطَامًا فَظَلۡتُمۡ تَفَكَّهُوۡنَ 65

(56:65) If We so wished, We could have reduced your harvest to rubble, and you would have been left wonder-struck to exclaim:

اِنَّا لَمُغۡرَمُوۡنَ ۙ 66

(56:66) "We have been penalised;

بَلۡ نَحۡنُ مَحۡرُوۡمُوۡنَ 67

(56:67) nay; we have been undone!"

اَفَرَءَيۡتُمُ الۡمَآءَ الَّذِىۡ تَشۡرَبُوۡنَ ؕ 68

(56:68) Did you cast a good look at the water that you drink?

ءَاَنۡتُمۡ اَنۡزَلۡتُمُوۡهُ مِنَ الۡمُزۡنِ اَمۡ نَحۡنُ الۡمُنۡزِلُوۡنَ 69

(56:69) Is it you who brought it down from the clouds or is it We Who brought it down?[29]

29. That is, We have not only made arrangements of satisfying your hunger, but also of satisfying your thirst, This water that is even more essential for your life than bread has been arranged by Us, not by you. The seas in the earth have been created by Us. It is the heat of Our sun that causes their water to evaporate, and it is Our winds that cause the vapors to rise. Then it is by Our power and wisdom that the vapors collect and form into clouds. Then, by Our command the clouds divide in a particular proportion and spread over different regions of the earth so that the share of the water appointed for a particular region, should

reach it. And also in the upper atmosphere, We bring about the cool that causes the vapors to change back into water. We have not only brought you into being but are also busy making all these arrangements for your sustenance without which you could not survive at all. Then, when the fact is that you have come into being by Our act of creation, are eating Our provisions and drinking Our water, where from have you gotten the right that you should pose to be independent of Us and serve someone else beside Us.

لَوْ نَشَآءُ جَعَلْنٰهُ اُجَاجًا فَلَوْلَا تَشْكُرُوْنَ 70

(56:70) If We had so pleased, We could have made it bitter.[30] So why would you not give thanks?[31]

30. In this sentence an important manifestation of Allah's power and wisdom has been pointed out. Among the wonderful properties that Allah has created in water, one property also is that no matter what different substances are dissolved in water, when it changes into vapor under the effect of heat, it leaves behind all adulterations and evaporates only with its original and actual component elements. Had it not possessed this property the dissolved substances also would have evaporated along with the water vapors. In this case the vapors that arise from the oceans would have contained the sea salt, which would have made the soil saline and uncultivable wherever it rained. Then, neither could man have survived by drinking that water, nor could it help grow any vegetation. Now, can a man possessed of any common sense claim that this wise property in water has come about by itself under some blind and deaf law of nature? This characteristic by virtue of which sweet, pure water is distilled from saltish seas and falls as rain, and then serves as a source of water-supply and irrigation in the form of rivers, canals, springs and wells, provides a clear proof of the fact that the Provider has endowed water with this property thoughtfully and deliberately for the purpose that it may become a means of sustenance for His creatures. The creatures that could be sustained by salt water were created by Him in the sea and there they flourish and multiply. But the creatures that He created on the land and in the air, stood in need of sweet water for their sustenance and before making arrangement of the rainfall for its supply, He created this property in water that at evaporation it should rise clear and free of everything dissolved in it.

31. In other words, why do you commit this ingratitude in that some of you regard the rainfall as a favor of the gods, and some others think that the rising of the clouds from the sea and their raining as water is a natural cycle that is working by itself, and still others, while acknowledging it as a mercy and blessing of God, do not admit that God has any such right on them that they should bow to Him alone? How is it that while you derive so much benefit from this great blessing of Allah, in return you commit sins of disbelief and polytheism and disobedience of Him.

اَفَرَءَيْتُمُ النَّارَ الَّتِيْ تُوْرُوْنَ ؕ 71

(56:71) Did you consider the fire which you kindle?

ءَاَنتُمۡ اَنشَاۡتُمۡ شَجَرَتَهَاۤ اَمۡ نَحۡنُ الۡمُنشِـُٔوۡنَ 72

(56:72) Did you make its tree[32] grow or was it We Who made it grow?

32. The tree here either implies the tree that supplies wood for lighting a fire, or the trees of markh and afar, green sticks of which were struck one against the other to produce sparks in ancient Arabia.

نَحۡنُ جَعَلۡنٰهَا تَذۡكِرَةً وَّمَتَاعًا لِّلۡمُقۡوِيۡنَ ۚ 73

(56:73) We made it a reminder[33] and a provision for the needy.[34]

33. Making the fire a means of remembrance means: The fire by virtue of its quality of being kindled at all times reminds man of his forgotten lesson that without it human life could not be any different from animal life. Because of the fire only did man learn to cook food for eating instead of eating it raw like the animals, and then new and ever new avenues to industry and invention went on opening up before him. Obviously, if God had not created the means of kindling the fire and the substances that could be kindled, man's inventive potentialities would have remained dormant. But the man has forgotten that his Creator is a wise Sustainer, Who created him with human capabilities on the one hand, and on the other, created such materials on the earth by which his these capabilities could become active and operative. If he is not lost in heedlessness, the fire alone is enough to remind him of the favors and bounties of his Creator, which he is so freely enjoying in the world.

34. The word muqwin in the original has been interpreted differently by the lexicographers. Some have taken it in the meaning of the travelers who have halted in the desert, some in the meaning of a hungry man, and some take it in the meaning of all those who derive benefit from the fire, whether it is the benefit of cooking food or of light or of heat.

فَسَبِّحۡ بِاسۡمِ رَبِّكَ الۡعَظِيۡمِ ؕ 74

(56:74) Glorify, then, (O Prophet), the name of your Great Lord.[35]

35. That is, mention His blessed name and proclaim that He is free from and far above the defects and faults and weaknesses that the pagans and polytheists ascribe to Him, and which underlie every creed of disbelief and every argument that is presented by the deniers of the Hereafter.

فَلَاۤ اُقۡسِمُ بِمَوٰقِعِ النُّجُوۡمِ ۙ 75

(56:75) No![36] I swear by the positions of the stars –

36. That is, the truth is not what you seem to think it is. Here, the use of the word la (nay) before swearing an oath by the Quran's being Allah's revelation by itself shows that the oath

has been sworn to refute certain objections that the disbelievers were raising with regard to the Quran.

وَاِنَّهٗ لَقَسَمٌ لَّوۡ تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ عَظِيۡمٌ ۙ 76

(56:76) and this is indeed a mighty oath, if only you knew –

اِنَّهٗ لَقُرۡاٰنٌ كَرِيۡمٌ ۙ 77

(56:77) that this indeed is a noble Qur'an,[37]

37. The places of the stars: the positions and phases and orbits of the stars and planets. The oath implies that just as the system of the celestial bodies is firm and stable, so also is this divine Word firm and stable. The same God Who has created that system has also sent down this Word. Just as there exists perfect consistency and harmony among the countless stars and planets found in the countless galaxies of the universe, whereas apparently they seem to be scattered, so also this Book presents a perfectly consistent, and systematic code of life in which detailed guidance has been given, on the basis of belief, about morals, modes of worship, civilization and culture, economic and social life, law and justice, peace and war, in short, about every aspect of human life, and there is nothing out of harmony with the other, whereas this system of thought has been expressed in scattered verses and discourses given on different occasions. Then, just as the system of the heavens set and planned by God is stable and unalterable, and does not ever admit of the slightest variation, so also are the truths and instructions given , in this Book stable and unalterable: no part of these can be changed or displaced in any way.

فِىۡ كِتٰبٍ مَّكۡنُوۡنٍ ۙ 78

(56:78) inscribed in a well-guarded Book,[38]

38. This implies the well-guarded Tablet (lohe-mahfuz). For it the word kitabin maknun has been used, which means a writing kept hidden, i.e. a writing that is inaccessible to all. The Quran's having been inscribed in this well guarded Book means that before its being sent down to the Prophet (peace be upon him) it lay inscribed in the divine writ of destiny in which three is no possibility of any alteration or corruption taking place, for it is inaccessible to every kind of creation.

لَّا يَمَسُّهٗۤ اِلَّا الۡمُطَهَّرُوۡنَ ؕ 79

(56:79) which none but the pure may touch;[39]

39. This is a refutation of the accusation that the disbelievers used to level against the Quran. They regarded the Prophet (peace be upon him) as a sorcerer and asserted that he was being inspired with the Word by the jinn and Satans. An answer to it has been given at several places in the Quran, e.g. in Surah Ash-Shuara, where it has been said: This (lucid Book) has

not beer brought down by satans, nor does this work behoove them, nor are they able to do it. They have indeed been kept out of its hearing. (verses 210-212). The same theme has been expressed here, Saying: None but the purified can touch it. That is to say Not to speak of its being brought down by the Satans, or its being tampered within any way when it is being revealed, none but the pure angels can come anywhere near it when it is being revealed from the well-guarded Tablet (lohemahfuz) to the Prophet (peace be upon him). The word mutahharin has been used for the angels in the sense that Allah has kept them free of every kind of impure feeling and desire. This same commentary of this verse has been given by Anas bin Malik, Ibn Abbas, Saeed bin Jubair, Ikrimah, Mujahid, Qatadah, Abul Aliyah, Suddi, Dahhak and Ibn Zaid, and the same also fits in with the context. For the context itself shows that after refuting the false concepts of the Makkan disbelievers about Tauhid and the Hereafter, now their false accusations against the Quran are being answered, and by swearing an oath by the positions of the stars, it is being stated that the Quran is an exalted Book, which is inscribed in the well-guarded divine writ, in which there is no possibility of any interference by any creation, and it is revealed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in such a safe way that none but the pure angels can touch it.

Some commentators have taken la in this verse in the sense of prohibition, and have interpreted the verse to mean: None who is unclean should touch it. Although some other commentators take la in the sense of negation and interpret the verse to mean: None but the clean and pure touch this Book, they express the opinion that this negation is a prohibition in the same way as the Prophet's (peace be upon him) saying is a prohibition: A Muslim is a brother of a Muslim, he does not treat him unjustly. Although, here it has been said that a Muslim does not treat the other Muslim unjustly, you it enjoins that a Muslim is not to treat the other Muslim unjustly. Likewise, although in this verse it has been stated that none but the clean and pure angels touch this Book, yet it enjoins that unless a person is purified, he should not touch it.

The fact, however, is that this commentary does not conform to the context of the verse. Independent of the context, one may take this meaning from its words, but if considered in the context in which the verse occurs, one does not see any ground for saying that: None is to touch this Book except the clean and purified people. For the addressees here are the disbelievers and they are being told, as if to say: This Book has been sent down by Allah, Lord of the worlds. Therefore, your suspicion that the satans inspire the Prophet (peace be upon him) with it is wrong. What could be the occasion here to enunciate the Shariah injunction that no one should touch it without purification? The most that one could say in this regard is that although this verse has not been sent down to enjoin this command, yet the context points out that just as only the purified (mutahharin) can touch this Book in the presence of Allah, so in the world also the people who at least believe in its being divine word should avoid touching it in the impure and unclean state.

The following are the traditions that bear upon this subject:

(1) Imam Malik has related in Muatta this tradition on the authority of Abdullah bin Abi Bakr Muhammad bin Amr bin Hazm: The written instructions that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had sent to the Yamanite chiefs by the hand of Amr bin Hazm contained this instruction also: La yamass-ul Quran a illa tahirun. No one should touch the Quran except the pure one. This same thing has been related by Abu Daud from Imam Zuhri in the

traditions which are immediately traced to the Prophet (peace be upon him), (marasil), saying that the writing that he had seen with Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Amr bin Hazm contained this instruction as well.

(2) The traditions from Ali in which he says: Nothing prevented the Prophet of Allah from reciting the Quran but the state of uncleanness due to sexual intercourse. (Abu Daud, Nasai, Tirmidhi).

(3) The tradition of Ibn Umar in which he states: The Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah said: The menstruating woman and the one who is unclean on account of sexual intercourse should not read any portion of the Quran. (Abu Daud. Tirmidhi).

(4) The tradition of Bukhari in which it has been said that the letter which the Prophet (peace be upon him) sent to Heraclius, the Roman emperor, also contained this verse of the Quran: Yaahl al-Kitabi to alau ila kalimat-in sawaaun bainana wa baina-kum.

The views that have been related from the Prophet's companions and their immediate followers are as follows:

Salman, the Persian, saw no harm in reading the Quran without the ablutions, but even according to him touching the Quran with the hand in this state was not permissible. The same also was the view of Saad bin Abi Waqqas and Abdullah bin Umar. And Hasan Basri and Ibrahim Nakhai also regarded touching the Quran with the hand without the ablutions as disapproved, (AI-Jassas, Ahkam al-Qur an). The same has been reported from Ata, Taus, Shabi and Qasim bin Muhammad also. (Ibn Qudamah, Al-Mughni). However, according to all of them, reading the Quran without touching it with the hand, or reciting it from memory, was permissible even without the ablutions.

Umar, Ali, Hadrat Hasan Basri. Hadrat Ibrahim Nakhai and Imam Zuhri regarded reading the Quran in the state of uncleanness due to sexual intercourse and menstruation and bleeding after childbirth as disapproved. But Ibn Abbas held the view, and the same also was his practice, that one could recite from memory the portion of the Quran that one usually recited as ones daily practice. When Hadrat Saeed bin al-Musayyab and Saeed bin Jubair were asked about their view in this regard, they replied: Is not the Quran preserved in the memory of such a person? What then is the harm in reciting it? (Al-Mughni, Al-Muhalla by Ibn Hazm).

The following are the viewpoints of the jurists on this subject:

The Hanafi viewpoint has been explained by Imam Alauddin al-Kashani in his Badai-as-Sanai, thus: Just as it is not permissible to offer the Prayer without the ablutions, so also it is not permissible to touch the Quran without the ablutions, However, if the Quran is in a cast or a cover, it may be touched. According to some jurists, the case or cover implies the binding, and according to others, the bag or the envelope or the wrapper in which the Quran is kept and can also be taken out. Likewise, the books of the commentary also should not be touched without the ablutions nor anything else in which a Quranic verse may have been written. However, the books of Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence) may be touched although preferably they too may not be touched without the ablutions, for they also contain Quranic

verses as part of argument and reasoning. Some Hanafi jurists hold the opinion that only that part of the Quran where the text may have been written should not be touched without the ablutions. As for the margins there is no harm in touching it, whether they are blank or contain notes on the text. The correct thing, however, is that the margins also are a part of the Book and touching them amounts to touching the Book. As for reading the Quran, it is permissible without the ablutions. In Fatawa Alamgiri children have been made an exception from this rule. The Quran can be given in the children's hand for teaching purposes whether they are in the state of ablutions or not.

The Shafei viewpoint has been stated by Imam Nawawi in Al-Minhaj, thus: As it is for the Prayer and the circumambulation of the Kabah, it is also forbidden to handle the Quran or to touch a leaf of it without the ablutions. Likewise, it is also forbidden to touch the binding of the Quran, and also a bag, or a bow containing the Quran, or a tablet on which a part of the Quran may have been written for instructional purposes. However, it is lawful to touch the baggage of a person containing the Quranic inscription. A child may touch the Quran without the ablutions, and a person without ablutions may turn over a leaf with a piece of wood, or something else, if he wants to read the Quran.

The Maliki position as stated in Al-Fiqh alal-Madhahib al- Arbah is: They concur with the other jurists in this that the state of ablutions is a prerequisite for touching the Quran, but in the matter of imparting instruction in the Quran they make both the teacher and the taught an exception from the rule, and allow even a menstruating woman to touch the Quran if she is engaged in learning or teaching it. Ibn Qadamah has cited in Al-Mughni this saying of Imam Malik: Although reading the Quran in the state of uncleanness due to sexual intercourse is forbidden, the woman who is discharging the menses is permitted to read it, for she would forget her recitations if prohibited from reading the Quran for a long time.

The Hanbali viewpoint as stated by Ibn Qadamah is as follows: In the state of uncleanness due to sexual intercourse and menstruation and bleeding after childbirth it is not permissible to read the Quran or any complete verse of it. However, it is permissible to recite bismillah, al-hamdu-lillah, etc. for although these also are parts of one or the other verse, their recitation does not amount to recitation of the Quran. As for handling the Quran, it is not permissible in any case without the ablutions. However, one is not forbidden to touch a letter, or a book of Fiqh, or some other writing containing a Quranic verse. Likewise, one may handle even without the ablutions, something that contains the Quran. The state of ablutions is also no pre-requisite for handling the books of exegesis. Furthermore, if a person who is not in the state of ablutions is required to handle the Quran under an immediate need, he may do so after purification with the dust (tayammum). Al-Fiqh alal-Madhahib al- Arabah also contains this ruling of the Hanbali Fiqh: It is not right for the children to handle the Quran without ablutions even when receiving instruction in it, and it is the duty of their guardians to make them perform the ablutions before they give the Quran to them.

The Zahiri viewpoint is that reading the Quran and handling it is permissible under all conditions, whether one is without the ablutions, or unclean due to sexual intercourse, or even if the woman is menstruating. Ibn Hazm has discussed this question fully in Al-Muhalla (vol. 1, pp. 77-84) and given arguments for the validity of this viewpoint and has

concluded that none of the conditions laid down by the jurists for reading the Quran and handling it, is supported by the Quran and the Sunnah.

تَنْزِيلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ 80

(56:80) a revelation from the Lord of the Universe.

اَفَبِهٰذَا الْحَدِيْثِ اَنْتُمْ مُّدْهِنُوْنَ ۙ 81

(56:81) Do you, then, take this discourse in light esteem,[40]

40. Literally, idhan (from which mudhinun of the text is derived) means to treat something with contempt, to deny its due importance, to regard it as unworthy of serious attention, to hold it in light esteem.

وَتَجْعَلُوْنَ رِزْقَكُمْ اَنَّكُمْ تُكَذِّبُوْنَ 82

(56:82) and your portion in it is simply that you denounce it as false?[41]

41. In his commentary of tajaluna rizqa-kum, Imam Razi has expressed the view that probably the word rizq here means livelihood. Since the disbelieving Qaraish regarded the message of the Quran as harmful to their economic interests and feared that if it succeeded it would deprive them of their means of livelihood, the verse may also mean this: You have made the denial of this Quran a question of your economic interests, and for you the question of the right and wrong is of no consequence; the only thing of real importance in your sight is the bread for the sake of which you would least hesitate to oppose the truth and adhere to the falsehood.

فَلَوْلَآ اِذَا بَلَغَتِ الْحُلْقُوْمَ ۙ 83

(56:83) Why, then, when the soul leaps up to the throat,

وَاَنْتُمْ حِيْنَئِذٍ تَنْظُرُوْنَ ۙ 84

(56:84) the while you are helplessly watching that he is on the verge of death,

وَنَحْنُ اَقْرَبُ اِلَيْهِ مِنْكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ لَّا تُبْصِرُوْنَ 85

(56:85) – at that moment when We are closer to him than you, although you do not see (Us)

فَلَوْلَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ غَيْرَ مَدِيْنِيْنَ ۙ 86

(56:86) if you are not subject to anyone's authority,

تَرْجِعُوْنَهَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ 87

(56:87) why are you then not able to bring them back to life if you are truthful?

فَاَمَّآ اِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِيْنَ ۙ 88

(56:88) So if he is one of those who are near-stationed (to Allah),

فَرَوْحٌ وَّرَيْحَانٌ ۙ وَّجَنَّتُ نَعِيْمٍ 89

(56:89) then happiness and delight and Gardens of Bliss are his.

وَاَمَّآ اِنْ كَانَ مِنْ اَصْحٰبِ الْيَمِيْنِ ۙ 90

(56:90) And if he is one of the People on the Right,

فَسَلٰمٌ لَّكَ مِنْ اَصْحٰبِ الْيَمِيْنِ ؕ 91

(56:91) he will be welcomed by the words: “Peace to you” from the People on the Right.

وَاَمَّآ اِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ الضَّآلِّيْنَ ۙ 92

(56:92) And if he is one of those who give the lie (to this Message) and go astray,

فَنُزُلٌ مِّنْ حَمِيْمٍ ۙ 93

(56:93) then he will be served boiling water,

وَّتَصْلِيَةُ جَحِيْمٍ 94

(56:94) and will be scorched by the Fire.

اِنَّ هٰذَا لَهُوَ حَقُّ الْيَقِيْنِ ۚ 95

(56:95) That indeed is the absolute truth.

فَسَبِّحۡ بِاسۡمِ رَبِّكَ الۡعَظِيۡمِ ع 96

(56:96) So glorify the name of your Great Lord.[42]

42. Uqbah bin Amir Juhni relates that when this verse was sent down the Prophet (peace be upon him) commanded that the people put it in their ruku, i.e. they should recite Subhana-Rabbi-yal-Azim in the position of ruku in the Prayer. And when the verse Sabbi-hismi-Rabbi-kal-Aala was sent down, he enjoined that they put it in their sajdah, i.e. they should recite Subhana-Rabbi-yal-Aala in sajdah. (Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud, Ibn Majah, Ibn Hibban, Hakim). This show that even the most minor details of the procedure enjoined by the Prophet (peace be upon him) for the Prayer are derived from the allusions given in the Quran.

57. Surah Al Hadid (The Iron)

Name

The Surah takes its title from the sentence, Wa anzalna' l-hadida, of verse 25.

Period of Revelation

This is unanimously a Madani Surah, and a study of its subject matter shows that it was probably sent down some time during the interval between the Battle of Uhud and the Truce of Hudaibiyah. This was the time when the tiny Islamic State of Madinah had been hemmed in by the disbelievers and the handful of the ill equipped Muslims were entrenched against the combined power of entire Arabia. In this state Islam not only stood in need of the sacrifice of Life from its followers, but it also needed monetary help and assistance. In this Surah a forceful appeal has been made for the same. This view is further strengthened by verse 10 in which Allah has addressed the believers to the effect "Those of you who would spend and fight after the victory can never be equal to those who have spent and fought before the victory." And the same is supported by the traditions that Ibn Marduyah has related on the authority of Hadrat Anas. In respect of the verse: Alam ya'n-i lilladhina aamanu an takhsha'a qulubu- hum li-dhikrillah-i, he says that 17 years after the commencement of the revelation of the Qur'an this verse was sent down to arouse the believers to action. Reckoned thus the period of the revelation of this Surah falls between the 4th and the 5th year after the hijrah.

Theme and Subject Matter

The theme of this Surah is to exhort the Muslims to spend in the cause of Allah. At the most critical juncture of the history of Islam when it was engaged in a life and death struggle against Arab paganism, this Surah was revealed to persuade the Muslim's to make monetary sacrifices in particular, and to make them realize that Islam did not merely consist in verbal affirmation and some outward practices but its essence and spirit is sincerity towards Allah and His Religion. The faith of the one who was devoid of this spirit and who regarded his own self and wealth as dearer to himself than Allah and His Religion, was hollow and therefore of little worth in the sight of Allah.

For this object, first the attributes of Allah Almighty have been mentioned so that the listeners may fully realize as to Who is addressing them. Then, the following themes have been expressed in sequence:

1. The inevitable demand of the Faith is that one should not shirk spending one's wealth for the sake of Allah. This would not only be contrary to the Faith but also wrong realistically. For the wealth indeed belongs to Allah, on which man has been given proprietary rights only as His vicegerent. Yesterday this wealth was in other people's possession today it is with one particular man, and tomorrow it will pass into some one else's hand. Ultimately, it will go back to Allah, Who is the inheritor of everything in the universe. Only that much of this wealth will be of any use to a man, which he spends in the cause of Allah during the period it is in his possession.

2. Although making sacrifices for the sake of Allah is commendable in any case, the true worth of these sacrifices is determined by the nature of the occasion. There is an occasion when the power of paganism is overwhelming and there is a danger that it might subdue and overcome Islam completely; there is another occasion when Islam is in a stronger position in its struggle against un-Islam and the believers are attaining victories. Both these states are not equal as regards their respective importance. Therefore, the sacrifices that are made in these different states would also not be equal. Those who sacrifice their lives and expend their wealth to further promote the cause of Islam when it is already strong cannot attain to the rank of those who struggled with their lives and their wealth to promote and uphold the cause of Islam when it was weak.
3. Whatever is spent for the cause of the Truth is a loan on Allah, and Allah will not only return it increasing it manifold but will also give from Himself the best reward for it.
4. In the Hereafter the Light shall be bestowed only on those believers who would have spent their wealth in the cause of Allah. As for the hypocrites who watched and served only their own interests in the world, and who least bothered whether the Truth or falsehood prevailed will be segregated from the believers in the Hereafter although they might have lived in close association with them in the world. They will be deprived of the Light, and they will be counted among the disbelievers.
5. The Muslims should not behave like those followers of the earlier Books, whose lives have been. spent in the worship of the world and whose hearts have become hardened due to negligence with the passage of time. He cannot be a believer whose heart does not melt at the remembrance of Allah and does not bow to the Truth sent down by Him.
6. The sincere upholders of the Truth and the true witnesses of the Faith in the sight of Allah are only those believers who spend their wealth in His way sincerely, without any desire of show.
7. The life of this world is only a short lived spring and a means of pride and show. Its sports and pastimes, its adornments and decorations, its pride of place, its wealth and possessions, for which the people try to vie with one another, are transient. Its likeness is of the crop which flourishes and blooms, then turns pale and then finally is reduced to chaff. The everlasting life is the life hereafter when results of great consequence will be announced. Therefore, if one has to vie with another for something, one should strive for Paradise.
8. Whatever good man meets with and whatever hardship he suffers in the world, are pre-ordained by Allah. A true believer is he who does not lose heart in affliction and is not puffed up with pride in good times. It is the character of a hypocrite and disbeliever that he is puffed up with pride when Allah favors him with His blessings, behaved boastfully and shows stinginess when called upon to spend in the cause of the same God Who blessed him, and also counsels others to be stingy like himself.
9. Allah sent His Messengers with clear signs and the Book and the Law of Justice so that the people may adhere to justice; besides, He sent down iron also so that power may be used to establish the Truth and vanquish falsehood. Thus, Allah likes to see as to who from among the people would rise to support and succor His true Religion even at the risk of their lives. These opportunities Allah has created for man's own advantage and development; otherwise Allah does not stand in need of others for His works.

10. Prophets came from Allah in the past, and by their preaching some people adopted the Right Path, but most of them persisted in wickedness. Then the Prophet Jesus came, whose teachings brought about many moral improvements in the lives of the people, but his community invented monasticism. Now Allah has sent the Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be His peace and blessings). Those who affirm faith in him and pass their life fearing Allah's accountability, will be given by Allah a double share of His mercy and He will bless them with the Light by which they will see and walk the straight path among the crooked paths met with at every step in the life of this world. Although the followers of the earlier revelation regard themselves as the monopolists of Allah's bounties, the fact remains that Allah Himself controls His bounties He may bless with these whomever He pleases.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

سَبَّحَ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الۡعَزِيۡزُ الۡحَكِيۡمُ ۱

(57:1) All that is in the heavens and the earth extols the glory of Allah.[1] He is the Most Mighty, the Most Wise.[2]

1. That is, it has always been so that everything in the universe has proclaimed the truth that its Creator and Sustainer is free from every blemish and defect, every weakness, error and evil. He is glorified in His essence, He is glorified in His attributes, He is glorified in His works as well as His commands whether they relate to the creation, or to the religious law for mankind. Here sabbaha has been used in the past tense; at other places yusabbihu has been used which includes both the present and the future tenses. This would signify that every particle in the universe has always been extolling the glory of its Creator and Sustainer in the past, is doing at present and will continue to do the same in the future forever and ever.

2. That is, not only is He All-Mighty and All-Wise, but the truth is that He alone is All-Mighty and All-Wise. The word Aziz signifies a mighty and powerful Being Whose decrees cannot be prevented by any power in the world from being enforced, Whom no one can oppose and resist, Who has to be obeyed by every one whether one likes it or not, Whose rebel cannot escape His accountability and punishment in any way. The word Hakim signifies that whatever He does, He does it wisely. His creation, His administration and rule, His commands and guidance, all are based on wisdom. None of His works is tarnished by any tract of folly or ignorance.

There is another fine point here, which one should fully understand. Seldom in the Quran has Allah’s attribute of Aziz (All-Mighty) been accompanied by His attributes of being Qawi (Strong), Muqtadir (Powerful), Jabber (Omnipotent), Dhuntiqam (Avenger) and the like, which only signify His absolute power, and this has been so only in places where the context demanded that the wicked and disobedient be warned of Allah’s relentless punishment. Apart from such few places, wherever the word Aziz has been used for Allah, it has everywhere been accompanied by one Or other of His attributes of being Hakim (Wise), Alim (Knower), Rahim (Merciful), Ghafur (Forgiving), Wahhab (Generous) and

Hamid (Praiseworthy). The reason is that if a being who wields un-limited power is at the same time unwise, ignorant, un-forgiving as well as stingy and devoid of character, its power and authority cannot but lead to injustice and wickedness. Thus, wherever injustice and wickedness is being committed in the world, it is only because the one who wields authority over others, is either using his power un-wisely and foolishly, or he is merciless and hardhearted, or evil-minded and wicked. Wherever power is coupled with these evil traits of character, no good can be expected to result. That is why in the Quran Allah's attribute of Aziz has necessarily been accompanied by His attributes of being All-Wise and Knowing, Compassionate and Forgiving, Praiseworthy and Generous. So that man may know that the God Who is ruling this universe has, on the one hand, such absolute power that no one, from the earth to the heavens, can prevent His decrees from being enforced. But, on the other hand, He is also All-Wise: His each decision is based on perfect wisdom. He is also All- Knowing: whatever decision He makes, it is precisely according to knowledge. He is also Compassionate: He does not use infinite power mercilessly. He is Forgiving as well: He does not punish His creatures for trifling faults, but overlooks their errors. He is also Generous: He does not treat His subjects stingily, but liberally and benevolently. And He is also Praiseworthy: He combines in Himself all praiseworthy virtues and excellences.

The importance of this statement of the Quran can be better understood by those people who are aware of the discussions of the philosophy of politics and law on the question of sovereignty. Sovereignty connotes that the one who possesses it should wield un-limited power: there should be no internal and external power to change or modify his decision or prevent it from being enforced, and none should have any alternative but to obey him. At the mere concept of this infinite and un-limited power, man's common-sense necessarily demands that whoever attains to such power, should be faultless and perfect in knowledge and wisdom, for if the one holding this power is ignorant, merciless and evil, his sovereignty will inevitably lead to wickedness and corruption. That is why the philosophers, who regarded a single man, or a man-made institution, or an assembly of men as the holder of this power, have had to presume that he or it would be infallible. But obviously, neither can unlimited sovereignty be actually attained by a human power, nor is it possible for a king, or a parliament, or a nation, or a party that it may use the sovereignty attained by it in a limited circle faultlessly and harmlessly. The reason is that the wisdom that is wholly free of every trace of folly, and the knowledge that fully comprehends all the related truths, is not at all possessed even by entire mankind, not to speak of its being attained by an individual, or an institution, or a nation. Likewise, as long as man is man, his being wholly free of and above selfishness, sensuality, fear, greed, desires, prejudice and sentimental love, anger and hate is also not possible. If a person ponders over these truths, he will realize that the Quran is indeed presenting here a correct and perfect view of sovereignty. It says that no one except Allah in this universe is possessor of absolute power, and with this unlimited power He alone is faultless, All-Wise and All- Knowing, Compassionate and Forgiving, and Praiseworthy and Generous in His dealings with Hid subjects.

لَهٗ مُلۡكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ۚ يُحۡىٖ وَيُمِيۡتُ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرٌ 2

(57:2) His is the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and causes death, and He has power over everything.

هُوَ الْاَوَّلُ وَالْاٰخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ۚ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ 3

(57:3) He is the First and the Last, and the Manifest and the Hidden,[3] and He has knowledge of everything.

3. That is, when there was nothing, He was, and when there will be nothing, He will be. He is the most Manifest of all the manifests, for whatever manifests itself in the world, does so only by His attributes and His works and His light. And He is the Most Hidden of all the hidden, for not only do the senses fail to perceive Him but the intellect and thought and imagination also cannot attain to His essence and reality. The best commentary in this regard is a supplication of the Prophet (peace be upon him) which Imam Ahmad, Muslim, Tirmidhi, and Baihaqi have related on the authority of Abu Hurairah, and Hafiz Abu Yala Mosuli in his Musnad on the authority of Aishah:

Antal Awwal, fa-laisa qablaka shaiin; wa Antal Akhir falaisa ba daka shaiin; wa Antal Zahir, fa-laisa fauqaka shai in; wa Anfal Batin, fa laisa dunaka shaiin. You alone are the First; none is before You; You alone are the Last: none is after You; You alone are the Exalted none is above You; You alone are the Hidden: none is more hidden than You.

Here, the question arises: How does this accord with the immortality and eternal life of the dwellers of Paradise and Hell mentioned in the Quran when Allah alone is the Last and Eternal? Its answer has been provided by the Quran itself: Everything is perishable except Allah Himself. (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 88). In other words no creature is immortal in its personal capacity; if a thing exists or continuous to exist, it does so because Allah keeps it so, and can exist only by His letting it exist; otherwise in its own capacity everything is perishable except Allah. Immortality in Heaven and Hell will not be bestowed upon somebody because he is immortal by himself, but because Allah will grant him eternal life. The same is true of the angels, they are not immortal by themselves. When Allah willed they came into existence, and will continue to exist only as long as He wills.

هُوَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ فِيْ سِتَّةِ اَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ؕ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيْهَا ؕ وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ اَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ 4

(57:4) He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six days and then established Himself on the Throne.[4] He knows all that enters the earth and all that comes forth from it, and all that comes down from the heaven and all that goes up to it.[5] He is with you wherever you are.[6] Allah sees all that you do.

4. That is, He alone is the Creator of the universe as well as its Ruler. (For further explanation, see (E.Ns 41, 42 of Surah Al-Aaraf); (E.N. 4 of Suran Younus); (E.Ns 2 to 5 of Surah Ar-Raad), (E.Ns 11 to 15 of Surah HaMim As- Sajdah).

5. In other words, He is not only the Knower of the all but also of the parts. He knows each seed that goes under the layers of the soil, each leaf and bud that comes out of the soil, each rain-drop that falls from the sky, and each molecule of the vapor that ascends from the seas and lakes to the sky. He is aware of every seed lying anywhere under the soil. That is how He causes it to split and sprout up and develop. He is aware of how much vapor has risen from each different place and where it has reached. That is how he collects it into cloud and distributes it and causes it to fall as rain in due measure on different place of the earth. The same is true of the details of everything that goes into the earth and comes out of it, and of everything that ascends to the sky and descends from it. If all this were not comprehended by Allah in His knowledge, it would not be possible for Him to plan and order each thing separately and to regulate and control it in a wise manner.

6. That is, nowhere are you outside Allah's knowledge, His power, His rule, His management and administration. Allah knows wherever you are, whether in the earth, or the air, or the water, or in a secret place. Your being alive there is by itself a proof that Allah is providing for you in that very place. If your heart is beating, if your lungs are breathing, if yow hearing and yow sight are functioning, it is only because all parts of yow body are working under Allah's rule. And if death comes to you at any place; it comes because Allah takes a decision to stop providing for you and to recall you from the world.

لَهٗ مُلۡكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ؕ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ تُرۡجَعُ الۡاُمُوۡرُ 5

(57:5) His is the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and to Him are all matters referred (for judgement).

يُوۡلِجُ الَّيۡلَ فِى النَّهَارِ وَيُوۡلِجُ النَّهَارَ فِى الَّيۡلِ ؕ وَهُوَ عَلِيۡمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوۡرِ 6

(57:6) He causes the night to pass into the day, and causes the day to pass into the night, and He fully knows all that is hidden in the breasts of people.

اٰمِنُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوۡلِهٖ وَاَنۡفِقُوۡا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُمۡ مُّسۡتَخۡلَفِيۡنَ فِيۡهِ ؕ فَالَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا مِنۡكُمۡ وَاَنۡفَقُوۡا لَهُمۡ اَجۡرٌ كَبِيۡرٌ 7

(57:7) Believe in Allah and in His Messenger[7] and expend[8] of what He has entrusted to you.[9] A great reward awaits those of you who believe and spend their wealth.[10]

7. The addressees here are not the non-Muslims, but, as is borne out by the whole subsequent discourse, the Muslims who had affirmed the faith and joined the ranks of the believers, but were not fulfilling the demands of the faith and conducting themselves as true believers should. It is obvious that non-Muslims cannot be invited to affirm the faith and then immediately asked to subscribe generously to the cause of jihad for the sake of Allah, nor can they be told that whoever would fight and spend his wealth in the cause of Allah before the victory, would attain to a higher rank than him who would perform these

services later, For, when a non-Muslim is invited to the faith, the preliminary demands of it only are presented before him and not the ultimate once, Therefore, in view of the context, the meaning of saying: "Believe in Allah and His messenger," here would be: O people, who profess to have affirmed the faith and have joined the ranks of the Muslims, believe in Allah and Messenger (peace be upon him) sincerely and conduct yourselves as the true and sincere believers should.

8. Here, by spending is not implied spending on public welfare, but, as is clearly borne out by the words of verse 10, it implies subscribing to the cause of the war effort that was being waged at that time under the leadership of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to uphold Islam against paganism. Two things, in particular, were such for which the Islamic Government at that time stood in great need of financial help. First, the war equipment; second, supporting and sustaining the oppressed Muslims, who, due to persecution by the disbelievers had emigrated, and were still emigrating, to Al-Madinah from every corner of Arabia, The sincere Muslims were trying their best to render as much help as they could but meeting the entire expenses in this regard was much beyond their means and resources, and their this same spirit of sacrifice has been commended in verses 10, 12, 18 and 19 below. But among the Muslims there were quite a number of well-to-do people, who were watching this struggle between Islam and paganism as mere spectators and had no feelings whatsoever that the faith they claimed to believe in also imposed certain rights on their life and wealth. This second kind of people are the addressees of this verse, They have been exhorted to believe sincerely, and to spend their wealth in the cause of Allah.

9. This has two meanings and both are implied here. The first meaning is: The wealth that you possess is not, in fact, your personal property but has been given to you by Allah. You are not its exclusive master and owner. Allah has given you proprietary right over it as His vicegerent. Therefore, you should have no hesitation in spending it in the service of the real Master. It is not for the vicegerent to withhold the Master's wealth from being spent for the Master's own sake. The second meaning is: Neither has this wealth been with you since ever, nor will it remain in your possession for ever, Yesterday it was in some other people's possession; then Allah made you their successor and entrusted it to you, A time will come when it will not remain with you but some other people will succeed you as its owners, Therefore, in this short-lived ownership, when you are its trustees, spend it in the cause of Allah so that in the Hereafter you may be rewarded for it permanently and eternally. This same thing has been stated by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in a Hadith. Tirmidhi relates that once a goat was slaughtered in the Prophet's (peace be upon him) house and its flesh was given away to the poor. When he came to the house and asked: What remains of the goat? Aishah replied: Nothing but a shoulder. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) remarked: Nay, the whole goat but the shoulder. That is, whatever has been given away for the sake of Allah, has, in fact, been saved. According to another Hadith, a person asked: O Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah, what kind of charity brings the highest reward? He replied: That you should give away a thing in charity when you are hale and hearty: When you feel it could be saved and may like to invest it in the hope of earning more. Do not wait till death when you may say: Give this to so and so and that to so and so, for at that time the wealth has in any case to pass on to so and so. (Bukhari, Muslim). According to another Hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Man says: My wealth! My wealth! whereas his own share in his wealth is no more than what he has eaten up, or worn away, or

passed on in charity? Whatever remains will leave him and will be passed on to others (Muslim).

10. Here again, spending wealth in the cause of jihad has been regarded as an essential demand of the faith and a proof of one's sincerity in it, as if to say: The true and sincere believer is he who does not shirk spending wealth on such an occasion.

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللّٰهِ ۚ وَالرَّسُوْلُ يَدْعُوْكُمْ لِتُؤْمِنُوْا بِرَبِّكُمْ وَقَدْ اَخَذَ مِيْثَاقَكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ 8

(57:8) How is it that you do not believe in Allah when the Messenger calls you to believe in your Lord[11] and although he has taken a covenant from you,[12] if indeed you are believers?

11. That is, you are adopting this unbelieving attitude and conduct at a time when the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah is present among you, and you are receiving the invitation to the faith not through an indirect and remote means but directly through the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah himself.

12. Some commentators have taken this pledge to imply the pledge of service to Allah, which had been taken at the beginning of creation from the future offspring of Adam (peace be upon him), and some others take it for the pledge with which man has been naturally endowed to serve and obey Allah. But the truth is that it implies the conscious pledge of obedience to Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) that every Muslim makes to his Lord by the affirmation of the faith. At another place in the Quran this same pledge has been referred to thus:

Keep in mind the blessing Allah has bestowed upon you and do not forget the solemn covenant which He made with you and which you confirmed, when you said: We have heard and submitted. Fear Allah for Allah knows the very secrets of the hearts. (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 7).

Ubadah bin Samit relates: The Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah had made us pledge that we would listen and obey both in sound health and in ill health; would spend in the cause of Allah both in prosperity and in adversity; would enjoin the good and forbid the evil; would proclaim the truth for the sake of Allah and would not fear the blame of any one in this regard (Musnad Ahmad).

هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُنَزِّلُ عَلٰى عَبْدِهٖٓ اٰيٰتٍۢ بَيِّنٰتٍ لِّيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ۭ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُمْ لَرَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ 9

(57:9) He it is Who sends down Clear Signs to His servant so as to bring you out from darkness into light. Surely Allah is Most Kind and Most Compassionate to you.

وَمَا لَكُمْ اَلَّا تُنْفِقُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَلِلّٰهِ مِيْرَاثُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ لَا يَسْتَوِيْ
مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ اَنْفَقَ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقَاتَلَ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْفَقُوْا مِنْۢ
بَعْدُ وَقَاتَلُوْا ؕ وَكُلًّا وَّعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ع 10

(57:10) How is it that you do not expend in the Way of Allah when to Allah belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth?[13] Those who spent their wealth and took part in fighting before the Victory cannot be equated (with those who spent their wealth and took part in fighting afterwards). They are higher in rank than those who spent and fought afterwards.[14] But to each Allah has promised a good reward. Allah is well aware of all that you do.[15]

13. This has two meanings:

(1) Your wealth is not going to stay with you forever. One day you will leave it behind; then Allah alone will inherit it. Thus the best thing would be that you should spend it yourself in the cause of Allah so that your reward for it is guaranteed with Allah. If you do not spend it yourself, it will in any case return to Allah, but then you will not be entitled to any reward from Him.

(2) You should have no fear of indigence and poverty when you spend it in the cause of Allah, because Allah for Whose sake you would spend your wealth is the Owner of all the treasures of the heavens and the earth. He possessed not only what He has bestowed on you today but has much more to bestow on you tomorrow. This same thing has been expressed at another place, thus:

O Prophet, say to them: My Lord gives abundantly to whomever of His servants He wills and sparingly to whomever He wills. Whatever you spend, He replenishes it by other provisions: He is the best of Providers. (Surah Saba, Ayat 39).

14. That is, although both are entitled to the reward, yet the former are necessarily higher in rank than the latter, for they faced greater risks for the sake of Allah in difficult circumstances, which the latter not. They spent their wealth at a time when there appeared no remote chance of victory that would compensate for their expenditure, and they fought the disbelieves at a critical time when there was an ever present apprehension that the enemy might overpower and crush the followers of Islam completely. Mujahid, Qatadah and Zaid bin Aslam, from among the commentators, say that the word victory in this verso has been used for the conquest of Makkah, and Amir Shabi says that it refers to the truce of Hudaibiyah. The former view has been adopted by most of the commentators, and in support of the latter this tradition from Abu Saeed Khudri is presented: During the time when the truce of Hudaibiyah was concluded, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to us:

In the near future there will appear the people whose deeds will make you look upon your own deeds as mean and trifling, but even if one of them possessed a mountain of gold and he spent all of it in the cause of Allah, he would not attain to your spending two pounds, or even one pound of it. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Marduyah, Abu Nuaim Isfahani). Furthermore, it is also supported by the Hadith which Imam Ahmad has related on the authority of Anas. He says: Once a dispute arose between Khalid bin Walid and Hadrat Abdur Rahman bin Auf, in the course of which Khalid said to Abdur Rahman: You people assume your superiority over us on account of your past services. When this thing came to the Prophet's (peace be upon him) notice, he said: By God in whose hand is my lift, even if you people spent gold equal (in weight) to Mount Uhud, or equal to other mountains, you would not attain to the deeds of these people. From this it is argued that in this verse victory refers to the truce of Hudaibiyah, for Khalid bin Walid had embraced Islam after this truce and had participated in the conquest of Makkah. However, whether victory in this particular case is taken to imply the truce of Hudaibiyah or the conquest of Makkah, in any case the verse does not mean that the distinction of the ranks is confined to this one victory alone, but as a general principle it shows that those who fight and spend in the cause of Islam at the time when disbelief and disbelievers appear to be dominant and Islam seems to have no remote chance of victory, are far superior in rank to those who make sacrifices after the conflict between Islam and paganism has been decided in favor of Islam.

15. That is, Allah does not bestow His favors blindly. Ho sees who has performed what deeds, under what kind of circumstances, and with what motive and then determines the rank and the reward of the deed of each person with full justice and awareness.

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِيْ يُقْرِضُ اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضٰعِفَهٗ لَهٗ وَلَهٗٓ اَجْرٌ كَرِيْمٌ ۚ 11

(57:11) Who is it that will give Allah a beautiful loan? A loan that Allah will repay after increasing it many times and grant him a generous reward.[16]

16. How Generous and Beneficent is Allah that if a man spends the wealth granted by Himself in His way, He calls it a loan Himself, provided that it is a good loan, that is, a loan which in given with a pure intention, without any selfish motive of winning reputation and renown, or of doing favor to somebody, but only for the sake of Allah's approval and to win His good-will and rewards. Allah makes two promises in this regard:

(1) That He will repay it increasing it manifold.

(2) That He will also give from Himself the best reward for it.

According to a Hadith reported by Abdullah bin Masud, when this verse was revealed and the people heard it from the Prophet (peace be upon him), Abud Dahdah Ansari asked: O Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah, does Allah want a loan from us?" The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Yes, O Abud-Dahdah. He said: Kindly show me your hand. The Prophet (peace be upon him) extended his hand towards him. He took his hand in his own hand and said: I give away my garden in loan to my Lord. Abdullah bin Masud says that the garden had 600 datepalms and also his own house in which his family lived. Saying this to the Prophet (peace be upon him) he went straight back home, and calling out to his

wife said: Come out, O mother of Dahdah, I have loaned this garden to my Lord. She replied: Dahdah's father, you have made a good bargain, and she immediately vacated and left the garden with her children. (Ibn Abi Hatim). This incident throws light on the conduct of the sincere believers of that time, and from this one can also understand the kind of the good loan that Allah has promised to return increasing it manifold with a rich reward in addition.

يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ يَسْعٰى نُورُهُمْ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ بُشْرٰىكُمُ
الْيَوْمَ جَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِينَ فِيهَا ۚ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ۚ 12

(57:12) On that Day you will see believing men and women that their light will be running before them and on their right hands.[17] (They will be told): "A good tiding to you today." There shall be Gardens beneath which rivers flow; therein they shall abide. That indeed is the great triumph.

17. This and the following verses show that the light on the Day of Judgment will be specifically meant for the righteous believers only. As for the disbelievers and the hypocrites and the wicked people, they will be wandering about in the darkness as they had been in the world. The light there will be the light of righteous deeds. The sincerity of the faith and the piety of the character and conduct will turn into light that will lend brightness to the personality of the virtuous. The brighter the deed the more luminous will be his person, and when he will walk towards Paradise, his light will be running forward before him. The best explanation of it is Qatadah's mursal tradition in which he says; The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The light of some one will be so strong and sharp that it will be running on before him equal to the distance between Al-Madinah and Aden, of another equal to the distance between Madinah and Sana, and of another even less than that; so much so that there will be a believer whose light will jsut extend beyond his steps. (Ibn Jarir). In other words, the intensity of the light of a person will be proportionate to the extent of the good done and spread by him in the world, and the beams of his light will be running on before him in the Hereafter extending as far as his good will have extended in the world.

Here, a question may arise in the mind of the reader: One can understand the meaning of their light running on before the believers but what does their light running on only on their right hand mean? Will there be darkness on their left side? The answer is: When a man is walking with a light on his right hand, his left side also will be bright, though the fact of the matter is that the light will be on his right hand. This has been explained by the Hadith, which Abu Dharr and Abu Darda have reported, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: I shall recognize the righteous people of my ummah by their light which will be running on before them and on their right and on their left. (Hakim, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Marduyah).

يَوْمَ يَقُوْلُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتُ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا انْظُرُوْنَا نَقْتَبِسْ مِنْ نُّوْرِكُمْ ۚ قِيْلَ
ارْجِعُوْا وَرَآءَكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوْا نُوْرًا ۭ فَضُرِبَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِسُوْرٍ لَّهٗ بَابٌ ۭ بَاطِنُهٗ فِيْهِ الرَّحْمَةُ
وَظَاهِرُهٗ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ ۭ 13

(57:13) On that Day the hypocrites, both men and women, shall say to the believers: "Look at us that we may extract some light from your light."[18] They will be told: "Go back and seek light for yourselves elsewhere." Then a wall shall be erected between them with a door in it. On the inside of it there will be mercy, and on the outside of it there will be chastisement.[19]

18. It means that when the believers will be going towards Paradise, the light will be before them, and the hypocrites will be stumbling about in the darkness behind. At that time they will call out to the believers, who lived with them together in the same Muslim society in the world, saying: Look back towards us awhile so that we also may get some light.

19. This means that the people of Paradise will enter it through a gate and then the gate will be closed. On one side of the gate there will be the blessings of Paradise and on the other the torment of Hell. For the hypocrites it will not be possible to cross the barrier that will stand between them and Paradise.

يُنَادُوْنَهُمْ اَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَّعَكُمْ ۭ قَالُوْا بَلٰى وَلٰكِنَّكُمْ فَتَنْتُمْ اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتَرَبَّصْتُمْ
وَارْتَبْتُمْ وَغَرَّتْكُمُ الْاَمَانِيُّ حَتّٰى جَاۗءَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ وَغَرَّكُمْ بِاللّٰهِ الْغَرُوْرُ 14

(57:14) The hypocrites will call out to the believers: "Were we not with you?"[20] The believers will reply: "Yes; but you allowed yourselves to succumb to temptations,[21] and you wavered[22] and you remained in doubt[23] and false expectations deluded you until Allah's command came to pass,[24] and the Deluder[25] deluded you concerning Allah.

20. That is, did we not live with you together in the same Muslim society? Did we not affirm the faith? Did we not offer the Prayers along with you and observe the Fast and perform the Hajj and pay the Zakat? Did we not sit with you in your assemblies and were we not bound in marriage ties and kinship with you? Then, how is it that we have been separated from you today?

21. That is, in spite of your claim to be Muslims, you never believed like true and sincere Muslims and remained suspended between belief and unbelief. You still had your interests attached to disbelief and the disbelievers and you never gave yourselves up wholly to Islam.

22. Tarabbus (from which tarabbastum of the text is derived) means to wait and tarry for an opportunity. When a person is unable to decide which of the two alternative ways he should choose but stands and waits to consider which way should be more favorable for him to follow, he is involved in tarabbus. The hypocrites had adopted the same attitude during the critical time of the conflict between Islam and un-Islam. Neither were they siding with disbelief openly nor were spending their energy to support and help Islam with full conviction. They were sitting on the fence, waiting to see which party in the conflict became dominant, so that if it was Islam they may join it on the basis of their affirmation of the faith, and if it was unbelief they may side with its supporters taking advantage of their neutral position in the conflict.

23. This implies different kinds of doubts that a hypocrite suffers from, and the same also are the actual causes of his hypocrisy. He doubts the existence of God, the Prophethood of the Prophet, the Quran's being Allah's book, the Hereafter, its accountability, and its rewards and punishments, and he doubts whether the conflict between the truth and falsehood is real, or a mere delusion; as for himself he considers the only truth to be that one should enjoy life and its pleasures to the full. For unless a person is involved in such doubts he can never be a hypocrite.

24. This can have two meanings:

(1) Until death came to him, you could not shed this delusion till the last moment.

(2) That Islam became dominant, while you looked on unconcerned.

25. That is, Satan.

فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْكُمْ فِدْيَةٌ وَّلَا مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ۭ مَاْوٰىكُمُ النَّارُ ۭ هِىَ مَوْلٰىكُمْ ۭ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ 15

(57:15) So no ransom shall be accepted from you today, nor from those who disbelieved.[26] You are destined for the Fire. That will be your guardian.[27] And that indeed is a grievous destination.

26. This clearly shows that in the Hereafter the hypocrites will be doomed to the same fate as the disbelievers.

27. The words hiya maula kum (Hell is your maula) can have two meanings:

(1) That Hell is the only proper place for you.

(2) That you never took Allah as your maula (friend, patron) so that He may look after you. Now Hell only is your maula, therefore, Hell now will look after you.

اَلَمۡ يَاۡنِ لِلَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اَنۡ تَخۡشَعَ قُلُوۡبُهُمۡ لِذِكۡرِ اللّٰهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الۡحَـقِّ ۙ وَلَا يَكُوۡنُوۡا
كَالَّذِيۡنَ اُوۡتُوا الۡكِتٰبَ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ فَطَالَ عَلَيۡهِمُ الۡاَمَدُ فَقَسَتۡ قُلُوۡبُهُمۡ ؕ وَكَثِيۡرٌ مِّنۡهُمۡ
فٰسِقُوۡنَ 16

(57:16) Is the time not come that the hearts of the believers should be humbled to Allah's remembrance and to the Truth that He has revealed,[28] and that they should not be like those who were vouchsafed the Book and then a long time elapsed so that their hearts were hardened? A great many of them are now evil-doers.[29]

28. Here again, the word believers is general, but it does not apply to all the Muslims; it refers to those particular Muslims who had professed the faith verbally and joined the followers of the Prophet (peace be upon him) though their hearts were devoid of any concern for Islam. They were watching that the pagan forces were bent upon wiping out Islam; they had encircled the handful of Muslims from all sides, who were being made the target of persecution everywhere in Arabia, and thus the oppressed Muslims were fleeing to Al-Madinah empty-handed for refuge; the sincere Muslims were extending to them whatever economic help they could; yet they were, at the same time, engaged in a life and death struggle with the enemy. But, in spite of this, these people who professed the faith were not being moved at all. So, here, they are being put to shame. As if to say: What kind of believers are you? At this critical juncture for Islam, is it not yet the time that your hearts should melt at the mention of Allah and be filled with the spirit of sacrifice for the sake of His religion. Can the believers be such that they have no feelings for Islam when it is confronted with hard times. That they may sit unconcerned when they are summoned in the name of Allah. That the hearts may neither tremble out of fear of Allah nor bow to His command when He Himself should make an appeal for contributions in the Book sent down by Him, declaring it as a loan to Himself and plainly telling that the one who would regard his wealth as dearer than the cause of the true faith would be a hypocrite and not a believer.

29. That is, the Jews and the Christians seem to have lost fervor and degenerated spiritually and morally hundreds of years after the passing away of their Prophets. But have you already become so depraved that while the Prophet (peace be upon him) is still present among you, and the Book of God is still being revealed, and not much time has passed over you since you affirmed the faith, and you have started behaving like the Jews and the Christians who have reached this state through centuries of playing and tempering with the Book of Allah and its verses.

اِعۡلَمُوۡۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحۡىِ الۡاَرۡضَ بَعۡدَ مَوۡتِهَا ؕ قَدۡ بَيَّنَّا لَـكُمُ الۡاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَعۡقِلُوۡنَ 17

(57:17) Know well that Allah revives the earth after it becomes lifeless. We have clearly shown Our Signs to you, perchance you will use your reason.[30]

30. The point contained here should be well understood. At several places in the Quran the Prophethood and the revelation of the Book have been compared to the rainfall, for the effects produced by them on humanity are precisely like those produced by rain on the soil. Just as the dead earth swells and blooms as soon as it receives a shower of rain, so it is with the dead humanity in a country where a Prophet is raised through Allah's mercy and revelation begins to be sent down to him. It starts revealing those virtues which lay hidden and suppressed for ages. It starts manifesting from within itself excellent morals and good deeds and virtues of every kind. Allusion has been made to this truth here so as to open the eyes of the Muslims of the weak faith and to make them ponder their state. The way humanity was being reformed by the blessed rainfall of the Prophethood and revelation and the way it was being richly and generously blessed in every way was not a remote story for them. They were observing it themselves in the pious and righteous society of the companions and experiencing it day and night around them. Polytheism with all its evils was present before them while the virtues and good things emanating from Islam were also blooming and flourishing before their eyes. Therefore, they did not need to be told any details. An allusion was enough to the effect. The signs of how Allah grants life to the dead earth through the rainfall of His mercy have been shown to you. Now you should use your common sense and consider it for yourself as to what benefit you arc deriving from this blessing.

إِنَّ الْمُصَّدِّقِينَ وَالْمُصَّدِّقٰتِ وَأَقْرَضُوا اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يُّضٰعَفُ لَهُمْ وَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ 18

(57:18) Verily those who give alms[31] be they men or women, and give Allah a beautiful loan shall be repaid after increasing it many times; and theirs shall be a generous reward.

31. Sadaqah, as an Islamic term, is the charity given sincerely and with a pure intention only with a view to seek Allah's good pleasure without making any show of it, and without the intention of doing any favor to the recipient. The donor should give it only because he has a true feeling of the service of his Lord. The word is derived from sidq, therefore, sadaqat (sincerity) is of its essence. No charity and no spending of the wealth can be a sadaqah unless it springs from a sincere and pure motive of spending only for the sake of Allah.

وَالَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖٓ أُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الصِّدِّيقُونَ ۖ وَالشُّهَدَآءُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۭ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ وَنُوْرُهُمْ ۭ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِاٰيٰتِنَآ أُولٰٓئِكَ أَصْحٰبُ الْجَحِيمِ ع 19

(57:19) In Allah's sight only those who truly believe in Allah and His Messengers[32] are utterly truthful[33] and true bearers of witness(for the sake of Allah).[34] For them is their reward and their light.[35] As for those who gave the lie to Our Signs, they are the people of Hell.

32. Here, the believers imply those people of true faith whose attitude and conduct was absolutely different from that of the people of weak faith and the false claimants to Islam, and who were at that time vying with one another in making monetary sacrifices and were struggling with their lives in the cause of the true faith.

33. Siddiq (most truthful) is the superlative from sidq; however, one should clearly understand that sidq is not merely a statement conforming to the truth, but a statement which is not only true in itself but its speaker also upholds it as a truth sincerely. For instance, if a person says that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is Allah's Messenger, this is by itself precisely according to the truth, for the Prophet (peace be upon him) is truly Allah's Messenger, but the person would be true in his statement only if he also believed and upheld him as Allah's Messenger. Therefore, a thing would be sidq if what was said was in conformity with the truth as well as with the speaker's own conscience. Likewise, sidq also contains the sense of faithfulness, sincerity and practical righteousness. Sadiq-ul-waad would be the person who kept his promise practically, who never broke it. Sadiq (true friend) would be he who did full justice to friendship in the time of need, and who never proved faithless to anybody in any way. In war, sadiq-fil-qital (true soldier) would be the one who fought with all his heart and body and established his valor practically. Thus, sidq in essence implies that one's deed should fully conform to his word. The one who acts contrary to his word cannot be sadiq. On that very basis, the one who preaches one thing and acts contrary to it is regarded as a false preacher. With this meaning of sidq and sadiq in view one can fully appreciate the meaning of the superlative sadiq. It would inevitably imply a righteous person who is free from every impurity, who has never swerved from the truth and piety, who could never be expected to say anything against his conscience. Who believed in whatever he believed with full sincerity and remained faithful to it under all circumstances, and who has practically proved that he is a true believer in the full sense of the word. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 99 of Surah An-Nisa).

34. The early commentators have differed about the explanation of this verse. Ibn Abbas, Masruq, Dahhak, Muqatil bin Hayyan and others say that the previous sentence ended with humsssiddiqun; and wash-shuhadauinda Rabbihim la-hum ajru-hum wa nuru-hum is a separate and independent sentence According to this explanation, the translation of the sentence would be: Those who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, are indeed the most truthful (as siddiqun); as for the true witnesses (ash-shuhada), they will have their reward and their light from their Lord. Contrary to this, Mujahid and several other commentators regard this whole expression as one sentence. According to them the translation would be that which we have given in the text above. The two commentaries differ because the first group has taken the word shahid in the meaning of the martyr in the way of Allah and seeing that every believer is not a shahid in this sense, has taken wash-shuhadau inda Rabbi-him as a separate sentence. But the other group takes shahid in the meaning of the witness of the truth, and not in the sense of the martyr, and in this sense every believer is a shahid. We are of the opinion that this second commentary is preferable and this is;

And thus We have made you a middle nation that you may be witnesses against mankind, and the messenger may be a witness against you. (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 143).

Allah had called you Muslims before this and has also called you (by the same name) in this (Quran) so that the Messenger may be a witness in regard to you and you may be witnesses in regard to the rest of mankind. (Surah Al- Hajj, Ayat 78).

In a Hadith, Bara bin Azib has related that he heard the Prophet (peace be upon him) say: The believers of my Ummah are shahid (the witnesses); then he recited this very verse of Surah Al-Hadid. (Ibn Jarir). Ibn Marduyah has related on the authority of Abu ad-Darda the tradition that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The one who emigrates from a land in order to save his life and his faith from temptation, is recorded as a siddiq (most truthful), and when he dies, Allah takes his soul as a shahid (true witness). Then after this, the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited this very verse. (For the explanation of this meaning of shahadat, see (E.N. 144 of Surah Al-Baqarah); (E.N. 99 of Surah An-Nisa), (E.N. 82 of Surah Al-Ahzab).

35. That is, each one of them will receive the reward and the light of the measure and degree he deserves. They will all get their own respective rewards and lights and their shares have already been reserved for them.

اِعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَّلَهْوٌ وَّزِيْنَةٌ وَّتَفَاخُرٌۢ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْاَمْوَالِ
وَالْاَوْلَادِ ؕ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ اَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهٗ ثُمَّ يَهِيْجُ فَتَرٰىهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُوْنُ
حُطَامًا ؕ وَفِي الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌ ۙ وَّمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ ؕ وَمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَآ اِلَّا
مَتَاعُ الْغُرُوْرِ 20

(57:20) Know well that the life of this world is merely sport and diversion and adornment and an object of your boasting with one another, and a rivalry in the multiplication of riches and children. Its likeness is that of rain: when it produces vegetation it delights the tillers. But then it withers and you see it turn yellow, and then it crumbles away. In the Hereafter there is (either) grievous chastisement (or) forgiveness from Allah and (His) good pleasure. The life of this world is nothing but delusion.[36]

36. To understand this theme fully one should keep the following verses of the Quran in mind: (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayats 14-15); (Surah Younus, Ayats 24-25); (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 18); (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayats 45-46); (Surah An-Noor, Ayat 39). In all these verses the truth that has been impressed on the mind is: The life of this world is a temporary life: its spring as well as its autumn is temporary. There is much here to allure man. But this, in fact, consists of base and insignificant things which man because of his shallowness of mind regards as great and splendid and is deluded into thinking that in attaining them lies supreme success. The truth however is that the highest benefits and means of pleasure and enjoyment that one can possibly attain in the world, are indeed short and insignificant and confined to a

few years of temporary life and can be destroyed by just one turn of fate. Contrary to this, the life in Hereafter is a splendid and eternal life. Its benefits are great and permanent and its losses too are great and permanent. The one who attains Allah's forgiveness and His goodwill there, will indeed have attained the everlasting bliss beside which the entire wealth of the world and its kingdom become pale and insignificant. And the one who is seized in God's torment there, will come to know that he had made a bad bargain even if he had attained all that he regarded as great and splendid in the world.

سَابِقُوٓا۟ إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ ٱلسَّمَآءِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ ۙ أُعِدَّتْ
لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ بِٱللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِۦ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ ٱللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَآءُ ۚ وَٱللَّهُ ذُو ٱلْفَضْلِ
ٱلْعَظِيمِ 21

(57:21) So vie with one another[37] in seeking to attain your Lord's forgiveness and a Garden whose width is as the width of the heaven and the earth,[38] one which has been prepared for those who believe in Allah and His Messengers. That is Allah's bounty which He bestows upon those whom He pleases. Allah is the Lord of abounding bounty.

37. Musabaqat (from which sabiqu of the original is derived) means to compete and vie with each other in order to excel. The meaning is: Give up your rivalries with one another for amassing wealth, and pleasures and benefits of the world and instead make the forgiveness of your Lord and Paradise the object of your struggle and rivalries.

38. Some commentators have taken the word ard in arduha ka-ardis-samai wal-ard in the sense of breadth, but actually this word has been used here in the meaning of spaciousness and extensiveness. In Arabic the word ard is not only used for breadth, as a counterpart of length, but also for spaciousness, as it has been used in(Surah HaMim As-Sajdah, Ayat 51): fadhu dua in arid: Then he is full of long supplications. Besides, one should also understand that the object here is not to foretell the area or extent of Paradise, but to give an idea of its vastness and extensiveness. Here its vastness has been described as the vastness of the heaven and earth, and in Surah Aal-Imran it has been said: Hasten to follow the path that leads to your Lord's forgiveness and to Paradise whose vastness is that of the universe, which has been prepared for the righteous (verse 133). When both these verses are read together, one gets the idea that the gardens and palaces man will receive in Paradise will only serve as his dwellingplace but the entire universe will be his home. He will not be restricted to one place as he is in this world, where just for reaching the moon, his nearest neighbor in space, he has had to struggle hard for years and expend excessive resources only to overcome the difficulties of a short journey. There the whole universe will be accessible to him. He will be able to see whatever he would desire from his station and be able to visit whichever place he would like easily.

مَآ اَصَابَ مِنۡ مُّصِيۡبَةٍ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ وَلَا فِىۡۤ اَنۡفُسِكُمۡ اِلَّا فِىۡ كِتٰبٍ مِّنۡ قَبۡلِ اَنۡ نَّبۡرَاَهَا ؕ اِنَّ
ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيۡرٌ ۚ 22

(57:22) No misfortune ever befalls on earth, nor on yourselves but We have inscribed it in the Book[39] before We make it manifest.[40] Surely that is easy for Allah.[41]

39. A Book: the writ of destiny.

40. Here, "it" may be referring to the affliction as well as to the earth, or the self of man, or in view of the context, to all the creatures.

41. That is, it is not at all difficult for Allah to pre-ordain the destiny of each and every one of His creatures.

لِّكَيۡلَا تَاۡسَوۡا عَلٰى مَا فَاتَكُمۡ وَلَا تَفۡرَحُوۡا بِمَآ اٰتٰىكُمۡ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخۡتَالٍ
فَخُوۡرِ ۙ 23

(57:23) (We do so) that you may not grieve over[42] the loss you suffer, nor exult over what He gave you. Allah does not love the vainglorious, the boastful,

42. In order to understand why this has been said in that context, one should keep in mind the conditions through which the Muslims were passing at the time this Surah was revealed. An ever present danger of attack by the enemy, battles in quick succession, a state of constant siege, hardships caused by economic boycott by the disbelievers, persecution of the converts to Islam everywhere in Arabia, these were the conditions that the Muslims were confronted with at that time. The disbelievers looked upon these as a proof of the Muslims having been forsaken and rejected, and the hypocrites took these as a confirmation of their own suspicions and doubts. As for the sincere Muslims, they were facing these bravely and resolutely, yet the excess of hardship and suffering would sometimes become trying even for them. So, the Muslims are being consoled, as if to say: No affliction, God forbid, has befallen you without the knowledge of your Lord. Whatever you are experiencing is according to the pre-ordained scheme of Allah, which is already recorded in the writ of destiny. And you are being made to pass through these trials and tribulations for the sake of your own training for the great service that Allah wills to take from you. If you are made to attain to success without passing through these hardships, weaknesses will remain in your character due to which you will neither be able to digest power and authority nor withstand the tempests and furies of falsehood.

ٱلَّذِينَ يَبۡخَلُونَ وَيَأۡمُرُونَ ٱلنَّاسَ بِٱلۡبُخۡلِۗ وَمَن يَتَوَلَّ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ هُوَ ٱلۡغَنِيُّ

ٱلۡحَمِيدُ 24

(57:24) those who are niggardly and bid others to be niggardly.[43] And he who turns away, (should know that) Allah is Self-Sufficient, Immensely Praiseworthy.[44]

43. The allusion is to the trait of character that everyone could experience among the hypocrites in the Muslim society itself. As regards to the outward affirmation of the faith, they could not be distinguished from the true Muslims. But owing to lack of sincerity they were not receiving the sort of training that was being given to the sincere Muslims. Therefore, the little prosperity and leadership that they were enjoying in an ordinary town of Arabia, was causing them to be swollen with pride. As for their stinginess, not only were they themselves unwilling to give away anything in the cause of God Whom they professed to believe in and the Messenger (peace be upon him) whom they professed to follow and the faith which they professed to have accepted, but also tried to prevent others from making any contribution, for, they thought, it was a useless cause. Obviously, if there had been no trials and tribulations, these worthless people, who were of no use to Allah, could not be separated from the sincere and worthy believers, and without weeding them out a mixed crowd of sincere and insincere Muslims could not be entrusted with the high office of leadership of the world, the great blessings of which the world subsequently witnessed in the rightly-guided Caliphate.

44. That is, even if after hearing these words of admonition a person does not adopt the way of sincerity, faithfulness and sacrifice for the sake of Allah and His religion, and wishes to persist in his stubbornness, which Allah disapproves, then Allah has no use for him, for Allah is All- Sufficient and Independent of His creatures. He does not stand in need of their help in any way. And He is All- Praiseworthy. People of only good qualities are acceptable to Him. People of evil character cannot be entitled to receive any favor from Him.

لَقَدۡ أَرۡسَلۡنَا رُسُلَنَا بِٱلۡبَيِّنَٰتِ وَأَنزَلۡنَا مَعَهُمُ ٱلۡكِتَٰبَ وَٱلۡمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ ٱلنَّاسُ بِٱلۡقِسۡطِۖ

وَأَنزَلۡنَا ٱلۡحَدِيدَ فِيهِ بَأۡسٞ شَدِيدٞ وَمَنَٰفِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيَعۡلَمَ ٱللَّهُ مَن يَنصُرُهُۥ وَرُسُلَهُۥ

بِٱلۡغَيۡبِۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٞ ٢٥

(57:25) Indeed We sent Our Messengers with Clear Signs, and sent down with them the Book and the Balance that people may uphold justice.[45] And We sent down iron, wherein there is awesome power and many benefits for people,[46] so that Allah may know who, without even having seen Him, helps Him and His Messengers. Surely Allah is Most Strong, Most Mighty.[47]

45. In this brief sentence the whole essence of the mission of the Prophets bas been compressed, which one should clearly understand. It says that all the Messengers who came to the world from Allah, brought three things:

(1) Bayyenaat: manifest signs which clearly showed that they were really Allah's Messengers, and were not impostors; convincing arguments which made it evident that what they were presenting as truth was really the truth, and what they condemned as falsehood was really falsehood. Clear instructions which told without any ambiguity what was the right way for the people in respect of beliefs, morals, acts of worship and dealings, which they should adopt, and what were the wrong ways which they should shun and avoid.

(2) Kitab: the Book which contained all the teachings required for the guidance of man so that people may turn to it for enlightenment.

(3) Mizan: the criterion of truth and falsehood which may precisely indicate, like a balance, the golden mean between two extremes in matters of thought, morals and dealings.

The object for which the Prophets were sent with these three things was that man's conduct in the world and the system of human life, individually as well as collectively, should be established with justice. On the in hand, every man should precisely know the rights of God, the rights of his self and the rights of all those people with whom he may have to deal in any way, and should fulfill them faithfully. And on the other hand, the system of collective life should be built on such principles as should eliminate every kind of injustice from society, should safeguard every aspect of civilization and social life against extremism, should establish correct balance and equity in all spheres of collective life, so that all elements of society should receive their rights equitably and fulfill their obligations and duties responsibly.

In other words, the object of sending the prophets was to establish individual as well as collective justice. They wanted to establish justice in the personal life of each individual so as to bring about poise and equilibrium in his mind, his character, his conduct and his dealings. They also wanted to establish the whole system of human society on justice so that both the individual and the society should assist and cooperate with each other in their spiritual, moral and material well-being instead of being a hindrance and obstacle.

46. Sending down iron means creating iron in the earth just as in (Surah Az-Zumar, Ayat 6) it has been said: He sent down for you eight heads of cattle, male and female. As whatever exists in the earth, has come here by Allah's command, and has not appeared by itself. Its being created has been expressed in the Quran as its being sent down. The mention of sending down iron which has great strength and other benefits for men immediately after stating the object of the mission of the Prophets by itself indicates that by iron here is meant political and military power. Thus the verse means: Allah did not raise His Prophets in the world just to present a scheme for the establishment of justice, but it was also a part of their mission to endeavor to enforce it practically, to collect necessary power to establish justice in all spheres of life, to punish those who might disrupt it and to break the power of those who might resist it.

47. That is, Allah does not need this help because He is neither weak nor cannot use His power to accomplish this work, but He has adopted this method for the trial of men. Man can advance on the way of his progress and well-being only by passing through this trial. Allah indeed has the power to subdue all the disbelievers by one command whenever He wills and give to His Messengers complete dominance over them, but in that case the believers in the Messengers would have nothing to do for which they should become entitled to rewards. That is why Allah instead of accomplishing this mission through His dominant power adopted the method of sending His Messengers to human beings with the signs and the Book and the criterion, and enjoined them to present the way of justice before the people and exhort them to refrain and desist from wickedness sad injustice At the same time, He gave us full option to accept the message of the Messengers or to reject it. He summoned those who accepted the invitation to come forward and help Him and His Messengers to establish justice, and to exert their utmost against those who were bent upon retaining the unjust system. Thus, Allah wants to see who among us reject the invitation to justice, who exert with their lives in order to retain injustice as against justice, who shirk supporting struggling for the cause of the message of justice after they have accepted it, and who stake their lives and their possessions for the sake of unseen God to help the truth become dominant in the world. Only for those who emerge successful in this test will avenues to future progress be opened up.

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا نُوْحًا وَّ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِيْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتٰبَ فَمِنْهُمْ مُّهْتَدٍ ۚ
وَكَثِيْرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ 26

(57:26) Indeed We[48] sent forth Noah and Abraham and established in their line Prophecy and the Book.[49] Then some of them embraced the guidance and many of them are wicked.[50]

48. Now it is being told what corruptions appeared among those who believed in the Prophets who came to the world before the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) with the signs and the Book and the criterion.

49. That is, whichever Messenger came with Allah's Book, was from the progeny of the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) and, after him, from the progeny of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him).

50. Became transgressors and disobedient.

ثُمَّ قَفَّيْنَا عَلٰٓى اٰثَارِهِمْ بِرُسُلِنَا وَقَفَّيْنَا بِعِيْسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ الْاِنْجِيْلَ ۙ وَجَعَلْنَا فِيْ
قُلُوْبِ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُ رَاْفَةً وَّرَحْمَةً ۭ وَرَهْبَانِيَّةَ ۨ ابْتَدَعُوْهَا مَا كَتَبْنٰهَا عَلَيْهِمْ اِلَّا ابْتِغَاۗءَ

رِضۡوَانِ اللّٰهِ فَمَا رَعَوۡهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا ۚ فَاٰتَيۡنَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا مِنۡهُمۡ اَجۡرَهُمۡ ۚ وَ كَثِيۡرٌ

مِّنۡهُمۡ فٰسِقُوۡنَ 27

(57:27) In their wake, We sent a succession of Our Messengers, and raised Jesus, son of Mary, after all of them, and bestowed upon him the Evangel, and We set tenderness and mercy[51] in the hearts of those that followed him. As for monasticism,[52] it is they who invented it;[53] We did not prescribe it for them. They themselves invented it in pursuit of Allah's good pleasure, and then they did not observe it as it ought to have been observed.[54] So We gave their reward to those of them that believed. But many of them are wicked.

51. The words in the text are rafat and rahmat, which are almost synonymous. But when they are used together, rafat implies the compassion that a person feels on seeing another person in pain and distress, and rahmat is the feeling under which bhe tries to help him. As the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) was highly compassionate and merciful towards the people, his this trait of character deeply influenced his disciples: therefore, they treated the people with pity and sympathy and served them with all their heart and soul.

52. The root rahb (from which rahbaniyyat or ruhbaniyyat is derived) means fear; thus rahbaniyyat means a mode of life which reflects fear and terror, and ruhbaniyyat means the mode of life of the terrified. As a term it implies a person’s abandoning the world out of fear (whether it is the fear of somebody’s tyranny, or fear of the worldly temptations and distractions, or fear of one’s personal weaknesses) and taking refuge in the jungles and mountains, or living alone as a hermit.

53. The words in the original can have two meanings:

(1) That We did not enjoin monasticism (ruhbaniyyat) upon them. We enjoined upon them only the seeking of Allah’s good pleasure.

(2) That monasticism was not enjoined by Us. They of their own accord enjoined it on themselves, to seek Allah’s good pleasure. In both cases this verse makes it explicit that monasticism is an un-Islamic creed, and it has never been part of the true faith. The same thing has been stated by the Prophet (peace be upon him) thus: There is no monasticism in Islam. (Musnad Ahmed). In another Hadith the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The monasticism of this ummah is to fight in the way of Allah. (Musnad Ahmed Musnad Abi Yala. That is, the way for this ummah to attain to spiritual piety lies not in abandoning the world but in fighting in Allah’s way. This ummah does not flee to the jungles and mountains out of fear of temptations and distractions but counteracts them by resort to fighting in Allah’s way. According to a tradition related both by Bukhari and by Muslim, one of the companions said that he would keep up Prayers throughout the night; another said that he would fast perpetually without ever observing a break; and a third one said the he would never marry and would have nothing to do with women. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) came to know of what they had resolved, he said: By God, I fear Allah

the most and remain conscious of Him at all times; yet my way is that I observe the fast as well as break it. I keep up the Prayer during the night as well as have sleep. And I marry the women also. The one who does not follow my way, does not belong to me. Anas says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to say: Do not be hard and severe to yourselves, lest Allah should be hard and severe to you. A community had adopted this way of severity towards itself, then Allah also seized it in severity. Look, the remainder of them are found in the monasteries and churches. (Abu Daud).

54. That is, they were involved in a double error. First, they imposed on themselves the restrictions which Allah had not imposed. Second, they did not observe in the right spirit the restrictions that they had imposed upon themselves with a view to attain to Allah's goodwill, and conducted themselves in a way as to earn Allah's wrath instead of His good pleasure.

To understand this theme fully we should have a look at the history of Christian Monasticism.

Until 200 years after the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), the Christian Church knew no monasticism. Its germs, however, were found in Christianity from the very beginning. To look upon asceticism as a moral ideal and to regard celibacy as superior to matrimonial and mundane life is the basis of monasticism. Both these existed in Christianity from the beginning. Owing to the sanctification of celibacy in particular, it was considered undesirable for those who performed religious services in the church to marry, have children and be involved in domestic chores; so much so that by the 3rd century monasticism began to spread like an epidemic in Christiandom. Historically, it had three main causes.

First, sensuality, immorality and worship of the world had so permeated the ancient polytheistic society that in their zeal to counteract it, the Christian scholars adopted the extremist way instead of the way of moderation. They so stressed chastity that the relationship between man and woman by itself came to be looked upon as filthy, even if it was within marriage. They reacted so violently to monasticism that to possess property of any kind ultimately was considered a sin for a religious person and to live like a poor man and ascetic the criterion of moral excellence. Likewise, in their reaction to the sensuality of the polytheistic society, they touched the other extreme. They made withdrawal from pleasure and all material comforts, self denial and curbing of the desires as the object of morality. They regarded torturing the body by different sorts of harsh discipline as the climax and proof of a person's spirituality.

Secondly, when Christianity started achieving successes and spreading rapidly among the common people, the Church in its zeal to attract more and more adherents went on imbibing every evil that was prevalent in society. Thus, saint-worship replaced the ancient deities. Images of Christ and Mary began to be worshiped instead of the idols of Horus and Isis. Christmas took the place of Saturnalia. Christian monks began to practice every kind of occult art like curing the sick by amulets and magic incantations, taking omens and fortune-telling, driving out spirits, etc. as were prevalent in ancient days. Likewise, since the common people looked upon a dirty and naked person who lived in a cave or den as a holy and godly man, this very concept of sainthood became prevalent in the Christian Church,

and legends of their miraculous powers began to abound in the memoirs of the Christian saints.

Thirdly, the Christians possessed no detailed law and definite traditions and practices to determine the bounds of religion. They had given up Mosaic Law and the Gospel by itself afforded no perfect code of guidance. Therefore, the Christian doctors went on permitting every kind of innovation to enter the religion partly under the influence of alien philosophies, customs and practices and partly under their personal preference and whim. Monasticism was one such innovation. Christian scholars and doctors of law took its philosophy and rules and practices from the Buddhist monks, Hindu Yogis and ascetics, Egyptian Anchorites, Iranian Manicheans, and the followers of Plato and Plotinus, and made the same the means and methods of attaining self-purification, spiritual loftiness and nearness to God. Those who committed this error were not ordinary men. From the 3rd to the 7th century (i.e. till about the time the Quran began to be revealed) the religious personalities who were recognized as the foremost scholars and religious guides and leaders of Christendom, both in the East and in the West, St. Athanasius, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Bazianzus, St. Chrysostom, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Augustine St. Benedict, St. Gregory the Great, all were monks themselves and great upholders of monasticism. It was under their influence that monasticism became popular in the Church.

Historically, monasticism among the Christians started from Egypt. Its founder was St. Anthony (A.D. 250 -350) who is regarded as the father of Christian Monasticism. He set up the first monastery at Pispir (now Der al Memum) in the Fayum. Later he established another monastery on the coast of the Red Sea, which is now called Der Mar Antonius. The basic cults of Christian Monasticism are derived from his writings and instructions. After this beginning the monastic movements spread like a flood in Egypt and monasteries for monks and nuns were set up everywhere in the land in some of which lived three thousand monks at a time. In 325 another ascetic, pachomius, appeared in Egypt, who founded ten major monasteries and nunneries for the monks and nuns. The monastic movement then began to spread in Palestine and Syria and different countries of Africa and Europe. The Christian Church in the beginning experienced some confusion in connection with monasticism, for although it recognized abandonment of the world, celibacy and voluntary poverty as an ideal of spiritual life, yet it could not declare marriage, producing children and possessing property or money to be sinful as the monks did. Subsequently, under the influence of holy men like St. Athanasius (d. 373), St. Basil (d. 379), St. Augustine (d. 430) and Gregory the Great (d. 609) many of the monastic rules became part and parcel of the Church.

This monastic innovation has some characteristics which are briefly as follows:

1- Inflicting pain on the body by severe exercises and novel methods. In this thing every monk tried to surpass the other. The achievements of these holy men as related in the memoirs of the Christian saints are to this effect: St. Macarius of Alexandria constantly carried on himself a weight of 80 pounds. For six months he slept in a swamp while poisonous flies preyed on his naked body. His disciple, St. Eusebius, even surpassed his master in suffering severities and rigors. He moved about carrying a weight of 150 pounds, and lay in a dry well for three years. St. Saba ate the maize that would start stinking having been soaked in water for a whole month. St. Bassarion lay in thorny bushes for 40 days and

did not rest his back on the ground for 40 years. St. Pachomius passed 15 years of his life, and according to another tradition 50 years, without putting his back on the ground. St. John remained standing in worship for three years during which he neither sat nor lay down, he would only recline at times against a rock. His food consisted of the offering that was brought for him every Sunday. St. Simeon Styiltes (390- 449) who is counted among the most illustrious Christian saints, used to observe an un-broken 40 days fast and smiling. Owing to such concepts the bond of marriage between man and woman came to be looked upon as filthy. A monk was forbidden even to look at a woman, not to speak of marriage, and was required to abandon his wife if he was married. As for men it was also impressed on the women that if they wished to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, they should shun marriage and remain spinsters and if they were married, they should separate from their husbands. St. Jerome, the distinguished Christian scholar, ruled that the woman who remained a spinster as a nun for the sake of Christ, was the bride of Christ, and her mother was the mother-in-law of Christ, i.e. God. Elsewhere St. Jerome says: To cut asunder the bond of marriage with the ax of chastity is the primary duty of the true devotee of God. The first impact these teachings had on a Christian man or Christian woman, under religious fervor, was that his or her married life was ruined. And since there was no provision for divorce or separation in Christianity, the husband and the wife would separate from each other while they remained bound in wed-lock. St. Nilus was father of two children. When he came under the spell of monasticism, he immediately separated from his wife. St. Ammon, on the first night of his marriage, gave his bride a sermon on the filthiness of the marriage bond and then the two between themselves decided to keep aloof from each other throughout life. St. Abraham abandoned his wife on the very first night of marriage. The same was done by St. Alexis. The memoirs of the Christian saints are full of such incidents.

The Church continued to resist in one way or the other these extremist concepts for three centuries. In those days it was not required of a priest to be single and unmarried. If he was married before being appointed a minister, he could keep his wife. However, he was forbidden to marry after his appointment. Moreover, a person could not be appointed a minister if he had married a widow, or a divorced woman, or had two wives, or possessed a concubine. Gradually, by the 4th century, the concept became firm that for a married person it was odious to perform religious services in the Church. The Council of Gengra (A.D. 362) was the last one in which such ideas were held as anti-religious, but a little later in 386, Roman Synod counseled the priests to avoid marriage relations and the following year Pope Siricius decreed that the priest who married, or continued to have sex relations with his wife if already married should be dismissed from office. Illustrious scholars like St. Ambrose, and St. Augustine upheld this decision most fervently, and after a little resistance it became fully enforced in the Western Church. In this period several councils were convened to consider the complaints to the effect that the people who were already married were having illicit relations with their wives even after their appointment to perform religious duties. Consequently, with a view to reform them, rules were made to the effect that they should sleep in the open, should never meet their wives in private, and should meet them only in the presence of at least two other men. St. Gregory has made mention of a wonderful priest who did not have any relation with his wife for 40 years, and when the woman approached him at his death-bed, he rebuked her, saying: Woman, keep away.

2- Their second characteristic was that they were dirty and against cleanliness and bodily care. Washing or applying water to the body was regarded as opposed to Godworship. For, according to them purification of the body was tantamount to pollution of the soul. St. Athanasius has faithfully described this virtue of St. Anthony that he never washed his feet during life. St. Abraham, from the day he entered Christianity, neither washed his face nor feet for 50 years. A famous nun Virgin Sylvia never allowed any part of her body except the fingers to become wet with water throughout life It is said of 130 nuns of 8 convent that they never washed their feet and would shudder with horror at a mere reference to bath.

3- Monasticism practically forbade married life and ruthlessly discarded the institution of marriage. All religious writings of the 4th and 5th centuries are replete with the thought that celibacy is the highest moral virtue, and chastity meant that one should strictly abstain from sexual relation even if it was between husband and wife. The perfection of a pure spiritual life lay in complete selfdenial, with no desire for physical pleasure. It was necessary to suppress any carnal desire because it strengthened animal nature. For them pleasure and sin were synonymous so much so that being happy was regarded as being forgetful of God. St. Basil forbade even laughing before Easter every year. Once he kept standing on one leg for a whole year. Often he would leave his monastery and retire to a well. Later he got a 60 foot high pillar erected near Antioch, which was three feet wide at the top and railed round. He spent the last 30 years of his life on this pillar and remained permanently exposed to the elements. His disciples carried food to him by ladder and removed his filth. He had even tied himself to the pillar by a string, which cut into his flesh; when the flesh became rotten, it bred worms; whenever a worm fell out, he would restore it to the sore, saying: Eat what God has given you. Crowds of pilgrims flocked to him from far and near. When he died the Christian world proclaimed that he was the best model of a Christian saint.

The memoirs of the Christian saints of this period are full of such instances. One particular saint had the characteristic that he observed silence for 30 years. He was never seen speaking. Another had tied himself to a rock; another roamed the jungles and lived on grass; another moved about carrying a heavy load; another kept his limbs and body tied in fetters and chains; some saints lived in the dens of beasts, or in dry wells, or in old graves; and some others remained naked and concealed their private parts under long hair and would crawl on the ground. After death the bones of the illustrious saints were preserved in monastery. I saw a full library decked with such bones in St. Catherine's monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai. There were skulls and foot-bones and hand bones arranged separately. A glass-case contained the whole skeleton of a saint.

4- The most painful and pathetic chapter of ascetic monasticism is that it cut asunder man's relations with his parents, with his brothers and sisters, and even his children For the Christian saints love of the parents for son, love of the brothers and sisters for brother and love of the children for father also was sinful. They believed it was necessary for man to break off all those relations for the sake of spiritual progress. In the biographies of the Christian saints one comes across highly pathetic and heart-rending incidents. A monk, St. Evagrius, had been undergoing severe exercises in the desert for many years. Suddenly one day letters reached him from his father and mother, who were passing their days in great agony without him. The saint, fearing that the letters might arouse feelings of human love in his heart, cast the letters immediately into the fire, without even opening them. The mother and sister of St. Theodorus came to the monastery where he was staying, with

recommendatory letters from many priests, and desired to have only a glimpse of him, but the saint refused to come out before them. St. Marcus' mother went to the monastery to sec him. She somehow obtained the abbot's permission for it and requested him to order her son to come out before her, but the son was adamant to her prayers. At last, he implemented the abbot's orders by appearing before his mother disguised and with closed eyes. Thus, neither was the mother able to recognize her son, nor the son saw his mother. Another saint, St. Poemen ant his six brothers lived in a desert monastery of Egypt. Years later their old mother came to know of their whereabouts and went to see them in the monastery. As soon as the brothers saw their mother coming, they hurried into their cell and shut the door. The mother started crying and wailing outside saying: I have traveled in this old age from a distant place only to have a glimpse of you. There will be no harm if only I see you. Am I not your mother. But the saints did not open the door and told the mother that they would meet her in the next world. Even more painful and piteous is the story of St. Simeon Stylites, who left his parents and remained away from them without any trace of his whereabouts for 27 years. The father died of grief. When the fame of the son's piety and holiness spread, the mother, who was still living in agony, came to know of his whereabouts. She came to the monastery to see him but women were not allowed to enter. She prayed that either the son should call her in, or he should himself come out to let her have a glimpse of him, but the saint refused to oblige her. The woman lay at the entrance for three days and three nights and at last breathed her last in the same state. Then the holy man emerged from his seclusion, mourned his mother's death and prayed for her forgiveness. In the same harsh way these saints treated their sisters and children. There is the story of Mutius, a prosperous man by all means. Drawn out suddenly by the religious impulse, he took his 8-year-old son and went to a monastery. But for the sake of his progress to holiness it was necessary that he should give up love of his son. Therefore, first the son was separated from him. Then the innocent child was subjected to harsh treatment before his very eyes and he watched it patiently. Then, the abbot of the monastery ordered him to go and cast the child into the river. He became ready even for this; then right at the time when he was going to throw the child into the river, the monks saved the child's life. Then it was admitted that he had actually attained to the rank of a holy man. The viewpoint of Christian monasticism in these matters was that the one who sought love of God, should break off all relations of human love that bound him in the world to his parents, his brothers and sisters and his children. St. Jerome says: Even if your nephew clings to you with his hands round your neck; even if your mother calls you back in the name of having suckled you; even if your father obstructs your way and lies down before you, you should hasten out to the banner of the cross, trampling the body of your father, without shedding a tear. Ruthlessness in this matter is piety itself. St. Gregory writes: A young monk who could not give up love of his parents, left the monastery one night in order to pay them a visit. God punished him for this error, for as soon as he returned to the monastery, he died. His body was buried in the grave but the earth did not accept it. He was placed in the grave again and again, and the earth threw him out every time. At last, St. Benedict placed a sacred offering on his chest, and then the grave accepted him. Of a nun it is said that for three days after her death, she remained subject to a torment because she had not been able to cleanse her heart of her mother's love. About a saint it is written that he never treated anyone harshly except his relatives.

5- Their practice of meting out ruthless, cruel and harsh treatment to their nearest relatives, made their human feeling dead, with the result that they would treat with utmost enmity

those with whom they had any religious differences. By the beginning of the 4th century, 80 to 90 religious sects had arisen in Christianity. St. Augustine has made mention of 88 sects of his own time, each of which regarded the other with extreme hatred. And the fire of this hatred also was fanned by the monks, who were always in the forefront to halt and destroy the opponent sects by their machinations. Alexandria was a great center of this sectarian conflict. There, in the beginning the Bishop of the Arian sect attacked the Athanasius party. Virgin nuns were dragged out of their convents, stripped naked and beaten with thorny branches and branded in order to make them give up their creed. Then, when the Roman Catholics came to power in Egypt, they treated the Arian sect likewise; so much so that according to the prevalent view Arius himself was also poisoned. Once in the same city of Alexandria the monks of St. Cyril created a turmoil. They seized a nun of the opponent sect and took her into their church; they killed her, backed her body to pieces, and cast it into the fire. Rome was not any different from this. In 366, at the death of Pope Liberius, two sects nominated their respective candidates for papacy; this resulted in great bloodshed; so much so that in one day 137 dead bodies were taken out from one church.

6- Side by side with this retreat from the world and life of seclusion and poverty, wealth of the world was also amassed most avariciously. By the beginning of the 5th century the condition was that the bishop of Rome lived in his palace like kings, and when his conveyance emerged in the city, it would be as stately and splendid as of the emperor himself. St. Jerome complains of the conditions of his time (later part of the 4th century) saying that the feast hosted by many of the bishops out-classed the feasts of the governors. The flow of wealth to monasteries and churches had assumed the proportions of a deluge by the beginning of the 7th century (the age of the revelation of the Quran). It had been deeply impressed on the minds that a person who happened to commit a grave sin could be redeemed only by making an offering at a saint's shrine, or a sacrifice at the altar of a church or monastery. Then the same world and its luxuries and comforts abstention from which was the mark of distinction of the monks, lay at their feet. The factor which, in particular, caused this decline was that when the common people developed extreme reverence for the monks because of their undergoing severe exercises of self-discipline and self-denial, hosts of world seeking people also donned the monk's garments and entered their ranks. Then under the garb of feigned poverty they turned acquisition of worldly wealth and possessions into a flourishing business.

7- In the matter of chastity monasticism was also repeatedly defeated in its fight against nature and defeated well and proper. In the monasteries some exercises of selfmortification were such as required the monks and nuns to live together in one and the same place, and they had often to pass the night in the same bed in their enthusiasm for more and more temptations. St. Evagarius, the well-known monk, has praised the self-control acquired by the Palestinian monks, saying: They had mastered their passion so completely that although they bathed with the women together, looked at their bodies, touched them, even embraced them, yet they remained invincible to nature. Although bathing was an odious thing in monasticism, such baths were also taken for the sake of exercise in selfcontrol. At last, about the same Palestine, St. Gregory of Nyssa (d. 396) writes that it bas become a center of wickedness and immorality. Human nature avenges itself on those who fight it. Monasticism fought it and ultimately fell in the pit of immorality the story of which is a most shameful blot on the religious history of the 8th to 11th centuries. An Italian bishop of

the 10th century writes: If the penal law for misconduct is practically enforced against those who perform religious services in the church, none would escape punishment except the boys, and if the law to remove illegitimate children from religious services was also enforced, there might perhaps be left no boy among the attendants of the church. Books of the medieval authors are replete with the complaints that the nunneries had become houses of prostitution. Within their four walls newborn babies were being massacred; the priests and religious attendants of the church had developed illicit connections even with forbidden relatives; the crime of the unnatural act had spread like an epidemic in the monasteries; and the practice of confession had become a means of immorality in the churches. From these details, one can fully appreciate what corruption of Christianity is that which the Quran is alluding to when it says: The Christians themselves invented monasticism, but they did not observe it as it should have been observed.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَءَامِنُواْ بِرَسُولِهِۦ يُؤۡتِكُمۡ كِفۡلَيۡنِ مِن رَّحۡمَتِهِۦ وَيَجۡعَل لَّكُمۡ نُورٗا تَمۡشُونَ بِهِۦ وَيَغۡفِرۡ لَكُمۡۚ وَٱللَّهُ غَفُورٞ رَّحِيمٞ ٢٨

(57:28) Believers, have fear of Allah and believe in His Messenger,[55] and He will grant you a two-fold portion of His Mercy, and will appoint for you a light whereby you shall walk;[56] and He will forgive you.[57] Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Compassionate.

55. The commentators differ in the explanation of this verse, One group says that the address here is directed to the people who believed in the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him). It is being said to them: Believe in the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) now; for this you will be given a double reward, one reward for believing in the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) and the other reward for believing in the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The second group says that the followers of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are being addressed. They are being admonished to the effect: Do not rest content with your verbal affirmation of the faith only, but you should believe sincerely and truly. For this you will be given a double reward: one reward for giving up disbelief and turning to Islam, and the second reward for believing sincerely in Islam and remaining steadfast to it. The first commentary is supported by (verses 52-54 of Surah Al-Qasas), and furthermore by the tradition reported by Abu Musa al-Ashari, according to which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: There are three men who will get a double reward, one of them is a person from among the followers of the earlier Books who believed in this earlier Prophet and then believed in the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). (Bukhari Muslim). The second commentary is supported by(verse 37 of Surah Saba), which says that the righteous believers will have a double reward. From the point of view of argument both the commentaries are equally weighty. However, considering the theme that follows, one feels that the second commentary is more in keeping with the context here; and in fact the whole theme of this Surah, from beginning to end, supports this very commentary. From the beginning of this Surah the addressees are the people who had entered Islam after affirming the Prophethood of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and it is they whom the Surah invites to believe sincerely and truly and not merely verbally with the tongue.

56. That is, He will bless you with such a light of knowledge and vision in the world by which you will be able clearly distinguish at every step the straight way of Islam from the crooked paths of ignorance in different matters of life, and in the Hereafter He will grant you the light that has been mentioned in verse 12 above.

57. That is, He will forgive you your errors that you may happen to commit due to human weaknesses in spite of your sincere efforts to fulfill the demands of the faith, and will also forgive those sins of yours that you had committed in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance.

لِّئَلَّا يَعْلَمَ أَهْلُ الْكِتٰبِ أَلَّا يَقْدِرُوْنَ عَلٰى شَيْءٍ مِّنْ فَضْلِ اللّٰهِ وَأَنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللّٰهِ
يُؤْتِيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ ع 29

(57:29) (You should do this) so that the People of the Book know that they have no control over Allah's Bounty, and that all bounty is in Allah's Hand; He bestows it on whomsoever He pleases. Allah is the Lord of abounding bounty.

58. Surah Al Mujadilah (The Pleading Woman)

Name

This Surah is entitled Al Mujadalah as well as Al Mujadilah, the title being derived from the word tujadiluka of the very first verse. As at the outset mention has been made of the woman who pleaded with the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) the case of zihar pronounced by her husband and urged him to suggest a way out of the difficult situation in order to save her and, her children's life from ruin, and Allah has described her pleading by the word "mujadalah", the Surah came to be known by this very title. If it is read as "mujadalah",it would mean "pleading and arguing", and if it is read as "mujadilah", it would mean "the woman who pleaded and argued."

Period of Revelation

There is no tradition to tell as to when this incident of pleading and arguing took place, but there is a hint in the subject matter of the Surah on the basis of which it can be said with certainty that it happened some time after the battle of the Trench (Shawwal, 5 A. H.). In Surah Al-Ahzab, Allah while negating that an adopted son could be one's real son, had just said this and no more; "And Allah has not made those of your wives whom you divorce by zihar your mothers." But in that Surah there was nothing to the effect that to divorce a wife by zihar was a sin or a crime, nor anything about the legal injunction concerning it. Contrary to it, in this Surah the whole law relating to zihar has been laid down, which shows that these detailed injunctions were sent down some time after the brief reference to it in Surah Al- Ahzab.

Subject Matter and Topics

In this Surah instructions have been given to the Muslims about the different problems that confronted them at that time.

From the beginning of the Surah to verse 6 legal injunctions about zihar have been given, along with which the Muslims have been strictly warned that it is contrary to their profession of the Faith that they should still persist in the practices of ignorance after they have accepted Islam, that they should break the bounds set by Allah, or refuse to abide by them, or that they should make their own rules and regulations contradictory to them. For this there is not only the punishment of disgrace and humiliation in the world but in the Hereafter too there will be strict accountability for it.

In vv. 7-10 the hypocrites have been taken to task for their secret whisperings and consultations by which they conspired and intrigued against the "Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings), and because of their hidden malice and grudge greeted him, like the Jews, in a manner as to wish him ill instead of well. In this connection, the Muslims have been consoled, as if to say: "These whisperings of the hypocrites can do no harm to you; therefore, you should go on doing your duty with full trust in Allah". Besides, they have also been taught this moral lesson: “The true believers, when they talk secretly together, do not talk of sin and transgression and disobedience to the Messenger if they have to talk secretly together they should talk of goodness and piety."

In vv. 11-13 the Muslims have been taught certain manners of social behavior and given instructions to eradicate certain social evils which were prevalent among the people then as they are today. If some people are sitting in an assembly, and more people arrive, they do not show even the courtesy as to squeeze in so as to make room for others, with the result that the new-comers have to keep standing, or to sit in the door-way, or to go back, or seeing that there is enough room yet start jumping over the people's heads to find room for themselves. This often used to be experienced in the Holy Prophet's assemblies. Therefore, Allah gave the instruction, as if to say: "Do not behave selfishly and narrow mindedly in your assemblies but do accommodate the new-comers also with an open heart."

Likewise, another vice found among the people is that when they go on a visit to somebody (an important person, in particular), they prolong their sitting and do not at all mind that encroaching upon his time unduly would cause him hardship. Then, if he tells them to leave, they mind it; if he himself rises up from their assembly, they complain of his lack of manners; if he tells them indirectly that he has some other business also to attend to, for which he needs time, they turn a deaf ear to his request. The Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) himself also had to experience such misconduct of the people, who in their earnestness to benefit by his teaching did not at all see that they were wasting his precious time so badly needed for other important works. At last, Allah in order to eradicate this bad manner, enjoined that when the people are asked to rise up from an assembly, they should rise up and disperse.

Another vice prevalent among the people was that each person wished to have secret counsel individually with the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) without any real need, or would like that he should approach him during an assembly and whisper something to him. This was not only embarrassing for the Holy Prophet but also annoying for the people who sat in the assembly. That is why Allah imposed the restriction that anyone who wanted to consult him in private, should first give away something in charity. The object was that the people should be warned of this bad manner and made to give it up. Thus, the restriction was kept in force for a short while, and when the people had corrected their behavior, it was withdrawn.

From verse 14 to the end of the Surah members of the Muslim society, which was a mixture of the sincere Muslims and the hypocrites and the waverers, have been told plainly as to what is the criterion of sincerity in Islam. One kind of Muslims are those who are friends with the enemies of Islam: they do not hesitate for the sake of their interests to be treacherous to the religion which they profess to believe in; they spread all sorts of doubts and suspicions against Islam and prevent the people from adopting the Way of Allah. But since they are part of the Muslim community their false profession of Faith serves them as a cover and shield. The second kind of Muslims are those who, in the matter of Allah's Religion, do not care even for their own father, brother, children, and family, to say nothing of others. They do not cherish any feeling of love for the person who is an enemy of God and His Messenger and His Religion. Allah in these verses has explicitly stated that the people of the first kind, in fact, belong to Satan's party however hard they may try to convince others of their Islam by swearing oaths. And the honor of belonging to Allah's party is possessed only by the Muslims of the second kind. They alone are the true Muslims: they alone will attain to true success, and with them alone is Allah well pleased.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

قَدۡ سَمِعَ اللّٰہُ قَوۡلَ الَّتِیۡ تُجَادِلُکَ فِیۡ زَوۡجِہَا وَ تَشۡتَکِیۡۤ اِلَی اللّٰہِ ۖ وَ اللّٰہُ یَسۡمَعُ تَحَاوُرَکُمَا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ سَمِیۡعٌۢ بَصِیۡرٌ 1

(58:1) Allah[1] has surely heard the words of her who contends with you concerning her husband and complains to Allah. Allah hears what both of you say.[2] Verily Allah is All- Hearing, All-Seeing.

1. Here, hearing does not merely imply hearing a complaint but also redressing the grievances.

2. The translators generally have translated these sentences in the past tense, which tends to give the meaning that the woman had left after relating her complaint and the Prophet (peace be upon him) some time later might have received this revelation. That is why Allah has said: We indeed heard what the woman said, who was pleading with you and complaining to Us, and We were at that time hearing the conversation of both of you. But in most of the traditions that have been reported in the Hadith about this incident, it has been stated that right at the time when the woman was relating the zihar pronounced by her husband and complaining to the Prophet (peace be upon him) to the effect that if she was separated from her husband, she and her children would be ruined, the state of receiving revelation appeared on the Prophet (peace be upon him) and these verse's were sent down. On this basis we have preferred rendering these sentences in the present tense.

The woman concerning whom these verses were sent down was Khaulah bint-Thalabah of the Khazraj tribe, and her husband, Aus bin Samit Ansari, was brother of Ubadah bin Samit, the chief of the Aus tribe. The story of the zihar upon her is related in detail below. What is worth mentioning here is that the incident of woman's complaint being heard by Allah Almighty and the coming down of the divine command immediately to redress her grievance was an event that earned her a place of honor and esteem among the companions. Ibn Abi Hatim and Baihaqi have related that once Umar was on his way out with some companions. On the way he came across a woman, who stopped him; he immediately stopped and listened to what she had to say patiently with his head bent down, and did not move till she had finished. One of the companions said: O commander of the faithful, you held back the Quraish chiefs for so long for the sake of this old woman! Umar said: Do you know who she is? She is Khaulah bint- Thalabah, the woman whose complaint was heard at the seventh heaven. By God, even if she had kept me standing till the night, I would have kept standing. I would only have excused myself at the prayer times. Ibn Abdul Barr has related in Al-Istiab this tradition from Qatadah: When Umar came across this lady, on the way, he greeted her. After answering his greeting, she said: O Umar, there was a time when I saw you at the Ukaz festival. Then you were called Umair. You tended goats with the shepherd's staff in your hand. Then, not very long after this, you began to be called Umar. Then a time came when the people began addressing you as commander of the faithful. So, fear Allah with regard to your subjects, and remember that the one who fears Allah's

punishment, for him the stranger also is like a close kinsman, and the one who fears death, may well lose that very thing which he wants to save. At this Jarud Abdi, who was accompanying Umar, said: O woman, you have talked insolently to the commander of the faithful. Thereupon Umar said: Let her say whatever she has to say. Do you know who she is? She was heard at the seventh heaven. So, she deserves to be heard longer and with greater attention by Umar. Imam Bukhari has also related briefly a story resembling to this.

اَلَّذِيْنَ يُظٰهِرُوْنَ مِنْكُمْ مِّنْ نِّسَآئِهِمْ مَّا هُنَّ اُمَّهٰتِهِمْ ؕ اِنْ اُمَّهٰتُهُمْ اِلَّا الّٰٓئِيْ وَلَدْنَهُمْ ؕ
وَاِنَّهُمْ لَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مُنْكَرًا مِّنَ الْقَوْلِ وَزُوْرًا ؕ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَعَفُوٌّ غَفُوْرٌ 2

(58:2) Those among you who divorce their wives by declaring them to be their mothers,[3] such are not their mothers; none are their mothers except those who gave birth to them.[4] Indeed what they say is highly contemptible and false.[5]Verily Allah is Most Pardoning, Most Forgiving.[6]

3. Among the Arabs it often so happened that during a family quarrel, the husband in the heat of the moment would say to his wife: Anti alayya ka-zahri ammi which literally means: You are for me as the back of my mother. But its real meaning is: To have sexual relations with you would be like having sexual relations with my mother. Such words are still uttered by the foolish people, who, as the result of a family quarrel, declare the wife to be like their mother, or sister, or daughter, and make her unlawful for themselves like the prohibited women. This is called zihar. Zahr in Arabic is metaphorically used for riding and mounting. Thus, the conveyance is called zahr, because man rides on its back. As this word was employed in order to make the wife unlawful, it was termed zihar. In the pre- Islamic days this was looked upon as tantamount to the pronouncement of divorce, even of greater effect than that, for they took it to mean that the husband was not only severing his marital relations with his wife but was also declaring her to be unlawful for himself like his mother. On this very basis, the Arabs thought reunion could be possible after a divorce but it was impossible after zihar.

4. This is Allah's first decision concerning zihar. It means that if a person shamelessly compares the wife to his mother, his this utterance does not make his wife his mother, nor is she endowed with the sanctity that the mother enjoys. The mother's being mother is fact, for she has given birth to the man. On this very ground, she is eternally sacred and prohibited. Now, how will the woman who has not given him birth become his mother simply by a word of mouth, and how will sanctity and prohibition be established for her by reason, morality and law which, by virtue of this fact, is only reserved for the mother who gave birth. Thus, Allah by this condemnation abolished the custom of the pre-Islamic ignorance according to which the marriage contract between the husband, by pronouncing zihar, and the wife stood dissolved and she became absolutely forbidden for him like the mother.

5. That is, to liken the wife to the mother is, in the first place, an absurd and shameful thing which no noble person should ever think of, not to speak of uttering it with the tongue. Secondly, it is also a falsehood, for if the one who says such a thing is giving the news that his wife has now become his mother for him, he is uttering falsehood, and if he is declaring

that he has henceforth bestowed on his wife the sanctity of the mother, even then his claim is false, for God has not given him the authority that he may treat a woman as his wife as long as he likes and then start treating her as his mother as and when he likes. The lawgiver is Allah Almighty, not he, and Allah has included in the order of motherhood the grandmothers, both paternal and maternal, mother-in-law, foster mother and the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) along with the woman who gave birth. Nobody has the right to include of his own whim another woman in this order, not to speak of the woman who has been his wife. This gives the second legal injunction. To pronounce zihar is a grave sin and forbidden act, the violation of which deserves to be punished.

6. That is, such an utterance actually deserves to be punished much more severely, but it is Allah's kindness that He has, firstly, abolished the custom of ignorance and saved your family life from utter ruin, and secondly, has prescribed the lightest punishment for the culprits. And His supreme kindness is that the punishment too, is not any form of physical torture or imprisonment, but a few acts of worship and virtue, which are meant to reform you and help spread good in your society. In this connection, one should also understand that the acts of worship that have been prescribed by Islam as expiations for certain crimes and sins are neither mere punishments that they may be without the spirit of worship, nor mere acts of worship that they may entail no pain and suffering of the punishment. But both the aspects have been combined in them so that the culprit may experience pain as well as expiate his sin by means of performing a virtue and act of worship.

وَالَّذِيْنَ يُظٰهِرُوْنَ مِنْ نِّسَآئِهِمْ ثُمَّ يَعُوْدُوْنَ لِمَا قَالُوْا فَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ
يَّتَمَآسَّا ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ تُوْعَظُوْنَ بِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ 3

(58:3) Those[7] who declare their wives to be their mothers and thereafter go back on what they have said[8] shall free a slave before they may touch each other. That is what you are exhorted to do.[9] Allah is fully aware of all your deeds.[10]

7. From here begins the statement of the legal injunctions concerning zihar. To understand this, it is necessary that one should keep in mind the incidents of zihar that took place in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), for the code of law pertaining to zihar is derived from the verses and the judgments that the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave after the revelation of these verses in the cases of zihar brought before him.

According to Abdullah bin Abbas, the first case of zihar in Islam was the one relating to Aus bin Samit Ansari, on whose wife Khaulah's complaint Allah sent down these verse. Although the details of this case that the traditionists have cited from several reporters contain minor differences, yet the elements of legal import and significance are almost agreed upon. A resume of these traditions is as follows:

Aus bin Samit had grown a little peevish in old age and according to some traditions, had also developed an ailment resembling insanity. The reporters have described it by the word lamam which is not exactly madness in Arabic but a state resembling it. In this state he had also pronounced zihar on his wife several times before, but in Islam this was the first

occasion that he pronounced it as the result of a quarrel with her. Thereupon, his wife appeared before the Prophet (peace be upon him) and relating the whole story to him, said: O Messenger of Allah, is there any way out of this situation that could save me and my children from ruin. The Prophet's (peace be upon him) reply has been reported in different words by different reporters. In some traditions the words are to the effect: No command has been given to me so far in this regard, and in some others the words are: In my opinion you have become unlawful to him, and in still others: You are unlawful to him. At this, she began to cry and complain and told the Prophet (peace be upon him) over and over again that her husband had not pronounced the words of divorce; therefore, he should suggest a way by which she and her children and her old husband's life could be saved from ruin. But the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave her the same reply every time. In the meantime he underwent the state of receiving revelation and these verses were revealed. After this, he said to her (and according to other traditions, he called her husband and told him) to free a slave. When they expressed their inability to do so, he said that the husband would have to observe two months' fast consecutively. She said: Aus is such a man that unless he eats and drinks three times a day, his sight starts failing him. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Then, you will have to feed 60 poor people. They submitted that they did not have the means for that unless they were helped out by him. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave them food articles that could suffice 60 men for two meals. Different quantities of it have been mentioned in different traditions. According to some traditions Khaulah herself gave to her husband food articles equal in quantity to those given by the Prophet so that he may perform the expiation. (Ibn Jarir, Musnad Ahmad Abu Daud, Ibn Abi Hatim).

The second incident of zihar relates to Salamah bin Sakhr Bayadi. He had a somewhat abnormal appetite for sex. When the fasting month of Ramadan came, he, fearing that he might lose self-control in daytime in the state of fasting, pronounced zihar on his wife till the end of Ramadan. But he could not adhere to his pledge and went in to his wife one night. Penitent he appeared before the Prophet (peace be upon him) and told him what he had done. He told him to release a slave. He said he had no one else beside his wife, whom he could release. The Prophet (peace be upon him) then told him to observe two months' consecutive fast. He replied that it was during obligatory fasting itself that he had been unable to control himself and had become involved in trouble. The Prophet then said that he should feed 60 poor people, He replied that they were poor themselves and had gone to bed at night without food. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) got him a sufficient quantity of food articles from the collector of the zakat of Bani Zurayq so that he may feed 60 persons and may also save something for his children. (Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud, Tirmadhi).

The third incident that has been related without any reference to the name is that a man pronounced zihar on his wife and then had sexual intercourse with her even before making the expiation. Then, when he came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) to ask for the legal verdict, he commanded him to abstain from her till he had made the expiation. (Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Nasai, Ibn Majah).

The fourth incident is that the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself heard a man calling his wife as sister. Thereupon he said to him angrily: Is she your sister. But he did not regard it as zihar. (Abu Daud). These four are the reliable incidents that have been related in the

Hadith through authentic channels, and through them only can one adequately understand the Quranic injunctions that have been laid down in the following verses.

8. Literally: That they return to that which they said, but in view of the Arabic language and idiom great differences have occurred in determining the meaning of these words.

Their one meaning can be: If they repeat the words of zihar after they have uttered them once. The Zahiriyyah and Bukair bin al-Ashajj and Yahya bin Ziyad al-Farm hold this very view, and a saying from Ata bin Abi Rabah also has been reported in support of the same. According to them, the pronouncement of zihar once is forgiven; however, if a person repeats it, he becomes liable to make the expiation. But this commentary is expressly wrong for two reasons: first, that Allah has condemned zihar as an absurd thing and a falsehood and then prescribed a penalty for it. Now, it is not conceivable that if a man utters falsehood or absurdities once he should be excused and if he utters it the second time he should make himself liable to punishment. The second reason of its being wrong is that the Prophet (peace be upon him) never asked the man pronouncing zihar whether he had pronounced it once or twice.

Its second meaning is: If the people who were used to uttering zihar in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance, repeat it in Islam, they will incur this punishment. This would mean that zihar should by itself be liable to punishment, and whoever utters the words of zihar for his wife, should become liable to make the expiation whether he may divorce the wife after it, or his wife may die; or he may have no intention of resuming conjugal relations with his wife. This view is hold by Taus, Mujahid, Shabi, Zuhri, Sufyan Thauri and Qatadah from among the jurists. They say that if the woman dies after the zihar, the husband cannot inherit her unless he has made the expiation.

The third meaning is: If after uttering the words of zihar the man may wish to go back on his words and make amends for what he said. In other words, yaudon lima qalo means that the man revoked what he had said.

The fourth meaning is: If the man may wish to make lawful what he had made unlawful for himself by pronouncing the zihar. In other words, it would mean that the person who had made a thing unlawful for himself has now returned to make it lawful views. Most of the jurists have preferred and adopted one of these last two.

9. In other words: This you are being enjoined for your own correction and admonition so that the members of Muslim society may give up this evil custom of ignorance and none of you may commit this folly. If you have to quarrel with your wife, you may quarrel with her like good people. if you intend to divorce her, then you should divorce her gracefully. It is absurd that you should compare her to your mother and sister whenever you have a quarrel with her.

10. That is, Allah will certainly know, even if nobody else does, if a person pronounces zihar, and then quietly resumes normal conjugal relations with his wife without first atoning for the offense. Such people cannot in any way escape Allah's punishment.

فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّتَمَآسَّا ؕ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَاِطْعَامُ
سِتِّيْنَ مِسْكِيْنًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ لِتُؤْمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ؕ وَتِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَلِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابٌ
اَلِيْمٌ 4

(58:4) And he who does not find a slave (to free), shall fast for two months consecutively before they may touch each other; and he who is unable to do so shall feed sixty needy people.[11] All this is in order that you may truly believe in Allah and His Messenger.[12] These are the bounds set by Allah; and a grievous chastisement awaits the unbelievers.[13]

11. This is the divine commandment in respect of zihar. The following are the details of the law that the jurists of Islam have derived from the words of this verse, the judgments of the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah and the general principles of Islam.

(1) This law of zahir abrogates the Arabian custom of ignorance according to which the marriage contract stood annulled and the woman became permanently forbidden to the husband. Likewise, this law annuls all those laws and customs which regard zihar as a meaningless custom, which is of no legal effect, and permit man to continue having marital relations with his wife as usual even after having compared her to his mother and other prohibited relations. For in the sight of Islam the sanctity of the mother and other prohibited relations is not such an ordinary thing that a man may even think of the comparison between them and his wife, not to speak of uttering it with the tongue. Between the two extremes the position adopted by the Islamic law in this regard is based on three principles:

(a) That the marriage contract is not annulled by zihar, but the woman continues to be the husband's wife as usual,

(b) that the woman becomes only temporarily prohibited to the man by zihar, and

(c) that this prohibition operates till the time that the husband makes the expiation, and that the expiation only can remove the prohibition.

(2) As for the person pronouncing zihar, it is agreed that the zihar of that husband is only reliable, who is of sound mind and mature age and pronounces the words of zihar in his right senses; the zihar of the child or of the insane person is not reliable. Moreover, the zihar of the person who might not be in his right senses at the time of pronouncing its words is also not reliable, e.g. if he mutters words during sleep, or is senseless, due to any reason. However, the jurists have differed on the following points:

(a) About the person who pronounces zihar in the state of intoxication. A great majority of them including the four Imams have given the verdict that since he has intentionally used the intoxicant, his zihar, like his divorce, will be regarded as valid legally, for he has undergone this state deliberately. However, if he has taken a medicine on account of illness

and has been intoxicated, or has been compelled to take wine in intense thirst in order to save life, his zihar and divorce pronounced in that state will not be enforced. This very view is held by the Hanafis and the Shafeis and the Hanbalis and also the same was the view commonly held by the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Contrary to it, Uthman held the view that the zihar and divorce pronounced in the state of intoxication are not reliable. Imam Tahawi and Karkhi from among the Hanafis hold this view as preferable and a statement of Imam Shafai also supports it. According to the Malikis the zihar pronounced in the state of intoxication will be reliable in case the person concerned has not wholly lost his senses, but talks sensibly and coherently and knows what he is saying.

(b) According to Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam Malik, only the zihar of the husband who is a Muslim is reliable. These injunctions do not apply to the non-Muslim subjects of the Islamic state, for the Quranic words: Alladhina yazahiruna minkum: those from among you who put away their wives by zihar, have been addressed to the Muslims, and the fasting, which is one of the three kinds of the expiations prescribed in the Quran, obviously cannot be applicable to the non-Muslim subjects. According to Imam Shafei and Imam Ahmad, these injunctions will be applicable both to the Muslims and to the non-Muslims; however, there is no fasting for the non-Muslim subject: he may only free a slave or feed 60 poor.

(c) Can a woman also, like a man, pronounce zihar. For instance will it be zihar if she says to her husband: You are for me as my father, or I am for you like your mother. The four Imams say that this is not zihar and the legal injunctions of zihar do not apply to it at all. For the Quran in express words has laid down these injunctions in respect of the cases where the husbands pronounce zihar on their wives, and the authority to pronounce zihar can be held only by him who holds the authority to pronounce divorce. Just as the Shariah has not given the woman the power to divorce the husband, so it has also not given her the power to make her ownself unlawful to her husband. This same is the view of Sufyan Thauri, Ishaq bin Rahawaiyh, Abu Thaur and Laith bin Saad. They regard such a pronouncement by a woman as meaningless and without effect. Imam Abu Yusuf says that though this is not zihar, it will entail for the woman the atonement of the oath, for the pronouncement of such words by the woman means that she has sworn not to have marital relations with her husband. This same is the view of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal as cited by Ibn Qadamah. Imam Auzai says that if before marriage the woman said that if she married a particular man he would be for her as her father, it would be zihar, and if she says such a thing after marriage it would be in the nature of an oath, which would entail the atonement for the oath. Contrary to it, Hasan Basri, Zuhri, Ibrahim Nakhai and Hasan bin Ziyad Lului say that this is zihar and will entail the expiation prescribed for zihar by the woman; however, the woman will not have the right to prevent the husband from coming in to her before making the expiation. Ibrahim Nakhai has cited this incident in support of this view. Musab, son of Zubair, sent a proposal of marriage to Aishah bint Talhah. She turned down the proposal, saying: If I marred him, he would be for me as the back of my father (huwa alayya ka-zahri abi). After some time, she decided to marry him willingly. When the jurists of Al-Madinah were asked for their ruling on it, many jurists including several companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) ruled that Aishah would have to make an expiation for the zihar. After citing this incident Ibrahim Nakhai has expressed his own opinion, saying that if Aishah had said this thing after the marriage it would not have entailed the expiation. But since she said this before

marriage when she had the option to marry, or not to marry, the expiation became obligatory on her.

(3) The excuse of a sensible and mature person, who pronounces the express words of zihar in his full senses, cannot be acceptable that he uttered the words in a state of anger, or in jest, or in love, or that he had no intention of the zihar. However, in respect of the words which are not express in this regard, and which can give different meanings, the injunction will vary according to their nature. Below we shall tell what words of zihar are expressed and what words are not expressed.

(4) It is agreed upon by all that zihar can be pronounced on the woman who is a wedded wife of the man. However, there is a difference of opinion whether zihar can also be pronounced on the other woman or not. In this matter, the following are the different viewpoints:

The Hanafis say that if a man says to the other woman: If I marry you, you will be for me as the back of my mother, then whenever he marries her, he will not be allowed to touch her without first making the expiation. This same is the verdict of Umar. During his caliphate a man said such words to a woman and afterwards married her. Umar ruled that he would have to make the expiation for the zihar.

The Malikis and the Hanbalis have also expressed the same opinion, and they add this to it: If the woman was not specified, but the man said words to the effect that all women were for him like that, then whichever woman he married, he would have to make the expiation before touching her. The same is the opinion of Saed bin al- Musayyab, Urwah bin Zubair, Ata bin Abi Rabah, Hasan Basri and Ishaq bin Rahawaiyh.

The Shafeis say that zihar before marriage is meaningless. Ibn Abbas and Qatadah also hold the same opinion.

(5) Can zihar be pronounced for a fixed term. The Hanafis and the Shafeis say that if a man has pronounced zihar for a certain period of time, he will have to make the expiation if he touches the wife before the expiry of that time; however, the zihar will become ineffective when the time has elapsed. Its argument is the incident concerning Salamah bin Sakhr Bayadi, who had pronounced zihar upon his wife for the month of Ramadan, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not tell him that the fixation of the time limit was meaningless. On the contrary, Imam Malik and Ibn Abi Laila say that whenever zihar is pronounced it will be forever and the specification of time will be of no effect, for the prohibition that has occurred cannot become void of its own accord on the expiry of the time.

(6) If the zihar is conditional, expiation will become incumbent whenever the condition is violated. For instance, if a man says to his wife: If I enter the houses you will be to me as the back of my mother, then whenever he enters his house, it will be unlawful for him to touch his wife without first making the expiation.

(7) In case the words of zihar are repeated several times to a wife, the Hanafis and the Shafeis say that whether this is done in one sitting or in several sittings, it will entail as

many expiations as the number of the times the word were repeated, unless the man might have repeated the words only to stress what he had said before. Contrary to this, Imam Malik and lmam Ahmad bin Hanbal say that no matter how often the words are repeated, it will entail only one expiation. The same is the view of Shabi, Taus, Ata bin Abi Rabah Hasan Basri and Auzai. Ali's ruling is that if the repetition is made in one sitting, there will be only one expiation, and if in different sittings, then there will be as many expiations as the number of the sittings in which the repetition was made. The same is the view of Qatadah ant Amr bin Dinar.

(8) If zihar is pronounced upon two or more wives simultaneously in one and the same set of words, e.g. if addressing them the husband says: You are to me as the back of my mother, the Hanafis and the Shafeis say that separate expiations will have to be made to make each of them lawful. The same is the opinion of Umar, Ali, Urwah bin Zubair, Taus, Ata, Hasan Basri, Ibrahim Nakhai, Sufyan Thauri and Ibn Shihab Zuhri. Imam Malik and Imam Ahmad say that in this case one and the same expiation will suffice for all. Rabiah, Auzai, Ishaq bin Rihawaiyh and Abu Thaur also have expressed the same opinion.

(9) It is agreed upon by all that if a man repeats zihar, again after making expiation for it once, the wife will not be lawful to him unless he makes another expiation.

(10) Although it is sinful, according to the four Imams, to establish marital relations with the wife before making the expiation, and the man should ask for Allah's forgiveness for it, and should refrain from repeating such a thing, yet it will entail only one expiation. The Prophet (peace be upon him) had exhorted the people who had committed such an offense in his time to implore Allah for forgiveness and not to touch the wife unless they had made the expiation, but he did not enjoin any additional expiation besides the expiation for zihar. Amr bin Aas, Qabisah bin Dhuaib, Saed bin Jubair, Zuhri and Qatadah say that it will entail two expiations and Hasan Basri and Ibrahim Nakhai have given the opinion that this will entail three expiations. Probably the Ahadith in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave his ruling on this matter did not reach these scholars.

(11) As to comparison of the wife to whom would be zihar, the jurists have expressed different views:

Amir Shabi says that her comparison to the mother only is zihar, and the Zahiriyyah say that her comparison only to the mother's back is zihar, for the injunction does not apply to anything else. No section of the Islamic jurists, however; agrees with them in this regard, for the reason given by the Quran of the wife's comparison to the mother being sinful is that it is absurd and a lie. Now, obviously comparison of the wife to the women whose sanctity is just like the mother's would be as absurd as it is in the case of the mother. Therefore, there is no reason why the commandment in that case should not be the same as in the can of the comparison to the mother.

The Hanafis say that in this command are included all those women, who are permanently prohibited to man on the basis of lineage, fosterage, or marital relationship, but the women who may only be temporarily prohibited and can become lawful at any time, are not included in this, e.g. the wife's sister, her maternal and paternal aunts, or another woman, who is not the men's wedded wife. It will be zihar if comparison is made with such a part of

the permanently prohibited woman's body as is forbidden for men to look at. However, it will not be zihar if comparison is made of the wife's hand, foot, head, hair, tooth, etc. to the back of a permanently prohibited woman, or of the wife to her head, hand, foot, etc. for it is not unlawful to look at these parts of the mother's or sister's body. Likewise, to say to the wife: Your hand is like my mother's hand, or your foot is like my mother's foot, is not zihar.

The Shafeis say that in this command are included only those women, who were, and are, permanently prohibited, i.e. mother, sister, daughter etc. but this does not include those women, who may have been lawful at some time, e.g. the foster-mother, foster-sister, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, or those who may become lawful at any time, e.g. the wife's sister. Apart from these temporarily prohibited women, it will be zihar to compare the wife to such parts of the permanently prohibited woman's body as are not normally mentioned out of reverence and respect, As for those parts which are mentioned out of reverence and respect, it will be zihar to make a comparison with them only in case this is done with the intention of zihar; for instance, if a man says to his wife: You are to me like my mother's eye, or like my mother's hand, foot or belly, or he compares the wife's belly, or breast, with the mother's belly, or breast, or says that the wife's head, back or hand is to him as his mother, it will be zihar if said with the intention of zihar and reverence if said with the intention of reverence.

The Malikis say that to compare the wife to any of the prohibited women is zihar, so much so that even if a man says to his wife: You are to me like the back of such and such other woman, it would be zihar. Furthermore, they say that it would be zihar to compare any part of the mother's body, or of an eternally prohibited woman's body, to the wife, or to any part of the wife's body, without any condition that the parts thus compared be such as may look at any part of the mother's body as he looks at the wife's.

The Hanbalis include in this command all those women, who may be eternally prohibited, though they may have been lawful before, e.g. the mother-in law, or fostermother. As for the women who may become lawful at any time later (e.g. the wife's sister), Imam Ahmad's one statement concerning them is that comparison to them is not zihar. Moreover, according to the Hanbalis to compare any part of the wife's body to any part of the prohibited woman's comes under zihar. However, the non-permanent parts like the hair, nails, teeth, etc. are excluded from this command.

(12) The jurists agree that to say to the wife: You are to me like the back of my mother, is expressly zihar, for the Arabs used this very formula for zihar, and the Quranic command was also sent down only concerning this. However, the jurists have disagreed as to which of the other words are such as clearly come under zihar, and which are such whose amounting or not amounting to zihar will be dependent upon the speaker's intention.

With the Hanafis, the express words of zihar are those in which a lawful woman (the wife) may have been clearly compared to an unlawful woman (i.e. any woman from among the eternally prohibited women), or compared to such part of the body which is forbidden for a man to look at, like saying: You are to me like the belly or the thigh of my mother, or of such and such prohibited woman. Apart from these, the other words are disputed. According to Imam Abu Hanifah, if the man says: You are forbidden to me like the back of my mother, it is expressly zihar, but according to Imams Abu Yusuf and Muhammad it would be zihar if

there was the intention of zihar and divorce if there was the intention of divorce. The view generally held by the Hanafis is that if the man says: You are as my mother, or like my mother, it is zihar if said with the intention of zihar and irrevocable divorce if said with the intention of divorce, and meaningless if there was no such intention at all. However, according to Imam Muhammad this is express zihar. If the man calls his wife his mother or sister or daughter, it is an absurdity upon which the Prophet (peace be upon him) had expressed great anger, but he did not regard it as zihar. If the man says: You are forbidden to me like my mother, it would be zihar if said with the intention of zihar, and divorce if said with the intention of divorce, and zihar if there was no intention at all. If he says: You are to me like my mother, or as my mother, his intention will be questioned. If he said this out of respect and reverence, it would be respect and reverence, if with the intention of divorce, it would be divorce. If there was no intention whatsoever, it would be meaningless according to Imam Abu Hanifah, but would entail the atonement of the oath, though not of zihar according to Imam Abu Yusuf and would be zihar according to Imam Muhammad.

With the Shafeis, the express words of zihar are that a man should say to his wife: You are to me, or with me, or for me, like the back of my mother, or you are like the back of my mother, or your body, or your self, is to me like the body or self of my mother. Apart from these, in respect of all other words the decision will be dependent on the speaker's intention.

According to the Hanbalis, every such word by which a man may have compared his wife, or a part from among the permanent parts of her body, to a prohibited woman, or to a part from among the permanent parts of the prohibited woman's body clearly, would be regarded as express in the matter of zihar.

The Malikis' viewpoint is almost the same. However, in the details they have given different rulings For instance, according to them, a man's saying to his wife: You are to me as my mother, or like my mother, is zihar if said with the intention of zihar, divorce if said with the intention of divorce, and zihar if there was no intention at all. According to the Hanbalis, it may be regarded only as zihar provided there was the intention. If a man says to his wife: You are my mother, this is zihar according to the MalikIs, but according to the Hanbalis it would be zihar if said in a state of anger on account of a quarrel, and it would not be zihar if it was said out of love and affection, although it is wrong. If a man says: You have divorce on you: you are like my mother, according to the Hanbalis this is divorce, not zihar, and if he says: You arc like my mother: you have divorce on you, both zihar and divorce will take place. To say: you are forbidden to me as the back of my mother, is zihar according to both the Malikis and the Hanbalis, whether the words were said with the intention of divorce, or without any intention.

In this discussion about the words of zihar one should clearly understand that all the disputes of the jurists in this regard relate to the words and usage of the Arabic language. Obviously the people who speak other languages will neither pronounce zihar in Arabic nor will utter an exact and accurate translation of the Arabic words and sentences at the time they pronounce zihar. Therefore, if one has to decide whether a word or a sentence comes under the definition of zihar, or not, one should not examine it from the point of view of its being an exact translation of the words given by the jurists, but one should only see whether the speaker had compared his wife in the sexual context clearly to any of the women in the prohibited degrees, or whether there was the probability of other meanings also in his

words. Its most conspicuous example is the Arabic sentence itself about which all the jurists and commentators agree that this very sentence was used for zihar in Arabic, i.e. Anti alayya kazahri ummi (you are to me like the back of my mother). Probably, in no other language of the world can the man pronouncing zihar use words that may be a literal translation of this Arabic sentence. However, he can certainly use words of his own language, which may have precisely the same meaning for which an Arab used this sentence. The meaning of this sentence was: To have sexual intercourse with you would be like having sexual intercourse with my mother, or as some foolish person might say to his wife: If I come in to you, I would be going in to my mother.

(13) In the Quran what has been mentioned as entailing the expiation is not the mere zihar but one's aud (returning) after the zihar. That is, if a man only pronounces the zihar and does not return, he does not incur any expiation. Now, the question is, what is this aud (returning) that entails the expiation. In this regard, the jurists have held the following viewpoints:

The Hanafis say that aud is the intention to have the sexual intercourse, but it does not mean that the mere intention should entail the expiation; so much so that the man may have to make the expiation even if he does not take any practical step after the intention. But its correct meaning is that the man who wishes to remove the prohibition that he had imposed on him by pronouncing zihar of severing marital relations with his wife, should first make the expiation, for this prohibition cannot be removed without the expiation.

Three statements have been cited from Imam Malik in this regard, but his most well known and authentic statement, according to the Malikis, is in full agreement with the Hanafi viewpoint, as stated above. He says that what the man had made unlawful for himself by zihar was the sexual relation with his wife. Now, aud means that he should return to establish the same relation with her.

Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal's view as cited by Ibn Qadamah is almost the same as of the two Imams as noted above. He says that after the zihar, expiation has necessarily to be made to make the sexual intercourse lawful. The man who wants to make it lawful after having pronounced zihar, in fact, wants to return from the prohibition. Therefore, he has been enjoined to make the expiation before making it lawful for himself, precisely like the man who wants to make the other woman lawful for himself and has to marry her before she could be lawful for him.

Imam Shafeis viewpoint is quite different. He says that a man's keeping his wife as usual and detaining her in wedlock as before after having pronounced zihar is aud, for as soon as he pronounced zihar he, in fact, forbade himself to keep her as wife. Therefore, if he did not divorce her immediately on pronouncing zihar and kept her back for so long that he could utter the words of divorce, he committed aud and the expiation became incumbent upon him. This means that if after pronouncing zihar the man did not pronounce divorce in the next breath, expiation would become incumbent, whether afterwards he might decide not to keep the woman as wife and might have no intention of having marital relations with her. So much so that even if he divorced his wife after a few moments' thought, according to Imam Shafei, he would still have to make the expiation.

(14) The Quranic injunction is that the pronouncer of zihar must make the expiation before the two, the husband and the wife, touch each other. All the four Imams agree that according to this verse not only is the sexual intercourse prohibited before the expiation but it is also prohibited that the husband touch the wife in any way. The Shafei's regard only touching with desire as prohibited. The Hanbalis regard every kind of pleasure seeking as forbidden; and the Malikis regard even casting of the look at the wife's body for the sake of pleasure as unlawful. According to them only casting of the look at the face and hands is an exception.

(15) If after zihar, a man divorces his wife, he cannot touch her without first making the expiation in case it is a revocable divorce. If it is an irrevocable divorce, and he remarries her, he still will have to make the expiation before he could touch her. So much so that even if he has divorced her thrice, and the woman after marrying another man becomes a widow, or is divorced, and then the pronouncer of zihar remarries her, she will not be lawful to him unless he first makes the expiation. For, he has forbidden her to himself by comparing her to his mother or other prohibited woman, and this prohibition cannot be removed without the expiation. All the four Imams agree about this.

(16) It is incumbent upon the woman that she should not allow the husband who has pronounced zihar on her to touch her until he makes the expiation. And since the marital relationship is a right of the woman of which the husband has deprived her by zihar, she can go to the court of law if he does not make the expiation. The court will compel the husband to make the expiation to remove the barrier he has raised between himself and her. And if he does not comply, the court can award him lashes or imprisonment or both. This also is agreed upon by all the four schools of law. However, the difference is that in the Hanafi Fiqh this is the only way out for the woman; if the court does not help her out of the situation, she will remain suspended under zihar indefinitely. For, zihar does not dissolve the marriage contract, it only forbids the husband to have marital relations with the wife. According to the Maliki school if the husband pronounces zihar and keeps the wife suspended with a view to punish her, the law of eila will be applied against him, which means that he cannot keep her suspended for more than four months. (For the law of eila, see (E.Ns 245 to 247 of Surah Al- Baqarah). According to the Shafeis, although in zihar the law of eila can be applied only if the husband might have pronounced zihar for a specific period, which does not exceed four months. Yet, since according to them the expiation becomes incumbent upon the husband from the very moment he keeps back the woman as wife, it is not possible that he may keep her suspended for along period indefinitely.

(17) The express commandment of the Quran and the sunnah is that the first expiation for zihar is to free a slave. If a man cannot afford this, he can expiate by fasting two months consecutively; and if he cannot do even this, then he can feed 60 poor. But if a man cannot expiate in any of the three ways, he will have to wait till he has the means to act in one or the other way, because the Shariah has not prescribed any other form of expiation. However, the sunnah confirms that such a person should be helped out so that he can make the third kind of the expiation. The Prophet (peace be upon him) helped such people out of the public treasury, who were caught in this awkward situation by a mistake of their own, and were helpless to expiate in any of the three prescribed ways.

(18) The Quran enjoins to release a neck (raqabah) as expiation, which applies both to a male and a female slave, and there is no restriction of the age in it. It would be sufficient to release a suckling child who may be in the state of slavery. However, the jurists have disagreed whether both the believing and the unbelieving slaves can be released, or whether only the believing slave will have to be released. The Hanafis and the Zahiriyyah say that it is enough to release a slave, whether a believer or an unbeliever, as expiation for zihar for the Quran only mentions raqabah (the neck); it does not say that it has to be a believer. On the contrary; the Shafeis, the Malikis and the Hanbalis impose the condition that it has to be a believing slave. They have held this injunction as analogous to the other expiations in which release of raqabah has been made conditional upon his being a believer.

(19) If the pronouncer of zihar cannot afford to release a slave, the Quran enjoins him to fast for two successive months before the two can touch each other. As for the details of acting on this divine command, the viewpoints of the different juristic schools are as follows:

(a) All agree that the months imply the lunar months. If fasting is begun with the sighting of the new moon, one will have to complete two months' un-interrupted fasting. If fasting is begun on another date in the month, according to the Hanafis and the Hanbalis, one will have to fast for 60 days consecutively; and according to the Shafeis, one will observe a total of 30 fasts in the first and the third months and observe the whole of the middle lunar month, whether it is of 29 days or 30 days.

(b) The Hanafis and the Shafeis say that fasting should be begun at a time when within the next two months there should neither fall the month of Ramadan nor the two Eid days, nor the day of sacrifice, nor the Tashriq days (10th to 13th of Dhil-Hajj) for the observance of the Ramadan fast and its abandonment on the Eid days and the day of Sacrifice ant Tashriq days, in the course of the expiation fasting, would break the succession of the fasting, and the pronouncer of zihar would have to start fasting afresh. The Hanbalis say that observance of the Ramadan fast and its abandonment on the forbidden days do not break the succession.

(c) In the course of the two months whether one abandons a fast on account of a valid excuse, or without a valid excuse, in both cases the succession will break according to the Hanafis and the Shafeis, and one will have to start fasting afresh. The same is the opinion of Imam Muhammad Baqir, Ibrahim Nahkai, Saed bin Jubair, and Sufyan Thauri. According to Imam Malik and Imam Ahmad, fasting can be abandoned on account of illness or a journey and this does not break the succession; however, succession does break if the fast is abandoned without a valid reason. Their reasoning is that the nature of the expiation fast is not obligatory as of the Ramadan fast: when that fast can be abandoned on account of an excuse, there is no reason why this cannot be. The same is the viewpoint of Abdullah bin Abbas, Hasan Basri, Ata bin Abi Rabah, Said bin al- Masayyab, Amr bin Dinar, Shabi, Taus, Mujahid, Ishaq bin Rahawaiyh, Abu Ubaid and Abu Thaur. (d) If the man commits sexual intercourse with the wife under zihar within the two months of fasting, according to all the Imams, the succession will break, and he will have to begin fasting anew, for he has been enjoined to fast for two successive months before he could touch the wife.

(20) According to the Quran and the Sunnah, the third kind of expiation (feeding the 60 poor) can be made only by him who does not have the power to make the second expiation

(fasting for two months successively). The details of acting on this command as worked out by the jurists are as follows.

(a) According to all the four Imams, being powerless to observe the fast means that one should either he powerless due to old age, or due to illness, or due to the reason that one may not be able to abstain from sexual intercourse for two successive months, and may become impatient at any time in the course of fasting. The validity of all these three excuses is confirmed by the Ahadith that have been cited in connection with the cases of Aus bin Samit Ansari and Salamah bin Sakhr Bayadi. However, about illness there is a little difference of opinion among the jurists. The Hanafis say that the excuse of illness will be valid only in case there is no hope of recovery, or there is the fear that the disease may worsen on account of fasting. The Shafeis say that if fasting is likely to cause a severe hardship by which the man may feel the danger of its being interrupted, this excuse also can be valid. The Malikis say that if the man strongly feels that he will be able to observe the fast in the future, he may wait till then, and if he has no such feeling, he should feed the poor. The Hanbalis say that the apprehension that the disease will worsen by fasting is a sufficient excuse for not fasting.

(b) Food can be given only to those poor people whose maintenance is not the obligatory responsibility of the man concerned.

(c) The Hanafis say that food can be given to both the Muslim and the non Muslim subjects of the Islamic State, but not to the belligerent disbelievers and to those who have been given protection. The Malikis, the Shafeis and the Hanbalis say that the Muslim needy ones only can be fed.

(d) There is full agreement that feeding implies to feed two times a day to fill. However, there is a difference of opinion about the meaning of feeding. The Hanafis say that it is equally valid to feed with cooked food two times a day or to give away grain sufficient to meet the food requirements of a needy person two times a day, For the Quran has used the word itam, which means both to provide food and to feed. But the Malikis, the Shafeis and the Hanbalis do not regard feeding with cooked food as correct; they think it is necessary to give away grain. In case grain is given, there is full agreement that the grain should be the staple food in the city or area, and all the poor people should be given it equally.

(e) According to the Hanafis, it is also valid if one and the same poor person is fed or given food for 60 days, though it is not correct to give him food for 60 days on one and the same day. However, the other three schools do not think it is valid to provide food to one and the same poor man; it is necessary to give food to 60 persons. It is not permissible in any of the four schools to provide food to 60 men at one time and to another 60 at another time.

(f) This is also not permissible according to any of the four schools that one may fast for 30 days and then feed 30 poor ones, for two different expiations cannot be combined. If one has to fast, he should fast for two months successively, and if one has to feed, he should feed 60 poor once.

(g) Although in connection with the expiation of feeding the Quran does not use words to the effect that this expiation should also be made before the husband and the wife can touch

each other yet the context demands that this restriction will apply to this third kind of expiation as well. That is why the four Imams do not regard it as permissible that the man should go to his wife during the time the expiation of feeding is being performed. However, the difference is that according to the Hanbalis the man who commits this offense, will have to feed the poor afresh, but the Hanafis show leniency, for in respect of this third expiation there is no mention of before the two touch each other in the Quran, and this provides a basis for the concession.

Bibligraphies

Hanafi Fiqh: Hedayah; Fath al-Qadir; Bidai-us-Sunat; Al Jassas Ahkam al-Quran.

Shafei Fiqh: An-Nawawi, Al-Minhaj together with Sharh Mughni al-Muhtaj; Tafsir Kabir

Malaki Fiqh: Hashah ad-Dusuqi ala-sh-Sharh al-Kabir; Hedayar al-Mujtahid; Ibn al-Arabi, Ahkam al-Quran

Hanbali Fiqh: Ibn Qudamah, Al Mughni

Zahiriyyah Fiqh: Ibn Hazm, Al Mualla

12. So that you may believe: So that you may adopt the attitude of a true and sincere believer. Obviously, the addressees of this verse are not the pagans and polytheists, but the Muslims who had already affirmed the faith. To tell them, after reciting to them a Shariah injunction: This is being enjoined so that you may believe in Allah and His Messenger, clearly signifies that the conduct of the person who continues to follow the traditional law of paganism even after hearing the divine command would be contradictory to his profession of the faith. It is not the character of a believer that when Allah and His Messenger have prescribed a law for him in some matter of life, he should set it aside and follow some other law of the world, or go on following his own wishes and desires.

13. Here "disbeliever" does not imply the denier of Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him), but the person who adopts the attitude and conduct of a disbeliever even after affirming faith in Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him). In other words, it means: This, in fact, is a characteristic of the disbelievers that even after hearing the command of Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him), they should go on following their own whims, and continue to practice the customs of ignorance, for a true and sincere believer would never adopt such an attitude. The same thing has been said in Surah Aal-Imran after enjoining the imperative duty of Hajj: And the one who disbelieves (i.e. does not obey this commandment), then Allah is Self- Sufficient and does not stand in need of anyone in the worlds. (verse 97). At neither place has the word kufr been used in the sense that whoever continues to have marital relations with the wife after zihar without making the expiation, or thinks that divorce has taken place by the mere pronouncement of zihar on the wife, or does not go to perform Hajj, in spite of the means, should be declared an apostate and disbeliever by the religious court and regarded as excommunicated by the Muslims. But it means that in the sight of Allah such people as may reject His commandments by word or deed, or may at least bother to know as to what bounds their Lord has set for them, what He

has forbidden and what He has enjoined, what He has made lawful and what unlawful, are not counted among the believers.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحَآدُّونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ كُبِتُوا كَمَا كُبِتَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَقَدْ أَنزَلْنَآ آيَٰتٍۭ بَيِّنَٰتٍ ۚ وَلِلْكَٰفِرِينَ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ ۚ 5

(58:5) Verily those who oppose Allah and His Messenger[14] shall be brought low even as those before them were brought low.[15] Surely We have sent down Clear Signs; and a humiliating chastisement awaits the unbelievers;[16]

14. Those who oppose: Those who do not recognize the bounds set by Allah and instead set some other bounds for themselves. Ibn Jarir Tabari has given this commentary of this verse: That is, the people who resist Allah with regard to the bounds and duties enjoined by Him, and set for themselves some other bounds instead of the bounds set by Him. Baidawi has given this commentary of it: That is, they show hostility towards and dispute with Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him), or set other bounds for themselves than the bounds set by them, or adopt the bounds set by others. Alusi in his Ruh Al-Maani has concurred with Baidawi in this commentary and cited the statement of Shaikh-ul-Islam Sadullah Chalpi to the effect: In this verse a threat has been held out to those kings and evil rulers who have framed many such rules as are opposed to the bounds set by the Shariah, and called them law. Here, Allama Alusi has dwelt upon the constitutional status (i.e. constitutional from the Islamic viewpoint) of the man made laws as against the Shariah laws and concluded thus:

There can be no doubt in the disbelief of the person who regards this law as commendable and superior to the Shariah and says that it is wiser and better suited to the genius of the people. And when the Shariah injunction in a particular matter is pointed out to him, he is angry, as we have seen some of those who are under the curse of Allah.

15. The word used in the original is kubt, which means to disgrace, to destroy, to curse, to drive off, to push out, to debase. What is meant to be said is that the communities of the former Prophets who resisted Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) and rebelled against His commandments have already gone to their doom. Now those from among the Muslims who adopt the same attitude in life will also meet with the same evil end. Whenever the people made their own laws contradictory to divine law, or adopted laws made by others, they were deprived of Allah's bounty and grace, with the result that their lives were filled with deviations, immoralities and moral and social evils, which caused them to be ultimately degraded and humiliated oven in this world. If the same error now is committed by the community of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), there is no reason why it should continue to be regarded with favor by Allah and He may go on protecting it from a disgraceful destruction for ever and ever. Allah had neither any ill will against the communities of His former Messengers nor has He any special connection with the community of this Messenger (peace be upon him).

16. A little consideration of the context shows that here two punishments of this attitude have been mentioned: (1) Kubt, i.e. debasement and humiliation of this world. (2) Adhab muhin, i.e. a disgraceful torment that they will suffer in the Hereafter.

يَوْمَ يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللّٰهُ جَمِيْعًا فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوْا ؕ اَحْصٰىهُ اللّٰهُ وَنَسُوْهُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
شَهِيْدٌ ۏ 6

(58:6) a chastisement that shall come upon them on the Day when Allah will raise them all to a new life and will inform them of their deeds.[17] Allah has recorded it all while they have forgotten it. Allah is a witness over everything.

17. That is, their having forgotten their own attitude and conduct does not mean that it is dead and forgotten altogether. For them the disobedience of God and resistance to His commands may be an ordinary matter which they may forget easily once they have indulged in it and may not even regard it as anything objectionable, which they should have avoided, yet in the sight of God it is no ordinary matter at all. With Him every misdeed of theirs has been noted down, His register contains a full record of every deed done by a person, when and where it was done, what was his own reaction to it, what were its consequences and how far and in what forms did they appear and spread in the world.

اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ ؕ مَا يَكُوْنُ مِنْ نَّجْوٰى ثَلٰثَةٍ اِلَّا هُوَ
رَابِعُهُمْ وَلَا خَمْسَةٍ اِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ وَلَاۤ اَدْنٰى مِنْ ذٰلِكَ وَلَاۤ اَكْثَرَ اِلَّا هُوَ مَعَهُمْ اَيْنَ مَا
كَانُوْا ۚ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوْا يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ 7

(58:7) Are you not aware[18] that Allah knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth? Never is there any whispering among three but He is their fourth; nor among five but He is their sixth;[19] nor fewer nor more but He is with them wherever they may be.[20] And then He will tell them on the Day of Judgement all that they have done. Surely Allah knows everything.

18. From here to verse 10 continuously the hypocrites have been taken to task for the attitude they had adopted in the Muslim society. Although apparently they were a part of the Muslim community, secretly they were a separate group from the believers. Whenever the Muslims saw them, they found them whispering secretly together. That is how they conspired and made all sorts of plans in order to create rifts in the ranks of the Muslims, and to cause alarm and spread mischief among them.

19. The question may arise why have three and five been mentioned here instead of two and three? Why has two and then four been left out? The commentators have given many

answers to this question but in our opinion the correct answer is that this style has been adopted for maintaining the literary beauty of the Quran. Without this the style would have suffered from blemishes. Therefore, after making mention of three and five whisperers the gap has been filled up in the following sentence by saying: whether the whisperers are fewer than three, or more than five, in any case Allah is always with them.

20. This Allah's being associated with them is, in fact, in the sense of Allah's being All-Knowing and All-Aware, All- Hearing and All-Seeing and His being absolute in power, and not in the sense that Allah, God forbid, is a person who is secretly and invisibly present among the five persons as their sixth associate. This, in fact, is meant to make the people realize that they may be holding secret counsels in safe and hidden places and may be able to conceal their plans from the world but they cannot keep them concealed from Allah, that they may escape from every power of the world, but they cannot escape the grasp of Allah.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيۡنَ نُهُوۡا عَنِ النَّجۡوٰى ثُمَّ يَعُوۡدُوۡنَ لِمَا نُهُوۡا عَنۡهُ وَيَتَنٰجَوۡنَ بِالۡاِثۡمِ
وَالۡعُدۡوَانِ وَمَعۡصِيَتِ الرَّسُوۡلِ ۫ وَاِذَا جَآءُوۡكَ حَيَّوۡكَ بِمَا لَمۡ يُحَيِّكَ بِهِ اللّٰهُ ۙ وَيَقُوۡلُوۡنَ فِىۡۤ
اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ لَوۡلَا يُعَذِّبُنَا اللّٰهُ بِمَا نَقُوۡلُ ؕ حَسۡبُهُمۡ جَهَنَّمُ ۚ يَصۡلَوۡنَهَا ۚ فَبِئۡسَ الۡمَصِيۡرُ 8

(58:8) Have you not seen those who were forbidden to whisper and yet they engaged in what they had been forbidden?[21] They secretly converse among themselves concerning sin and transgression and disobedience to the Messenger. And when they come to you, they greet you in a manner that Allah does not greet you,[22] and say to themselves: "Why does Allah not chastise us for these utterances of ours?"[23] Hell it is that shall suffice them, and in it will they burn. How woeful is their destination!

21. This shows that before the revelation of this verse the Prophet (peace be upon him) had forbidden the people this practice. Yet when they did not desist, Allah directly sent down this verse containing His warning and wrath for such people.

22. This was the common practice of the Jews and the hypocrites. According to several traditions, some Jews came before the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said: Assam alaika ya abul-Qasim. That is, they pronounced as-sam alaika in such a manner as to give the impression that they had said as-salam alaika (peace be on you), which is the Islamic way of greeting. But actually they had said sam, instead of salam, which means death. In response the Prophet said: wa-alaikum. Aishah retorted: May death visit you and the curse of Allah. The Prophet warned her, saying: Aishah, Allah does not like abusive language. She submitted: Didn't you hear, O Messenger of Allah what they said. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: And didn't you hear what reply I gave? I said: And the same upon you. (Bukhari, Muslim, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim). Abdullah bin Abbas has stated that both the Jews and the hypocrites had adopted this very way of greeting. (Ibn Jarir).

23. That is, they regarded it as a proof of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) not being a Messenger. They thought that if he had been a true Messenger, they would be punished by a torment as soon as they greeted him in that way. Since there was no torment while they were greeting him day and night like that, he was not a Messenger of Allah.

يَآيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا تَنَاجَيْتُمْ فَلَا تَتَنَاجَوْا بِالْاِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَمَعْصِيَتِ الرَّسُوْلِ وَتَنَاجَوْا بِالْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوٰى ۭ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ 9

(58:9) Believers, when you converse in secrecy, let that not be concerning sin and transgression and disobedience to the Messenger; rather, converse concerning virtue and piety. And fear Allah to Whom all of you shall be mustered.[24]

24. This shows that najwa (talking secretly together) by itself is not forbidden, but it s being lawful or unlawful depends upon the character of the people who hold secret consultations and upon the circumstances under which such consultations are held, and upon nature of the consultations themselves, If the people whose sincerity, righteousness and purity of character are well known, are seen talking secretly together, nobody would have any misgiving that they were planning mischief. On the contrary, the whispering and secret consultations of the people who are notorious for their evil and wicked character, produce in every mind, the suspicion that they are engaged in a new conspiracy. Likewise, if a couple of persons talk for some time together on some matter secretly, it is not objectionable, but if some people have formed themselves into a gang and constantly engaged in a whispering campaign against the Muslim community, this would indeed be a prelude to some mischief. If nothing else, it would at least stir up divisions among the Muslims. Above all, the thing that decides whether najwa (secret counsel) is lawful or unlawful is the nature of the things talked of it. If two men hold a secret counsel in order to bring a dispute the an end, and to restore a person's right, or to bring a dispute to an end, or to restore a person's right, or to promote a good cause, it is no evil, but rather and an act of virtue, On the contrary, if the same secret counsel between two men is held with a view to creating mischief, or usurping the rights of others, or committing a sin, obviously the object itself would be evil and the secret counsel about it evil added to evil.

In this connection, the teaching given by the Prophet (peace be upon him) of social etiquette is: When three men are sitting together, no two of them should whisper to each other, for this would cause anguish to the third. (Bukhari, Muslim, Musnad Ahmad, Thirmidhi, Adu Daud). In another Hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Two men should not whisper together, without the leave of the third, for this would cause him anguish. (Muslim). This objectionable sort of whispering also applies to the case when two of the three men start talking in a language which is not understood by the third, and even more objectionable would be that during their whispering they should look towards the third person or gesticulate in a manner as to suggest that he is the topic of discussion between them.

إِنَّمَا النَّجْوٰى مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ لِيَحْزُنَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَلَيْسَ بِضَآرِّهِمْ شَيْـًٔا اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ
وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ 10

(58:10) Whispering is an act of Satan, one that aims at causing grief to the believers; yet without Allah's leave no harm can be caused to them. So in Allah should the believers put all their trust.[25]

25. This has been said so that if a Muslim watches some other people whispering, which causes him the doubt that it is directed against him, he should not feel so offended as to start planning a counter-attack on the basis of mere suspicion, or begin to nourish grief, or malice, or undue concern in his heart. He should understand that no one can harm him except by Allah's leave. This conviction would inspire him with such confidence that he would feel delivered of many a useless worry and imaginary danger and leaving the wicked to themselves would remain engaged in peacefully doing his duty. The believer who has trust in Allah is neither a faint-hearted person, whose peace of mind could be ruined by every doubt and suspicions nor so shallow and mean-minded as would lose his cool when confronted by the evildoers and start behaving in an unjust manner himself.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا قِيْلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوْا فِى الْمَجٰلِسِ فَافْسَحُوْا يَفْسَحِ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ ۚ
وَاِذَا قِيْلَ انْشُزُوْا فَانْشُزُوْا يَرْفَعِ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ ۙ وَالَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ
دَرَجٰتٍ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ 11

(58:11) Believers, when you are told: "Make room for one another in your assemblies," then make room; Allah will bestow amplitude on you.[26] And when it is said: "Rise up," then rise up;[27] Allah will raise to high ranks[28] those of you who believe and are endowed with knowledge. Allah is well aware of all that you do.

26. This has been explained in the introduction to this Surah. Some commentators regard this command as restricted to the assemblies of the Prophet (peace be upon him). But as pointed out by Imam Malik, the correct view is that this is a general instruction for the assemblies held by the Muslims. One of the rules of etiquette taught by Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) to the Muslims is that when they are sitting in an assembly and some more people arrive, they should have the courtesy to accommodate the newcomers and should squeeze in together as far as possible to make room for them to sit. The new-comers should also have the courtesy not to press in forcibly and make others rise up in order to take their place. In the Hadith Abdullah bin Umar and Abu Hurairah have reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Nobody should make another person rise up so as to take his place, but you should yourself make room for others. (Musnad Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim). And Abdullah bin Amr bin Aas reports that the Prophet (peace

be upon him) said: It is not lawful for a person that he should forcibly press in between two men except by their leave. (Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi).

27. Abdur Rahman bin Zaid bin Aslam has stated that the people used to prolong their sitting in the Prophet's (peace be upon him) assemblies and tried to sit till the end. This caused him inconvenience and discomfort as well as hindrance in his daily chores. At this Allah sent down this command, teaching the people the etiquette: When you are told to rise up froth the assembly, you should rise up and disperse. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir).

28. That is, you should not think that if in the Prophet's (peace be upon him) assembly you had to sit a little farther away from him for the sake of making room for others, you would be reduced in rank or if you were asked to rise up and disperse from the assembly, you were disgraced. The real means of exaltation of ranks is faith and knowledge, and not an opportunity to sit nearest to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in his assembly and sit the longest. If a person happened to sit nearer to him, it does not mean that he became exalted in rank, for the high ranks belong only to those who have attained to the wealth of knowledge and faith. Likewise, the person who prolonged his sitting with the Prophet (peace be upon him) only to cause him inconvenience and discomfort, in fact, displayed lack of good manners. His there sitting near him for a long time will not exalt him in rank in any way. Far higher and exalted in rank in the sight of Allah is he who attained to taste faith and knowledge and imbibed the morals that should belong to a believer.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ إِذَا نَٰجَيْتُمُ ٱلرَّسُولَ فَقَدِّمُوا۟ بَيْنَ يَدَىْ نَجْوَىٰكُمْ صَدَقَةً ۚ ذَٰلِكَ
خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَطْهَرُ ۚ فَإِن لَّمْ تَجِدُوا۟ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ 12

(58:12) Believers, when you come to the Messenger for private consultation, offer some charity before your consultation with him.[29] That is better for you and more conducive to purity. But if you find nothing to offer in charity, then know that Allah is Most Merciful, Most Compassionate.

29. According to Abdullah bin Abbas, this command was sent down because the Muslims had started requesting the Prophet (peace be upon him) for private counsel much too frequently, and this put him to great inconvenience. At last, Allah willed to relieve His Prophet (peace be upon him) of this burden. (Ibn Jarir). Zaid bin Aslam says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) would never turn down the request of anyone, who wanted to consult him in private. Whoever desired to have private counsel with him, he would oblige him. Often it so happened that the people would ask for private counsel in matters in which there was no real need. This was the time when all of Arabia was engaged in war against Al-Madinah. Sometimes, after a person had made such a request, Satan would whisper into the ears of the people the idea that he had brought to the Prophet (peace be upon him) the news of invasion by such and such tribes, and this would cause rumors to spread in Al-Madinah. On the other hand, this would give the hypocrites an opportunity to say that Muhammad (peace be upon him) was a credulous person, who listened to and believed in whatever anyone told him. Because of this Allah imposed the restriction that anyone who wanted to have private counsel with the Prophet should first give away something in charity. (Ibn

Arabi: Ahkam al-Quran). Qatadah says that some people talked to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in private in order to show their superiority to others.

Ali says when this was enjoined the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked him, What should be the quantity of the charity, should it be one dinar. I said: This is more than the people can afford. The Prophet (peace be upon him) then asked: Should it be half a dinar. I said: This is also too much. Then he asked what it should be. I said: Gold equal to a barley grain. The Prophet (peace be upon him) remarked: Your advice is for too little. (Ibn Jarir, Tirmidhi, Musnad, Abu Yala). In another tradition Ali says: This is a verse of the Quran which no one acted upon except me. As soon as it was enjoined, I offered the charity and consulted the Prophet about a problem. (Ibn Jarir, Hakim, lbn al-Mundhi, Abd bin Humaid).

ءَاَشْفَقْتُمْ اَنْ تُقَدِّمُوْا بَيْنَ يَدَىْ نَجْوٰىكُمْ صَدَقٰتٍ ؕ فَاِذْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوْا وَتَابَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكُمْ
فَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَاَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ع 13

(58:13) Are you afraid that you will have to offer charity when you hold private conversation with the Prophet? But if you are unable to do so and Allah pardons you, then establish Prayer and pay Zakah, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah is well aware of all that you do.[30]

30. This second command was sent down some time after the first command, and it concealed the injunction of giving something in charity. However, there is a difference of opinion as to how long the injunction remained in force. Qatadah says it remained in force for less than a day and then was abrogated. Muqatil bin Hayyan says that it remained in force for ten days; and this is the longest period of its life mentioned in any tradition.

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ تَوَلَّوْا قَوْمًا غَضِبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ مَا هُمْ مِّنْكُمْ وَلَا مِنْهُمْ ۙ وَيَحْلِفُوْنَ عَلَى
الْكَذِبِ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ 14

(58:14) Do you not see those who took for friends a people whom Allah is wroth with?[31] They neither belong to you nor you to them.[32] They swear to a falsehood, and they do so knowingly.[33]

31. The allusion is to the Jews of Al-Madinah whom the hypocrites had taken for friends.

32. That is, they are neither sincere in their connections with the believers, nor with the Jews: their relations with both are based on selfish interests.

33. A false oath: that they have believed in and have accepted Muhammad (peace be upon him) as their guide and leader and are faithful to Islam and the Muslims.

اَعَدَّ اللّٰهُ لَهُمۡ عَذَابًا شَدِيۡدًا ؕ اِنَّهُمۡ سَآءَ مَا كَانُوۡا يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ 15

(58:15) Allah has prepared for them a grievous chastisement. Indeed, evil are the acts in which they are engaged.

اِتَّخَذُوۡۤا اَيۡمَانَهُمۡ جُنَّةً فَصَدُّوۡا عَنۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ فَلَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيۡنٌ 16

(58:16) They have taken their oaths as a shield by means of which they hinder people from the Way of Allah.[34] Theirs shall be a humiliating chastisement.

34. That is, on the one hand, they swear oaths to their faith and fidelity to make the Muslims believe that they belong to them, and on the other, they sow doubts and suspicions against Islam and the followers of Islam and the Prophet (peace be upon him) of Islam in the hearts of the people, so that they should turn away from Islam in disgust taking their word to be a true inside picture of Islam, coming from the Muslims themselves.

لَنۡ تُغۡنِىَ عَنۡهُمۡ اَمۡوَالُهُمۡ وَلَاۤ اَوۡلَادُهُمۡ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ شَيۡـًٔا ؕ اُولٰٓـئِكَ اَصۡحٰبُ النَّارِ ؕ هُمۡ فِيۡهَا خٰلِدُوۡنَ 17

(58:17) Neither their possessions nor their offspring will be of any avail to them against Allah. They are the people of the Fire; therein they shall abide.

يَوۡمَ يَبۡعَثُهُمُ اللّٰهُ جَمِيۡعًا فَيَحۡلِفُوۡنَ لَهٗ كَمَا يَحۡلِفُوۡنَ لَـكُمۡ وَيَحۡسَبُوۡنَ اَنَّهُمۡ عَلٰى شَىۡءٍ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّهُمۡ هُمُ الۡكٰذِبُوۡنَ 18

(58:18) On the Day when Allah will raise them all from the dead they will swear before Him as they swear before you today,[35] thinking that this will avail them. Behold, they are utter liars.

35. That is, not being content with swearing oaths before the people in this world, they will swear false oaths also before Allah Himself in the Hereafter, for falsehood and fraud has become second nature with them, which they will not give up even after death.

اِسۡتَحۡوَذَ عَلَيۡهِمُ الشَّيۡطٰنُ فَاَنۡسٰٮهُمۡ ذِكۡرَ اللّٰهِ ؕ اُولٰٓـئِكَ حِزۡبُ الشَّيۡطٰنِ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّ حِزۡبَ الشَّيۡطٰنِ هُمُ الۡخٰسِرُوۡنَ 19

(58:19) Satan has gained mastery over them and has made them neglect remembering Allah. They are the party of Satan. Behold, the party of Satan will be the losers.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحَادُّونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَٰئِكَ فِي الْأَذَلِّينَ 20

(58:20) Verily those who oppose Allah and His Messenger will be among the most abject beings.

كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَأَغْلِبَنَّ أَنَا وَرُسُلِي ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ 21

(58:21) Allah has written: "Surely I will prevail; I and My Messengers."[36] Verily Allah is Most Strong, Most Mighty.

36. For explanation, see(E.N. 93 of Surah As-Saaffat).

لَّا تَجِدُ قَوْمًا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ يُوَادُّونَ مَنْ حَادَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَوْ كَانُوا
آبَاءَهُمْ أَوْ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ أَوْ إِخْوَانَهُمْ أَوْ عَشِيرَتَهُمْ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ كَتَبَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْإِيمَانَ
وَأَيَّدَهُمْ بِرُوحٍ مِّنْهُ ۖ وَيُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۚ رَضِيَ
اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ حِزْبُ اللَّهِ ۚ أَلَا إِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ۚ 22

(58:22) You shall not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day befriending those who oppose Allah and His Messenger even though they be their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their kindred.[37] He has inscribed faith in their hearts and has strengthened them with a spirit from Him, and He shall make them enter Gardens beneath which rivers flow. Therein they shall abide. Allah is well-pleased with them, and they are well-pleased with Him. They belong to Allah's party. Verily Allah's party shall prosper.

37. Two things have been stated in this verse: first, a matter of principle, and the second, a statement of fact. The matter of principle is that faith in the true religion and love of the opponents of the religion are contradictory things, which cannot conceivably co-exist in one and the same place. It is absolutely impossible that love of the faith and love of the enemies of Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) should co-exist in one and the same heart, just as a person's love for himself and his love for his enemy cannot co-exist in his heart simultaneously This is as if to say: lf you see a person who professes the faith as well as keeps relations of love with the opponents of Islam, you should never be involved in the misunderstanding that he might perhaps be true in his profession in spite of his this attitude and conduct. Likewise, the people who have established relations with Islam and the opponents of Islam simultaneously, should themselves also consider their position well and

see what they actually are. Are they believers or hypocrites? And what actually they want to be. Do they want to live as believers or as hypocrites? If they have any righteousness left in them and any feeling that from a moral viewpoint hypocrisy is the meanest and most abject attitude for man, they should give up their attempt to ride in two boats simultaneously. Faith wants them to be decisive. If they want to remain believers, they should sever and sacrifice all those connections that clash with their relationship with Islam. If they hold another relation dearer to themselves than the relationship with Islam, then they should better give up their false profession of Islam.

Here, Allah has not just stated the principle but has also presented the fact as a model before those who professed the faith. The true believers had in fact severed all connections that clashed with their relationship with Allah's religion. This had been witnessed by entire Arabia in the battles of Badr and Uhud. The emigrants from Makkah had fought against their own tribe and closest kinsmen only for the sake of Allah and His religion. Abu Ubaidah killed his father, Abdullah bin al-jarrah. Musab bin Umair killed his brother, Ubaid bin Umair. Umar killed his maternal uncle, Aas bin Hisham bin Mughirah. Abu Bakr became ready to fight his son, Abdur Rahman. Ali, Hamzah and Ubaidah bin al-Harith killed Utbah, Shaibah and Walid bin Utbah, who were their close kinsmen. About the prisoners of war captured at Badr, Umar gave the opinion that they should all be put to the sword, and proposed that a relative should kill a relative. In the same battle of Badr when Musab bin Umair saw that an Ansari Muslim had captured his real brother, Abu Aziz bin Umair, and was tying him, he shouted out to him, saying: Tie him tight: his mother is a rich woman. She will pay you a large ransom. Abu Aziz said: You are a brother and say this. Musab replied: Not you, but this Ansari Muslim is my brother now who has captured you. In the same battle of Badr, Abul Aas the son-in-law of the Prophet (peace be upon him) was taken as a prisoner and was shown no special favor any different from the other prisoners on account of his relationship with the Prophet (peace be upon him). Thus, the world was made a witness to the fact and shown the character of the sincere Muslims and their profound relationship with Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him).

Dailami has related this invocation of the Prophet (peace be upon him) on the authority of Muadh: Alla-humma la taj al li-fajir-in (and according to another tradition, il-fasiq-in) alayya yadan wa la ni mata fa yuwadda-hu qalbi fa-inni wajad-tu fima uhitu ilayya la tajidu qaum-an yu minuna billahi wal-yaum il-akhir-i yuwaaddiuaa man haadd-Allahs wa Rasulahu: O God, let not the wicked (and according to another tradition, the sinful) do me a favor because of which I may have love for him in my heart, for in the revelation sent down by You, I have also found this: You will never find any people who believe in Allah and the Last Day loving those who oppose Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him).

59. Surah Al Hashr (The Banishment)

Name

The Surah derives its name from the mention of the word *al-hashr* in verse thereby implying that it is the Surah in which the word *al-hashr* has occurred.

Period of Revelation

Bukhari and *Muslim* contain a tradition from Hadrat Sa'id bin Jubair to the effect "When I asked Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas about Surah Al-Hashr, he replied that it was sent down concerning the battle against the Bani an-Nadir just as Surah Al-Anfal was sent down concerning the Battle of Badr. In another tradition from Hadrat Sa'id bin Jubair, the words cited from Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) are: *Qul: Surah an-Nadir*: Say, it is Surah an-Nadir." The same thing has been related also from Mujahid, Qatadah, Zuhri, Ibn Zaid, Yazid bin Ruman, Muhammad bin Ishaq and others. They are unanimous that the followers of the Book whose banishment has been mentioned in it, imply the Bani an-Nadir. Yazid bin Ruman, Mujahid and Muhammad bin Ishaq have stated that this whole Surah, from beginning to end, came down concerning this very battle.

As for the question as to when this battle took place, Imam Zuhri has stated on the authority of Urwah bin Zubair that it took place six months after the Battle of Badr. However, Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Hisham and Baladhuri regard it as an event of Rabi' al-Awwal, A. H. 4, and the same is correct. For all traditions agree that this battle took place after the incident of Bi'r Ma'unah, and historically also it is well known that the incident of Bir Ma'unah occurred after the Battle of Uhud and not before it.

Historical Background

In order to understand the subject matter of this Surah well, it is necessary to have a look at the history of the Madinah and Hejaz Jews, for without it one cannot know precisely the real causes of the Holy Prophet's dealing with their different tribes the way he did.

No authentic history of the Arabian Jews exists in the world. They have not left any writing of their own in the form of a book or a tablet which might throw light on their past, nor have the Jewish historians and writers of the non-Arab world made any mention of them, the reason being that after their settlement in the Arabian peninsula they had detached themselves from the main body of the nation, and the Jews of the world did not count them as among themselves. For they had given up Hebrew culture and language, even the names, and adopted Arabism instead. In the tablets that have been unearthed in the archaeological research in the Hejaz no trace of the Jews is found before the first century of the Christian era, except for a few Jewish names. Therefore, the history of the Arabian Jews is based mostly on the verbal traditions prevalent among the Arabs most of which bad been spread by the Jews themselves.

The Jews of the Hejaz claimed that they had come to settle in Arabia during the last stage of the life of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). They said that the Prophet Moses had dispatched an army to expel the Amalekites from the land of Yathrib and had commanded it not to spare even a single soul of that tribe. The Israelite army carried out the Prophet's

command, but spared the life of a handsome prince of the Amalekite king and returned with him to Palestine. By that time the Prophet Moses had passed sway. His successors took great exception to what the army had done, for by sparing the life of an Amalekite it had clearly disobeyed the Prophet and violated the Mosaic law. Consequently, they excluded the army from their community, and it had to return to Yathrib and settle there for ever.(*Kitab al-Aghani*, vol. xix, p. 94). Thus the Jews claimed that they had been living in Yathrib since about 1200 B.C. But, this had in fact no historical basis and probably the Jews had invented this story in order to overawe the Arabs into believing that they were of noble lineage and the original inhabitants of the land.

The second Jewish immigration, according to the Jews, took, place in 587 BC. when Nebuchadnezzer, the king of Babylon, destroyed Jerusalem and dispersed the Jews throughout the world. The Arab Jews said that several of their tribes at that time had come to settle in Wadi al-Qura, Taima, and Yathrib.(Al-Baladhuri, *Futuh al-Buldan*). But this too has no historical basis. By this also they might have wanted to prove that they were the original settlers of the area.

As a matter of fact, what is established is that when in A. D. 70 the Romans massacred the Jews in Palestine, and then in A. D. 132 expelled them from that land, many of the Jewish tribes fled to find an asylum in the Hejaz, a territory that was contiguous to Palestine in the south. There, they settled wherever they found water springs and greenery, and then by intrigue and through money lending business gradually occupied the fertile lands. Ailah, Maqna, Tabuk, Taima, Wadi al Qura, Fadak and Khaiber came under their control in that very period, and Bani Quraizah, Bani al-Nadir, Bani Bahdal, and Bani Qainuqa also came in the same period and occupied Yathrib.

Among the tribes that settled in Yathrib the Bani al Nadir and the Bani Quraizah were more prominent for they belonged to the Cohen or priest class. They were looked upon as of noble descent and enjoyed religious leadership among their co- religionists. When they came to settle in Madinah there were some other tribes living there before, whom they subdued and became practically the owners of this green and fertile land. About three centuries later, in A. D. 450 or 451, the great flood of Yemen occurred which has been mentioned in vv. 16-17 of Surah Saba above. As a result of this different tribes of the people of Saba were compelled to leave Yemen and disperse in different parts of Arabia. Thus, the Bani Ghassan went to settle in Syria, Bani Lakhm in Hirah (Iraq), Bani Khuzaah between Jeddah and Makkah and the Aus and the Khazraj went to settle in Yathrib. As Yathrib was under Jewish domination, they at first did not allow the Aus and the Khazraj to gain a footing and the two Arab tribes had to settle on lands that had not yet been brought under cultivation, where they could hardly produce just enough to enable them to survive. At last, one of their chiefs went to Syria to ask for the assistance of their Ghassanide brothers; he brought an army from there and broke the power of the Jews. Thus, the Aus and the Khazraj were able to gain complete dominance over Yathrib, with the result that two of the major Jewish tribes, Bani an-Nadir and Bani Quraizaha were forced to take quarters outside the city. Since the third tribe, Bani Qainuqa, was not on friendly terms with the other two tribes, it stayed inside the city as usual, but had to seek protection of the Khazraj tribe. As a counter measure to this Bani an Nadir and Bani Quraizah took protection of the Aus tribe so that they could live in peace in the suburbs of Yathrib.

Before the Holy Prophet's arrival at Madinah until his emigration the following were the main features of the Jews position in Hejaz in general and in Yathrib in particular:

1. In the matter of language, dress, civilization and way of life they had completely adopted Arabism, even their names had become Arabian. Of the 12 Jewish tribes that had settled in Hejaz, none except the Bani Zaura retained its Hebrew name. Except for a few scattered scholars none knew Hebrew. In fact, there is nothing in the poetry of the Jewish poets of the pre-Islamic days to distinguish it from the poetry of the Arab poets in language, ideas and themes. They even inter-married with the Arabs. In fact, nothing distinguished them from the common Arabs except religion. Notwithstanding this, they had not lost their identity among the Arabs and had kept their Jewish prejudice alive most ardently and jealously. They had adopted superficial Arabism because they could not survive in Arabia without it.
2. Because of this Arabism the western orientalists have been misled into thinking that perhaps they were not really Israelites but Arabs who had embraced Judaism, or that at least majority of them consisted of the Arab Jews. But there is no historical proof to show that the Jews ever engaged in any proselytizing activities in Hejaz, or their rabbis invited the Arabs to embrace Judaism like the Christian priests and missionaries. On the contrary, we see that they prided themselves upon their Israelite descent and racial prejudices. They called the Arabs the Gentiles, which did not mean illiterate or uneducated but savage and uncivilized people. They believed that the Gentiles did not possess any human rights; these were only reserved for the Israelites, and therefore, it was lawful and right for the Israelites to defraud them of their properties by every fair and foul means. Apart from the Arab chiefs, they did not consider the common Arabs fit enough to have equal status with them even if they entered Judaism. No historical proof is available, nor is there any evidence in the Arabian traditions, that some Arab tribe or prominent clan might have accepted Judaism. However, mention has been made of some individuals, who had become Jews. The Jews, however, were more interested in their trade and business than in the preaching of their religion. That is why Judaism did not spread as a religion and creed in Hejaz but remained only as a mark of pride and distinction of a few Israelite tribes. The Jewish rabbis, however, had a flourishing business in granting amulets and charms, fortune telling and sorcery, because of which they were held in great awe by the Arabs for their "knowledge" and practical wisdom.
3. Economically they were much stronger than the Arabs. Since they bad emigrated from more civilized and culturally advanced countries of Palestine and Syria, they knew many such arts as were unknown to the Arabs; they also enjoyed trade relations with the outside world. Hence, they had captured the business of importing grain in Yathrib and the upper Hejaz and exporting dried dates to other countries. Poultry farming and fishing also were mostly under their controls They were good at cloth weaving too. They had also set up wine shops here and there, where they sold wine which they imported from Syria. The Bani Qainuqa generally practiced crafts such as that of the goldsmith, blacksmith and vessel maker. In all these occupations, trade and business these Jews earned exorbitant profits, but their chief occupation was trading in money lending in which they had ensnared the Arabs of the surrounding areas. More particularly the chiefs and elders of the Arab tribes who were given to a life of pomp, bragging and boasting on the strength of borrowed money were deeply

indebted to them. They lent money on high rates of interest and then would charge compound interest, which one could hardly clear off once one was involved in it. Thus, they had rendered the Arabs economically hollow, but it had naturally induced a deep rooted hatred among the common Arabs against the Jews.

4. The demand of their trade and economic interests was that they should neither estrange one Arab tribe by befriending another, nor take part in their mutual wars. But, on the other hand, it was also in their interests, that they should not allow the Arabs to be united and should keep them fighting and entrenched against each other, for they knew that whenever the Arab tribes united, they would not allow them to remain in possession of their 1large properties, gardens and fertile lands, which they had come to own through their profiteering and money lending business. Furthermore, each of their tribes also had to enter into alliance with one or another powerful Arab tribe for the sake of its own protection so that no other powerful tribe should overawe it by its might. Because of this they had not only to take part in the mutual wars of the Arabs but they often had to go to war in support of the Arab tribe to which their tribe was tied in alliance against another Jewish tribe which was allied to the enemy tribe. In Yathrib the Bani Quraizah and the Bani an-Nadir were the allies of the Aus while the Bani Qainuqa of the Khazraj. A little before the Holy Prophet's emigration, these Jewish tribes had confronted each other in support of their respective allies in the bloody war that took place between the Aus and the Khazraj at Buath.

Such were the conditions when Islam came to Madinah, and ultimately an Islamic State came into existence after the Holy Prophet's (upon whom be Allah's peace) arrival there. One of the first things that he accomplished soon after establishing this state was unification of the Aus and the Khazraj and the Emigrants into a brotherhood, and the second was that he concluded a treaty between the Muslims and the Jews on definite conditions, in which it was pledged that neither party would encroach on the rights of the other, and both would unite in a joint defense against the external enemies. Some important clauses of this treaty are as follows, which clearly show what the Jews and the Muslims had pledged to adhere to in their mutual relationship:

"The Jews must bear their expenses and the Muslims their expenses. Each must help the other against anyone who attacks the people of this document. They must seek mutual advice and consultation, and loyalty is a protection against treachery. They shall sincerely wish one another well. Their relations will be governed by piety and recognition of the rights of others, and not by sin and wrongdoing. The wronged must be helped. The Jews must pay with the believers so long as the war lasts. Yathrib shall be a sanctuary for the people of this document. If any dispute or controversy likely to cause trouble should arise, it must be referred to God and to Muhammad the Apostle of God; Quraish and their helpers shall not be given protection. The contracting parties are bound to help one another against any attack on Yathrib; Every one shall be responsible for the defense of the portion to which he belongs" (*lbn Hisham*, vol. ii, pp. 147 to 150).

This was on absolute and definitive covenant to the conditions of which the Jews themselves had agreed. But not very long after this they began to show hostility towards the Holy Prophet of Allah (upon whom be Allah's peace) and Islam and the Muslims, and their hostility and perverseness went on increasing day by day. Its main causes were three:

First, they envisaged the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) merely as a chief of his people, who should be content to have concluded a political agreement with them and should only concern himself with the worldly interests of his group. But they found that he was extending an invitation to belief in Allah and the Prophethood and the Book (which also included belief in their own Prophets and scriptures), and was urging the people to give up disobedience of Allah and adopt obedience to the Divine Commands and abide by the moral laws of their own prophets. This they could not put up with. They feared that if this universal ideological movement gained momentum it would destroy their rigid religiosity and wipe out their racial nationhood.

Second, when they saw that the Aus and the Khazraj and the Emigrants were uniting into a brotherhood and the people from the Arab tribes of the surrounding areas, who entered Islam, were also joining this Islamic Brotherhood of Madinah and forming a religious community, they feared that the selfish policy that they had been following of sowing discord between the Arab tribes for the promotion of their own well being and interests for centuries, would not work in the new system, but they would face a united front of the Arabs against which their intrigues and machinations would not succeed.

Third, the work that the Holy Messenger of Allah (upon whom be Allah's 'peace) was carrying out of reforming the society and civilization included putting an end to all unlawful methods" in business and mutual dealings. More than that; he had declared taking and giving of interest also as impure and unlawful earning. This caused them the fear that if his rule became established in Arabia, he would declare interest legally forbidden, and in this they saw their own economic disaster and death.

For these reasons they made resistance and opposition to the Holy Prophet their national ideal. They would never hesitate to employ any trick and machination, any device and cunning, to harm him. They spread every kind of falsehood so as to cause distrust against him in the people's minds. They created every kind of doubt, suspicion and misgiving in the hearts of the new converts so as to turn them back from Islam. They would make false profession of Islam and then would turn apostate so that it may engender more and more misunderstandings among the people against Islam and the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace). They would conspire with the hypocrites to create mischief and would cooperate with every group and tribe hostile to Islam. They would create rifts between the Muslims and would do whatever they could to stir them up to mutual feuds and fighting. The people of the Aus and the Khazraj tribes were their special target, with whom they had been allied for centuries. Making mention of the war of Buath before them they would remind them of their previous enmities so that they might again resort to the sword against each other and shatter their bond of fraternity into which Islam had bound them. They would resort to every kind of deceit and fraud in order to harm the Muslims economically. Whenever one of those with whom that had business dealings, would accept Islam, they would do whatever they could to cause him financial loss. If he owed them something they would worry and harass him by making repeated demands, and if they owed him something, they would withhold the payment and would publicly say that at the time the bargain was made he professed a different religion, and since he had changed his religion, they were no longer under any obligation towards him. Several instances of this nature have been cited in the explanation of verse 75 of Surah Al Imran given in the commentaries by Tabari, Nisaburi, Tabrisi and in *Ruh al Ma'ani*.

They had adopted this hostile attitude against the covenant even before the Battle of Badr. But when the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) and the Muslims won a decisive victory over the Quraish at Badr, they were filled with grief and anguish, malice and anger. They were in fact anticipating that in that war the powerful Quraish would deal a death blow to the Muslims. That is why even before the news of the Islamic victory reached Madinah they had begun to spread the rumor that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) had fallen a martyr and the Muslims had been routed, and the Quraish army under Abu Jahl was advancing on Madinah. But when the battle was decided against their hopes and wishes, they burst with anger and grief. Ka'b bin Ashraf, the chief of the Bani an-Nadir, cried out:"By God, if Muhammad has actually killed these nobles of Arabia, the earth's belly would be better for us than its back." Then he went to Makkah and incited the people to vengeance by writing and reciting provocative elegies for the Quraish chiefs killed at Badr. Then he returned to Madinah and composed lyrical verses of an insulting nature about the Muslim women. At last, enraged with his mischief, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) sent Muhammad bin Maslamah Ansari in Rabi al-Awwal, A. H. 3, and had him slain. (*Ibn Sad, Ibn Hisham, Tabari*).

The first Jewish tribe which, after the Battle of Badr, openly and collectively broke their covenant were the Bani Qainuqa. They lived in a locality inside the city of Madinah. As they practiced the crafts of the goldsmith, blacksmith and vessel maker, the people of Madinah had to visit their shops fairly frequently. They were proud of their bravery and valor. Being blacksmiths by profession even their children were well armed, and they could instantly muster 700 fighting men from among themselves. They were also arrogantly aware that they enjoyed relations of confederacy with the Khazraj and Abdullah bin Ubbay, the chief of the, Khazraj, was their chief supporter. At the victory of Badr, they became so provoked that they began to trouble and harass the Muslims and their women in particular, who visited their shops. By and by things came to such a pass that one day a Muslim woman was stripped naked publicly in their bazaar. This led to a brawl in which a Muslim and a Jew were killed. Thereupon the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) himself visited their locality, got them together and counseled them on decent conduct. But the reply that they gave was; "O Muhammad, you perhaps think we are like the Quraish. They did not know fighting; therefore, you overpowered them. But when you come in contact with us, you will see how men fight." This was in clear words a declaration of war. Consequently, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) laid siege to their quarters towards the end of Shawwal (and according to some others, of Dhi Qa'dah) A. H. 2. The siege had hardly lasted for a fortnight when they surrendered and all their fighting men were tied and taken prisoners. Now Abdullah bin Ubayy came up in support of them and insisted that they should be pardoned. The Holy Prophet conceded his request and decided that the Bani Qainuqa would be exiled from Madinah leaving their properties, armor and tools of trade behind. (*Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Hisham, Tarikh Tabari*).

For some time after these punitive measures (i. e. the banishment of the Qainuqa and killing of Ka'b bin Ashraf the Jews remained so terror stricken that they did not dare commit any further mischief. But later when in Shawwal, A. H. 3, the Quraish in order to avenge themselves for the defeat at Badr, marched against Madinah with great preparations, and the Jews saw that only a thousand men had marched out with the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) as against three thousand men of the Quraish, and even they were

deserted by 300 hypocrites who returned to Madinah, they committed the first and open breach of the treaty by refusing to join the Holy Prophet in the defense of the city although they were bound to it. Then, when in the Battle of Uhud the Muslims suffered reverses, they were further emboldened. So much so that the Bani an-Nadir made a secret plan to kill the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) though the plan failed before it could be executed. According to the details, after the incident of Bi'r Maunah (Safar, A. H. 4) Amr bin Umayyah Damri slew by mistake two men of the Bani Amir in retaliation, who actually belonged to a tribe which was allied to the Muslims, but Amr had mistaken them for the men of the enemy. Because of this mistake their blood money became obligatory on the Muslims. Since the Bani an-Nadir were also a party in the alliance with the Bani Amir, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) went to their clan along with some of his Companions to ask for their help in paying the blood money. Outwardly they agreed to contribute, as he wished, but secretly they plotted that a person should go up to the top of the house by whose wall the Holy Prophet was sitting and drop a rock on him to kill him. But before they could execute their plan, he was informed in time and be immediately got up and returned to Madinah.

Now there was no question of showing them any further concession. The Holy Prophet at once sent to them the ultimatum that the treachery they had meditated against him had come to his knowledge; therefore, they were to leave Madinah within ten days; if anyone of them was found staying behind in their quarters, he would be put to the sword. Meanwhile Abdullah bin Ubayy sent them the message that he would help them with two thousand men and that the Bani Quraizah and Bani Ghatafan also would come to their aid; therefore, they should stand firm and should not go. On this false assurance they responded to the Holy Prophet's ultimatum saying that they would not leave Madinah and he could do whatever was in his power. Consequently, in Rabi' al-Awwal, A. H. 4, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) laid siege to them, and after a few days of the siege (which according to some traditions were 6 and according to others 15 days) they agreed to leave Madinah on the condition that they could retain all their property which they could carry on thee camels, except the armor. Thus, Madinah was rid of this second mischievous tribe of Jews. Only two of the Bani an-Nadir became Muslims and stayed behind. Others went to Syria and Khaiber.

This is the event that has been discussed in this Surah.

Theme and Subject Matter

The theme of the Surah as stated above, is an appraisal of the battle against the Bani an Nadir. In this, on the whole, four things have been discussed.

1. In the first four verses the world has been, admonished to take heed of the fate that had just befallen the Bani an-Nadir. A major tribe which was as strong in numbers as the Muslims, whose people boasted of far more wealth and possession who were by no means ill equipped militarily and whose forts were well fortified could not stand siege even for a few Days, and expressed their readiness to accept banishment from their centuries old, well established settlement even though not a single man from among them was slain. Allah says that this happened not because of any power possessed by the Muslims but because the Jews had tried to resist and fight Allah and

His Messenger, and those who dare to resist the power of Allah, always meet with the same fate.

2. In verse 5, the rule of the law of war that has been enunciated is: the destruction caused in the enemy territory for military purposes does not come under "spreading mischief in the earth."
3. In vv 6-10 it has been stated how the lands and properties which come under the control of the Islamic State as a result of war or peace terms, are to be managed. As it was the first ever occasion that the Muslims took control of a conquered territory, the law concerning it was laid down for their guidance.
4. In vv. 11-17 the attitude that the hypocrites had adopted on the occasion of the battle against the Bani an-Nadir has been reviewed and the causes underlying it have been pointed out.
5. The whole of the last section (vv. 18-24) is an admonition for all those people who had professed to have affirmed the faith and joined the Muslim community, but were devoid of the true spirit of the faith. In it they have been told what is the real demand of the Faith, what is the real difference between piety and wickedness, what is the place and importance of the Quran which they professed to believe in, and what are the attributes of God in Whom they claimed to have believed.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

سَبَّحَ لِلّٰہِ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ۚ وَہُوَ الۡعَزِیۡزُ الۡحَکِیۡمُ 1

(59:1) All that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth extols Allah's Glory: He is the Most Mighty, the Most Wise.[1]

1. For explanation, see(E.Ns 1, 2 of Surah Al-Hadid). The object of this introductory sentence before making an appraisal of the banishment of the Bani an-Nadir is to prepare the mind to understand the truth that the fate this powerful tribe met was not the result of the power of the Muslims but a manifestation of the power of Allah.

ہُوَ الَّذِیۡۤ اَخۡرَجَ الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا مِنۡ اَہۡلِ الۡکِتٰبِ مِنۡ دِیَارِہِمۡ لِاَوَّلِ الۡحَشۡرِ ؕ مَا ظَنَنۡتُمۡ اَنۡ یَّخۡرُجُوۡا وَظَنُّوۡۤا اَنَّہُمۡ مَّانِعَتُہُمۡ حُصُوۡنُہُمۡ مِّنَ اللّٰہِ فَاَتٰىہُمُ اللّٰہُ مِنۡ حَیۡثُ لَمۡ یَحۡتَسِبُوۡا ۟ وَقَذَفَ فِیۡ قُلُوۡبِہِمُ الرُّعۡبَ یُخۡرِبُوۡنَ بُیُوۡتَہُمۡ بِاَیۡدِیۡہِمۡ وَاَیۡدِی الۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ ۫ فَاعۡتَبِرُوۡا یٰۤاُولِی الۡاَبۡصَارِ 2

(59:2) He it is Who in the first assault drove forth the People of the Book that disbelieved from their homes[2] at the first gathering of forces.[3] You did not believe that

they would leave; while they too thought that their fortresses would defend them against Allah.[4] Then Allah came upon them from whence they did not even imagine,[5] casting such terror into their hearts that they destroyed their homes by their own hands and their destruction was also caused by the hands of the believers.[6] So learn a lesson from this, O you who have perceptive eyes![7]

2. Here, the reader should understand one thing at the outset so as to avoid any confusion about the banishment of the Bani an-Nadir. The Prophet (peace be upon him) had concluded a formal written treaty with the Bani an-Nadir. They had not broken this agreement as such that it should have become void. But the reason why they were attacked was that after making different kinds of minor violations of it, they at last committed such an offense which amounted to the breach of trust. That is, they plotted to kill the leader of the other party to the treaty, i.e. the Islamic State of Al- Madinah. The plot became exposed, and when they were accused of breaking the agreement they could not deny it. Thereupon, the Prophet (peace be upon him) told them either to leave Al-Madinah or to be ready for a war. This notice was in accordance with this injunction of the Quran: If you ever fear treachery from any people, throw their treaty openly before them. (Surah Al-Anfal, Ayat 58). That is why Allah is describing their exile as His own action, for it was precisely in accordance with divine law. In other words, they were not expelled by the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Muslims but by Allah Himself. The other reason why Allah has described their exile as His own action has been stated in the following verses.

3. The word hashr in the text means to gather the scattered individuals togather or to take out scattered individuals after mustering them together. Thus, the words li-awwal-ilhashr mean: with the first hashr or on the occasion of the first hashr. As for the question, what is implied by the first hashr here, the commentators have disagreed on it. According to one group it implies the banishment of the Bani an-Nadir from Al-Madinah, and this has been described as their first hashr in the sense that their second hashr took place in the time of Umar, when the Jews and the Christians were expelled from the Arabian peninsula, and the final hashr will take place on the Day of Resurrection. According to the second group it implies the gathering of the Muslim army together to fight the Bani an- Nadir; and li-awwal-il-hashr means that as soon as the Muslims had gathered together to fight them, and no blood yet had been shed, they, by the manifestation of Allah's power, offered to be banished from Al-Madinah of their own accord. In other words, these words have been used here in the meaning of at the very first assault. Shah Waliullah has translated it at the first gathering of the army. Shah Abdul Qadir has translated it at the first mustering. In our opinion this translation very nearly gives the meaning of these words.

4. To understand this one should keep in mind the fact that the Bani an-Nadir had been well established here for centuries. They lived in compact populations outside Al- Madinah without any lien element. Their settlement was well fortified, which had fortified houses as are generally built in feud-ridden tribal areas. Then their numerical strength also equaled that of the Muslims, and inside Al- Madinah itself many of the hypocrites were their supporters. Therefore, the Muslims could never expect that they would, even without fighting, be so unnerved by the siege as to leave their homes willingly. Likewise, the Bani an-Nadir also could not have imagined that some power would compel them to leave their homes within six days. Although the Bani Qainuqa had been expelled before them, and their false pride of valor had proved to be of no avail, they lived in a locality inside Al-

Madinah and did not have any separate fortified settlement; therefore, the Bani an- Nadir thought that their inability to withstand the Muslims was not exceptionable, Contrary to this, in view of their own fortified settlement and strongholds, they could not imagine that some power could turn them out so easily. That is why when the Prophet (peace be upon him) served a notice on them to leave Al-Madinah within ten days, they boldly retorted, saying: We are not going to quit, you may do whatever you please.

Here, the question arises, on what basis has Allah said: They were thinking that their fortresses would save them from Allah. Did the Bani an-Nadir really know that they were not facing Muhammad bin Abdullah (peace be upon him) but Allah? And did they, in spite of knowing this, think that their fortresses would save them from Allah? This is a question which would confound every such person who does not know the psychology of the Jewish people and their centuries-old traditions. As regards the common men, no one can imagine that despite their knowing consciously that they were facing Allah, they would entertain the false hope that their forts and weapons would save them from Allah. Therefore, an ignorant person would interpret the divine word, saying that the Bani an-Nadir in view of the strength of their forts were apparently involved in the misunderstanding that they would remain safe from the Prophet's (peace be upon him) attack, but in reality they were fighting Allah and from Him their forts could not save them. But the fact is that the Jews in this world are a strange people, who have been knowingly fighting Allah: they killed the Prophets of Allah knowing them to be His Prophets, and they declared boastfully and arrogantly that they had killed the Prophets of Allah. Their traditions say that their great Patriarch, the prophet Jacob (peace be upon him), wrestled with Allah throughout the night and Allah could not throw him even till daybreak. Then, when at daybreak Allah asked Jacob to let Him go, Jacob replied that he would not let Him go until He blessed him. Allah asked him his name, and he answer Jacob. Allah said that his name would no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you strove with God and with men, and prevailed. (See Gen. 32: 25-29 in the latest Jewish translation; The Scriptures, published by the Jewish Publication Society of America 1954). In the Christian translation of the Bible too this subject has been rendered likewise. In the footnote of the Jewish translation, Israel has been explained as: He who striveth with God. In the Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature the meaning given of Israel by the Christian scholars is: Wrestler with God. Then in Hosea (O.T.) the Prophet Jacob (peace be upon him) has been praised thus: By his strength he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed. (Ch. 12: 3-4). Now, obviously, the people of Israel are the children of the same Prophet Israel who, according to their faith, had striven with God and wrestled with Him. For them it is not at all difficult that they should stand firm and fight even God. On this very basis, they, even according to their own profession, killed the Prophets of God, and under the same false pride they put the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) on the cross and bragged: We have killed Jesus Christ, son of Mary, Messenger of Allah. Therefore, it was not against their traditions that they fought Muhammad (peace be upon him) despite their knowledge that he was Allah's Messenger. If not their common people, their rabbis and learned men knew well that he was the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah. The Quran itself contains several evidences to this effect. (For instance, see (E.Ns 79, 95 of Surah Al-Baqarah); (E.Ns 190, 191 of Surah An-Nisa); (E.Ns 70, 73 of Surah As-Saaffat).

5. Allah's coming down upon them does not mean that Allah was staying in another place whence He attacked them. But this is a metaphoric expression. The object is to give the idea that while facing Allah they were thinking that Allah could chastise them only by bringing an army against them from the front and they were confident that they would resist that force by their fortifications. But Allah attacked them from whence they had not thought it possible; and this was that He made than weak and broke their power of resistance from within after which neither their weapons nor their strongholds could help them.

6. That is, the destruction occurred in two ways: from outside the Muslims besieged them and started demolishing their fortifications, and from within, first they raised obstacles of stone and wood to stop the Muslims from advancing, and for this purpose broke their own houses for the material; then, when they became certain that they would have to vacate the place, they started pulling down their houses, which they had so fondly built and decorated, with their own hands, so as to render them useless for the Muslims later. When they settled peace with the Prophet (peace be upon him) on the condition that they would be spared their lives but would have the permission to carry away whatever they could, except the weapons and armor, they started removing the frames of the doors and windows, even pegs, so much so that some people removed the beams and wooden ceilings, which they put upon the back of their camels and left.

7. There are many lessons which one can learn from this event, which have been alluded to in this brief but eloquent sentence. These Jews were none other but the followers of the former Prophets: they believed in God, in the Book, in the former Prophets and the Hereafter. Accordingly, they were the former Muslims. But when they turned their back on religion and morality and adopted open hostility to the truth only for the sake of their selfish desires and worldly motives and interests, and showed scant regard for their treaties and agreements, Allah's grace was turned away from them, otherwise Allah had no personal enmity with than. Therefore, first of all, the Muslims themselves have been admonished to heed their fate and learn a lesson from it, lest they too should start behaving as if they were the beloved children of God, as the Jews did, and should be involved in the misunderstanding that their being included among the followers of the last Prophet of God would by itself guarantee for them Allah's bounty and His support, apart from which they were not bound to adhere to any demand of religion and morality. Besides, those people of the world also have been asked to learn a lesson from this event, those who oppose the truth consciously, and then place reliance upon their wealth and power, their means and resources, thinking that these would save them from the divine punishment. The Jews of Al-Madinah were not unaware that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had not risen for the supremacy of a people or tribe, but he was presenting an ideological invitation the addressees of which were all men, and every man, no matter what race or country he belonged to, could join his ummah by accepting the invitation, without discrimination or distinction. They were themselves witnessing that Bilal of Habash, Suhaib of Rome, and Salman of Persia enjoyed the same position and status in the Muslim community as was enjoyed by the people of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) own house. Therefore, they were not feeling any danger that the Quraish and the Aus and the Khazrij would gain an upper hand over them. Nor were they unaware that the ideological invitation that he was presenting was precisely the same as their own Prophets had been presenting. The Prophet (peace be upon him) never put forward any claim that he had come with a new religion,

unknown to the people, and that the people should give up their former religion and accept his religion instead. But what he claimed was that the religion being presented by him was the same that the Prophets of God had been preaching and presenting since the beginning of creation. And from their Torah they could themselves confirm that it was actually the same religion, the principles of which were not any different from the principles of the religion of the Prophets. On the same basis they were told in the Quran: Affirm faith in the teaching sent down by Me, which confirms the teaching that you already possess, and you should not be its first deniers. They were also witnessing what character and morals the Prophet (peace be upon him) possessed, and what revolution had taken place in the lives of those who had accepted his message. For a long time the Ansar of Al- Madinah had been their closest neighbors. They knew what kind of people they had been before embracing Islam and what they became after their conversion to Islam. Thus, they were well aware of the invitation of the inviter and of the results of accepting the invitation. But in spite of witnessing and knowing all this, only on account of their racial prejudice and worldly interests, they spent all their energy against the message of truth about which there was no room for doubt at least in their minds. After such an obvious and open hostility to the truth they expected that their strongholds would save them from Allah, whereas the whole human history bears evidence that the one who is resisted by the power of God, cannot save and protect himself by any weapon, means or device.

وَلَوْلَآ اَنْ كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْجَلَآءَ لَعَذَّبَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا ؕ وَلَهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابُ النَّارِ 3

(59:3) If Allah had not decreed banishment for them, He would certainly have chastised them in this world.[8] As for the Hereafter, the chastisement of the Fire awaits them.

8. Would have punished them in this world: world have caused them to be annihilated. That is, had they fought instead of surrendering to save their lives, they would have been completely wiped out. Their men would have perished in the war and their womenfolk and children would have been taken prisoners and there would be no one to have them ransomed.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ شَآقُّوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّشَآقِّ اللّٰهَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ 4

(59:4) That is because they set themselves against Allah and His Messenger; and whoever sets himself against Allah should know that Allah is surely Most Stern in retribution.

مَا قَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ لِّيْنَةٍ اَوْ تَرَكْتُمُوْهَا قَآئِمَةً عَلٰٓى اُصُوْلِهَا فَبِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيُخْزِيَ

الْفٰسِقِيْنَ 5

(59:5) The palm-trees that you cut down or those that you left standing on their roots, it was by Allah's leave that you did so.[9] (Allah granted you this leave) in order that He might humiliate the evil-doers.[10]

9. The reference is to the fact that the Muslims cut down or burnt many of the palm-trees that stood in the oases around the settlement of the Bani an-Nadir in order to facilitate the siege, However, they left those trees standing which did not obstruct the military operations. At this the hypocrites of Al-Madinah and the Bani Quraizah, and the Bani an-Nadir themselves raised a clamor, saying that, on the one hand, Muhammad (peace be upon him) prohibited spreading disorder in the world, but, on the other hand, fruit trees were being cut down by his command, which amounted to spreading disorder in the world. At this Allah sent down the command: Whatever trees you cut down, or whatever you left standing, your neither act was unlawful, but it had Allah's permission. The legal injunction that is derived from this verse is that the destruction caused for the sake of military operations does not come under spreading disorder in the world. But spreading disorder in the world is that an army under the fit of war hysteria should intrude into the enemy territory and start destroying the crops, cattle, gardens, houses and everything in its way without any reason. In this matter, the general instruction is the same which Abu Bakr Siddiq gave while dispatching the Muslim army to Syria: Do not cut down fruit trees, do not destroy crops, do not ravage the settlements. This was precisely in accordance with the Quranic teaching, which condemns those who spread chaos: When they get power they direct all their efforts towards spreading corruption in the land, destroying harvests and killing people. (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 205). But the specific command in respect of the war exigencies is that if destruction is necessary for military operations against the enemy, it is lawful. Thus, Abdullah bin Masud has given this explanation in the commentary of this verse: The Muslims had cut down only those trees of the Bani an- Nadir that stood on the battlefield. (Tafsir Nisaburi). Some of the Muslim jurists have overlooked this aspect of the matter and expressed the opinion that the permissibility of cutting the trees of the Bani an-Nadir was confined only to that particular event. It does not make it generally permissible that whenever war necessitates, trees of the enemy be cut down and burnt. Imam Auzai, Laith and Abu Thaur hold this same opinion. But the majority of the jurists hold the view that for the sake of important military operations it is permissible. However, this is not permissible for the purpose of mere destruction and pillage.

One may ask: This verse of the Quran could satisfy the Muslims, but how could those who did not accept the Quran as divine word be satisfied at this reply to their objection that both acts were permissible as they had Allah's permission for it? The answer is: This verse of the Quran was sent down to satisfy only the Muslims; it was not sent down to satisfy the disbelievers. Since due to the objection of the Jews and the hypocrites, or due to their own thinking, they had been involved in the misgiving whether they were guilty of spreading disorder in the earth. Allah gave them the satisfaction that both the acts, cutting down some trees to facilitate the siege and leaving some other trees standing which did not obstruct the siege, were in accordance with divine law.

The traditionists in their traditions have disagreed the point whether the order to cut and burn the trees had been given by the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself, or whether the Muslims had done it of their own accord, and then later asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) about its legal aspect. Abdullah bin Umar has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon

him) himself had ordered it. (Bukhari, Muslim, Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Jarir). The same also has been reported by Yazid bin Ruman (Ibn Jarir). On the contrary, Mujahid and Qatadah say that the Muslims had on their own cut down the trees, then a dispute arose among them whether what they had done was permissible or not. Some said it was permissible and some said it was not. At last Allah sent down this verse and approved the act of both. (Ibn Jarir). The same thing is supported by a tradition of Abdullah bin Abbas: The Muslims were confused because some of them had cut the trees and others had not; therefore, they wanted to ask the Prophet (peace be upon him) as to who would be rewarded for the act and who would be punished (Nasai). Those of the jurists who have preferred the first tradition give the argument that this was the Prophet's personal judgment, which was later ratified by revelation from Allah, and this is a proof of the fact that in matters where no divine command existed, the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to follow his personal judgment. On the other hand, those jurists who have preferred the second tradition argue that the two groups of the Muslims had adopted two different views on the basis of their own personal judgments and Allah ratified both. Therefore, if the learned men arrive at different conclusions by judicious exercise of their personal judgment, then although their opinions might differ, they would all be correct in the divine Shariah.

10. That is, Allah willed that they should be disgraced if you cut down the trees and also if you left them standing. In the first case, they were disgraced when they saw that the trees of the gardens which they had planted with their own hands and which they had owned since ages, were being cut down before their very eyes and they were watching it helplessly. Even an ordinary peasant and gardener cannot tolerate another's misappropriation or intrusion into his field or garden. He would protect his field or garden at the risk of his life if somebody tried to destroy it in his presence. For, if he cannot prevent destruction of his property, it would be a sign of his extreme humiliation and weakness. But here a whole tribe, which had been living at this place fearlessly and boldly for centuries, was watching helplessly that its neighbors had invaded its gardens and were destroying the trees while it could do nothing. After this even if they stayed on in Al-Madinah, they would have lived in disgrace and humility. In the second case, they were disgraced when on leaving Al-Madinah they saw that the lush green gardens which had been in their possession till the previous day were now passing into the possession of the Muslims. If they had the power they would have laid waste the entire gardens by their own hands so that not a single whole tree passed into the hands of the Muslims. But in their helplessness they left the city, despaired and griefstricken, leaving everything intact behind.

وَمَآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ مِنْهُمْ فَمَآ اَوْجَفْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ خَيْلٍ وَّلَا رِكَابٍ وَّلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُسَلِّطُ رُسُلَهٗ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ 6

(59:6) Whatever Allah has taken away from them and bestowed (as spoils) on His Messenger[11] for which you spurred neither horses nor camels; but Allah grants authority to His Messengers over whomsoever He pleases. Allah has power over everything.[12]

11. From here to the end of verse 10, Allah explains how the lands and properties that were restored to the Islamic State after the exile of the Bani an-Nadir, are to be managed and administered. As it was the first occasion that a land was conquered and included in the Islamic territory, and many more lands were destined to be conquered in the future, the law governing the conquered lands was enunciated at the outset. Here, a note-worthy point is that Allah at this place has used the words: Ma-afa-Allahu ala Rasuli-hi-min-hum: Whatever Allah restored to His Messenger from them. These words clearly imply that the rebels of Allah Almighty are not entitled to own the earth and things existing on it. If they have become their owners and are appropriating them, their ownership and appropriation of these things is, in fact, in the nature of usurpation of a master's property by a dishonest servant. The real right of these properties is that these should be spent and used in the service and obedience of their real Master, Allah, Lord of the worlds, according to His will, and their this use is possible only through the agency of the righteous believers. Therefore, the true position of the properties which pass from the ownership of the disbelievers into the hands of the Muslims as the result of a lawful war, is that their real Owner has withdrawn them from His disobedient and disloyal servants, and restored them to His obedient and loyal servants. That is why, in the terminology of the Islamic Law such properties have been described as Fai (restored properties).

12. That is, the restoration of these properties to the Muslims is not the result of the effort of the actual fighting army so that the army on that basis may have the right that the properties may be distributed among the soldiers, but its real nature is that Allah by His bounty has given dominance to His Messengers and the system that they represent over them. In other words, the passing of these properties into the Muslims' hands is not the direct result of the effort and struggle of the fighting army, but the result of the total strength that Allah has bestowed on His Messenger and his community and the system established by him. Therefore, these properties are quite different in nature from the spoils of war and so cannot be distributed among the soldiers as such.

Thus, the Shariah has made a distinction between ghanimah (spoils of war) and fai (restored properties). The injunction in respect of the ghanimah has been given in Surah Al-Anfal, Ayat 41, and it is this: It should be divided in five parts, four parts of which be distributed among the fighting army and the fifth deposited in the Public Treasury (Bait al-Mal), and expended on the items mentioned in the verse. As for the fai, the injunction is that it should not be distributed among the army, but it should be reserved for the items of expenditure being stated in the following verse. The distinction between the two has been made plain by the words: You have not rushed your horses and camels on them, which imply the military operations. Thus, the properties which are taken as a direct result of such operations are the ghanimah and those which are not the result of these operations are the fai. The distinction between ghanimah and fai that has been mentioned in this verse, has been explained in greater detail by the jurists of Islam. Ghanimah are only those transferable properties which are taken from the enemy during military action; other than these things, e.g. lands, houses and other transferable and nontransferable properties of the enemy, are excluded from the definition of ghanimah and are fai. The source of this explanation is the letter that Umar had written to Saad bin Abi Waqqas after the conquest of Iraq. In that letter he wrote: Distribute the properties and goods which the soldiers of the army collected and brought to your camp among the Muslims who participated in the war, and leave the lands and the canals with

those who work on them so that the proceeds thereof are used for the salaries of the Muslims. (Abu Yusuf, Kitab al-Kharaj, p. 24; Abu Ubaid, Kitab al-Amwal, p. 59; Yahya bin Adam, Kitab al-Kharaj, pp. 27-28, 48). On this very basis, Hasan Basri says: Whatever is taken from the enemy camp is the right of those who won victory over it, and the lands are for the Muslims. (Yahya bin Adam, p. 27). And Imam Abu Yusuf says: Whatever the Muslims take from the enemy troops, and whatever goods and arms and cattle they collect and bring to their camp is ghanimah; from this one-fifth will be deducted and the rest distributed among the soldiers. (Kitab al-Kharaj, p. 18). The same is the opinion of Yahya bin Adam, which he has expressed in his Kitab al- Kharaj (p. 27). Even more than this, what makes the distinction between ghanimah and fai is that after the Battle of Nahawand when the ghanimah had been distributed and the conquered lands had been included in the Islamic State, a man named Saib bin Aqra found two bags of jewels outside the fort. He was confused whether it was the ghanimah which should be distributed in the army, or the fai which should be deposited in the Bait al-Mal. Consequently, he came to Al-Madinah and put the matter before Umar, who decided that it should be sold and the price should be deposited in the Bait al-Mal. From this it becomes clear that ghanimah are only those transferable properties which are taken by the soldiers during the war. After the war is over, the transferable properties also, like the nontransferable properties, become fai. Imam Abu Ubaid relates this event and says: The properties that are seized from the enemy by the use of force, when the war is still in progress, are ghanimah and what is taken after the war is over, when the territory has become dar al-Islam (abode of Islam), is fai, which should be reserved for the common people of the dar al-Islam; the law of the one-fifth (khums) will not be applicable to it. (Kitab al-Amwal p. 254).

After defining ghanimah thus, the rest of the properties, wealth and lands, which pass from the disbelievers ownership to the Muslims may be divided into two main kinds, first those which are taken as a result of actual fighting (fanwatan in Fiqh terminology); second, those which are taken by the Muslims as a result of the peace terms whether peace is concluded because of the pressure of the military power of the Muslims, or their dread and awe, and in this are also included all those properties which pass into the Muslims ownership in every other way than as a result of actual fighting. The differences that have arisen among the jurists of Islam have been only concerning the first kind of the properties in order to determine their correct legal position, for they do not come under those upon which you have not rushed your horses and camels. As regards to the second kind of the properties, all agree that they are fai, for the Quran has explicitly laid down the injunction about them. Below we shall discuss in detail the legal position of the first kind of the properties.

مَآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ مِنْ اَهْلِ الْقُرٰى فَلِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ وَلِذِى الْقُرْبٰى وَالْيَتٰمٰى
وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ ۙ كَيْ لَا يَكُوْنَ دُوْلَةًۢ بَيْنَ الْاَغْنِيَآءِ مِنْكُمْ ۭ وَمَآ اٰتٰىكُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ
فَخُذُوْهُ ۤ وَمَا نَهٰىكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوْا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ۘ 7

(59:7) Whatever (from the possessions of the towns people) Allah has bestowed on His Messenger belongs to Allah, and to the Messenger, and to his kinsfolk, and to the orphans, and to the needy, and to the wayfarer[13] so that it may not merely circulate between the rich among you.[14] So accept whatever the Messenger gives you, and refrain from whatever he forbids you. And fear Allah: verily Allah is Most Stern in retribution.[15]

13. In the preceding verse what was pointed out was why these properties should not be distributed among the fighting army like the spoils, and why the legal injunction concerning them is different from that concerning the spoils. Now in this verse it is being stated as to who are entitled to have a share in these properties.

The first share in these is of Allah and His Messenger. The detail of how the Prophet (peace be upon him) acted on this injunction has been related by Malik bin Aus bin al- Hadathan on the authority of Umar, thus: The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to take from it necessary expenses for himself and his family and the rest he used to spend on arranging arms and conveyances for Jihad. (Bukhari, Muslim, Musnad Ahmad, Daud, Tirmadhi, Nasai and others). After the passing away of the Prophet (peace be upon him) this share was transferred to the Public Treasury of the Muslims so that it is spent in the service of the mission which Allah had entrusted to His Messenger (peace be upon him). Imam Shafai is reported to have expressed the opinion that the share which was specifically meant for the Prophet's (peace be upon him) person, is for his caliph after him, for the Prophet (peace be upon him) was entitled to it on the basis of his office of leadership and not on the basis of the office of Apostleship. But the view of the majority of the Shafei jurists in this matter is the same as of the other jurists, viz. that this share now is reserved for the religious and collective welfare of the Muslims, and not for any particular person.

The second share is of the kinsfolk, and this implies the kinsfolk of the Prophet (peace be upon him), i.e. the Bani Hashim and the Bani al-Muttalib. This share was set aside so that, besides meeting his own and his family's requirements, the Prophet (peace be upon him) could also fulfill his obligations towards those of his relatives who stood in need of his help, or whom he felt like helping. After the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him), this ceased to be a separate and independent source, because like the right of the orphans and the wayfarers and the indigent among the Muslims, looking after the rights of the needy among the Bani Hashim and the Bani al-Muttalib also became the responsibility of the Public Treasury. However, they were treated as superior to others in so far as they had no share in the zakat. Abdullah bin Abbas has related that in the time of Abu Bakr and Umar and Uthman, the first two shares were dropped and only the remaining three shares (i.e. those for the orphans and the indigent and the wayfarers) were kept as of those entitled to fai. Then Ali also acted on the same in his time, Muhammad bin Ishaq has related on the authority of Imam Muhammad Baqir that although Ali's personal opinion was the same as of the people of his house (that this share should be given to the relatives of the Prophet, peace be upon him), he did not think that he should act against the practice of Abu Bakr and Umar. Hasan bin Muhammad bin Hanafiyah says that after the Prophet (peace be upon him), a difference of opinion arose about these two shares (i.e. the share of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and the share of his relatives). Some people said that the first share should go to the Prophet's (peace be upon him) caliph, some said that the second share should go to the relatives of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and still others said that the

second share should be given to the relatives of the caliph. At last, a consensus was reached that both the shares be spent on the requirements of Jihad. Ata bin Saib says that Umar bin Abdul Aziz in his time had started sending the share of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the share of the relatives to the Bani Hashim. The opinion of Imam Abu Hanifah and of most of the Hanafi jurists is that in this matter the same practice is correct as was being followed in the time of the righteous Caliphs. (Abu Yusuf, Kitab al-Kharaj pp. 19-21). Imam Sharei's opinion is that both the rich and the needy from among the people whose being descended from the Bani Hashim and the Bani al-Muttalib is confirmed, or is well known, can be given shares from fai. (Mughni alMuhtaj). The Hanafis say that only their needy people can be helped from this; however, their right to this is greater than that of others. (Ruh al-Maani). According to Imam Malik, there is no restriction on the government in this matter. It can spend on any head that it deems fit and proper, but the better course is that it should give preference to the people of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) house. (Hashiyah ad-Dusuqi ala-sh-Sharh-al-Kabir).

About the remaining three shares there is no dispute among the jurists. However, the difference between Imam Shafei and the other Imams is that according to Imam Shafei the total properties of fai are to be divided into five equal parts one part of which is to be spent on the abovementioned heads in such a way that one-fifth of it is spent on the common benefits of the Muslims, one-fifth on the Bani Hashim and the Bani al-Muttalib, one-fifth on the orphans, one-fifth on the indigent and one-fifth on the wayfarers. However, Imam Malik, Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam Ahmad do not concur with this division. Their opinion is that the whole of fai is for the welfare and common benefit of the Muslims. (Mughni al-Muhtaj).

14. This is one of the most important verses of the Quran, which lays down the basic principle of the economic policy of the Islamic community and government. Wealth should circulate among the whole community and not only among the rich lest the rich should go on becoming richer day by day and the poor becoming poorer. This policy has not merely been enunciated in the Quran, but for the same objective the Quran has forbidden interest, made the zakat obligatory, enjoined that khums (one-fifth) be deducted from the booty, exhorted the Muslims to practice voluntary charity, has proposed such forms of different kinds of atonements that the flow of wealth is turned towards the poor classes of society, and has made such a law of inheritance that the wealth left by every deceased person spreads among the largest circle of the people. Apart from this, stinginess has been condemned and generosity commended as a noble moral quality, the well-to-do people have been told that in their wealth there is a definite share of the beggar and the indigent, which they must discharge not as charity but as the right of the concerned people, and the law enjoined in respect of a major source of revenue of the Islamic government (i.e. fai) is that its one portion must necessarily be spent on supporting the poor class of society. In this connection, it should also be borne in mind that there are two main sources of the revenue of the Islamic government: zakat and fai. The zakat is charged from the Muslims on their total extra capital, cattle, wealth, trade goods and agricultural produce, which is over and above the minimum exemption limit (nisab), and most of it is reserved for the poor. And fai comprises all the revenues including jizyah and taxes which are received from the non-Muslims; a major part of this is also set aside for the poor. This gives a clear hint to the effect that an Islamic government should manage its revenues and expenditure and the financial and economic affairs of the country on the whole in such a manner that the wealthy and

influential people are not allowed to have their monopoly over the means and resources of wealth, and the flow of wealth is neither turned from the poor to the rich nor it should remain circulating only among the rich.

15. In view of the context the verse means: Accept without question whatever decision the Prophet (peace be upon him) gives about the management of the properties of the Bani an-Nadir, and likewise about the distribution of fai properties and goods afterwards. One should take whatever the Prophet (peace be upon him) gives him, and the one whom he does not give anything, should neither protest nor demand it. But since the words of the command are general, its application is not restricted to the distribution of the fai properties and goods only, but its intention is that in all matters the Muslims should obey the Prophet (peace be upon him). This intention of the command becomes all the more clear when we consider that as against "whatever the Messenger gives you" the words used are "whatever he forbids you" and not "whatever he does not give you." If the object of the command were restricted to call obedience to the distribution of all properties and goods only, then as against "whatever he gives you" the words should have been "whatever he does not give you." The use of the forbidding or restraining words in this context by itself shows that the object of the command is to enjoin obedience to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in whatever he commands and forbids. The same thing has been stated by the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself. According to Abu Hurairah he said: When I command you to do a thing, do it as far as you can; and when I forbid you to do a thing, restrain from it. (Bukhari, Muslim). About Abdullah bin Masud it has been related that once during a speech he said: Allah has cursed the woman who practices such and such a fashion. Thereupon a woman approached him and asked: Wherefrom have you derived this thing? For I have not seen such a thing anywhere in the Book of Allah. Abdullah replied: Had you studied the Book of Allah, you would certainly have found it therein. Have you not read the verse: Ma ata-kum ar-rasulu fa-khudu hu wa ma nahakum anhu fantahu: Take whatever the Messenger gives you, and refrain from whatever he forbids you. When she said that she had read this verse, Abdullah said: So the Prophet (peace be upon him) has forbidden this act, and has given the news that Allah has cursed the women who practice it. The woman agreed that she had understood the command. (Bukhari, Muslim, Musnad Ahmad, Musnad Ibn abi Hatim).

لِلْفُقَرَآءِ الْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُخْرِجُوْا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَاَمْوَالِهِمْ يَبْتَغُوْنَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ
وَرِضْوَانًا وَّيَنْصُرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الصّٰدِقُوْنَ ۚ 8

(59:8) It also belongs to the poor Emigrants who have been driven out of their homes and their possessions,[16] those who seek Allah's favour and good pleasure and help Allah and His Messenger. Such are the truthful ones.

16. This implies those people who at that time had been expelled from Makkah and other parts of Arabia only because they had embraced Islam. Before the conquest of the territory of the Bani an-Nadir these emigrants had no permanent means of sustenance. Therefore, it was commanded that in the properties which were then taken, and in the fai properties which are taken in future there is also a share of these people along with the common poor

people and the orphans and the wayfarers. With these properties all such people should be helped, who are forced to emigrate for the cause of Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) to the abode of Islam. Accordingly, the Prophet (peace be upon him) distributed a part of the properties taken from the Bani an-Nadir among the emigrants and the oases which the Ansar had set aside for the support and maintenance of their emigrant brothers were returned to them. But it is not correct to think that the emigrants had this share in the fai only at that time. In fact, the intention of the verse is to point out that till Resurrection it is the duty of the Islamic government of the country to settle the people who are exiled and compelled to take refuge in it because of being Muslims and to enable them to stand on their feet economically; and it should also spend on this head from the fai properties besides the zakat funds.

وَالَّذِيْنَ تَبَوَّؤُ الدَّارَ وَالْاِيْمَانَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّوْنَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ اِلَيْهِمْ وَلَا يَجِدُوْنَ فِيْ صُدُوْرِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِّمَّآ اُوْتُوْا وَيُؤْثِرُوْنَ عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ ۭ وَمَنْ يُّوْقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهٖ فَاُولٰۗىِٕكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ۝

(59:9) It also belongs to those who were already settled in this abode (of Hijrah) [17] having come to faith before the (arrival of the) Muhajirun (Emigrants).They love those who have migrated to them and do not covet what has been given them; they even prefer them above themselves though poverty be their own lot.[18] And whosoever are preserved from their own greed, such are the ones that will prosper.[19]

17. This implies the Ansar. In other words, not only are the emigrants entitled to fai but those Muslims also are entitled to receive their share from it who were already living in the abode of Islam (Al-Madinah).

18. This is in praise of the Ansar, the Muslims of Al- Madinah. When the emigrants came from Makkah and other places to their city, they offered their gardens and oases to the Prophet (peace be upon him) with the request that he distribute them among their emigrant brethren-infaith. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: These people do not know gardening: they have come from a region where there are no gardens. Could it not be that you (the Ansar) continue to work in the gardens and oases and make the emigrants partners in the produce? The Ansar submitted: We have heard and obeyed. (Bukhari, Ibn Jarir). Thereupon the emigrants said: We have never seen any people so self-sacrificing as the Ansar, for they would work and labor and make us partners in the produce. We think they would thus be entitled to all spiritual rewards. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Nay, as long as you would praise them and pray for their well-being, you also would get your rewards. (Musnad Ahmad). Then, when the territory of the Bani an-Nadir was taken, the Prophet (peace be upon him) made this proposal to the Ansar: Now one way of managing it is that your properties and the gardens and the oases left by the Jews be combined together and then the whole distributed among you and the emigrants. The second way is that you take back your properties, and the lands vacated by the Jews be distributed among the

emigrants. The Ansar said: You may please distribute these evacuee properties among the emigrants and may give them of our properties also as you please. At this Abu Bakr cried out: May Allah reward you, O assembly of the Ansar, with the best of everything. (Yahya bin Adam, Baladhuri). Thus, with the willing consent of the Ansar the properties left by the Jews were distributed only among the emigrants, and from among the Ansar only Abu Dujanah, Sahl bin Hunaif and (according to some) Harith bin as-Simmah were given shares, for they were poor people. (Baladhuri, Ibn Hisham Ruh al-Maani). The same self-sacrificing spirit was shown by the Ansar when the territory of Bahrain was annexed to the Islamic State. The Prophet (peace be upon him) wished that the conquered lands of that territory be given to the Ansar, but they submitted: We would not take any share from it unless a similar share was given to our emigrant brothers. (Yahya bin Adam). Allah has praised the Ansar for this very spirit of self-sacrifice.

19. The word used here means "is saved" and not "was safe", for without Allah's help and succor no one can attain to the wealth of the heart (liberal-mindedness) by his own power and effort. This is a blessing of God, which one can attain only by God's bounty and grace. The word shuhha is used for stinginess and miserliness in Arabic. But when this word is attributed to the self of man, it becomes synonymous with narrow-mindedness, niggardliness, mean spiritedness and small-heartedness, and not mere stinginess: it is rather the root cause of stinginess itself. Because of this very quality man avoids acknowledging even the good qualities of another, not to speak of recognizing his rights and discharging them. He wants that he alone should gather up everything in the world, and no one else should have anything of it. He never feels content with his own right, but usurps the rights of others, or at least wants to have for himself all that is good in the world and should not leave anything for others. On this very basis one's being saved from this evil has been described in the Quran as a guarantee for success. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has counted it among the most evil qualities of man which are the root cause of corruption and mischief. Jabir bin Abdullah has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Avoid shuhha for it was shuhha which ruined the people before you. It incited them to shed each other's blood and make the sacred and forbidden things of others lawful for themselves. (Muslim, Musnad Ahmad, Baihaqi, Bukhari in Al-Adab). The tradition of Abdullah bin Umar contains the following words: It led them to commit wickedness and they committed it. It commanded them to commit sins and they committed sin. It urged them to break off all connections with the kindred and they broke off all connections with them. (Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud, Nasai). Abu Hurairah has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Faith and shuhha of the self cannot combine in one and the same heart. (Ibn Abi Shaibah, Nasa Baihaqi in Shuab al-Iman, Hakim). Abu Said Khudri has stated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Two of the qualities are such that they cannot combine in a Muslim: stinginess and misbehavior. (Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Bukhari in Al-Adab). It is as a result of this very teaching of Islam that, apart from individuals, the Muslims as a nation are still the most generous and liberal minded people in the world.

وَالَّذِيْنَ جَآءُوْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِاِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِيْنَ سَبَقُوْنَا بِالْاِيْمَانِ

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِيْ قُلُوْبِنَا غِلًّا لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا رَبَّنَآ اِنَّكَ رَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ع 10

(59:10) (And it also belongs to) those who came after them,[20] and who pray: "Lord, forgive us and our brethren who have preceded us in faith, and do not put in our hearts any rancour towards those who believe. Lord, You are the Most Tender, the Most Compassionate."[21]

20. In the injunctions laid down up to here, it has been ruled that in the fai properties there are the rights of Allah and His Messenger and the Messenger's relatives and the orphans and the indigent and the wayfarers and the emigrants and the Ansar and of the Muslim generations which will be born till the Day of Resurrection. It is this important legal ruling of the Quran in the light of which Umar introduced the new system in respect of the lands and properties of the conquered territories of Iraq, Syria and Egypt and of the possessions of the previous governments and rulers of those countries. When these countries were conquered; some of the distinguished companions among whom were included prominent men like Zubair, Bilal, Abdur Rahman bin Auf and Salman Farsi, insisted that these should be distributed among the armies who had fought and conquered them. They thought that those properties did not come under those upon which you have not rushed your horses and camels, but the Muslims had conquered them by rushing their horses and camels on them. Therefore, except for those cities and territories which surrendered without the war, all the rest of the conquered lands came under ghanimah for which the legal command is that one fifth of the lands and the people be given to the public treasury and the remaining four parts be distributed among the soldiers. But this opinion was not correct on the ground that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had not distributed the lands and the people of any territory conquered by fighting in his time after the deduction of one-fifth, like the booty. Two of the most conspicuous precedents of his time were the conquest of Makkah and the conquest of Khaiber. Of these he handed over Makkah intact to its inhabitants. As for Khaiber, according to Bushair bin Yasar, he divided it into 36 parts, of which he set aside 18 parts for collective benefits and requirements of the Muslims and distributed the remaining 18 among the army. (Abu Daud, Baihaqi, Abi Ubaid: Kitab al-Amwal; Yahya bin Adam: Kitab al-Kharj Baladhuri: Futuh al-Buldan; Ibn Human: Fath al-Qadir). This action of the Prophet (peace be upon him) made it clear that the command in respect of the conquered lands, even if they might have been taken by fighting, is not the same as of the ghanimah otherwise he would never have given the whole of Makkah intact to the people of Makkah, and would have set aside exactly one-half of the properties of Khaiber for the common benefits of the Muslims instead of deducting its one-fifth for the public treasury. Thus, what was established on the basis of the Sunnah was: In respect of the territories conquered by fighting, the ruler of the Muslims has the authority that he may take any decision that he deems fit keeping in view the conditions of the time. He can distribute them if he so likes but if a territory has an unusual nature and importance, as Makkah had, he can also treat its inhabitants with favor, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) treated the people of Makkah.

But as the conquests had not yet become common in the Prophet's time and separate injunctions in respect of the different kinds of conquered territories had not yet become clearly known to the people, so when big countries were annexed to Islam in the time of Umar, the companions were faced with the problem whether the territories conquered by force were in the nature of ghanimah or fai. After the conquest of Egypt, Zubair demanded: Distribute this, whole land just as the Prophet (peace be upon him) had distributed Khaiber. (Abu Ubaid). About the conquered territories of Syria and Iraq, Bilal insisted: Distribute all the lands among the fighting forces just as the spoils are distributed. (Abu Yusuf, Kitab al-Kharaj). On the other hand, Ali gave this opinion: Leave these lands in possession of the peasants so that they continue to remain a source of income for the Muslims. (Abu Yusuf, Abu Ubaid,). Likewise, the opinion of Muadh bin Jabal was: If you distributed these lands, evil consequences would occur. Because of this distribution large properties will pass into the hands of those few people, who have conquered them. Then, when these people pass away and their properties pass on to their heirs and there is left only one woman or only one man from among them, nothing might remain for the future generations to meet their needs and even to meet the expenses of safeguarding the frontiers of the Islamic State. Therefore, you should so settle things that the interests of both the present and of the future generations are equally safeguarded. (Abu Ubaid, p. 59; Fath al-Bari, vol. vi, p. 138). Umar calculated and found that if the territories of Iraq were distributed, each individual would receive two or three peasants on the average as his share, (Abu Yusuf. Abu Ubaid). Thereupon he arrived at the judicious conclusion that those territories should not be distributed. Thus, the replies that he gave to those who demanded their distribution, were as follows:

Do you want that for the people who come afterwards there should not remain anything. (Abu Ubaid).

What will happen of the Muslims who came afterwards when they find that the land along with its peasants has been distributed and the people have inherited their forefathers? This is not at all just. (Abu Yusuf).

What will be left for the Muslims who came after you? I am afraid if I distribute it, you would fight among yourselves over water. (Abu Yusuf). Had I no thought for those who would come afterwards, I would distribute every territory that I conquered just as the Messenger of Allah had distributed Khaiber. (Bukhari, Muwatta, Abu Ubaid).

Nay: this is the real estate. I will withhold it so that the needs and requirements of the conquering forces and of the common Muslims continue to be met by it. (Abu Ubaid). But the people were not satisfied with these replies, and they started saying that he was being unjust. At last, Umar convened a meeting of the consultative body of the companions and put the matter before it. Here are some of the sentences of the speech that he made on this occasion: I have given you this trouble so that you may join me in shouldering the trust that has been put in me for governing your affairs. I am one of you, and you are the people who affirm the truth today. Every one of you has the option to agree to or differ from what I say. I do not wish that you should follow my desire. You have the Book of Allah, which states the whole truth. By God, if I have said something which I want to enforce, I have no object in view except the truth. You have heard those who think that I am being unjust to them and want to deprive them of their rights, whereas I seek Allah's refuge that I should commit an

injustice. It would be vicious on my part if I withheld from them something which actually belonged to them and gave it to another. But I can see that no other land after the land of the Khosroe is going to fall. Allah has given the properties of the Persians and their lands and their peasants in our possession. I have distributed the booty taken by our armies among them after the deduction of the khums (one fifth), and am thinking of distributing the rest which yet remains. But as for the lands my opinion is that I should not distribute them and their peasants, but should levy revenue on the lands and jizyah on the peasants, which they should always pay, and this should be the fai for the common Muslims and their children and the armies of today and for the generations yet to come. Don't you see that we need the troops who should be appointed to protect these our frontiers? Don't you see that in territories like Syria, AI-Jazirah, Kufah, Basra, Egypt we should station our troops, and they should be regularly for their services? So, if I distribute these lands along with their peasants, how shall we meet these expenses.

The debate went on for two or three days. Uthman, Ali, Talhah, Abdullah bin Umar and others concurred with Umar, but nothing could be decided. At last, Umar rose and said: I have found an argument in the Book of Allah, which is decisive in this matter. Then, he recited these very verses of Surah Al-Hashr from Ma afaa Allahu to Rabbana innaka Raufur-Rahim, and argued: The people of this day only are not entitled to receive a share in these properties bestowed by Allah, but Allah has also joined with them those people who will come after them. Then, how can it be that we should distribute the fai properties which are meant for all, only among the conquerors and leave nothing for the later generations? Moreover, Allah says: So that this wealth does not remain circulating among your rich people only. But if distribute it among the conquerors, it will remain circulating only among your rich and nothing would be left for others. This argument satisfied everybody and consensus was reached that all the conquered territories should be declared fai for the common benefits of the Muslims, which should be left with those who work on those lands and they should be put under revenue and jizyah. (Abu Yusuf Kitab al-Kharaj, pp. 23-27, 35; Al- Jassas, Ahkam al-Quran).

Accordingly, the real position of the conquered lands that came to be established was that the Muslims in their collective capacity are their owners; the people who were already working on them would be recognized as cultivators on behalf of the Muslims; they would continue to pay the prescribed revenue to the Islamic government on those lands, their rights as cultivators would pass from generation to generation as heritage, and they would even be allowed to sell those rights, but they will not be the real owners of the land, but its real owners will be the Muslim community. Imam Abu Ubaid in his Kitab al-Amwal has stated this legal position, thus:

Umar left the lands of the territory of Iraq in the hands of its people; he levied tax on their lands and jizyah per head on the people. (p. 57).

When the head of the Islamic government leaves the lands in the hands of the people of the conquered territories, they would be allowed to pass the lands on as heritage and would also be allowed to sell them. (p. 84).

In the time of Umar bin Abdul Aziz, Shabi was asked: Is there a treaty with the people of the territory of Iraq. He replied: There is no treaty, but when the revenue was accepted from them, it amounted to a treaty with them. (Abu Ubaid, p. 49; Abu Yusuf, p. 28).

In the time of Umar, Utbah bin Furqad purchased a piece of land by the Euphrates. Umar asked him from whom he had purchased the land. He replied that he had purchased it from its owners. Umar said: Its owners are these people, i.e. the emigrants and the Ansar. Thus, Umar held the opinion that the real owners of those lands were the Muslims. (Abu Ubaid, p. 74).

Accordingly, the properties of the conquered countries which were declared as the collective property of the Muslims were the following:

(1) Those lands and territories which come under the control of the Islamic government in consequence of a peace treaty.

(2) The ransom or revenue or jizyah which the people of a territory may have agreed to pay, without fighting, in order to seek refuge from the Muslims.

(3) Those lands and properties which the owners might have abandoned and fled.

(4) The properties the owners of which were slain and no survivor was left to own them.

(5) The lands which were not under any ownership previously.

(6) The lands which were already in the ownership of the people, but were left with their previous owners and they were put under jizyah and revenue.

(7) Estates of the previous ruling dynasties.

(8) Properties of the previous governments.

(For details, see Bada-i as-Sanai, vol. vii, pp. 116-118; Yahya bin Adam Kitab aI-Kharaj. pp. 22, 64; Mughni al- Muhtaj, vol. iii, p. 93; Hashiyah ad-Dusuqi ala-sh-Sharah al-Kabir, vol. ii, p. 190; Ghayat al-Muntaha, vol. i, pp. 467- 471).

Since these properties were declared as fai with the consensus of the companions, the jurists of Islam also have agreed in principle on their being regarded as fai. However, they have differed in certain matters, the details of which arc briefly as follows:

The Hanafis say that as regards to the lands of the conquered territories the Islamic government (Imam in juristic terminology has the option that it may distribute them among the forces of conquest after deduction of the khums (one fifth), or may leave them with the former owners and put the owners under jizyah and the lands under revenue. In this case the land will be regarded as a legacy for the Muslims. (Badai as-Sanai, Al-Jassas, Ahkam al-Quran; Sharah al-Anayah al al-Hedayah; Fath al- Qadir). The same view has Abdullah bin Mubarak cited for Imam Sufyan Thauri. (Yahya bin Adam; Abu Ubaid, Kitab al-Amwal).

The Malikis say that as soon as the lands have been conquered they automatically become a legacy for the Muslims. It does not need the Imam's ruling or the willingness of the Muslim soldiers to declare them a legacy. Besides, the well known view among the Malikis is that not only the lands but the houses and buildings of the conquered territories are also, as a matter of fact, a legacy for the Muslims. However, the Islamic government will not charge the rent for them. (Hashiyah ad-Dusuqi).

The Hanbalis agree with the Hanafis that the Imam has the option to distribute the lands among the soldiers or to declare them as a legacy for the Muslims, and with the Malikis that although the houses of the conquered territories are included in the legacy, no rent will be levied on them. (Ghayatal Muntaha which is a collection of the legal rulings of the Hanbali School of juristic thought and a source book for legal rulings since the 10th century).

The Shafei's viewpoint is that all the transferable properties of the conquered territory are ghanimah, and all the non-transferable properties (lands, houses, etc.) are fai. (Mughni al-Muhtaj).

Some jurists have expressed the opinion that if the Imam wants to declare the lands of the territory taken by fighting as a legacy for the Muslims, he must first obtain the willingness of the conquering forces. For this they cite this argument: Umar, before the conquest of Iraq, had promised Jarir bin Abdullah al-Banali, the people of whose tribe constituted one-fourth of the army, which fought the Battle of Qadisiyah, that they would be given one-fourth of the conquered territory. Thus, they retained this territory for two or three years. Then Umar said to them: Had I not been responsible and answerable in the matter of division, I would have left with you whatever has been given to you. But now I see that the people have grown in numbers; therefore, my opinion is that you return it to the common people. Jarir acceded to this, and Umar gave him 50 dinars as a prize. (Abu Yusuf, Kitab al-Kharaj; Abu Ubaid, Kitab al-Amwal). From this they argue that Umar had decided to declare the conquered territories as a legacy for the Muslims only after obtaining the willingness of the conquerors. But the majority of the jurists do not admit this argument. For in respect of all the conquered territories no such willingness of the conquerors ever was taken. Only in the case of Jarir bin Abdullah this was done because Umar had made a promise with him prior to any collective decision about the conquered lands. Therefore, he had to obtain his willingness only in order to be free from the obligation of the promise. This cannot be cited as a general law.

Another section of the jurists says that even after declaring the lands as a legacy, the government retains the option that it may redistribute the lands among the conquerors. For this they argue from this tradition: Once Ali said to the people in an address: Had not there been the apprehension that you would fight among yourselves, I would have distributed the suburban lands among you. (Abu Yusuf, Kitab al-Kharaj; Abu Ubaid, Kitab al-Amwal). But the majority of jurists do not admit this argument either. They are unanimous that when the people of the conquered territory have once been allowed to retain their lands and put under jizyah and revenue, the decision can never be changed later. As for the tradition attributed to Ali, Abu Bakr al-Jassas has discussed it at length in his Ahkam al- Quran and proved it to be not authentic.

21. In this verse although the real object is only to point out that in fai not only the people of the present generation but the Muslims of the later periods and their future generations also have a share, yet, besides, the Muslims have also been taught an important moral lesson that they should never have any malice against other Muslims in their hearts, and they should continue to pray for the forgiveness of the Muslims who have gone before them instead of cursing and abusing them. The bond that binds the Muslims together is that of a common faith. If a person values his faith as the most important thing in his heart, inevitably he would be a well-wisher of all those people who are his brethren-in faith. He can have ill-will and malice and hatred towards them in his heart only when the value of the faith decreases in his sight and he starts valuing other things more. Therefore, it is the requirement of faith that a believer's heart should be free from every trace of malice and hatred against the other believers. In this matter the best lesson is given by a Hadith which Nasai has related from Anas. According to him, once it so happened that for three days continuously the Prophet (peace be upon him) declared in his assembly that a person was going to appear before them who belonged to the dwellers of Paradise, and every time it would be a certain person from among the Ansar. At this Abdullah bin Amr bin Aas became curious as to what deeds the person concerned performed on the basis of which the Prophet (peace be upon him) had repeatedly given the good news of his admission to Paradise. Thus, he made an excuse and spent three consecutive nights in his house to see how he performed his worship, but during the night he did not see anything unusual. At last, he asked him directly as to what special acts and devotions he performed on the basis of which the Prophet (peace be upon him) had given the great good news about him. He replied: You have seen how I perform my worship, but there is one thing which might have carved me this reward: I do not harbor any malice or evil design against any Muslim, nor feel jealous of him on account of any good that Allah might have bestowed on him.

This does not mean that if a Muslim finds an error in another Muslim's word or deed, he should avoid calling it an error. Faith does not demand this. But to describe an error as a mistake on the basis of an argument and to state it to be so in a polite and decent manner is one thing and harbor malice and hatred and resort to invective and abuse is quite another thing. It is wrong if one resorts to this in respect of his contemporaries, but worse if one resorted to this in respect of the dead people of the past. For the person indulging in such a thing would be a most filthy person for he is not even inclined to forgive the dead. And the worst would be that a person should resort to invective and abuse in respect of those illustrious people who had done full justice to the Prophet's (peace be upon him) companionship in a period full of extreme tribulations and hardships and had struggled with their lives to spread the light of Islam in the world and enabled us today to be blessed with the faith. One can hold any opinion if he thinks that such and such party of them was in the right and such and such in the wrong in its viewpoint in the differences that arose between them, and can even express his opinion in a reasonable and decent way, but to resort to exaggeration in support of one party so that the heart is filled with spite and hatred against the other is an evil which no God-fearing person would commit. Those who indulge in such a thing against the clear teaching of the Quran, generally present the excuse that the Quran forbids to bear malice towards the believers and the ones towards whom they bear the malice were not believers but hypocrites. But this allegation is even worse than the sin in defense of which the excuse is presented. For these very verses of the Quran in the context of which Allah has taught the Muslims of the later generations not to bear malice towards

the Muslims who have gone before them and to pray for their forgiveness, are sufficient to refute this allegation. In these verses three groups have been mentioned, one after the other, who are entitled to receive a share in fai. the Emigrants, the Ansar and the Muslims coming after them; and the Muslims of the later periods have been enjoined that they should pray for the forgiveness of the Muslims who had embraced the faith before them. Obviously, in this context those who had embraced the faith before them could not be any other than the Emigrants and the Ansar. Then Allah in (verses 11-17 of this Surah Al-Hashr) itself has told us who were the hypocrites. This makes it absolutely clear that the hypocrites were the people who had encouraged the Jews on the occasion of the battle of the Bani an-Nadir; as against them, the believers were those who were on the side of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in this battle. After this, can a Muslim who has any fear of God in his heart, have the boldness to deny the faith of the people to whose faith Allah Himself has borne the testimony.

Imam Malik and Imam Ahmed arguing from this verse, have expressed the opinion that there is no share in fai for the people who malign the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). (Ibn al-Arabi, Ahkam al-Quran; Ghayat al-Muntaha). But the Hanafis and the Shafeis have not concurred with this, the reason being that Allah while declaring the three groups to be entitled to fai, has praised a conspicuous quality of each group but none of these qualities is a condition which may determine whether a group should or should not be given a share in fai. About the Emigrants it has been said: They seek Allah's bounty and His goodwill, and are ever ready to succor Allah and His Messenger. This does not mean that an Emigrant who lacks this quality, is not entitled to have a share in fai. About the Ansar, it has been said: They love those who have migrated to them and entertain no desire in their hearts for what is given to them and prefer others about themselves even though they be needy themselves. This also does not mean that a member of the Ansar who has no love for the Emigrants and who is desirous of getting for himself what is being given to them, has no share in fai. Therefore, the quality of the third group that they pray for the forgiveness of those who embraced the faith before them and they pray that they should not have any malice in their hearts towards any other believer is also no condition to make one entitled to fai, but this is in praise of a good quality and an instruction as to what should be the attitude of the believers towards the other believers and especially in respect of those believers who have gone before them.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيۡنَ نَافَقُوۡا يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ لِاِخۡوَانِهِمُ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا مِنۡ اَهۡلِ الۡكِتٰبِ لَئِنۡ اُخۡرِجۡتُمۡ لَنَخۡرُجَنَّ مَعَكُمۡ وَلَا نُطِيۡعُ فِيۡكُمۡ اَحَدًا اَبَدًا ۙ وَّاِنۡ قُوۡتِلۡتُمۡ لَنَنۡصُرَنَّكُمۡ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَشۡهَدُ اِنَّهُمۡ لَكٰذِبُوۡنَ 11

(59:11) Did[22] you not see the hypocrites say to their brethren, the unbelievers among the People of the Book: "If you are banished we too will go with you and will not listen to anyone concerning you; and if war is waged against you, we will come to your aid." But Allah bears witness that they are liars.

22. From the style of this whole section (verses 11-17), it appears that it was revealed at the time when the Prophet (peace be upon him) had served a notice on the Bani anNadir to leave Al-Madinah within ten days, but had not yet laid siege to their quarters. As has been mentioned about, when the Prophet (peace be upon him) served the notice to the Bani an-Nadir, Abdullah bin Ubayy and other leaders of the hypocrites of Al-Madinah sent them a message to the effect that they would come to their aid with two thousand men, and that the Bani Quraizah and the Bani Ghatafan would also rise in their support; therefore, they should stand firm and should never surrender to the Muslims. For if the Muslims waged a war against hem, they would fight them from their side; and if they expelled hem, they also would go out with them. Thereupon Allah sent down these verses. Thus, chronologically this section is an earlier revelation and the first section a later revelation, when the Bani an-Nadir had actually been driven out of Al-Madinah. But in the Quran the order of the two passages has been reversed for the reason that the subject matter of the first section is of greater importance

لَئِنْ أُخْرِجُوا لَا يَخْرُجُونَ مَعَهُمْ ۖ وَلَئِنْ قُوتِلُوا لَا يَنْصُرُونَهُمْ ۖ وَلَئِنْ نَصَرُوهُمْ لَيُوَلُّنَّ
الْأَدْبَارَ ۖ ثُمَّ لَا يُنْصَرُونَ 12

(59:12) To be sure, if they are banished, they will not go with them and if war is waged against them, they will not aid them; and even if they provide any aid to them, they will still turn their backs, and thereafter no aid will be forthcoming to them.

لَأَنْتُمْ أَشَدُّ رَهْبَةً فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ 13

(59:13) Surely they have greater dread for you in their hearts than for Allah.[23] That is because they are a people who are devoid of understanding.[24]

23. That is, the reason why they dare not face you openly in the field is not that they are Muslim: and have fear of God in their hearts and are afraid that despite their claim to the faith when they come out to help the disbelievers as against the believers, they will be held accountable before God. But what actually restrains them from facing you is that when they see your profound love and spirit of selfsacrifice and devotion for Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the great unity and concord in your ranks, they become dispirited. They know well that although you are few in number, the spirit of martyrdom which has turned each single individual among you into a gallant warrior and the organization which has molded you into a solid body, will also crush them along with the Jews when they clash with you in the battlefield. Here one should bear in mind the fact that if a person harbors the fear of another than God in his heart, it is in fact a negation of the fear of God. Obviously, the person who considers one of the dangers as lesser and the other greater, pays no heed to the first but does whatever he can to safeguard himself against the greater danger.

24. A great truth has been expressed in this brief sentence. A person who has sense knows that the real power to be feared is the power of Allah and not the power of men. Therefore,

he will avoid every such thing as may call for the punishment of Allah, whether there is any human power to call him to account for it or not, and he will come out to accomplish any duty which Allah has enjoined on him, whether he is opposed and hindered by all the powers of the world. But a man, who has no sense, determines his attitude and conduct in view of the human powers, instead of Allah's power, in all matters of lift, because Allah's power for him is imperceptible and human powers are perceptible. If he avoids something, he will avoid it, not because of the fear of Allah's punishment for it, but because of a human power, which may be there to take him to task. And if he does something he will do is not because Allah has enjoined it, but because some human power has ordered or approved of it, and will reward him for it. This very distinction between intelligence and folly, in fact, distinguishes the character and conduct of a believer from that of an unbeliever.

لَا يُقَاتِلُوْنَكُمْ جَمِيْعًا اِلَّا فِيْ قُرًى مُّحَصَّنَةٍ اَوْ مِنْ وَّرَآءِ جُدُرٍ ؕ بَاْسُهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ شَدِيْدٌ ؕ
تَحْسَبُهُمْ جَمِيْعًا وَّقُلُوْبُهُمْ شَتّٰى ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْقِلُوْنَ ۚ 14

(59:14) They will never fight against you as a body (in an open battlefield); and if they fight against you they will fight only in fortified townships or from behind walls. Intense is their hostility to one another. You reckon them united while their hearts are divided.[25] That is because they are a people devoid of reason.

25. This refers to the second weakness of the hypocrites. The first weakness was that they were cowardly. They feared the men instead of fearing God and had no higher aim of life before them like the believers, which might impel them to fight for it even at the cost of life. And their second weakness was that they had no common tie between them except hypocrisy, which might unite them together into a strong band. The only thing that had brought them together was that they were all feeling highly upset at the flourishing leadership and rule of Muhammad (peace be upon him), who was an outsider in their city, and at the warm reception and help which their own compatriots, the Ansar, were giving to the Emigrants. Because of this jealousy they wanted them to join hands together and in conspiracy with the enemies of Islam of the surrounding areas should somehow put an end to this alien power and authority. But apart from this negative objective there was no positive common aim to unify them. Each of their chiefs had his own separate band, each craved for his own leadership. No one was sincere to the other, but each bore such jealousy and malice for the other that they could neither forget their mutual enmities nor desist from harming the other fatally even while facing those whom they regarded as their common enemy.

Thus, at the outset, even before the battle against the Bani an-Nadir took place, Allah analyzed the internal state of the hypocrites and informed the Muslims that there was no real danger from their side; therefore, they should not feel alarmed at the rumors that when they lay siege to the Bani an-Nadir, the leaders of the hypocrites would attack them from the rear with two thousand men, and also bring the Bani Quraizah and the Bani Ghatafan along against them. All this was empty boasting which would be exposed at the very beginning of the trial.

كَمَثَلِ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ قَرِيبًا ذَاقُوا وَبَالَ أَمْرِهِمْ ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۚ 15

(59:15) They are like those who tasted the evil consequences of their deeds[26] a short while before. A grievous chastisement awaits them.

26. The allusion is to the disbelievers of the Quraish and the Jewish clan of the Bani Qrainuqa who had been defeated by a handful of ill-equipped Muslims in spite of their larger numbers and superior equipment, due mainly to these weaknesses.

كَمَثَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِذْ قَالَ لِلْإِنسَانِ اكْفُرْ ۖ فَلَمَّا كَفَرَ قَالَ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّنكَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ 16

(59:16) Their parable is that of Satan when he says to man: "Disbelieve," but when he disbelieves, he says: "I am quit of you. Verily I fear Allah, the Lord of the Universe."[27]

27. That is, these hypocrites are treating the Bani an-Nadir in much the same way as Satan treats men. Today they are urging them to stand firm and go forth and clash with the Muslims making them believe that they would come to their aid, but when they actually clash with the Muslims, they would renounce their pledges and promises and would never even look back to see their fate. The same way does Satan treat every disbeliever, and a similar treatment had he given to the disbelieving Quraish at Badr, as has been mentioned in (Surah al-Anfal, Ayat 48). First, he incited them with false hopes and brought them out to confront the Muslims, saying: Today no one can overcome you, for I am with you. But when the two forces met in battle, he took to his heels, saying: I have nothing to do with you. I see that which you cannot see. Indeed, I fear Allah.

فَكَانَ عَاقِبَتَهُمَا أَنَّهُمَا فِي النَّارِ خَالِدَيْنِ فِيهَا ۚ وَذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ الظَّالِمِينَ 17

(59:17) In the end both will be in the Fire, and will abide in it. That is the recompense of the wrong-doers.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ 18

(59:18) Believers,[28] fear Allah and let every person look to what he sends forward for the morrow.[29] Fear Allah; Allah is well aware of all that you do.

28. It is a rule of the Quran that whenever the hypocritical Muslims are taken to task for their hypocrisy, they are given admonition also so that whoever of them has some life left in his conscience, may feel remorse for his conduct and attitude and may make an effort, out of

the fear of Allah, to come out of the pit into which his worship of the self has thrown him. This whole section (verses 18-24) consists of such admonition.

29. For tomorrow: for the Hereafter. That is, this whole worldly life is "today", whose "tomorrow" is the Day of Resurrection, which is going to follow it. Adopting this style Allah has, in a wise manner, made man understand the truth that just as that person is highly foolish, who gambles away his all for the enjoyment of today and does not realize whether tomorrow he would be left with anything to eat and a place of shelter or not, so is also that person only working for his own doom, who is too absorbed in making his world to pay heed to the Hereafter, whereas the Hereafter is to follow this world just as today is to be followed by tomorrow, and there he would find nothing if he has sent nothing ahead for the morrow. Besides, the other wise point here is that every person has been appointed his own censor. Unless a person develops in himself the sense of what is good for him and what is evil, he cannot appreciate whether what he is doing will make his future in the Hereafter or mar it. And when this sense becomes active in himself, he will have to calculate and see for himself whether the way in which he is spending his time, his wealth, his energies and capabilities leads to Heaven or Hell. To do so is in his own interest; for if he does not do so he will ruin his own future itself.

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنسَاهُمْ أَنفُسَهُمْ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ 19

(59:19) And be not like those who forgot Allah and so He made them oblivious of themselves.[30] They are the wicked ones.

30. That is, forgetfulness of God inevitably leads to forgetfulness of one's own self. When man forgets that he is slave to the Almighty, he will inevitably form a wrong view of his position in the world, and his whole life will go wrong because of this basic error. Likewise, when he forgets that he is slave to nobody except Allah, he does not serve the one whose slave actually he is not. This also is a grave and allpervading misunderstanding, which corrupts his whole life. Man's real position in the world is that of a slave; he is not free and self-sufficient; and he is slave of only One God, and is no one else's slave beside Him. The person who does not know this truth, does not in fact know himself. And the person who in spite of knowing this, forgets it at any moment, may commit an act at that very moment, which a disbeliever, or a polytheist or a man forgetful of God only would commit. Man's remaining firm and steadfast on the right path entirely depends on his remembering God at all times. For as soon as he, becomes heedless of Him, he becomes heedless of himself and this very heedlessness turns him into sinfulness.

لَا يَسْتَوِي أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ وَأَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ ۚ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ 20

(59:20) Those destined for the Fire and those destined for Paradise cannot be alike. Verily it is those destined for Paradise who shall triumph.

لَوۡ اَنۡزَلۡنَا هٰذَا الۡقُرۡاٰنَ عَلٰى جَبَلٍ لَّرَاَيۡتَهٗ خَاشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنۡ خَشۡيَةِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَتِلۡكَ الۡاَمۡثَالُ
نَضۡرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمۡ يَتَفَكَّرُوۡنَ 21

(59:21) Had We sent down this Qur'an upon a mountain you would indeed have seen it humbling itself and breaking asunder out of fear of Allah.[31] We propound such parables to people that they may reflect.

31. The parable means that if a huge creation like a mountain had the sense and knowledge that it had been made responsible and accountable, like man, before Allah Almighty, for its deeds, it would have trembled from the fear of it. But how heedless, senseless and thoughtless is the man, who understands the Quran, and has known the whole truth through it, yet he is neither seized by any fear nor feels worried as to what answer he would make to his God about the responsibilities that have been placed on him. On the contrary, when he reads the Quran, or hears it being read, he remains un-moved as if he were a lifeless and senseless stone, which is not supposed to hear and see and understand anything. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 120 of Surah Al-Ahzab).

هُوَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِىۡ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ عٰلِمُ الۡغَيۡبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ ۚ هُوَ الرَّحۡمٰنُ الرَّحِيۡمُ 22

(59:22) He[32] is Allah: there is no god but He;[33] the Knower of the unseen and the manifest,[34] He is the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate.[35]

32. These verses explain what kind of God He is, and what are His attributes, Who has sent this Quran to you, Who has placed these responsibilities on you, and before Whom you have to render an account of your deeds in the end. This mention of the divine attributes immediately after the above theme automatically gives man the feeling that he has not to deal with an ordinary being but with Almighty Allah Who has such and such attributes. Here, one should also understand that although in the Quran, the attributes of Allah Almighty have been stated in a unique way, which gives a clear concept of the divine Being, there are two places where the attributes of Allah have been mentioned in a most comprehensive way, in the verse of the Alkursi (Al- Baqarah, Ayat 255) and in these verses of Surah Al-Hashr.

33. That is, He is the One besides Whom none else has the rank, position, attributes and powers of Godhead so that he may be worshiped and served as god.

34. That is, He knows whatever is hidden from the creatures as well as whatever is known and visible to them. Nothing of this universe is unknown to Him. He directly knows whatever has happened in the past, whatever exists at present and whatever will happen in the future. He does not stand in need of any means or medium of knowledge.

35. That is, He alone is the Being Whose mercy is limitless, which covers the whole universe and blesses and benefits everything in it. None else in the world is the bearer of such all-pervading, infinite mercy. The mercy of every other being, characterized by the ability of

mercy, is partial and limited, and that quality too is not essentially its own, but bestowed by the Creator for a specific need and purpose. He has created the quality of mercy for some other creature. He has created it in order to make one creature a means for the development and well-being of the other creature. This by itself is a proof that Allah's Mercy is infinite.

هُوَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِیۡ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ اَلۡمَلِكُ الۡقُدُّوۡسُ السَّلٰمُ الۡمُؤۡمِنُ الۡمُهَيۡمِنُ الۡعَزِيۡزُ الۡجَبَّارُ الۡمُتَكَبِّرُ ؕ سُبۡحٰنَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يُشۡرِكُوۡنَ 23

(59:23) He is Allah: there is no god but He: the King,[36] the Holy,[37] the All-Peace,[38] the Giver of security,[39] the Overseer,[40] the Most Mighty,[41] the Overpowering,[42] the All-Great.[43] Exalted be He from whatever they associate with Him.

36. The word used in the original is al-Malik, which means that He alone is the real Sovereign. Moreover, the word al- Malik in its general sense also gives the meaning that He is King of the entire universe and not of a particular region or of a specific country. His Sovereignty and rule comprehends the entire universe.

He is Master of everything. Everything submits itself to His command and power and authority, and there is nothing to delimit His Sovereignty. At different places in the Quran all aspects of Allah's Sovereignty have been presented and explained fully.

And whoever exists in the heavens and the earth, belongs to Him. All are obedient to Him. (Surah Ar-Room, Ayat 26).

He administers the affairs of the world from the heavens to the earth. (Surah As-Sajdah, Ayat 5).

To Him belongs the dominion of the earth and the heavens, and all matters are referred to Him for decision.(Surah Al- Hadid, Ayat 5).

He has no partner in His sovereignty. (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayat 2).

In His hand is the absolute control of everything. (Surah Ya Seen, Ayat 83).

Doer of whatever He wills. (Surah Al-Burooj, Ayat 16).

He is accountable to none for what He does, but all others are accountable (to Him). (Surah Al-Anbiyia, Ayat 23).

Allah rules and there is none to reverse His decrees. (Surah Ar-Raad, Ayat 41).

The Being Who gives protection while none can give protection against Him. (Surah Al-Momin, Ayat 88).

Say: O Allah, Sovereign of the Kingdom, You bestow kingdom on whomever You will, and You take it away from whomever You will. You exalt whomever You will and You abase

whomever You will. All that is good is in Your power; indeed You have full power over all things. (Surah Aal-i-Imran, Ayat 26).

These explanations make it abundantly clear that Allah is not King in some limited or metaphoric sense but He is real King in the most perfect and complete sense of sovereignty. As a matter of fact, if sovereignty in its true sense is at all found somewhere, it is found only in Allah's Kingship. Apart from this, wherever it is claimed to be, whether in the person of a king or dictator, or in a class or group or family, or in some nation, he or it possesses no sovereignty at all, for sovereignty is not a gift, which may at one time be granted and at another time withdrawn, which may be in danger of being usurped, the establishment and existence of which may be temporary and temporal, and the sphere of power and authority of which may be circumscribed and restricted by many other conflicting powers.

37. Al-Quddus is a superlative. It means that Allah is far exalted that He should have a fault or defect or demerit. He is the purest Being. No evil can be imagined about Him. Here, one should clearly understand that the attribute of holiness is a foremost accompaniment of sovereignty. Man's intellect and nature refuse to believe that a being who is the bearer of sovereignty may be mischievous, ill behaved, ill-natured, who may be characterized with these base qualities from whose power and authority his subjects might be in danger of suffering evil instead of being blessed with good. That is why wherever man thinks sovereignty is centered, he assumes holiness also to be there, even if it is not there, for absolute sovereignty is inconceivable without holiness. But, obviously, there is no real Sovereign, nor can there be, except Allah, Who is the Holy. Whether it is monarchy, or sovereignty of the people, or dictatorship of the socialist system, or some other form of human rule, in any case holiness for it is inconceivable.

38. The word As-Salam as used in the original means peace and Secure, Allah's being called As-Salam means that He is peace and safety personified. He is far exalted that some calamity or weakness or defect should befall Him, or His Perfection should suffer a decline or blemish.

39. The word Al-Mumin is derived from amun, which means to secure from fear, and Mumin is one who provides security to others. Allah has been called Al-Mumin in the sense that He provides security to His creatures. His creatures are secure from the fear that He would ever wrong them, or deprive them of their rights, or allow their rewards to go to waste, or would violate the promises He has made with them. Then, since no object has been mentioned with this subject, but the epithet of Al-Mumin has been used absolutely, it automatically gives the meaning that His security comprehends the entire universe and all that it contains.

40. The word Al-Muhaimin has three meanings:

(1) The Guardian and Protector.

(2) The Observer who sees what everyone does.

(3) The Being Who has taken up the responsibility to fulfill the needs and requirements of the people.

Here also, since the word Al-Muhaimin has been used absolutely, and no object has been mentioned of this subject, therefore, it by itself gives the implied meaning that He is guarding and protecting all creatures, is watching the acts and deeds of everyone, and has taken up the responsibility of sustaining and providing for every creature in the universe with its needs and requirements.

41. Al-Aziz: such an Almighty Being against Whom no one may dare raise his head, no one may have the power to resist His decrees, before Whom everyone may be helpless and powerless.

42. The word al-Jabbar as used in the original is derived from jabr which means setting something right by use of power, reforming something by force. Allah has been called Al-Jabbar in the sense that He sets the system of His universe right by the use of power and enforces His will, which is entirely based on wisdom. Moreover, the word Jabber also contains the meaning of greatness and glory. Thus, a palm-tree which is too tall for the people to pluck its fruit is called jabber in Arabic. Likewise, an act which is grand and glorious is called amal jabbar.

43. The word Al-Mutakabbir has two meanings.

(1) The one who is not actually great but poses as great.

(2) The one who is actually great and sets himself up as such.

Whether it is man or Satan, or some other creature, since greatness does not, in fact, belong to it, its posing itself as great and claiming superiority over others is, a false claim and a vice. Contrary to this, Allah Almighty is truly Great and greatness actually belongs to Him, and everything in the universe is low and insignificant as against Him. Therefore, His being Great and setting Himself up as Great is no false claim but reality; it is not an evil quality but a virtue and excellence, which no one else has but Allah.

هُوَ اللّٰهُ الۡخَالِقُ الۡبَارِئُ الۡمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الۡاَسۡمَآءُ الۡحُسۡنٰى ؕ يُسَبِّحُ لَهٗ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الۡعَزِيۡزُ الۡحَكِيۡمُ ۚ 24

(59:24) He is Allah, the Planner,[44] Executer and Fashioner of creation.[45] His are the names most beautiful.[46] Whatever is in the heavens and the earth extols His Glory.[47] He is the Most Mighty, the Most Wise.[48]

44. That is, those who regard a creature as an associate in His powers, authority, attributes, or in His Being, in fact, utter a grave falsehood, for Allah is far exalted that anybody or anything should be an associate with Him in any sense.

45. That is, the entire world and everything in it, from the initial plan of its creation till its coming into existence in its final, finished form, is entirely Allah's work of creation. Nothing has come into existence by itself nor come about accidentally, nor has anyone else the least

share in its creation and development. Here, Allah's act of creation has been described in three separate stages, which take place one after the other. First is the stage of khalq, which means to ordain, or to plan. It is like an engineer's conceiving the design of a building, which he intends to build for a specific purpose and draws out its detailed diagram and model. The second stage is barr, which actually means to separate, to cut, to split asunder. The Creator has been called Al-barii in the sense that He enforces the plan He has conceived and brings out the thing from non-existence into existence. It is Analogous to the engineer's putting marks on the ground of the full measurements of the building according to the plan, digging the foundations, raising the walls and completing all the practical preliminaries of the construction work. The third stage is taswir, which means to give shape; here it implies giving something its final complete shape. In all these three stages there is no resemblance whatever between Allah's work and human works. None of human plans is such as may not have been derived from previous models and plans. But each of Allah's plans is, unique and His own original creation. Whatever man makes, he makes it by combining the substances created by Allah. He does not bring anything from nonexistence into existence, but composes and constructs by different methods whatever is present and available. Contrary to this, Allah has brought everything from non-existence into creation, and the substance itself of which He has made the universe is created by Him. Likewise, in the matter of giving shape also man is not the inventor but an imitator, and only a poor imitator. The real Maker of forms and shapes is Allah, Who has given a unique and matchless shape to every species and individual and has never repeated exactly the same shape or from.

46. Names imply the adjectives, and "His are the excellent names" means that those adjectives which indicate or express some kind of defect are not appropriate for Him. He should be remembered by those names which express His attributes of Perfection. In the Quran these beautiful names of Allah have been mentioned here and there, and in the Hadith 99 names of that Exalted and Pure Being have been enumerated which Timidhi and Ibn Majah have related on the authority of Abu Hurairah. If one studies these names as mentioned in the Quran and the Hadith carefully, he can easily understand what words would be appropriate and suitable if one has to remember Allah in another language.

47. That is, everything proclaims with the tongue, or otherwise, that its Creator is free from every fault and defect, weakness and error.

48. For explanation, see (E.N. 2 of Surah Al-Hadid).

60. Surah Al Mumtahina (The Woman Under Questioning)

Name

In verse 10 of this Surah it has been enjoined that the women who emigrate to dar al-Islam (the Islamic State) and claim to be Muslims, should be examined hence the title Al-Mumtahinah. The word is pronounced both as mumtahinah and as mumtahanah, the meaning according to the first pronunciation being "the Surah which examines", and according to the second, "the woman who is examined."

Period of Revelation

The Surah deals with two incidents, the time of the occurrence of which is well known historically. The first relates to Hadrat Hatib bin Abz Balta'a, who, a little before the conquest of Makkah, had sent a secret letter to the Quraish chiefs informing them of the Holy Prophet's intention to attack them. The second relates to the Muslim women, who had started emigrating from Makkah to Madinah, after the conclusion of the Truce of Hudaibiyah, and the problem arose whether they also were to be returned to the disbelievers, like the Muslim men, according to the conditions of the Truce. The mention of these two things absolutely determines that this Surah came down during the interval between the Truce of Hudaibiyah and the Conquest of Makkah. Besides, there is a third thing also that has been mentioned at the end of the Surah to the effect; What should the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) make the women to pledge when they come to take the oath of allegiance before him as believers?About this part also the guess is that this too was sent down some time before the conquest of Makkah, for after this conquest a large number of the Quraish women, like their men, were going to enter Islam simultaneously and had to be administered the oath of allegiance collectively.

Theme and Topics

This Surah has three parts;

The first part consists of vv. 1-9, and the concluding verse 13 also relates to it. In this strong exception has been taken to the act of Hadrat Hatib bin Abi Balta'a in that he had tried to inform the enemy of a very important war secret of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) only for the sake of safe guarding his family. This would have caused great bloodshed at the conquest of Makkah had it not been made ineffective in time. It would have cost the Muslims many precious lives; many of the Quraish would have been killed, who were to render great services to Islam afterward; the gains which were to accrue from conquering Makkah peacefully would have been lost, and all these serious losses would have resulted only because one of the Muslims had wanted to safeguard his family from the dangers of war. Administering a severe warning at this blunder Allah has taught the believers the lesson that no believer should, under any circumstances and for any motive, have relations of love and friendship with the disbelievers, who are actively hostile to Islam, and a believer should refrain from everything which might be helpful to them in the conflict between Islam and disbelief. However, there is no harm in dealing kindly and justly with those disbelievers, who may not be practically engaged in hostile activities against Islam and persecution of the Muslims.

The second part consists of vv. 10-11. In this a social problem has been settled, which was agitating the minds at that time. There were many Muslim women in Makkah, whose husbands were pagans, but they were emigrating and reaching Madinah somehow. Likewise, there were many Muslim men in Madinah, whose wives were pagans and had been left behind in Makkah. The question arose whether the marriage bond between them continued to be valid or not. Allah settled this problem for ever, saying that the pagan husband is not lawful for the Muslim women, nor the pagan wife lawful for the Muslim husband. This decision leads to very important legal consequences, which we shall explain in our notes below.

The third section consists of verse 12, in which the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) has been instructed to ask the women who accept Islam to pledge that they would refrain from the major evils that were prevalent among the womenfolk of the pre-Islamic Arab society, and to promise that they would henceforth follow the ways of goodness which the Messenger of Allah may enjoin.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا لَا تَتَّخِذُوۡا عَدُوِّىۡ وَعَدُوَّكُمۡ اَوۡلِيَآءَ تُلۡقُوۡنَ اِلَيۡهِمۡ بِالۡمَوَدَّةِ وَقَدۡ
كَفَرُوۡا بِمَا جَآءَكُمۡ مِّنَ الۡحَـقِّ ۚ يُخۡرِجُوۡنَ الرَّسُوۡلَ وَاِيَّاكُمۡ اَنۡ تُؤۡمِنُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ رَبِّكُمۡ ؕ اِنۡ
كُنۡتُمۡ خَرَجۡتُمۡ جِهَادًا فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِىۡ وَابۡتِغَآءَ مَرۡضَاتِىۡ ۚ تُسِرُّوۡنَ اِلَيۡهِمۡ بِالۡمَوَدَّةِ ۖ وَاَنَا
اَعۡلَمُ بِمَاۤ اَخۡفَيۡتُمۡ وَمَاۤ اَعۡلَنۡتُمۡ ؕ وَمَنۡ يَّفۡعَلۡهُ مِنۡكُمۡ فَقَدۡ ضَلَّ سَوَآءَ السَّبِيۡلِ 1

(60:1) Believers,[1] if you have left (your homes and) have come forth to struggle in My Way and to seek My good pleasure, do not make friends with My enemies and your enemies. You befriend them whereas they have spurned the Truth that has come to you; and (such is their enmity that) they expel the Messenger and yourselves for no other reason than that you believe in Allah, your Lord. You send to them messages of friendship in secrecy, although I know well whatever you do, be it secretly or publicly. And whosoever of you does so has indeed strayed far away from the Straight Path.

1. It would be appropriate to give at the outset the details of the incident concerning which these verses were revealed so that the subject that follows is understood easily. The commentators agree, and Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, Qatadah, Urwah bin Zubair and others also have unanimously reported that these verses were revealed at the time when a letter of Hatib bin Abi Baltaa to the pagans of Makkah was intercepted.

It so happened that, when the Quraish broke the treaty of Hudaibiyah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) started making preparations for an invasion of Makkah, but he did not tell

anyone, except a few close companions, about the goal of the expedition. At about the same time a woman arrived from Makkah, who had been a slave-girl of the Bani Abdul Muttalib, and then after her freedom had adopted singing as her profession. She complained of poverty to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and requested for financial help. The Prophet (peace be upon him) appealed to Bani Abdul Muttalib and he satisfied her need. When she was about to leave for Makkah, Hatib bin Abi Baltaa met her and quietly gave her a letter addressed to some of the Makkah chiefs and paid her ten dinars so that she kept the secret and carried the letter to the addressees secretly. When she had just left Al-Madinah, Allah informed the Prophet (peace be upon him) of it. The Prophet (peace be upon him) immediately sent Ali, Zubair and Miqdad bin Aswad after her with the instruction: Make haste. At Raudah khaki (12 miles from Al-Madinah on the road to Makkah) you will meet a woman, who carries a letter from Hatib to the pagans of Makkah. Seize that letter by any means you like. If she delivers the letter willingly, let her go; if she refuses to deliver it, kill her. When these companions reached the place, they found the woman there. They demanded the letter from her. She replied that she had a letter. They searched her but could find no letter. At last, they told her to deliver the letter, otherwise they would strip her and search her. When she saw that there was no way of escape, she took out the letter from her hair-plait and delivered it to them, and they brought it to the Prophet (peace be upon him). When the letter was opened and read, it was found to contain information to the Quraish that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was making preparations to attack them. (In different traditions different wordings of the letter have been reported but the purport of all is one and the same). The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked Hatib what induced him to act thus. He replied: Do not make haste in this matter of mine. I have not done this because I have become a disbeliever or an apostate, and have started preferring disbelief to Islam. But the truth is that my near and dear ones are still in Makkah. I do not belong to the tribe of the Quraish, but had settled there under the guardianship of some of them. The families of the Emigrants, which are still in Makkah, will be defended and protected by their tribes and clans, but I have no tribe which could give protection to my family. Therefore, I sent this letter in order to keep the Quraish under obligation so that they did not harm my children. (According to Hatib's son Abdur Rahman, Habit had his children and brother still in Makkah at that time, and according to Hatib's own report his mother was also there). Hearing what Hatib had to say, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to the people: Hatib has told you the truth. That is, the real motive of his action was this and not any treachery against Islam or any intention to support disbelief. Umar rose and said: Permit me, O Messenger of Allah, that I should cut off this hypocrite's head. He has been treacherous to Allah and His Messenger and the Muslims. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: This man has participated in the Battle of Badr. You may not know, O Umar, Allah may have looked favorably at the people of Badr and said: Do as you please, I have forgiven you. (The words in the last sentence are different in different traditions. In some these are to the effect: I have granted you forgiveness; in some other: I am your forgiver; and in still an other: I will forgive you). Hearing this Umar wept and said: Allah and His Messenger have the best knowledge. This is a resume of those many traditions which Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, Abu Daud, Timidhi, Nasai, Ibn Jarir Tabari, Ibn Hisham, Ibn Hibban and Ibn Abi Hatim have related on the authority of several reliable transmitters. The most authentic of these is the tradition which Ali's secretary, Ubaidullah bin Abu Rafi, heard from Ali himself, and from him Ali's grandson, Hasan bin Muhammad bin Hanafiyah, heard and conveyed to the later reporters. In none of these there is any mention that Hatib was pardoned when he presented

this excuse. But there is no hint either to show that he was awarded some punishment. That is why the Muslim scholars have concluded that Hatib's excuse was accepted and he was pardoned.

إِنْ يَثْقَفُوكُمْ يَكُونُوا لَكُمْ أَعْدَاءً وَيَبْسُطُوا إِلَيْكُمْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ وَأَلْسِنَتَهُمْ بِالسُّوءِ وَوَدُّوا لَوْ تَكْفُرُونَ ۖ 2

(60:2) If they could overcome you, they would act as your foes and would hurt you by their hands and tongues, and would love to see you become unbelievers.[2]

2. Although what has been said up to here, and what follows in this regard, was revealed in connection with the incident relating to Hatib, Allah, instead of dwelling on his case only, has given the believers this lesson forever. It is contrary to the profession of the faith that a person should act, out of any motive or reason, in a way detrimental to the interests of Islam and subservient to the interests of disbelief when a conflict is going on between Islam and disbelief and some people have adopted a hostile attitude towards the Muslims only because they are Muslims. Even if a person be wholly free from any ill-will against Islam and acts thus not with an evil intention but for the sake of a dire personal need, the act anyhow is unbecoming of a believer, and whoever acts thus strays from the right way.

لَنْ تَنْفَعَكُمْ أَرْحَامُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ ۚ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۚ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَكُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ 3

(60:3) On the Day of Resurrection neither your blood-kindred nor your own offspring will avail you.[3] (On that Day) He will separate you.[4] Allah sees all that you do.[5]

3. The allusion is to Hatib. As he had acted thus only in order to ensure that his mother and brother and children remained safe in the event of a war, it is being said: The relations for whose sake you have committed this grave error, will not save you on the Day of Resurrection. No one will dare come forward in the court of Allah and say: Our father, or our son, or our brother had committed this sin for our sake; therefore, we may be punished instead of him. At that time everyone will be worried only about himself, and weighed down with the anxiety of somehow saving himself from the consequences of his own acts, not to speak of being ready to take the burden of another's sins on him. This thing has been expressed in clearer words at several other places in the Quran. At one place it has been said: To save oneself from the torment of that Day, the culprit will wish to give his children, his wife, his brother, his kinsfolk, who gave him shelter, and all the people of the earth, in ransom that this device might rescue him. (Surah Al-Maarij, Ayats 11-14). And at another place it is said: On the Day man shall flee from his brother and his mother and his father and his wife and his children. Each one of them, on that Day, shall have enough to occupy him so as to make him heedless of others.(Surah Abasa, Ayats 34-37).

4. That is, all worldly relations and bonds of love and friendship shall be rendered void in the Hereafter. The people will not be judged as groups and parties and families, but every person will have to present himself as an individual and render his own account only. Therefore, no one in the world should commit a wrong for the sake of a relationship or friendship or fraternity, for he will himself have to face all its consequences, and no one else will become a partner in a matter of his personal responsibility.

5. The following conclusions are deduced from the details of the case of Hatib, as mentioned above, and the verses which were revealed in this connection:

(1) Whatever the motive of the person, it was in itself an act of espionage, and a very dangerous kind of espionage on a critical occasion. The enemy, who was absolutely unaware, had been informed of the immanent attack from Al- Madinah. Then it was not a case based on suspicion but a letter written by the concerned person himself had been intercepted, after which no other proof of the guilt was required. These were not peace but war time conditions; yet the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not place Hatib in confinement without giving him a chance of self defense. This option was also not given to him in private but publicly before the people. This makes it manifest that there is no room in Islam for such laws and regulations under which the ruler may have the right in any case to imprison a person only on the basis of his own knowledge or suspicion. Islam also does not recognize the method of trying a person secretly in secret.

(2) Hatib was not only one of the emigrants but also a participant in the Battle of Badr, and enjoyed a distinguished place among the companions. But despite this a serious crime happened to be committed by him and Allah took him to task for this in the Quran as is evident from the above verses. In the Hadith too, his case has been narrated in detail and also among the commentators there may be none who has not made a reference to it. These are some of the evidences which prove that the companions were not innocent. They also could commit errors because of human weaknesses, and errors happened to be committed by them practically. The teaching of regarding them with respect and reverence that Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) have given, does not at all require that if one of them happened to commit an error, it should not be mentioned, for evidently, if this were their demand, neither would Allah have mentioned them in His Book, nor the companions and their successors and the traditionists and the commentators would have related their details in their traditions and books.

(3) The view that Umar expressed in the case of Hatib concerned the apparent aspect of the act. His reasoning was that the act was clearly in the nature of treachery to Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) and the Muslims. Therefore, Hatib was a hypocrite and deserved to be put to death. But the Prophet (peace be upon him) rejected his viewpoint and explained the viewpoint of the Islamic Shariah, saying: Decision should not be given only on the outward form of the act but it should also be seen what evidence is given by the past life and general character of the person, who happens to commit the act and the circumstances under which he commits it. The act, no doubt, smacked of espionage but did the attitude of the person concerned towards Islam and the followers of Islam until then indicate that he could do such a thing with the intention of treachery to Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) and the Muslims. He was one of those who had emigrated for the sake of the faith. Could he have made such a sacrifice without sincerity? He fought in a critical battle

like Badr for the sake of his faith when the Muslims were facing an enemy much better equipped and three times their number. Could the sincerity of such a person be doubted or could it be believed that he had the slightest inclination towards the Quraish. He was telling the plain truth that his family at Makkah did not enjoy the protection of any tribe or clan, which the families of the other emigrants enjoyed; therefore, he acted thus during war time only in order to safeguard his children from the persecution of the disbelievers. The facts confirmed that he did not really belong to any tribe at Makkah and this too was known that his family members were still back at Makkah. Therefore, there was no reason why his statement should be taken as false and the opinion formed that his real motive was not this but the intention of treachery. No doubt, for a sincere Muslim even with a good intention it was not lawful that he should inform the enemy of the military plans of the Muslims only for the sake of his personal interests, yet there is a great difference between the error of a sincere Muslim and the treachery of a hypocrite. Both cannot be awarded the same punishment only on the basis of the similarity between their acts. This was the Prophet's (peace be upon him) decision in this case, and Allah confirmed it in the verses of Surah Al-Mumtahinah. A careful study of the above three verses will show that in these Allah has certainly reprimanded Hatib, but it is a kind of a reprimand administered to a believer and not the one administered to a hypocrite. Moreover, no penalty, or physical punishment was awarded to him, but he was administered a severe rebuke publicly and let off, which meant that in a Muslim society even a blot on the honor of a guilty believer and his falling into disrepute was also a very severe punishment.

(4) About the great merit of those companions who fought at Badr, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: You may not know Allah might have looked favorably at the people of Badr and said: Do as you please, I have forgiven you. This does not mean that the companions of Badr were forgiven each and every sin and they were at liberty to commit whatever sin and crime they pleased, for forgiveness had already been guaranteed to them. This was neither meant by the Prophet (peace be upon him) nor the companions ever understood it in this meaning, nor any companion of Badr after hearing this good news ever thought that he was free to commit any sin, nor ever any rule was made on the basis of this in the Islamic Shariah that if a companion of Badr happened to commit a sin, he should not be given any punishment for it. As a matter of fact, if one considers the circumstances under which this was said and the words that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used on this occasion carefully, one can clearly understand the meaning to be this: It would not be anything impossible if in view of the great and meritorious services that the companions rendered at Badr out of sincerity and devotion and at the very risk of their lives for the sake of Allah and His religion, Allah might have forgiven all their former and latter sins mercifully. Therefore, you should not suspect such a companion of treachery and hypocrisy, and should accept the excuse that he himself was presenting for his crime.

(5) From the Quran and the Prophet's (peace be upon him) sayings it also becomes evident that a Muslim's being involved in espionage for the disbelievers by itself is not a sufficient basis for the conclusion that he has become an apostate, or is devoid of the faith, or is a hypocrite. For reaching such a conclusion if there are some other circumstances and evidences, it would be a different thing; otherwise by itself this act is only a crime, not a sign of disbelief.

(6) From these verses of the Quran it also becomes evident that for a Muslim it is in no case permissible that he should spy for the disbelievers, no matter how gravely his own life and property, or that of his near and dear ones, might be endangered.

(7) When Umar asked for the Prophet's (peace be upon him) permission to put Hatib to death for the crime of espionage, the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not say that the crime was not punishable with death, but declined permission on the ground that Hatib's being a companion of Badr was an express proof of his being sincere, and the statement given by him was correct that be had acted thus not out of any good wishes for the enemies but for the sake of safeguarding his family from any possible persecution to death. From this, one section of the jurists has argued that the general law in respect of a Muslim spy is that he should be put to death, unless there are very weighty reasons for awarding him a lesser punishment or a mere reprimand. But the jurists have disputed this question. Imam Shafei and some other jurists hold the view that the Muslim spy is punishable, but not with death. Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam Auzai maintain that he will be subjected to corporal punishment and long imprisonment. Imam Malik says that he will be put to death, but the Maliki jurists hold different views on this question. Ashhab says that the Muslim ruler has vast powers in this matter. He can exercise his judgment keeping in view the circumstances of the crime and the culprit and award him any punishment. A saying of Imam Malik and Ibn al-Qasim also is to the same effect. Ibn al Majishun and Abdul Malik bin Habib say that if the culprit is a habitual spy, he should be put to death. Ibn Wahb says that the punishment of the spy is death, but if he repents of spying, he may be pardoned. Sahnun says that one cannot know whether his repentance is genuine or deceptive; therefore, he should be put to death. There is also a saying of Ibn al-Qasim in support of this. And Asbagh says that the belligerent spy is punishable with death, but the Muslim or dhimmi spy should be given corporal punishment instead of the death sentence, unless he be helping the enemies openly as against the Muslims. (Ibn al-Arabi, Ahkam al-Quran; Umdat al-Qari; Fath al- Bari.)

(8) The Hadith that has been cited above also permits that for the investigation of the crime not only the male but the female accused can also be stripped if so required. Although Ali, Zubair and Miqdad had not stripped the woman, yet they had threatened her that if she did not produce the letter, they would strip and search her. Obviously, if it were not lawful, the three illustrious companions could not have threatened her thus. And one can understand that they must have reported the story of their expedition on their return to the Prophet (peace be upon him). Had he expressed his displeasure, it must have been reported. That is why the jurists have held it as permissible. (Umdat al-Qari).

قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِيْٓ إِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَالَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗ ۚ إِذْ قَالُوْا لِقَوْمِهِمْ إِنَّا بُرَءٰٓؤُا

مِنْكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ۖ كَفَرْنَا بِكُمْ وَبَدَا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةُ وَالْبَغْضَآءُ

أَبَدًا حَتّٰى تُؤْمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَحْدَهٗٓ اِلَّا قَوْلَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ لِاَبِيْهِ لَاَسْتَغْفِرَنَّ لَكَ وَمَآ اَمْلِكُ لَكَ مِنَ
اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۭ رَبَّنَا عَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْنَا وَاِلَيْكَ اَنَبْنَا وَاِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيْرُ 4

(60:4) You have a good example in Abraham and his companions: they said to their people: "We totally dissociate ourselves from you, and from the deities that you worship instead of Allah. We renounce you[6] and there has come to be enmity and hatred between us and you until you believe in Allah, the One True God." (But you may not emulate) Abraham's saying to his father: "Certainly I will ask pardon for you, although I have no power over Allah to obtain anything on your behalf."[7] (And Abraham and his companions prayed): "Our Lord, in You have we put our trust, and to You have we turned, and to You is our ultimate return.

6. That is, we reject you. We neither consider you to be in the right nor your religion. The inevitable demand of the faith in Allah is denial of taghut (Satan): Whoever rejects taghut and believes in Allah has taken a firm support that never gives way. (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 256).

7. In other words, it means: Though there is an excellent example for you in Abraham's (peace be upon him) conduct in that he expressed disapproval of his pagan people and broke off all connections with them, yet his promise to pray for the forgiveness of his pagan father and then carrying it out practically is not worth following, for the believers should not have even this much relationship of love and sympathy with the disbelievers. In (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 113), Allah has clearly warned: It does not behoove the Prophet (peace be upon him) and those who have believed that they should pray for the forgiveness of the polytheists even though they be near kinsmen. Thus, no Muslim is allowed to pray for the forgiveness of his unbelieving kinsmen on the basis of the argument that the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) had done so. As for the question, why did the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) pray thus, and did he carry out his promise practically. The answer has been provided by the Quran in full detail. When his father expelled him from the house, he had said on his departure: I bid you farewell: I will pray to my Lord for your forgiveness.(Surah Maryam, Ayat 47). On the basis of this very promise he prayed for him twice. One prayer is contained in (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 41): Lord, forgive me and my parents and the believers on the Day when reckoning will be hold. And the second prayer is in (Surah Ash Shuara, Ayat 86): Forgive my father, for indeed he is from among those who have strayed and do not disgrace me on the Day when the people will be raised back to life. But afterwards when he realized that the father for whose forgiveness he was praying, wan an enemy of Allah, he excused himself from it and broke off even this relationship of love and sympathy with him.

As regards to the prayer of Abraham for his father, it was only to fulfill a promise he bad made to him, but when he realized that he was an enemy of Allah, he disowned him. The fact is that Abraham was a tender-hearted, God fearing and forbearing man. (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 114).

A study of these verses makes the principle manifest that only that act of the prophet is worthy of following, which they persistently practiced till the end. As regards to those acts which they themselves gave up or which Allah restrained them from practicing or which were forbidden in the divine Shariah, they are not worth following, and no one showed follow such acts of theirs on the basis of the argument that that was such and such a prophet's practice.

Here also another question arises which may create confusion in some minds. In the verse under discussion, the saying of the Abraham (peace be upon him), which Allah has declared as not worth following, has two parts. The first part is that he said to his father: I will pray for your forgiveness, and the second: I have no power to get anything for you from Allah. Of these the first thing of not being a worthy examples to be followed is understandable, but, what is wrong with the second thing that that too has been made an exception from being an example worthily of imitation, whereas it by itself is a truth? The answer is that the saying of the Abraham (peace be upon him) has been included in the exception for the reason that when a person after making a promise with another to do something, says that it is not in his power to do anything beyond that for him, it automatically gives the meaning that if it were in his power to do anything further for him, he would have done that too for his sake. This makes his relationship of sympathy with the other person even more manifest. On that very basis this second part of the saying of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) also deserved to be included in the exception, although its subject was true in so far as it does not lie even in the power of a Prophet to have a person forgiven by Allah. Allama Alusi in his Ruhal-Maani has also given this same answer to this question.

رَبَّنَا لَا تَجۡعَلۡنَا فِتۡنَةً لِّلَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا وَاغۡفِرۡ لَنَا رَبَّنَا ۚ اِنَّكَ اَنۡتَ الۡعَزِيۡزُ الۡحَكِيۡمُ 5

(60:5) Our Lord, do not make us a test for the unbelievers,[8] and forgive us, our Lord. Surely You are Most Mighty, Most Wise."

8. There are several ways in which the believers can become a cause of trial for the disbelievers, for which every believer should seek Allah's refuge. For example:

(1) The disbelievers may gain upper hand over them and consider it a proof of their being in the right and the believers being in the wrong.

(2) The persecution of the believers by the disbelievers may become unbearable with the result that they may yield to them and abandon their faith and moral values. This would subject the believers to public ridicule and would provide the disbelievers with an opportunity to humiliate and debase them and their religion.

(3) In spite of being the standard-bearers of the true faith the believers may lose their moral superiority that should accrue to them as believers. And the people may see the same defects and deficiencies in their character as are commonly found in an un-Islamic community. This would give the disbelievers an opportunity to say that the faith of the believers was in no way superior to their disbelief. (For further details see(E.N. 83 of Surah Younus).

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِيْهِمْ اُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللّٰهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْاٰخِرَ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيْدُ ۧ 6

(60:6) Indeed there is a good example for you in them; a good example for anyone who looks forward to Allah and the Last Day.[9] As for him who turns away, Allah is All-Sufficient, Immensely Praiseworthy.[10]

9. Who is hopeful of Allah and the Last Day: Who expects that one Day he will have to present himself before Allah and is hopeful that Allah will treat him benevolently and help him attain to success in the Hereafter.

10. That is, Allah has no need of such believers, who profess to believe in His religion as well as maintain friendly relations with His enemies. He is Self Sufficient: His Godhead does not require that they should acknowledge Him as God. He is Self-Praiseworthy, i.e. His being praiseworthy is not dependent on the people's praising and glorifying Him. If they affirm the faith, they do so not for any good of Allah, but for their own good. And they cannot gain anything from their affirmation of the faith until they break off all connections of love and friendship with the enemies of Allah as the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) and his companions did.

عَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّجْعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ عَادَيْتُمْ مِّنْهُمْ مَّوَدَّةً ؕ وَاللّٰهُ قَدِيْرٌ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ 7

(60:7) It may well be that Allah will implant love between you and those with whom you have had enmity.[11] Allah is Most Powerful; and Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Compassionate.

11. Although the true believers were following the exhortation to sever their connections with the unbelieving kinsmen patiently, yet Allah knew how hard it was to break off one's connections with his parents, brothers and sisters and near relations. Therefore, Allah consoled them with the hope that a time would soon come when their same relations would become Muslims and their today's enmity would again change into love tomorrow. When this thing was said no one could understand how this would happen. But hardly a few weeks had passed after the revelation of these verses when Makkah fell and the people of Quraish began to enter Islam in large numbers, and the Muslims witnessed with their own eyes how the hope they were given materialized.

لَا يَنْهٰىكُمُ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوْكُمْ فِي الدِّيْنِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوْكُمْ مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ اَنْ
تَبَرُّوْهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوْٓا اِلَيْهِمْ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِيْنَ 8

(60:8) Allah does not forbid that you be kind and just to those who did not fight against you on account of religion, nor drove you out of your homes. Surely Allah loves those who are equitable.[12]

12. Here a doubt may arise in the minds. It is all right to treat the disbelievers, who are not hostile, kindly, but should only they be treated unjustly? And should the disbelievers, who arc hostile, be treated unjustly? The answer is that in this context, the word justice, in fact, has been used in a special sense. It means: Justice demands that you should not be hostile to those who are not hostile to you, for it is not justice to treat the enemy and the nonenemy alike. You have every right to adopt a stern attitude towards those who persecuted you for embracing Islam and compelled you to leave your homes and pursued you even after your expulsion. But as for those who were not partners in persecuting you, you should treat them well and should fulfill the right they have on you because of blood and other relationships.

اِنَّمَا يَنْهٰىكُمُ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الَّذِيْنَ قٰتَلُوْكُمْ فِي الدِّيْنِ وَاَخْرَجُوْكُمْ مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ وَظٰهَرُوْا
عَلٰٓى اِخْرَاجِكُمْ اَنْ تَوَلَّوْهُمْ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّهُمْ فَاُولٰۗىِٕكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ 9

(60:9) Allah only forbids you to be friends with those who have fought against you on account of religion and who have driven you out of your homes and have abetted in your expulsion. And any who make friends with them, they are the wrong-doers.[13]

13. The instructions to sever relations with the disbelievers given in the preceding verses, could cause the people the misunderstanding that this was because of their being the disbelievers. Therefore, in these verses it has been made clear that its real cause is not their disbelief but their hostility to Islam and their tyrannical treatment of the followers of Islam. The Muslims, therefore, should distinguish between the hostile disbeliever and the nonhostile disbeliever, and should treat those disbelievers well who have never treated them with evil. Its best explanation is the incident that took place between Asma, daughter of Abu Bakr, and her disbelieving mother. A wife of Abu Bakr's was Qutaylah bint Abdul Uzza, who was a disbeliever and had remained behind in Makkah after the migration. Asma had been born of her. After the peace treaty of Hudaibiyah when the traffic opened between Makkah and Madinah, she came to Al-Madinah to see her daughter and also brought some gifts. Asma herself has related that she went to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and asked: Should I see my mother. And can I treat her as a daughter should treat her mother. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Yes, treat her as your mother. (Musnad Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim). Asma's son, Abdullah bin Zubair, has given further details of this incident. He says that Asma in the beginning had refused to see her mother. Then, when she received Allah and His Messenger's permission she met her. (Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Jarir, Ibn

Abi Hatim). This by itself leads to the conclusion that a Muslim's serving his unbelieving parents and his helping his unbelieving brothers and sisters and relatives is permissible when they are not hostile to Islam. Likewise, one can also spend his charities on the indigent among the dhimmis. (Al-Jassas, Ahkam al-Quran; Ruh al-Maani).

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا جَآءَكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنٰتُ مُهٰجِرٰتٍ فَامْتَحِنُوْهُنَّ ؕ اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِاِيْمَانِهِنَّ ۚ
فَاِنْ عَلِمْتُمُوْهُنَّ مُؤْمِنٰتٍ فَلَا تَرْجِعُوْهُنَّ اِلَى الْكُفَّارِ ؕ لَا هُنَّ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحِلُّوْنَ
لَهُنَّ ۫ وَاٰتُوْهُمْ مَّآ اَنْفَقُوْا ؕ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْهُنَّ اِذَآ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ ؕ
وَلَا تُمْسِكُوْا بِعِصَمِ الْكَوَافِرِ وَسْـَٔلُوْا مَآ اَنْفَقْتُمْ وَلْيَسْـَٔلُوْا مَآ اَنْفَقُوْا ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ حُكْمُ
اللّٰهِ ؕ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ۝10

(60:10) Believers, when believing women come to you as Emigrants (in the cause of faith), examine them. Allah fully knows (the truth) concerning their faith. And when you have ascertained them to be believing women, do not send them back to the unbelievers.[14] Those women are no longer lawful to the unbelievers, nor are those unbelievers lawful to those (believing) women. Give their unbelieving husbands whatever they have spent (as bridal-dues); and there is no offence for you to marry those women if you give them their bridal-dues.[15] Do not hold on to your marriages with unbelieving women: ask for the return of the bridal-due you gave to your unbelieving wives and the unbelievers may ask for the return of the bridal-due they had given to their believing wives.[16] Such is Allah's command. He judges between you. Allah is All-Knowing, Most Wise.

14. The background of this injunction is that after the peace treaty of Hudaibiyah, in the beginning, the Muslim men started fleeing Makkah, while arriving at Al-Madinah they were sent back according to the terms of the treaty. Then the Muslim women started arriving and first of all, Umm Kulthum Uqbah bin Abi Muait emigrated to Al- Madinah, The disbelievers invoked the treaty and demanded return, and two brothers of Umm Kulthum, Walid bin Uqbah and Amarah bin Uqbah, came to Al- Madinah to take her back. At this the question arose whether the treaty of Hudaibiyah applied to the women as well. Allah has answered this very question here, saying: If they are Muslims, and it is ascertained that they have emigrated only for the sake of the faith and for no other motive, they are not to be returned.

Here, a complication has arisen on account of the narration of the Hadith from the viewpoint of the meaning and content, and it must be resolved. The traditions that are found in the Ahadith about the conditions of the treaty of Hudaibiyah are mostly traditions narrated from the viewpoint of the meaning and purport. About the condition under discussion the words in the different traditions are different. In some the words are to the

effect: Whoever reaches us from you, we will not return him, but whoever reaches you from us, you shall return. In some others the words are to the effect: Whoever of his companions comes to the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah without the permission of his guardian, he will send him back. And in still another, the words are: Whoever, from the Quraish goes to Muhammad (peace be upon him) without the permission of his guardian, he will return him to Quraish. The style of these traditions by itself shows that this condition of the treaty has not been reported in the actual words of the treaty, but the reporters have reported its purport in their own words. But since most of the traditions are of the same nature, the commentators and traditionists generally have understood that the treaty was general, which applied to both men and women, and the women too were to be returned according to it. Later, when this injunction of the Quran that the believing women were not to be returned, came to their knowledge, they interpreted it to mean that Allah in this verse had decided to break the treaty in so far as it related to the believing women. But this was not an ordinary thing which should be accepted so easily. If the treaty was general, without any exception in respect of men and women, it could not be lawful for one party to amend it unilaterally and change a part of it by itself. And even if such a thing happened, it is strange that the Quraish did not protest against it, whereas they remained on the lookout for an opportunity to raise objections against everything that the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Muslims did. Had they found that the Prophet had committed a breach of the treaty conditions, they would have raised a loud clamor. But we do not find any trace of it in any tradition that they took an exception to this ruling of the Quran. Had this question been carefully considered the problem could have been resolved by reference to the actual words of the treaty. But many people paid no attention to it. If some scholars (e.g. Qadi Abu Bakr Ibn al-Arabi) did pay any attention, they did not hesitate to say that the reason why the Quraish did not raise any objection was that Allah had miraculously scaled their mouths in this matter. It is strange how these scholars felt satisfied at this explanation.

The fact of the matter is that this condition of the peace treaty had been proposed by the disbelieving Quraish, and not by the Muslims, and the words that Suhail bin Amr, their representative, had gotten included in the treaty were: And that whichever man (rajul) come to you from us, even if he be on your religion, you will return him to us. These words of the treaty have been reproduced in Bukhari (Kitab ash-Shurut: Bab ash-Shurut fil-Jihad wal-Masalahah) through authentic channels. It may be that Suhail used the word rajul in the meaning of a person, but this might be the meaning he had in his mind. The word written in the treaty was rajul, which is used for a fullgrown man in Arabic. That is why when the brothers of Umm Kulthum bint Uqbah came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and demanded her return, (according to Imam Zuhri's tradition), Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) refused to return her, saying: The condition was about the men, not the women. (Ibn al-Arabi, Ahkam al-Quran; Loam Razi, Tafsir Kabir) Until then the people of Quraish themselves were under the delusion that the treaty applied to all kinds of emigrants, men or women; But when the Prophet (peace be upon him) drew their attention to these words of the treaty, they were struck dumb and had to accept this decision.

According to this condition of the treaty the Muslims had the right to decline return of any woman who emigrated from Makkah to Al-Madinah for any reason whatsoever. But Islam was interested only in safeguarding the believing women and not to make the holy city of Al-Madinah a place of refuge for every kind of female fugitive. Therefore, Allah enjoined:

Ascertain by examination the faith of the women who emigrated to you and profess to have believed; and when it is fully ascertained that they have emigrated with genuine faith, and no other motive, do not return them. Thus, the procedure adopted for carrying out this command was that the women who emigrated were questioned whether they believed in the oneness of Allah and the Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and had emigrated only for the sake of Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him), and not out of any worldly consideration, e.g. hatred of the husband, or love of somebody in Al-Madinah, or some other worldly motive. Only those women who gave satisfactory answers to these questions were allowed to stay, others were sent back. (Ibn Jarir on the authority of Iba Abbas, Qatadah, Mujahid, Ikrimah, Ibn Zaid).

In this verse a basic principle of the law of evidence has also been stated and its further clarification has been made by the procedure that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had prescribed for implementing it, The verse enjoins three things:

(1) Examine the faith of the emigrating women who present themselves as believers.

(2) Allah alone knows the truth about their faith; the Muslims have no means to find out whether they have really believed or not.

(3) When it has been ascertained that they are believers, they are not to be returned.

Then, in accordance with this injunction, the method that the Prophet (peace be upon him) prescribed for examining and ascertaining the faith of the women was that the statement given by them on oath should be relied on and it should be made sure after necessary examination that they had no other motive of emigration than the faith. First, it gives the principle that for taking decision on different matters it is not necessary for the court to have direct knowledge of the truth; for the court only that knowledge is sufficient which is obtained through evidence. Second, the statement given by a person on oath will be regarded as reliable until it is proved to be false by a clear evidence. Third, whatever declaration a person himself may make about his creed and faith, will be accepted and no search will be made into finding out, whether what he states actually constitutes his faith or not, unless there is a clear indication to the contrary. And fourth, in the personal affairs of a person, which no one else can know, his own statement will be trusted. e.g. in the matters of divorce and the waiting period (iddat) the woman's own statement about her menstrual course and state of purity will be regarded as reliable, whether it is true or false. According to these very rules, in the science of the Hadith also, those traditions will be accepted, the apparent state of whose reporters testifies to their being righteous, unless, of course, there are other circumstances which forbid the acceptance of a particular tradition.

15. This means that, a Muslim who wants to marry any of these women should pay a fresh dower and marry her. The dowers to he repaid to their unbelieving husbands will not be considered their dowers.

16. Four very important injunctions have been laid down in these verses, which relate both to the family law of Islam and to the international law.

First, that the woman who becomes a Muslim is no longer lawful for her unbelieving husband nor her unbelieving husband is lawful for her.

Second, that the marriage of the married woman who becomes a Muslim and emigrates from the abode of disbelief (dar al-kufr) to the abode of Islam (dar al-lslam) is automatically annulled, and any Muslim who likes can marry her after paying her dower.

Third, that it is not lawful for a man who becomes a Muslim to retain his wife in wedlock if she likes to remain an infidel.

Fourth, that if there exist relations of peace between the abode of disbelief and the abode of Islam, the Islamic government should try to settle the question of the return of dowers with the non-Muslim government, thus: The dowers of the married women of the disbelievers, who become Muslims and emigrate to the abode of Islam, should be returned by the Muslims, and the dowers of the unbelieving married women of the Muslims who are left behind in the abode of disbelief, should be taken back from the disbelievers.

The historical background of these injunctions is as follows: In the beginning of Islam, there were many such men, who accepted Islam but their wives did not become Muslim, and there were many such women who became Muslim but their husbands did not accept Islam. Abul Aas, the husband of Zainab, a daughter of the Prophet (peace be upon him), was a non-Muslim and he remained non-Muslim for several years. In the early period no command had been given to the effect that the pagan husband was unlawful for the Muslim wife and the pagan wife was unlawful for the Muslim husband. Therefore, the marital relations continued to exist between them. Even after the migration for several years, it so happened that many women became Muslim and emigrated to Al-Madinah while their pagan husbands remained in the abode of disbelief. Likewise, many Muslim men emigrated and their pagan wives were left in the abode of disbelief. But in spite of this their marriage continued. This was creating complications for the women in particular, for the men could marry other women, but this was not possible for the women. Until their marriage with their previous husbands was dissolved, they could not remarry. After the peace treaty of Hudaibiyah when these verses came down, they annulled the previous marriage between the Muslims and the pagans, and laid down an absolute and clear law for guidance in future. The jurists of Islam have codified this law under four major titles:

First, the case when both the man and the wife are in the abode of Islam and one of them becomes a Muslim and the other remains an infidel.

Second, the case when both the man and the wife are in the abode of disbelief, and one of them becomes a Muslim and the other remains an infidel.

Third, the case when one of the spouses becomes a Muslim and emigrates to the abode of Islam and the other remains an infidel in the abode of disbelief.

Fourth, the case when either of the Muslim spouses becomes an apostate.

Below we give the viewpoints of the jurists with regard to all the four cases separately:

(1) In the first case, if the husband has accepted Islam and his wife is a Christian or a Jewess, and she remains faithful to her religion, their marriage will endure, for it is permissible for a Muslim to have a wife who is a follower of the earlier scriptures. This is agreed upon by all jurists.

And if the wife of the man who has accepted Islam, is not a follower of the earlier Books, and she adheres to her faith, the Hanafis say that Islam will be presented before her; if she accepts it, the marriage will endure; if she refuses to accept it, separation will be effected between them. In this case, if consummation between them had taken place, the woman will be entitled to the dower; if there was no consummation, she will not be entitled to any dower, for separation has been caused because of her refusal. (Al- Mabsut; Hedayah; Fath al-Qadir). Imam Shafei and Imam Ahmad say that if the spouses did not have consummation, the woman would be outside wedlock as soon as the man accepted Islam, and if consummation had taken place; the woman will remain in wedlock till three menstruations. During this period if she accepts Islam of her own free will, the marriage will continue, otherwise it will become void automatically as soon as she is free from her third menstrual course. Imam Shafei also adds that it is not right to present Islam before the woman on the basis of the pledge of non-interference in religion that the dhimmis have been given by the Muslims. But this, in fact, is a weak argument; for it would be interference in the dhimmi woman's religion if she was compelled to accept Islam. It is no interference to tell her that if she accepted Islam, she would continue to be her husband's wife, otherwise she would be separated from him. In Ali's time there has been a precedent of this nature. An Iraqi landowner who was a Majusi by religion accepted Islam and his wife remained an unbeliever, AIi presented Islam before her, and when she refused to accept it, he effected separation between them. (Al-Mabsut). Imam Malik says that if consummation has not taken place, the unbelieving wife would forthwith cease to be the wife as soon as the man embraced Islam, and if consummation has taken place, Islam would be presented before the woman, and in case she refuses to accept it, separation will result. (Ibn Qudamah, Al-Mughni).

And if Islam has been accepted by the woman and the man remains an infidel, whether he is a follower of an earlier scripture or a non-follower, the Hanafis say that Islam will be presented before the husband whether consummation between them has taken place or not. If he accepts it, the woman will continue to be his wife; if he rejects it, the qadi will effect separation between them. So long as the man does not refuse to accept Islam, the woman will remain his wife, but he will not have the right to have sexual relations with her. In case the husband refuses, separation will become effective just like an irrevocable divorce. If consummation has not taken place before this, the woman will be entitled to half the dower, and if it has taken place, the woman will be entitled to full dower as well as maintenance during the waiting period (iddat). (AI-Mabsut; Hedayah; Fath at-Qadir). According to Imam Shafei, marriage will dissolve as soon as the woman accepted Islam in case consummation has not taken place, and in case it has taken place, the woman will continue to be the man's wife till the end of the waiting period. If in the mean-time he accepts Islam, marriage will remain valid, otherwise separation will take place as soon as the waiting period comes to an end. But in the case of the man, Imam Shafei has also expressed the same opinion as he has expressed about the woman as cited above. That is, it is not right to present Islam before him. But this is a weak opinion. In the time of Umar, on several occasions, the woman accepted

Islam and the man was invited to Islam; when he refused to accept it, separation was effected between the spouses. There is, for examples the case of the wife of a Christian of the Bani Taghlib, which was brought before him. Umar said to the man: Accept Islam, otherwise I will effect separation between you two. He declined, and the Caliph enforced the decree. The case of a newly converted lady of Bahz al-Malik was sent to him. In her case too he ordered that Islam be presented before her husband; if he accepts it well and good, otherwise separation be effected between them. These incidents had happened in front of the companions and no dispute or difference of opinion has been reported. (AI-Jassas, Ahkam al-Quran; Al Mabsut; Fath al-Qadir). Imam Malik's opinion in this connection is that if the woman becomes a Muslim before the consummation of marriage Islam should be presented before the husband; if he accepts it, well and good; otherwise separation should be effected forthwith. And if consummation has taken place, and the woman has accepted Islam afterwards, she will have to wait till the end of the waiting period. If the husband accepts Islam in the meantime, marriage will continue otherwise separation will take place as soon as the waiting period expires. A saying of Imam Ahmad is in support of Imam Shafei. His other saying is to the effect that the event of the difference of religion between the spouses will in any case lead to immediate separation, whether consummation between them has taken place or not. (Al-Mughni).

(2) If in dar al-kufr (abode of disbelief) the woman becomes a Muslim and the man remains an infidel, or the man becomes a Muslim and the wife (who neither is Christian nor Jew but is follower of a non-revealed religion) remains an infidel, the Hanafi viewpoint is that separation will not take place, whether consummation between them has taken place or not, until the woman completes three menstrual courses, or until she passes three months in case she is nonmenstruating. If in the meantime the other spouse is also converted, marriage will remain valid, otherwise separation will take place on the expiry of the term. Imam Shafei, in this case also, distinguishes between the occurrence of consummation and its non-occurrence. He maintains that if there was no consummation, separation would occur immediately on the event of the difference of religion between the spouses. And if the difference of religion has occurred after the consummation, marriage will continue valid until the end of the waiting period. If in the meantime the other spouse does not accept Islam, marriage will dissolve as soon as the waiting period comes to an end. (Al Mabsut, Fath al-Qadir, Al-Jassas Ahkam al-Quran).

In case where along with the difference of religion between the spouses the separation of abode also takes place, i.e. one of them remains an infidel in daral-kufr (the non-Muslim state) and the other emigrates to dar al-lslam (the Islamic state), the Hanafi viewpoint is that marriage between them will automatically dissolve. If the emigrant is the woman, she has the right to remarry immediately; she does not have to observe any waiting period. However, her husband will have to abstain from sexual intercourse until after she has discharged the menses once; and if she is pregnant, even then marriage can be contracted, but the husband must abstain from cohabitation until after the delivery. Imam Muhammad and Imam Abu Yusuf have differed from Imam Abu Hanifah in this. They say that the woman has to observe the waiting period; and if she is pregnant, she cannot contract marriage before the delivery. (Al-Mabsut; Hedayah; AI-Jassas, Ahkam al-Quran). Imam Shafei, Imam Ahmad and Imam Malik maintain that the separation of abode has nothing to do with this, for the real thing is only the difference of religions. If this difference takes place

between the spouses, the injunctions to govern this are the same as those which govern it in case such a difference takes place between the spouses in the Islamic state (Al-Mughni). Imam Shafei along with his above cited opinion has also expressed the view that if the emigrant Muslim woman has emigrated after a quarrel with her infidel husband, with the intention of dissolving his marital right, an immediate separation will take place not on the basis of the separation of abode (ikhtilaf dar) but on the basis of her this intention. (Al-Mabsut Hedayah).

But a careful consideration of the Quranic verse under discussion clearly shows that in this matter the most sound opinion is the one that Imam Abu Hanifah has expressed. Allah has sent down this verse concerning the believing women who emigrated and about them He has said that they are no longer lawful for the pagan husbands whom they have left behind in dar al-kufr, and has allowed the Muslims of the Islamic state to marry them after they have paid them the dowers. On the other hand, the emigrant Muslims have been addressed and enjoined not to keep those of their pagan wives in wedlock, who are left is dar alkufr, and to ask of the disbelievers the dowers that they had given to those women. Obviously, these injunctions do not pertain only to the difference of religion, but it is the difference of abode that has given these injunctions this particular form. If on account of migration the marriages of the Muslim women with their pagan husbands had not become dissolved, how could the Muslims be permitted to marry them. And that too in a way that the permission does not contain any reference to the observance of the waiting period by them. Likewise, if even after the revelation of the command, "and you also should not hold back unbelieving women in marriage" the pagan wives of the Muslim emigrants had continued to be their wives, they also would have been commanded to divorce them. But there is no reference here to this either. No doubt, it is correct that after the revelation of this verse, Umar and Talhah and some other emigrants had divorced their wives, but this is no proof that such a thing was at all necessary, and their severing of the marital relationship with those wives depended on their pronouncing divorce on them, and if they had not pronounced the divorce, the wives would have continued to be their legal wives.

In response to this, three events of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) time are quoted as precedents, which are regarded as a proof that even after the revelation these verses the prophet (peace be upon him), in spite of the separation of abode, allowed the marriage relationship to continue between the believing and the unbelieving spouses. The first event is this, a little before the conquest of Makkah, Abu Sufyan visited the Islamic army at Marr az- Zahran (present Wadi Fatimah) and accepted Islam, and his wife, Hind, remained a pagan in Makkah. Then Hind accepted Islam after the conquest of Makkah, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) ruled that their previous marriage would continue to be valid. The second event is that after the conquest of Makkah, Ikrimah bin Abu Jahl and Hakim bin Hizam fled Makkah and in their absence the wives of both became Muslims. Then they sought the Prophet's protection for their husbands and went and brought them back. Both the men come before the Prophet (peace be upon him) and accepted Islam and in their case too he held their previous marriages as valid. The third event relates to the Prophet's (peace be upon him) own daughter, Zainab, who emigrated to Al-Madinah and her husband, Abul-Aas, was left an infidel in Makkah. About him Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah contain a tradition on the authority of Ibn Abbas, saying that he came to Al-Madinah in A.H. 8 and became a Muslim, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) allowed his

daughter to continue in marriage with him, without renewal of marriage. But the first two of these events, in fact, do not come under the definition of the difference of abode. For the difference of abode does not mean a person's temporarily leaving one place for another, or his fleeting to another place, but the difference takes place only in case a person emigrates from one place and settles down in another place and the difference of nationality takes place between him and his wife. As for the event relating to Zainab, there are two traditions, one related on the authority of Ibn Abbas, as referred to above, and the other related by Imam Ahmad, Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah on the authority of Abdullah bin Amr bin Aas. In this second tradition it has been stated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) allowed his daughter to continue as the wife of Abul- Aas after renewal of the marriage, and with a fresh dower. Thus, in the first place, this precedent, due to the difference in reporting, no longer remains a definite argument with those who deny the legal effect of the separation of abode. Secondly, if they insist on the authenticity of Ibn Abbas's tradition, it contradicts their own viewpoint. For, according to their viewpoint, the marriage of the spouses between whom difference of religion takes place and who have consummated their marriage remains valid only until three menstruations. In the meantime if the other party also accepts Islam, the marriage continues to be valid, otherwise it dissolves automatically as soon as the third menstrual course starts. But in the case of Zainab from which they take their argument, the difference of religion between the spouses had taken place several years earlier. Abul Aas had affirmed the faith six years after Zainab's emigration, and at least two years before his conversion to Islam the injunction had been revealed in the Quran, according to which the Muslim woman had been forbidden for the pagans.

(4) The fourth case is of apostasy. Its one form is that both the husband and the wife should become apostates together, and the other that one of them becomes an apostate and the other remains a Muslim. If both the husband and the wife become apostates together, the Shafeis and the Hanbalis say that their marriage contracted in Islam will dissolve immediately if this happened before consummation, and after the lapse of the waiting period if it happened after consummation. On the contrary, the Hanafis hold the view that although according to common sense their marriage should dissolve, yet in the time of Abu Bakr, when thousands of people became apostates, and then again became Muslims, the companions did not direct anyone to renew the marriage; therefore, we accept this unanimous decision of the companions and admit, contrary to common sense, that in case both the husband and the wife become apostates together, their marriages do not dissolve.(Al Mabsut; Hedayah; Fath al-Qadir Al-Fiqh alal-Madhahib al-Arbah).

If the husband becomes an apostate and the wife continues to be Muslim, according to the Hanafis and the Malikis, the marriage will dissolve immediately, whether this happens before consummation or after it. But the Shafeis and the Hanbalis in this connection make a distinction between the two states. If it happens before consummation, the marriage will dissolved immediately, and if it happens after consummation it will endure till the end of the waiting period, In the meantime if the person returns to Islam, marriage will continue to hold good, otherwise, on the expiry of the waiting period, it will be deemed to have dissolved since he became an apostate. That is, the woman will not have to observe another waiting period afresh. All the four jurists agree that if this happened before consummation, the woman would be entitled to half the dower, and if after consummation to full dower.

And if the woman became an apostate, the old ruling of the Hanafis was that in this case too marriage would dissolve immediately. But later the scholars of Balkh and Samarkand gave the ruling that in case the woman becomes an apostate, separation does not take place immediately; and by this their object was to discourage the women from adopting this course in order to get rid of their husbands. The Malikis verdict is somewhat similar. They say that if circumstances testify that the woman adopted this course only as a pretence to win separation from the husband, separation will not take place. The Shafeis and the Hanbalis say that in case of the woman's turning an apostate too, the law is the same as in case of the husband's turning an apostate. That is, if she became an apostate before consummation, marriage would dissolve immediately and if after consummation, Marriage will endure till the end of the waiting period. If conversion takes place in the meantime marriage will continue to hold good, otherwise it will be deemed to have dissolved since the time of apostasy. There is consensus with regard to the dower. If the woman became an apostate, before consummation she would not be entitled to any dower, and if she adopted apostasy after consummation, she would be entitled to full dower. (Al-Mabsut. Hedayah; Fath al-Qadlr, Al Mughni; Al-Fiqh alal-Madhahib al-Arbah).

وَإِنْ فَاتَكُمْ شَيْءٌ مِّنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ إِلَى الْكُفَّارِ فَعَاقَبْتُمْ فَآتُوا الَّذِينَ ذَهَبَتْ أَزْوَاجُهُمْ مِّثْلَ مَا أَنفَقُوا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي أَنتُم بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ 11

(60:11) And if you fail to receive from the unbelievers a part of the bridal-due of your disbelieving wives, and then your turn comes, pay to those who have been left on the other side an amount the like of the bridal-due that they have paid.[17] And have fear of Allah in Whom you believe.

17. This thing had two alternatives and the verse applies to both. First, with the disbelievers with whom the Muslims had treaty relations, they wanted to settle the matter, thus: We shall return the dowers of the women who have emigrated to us, and you will return the dowers of the pagan wives of our men who have been left on your side. But the disbelievers did not agree to this. However, according to Imam Zuhri, the Muslims, in obedience to the divine command became ready to return the dowers of the women who were left behind with the pagans in Makkah, but the pagans refused to return the dowers of the women who had emigrated to the Muslims in Al-Madinah. Thereupon Allah enjoined that the dowers of the emigrant women, which were to be returned to the pagans, should be collected together in Al-Madinah instead of sending these to pagans; then from these collections disbursements should be made to those to whom the dowers were due from the pagans according to what was due to them.

The second alternative was that there were several converts to Islam, who had emigrated to the abode of Islam from the territories of the disbelievers with whom the Muslims had no treaty relations, leaving their pagan wives behind. Likewise, some women had also become converts and emigrated, leaving their pagan husbands behind. About them it was decreed that the matter should be settled in the abode of Islam itself on the bargain basis. That is, when the dowers were not being returned by the disbelievers, no dowers should be

returned to them. Instead, the dower of the woman who had emigrated to the abode of Islam, should be paid to the person whose wife had been left with the disbelievers.

But in case the account could not be settled equitably thus, and the amount of the dower due on behalf of the disbelieving wives of Muslims, who were left in the abode of disbelief, exceeded the amount of the dowers of the Muslim women who had emigrated, it was enjoined that the deficiency be made up from the spoils that the Muslims took in the wars against the disbelievers. Ibn Abbas has related that the Prophet (peace be upon him) would command that the loss of the person who did not receive his share of the dower be made up from the spoils. (Ibn Jarir). This same view has been adopted by Ata, Mujahid, Zuhri, Masruq Ibrahim Nakhai, Qatadah, Muqatil and Dahhak. All these scholars say, that the people whose dowers are left with the disbelievers, should be paid these from the collective spoils taken from the enemy. That is, before the booty is distributed, the dead dowers of the people should be paid and then the distribution made in which these people too should be given their equal shares along with the other soldiers. Some jurists say that the loss of such people can be made up not only from the spoils but even from the fai properties. But a large section of the scholars does not subscribe to this view.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّبِيُّ إِذَا جَآءَكَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنَٰتُ يُبَايِعْنَكَ عَلَىٰٓ أَن لَّا يُشْرِكْنَ بِٱللَّهِ شَيْـًٔا وَلَا يَسْرِقْنَ
وَلَا يَزْنِينَ وَلَا يَقْتُلْنَ أَوْلَٰدَهُنَّ وَلَا يَأْتِينَ بِبُهْتَٰنٍ يَفْتَرِينَهُۥ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِنَّ وَأَرْجُلِهِنَّ وَلَا
يَعْصِينَكَ فِى مَعْرُوفٍ فَبَايِعْهُنَّ وَٱسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُنَّ ٱللَّهَ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ 12

(60:12) O Prophet, when believing women come to you and pledge[18] to you that they will not associate aught with Allah in His Divinity, that they will not steal,[19] that they will not commit illicit sexual intercourse, that they will not kill their children,[20] that they will not bring forth a calumny between their hands and feet,[21] and that they will not disobey you in anything known to be good,[22] then accept their allegiance[23] and ask Allah to forgive them. Surely Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Compassionate.

18. As we have explained above, this verse was sent down some time before the conquest of Makkah. After the conquest the Quraish started coming to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in large numbers to take the oath of allegiance. From the men he took the oath himself on Mount Safa. As for the women he appointed Umar to administer the oath to them on his behalf and to ask them to pledge that they would refrain from the things mentioned in this verse. (Ibn Jarir, on the authority of Ibn Abbas; Ibn Abi Hatim, on the authority of Qatadah). Then, on his return to Al-Madinah he ordered the Muslim women of Al-Madinah to be gathered together in a house and he sent Umar to take the oath from them. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Marduyah, Bazzar, Ibn Hibban, on the authority of Umm Atiyyah Ansariah). On the Eid day also, after his address to men, he went to the assembly of women and in his sermon to them, he recited this verse and asked them to pledge that they would refrain from the things mentioned in it. (Bukhari on the authority of Ibn Abbas's tradition). Apart from these occasions, at different other times also, the women came before the Prophet (peace be upon

him) individually as well as collectively to take the oath of allegiance, as mentioned in several Ahadith.

19. In Makkah, when the oath of allegiance was being administered, Hind bint Utbah, wife of Abu Sufyan, asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) its explanation and said: Messenger of Allah, Abu Sufyan is rather stingy. Will it be sinful if I take out something from his wealth without his permission to meet my own and my children's needs. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Nay, but only, justly and lawfully; i.e. take only that much as may actually suffice for your needs. (Ibn al-Arabi, Ahkam al-Quran).

20. This also includes abortion, whether it is abortion of the legitimate or of the illegitimate fetus.

21. This implies two kinds of calumny:

(1) A woman's accusing other women of having illicit relations with other men and her spreading such stories among the people, for the women are generally prone to spreading such things.

(2) A woman's delivering a child by somebody else and making her husband believe that it is his. Abu Daud has related a tradition from Abu Hurairah saying that he heard the Prophet say: The woman who brings such a child into a family as does not actually belong to it, has no connection with Allah, and Allah will never admit her to Paradise.

22. In this brief sentence two important points of the law have been stated:

First, that obedience even to the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been restricted to "in what is good", although about the Prophet (peace be upon him) no one could imagine that he would order somebody to do an evil. From this it automatically follows that no one in the world can be obeyed outside the bounds of divine law. For when obedience to Allah's Messenger himself is conditional upon "in what is good", who else can have a position to demand unconditional obedience and require the people to obey and follow each of his commands, laws, rules or customs, which are opposed to the law of Allah? The Prophet (peace be upon him) has stated this principle, thus: There is no obedience in the disobedience of Allah; obedience is only in what is good and right. (Muslim, Abu Daud, Nasai). Our great doctors have derived this very theme from this verse, Abdur Rehman bin Zaid bin Aslam says:

Allah has not said that they should not disobey you (the Prophet) but that they should not disobey you in what is good.

Then, when Allah Almighty has made obedience even to the Prophet himself conditional upon this, how can another person have the right that he should be obeyed in anything but what is good? (Ibn Jarir).

Imam Abu Bakr al-Jassas writes:

Allah knew that His Prophet (peace be upon him) never enjoined anything but what was good. Still He restricted obedience to him only in what is good, so that no one ever may find

a provision to obey the kings when they enjoined something outside the obedience of Allah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has said: He who obeys a creature in disobedience to the Creator, Allah appoints the same creature over him in power. (Ahkam al-Quran).

Allama Alusi says:

This command refutes the view of those ignorant people who think that obedience to the ruler is absolutely necessary. Allah has restricted even obedience to His Messenger (peace be upon him) only in what is good, whereas the Messenger (peace be upon him) never enjoins anything but what is good. This is meant to warn the people that obedience to no one is lawful in disobedience to the Creator. (Ruh al-Maani).

Thus, this command in fact, is the foundation stone of the rule of law in Islam. The rule is that anything which is opposed to the law of Islam is a crime, and no one has the right to enjoin any such thing on any one. Anyone who enjoins anything against the law, is a culprit; and the one who obeys such a command is also a culprit. No subordinate can escape the punishment on the basis of the excuse that his superior officer had ordered him to do something which was a crime in the law.

The other thing which has great legal import is that in this verse after enjoining five prohibitions only one positive command has been given, namely that the Prophet (peace be upon him) will be obeyed in all good things. As for the evils, the major evils in which women of the pre-Islamic days were generally involved, have been mentioned and a pledge taken from them to refrain from them. But as for the good works, they have neither been mentioned nor any pledge taken to observe them. The only pledge that has been taken is that they will have to obey the Prophet (peace be upon him) in every good work that he enjoins. Now obviously, if the good works be only those which Allah Almighty has enjoined in the Quran, the pledge should have been to the effect: You will not disobey Allah, or You will not disobey the injunctions of the Quran. But when the pledge taken was to the effect: You will not disobey any good work that is enjoined by the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah, it automatically leads to the conclusion that the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been given vast powers for the reformation of society, and it is obligatory to obey all his commands, whether they are found in the Quran or not.

On the basis of this very legal authority the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked the women to pledge that they would refrain from all those evils which were prevalent among the women of the Arabian society at that time, and gave several such commands as have not been mentioned in the Quran. One may study the following Ahadith in this connection:

Ibn Abbas, Umm Salamah, Umm Atiyyah Ansariah and others have reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) while administering the oath of allegiance to the women asked them to pledge that they would refrain from mourning over the dead. These traditions have been related by Bukhari, Muslim, Nasai and Ibn Jarir.

A tradition reported by Ibn Abbas contains this detail: The Holy Prophet appointed Umar to administer the oath of allegiance to the women and commanded that he should forbid them to mourn over the dead, for in the days of pre- Islamic ignorance women used to tear their clothes and hair, scratched their faces and bewailed in aloud voice. (Ibn Jarir).

Zaid bin Aslam has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him), while administering the oath of allegiance forbade the women to scratch their faces, tear their garments, bewail and sing verses while mourning over the dead. (Ibn Jarir). Another tradition bearing on the same subject has been reported by Ibn Abi Hatim and Ibn Jarir from a woman who was among the women taking the oath of allegiance. Qatadah and Hasan Basri say that one of the things that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had made the women to pledge also was that they would refain from talking with the other men freely. Ibn Abbas has explained it in a tradition, thus: That they would not talk with the other men in private.

Qatadah has further explained it thus: Hearing this command Abdur Rahman bin Auf said: O Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah, sometimes it so happens that we are not present in the house and somebody comes to see us. The Prophet replied: I do not mean this. That is, the woman is not forbidden to tell the visitor that the master of the house is not present. (These traditions have been cited by Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Hatim).

Abdullah bin Amr bin al-Aas has reported another tradition from Umaimah bint-Rugaiqah, maternal aunt of Fatimah, saying: The Prophet (peace be upon him) made me to pledge that I would neither bewail the dead nor display myself like the women of the pre-Islamic paganism. (Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Jarir).

Salmah bint Qais, a maternal aunt of the Prophet (peace be upon him), says: I went before the Prophet (peace be upon him) with some other women of the Ansar to take the oath of allegiance. He made us to pledge that we would abstain from the things mentioned in this verse, and then said: Do not defraud your husbands. When we were about to leave, a woman said to me: Go and ask the Prophet (peace be upon him) what is meant by defrauding the husbands? When I went and asked the explanation, he replied: This that you should defraud him of his money and expend it on others. (Musnad Ahmad).

Umm Atiyyah says: The Prophet (peace be upon him) after administering to us the oath commanded us that we would attend the Eid congregational prayers, but the Friday prayer is not obligatory for us, and he forbade us to follow the bier. (Ibn Jarir).

The people who think that the constitutional powers and authority that the Prophet (peace be upon him) possessed emanated from his position as a ruler instead of his position as a Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah, and say that since he was also the ruler at the time, whatever commands he gave in that capacity were only meant to be obeyed during his time, say an absurd thing. Consider the Prophet's (peace be upon him) commands and instructions that we have cited above. If these instructions given by him for the reformation of the woman had emanated only from his position as a ruler how could these reforms then be introduced and enforced among the women of the Muslim society of the entire world forever? Which ruler has there been in the world, who might have had the position that a command issued by him just once for a reform might have become enforced in the Muslim society everywhere in the world forever? (For further explanation, see (E.N. 15 of Surah Al-Hashr).

23. Several authentic Ahadith show that in the Prophet's (peace be upon him) time the procedure of administering the oath of allegiance to the women was different from that to the men. For the men the procedure was that the ones pledging allegiance would give their

hand in the hand of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and take the oath. As for the women; the Prophet (peace be upon him) never took any woman's hand in his own hand, but adopted other different methods. In this connection, the following traditions have been reported:

Aishah says: By God, in connection with the oath of allegiance the Prophet's (peace be upon him) hand never touched any other woman's hand. While administering the oath of allegiance to a woman, he would only say to her: I have accepted your allegiance. (Bukhari, Ibn Jarir).

Umaimah bint Ruqaiqah has stated: I along with some other women went before the Prophet (peace be upon him) to pledge allegiance, and ho made us to pledge according to this verse of the Quran. When we said: We will not disobey you in what is good and right, he said: As far as it is in your power. We submitted: Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) are more kind to us than we could be to ourselves. Then we said: O Messenger of Allah, stretch your hand so that we may pledge allegiance. He replied: I do not shake hands with women: I only make them take the pledge. So he made us to pledge. In another tradition she has stated: The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not take the hand of any of us in his own hand. (Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Nasai, Ibn Majah, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim).

Abu Daud in Marasi has related this from Shabi: While administering the oath of allegiance to the women, a sheet of cloth was stretched towards the Prophet (peace be upon him), which he took in his hand and said: I do not take the woman's hand in my hand. This same subject has been related by Ibn Abi Hatim from Shabi, by Abdur Razzaq from Ibrahim Nakhai and by Saeed bin Mansur from Qais bin Abi Hazim.

Ibn Ishaq, in Maghazi has related this from Aban bin Salih: The Prophet (peace be upon him) would put his hand in a vessel full of water and then the woman also would put her hand in the same vessel. In Bukhari, a tradition from Abdullah bin Abbas is to the effect: After giving the Eid congregational sermon, the Prophet (peace be upon him) went through the rows of the men to the place where the women were sitting. There, in his address, he recited this verse of the Quran, then asked the women: Do you promise to act according to it? A woman from the assembly replied: Yes, O Messenger of Allah.

In a tradition related by Ibn Hibban, Ibn Jarir, Bazzar and others, Umm Atiyyah Ansariah has stated this: The Prophet (peace be upon him) extended his hand from outside the house and we extended our hands from inside the house. But this does not prove that the women might have shaken hands with the Prophet (peace be upon him), for Umm Atiyyah has not made any mention of the shaking of hands. Probably on this occasion for the purpose of taking the pledge the Prophet (peace be upon him) might have extended his hand from outside and the women their hands from inside the house towards him without any of their hands touching his.

يَآيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَوَلَّوْا قَوْمًا غَضِبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ قَدْ يَئِسُوْا مِنَ الْاٰخِرَةِ كَمَا يَئِسَ الْكُفَّارُ مِنْ اَصْحٰبِ الْقُبُوْرِ ع 13

(60:13) Believers, do not make friends with those against whom Allah is wrathful and who are despaired of the Hereafter, as despaired as are the unbelievers lying in their graves.[24]

24. The words in the original can have two meanings:

First, that they have despaired of their well-being and rewards in the Hereafter just as the deniers of the life-afterdeath have despaired of the resurrection of their near and dear ones, who are dead and gone into the graves. This meaning has been given by Abdullah bin Abbas and Hasan Basri, Qatadah and Dahak.

The second meaning can be: They have despaired of the mercy and forgiveness of the Hereafter just as the disbelievers, who are lying in the graves, have despaired of every good, for they are certain of their being involved in the punishment. This meaning has been related from Abdullah bin Masud and from Mujahid, Ikrimah, Ibn Zaid, Kalbi, Muqatil, Mansur (may Allah bless them all).

61. Surah As Saff (The Ranks)

Name

The Surah derives its name from the sentence yuqatiluna fi sabil-i- hlsaff-an of verse 4; thereby implying that it is a Surah in which the word saff occurred.

Period of Revelation

It could not be known from any reliable tradition, but a study of its subject-matter shows that this Surah probably was sent down in the period closely following the Battle of Uhud, for by reading between the lines perceives a clear description of the conditions that prevailed in that period.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is to exhort the Muslims to adopt sincerity in Faith and to struggle with their lives in the cause of Allah. It is addressed to the Muslims with weak faith as well as those who had entered Islam with a false profession of the Faith and also those who were sincere in their profession. Some verses are addressed to the first two groups, some only to the hypocrites, and some only to the sincere Muslims. The style itself shows where one particular group has been addressed and where the other.

At the outset the believers have been warned to the effect; "Allah indeed hates those people who say one thing and do another, and He indeed loves. those who fight in the cause of the Truth, standing like a solid structure, against the enemies of Allah."

In vv. 5-7 the people of the Holy Prophet's community have been warned that their attitude towards their Messenger and their Religion should not be like the attitude that the Israelites had adopted towards the Prophets Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them). In spite of acknowledging the Prophet Moses as a Messenger of God they continued to malign him as long as he lived, and in spite of witnessing clear signs from the Prophet Jesus they denied him without any hesitation. Consequently, the Israelites became perverse, incapable of benefiting from divine guidance. This is certainly not an enviable state which another nation should imitate.

Then, in vv. 8-9 a proclamation has been made with the challenge: The Jews and the Christians, and the hypocrites, who are conspiring with them, may try however hard they may to extinguish this Light of Allah, it will shine forth and spread in the world in all its fullness, and the Religion brought by the true Messenger of Allah shall prevail over every other religion however hateful it may be to the pagans and polytheists.

In vv. 10-13, the believers have been told that the way to success both here and in the Hereafter is only one: that they should believe in Allah and His Messenger sincerely and should exert their utmost in Allah's Way with their selves and their wealth. As a reward for this they will earn immunity from Allah's punishment, forgiveness of their sins and the eternal Paradise in the Hereafter, and will be blessed with Allah's good pleasure, succor and victory in the world.

In conclusion, the believers have been exhorted to' the effect that just as the disciples of the Prophet Jesus had helped him in the cause of Allah, so should they also become "helpers of Allah", so that they too are blessed with the same kind of good pleasure and approval of Allah as had been the believers before them against the disbelievers.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

سَبَّحَ لِلّٰہِ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ۚ وَہُوَ الۡعَزِیۡزُ الۡحَکِیۡمُ 1

(61:1) All that is in the heavens and all that is on earth extols Allah's glory. He is the Most Mighty, the Most Wise.[1]

1. This is a brief introduction to this discourse. For its explanation, see (E.Ns 1,2 of Surah Al-Hadid). The discourse has been opened with this introduction so that before hearing or reading what is going to follow, one may well understand that Allah is free from and far above this that the functioning of His Godhead should depend on someone's faith and another one's help and sacrifices. If He exhorts the believers to adopt sincerity in faith and urges them to exert their utmost for the success and victory of the truth, that is for the sake of their own good; otherwise the will of Allah is accomplished by His own power and by His own design, whether somebody makes no effort at all towards its implementation, and whether the whole world joins together to frustrate and resist it stubbornly.

یٰۤاَیُّہَا الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا لِمَ تَقُوۡلُوۡنَ مَا لَا تَفۡعَلُوۡنَ 2

(61:2) Believers, why do you profess that which you do not practise?

کَبُرَ مَقۡتًا عِنۡدَ اللّٰہِ اَنۡ تَقُوۡلُوۡا مَا لَا تَفۡعَلُوۡنَ 3

(61:3) It is most loathsome in the sight of Allah that you should profess what you do not practise.[2]

2. One meaning of this passage is general as is apparent from its words. It has a special meaning also, which becomes evident when this verse is read along with the verse that follows. The first meaning is that there should be complete agreement between a true Muslim's word and deed: he should carry into effect whatever he says, and when he has no intention of doing it, or has no power for it, he should not say it. To say one thing and do another is one of the most hideous characteristics of man, in the sight of Allah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has explained that a person's being characterized by this quality is a sign that he is not a believer but a hypocrite.

According to a Hadith, he said: The hypocrite has three signs even if he offered the Prayer and observed the Fast, and professed to be a Muslim: That is when he spoke he lied; when he made a promise, he broke it; and when he was entrusted with something, he proved dishonest. (Bukhari, Muslim).

In another Hadith he said:

Four characteristics are such that the one who has all four, is a hypocrite through and through, and the one who has one of these, has one characteristic of hypocrisy in him until he gives it up. That is when he is entrusted with something, he proves dishonest; when he speaks, he lies; when he makes a promise, he breaks it; and when he quarrels he crosses all limits of morality and decency. (Bukhari, Muslim).

The jurists of Islam have almost unanimously held the view that if a person makes a pledge to Allah (e.g. vows to do something), or enters into an agreement with others, or promised somebody to do something, it is obligatory for him to fulfill it, unless the thing he has promised is by itself sinful. If it is sinful, he should not observe or carry out the agreement or promise, but should expiate its violation as mentioned in (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 89) above. (Al-Jassas and Ibn alArabi, Ahkam al-Quran).

This much for the general meaning of these verses. As for their special meaning, it becomes obvious when these are read along with the verse that follows. The object is to reprove those people who talked much and made tall promises to fight and lay down their lives in the cause of Islam, but when the time came of their test and trial, they fled the battlefield. The people of weak faith have been taken to task for this weakness at several places in the Quran. For instance, in (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 77), it has been said: Have you also marked those to whom if was said, withhold your hands (a while from war) and establish the salat and pay the zakat. Now that they have been commanded to fight, some of them fear the people as they should fear Allah, or even more than that. They say: Our Lord, why have You prescribed fighting for us? Why have You not given us further respite. And in (Surah Muhammad, Ayat 20): Those who have believed, were saying, why is not a Surah sent down (to enjoin fighting). But when a decisive Surah was sent down in which fighting had been mentioned, you saw those in whose hearts was a disease, looking towards you like the one under the shadow of death. On the occasion of the Battle of Uhud in particular, the weaknesses to which allusions have been made continuously from (verse 121 to verse 171 of Surah Aal-Imran) became all the more conspicuous and visible.

The commentators while explaining the background of the revelation of these verses have mentioned the different forms of the weaknesses to which exception has been taken here. Ibn Abbas says that before the fighting was proscribed, there were some people among the Muslims who said: Would that we could know the act that is most lovable in the sight of Allah, so that we would perform the same. But when they were told that it was fighting in the cause of Allah, it became most difficult for them to carry out their promise. Muqatil bin Hayyan has stated that in the Battle of Uhud these very people were put to the test, and they abandoned the Prophet (peace be upon him) and fled. Ibn Zaid says that many of the people made the Prophet (peace be upon him) believe that they would go out with him to fight the enemy whenever it was so required, but when the time of the test came their promises proved false. Qatadah and Dahhak say that if some people did take pan in the battle, they accomplished nothing, but on their return from the battlefield they boasted and bragged, saying: We put up a brave fight and we achieved such and such a victory. It is such people who have been rebuked by Allah in these verses.

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الَّذِيْنَ يُقَاتِلُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِهٖ صَفًّا كَاَنَّهُمْ بُنْيَانٌ مَّرْصُوْصٌ 4

(61:4) Allah indeed loves those who fight in His Way as though they are a solid wall cemented with molten lead.[3]

3. First, it shows that only those believers are blessed with Allah's good pleasure and approval, who are prepared to fight in His way, disregarding every kind of danger. Secondly, that Allah likes an army which has three characteristics:

(1) It fights in Allah's way with full understanding, and does not fight for a cause disapproved by Allah. (2) It is not undisciplined, but is well-organized and wellarrayed for battle. (3) It offers stiff resistance to the enemy as though it were a solid cemented structure. Then, this last quality is by itself highly meaningful. No army can stand in the battle array like a solid structure unless it has the following characteristics.

(1) Complete agreement in the faith and the objective, which should smite soldiers and officers in a well-knit body.

(2) Confidence in one another sincerity, which cannot be created unless everybody is genuinely sincere in his aim and free from impure motives; otherwise the severe test of war will not allow anyone's insincerity to remain hidden, and when confidence is lost, the members of the army start suspecting instead of trusting one another.

(3) A high standard of morality without which neither can the officers and soldiers of the army have love and respect for each other, nor can they remain immune from mutual clashes and conflicts.

(4) Love of the common objective and a firm resolve to achieve it, which should inspire, the whole army with an invincible spirit of gallantry, devotion and self sacrifice, so that it may actually face the enemy like a solid cemented structure in the battle field.

Such were the foundations on which a powerful military organization was raised under the leadership of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Mighty powers of the day clashed with it and were annihilated. No power of the world then could dare face it for centuries.

وَاِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِقَوْمِهٖ يٰقَوْمِ لِمَ تُؤْذُوْنَنِيْ وَقَدْ تَّعْلَمُوْنَ اَنِّيْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ ؕ فَلَمَّا زَاغُوْٓا اَزَاغَ اللّٰهُ قُلُوْبَهُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ 5

(61:5) And call to mind when Moses said to his people: "O my people, why do you torment me when you know well that I am Allah's Messenger to you?"[4] So when they deviated, Allah made their hearts deviant. Allah does not direct the evil-doers to the Right Way.[5]

4. At several places in the Quran details have been given of how the Israelites in spite of acknowledging the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) as a Prophet of God and their own benefactor maligned him and proved disloyal to him. For this see (Surah Al Baqarah, Ayats 51, 55, 60, 67-71); (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 153); (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayats 20-26); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 138-141; 148-151); (Surah TaHa, Ayats 86-98). In the Bible too, the Jewish history written by the Jews themselves is replete with such events; for instance, sec Exodus, 5: 20-21, 14: 11- 12, 16: 2-3, 17: 3-4; Numbers, 11: 1-15, 14: 1-10, ch. l6, 20: 1-5. Here, allusion to these events is meant to warn the Muslims that they should not adopt the same attitude towards their Prophet as the Israelites had adopted towards their Prophet, otherwise they would meet the same fate as was met by the Israelites.

5. That is, it is not Allah's way to force the people to follow the right way of guidance if they are bent upon following the crooked ways of sin and disobedience. From this it automatically follows that the deviation of a person or nation is not initiated by Allah but by the person or the nation itself. But the law of Allah is that He provides means of deviation only for the one who chooses deviation, so that be may go astray into whatever alleys he may like. Allah has granted man the freedom of choice. Now it is for every man and for every group of men to decide whether he or it wants to obey their Lord, or not, and whether he or it chooses the right way for it or one of the crooked ways. There is no compulsion from Allah in this choice. If somebody chooses the way of obedience and guidance, Allah does not push him forcibly towards deviation and disobedience; and if somebody is resolved to follow disobedience instead of the way of righteousness, it is not Allah's way to make him adopt the way of obedience and guidance forcibly. But this also is the truth that a person who chooses a particular way for himself, cannot follow it practically unless Allah provides for him the ways and means and creates for him the conditions which are necessary for following it. This is Allah's grace and favor without which no one's efforts can be meaningful and productive. Now, if a person is not at all interested in seeking Allah's grace for righteousness, but seeks His grace for adopting evil, he is given the same. And when he receives the grace for doing evil, he becomes temperamentally perverse accordingly and the course of his action and effort goes on becoming crooked until at last the capability to do and accept good in him is gradually lost and destroyed. This is what is meant by, when they adopted perverseness, Allah caused their hearts to become perverse. In this state it is against the law of Allah that the one who wants to adopt deviation, and is actively and earnestly engaged in seeking it, and is expending all his thought and energy to move further and further on towards it, should be forcibly turned towards guidance, for such an action would negate the object of the test and trial, for which man has been granted the freedom of choice in the world. For if a man adopts righteousness through such guidance, there is no reason why he should be entitled to any reward whatever. Rather in such a case, the one who was not guided forcibly and was left in deviation on that account, should not be subjected to any punishment, for the responsibility for his deviation would lie on Allah, and at the time of his accountability in the Hereafter, he could present the argument: When there existed the rule of granting guidance forcibly in the world, why was I deprived of that favor? This is the meaning of the words: Allah does not guide the transgressors. That is, Allah does not grant the favor of adopting the way of obedience to those, who have chosen the way of sin and disobedience for themselves of their own free will.

وَإِذْ قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ
مِنَ التَّوْرَاةِ وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِي اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدُ ۖ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالُوا
هَٰذَا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ 6

(61:6) And call[6] to mind when Jesus, son of Mary, said: "O Children of Israel, I am Allah's Messenger to you, I verify the Torah which has come before me,[7] and I give you the glad tiding of a Messenger who shall come after me, his name being Ahmad."[8] Yet when he came to them with Clear Signs they said: "This is sheer trickery."[9]

6. This relates to the second disobedience of the children of Israel. The first disobedience they committed in the beginning of their great era of power and prosperity, and this second towards the very end of it, after which they came under the wrath and curse of God for ever and ever. The object of relating these two events here is to warn the Muslims of the consequences of adopting the attitude of disobedience towards their Prophet as the Israelites had adopted towards their Prophet.

7. This sentence has three meanings and all three are correct:

(1) That I have not brought any new religion, but the same religion that the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had brought. I have not come to repudiate the Torah, but to confirm it just as the Messengers of God have always been confirming the Messengers who came before them. Therefore, there is no reason why you should hesitate to acknowledge my apostleship.

(2) I answer to the good news that is there in the Torah about my advent. Therefore, instead of opposing me you should receive, and welcome me as the one whose coming had been foretold by the former Prophets.

(3) The Third meaning becomes obvious when the sentence is read along with the sentence which follows it and it is this: I confirm the good news given by the Torah about the coming of Allah's Messenger, named Ahmad (peace be upon him), and give the good news of his coming myself. According to this third meaning, this saying of the Prophet Jesus (peace be on him) alludes to the good news which the Prophet Moses (peace be on him) had given to his people about the advent of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). In it he says:

The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken. According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying: Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever

will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. (Deut. 18: 15- 19).

This is an express prophecy of the Torah, which applies to none but the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). In it the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) is conveying to his people this direction of Allah: I will raise up for you a Prophet from among your brethren. Obviously, the brethren of a nation cannot be a tribe or a family of the nation itself, but another nation to which it is related racially. If it had implied the coming of a Prophet from among the children of Israel themselves, the words would have been to the effect: I shall raise up a Prophet for you from among yourselves. Hence, the brethren of the Israelites can inevitably imply the Ishmaelites, who are their relatives by lineage, being the children of the Prophet Abraham (peace be on him). Moreover, no Israelite Prophet can correspond to this prophecy for the reason also that not one but many Prophets appeared among the Israelites after the prophet Moses and the Bible is replete with their history.

The other thing foretold in the prophecy is that the Prophet to be raised up would be like into the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). This obviously does not imply that he would resemble the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) in physical features or circumstances of life, for in this respect no individual can ever be like another individual; it also does not mean the resemblance in the characteristics of Prophethood, for this characteristic is common to all those Prophets who came after the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). Therefore, no Prophet can have this quality that he should be like unto him in this characteristic. Thus, resemblance in these two aspects becomes out of the question. The only aspect of resemblance on the basis of which the peculiarity of a Prophet of the future becomes understandable is that that Prophet should be a bearer of divine law like the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). And this peculiarity is found in none but the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), for all the Prophets who appeared before him among the Israelites were the followers of the Law of Moses (peace be upon him); none of them had brought a permanent divine law of his own.

This interpretation is further strengthened by these words of the prophecy. According to all that thou (i.e. the Israelites) desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord thy God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the Lord said unto them, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth. In this passage Horeb means the mountain on which the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had received the divine law first of all, and the prayer that the Israelites made was: If we are given a divine law in the further, it should not be given to us under the dreadful conditions like those which were created at the foot of Mt. Horeb while giving us the law. These conditions have been mentioned both in the Quran and in the Bible. See(Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 55, 56, 63); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 155, 171). Bible: Exodus, 19: 17-18). In answer to it, the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) tells the Israelites: Allah has granted your prayer. Ho says that He will raise up a Prophet for you, in whose mouth He will put His own words. That is, at the time of bestowing the new divine law, He will not create the dreadful conditions which were created at the foot of Mt. Horeb. Instead of that, divine words will be put in the mouth of the Prophet who would be appointed to that office, and he will recite those words before the people. A study of this explanation leaves no room for the doubt that the prophecy applies to another than the

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Only he after the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) has been granted an enduring and permanent divine law. At its bestowal no assembly of the people was called as was called of the Israelites at the foot of Mt. Horeb, and no such conditions were created during the time it was bestowed as were created in their case there.

8. This is a very important verse of the Quran, which has been subjected to severe adverse criticism as well as treated with the worst kind of criminal dishonesty by the opponents of Islam, for it says that the Prophet Jesus (peace be on him) had given the good news of the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) by name. Therefore, it is necessary that we study and discuss it in some details.

(1) In this verse the name mentioned of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is Ahmad. Ahmad has two meanings: the one who gives the highest praise to Allah, and the one who is most highly praised by others, or the one who is most worthy of praise among men. Authentic traditions confirm that this too was a well known name of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Muslim and Abu Daud Tayalisi have related on the authority of Abu Musa al-Ashari that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: I am Muhammad, I am Ahmad, and I am the Assembler. Other traditions on the subject have been related by Imam Malik, Bukhari, Muslim, Darimi, Tirmidhi, and Nasai from Jubair bin Mutim, This name of the Prophet (peace be upon him) was well known among the companions as is borne out by the poetry of Hassan bin Thabit.

It is also confirmed by history that the sacred name of the Prophet was not only Muhammad (peace be upon him) but also Ahmad. Arabic literature bears evidence that nobody in Arabia had been named Ahmad before the Prophet (peace be upon him), and after him innumerable people have been named Ahmad in the world. This is the greatest proof that since his Prophethood this name has been most well known among the people of his community. Had it not been a name of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the parents would not have named their children Ghulam Ahmad, assigning them Ahmad's slavery.

(2) The Gospel of St. John bears evidence that at the advent of the Prophet Jesus Christ (peace be upon him), the Israelites were awaiting the appearance of three persons: of the Christ, of Elias (i.e. the second coming of the Prophet Elias) and of that prophet.

In the words of the Gospel:

And this is the record of John (the Prophet John: Yahya) when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered: No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? That we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptize thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? (John, 1: 19-25).

These words expressly show that the Israelites were awaiting another Prophet besides the Prophet Christ (peace be upon him) and the Prophet Elias (peace be upon him), and he was

not the Prophet John (peace be upon him). The belief about the coming of that Prophet was so well known and well established among the Israelites that a mere reference to him as "that prophet" was enough to call attention to him without any need to add: The one who has been foretold in the Torah. Furthermore, it also shows that the advent of the prophet to whom they were referring was absolutely confirmed, for when these questions were asked of the Prophet John (peace be upon him), he did not say that no other prophet was to come and therefore the questions were irrelevant.

(3) Consider now the predictions that have been cited in the Gospel of St. John from chapter 14 to chapter 16 continuously:

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him: but ye know him; for he dwells with you, and shall be in you. (14: 16-17).

These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (14: 25-26).

Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. (14: 30).

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceeds from the Father, he shall testify of me. (15: 26).

Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. (16: 7).

I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you. (16: 12 15).

(4) In order to determine the exact meaning of these passages one should first know that the language spoken by the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) and his contemporary Palestinians was a dialect of the Aramaic language, called Syriac. More than 200 years before the birth of Jesus (peace be upon him) when the Seleucides came to power, Hebrew bad become extinct in this territory and been replaced by Syriac. Although under the influence of the Seleucide and then the Roman empires, Greek also had reached this area, it remained confined only to that class of the people, who after having access to the higher government circles, or in order to seek access to them, had become deeply Hellenized. The common Palestinians used a particular dialect of Syriac, the accents and pronunciations and idioms of which were different from the Syriac spoken in and around Damascus. The common people of the country were wholly unaware of Greek. So much so that when in A.D. 70 the Roman General Titus, after taking Jerusalem, addressed the citizens in Greek, he had to be

translated into Syriac, This makes it evident that whatever the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) spoke to his disciples must necessarily be only in Syriac.

Secondly, one should know that all the four Gospels contained in the Bible were written by the Greek-speaking Christians, who had entered Christianity after the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him). The traditions of the sayings and acts of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) reached to them through the Syriac speaking Christians, not in the written form but as oral traditions, and they translated these Syriac traditions into their own language and incorporated them in their books. None of the extant Gospels was written before 70. The Gospel of St. John was probably compiled a century after the Prophet Jesus in Ephesus, a city in Asia Minor. Moreover, no original copy even of these Gospels in Greek, in which these were originally written, exists. None of the Greek manuscripts that have been discovered and collected from here and there belong to the period before the inventions of printing dates before the 4th century. Therefore, it is difficult to say what changes might have taken place in these during the first three centuries. What makes it particularly doubtful is that the Christians have been regarding it as quite lawful to tamper with their Gospels intentionally as and when they liked. The author of the article Bible in Encyclopedia Britannica (Ed. 19731) writes:

The main sources of the evidence and of the variations are the manuscripts of the N.T., dating from the and to the 10th century or even later. In the process of copying, these manuscripts underwent the revisions that necessitate textual criticism. Some of these revisions were unintentional, as the scribe skipped a word or a line or as he mistook one character for another. Other revisions came from the desire of the scribe to harmonize the text of one Gospel with another or of one Testament with the other; or from his pious wish to correct or clarify the text at another point. But now that variations in the text exist, collection of the manuscripts is a difficult task.

Under such conditions as these, it is very difficult to say with absolute certainty that the sayings of the Prophet Jesus (peace be on him) found in the Gospels have been preserved, reproduced and cited faithfully and accurately, and that no change has taken place anywhere.

The third and a very vital point is that even after the conquest by the Muslims, for about three centuries, the Palestine Christians retained Syriac, which was not replaced by Arabic until the 9th century A.D. The information that the Muslim scholars of the first three centuries obtained through the Syriac speaking Christians about the Christian traditions, should be more authentic and reliable than the information of those people whom it reached through translation after translation from Syriac into Greek and then from Greek into Latin. For there were greater chances of the original Syriac words spoken by the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) remaining preserved with the Palestinian Christians than with others.

(5) Keeping these undeniable historical facts in mind, let us consider the fact that in the passages cited from St. John's Gospel above, the Prophet Jesus (peace be on him) is giving the news about one coming after him, about whom he says: He will be the prince of this world (Sarwar Alam), he shall abide with you forever, he will guide you into all truth and he shall testify of me (i.e. of Jesus himself). By interpolating words like the Holy Ghost and the Spirit of truth, in the passages of St. John. every effort has been made to corrupt the real

meaning, but despite that if these passages are read carefully, one can clearly see that the one whose coming has been foretold, will not be a spirit but a man, and an extraordinary man, whose teaching will be universal, all pervasive and enduring till the Last Day. For this particular person the word Madadgar (helper) has been used in the Urdu translation, and the Greek word used in St John's original Gospel, according to the Christians, was Peracletus. But the Christian scholars themselves have been faced with great difficulties in determining its meaning. In the original Greek Paraclete has several meanings: to call to a particular place, to call for help, to warn, to tempt and incite, to implore and pray. Moreover, in Hellenic sense, it gives these meanings: to console, to give satisfaction, to encourage. Wherever this word has been used in the Bible, it does not fit in well with the context anywhere. Origen has translated it consolateor at some places and deprecator at others. But the other commentators have rejected both these translations, for in the first place these are not correct according to Greek grammar; second, these meanings do not go well with context wherever this word has occurred in the passages. Some other translators have translated it Teacher, but this meaning, too, cannot be derived from the Greek usage, Tertullian and Augustine have preferred the word Advocate, and some other scholars have adopted words like assistant, comforter, cosoler, etc. (See Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature under Peracletus).

(6) Now, it is interesting to note that in Greek itself there is another word periclytos, which means the praised one. This word is exactly synonymous with Muhammad (peace be upon him). In pronunciation it closely resembles Peracletus. It cannot be a remote possibility that the Christians who have been used to making alterations in their religious books as and when they liked, might have effected a little variation in the spelling of this word in the prophecy related by St. John when they saw that it went against their set belief and creed. The original Greek Gospel composed by St. John does not exist either; therefore it is not possible to check which of the two words had actually been used in it.

(7) But the decision is not solely dependent on this as to which word had St. John actually used in Greek, for in any case that too was, a translation and the Prophet Jesus' (peace be upon him) language, as we have explained above, it was Palestinian Syriac. Therefore, the word that he might have used in his good news must necessarily be a Syriac word. Fortunately, we find that original Syriac word in the Life of Muhammad by Ibn Hisham. Along with that we also come to know its synonymous Greek word from the same book. Ibn Hisham, on the authority of Ibn Ishaq, has reproduced the complete translation of 15: 23-27 and of 16:1 of the Gospel according to yuhannus (Yuhanna: John), and has used the Syriac word Munhamanna instead of the Greek Paraclete. Then, Ibn Ishaq or Ibn Hisham has explained it this: The Munhamanna in Syriac means Muhammad and in Greek the Peracletus. (Ibn Hisham, vol. 1, p. 248). Now, historically, the language of the common Palestinian Christians until the 9th century A.D. was Syriac. This land was included in the Islamic territories in the first half of the 7th century. Ibn Ishaq died in 768 A.D. and Ibn Hisham in 828 A.D. This means that in the time of both the Palestinian Christians spoke Syriac, and for neither it was difficult to have contacts with the Christian subjects of their country. Moreover, in those days there also lived hundreds of thousands of Greek speaking Christians in the Islamic territories. Therefore, It was also not difficult for them to find out which particular word of Greek was synonymous with a certain word of Syriac. Now, if in the translation reproduced by Ibn Ishaq the Syriac word Munhamanna has been used, and

Ibn Ishaq or Ibn Hisham has explained that its Arabic equivalent is Muhammad and Greek Peracletus, there remains no room for the doubt that the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) had given the good news of the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) himself by name. Along with that it also becomes known that in the Greek Gospel of John the word actually used was Periclytos, which the Christian scholars changed into Peracletus at some later time.

(8) Even an older historical evidence in this connection is the following tradition from Abdullah bin Masud: When the Negus summoned the emigrants from Makkah to his court and heard the teachings of the Prophet (peace be upon him) from Jaafar bin Abi Talib, he said: God bless you and him from whom you have come. I bear witness that he is Messenger of Allah, and he is the same one whose mention we find in the Gospel, and the same one good news about whom had been given by Jesus (peace be upon him) son of Mary. (Musnad Ahmad). This has been related in Hadih from Jaafar himself and also from Umm Salamah. This not only proves that in the beginning of the 7th century the Negus knew that the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) had foretold the coming of a Prophet, but also that a clear pointer to that prophet existed in the Gospel on the basis of which the Negus did not take long to from the opinion that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was that prophet. However, from this tradition one cannot know whether the source of information with the Negus about the good news given by the Prophet Jesus was (peace be upon him) this same Gospel of St. John, or whether there existed some other means also at that time for this information.

(9) The truth is that the four Gospels which the Christian Church has recognized as Canonical are neither an authentic means of knowing the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) Prophecies about the Prophet (peace be upon him) nor are they a reliable source for knowing the correct biography and the original teachings of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) himself, but by far the more trustworthy means for this is the Gospel of Barnabas which the Church has declared as heretical and apocryphal. The Christians have done whatever they could to conceal it, and it remained lost to the world for centuries. In the 16th century only one copy of its Italian translation existed in the library of Pope Sixtus V, and no one was allowed to read it. In the beginning of the 18th century it came into the hands of one John Toland. Then, changing different hands it found its way in 1738 into the Imperial Library of Vienna, In 1907 an English translation of this Italian manuscript was printed at the Clarendon Press, Oxford, but probably soon after its printing the Christian world realized that the book cut at the very root of the faith which was attributed to the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him). Therefore, its printed copies were destroyed somehow, and then it never went into print any more. Another copy of it, a Spanish translation from the Italian manuscript, existed in the 18th century, which has been mentioned by George Sale in his Preface and Preliminary Discourse to the English translation of the Quran. This too was made to disappear, and no trace of it exists anywhere today. I had an opportunity to see a copy of the English translation published from Oxford and I have read it word by word. I feel that it is indeed a great blessing of which the Christians have kept themselves deprived only out of prejudice and stubbornness.

Wherever this Gospel is mentioned in Christian literature, it ill condemned as a forged Gospel, which perhaps some Muslim has composed and ascribed to Barnabas. But this is a great falsehood which has been uttered only for the reason that it contains at several places

clear prophecies about the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). In the first place, a perusal of this Gospel shows that it could not have been written by a Muslim. Secondly, had it been written by a Muslim, it would have spread extensively among the Muslims and the writings of the Islamic scholars would have contained plentiful references to it. On the contrary, the Muslims had no knowledge of its existence before George Sale wrote his Preliminary Discourse to his translation of the Quran. No mention of any kind is found of the Gospel of Barnabas in the books of the Muslim writers like Tabari, Yaqubi, Masudi, Al-Benrni, Ibn Hazm and others, who were fully conversant with Christian literature when they discuss Christianity. The best catalogs of the books found in the libraries of the Islamic world were Al-Fihrist of Ibn an-Nadim and Kashfas-Zunnun of Haji-Khalifah, and these too are without any mention of it. No Muslim scholar before the 19th century has ever mentioned the name of the Gospel of Barnabas, The third and most important argument to refute the claim that the Gospel has been written by a Muslim is that about 75 years before the birth of the Prophet (peace be upon him), in the time of Pogo Gelasius I, the list prepared of canonical books, which were banned for reading by a Papal decree also included the Gospel of Barnabas (Evangelium Barnabe). The question is: Who was the Muslim at that time, who forged this Gospel? The Christian scholars themselves have admitted that the Gospel of Barnabas remained prevalent in Syria, Spain, Egypt, etc. during the early days of Christianity for a long time and that it was banned as heretical in the 6th century.

(10) Before we reproduce the good news given by the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) about the advent of the Prophet (peace be upon him) from this Gospel, it would be useful to introduce it briefly so that the reader may know its importance and also understand why the Christians are so angry with it.

None of the writers of the four Gospels which have been included in the Bible as authentic and canonical, was a companion of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), and none of them has either made the claim that the information recorded by him in his Gospel was obtained from the companions of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), They have, in fact, made no mention of the sources from which they obtained their information, which could show whether the reporter himself witnessed the events and heard the sayings that he was describing or whether they reached him through one or more than one transmitters. On the contrary, the author of the Gospel of Barnabas states that he is one of the original twelve disciples of Jesus (peace be upon him), that he followed Jesus (peace be upon him) from the beginning till the end, and that he is recording the events that be witnessed with his own eyes and the sayings that he heard with his own ears. Not only this, in the end of the Book he says that on his departure from the world the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) had made him responsible for removing the prevalent misunderstandings about himself and for informing the world of the correct events.

Who was this Barnabas? In the Acts of the Apostles a person so named is very frequently mentioned. He came of a Jewish family of Cyprus. He has been praised for his services in connection with the preaching of Christianity and rendering help and assistance to the followers of the Christ. But nowhere has it been told as to when he embraced Christianity; his name does not either appear in the list of the twelve original disciples which has been given in the three Gospels. Therefore, one cannot say that the author of this Gospel is the same Barnabas or some other person. The list of the disciples given by Barnabas differs from the one given by Matthew and Mark only in two names: Thomas instead of whom Barnabas

has given his own name and Simon the Canaanite instead of whom he has named Judas son of Jacob. In the Gospel of Luke this second name is also there. Therefore, it would be correct to assume that some time later only in order to exclude Barnabas from the disciples the name of Thomas was included so as to be rid of his Gospel. To effect such changes in their scriptures has never been anything unlawful with the Christian scholars.

If one goes through the Gospel with an unbiased mind and compares it with the four Gospels of the New Testament, one cannot help feeling that it is far superior to them. In it the events of the life of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) have been described in much greater detail, in a manner as though somebody was actually witnessing what was happening and was himself a partner in those events. As against the incoherent stories of the four Gospels this historical account is more coherent. From it one can fully understand the series of events unfolding themselves. In it the teachings of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) have been given in a clearer, more effective and expanded form than in the other Gospels. The themes of the Unity of God, refutation of polytheism, attributes of God, essence of worship and morality have been presented in a most forceful, rational and exhaustive way. In the other Gospels one does not find even a fraction of the instructive parables which clothe the themes. This Gospel also shows in much greater detail what wise methods the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) used for the teaching and training of his disciples. Anyone who has any acquaintance with the language, style and temperament of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) will be compelled to admit after a perusal of this Gospel that it is not a fictitious document, which might have been forged in a later period. But the truth is that in it the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) appears before us in his true grandeur and glory much more conspicuously than anywhere in the four canonical Gospels. In it there is no trace of those contradictions which abound in the four Gospels in respect of his different sayings.

In the Gospel of Barnabas the life of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) and his teachings are found precisely according to the life and teachings of a Prophet of God. He presents himself as a Prophet, and confirms all the former Prophets and Books. He clearly states that there is no other means of knowing the truth except through the teachings of the Prophets, and the one who abandons the Prophets, in fact, abandons God. He presents the doctrines of the Unity of God, Prophethood, and the Hereafter precisely as taught by all the Prophets. He exhorts the people to perform the Prayer, observe the Fast and pay the Zakat. The description that Barnabas has given of his Prayers at a number of places shows that the times he observed for his Prayers were the same times of Fajr (Dawn), Zuhr (Early afternoon), Asr (Late afternoon), Maghrib (Sunset), Isha (Late Evening) and Tahajjud (Before Dawn), and he always performed his ablutions before the Prayer. He acknowledged David (peace be upon him) and Solomon (peace be upon him) as the Prophets, although the Jews and Christians have excluded them from the list of the Prophets. He regarded the Prophet Ishmael (peace be upon him) as the intended victim of the sacrifice, and he makes a Jewish rabbi admit that the intended victim was indeed the Prophet Ishmael (peace be upon him), and not the Prophet Isaac (peace be upon him), as the Israelites have made the people believe. His teachings about the Hereafter, Resurrection, Hell and Heaven are about the same as given in the Quran.

(11) The reason why the Christians have become opponents of the Gospel of Barnabas is not that it contains clear and definite good news about the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon

him) at several places, for they had rejected this Gospel even before his birth. To understand the real cause of their anger a little further discussion is needed.

The earliest followers of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) believed him only as a Prophet, followed the Mosaic Law, did not detach themselves from the other Israelites in the matter of beliefs, religious injunctions and rites of worship, and differed from the Jews only in that they had affirmed faith in the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) as the Messiah (the Christ) whereas the Jews had refused to acknowledge him as the Messiah. Later, when St. Paul entered this community, he also started preaching and proclaiming this religion to the Romans and the Greeks as well as other non-Jewish and non-Israelite communities.

For this purpose he invented an altogether new religion, the beliefs, doctrines and injunctions of which were entirely different from those taught by the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him). This man had never met the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) but was a bitter enemy of him during his lifetime, and even remained an enemy of his followers for several years after him. Then, when he entered his community and started inventing a new religion, he did not cite any saying of Jesus (peace be upon him) as his authority but based everything on his own inspiration. The only object before him while framing the new religion was to make it acceptable to the gentile world. He declared that a Christian was free from all restrictions of the Jewish Law. He abolished all restrictions of the lawful and the unlawful in food. He repudiated the circumcision, which was particularly disagreeable to the non-Jewish world. So much so that he innovated the doctrine of the divinity of Christ and his being son of God and the Atonement for the original sin of mankind by dying on the Cross, for it immensely suited the polytheistic taste of the common man. The early followers of Christ resisted these innovations, but the flood gate opened by St. Paul caused a huge multitude of the non-Jewish Christians to enter this religion against whom the handful of the Christians could not stand for long. However, until about the end of the 3rd century A.D. there were still many people who denied the divinity of Christ. But in the beginning of the 4th century (in 325 A.D.) the Nicaea Council recognized the Pauline doctrines and admitted them as the basis of Christianity. Then the Roman Empire itself turned Christian and in the reign of Emperor Theodosius Christianity became the state religion. Consequently, all the books that clashed with this doctrine were declared as heretical, and only those books were held as canonical which agreed with it. In 367 A.D. for the first time a collection of reliable and accepted books was issued by an epistle of Athanaseus, which was ratified in 382 A.D. in a meeting under Pope Damasius. Towards the end of the 5th century Pope Gelasius confirming this collection as authentic also issued a list of the books which were spurious, whereas no Christian scholar has ever made the claim that any of the Pauline doctrines which were made the criterion for declaring certain religious books as authentic and others as not authentic, had been taught by the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) himself. More than that, even in the Gospels which are admitted to the canonical collection no saying of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) himself is recorded, which may confirm these doctrines.

The Gospel of Barnabas was included among the rejected books because it clashed with this official creed. Its author at the outset states that the object of his Gospel is:

To reform the ideas of those who, being deceived of Satan, under presence of piety, are preaching most impious doctrine, calling Jesus son of God, repudiating the circumcision

ordained of God forever, and permitting every unclean meat; among whom also Paul hath been deceived.

He says that during the lifetime of Jesus, first of all the polytheistic Roman soldiers witnessing his miracles started calling him God and son of God. Then this epidemic infected the common Israelites also. At this Jesus was much grieved and upset. He repudiated this false belief about himself repeatedly and cursed those who spoke thus of him. Then he sent his disciples throughout Judea to refute it and blessed them also with the ability to work the same miracles which issued from himself, so that the people be made to give up the false idea that the one who performed those miracles was God or son of God. In this connection he reproduces the full discourses of the Prophet Jesus in which he repudiated this false belief and tells how upset he was at the circulation of this mischief. Moreover, he strongly refutes the Pauline doctrine that Christ died on the Cross. He narrates as an eye-witness that when Judas Iscariot took money from the high priest and brought soldiers to have Jesus arrested, four angels at God Almighty's command carried him away and Judas was so changed in speech and in face as to be like Jesus. Thus, it was he who was put on the cross and not Jesus. Thus, this Gospel cuts at the root of Pauline Christianity and ratifies what the Quran says in this regard, whereas 115 years before the revelation of the Quran, the Christian priests had rejected it on account of these very assertion.

(12) The above discussion makes it abundantly clear that the Gospel of Barnabas is, in fact, a more reliable Gospel than the so called canonical Gospels. It represents the Prophet Jesus' (peace be upon him) teachings and the events and deeds of his life and his sayings correctly; it is the Christian people's own misfortune that they have lost, only because of their stubbornness, the opportunity they were given to correct their beliefs and to know the real teachings of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him). Now we can quote with full satisfaction the glad tidings about the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), which Barnabas has reported from the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him). In these glad tidings at some places the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) mentions the Prophet by name, at some he calls him Rasul-Allah (Messenger of Allah), at some he uses the word Messiah for him, at some Admirable, and at other places employs sentences which give the same meaning as: La-ilaha-ill-Allah, Muhammad ar-Rasul-Allah. It is difficult for us to reproduce all pieces of the good news here, for they are scattered throughout the book in different wordings and in different contexts. We reproduce below only a few of them as specimen:

For all the prophets, that are one hundred and forty-four thousand, whom God hath sent into the world have spoken darkly. But after me shall come the Splendor of all the prophets and holy ones, and shall shed light upon the darkness of all that the Prophets have said, because he is the messenger of God. (Ch. 17).

The Levites and the scribes said: If thou be not the Messiah nor Elijah, or any prophet, wherefore dost thou preach new doctrine, and make thyself of more account than the Messiah? Jesus answered: The miracles which God worketh by my hands show that I speak that which God willeth; nor indeed do I make myself to be accounted as him of whom ye speak. For I am not worthy to unloose the ties of the hosen or the latchets of the shoes of the messenger of God whom ye call Messiah, who was made before me, and shall come after me, and shall bring the word of truth, so that this faith shall have no end. (Ch. 42).

Verily I say unto you, that every prophet when he is come hath borne to one nation only the mark of the mercy of God. And so their words were not extended save to that people to which they were sent. But the messenger of God, when he shall come, God shall give to him as it were the seal of his hand, insomuch that he shall carry salvation and mercy to all the nations of the world that shall receive his doctrine. He shall come with power upon the ungodly, and shall destroy idolatry, insomuch that he shall make Satan confounded. Continuing his speech with the disciples, the Prophet Jesus makes it clear that he will be born of the Ishmaelites, (Ch.43).

I therefore say unto you that the messenger of God is a splendor that shall give gladness to nearly all that God hath made, for he is adorned with the spirit of understanding and of counsel the spirit of wisdom and might, the spirit of fear and love, the spirit of prudence and temperance; he is adorned with the spirit of charity and mercy, the spirit of justice and piety, the spirit of gentleness and patience, which he hath received from God three times more than he hath given to all his creatures. O blessed time, when he shall come to the world. Believe me that I have seen him and have done him reverence, even as every prophet hath seen him: seeing that of his spirit God giveth to them prophecy. And when I saw him my soul was filled with consolation, saying: O Muhammad, God be with thee, and may he make me worthy to untie thy shoe latchet, for obtaining this I shall be a great prophet and holy one of God. (44).

Jesus answered: Let not your heart be troubled, neither be ye fearful: for I have not created you, but God our creator who hath created you will protect you. As for me, I am now come to the world to prepare the way for the messenger of God, who shall bring salvation to the world. But beware that ye be not deceived, for many false prophets shall come, who shall take my words and contaminate my gospel. Then said Andrew: Master, tell us some sign, that we may know him. Jesus answered: He will not come in your time, but will come some years after you, when my gospel shall be annulled, insomuch that there shall be scarcely thirty faithful. At that time God will have mercy on the world, and so he will send his messenger, over whose head will rest a white cloud, whereby he shall be known of one elect of God, and shall be by him manifested to the world. He shall come with great power against the ungodly, and shall destroy idolatry upon the earth and it rejoiceth me because that through him our God shall be known and glorified, and I shall be known to be true; and he will execute vengeance against those who shall say that I am more than man. He shall come with truth more clear than that of all the prophets. (Ch. 72).

For the promise of God was made in Jerusalem, in the temple of Solomon, and not elsewhere. But believe me, a time will come that God will give his mercy in another city, and in every place it will be possible to worship him in truth. And God in every place will have accepted true prayer with mercy ... I am indeed sent to the house of Israel as a prophet of salvation; but after me shall come the Messiah, sent of God to all the world; for whom God hath made the world. And then through all the world will God be worshiped, and mercy received. (Ch. 82).

Jesus answered: As God liveth, in whose presence my soul standeth, I am not the Messiah whom all the tribes of the earth expect, even as God promised to our father Abraham, saying: In thy seed will I bless all the tubes of the earth. (Gen. 22; 18). But when God shall take me away from the world, Satan will raise again this accursed sedition; by making the

impious believe that I am God and son of God, whence my words and my doctrine shall be contaminated, insomuch that scarcely shall there remain thirty faithful ones: whereupon God will have mercy upon the world, and will send his messenger for whom he hath made all things; who shall come from the south with power, and shall destroy the idols with the idolaters; who shall take away the dominion from Satan which he hath over men. He shall bring with him the mercy of God for salvation of them that shall believe in him, and blessed is he who shall believe his words. (Ch. 96).

The priest asked: After the coming of the messenger of God, shall other prophets come? Jesus answered: There shall not come after him true prophets sent by God, but there shall come a great number of false prophets, whereat I sorrow, For Satan shall raise them up by the just judgment of God, and they shall hide themselves undo the pretext of my gospel: (Ch. 97).

Then said the priest: How shall the Messiah be called, and what sign shall reveal his coming? Jesus answered: The name of the Messiah is admirable, for God himself gave him the name when he had created his soul, and placed it in a celestial splendor. God said: Wait Muhammad; for thy sake I will to create paradise, the world, and a great multitude of creatures whereof I make thee a present, insomuch that whoso shall bless thee shall be blessed, and whoso shall curse thee shall be accursed, When I shall send thee into the world, I shall send thee as my messenger of salvation, and thy word shall be true, insomuch that heaven and earth shall fail, but thy faith shall never fail. Muhammad is his blessed name (Ch. 97).

Barnabas writes that on one occasion Jesus spoke to his disciples and said that one of them (who was to be Judas Iscariot) would sell him to the enemies for 30 pieces of gold. Then said:

Whereupon I am sure that who shall sell me, be slain in my name, for that God shall take me up from the earth, and shall change the appearance of the traitor so that everyone shall believe him to be me; nevertheless when he dieth an evil death, I shall abide in that dishonor for a long time in the world. But when Mohammad shall come, the sacred messenger of God, that infamy shall be taken away. And this shall God do because I have confessed the truth of the Messiah, who shall give me this reward that I shall be known to be alive and to be a stranger to that death of infamy. (Ch. 1: 12).

To the disciples Jesus said: Verily I say unto you that if the truth had not been erased from the book of Moses, God would not have given to David our father the second. And if the book of David had not been contaminated, God would not have committed the Gospel to me; seeing that the Lord our God is unchangeable, and hath spoken but one message to all men. Wherefore, when the messenger of God shall come, he shall come to cleanse away all where with the ungodly have contaminated my book. (Ch.124).

In these clear and comprehensive prophecies there are only three things which at first sight appear to be doubtful.

First, that in these and in several other passages of the Gospel of Barnabas the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) has denied his own self being the Messiah.

Second, that not only in these but at many other places also in this Gospel the Messenger's actual name Muhammad (peace be upon him) has been mentioned, whereas this is not the way the Prophets make prophecies: they do not mention the actual name of the one coming in the future.

Third, that in these the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been called the Messiah.

The answer to the first objection is that not only in the Gospel of Barnabas but in the Gospel according to Luke also it is mentioned that the Prophet Jesus had forbidden his disciples to call him the Christ (the Messiah). The words in Luke are: He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God. And he strictly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing. (9: 20-21). Probably the reason was that about the Messiah whom the Israelites were awaiting, they thought he would subdue the enemies of truth by the sword. Therefore, the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) said that he was not that Messiah but he would come after him.

The answer to the second objection is that no doubt in the extant Italian translation of Barnabas the Holy Prophet's name has been written as Mohamed, but no one knows through how many different languages has this book reached the Italian. Obviously, the original Gospel of Barnabas must be in Syriac, because that was the language of Jesus (peace be upon him) and his companions. If the original book were extant, it could be seen what name of the Prophet (peace be upon him) was written in it. Now what one can assume is that originally the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) must have used the word Munhamanna as we have explained above by citing Ibn Ishaqs reference to St. John's Gospel. Then different translators may have translated it in their own languages. Later, probably some translator seeing that the name given in the prophecy was exactly synonymous with the word Mohamed may have written this very sacred name of the Prophet. Therefore, the mere appearance of this name only is not enough to give rise to the doubt that the entire Gospel of Barnabas has been forged by a Muslim.

The answer to the third objection is that the word Messiah is an Israelite technical term, which has been used in the Quran particularly for the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) for the reason that the Jews had denied his being the Messiah; otherwise it is neither a Quranic term nor has it been used anywhere in the Quran in the meaning of the Israelite term. Therefore, if the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) used the word Messiah for the Prophet (peace be upon him), and the Quran has not used this word for him, it is not right to conclude that the Gospel of Barnabas ascribes something to him which the Quran denies. In fact, it was customary with the Israelites that when somebody or something was set aside for a sacred cause, the person or thing was anointed with the holy oil on the head and consecrated. This anointing with the oil was called mesh in Hebrew, and the one thus anointed messiah. Utensils were likewise anointed and set aside for use in the house of worship. The priests were also anointed when they were appointed to priesthood. The kings and the prophets too were anointed when they were designated to kingship or prophethood by God. Thus, according to the Bible, there have been many messiahs in the history of the Israelites. The Prophet Aaron (peace be upon him) was a messiah as a priest, Moses (peace be upon him) as a priest and a prophet, Saul as a king, David as a king and a prophet, Melchizedek as a king and a priest, and Al-Yasa (Elisha) was a messiah as a prophet. Later, it was no longer regarded as necessary to appoint a person by anointing him with oil, but

somebody's being appointed by God had become synonymous with being a messiah. For instance, in I Kings, it has been said that God commanded the Prophet Elijah to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphet of Abelmehola shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. (19: 1516). None of these was anointed with oil. Their being commissioned by God amounted to their being anointed. Thus, according to the Israelite concept the word messiah was, in fact, synonymous with being commissioned by God, and in this very meaning had the Prophet Jesus (peace be on him) used this word for the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). For an explanation of the Israelite meaning of the word messiah, see Messiah in Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature).

9. The word sehr here does not mean magic but deception and fraud, which is also a well known meaning of this word in Arabic. Thus, the verse means: When the Prophet (peace be upon him) whose coming had been foretold by the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) came with the clear signs of his prophethood, the Israelites and the followers of Jesus declared his claim to prophethood to be a deception and fraud.

وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُوَ يُدْعٰٓى اِلَى الْاِسْلَامِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ 7

(61:7) Who would be more unjust than he who invents a lie about Allah[10] the while he is being called to Islam?[11]Allah does not direct such evildoing folk to the Right Way.

10. Who invents a lie against Allah: Declares the Prophet sent by Allah to be a false prophet and regards the revelations of Allah to His Prophet as forged by the Prophet himself.

11. That is, there could be no greater injustice than that besides calling a true Prophet (peace be upon him) a false prophet, one should start hurling abuses on him and employing all sorts of lies and false allegations and slanders to defeat his mission although the Prophet (peace be upon him) is calling him to Allah's worship and His obedience.

يُرِيْدُوْنَ لِيُطْفِـُٔوْا نُوْرَ اللّٰهِ بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَاللّٰهُ مُتِمُّ نُوْرِهٖ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ 8

(61:8) They seek to extinguish Allah's light (by blowing) with their mouths, but Allah shall spread His light in all its fullness, howsoever the unbelievers may abhor this.[12]

12. One should bear in mind that these verses were sent down in A.H. 3 after the Battle of Uhud, when Islam was confined only to the city of Al-Madinah, the Muslims were only a few thousands in number, and entire Arabia was bent upon wiping out this religion. The defeat that the Muslims had suffered at Uhud, had sullied their image of power and the tribes of the surrounding areas had been emboldened. Under such conditions it was said: No one will succeed in blowing out this light of Allah, but it will shine forth and spread throughout the world. This was a clear prediction which literally came true. Who could

know except Allah at that time of what was the future of Islam? Human eyes could only see that it was a flickering candle and violent winds were blowing to put it out forever.

هُوَ الَّذِیۡۤ اَرۡسَلَ رَسُوۡلَهٗ بِالۡهُدٰی وَدِیۡنِ الۡحَقِّ لِیُظۡهِرَهٗ عَلَی الدِّیۡنِ کُلِّهٖ ۙ وَلَوۡ کَرِهَ الۡمُشۡرِکُوۡنَ ۚ 9

(61:9) He it is Who has sent forth the Messenger with the Guidance and the True Religion that He may make it prevail over all religion, however those that associate aught with Allah in His Divinity might dislike this.[13]

13. The idolaters: The mushriks, those who combine the service of others with the service of Allah and mix other religions in the religion of Allah. Those who are not prepared to see that the entire system of lift is established on the obedience and guidance of One God. Those who insist that they will worship any deity they like and base their their beliefs and morals and civilization on any philosophy and doctrine they please. As against the ways of such people, it is being said that the Messenger of Allah has not been sent to make a compromise with than, but with the object that he should cause the guidance and religion of truth which he has brought from Allah to prevail over all religions, i.e. every aspect of the way of life. This mission he has to accomplish in any case whether the disbelievers and polytheists like it or not, and whoever they support it or resist it. This declaration has been made in the Quran at two other places. In (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 33)and (Surah Al-Fath, Ayat 28). Here it has been re-iterated for the third time. (For further explanation, see(E.N. 32 of Surah At- Taubah) and (E.N. 51 of Surah Al-Fath).

یٰۤاَیُّهَا الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا هَلۡ اَدُلُّکُمۡ عَلٰی تِجَارَةٍ تُنۡجِیۡکُمۡ مِّنۡ عَذَابٍ اَلِیۡمٍ 10

(61:10) Believers, shall I direct you to a commerce[14] that will deliver you from a grievous chastisement?

14. A bargain is something in which a person employs his wealth, time, labor and talent in order to earn a profit. In the same sense the faith and jihad in the cause of Allah have been called a bargain, as if to say: If you exert all your powers and spend all your resources in the way of Allah, you will get the profits that are being mentioned in the following verses. This same theme has been expressed in Surah At-Taubah in another way. (See (E.N. 106 of Surah At-Taubah).

تُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوۡلِهٖ وَتُجَاهِدُوۡنَ فِیۡ سَبِیۡلِ اللّٰهِ بِاَمۡوَالِکُمۡ وَاَنۡفُسِکُمۡ ؕ ذٰلِکُمۡ خَیۡرٌ لَّکُمۡ اِنۡ کُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ۙ 11

(61:11) Have faith in Allah and His Messenger[15] and strive in the Way of Allah with your possessions and your lives. That is better for you if you only knew.[16]

15. When the believers are asked to believe, it automatically gives the meaning that they should become sincere Muslims: they should not rest content with oral profession of the faith but should be ready and willing to make every sacrifice in the cause of their faith.

16. That is, this bargain is far superior for them to every worldly bargain.

يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَيُدْخِلْكُمْ جَنَّٰتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَٰرُ وَمَسَٰكِنَ طَيِّبَةً فِي
جَنَّٰتِ عَدْنٍ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ۙ 12

(61:12) He will forgive you your sins and will admit you to Gardens beneath which rivers flow. He will lodge you in excellent mansions in the Gardens of eternity. That is the supreme triumph.[17]

17. The real profits of the bargain that they will attain in the eternal lift of the Hereafter are:

(1) Immunity from the punishment of Allah.

(2) Forgiveness of sins.

(3) Entry into the Paradise the blessings of which are eternal and everlasting.

وَأُخْرَىٰ تُحِبُّونَهَا ۖ نَصْرٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَفَتْحٌ قَرِيبٌ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ 13

(61:13) He will also grant you the other favour that you desire: help from Allah and a victory that will come soon.[18]Give glad tidings of this to the believers.

18. Although victory and success in the world is a great blessing of Allah, yet for the believer the thing of real importance is not this but the success of the Hereafter. That is why the gain of the worldly life has been mentioned as second and the result accruing in the Hereafter first.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا أَنصَارَ اللَّهِ كَمَا قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ لِلْحَوَارِيِّينَ مَنْ
أَنصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ ۖ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنصَارُ اللَّهِ فَآمَنَت طَّائِفَةٌ مِّن بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ
وَكَفَرَت طَّائِفَةٌ ۖ فَأَيَّدْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَىٰ عَدُوِّهِمْ فَأَصْبَحُوا ظَٰهِرِينَ ۝ 14

(61:14) Believers, become Allah's helpers, as Jesus, son of Mary, said to the disciples:[19] "Who is my helper in (calling people) to Allah?" The disciples had responded by saying: "We are Allah's helpers."[20] Then a section of the Children of Israel believed and a section rejected the call. Thereafter We aided the believers against their enemies, and they prevailed.[21]

19. For the companions of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) the word disciples generally has been used in the Bible, but later the term apostle became prevalent for them among the Christians, and in the sense that they were God's apostles, but in the sense that the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) used to send them to different parts of Palestine as his preachers. Among the Jews this word was already in use for those who were sent to collect subscriptions for the Temple. However, the Quranic term hawari is better than both the Christian terms. The essence of this word is hur, which means whiteness. The washer man is called hawari because he whitens clothes by washing them. A pure and un-adulterated thing is also called hawari. The flour from which bran has been sifted is known as huwwara. In this very meaning this word is used for a sincere friend and an unselfish supporter. Ibn Sayyidah says: Anyone who exaggerates in helping another is his hawari. (Lisan al-Arab).

20. This is the last place in the Holy Quran where those who exert themselves in calling the people to Allah's religion and to cause it to become dominant over disbelief, have been called helpers of Allah. Before this, this very theme has been expressed in (Aal-Imran, Ayat 52); (Surah Al- Hajj, Ayat 40); (Surah Muhammad, Ayat 7); (Surah Al-Hadid, Ayat 25) and (Surah Al-Hashr, Ayat 8). And we have explained these verses in (E.N. 50 of Surah Aal-Imran); (E.N. 84 of Surah Al-Hajj); (E.N. 12 of Surah Muhammad); (E.N. 47 of Surah Al-Hadid). Moreover, in (E.N. 9 of Surah Muhammad) light has been also thrown on an aspect of this question. In spite of this some people seem to have the confusion that when Allah Almighty is All-Powerful, Self-Sufficient, and Independent of the help of all His creatures, how then can a man be a helper of Allah? To remove this confusion we shall further explain this point here.

In fact, these people have not been called helpers of Allah for the reason that Allah, Lord of the worlds, (God forbid) stood in need of any help from some of His creatures, but because in the sphere of life in which Allah Himself has granted man freedom of belief and disbelief, obedience and disobedience. He does not will to make the people His believers and obedient servants by means of His power and might. Instead, He adopts the method of admonition and instruction to show them the right way through His Prophets and Books. The one who accepts this admonition and instruction willingly is a Momin. The one who submits practically to His commands is a Muslim and devout Godworshiper. The one who adopts an attitude of Godconsciousness is a Muttaqi. The one who vies with others for good works is a Muhsin. And over and above this, the one who starts working for the reformation of the people by means of the same method of admonition and instruction and for establishing the system of Allah's obedience instead of disbelief and wickedness, is declared by Allah as His own helper, as has been mentioned in clear words at several places in the verses cited above. If the object were to designate such people as helpers of Allah's religion and not of Allah, the words would have been ansaru din-Allah and not ansar-Allah, yansuruna din-Allah and not yansurun- Allah, intansuruna din-Allah and not in-iansurun-Allah. When in order to convey and express a theme; Allah has adopted one and the same

style at several places, successively, it proves conclusively that the actual object is to designate these people as helpers of Allah. But this helpfulness, God forbid, is not in the sense that these people fulfill some need of Allah for which He requires their help, but it is in the sense that these people participate in the cause which Allah wills to accomplish through His Prophets and His Books instead of His great power and might.

21. Those who disbelieved in Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) are the Jews, and those who believed in him are the Christians as well as the Muslims, and Allah granted both these domination over the disbelievers of Christ. This is meant to requires the Muslims that just as the believers of Christ have dominated over his disbelievers in the past, so will the believers of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) prevail over his disbelievers.

62. Surah Al Jumuah (The Friday Congregation)

Name

It is derived from the sentence idha nudiya-lis-salat-imin-yaum-il- Jumu'ati of verse 9. Although in this Surah injunctions about the Friday congregational Prayer also have been given, yet "Jumu'ah" is not the title of its subject-matter as a whole, but this name too, like the names of other Surahs, is only a symbolic title.

Period of Revelation

The period of the revelation of the first section (vv. 1-8) is A. H. 7, and probably it was sent down, on the occasion of the conquest of Khaiber or soon after it. Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i and Ibn Jarir have related on the authority of Hadrat Abu Hurairah that he and other Companions were sitting in the Holy Prophet's assembly when these verses were revealed. About Abu Hurairah it is confirmed historically that he entered Islam after the truce of Hudaibiyah and before the conquest of Khaiber, and Khaiber was conquered, according to Ibn Hisham, in Muharram, and, according to Ibn Sa`d, in Jamadi al-Awwal, A.H. 7. Thus presumably Allah might have sent down these verses, addressing the Jews, when their last stronghold had fallen to the Muslims, or these might have been revealed when, seeing the fate of Khaiber, all the Jewish settlements of northern Hijaz had surrendered to the Islamic government.

The second section (vv. 9-11) was sent down shortly after the emigration, for the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) had established the Friday congregational Prayer on the 5th day after his arrival at Madinah. The incident that has been referred to in the last verse of this section must have occurred at a time when the people had not yet received full training in the etiquette of religious congregations.

Theme and Subject Matter

As we have explained above, the two sections of this Surah were sent down in two different periods. That is why their themes as well as their audiences are different. Although there is a kind of harmony between them on account of which they have been put together in one Surah, yet we should understand their themes separately before we consider the question of their harmony.

The first section was sent down at a time when all Jewish efforts to obstruct the message of Islam during the past six years had failed. First. in Madinah as many as three of their powerful tribes had done whatever they could to frustrate the mission of the Holy Prophet, with the result that one of the tribes was completely exterminated and the other two were exiled. Then by intrigue and conspiracy they brought many of the Arab tribes together to advance on Madinah, but in the Battle of the Trench they were all repulsed. After this, Khaiber had become their stronghold, where a large number of the Jews expelled from Madinah also had taken refuge. At the time these verses were revealed, that too was taken without any extraordinary effort, and the Jews at their own request agreed to live there as tenants of the Muslims. After this final defeat the Jewish power in Arabia came to an end. Then, Wad-il-Qura, Fadak, Taima', Tabuk, all surrendered one after the other, so much so

that all Arabian Jews became subdued to the same Islam which they were not prepared to tolerate before. This was the occasion when Allah Almighty once again addressed them in this Surah, and probably this was the last and final address that was directed to them in the Qur'an. In this they have been reminded of three things:

1. "You refused to believe in this Messenger only because he was born among a people whom you contemptuously call the "gentiles." You were under the false delusion that the Messenger must necessarily belong to your own community. You seemed to have been convinced that anyone who claimed to be a prophet from outside your community, must be an impostor, for this office had been reserved for your race, and a messenger could never be raised among the "gentiles." But among the same gentiles Allah has raised a Messenger who is reciting His Book in front of your very eyes, is purifying souls, and showing the Right Way to the people whose misdeeds are well known to you. This is Allah's bounty, which He may bestow on anyone He may please. You have no monopoly over it so that He may bestow it over whomever you may please and may withhold it from whomever you may desire it to be withheld".
2. "You had been made bearers of the Torah, but you did not understand your responsibility for it nor discharged it as you should have. You are like the donkey which is loaded with books, and which does not know what burden it is bearing. Rather you are worse than the donkey, for the donkey is devoid of sense, but you are intelligent. You not only shirk your responsibility of being bearers of Allah's revelations deliberately, Yet, you are under the delusion that you are Allah's favorites and the blessing of apostleship has been reserved for you alone. More than that, you seem to entertain the notion that whether you fulfill the demands of Allah's message or not, Allah In any case is bound not to make any other than you the bearer of His message."
3. "If you really were Allah's favorites and you were sure of having a place of honor and high rank reserved with Him, you would not have feared death so much as to prefer a life of disgrace to death. It is only because of this fear of death that you have suffered humiliation after humiliation during the past few years. Your this condition is by itself a proof that you are fully conscious of your misdeeds, and your conscience is aware that if you die with these misdeeds, you will meet with a greater disgrace before Allah in the Hereafter than in this world."

This is the subject-matter of the first section. The second section that was sent down many years later, was appended to this Surah because in it Allah has bestowed Friday on the Muslims as against the Sabbath of the Jews, and Allah wanted to warn the Muslims not to treat their Friday as the Jews had treated their Sabbath. This section was sent down on an occasion when a trade caravan arrived in Madinah right at the time of the Friday congregational service and hearing its din and drum the audience, except for 12 men, left the Prophet's Mosque and rushed out to the caravan, although the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) at that time was delivering the Sermon. Thereupon it was enjoined that after the call is sounded for the Friday Prayer all trade and business and other occupations become forbidden. The believers should then suspend every kind of transaction and hasten to the remembrance of Allah. However, when the Prayer is over, they have the right to disperse in the land to resume their normal occupations. This section could be made an independent Surah in view of the commandments that it contains about the

congregational service on Friday, and could also be included in some other Surah, but, instead, it has been included here particularly in the verses in which the Jews have been warned of the causes of their evil end. Its wisdom in our opinion is the same as we have explained above.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

يُسَبِّحُ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الۡاَرۡضِ الۡمَلِكِ الۡقُدُّوۡسِ الۡعَزِيۡزِ الۡحَكِيۡمِ 1

(62:1) All that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth extols the glory of Allah, the Sovereign, the Holy, the All- Mighty, the All-Wise.[1]

1. For explanation, see (E.Ns 1, 2 of Surah Al-Hadid), and (E.Ns 36, 37, 41 of Surah Al-Hashr). This introduction bears a deep relevance to the theme that follows. In spite of the fact that the Jews of Arabia were witnessing clear signs of Prophethood in the person of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his high character and works and in spite of the clear good news given by the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) in the Torah, which only applied to him, they were denying him only because they did not want to acknowledge the prophethood of a person who did not belong to their own community and race. They openly proclaimed that they would believe only in that which had come to them, and would not accept any teaching, which came through a non-Israelite prophet, even if it was from God. For this attitude in the following verses they have been reproved. Hence the reason for beginning the discourse with the introductory sentence. First, it says that everything in the universe is glorifying Allah; that is, the entire universe testifies that Allah is free from all those faults and weaknesses because of which the Jews have formed the concept of their racial superiority. He is not related to anyone. He has nothing to do with favoritism. He treats all His creatures with equal justice, mercy and care. No particular race and nation is His favorite so that He may be bound to bless it whatever it may do. And He is not prejudiced against any race or nation so that He may deprive it of His bounties even if it possesses all the good qualities. Then, it says that He is the Sovereign; that is, no worldly power can restrict His authority and powers, as if to say: You, O Jews, are His servants and subjects. It is not for you to decide whom He should appoint His Messenger, and whom He should not, for your guidance. Then, it says that He is Holy; that is, He is far exalted and glorified that His judgments may be mistaken. Human judgments may have mistakes but His decrees are perfect. In the end, two more attributes of Allah have been mentioned. That He is All-Mighty, i.e. none can fight Him and win and that He is All-Wise, i.e. whatever He does, it is always the very demand of wisdom, and His plans and designs are so wellplanned that none in the world can hinder and frustrate them.

هُوَ الَّذِيۡ بَعَثَ فِي الۡاُمِّيّٖنَ رَسُوۡلًا مِّنۡهُمۡ يَتۡلُوۡا عَلَيۡهِمۡ اٰيٰتِهٖ وَيُزَكِّيۡهِمۡ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الۡكِتٰبَ وَالۡحِكۡمَةَ ۚ وَاِنۡ كَانُوۡا مِنۡ قَبۡلُ لَفِيۡ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيۡنٍ ۙ 2

(62:2) He it is Who has sent to the gentiles a Messenger from among themselves,[2] one who rehearses to them His verses, purifies their lives, and imparts to them the Book and the Wisdom[3] although before that they were in utter error;[4]

2. Here the word ummi (gentile) has been used as a Jewish term and there is a subtlety in it. The verse means: The All- Mighty and All-Wise Allah has raised a Messenger (peace be upon him) among the Arabs whom the Jews contemptuously consider the gentiles and much below themselves, The Messenger (peace be upon him) has not risen of his own wish and will, but has been raised by Him Who is the Sovereign of the universe, Who is All-Mighty and All-Wise, Whose power can be resisted and opposed only to one's own loss and peril.

One should know that the word ummi has occurred in the Quran at several places but in different meanings at different places. At one place it has been used for the people who do not possess any revealed scripture, which they may he following, as in (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 20), where it has been said: Ask those who possess the Book and those who do not possess (ummis); Have you accepted Islam. Here, the ummis imply the Arab polytheists, and they have been regarded as a separate class from the followers of the Book, i.e. the Jews and the Christians. At another place, it has been used for the illiterate people among the Jews and Christians, who are ignorant of the Book of Allah, as in(Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 78): Among the Jews there are some illiterate people (ummis) who have no knowledge of the Book but are guided by mere conjecture and guesswork. At still another place, this word has been used purely as a Jewish term, which implies all the non-Jewish people, as in (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 75) (The actual cause of this dishonesty of theirs is that they say): We are not to be called to account for out behavior towards the non-Jews (ummis). This third meaning of ummi is implied in the verse under discussion. It is a synonym of the Hebrew word goyim, which has been translated gentiles in the English Bible and implies all the non-Jewish or the non-Israelite people of the world.

But the real significance of this Jewish term cannot be understood only by this explanation of it. The Hebrew word goyim originally was used only in the meaning of a nation, but gradually the Jews reserved it first for the nation other then themselves, then they gave it the special meaning that all the nations other than the Jews were un-civilized, irreligious, unclean and contemptible; so much so that in its connotations of hatred and contempt this word even surpassed the Greek term barbarian which they used for all the non-Greeks. In rabbinical literature, goyim are such contemptible people, who cannot be considered human, who cannot be made companions in a journey, who cannot be saved even if one of them is drowning. The Jews believed that the Messiah of the future would destroy all the goyim and burn them to annihilation (For further explanation, see(E.N. 64 of Surah Aal-Imran).

3. These characteristics of the Prophet (peace be upon him) have been mentioned at four places in the Quran and everywhere with a different object. These have been mentioned in (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 29) to tell the Arabs that the mission of the Prophet, which they were regarding as a calamity and affliction for themselves, was indeed a great blessing for which the Prophets Abraham and Ishmael (peace be upon them) had been praying for their children. In(Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 151), these have been mentioned to exhort the Muslims to recognize the true worth of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and to derive full benefit from the blessing which they had been granted in the form of his Apostleship. These have

been reiterated in (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 164) to make the hypocrites and the people of weak faith realize what great favor Allah had done to them by raising His Messenger (peace be upon him) among them, and how foolish they were in not appreciating this. Now, here in this Surah these have been repeated for the fourth time with the object to tell the Jews: The mission that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is performing in front of you, is evidently the mission of a Messenger. He is reciting the revelations of Allah, the language, themes and style of which testify that these are indeed divine revelations. He is purifying and reforming the lives of the people, cleansing their morals and habits and dealings of every evil element, and adorning them with the finest moral qualities. This is the same task which all the Prophets before him have been performing. Then he does not rest content only with the recitation of the revelations, but he is making the people understand the real aim of the divine Book by word and deed and by the practical model of his life and imparting to them the wisdom and knowledge which none but the Prophets have imparted so far. This very character and way of life and practical model is the conspicuous characteristic of the Prophets by which they are recognized. Then how stubborn you are that you refuse to recognize and believe in the Messenger (peace be upon him) whose truth is manifestly proved by his wonderful works only because Allah has not raised him among you but among the people whom you call the ummis (gentiles).

4. This is another proof of his prophethood, which has been presented to open eyes of the Jews. These people had been living in Arabia for centuries and no aspect of the religious, moral, social and cultural life of the Arabs was hidden from them. Referring to the state of their previous life it is being said: You are an eyewitness of the revolution that has taken place in the life of this nation within a few years under the guidance and leadership of Muhammad (peace be upon him). You are fully aware of the condition in which these people were involved before embracing Islam. You are also aware of their transformation afterwards, and you are also witnessing the condition of those people of this very nation, who have not yet embraced Islam. Is the clear and manifest difference which even a blind man can perceive not enough to convince you that this revolution can be brought about by none but a Prophet.

وَّاٰخَرِيْنَ مِنْهُمْ لَمَّا يَلْحَقُوْا بِهِمْ ؕ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ 3

(62:3) and (He has also) sent him to those others who have not yet joined them.[5] He is the Most Mighty, the Most Wise.[6]

5. That is, the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) is not restricted only to the Arabs but is meant for other nations and races as well, who have not yet joined the believers, but are going to be born till the Last Day. The word minhum (of them) in the original can have two meanings:

(1) That those other people will be of the ummis i.e. the non-Israelite nations of the world.

(2) That they will be believers in Muhammad (peace be upon him), though they have not yet joined the believers, but will join them later on. Thus, this verse is one of those verses which explicitly state that the Message of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is meant for all mankind forever. The other places where this theme has occurred in the Quran are: (Surah

Aal-Imran, Ayat 19); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 158); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 107); (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayat 1); (Surah Saba, Ayat 28). (For further explanation, see (E.N. 47 of Surah Saba).

6. That is, it is a manifestation of Allah's own power and wisdom that among an un-civilized, un-lettered people He has raised a great Prophet (peace be upon him), whose teachings are so revolutionary and contain such eternal and universal principles as can provide a sound basis for the whole of mankind to be a single unified community, which can obtain guidance from those principles forever. An impostor, however hard he may have tried, could not have attained this position and rank. Not to speak of a backward people like the Arabs; even the most intelligent and talented man of the most advanced nation of the world cannot have the power that he may revolutionize a nation so completely, and then give such comprehensive principles to the world that all mankind may follow it as one community and be able to run a universal and all-pervasive system of one way of life and one civilization forever. This is a miracle which has taken place only by Allah's power, and only Allah on the basis of His wisdom has chosen the person, the country and the nation for it.

ذٰلِكَ فَضۡلُ اللّٰهِ يُؤۡتِيۡهِ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الۡفَضۡلِ الۡعَظِيۡمِ 4

(62:4) Such is Allah's favour: He bestows it on whomsoever He pleases. Allah is the Lord of abounding favour.

مَثَلُ الَّذِيۡنَ حُمِّلُوا التَّوۡرٰىةَ ثُمَّ لَمۡ يَحۡمِلُوۡهَا كَمَثَلِ الۡحِمَارِ يَحۡمِلُ اَسۡفَارًا ؕ بِئۡسَ مَثَلُ الۡقَوۡمِ الَّذِيۡنَ كَذَّبُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهۡدِى الۡقَوۡمَ الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ 5

(62:5) The parable of those who were charged with the Torah and then they failed to live up to it[7] is that of a donkey[8] laden with books. Even more evil is the parable of the people who gave the lie to the Signs of Allah.[9] Allah does not direct such wrong-doers to the Right Way.

7. This sentence has two meanings, a general meaning and a special meaning. The general meaning is that the people who were entrusted with the knowledge and practice of the Torah and with the responsibility of guiding the world according to it, neither understood this responsibility nor discharged it as they should have. The special meaning is being the bearers of the Torah these people should have been foremost to join hands with the Messenger (peace be upon him), good news about whose advent had been already given in the Torah, but, instead, they have been in the forefront to oppose him and have thus failed to fulfill the demand of the teaching of the Torah.

8. That is, just as a donkey loaded with books does not know what it is loaded with, so are these people loaded with the Torah and they do not know what this Book was sent for and what are its demands.

9. That is, they are even worst than a donkey, who is without sense and therefore is excusable. But these people have intelligence, they read and teach the Torah and are fully

aware of its meaning. Yet they are turning away from its guidance and refusing willfully to acknowledge and believe in the Prophet (peace be upon him) who even according to the Torah teaches the truth. They are guilty not because of ignorance but because of denying Allah's revelation deliberately.

قُلْ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْٓا اِنْ زَعَمْتُمْ اَنَّكُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ لِلّٰهِ مِنْ دُوْنِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوُا الْمَوْتَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ 6

(62:6) Tell them: "O you who have become Judaised,[10] if you arrogantly fancy that you are Allah's favourites[11] to the exclusion of all people, then wish for death, if you are truthful in your claim."[12]

10. This point is noteworthy. It has not been said: O Jews. But: O you who have became Jews, or who have adopted Judaism, the reason being that the way of life brought by the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and the Prophets after and before him, was Islam itself. None of those Prophets was a Jew, nor had Judaism been born in their time, but Judaism as such came into being much later. It is ascribed to the tribe which descended from Judah, the fourth son of the Prophet Jacob (peace be upon him). When after the Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him), his kingdom broke into two parts, this tribe became ruler over the state which came to be known as Judea. The other tribes of the Israelites established their separate state which became famous as Samaria. Then Assyria not only destroyed Samaria but also wiped out those Israelite tribes which had founded that state. After that only the decedents of Judah besides those of Benjamin remained. Who because of the predominance of the descendants of Judah, began to be called the Jews. Judaism is the name of the framework of the doctrines, customs, and religious rules and regulations which the priests, rabbis and learned men of this race prepared according to their own ideas, theories and trends for many centuries. This framework started being shaped in the 4th century B.C. and continued to develop till the 5th century A.D. It contains a very small element of the divine guidance brought by the Messengers of Allah, and even that element has been corrupted. That is why at many places in the Quran they have been addressed as alladhina hadu, O you who have become Jews. All of these were not the Israelites but there were among them also converts who had embraced Judaism. Whenever in the Quran the children of Israel have been addressed, the words are: O children of Israel, and where the followers of Judaism have been addressed, the words are; alladhina hadu, O you who have become Jews.

11. At several places in the Quran, their claim has been described in detail, as in (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 111), they say: none shall enter Paradise unless he be a Jew. In(Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 80): The fire of Hell is not going to touch us, and even if it does at all, it will be only for a few days, and in (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 18): We are the sons of Allah and His beloved ones. Same such claims are also found in the books of the Jews themselves. The world at least knows that they regard themselves as the chosen people of God, and cherish the false notion that Cod has a special relationship with them, which is not shared by any other human group or class.

12. This has been stated for the second time in the Quran, addressing the Jews. First, in (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 94- 96), it was said, Say to them: If the abode of the Hereafter with Allah is exclusively reserved for you and not for the rest of mankind, then you should long for death, if you are sincere in your claim. Believe it that they will never wish for it, for (they are fully aware of) what they have sent before them for the Hereafter. And Allah knows well the mentality of the transgressors. You will find that of all mankind, they are the greediest for life; any they are even greedier than the idolaters. Each one of them longs to have a life of a thousand years, but a long life can by no means remove them away from the doom, for Allah is watching whatever they are doing. Now the same thing has been repeated here. But this is not a mere repetition. In the verses of Surah Al-Baqarah, it was said when no war had yet taken place between the Muslims and the Jews. In this Surah it was reiterated at the time when after several battles their power in Arabia had been finally and absolutely crushed. These battles and their results proved by experience and observation that what had been said in Surah Al-Baqarah was correct. In Al-Madinah and Khaiber, the Jewish strength was much superior to that of the Muslims both in numbers and in resources. Then they had the pagans of Arabia and the hypocrites of Al-Madinah also as their allies who were bent upon wiping out the Muslims. But in spite of this great disparity in numbers the Muslims overwhelmed the Jews mainly because they were least afraid of dying for the cause of Allah. They were rather fond of it, and would enter the battlefield fully prepared to embrace death. For they believed that they were fighting in the way of God and had complete faith that the one who fell martyr in His way would be blessed with Paradise. Contrary to this, the Jews were not prepared to fight and lay down their life for any cause, neither the cause of God, nor the cause of their nation nor for their own self, properties and honor. They only loved to live, in whatever way or fashion it be. This had made them cowardly.

وَلَا يَتَمَنَّوْنَهٗٓ اَبَدًۢا بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِالظّٰلِمِيْنَ 7

(62:7) But they shall never wish for death because of the (evil) deeds they have committed.[13] Allah is well aware of these evil-doers.

13. In other words, their flight from death is not without a reason. Whatever they may say, their conscience is fully aware of how they are behaving towards Allah and His religion and what consequences can be expected of the misdeeds they are committing in the world. That is why they are afraid to appear at the court of God.

قُلْ اِنَّ الْمَوْتَ الَّذِيْ تَفِرُّوْنَ مِنْهُ فَاِنَّهٗ مُلٰقِيْكُمْ ثُمَّ تُرَدُّوْنَ اِلٰى عٰلِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ع 8

(62:8) Tell them: “The death from which you flee will certainly overtake you. Then you will be returned to Him Who fully knows what is hidden and what is manifest. Thereupon He will let you know all that you used to do.”

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا نُوْدِيَ لِلصَّلٰوةِ مِنْ يَّوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا اِلٰى ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ ؕ
ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ 9

(62:9) Believers, when the call for Prayer is made on Friday,[14] hasten to the remembrance of Allah and give up all trading.[15] That is better for you, if you only knew.

14. Three things in this sentence are particularly noteworthy:

(1) That call to the Prayer is mentioned here.

(2) That the mention is of the call to such a Prayer as has to be performed particularly only on Fridays.

(3) That these things have not been mentioned so as to suggest that the call is to be made for the Prayer and a particular Prayer is to be performed on Friday, but the style and context clearly show that the call to the Prayer and the particular Prayer were both already being performed and practiced on Friday.

The people, however, were being negligent in that on hearing the call to the Prayer. They would not hasten to it but would remain occupied in their worldly activities and trade and business transactions. Therefore, Allah sent down this verse to make the people realize and appreciate the importance of the call and the Prayer and to exhort them to hasten to perform it as a duty. If these three things are considered deeply, they prove this absolute truth that Allah enjoined on the Prophet (peace be upon him) certain commands which were not revealed in the Quran, and these commands were also as obligatory as those revealed in the Quran itself. The call to the Prayer is the same as adhan which is being called the world over five times daily in every mosque. But neither its words have been stated anywhere in the Quran nor the method of calling the people to the Prayer has been taught. Its method was prescribed by the Prophet (peace be upon him). The Quran has only confirmed it twice, here and in Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 58. Likewise, this particular Prayer of Friday, which the Muslims of the entire world are performing has neither been enjoined in the Quran nor its time and method of performance described anywhere. This was also prescribed by the Prophet (peace be upon him), and this verse of the Quran was revealed only to stress its importance and obligatory nature. In spite of this express argument anyone who claims that the Shariah commandments are only those which have been stated in the Quran, is not in fact a denier of the Sunnah but of the Quran itself.

Before proceeding further, let us understand a few other things also about Jumuah (the Friday congregational Prayer):

(1) Jumuah is an Islamic term. In the pre-Islamic days of ignorance the Arabs called it the Arabah day. In Islam when it was declared as a congregational day of the Muslims, it was re-named as Jumuah. Although according to the historians, Kab bin Luayy, or Qusayy bin Kilab, also had used this name for this day, for he used to hold an assembly of Quraish on

this day (Fath-al-Bari), yet by this practice the ancient name did not change, and the common Arabs continued to call it the Arabah Day. The real change took place when Islam gave it this new name.

(2) Before Islam, setting aside of a day in the week for worship and regarding it as an emblem of the community was prevalent among the followers of the earlier scriptures. Among the Jews the Sabbath (Saturday) had been fixed for this purpose, because on this day Allah had delivered the children of Israel from the bondage of the Pharaoh. In order to distinguish themselves from the Jews the Christians took Sunday as their distinctive emblem. Although it had neither been enjoined by the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) nor mentioned anywhere in the Gospel, yet the Christians believe that after his death on the Cross the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) had risen from the grave on this day and ascended to heaven. On this very basis the later Christians ordained it as the day of worship, and then in 321 A.D. the Roman Empire instituted it as a holiday by decree. In order to distinguish its community from both these communities, Islam adopted Friday as the day of collective worship as against Saturday and Sunday.

(3) It is known from the tradition reported by Abdullah bin Masud and Abu Masud Ansari that the Friday congregational Prayer had been enjoined on the Prophet (peace be upon him) some time before the Hijrah in Makkah itself. But at that time he could not act on it, for in Makkah it was not possible to perform any worship collectively. Therefore, he sent a written instruction to the people who had emigrated to Al-Madinah before him that they should establish the Friday congregational Prayer there. Thus, Musab bin Umair, the leader of the earliest emigrants, offered the first Friday Prayer at Al-Madinah with 12 followers. (Tabarani, Daraqutni). Kaab bin Malik and Ibn Sirin have reported that even before this the Muslims of Al-Madinah had decided mutually, on their own initiative, that they would hold a collective service on one day in the week. For this purpose they had selected Friday as against the Sabbath of the Jews and Sunday of the Christians, and the first Friday Prayer was led by Asad bin Zurarah at the place of Bani Bayadah and 40 Muslims participated in it. (Musnad Ahmad Abu Daud, Ibn Majah, Ibn Hibban, Abd bin Humaid, Abdur Razzaq, Baihaqi). This shows that the Islamic taste and trend at that time was itself demanding that there should be a day on which maximum number of Muslims should gather together and worship collectively. And this was also a demand of the Islam itself that it should be a day other than Saturday and Sunday so that the symbol of the Muslim community should be distinctive from the emblems of the Jewish and the Christian communities. This was a wonderful manifestation of the Islamic trends and tastes of the Prophet's companions that many a time it so happened that even before a thing was enjoined their taste proclaimed that the spirit of Islam demanded its introduction.

(4) The establishment of the Friday congregational Prayer was one of the earliest things that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did after his emigration to Al-Madinah. After leaving Makkah he reached Quba on Monday and stayed there for four days. On the fifth day, which was a Friday, he preceded to Al-Madinah. On the way at the place of Bani Salim bin Auf, time came for the Friday Prayer and he performed the first Friday congregational Prayer at this very place. (Ibn Hisham).

(5) The time appointed by the Prophet (peace be upon him) for this Prayer was after the declining of the sun, the same time which is for the Zuhr Prayer. The written instruction that

he had sent to Musab bin Umair before the hijrah was: Seek nearness to Allah by means of two rakahs of the Prayer when the sun declines after midday on Friday. (Daraqutni). This same instruction he gave orally after hijrah as well as practically led the Friday Prayer at the same time. Traditions on this Subject have been related on the authority of Anas, Salamah bin Akwa, Zubair bin al- Awwam, Sahl bin Saad, Abdullah bin Masud, Ammar bin Yasr and Bilal in the collection of Hadith, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to perform the Friday Prayer after the declining of the sun: (Musnad Ahmad Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, Nasai, Tirmidhi).

(6) This is also confirmed by his practice that on this day the Prophet (peace be upon him) led the Friday congregational Prayer instead of the Zuhr Prayer, and this Prayer consisted of two rakahs and he gave the Sermon before it. This was the only difference between the Friday Prayer and the Zuhr Prayer on other days. Umar says: According to the command enjoined by the tongue of your Prophet (peace be upon him) the traveler's Prayer consists of two rakahs, the Fajr Prayer consists of two rakahs, and the Friday Prayer consists of two rakahs. This is the complete, not the shortened Prayer and the Friday Prayer has been shortened only because of the Sermon.

(7) The call to the Prayer that has been mentioned here implies the call that is made just before the Sermon, and not the call that is made much before the Sermon to announce that the prayer time has begun. There is a tradition in the Hadith from Saaib bin Yazid to the effect that in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) there used to be only one call that was made after the Imam (leader in Prayer) had taken his seat on the pulpit. The same practice also continued in the time of Abu Bakr and Umar. When population increased in the time of Uthman, he ordered another call to be made in the bazaar of Al- Madinah at his house, Az-Zaura. (Bukhari, Abu Daud, Nasai, Tabarani).

15. In this command remembrance implies the Friday sermon, for the first thing that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to do after the call was to deliver the sermon, and he always led the Prayer after delivering the sermon. Abu Hurairah has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The angels on Friday go on writing down the names of the people as they arrive. Then, when the Imam comes out to deliver the sermon, they stop writing the names and turn their attention to the remembrance (i.e. the sermon). (Musnad Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Nasai). This Hadith also shows that the remembrance implies the sermon. The exhortation of the Quran itself points to the same thing. First, it says: Hasten to the remembrance of Allah; then a little below it says: Then, when the Prayer is over, disperse in the land. This shows that on Friday the order of the service is that first there is the remembrance of Allah and then the Prayer. The commentators also agree that remembrance either implies the sermon, or the sermon and the Prayer both.

Using the word dhikr-Allah for the sermon by itself gives the meaning that it should contain themes relevant to the remembrance of Allah. For instance, praising and glorifying Allah, imploring Him to bless His Messenger (peace be upon him), exhorting and instructing the audience to obey His commands and follow His Shariah, commending His pious and righteous servants, etc. On this very basis, Zamakhshari writes in al-kashshaf: Praising the wicked and tyrannical rules in the Friday Sermon, or mentioning their names and praying

for them, has nothing to do with the remembrance of Allah; this would be the remembrance of Satan.

Hasten to the remembrance of Allah does not mean that one should come to the mosque running, but it means that one should make haste for it. The commentators also agree on this very meaning. Hastening, according to them means that on hearing the call one should immediately start making preparations to attend the mosque. The Hadith even forbids coming to the mosque for the Prayer running. Abu Hurairah has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: When the Prayer has begun, one should come walking to it with calm and dignity, and not running. Then, one should join in whatever remains of the Prayer, and should make up whatever he has missed independently later. In Sihah Sittah, Abu Qatadah Ansari says: Once we were offering the Prayer under the leadership of the Prophet (peace be upon him) when suddenly we heard some people coming to join the Prayer running. When the Prayer was concluded, the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked: What was the noise about. They replied; We came running for the Prayer. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said; Don't do that, whenever you come for the Prayer, come with calm and dignity. Join behind the Imam in whatever remains of the Prayer, and make up whatever you have missed independently. (Bukhari, Muslim). Leave off your trading also includes every other worldly activity and business which prevents one from getting ready for the Prayer with full attention and care. Buying and selling has been particularly forbidden, for commerce flourishes on Fridays. People from the surrounding areas gather together at a central place, the merchants also arrive with their merchandise, and the people become occupied in buying the necessities of daily use. The prohibition however is not restricted only to buying and selling, but it applies to all other occupations as well. And since Allah has forbidden these, jurists of Islam agree that after the call has been sounded for the Friday Prayer all forms of trade, business and worldly occupation become forbidden.

This command absolutely confirms the obligatory nature of the Friday Prayer. In the first place, the exhortation to hasten for it after one has heard the call is by itself a proof of its being obligatory. Then, the prohibition of a lawful thing like trade and business at the time of the Prayer also shows that it is obligatory in nature. Moreover, the elimination of the obligatory Zuhr Prayer on Friday and its being replaced by the Friday Prayer is a clear proof that it is obligatory in nature. For, an obligatory duty becomes eliminated only when the duty replacing it is more important. This very thing has been supported in many Ahadith in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) exhorted the Muslims in most emphatic words to attend the Friday Prayer and has declared it in clear words to be obligatory. Abdullah bin Masud has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: I feel I should ask somebody to stand in my place to lead the Prayer, and I myself should go and set fire to the houses of the people who do not come for the Prayer. (Musnad Ahmad, Bukhari). Abu Hurairah, Abdullah bin Abbas and Abdullah bin Umar say: We heard the Prophet (peace be upon him) say this in the Friday Sermon: The people should refrain from giving up the Friday Prayer; otherwise Allah will seal up hearts and they will become totally heedless. (Musnad Ahmad, Muslim, Nasai). From the traditions reported by Abu al-Jad Damri, Jabir bin Abdullah and Abdullah bin Abi Aufa from the Holy Prophet one comes to know that Allah seals up the heart of the person who abandons three Friday Prayers, one after the other, without a genuine reason and lawful excuse. Rather, in one tradition the words are to the effect: Allah turns the heart of such a one into the heart of a hypocrite. (Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud,

Nasai, Tirmidhi Ibn Majah Darimi, Hakim, Ibn Hibban, Bazzar, Tabarani in al-Kabir. Hadrat Jabir bin Abdullah says that the Prophet said: From today till Resurrection the Friday Prayer is obligatory on you. Allah will neither bless nor set right the condition of the one who abandons it disregarding it or considering it an ordinary thing. Note it well: the Prayer of such a one will be no prayer at all, his zakat will be no zakat at all, his Hajj no Hajj, his fasting no fasting, and no good done by him will be good, until he repents. Then, for the one who repents, Allah is Most Forgiving. (Ibn Majah, Bazzar). Another tradition, which is very close in meaning to this has been cited by Tabarani in Auset from Ibn Umar. Furthermore, there are many traditions in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) has declared the Friday Prayer as obligatory in clear words. Abdullah bin Amr bin al-Aas has related that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The Friday Prayer is obligatory on every person who hears the call to it. (Abu Daud Daraqutni). Jabir bin Abdullah and Abu Saeed Khudri say that he said in a Sermon: Know that Allah has enjoined the Friday Prayer as a duty on you. (Baihaqi). However, He has exempted the women, children, slaves, the sick and the travelers from this duty. Hafsah has reported that the Prophet said: Attendance at the Friday Prayer is obligatory on every adult male. (Nasai). Tariq bin Shihab's tradition contains this saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him): The Friday congregational Prayer is obligatory on every Muslim except the slave, women, children and the sick. (Abu Daud, Hakim). In the tradition of Jabir bin Abdullah, his words are to the effect: Friday Prayer is obligatory on the person who believes in Allah and the Last Day unless it is a woman, or a traveler, or a slave, or a sick man. (Daraqutni, Baihaqi). On account of these very exhortations of the Quran and the Hadith the entire Ummah is agreed that the Friday congregational Prayer is of obligatory nature.

فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلٰوةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللّٰهِ وَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ كَثِيرًا

لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ 10

(62:10) But when the Prayer is ended, disperse in the land and seek Allah's Bounty,[16] and remember Allah much[17] so that you may prosper.[18]

16. This does not mean that after the Friday is over, it is obligatory to go in search of livelihood, but it only implies permission. As it was ordered to stop all worldly business as soon as the call was made for the Prayer, so it is allowed that after the Prayer is over, the people may dispose and resume or pursue whatever occupation or business they may like. It is just like the prohibition of hunting in the state of ihram, but after ihram is put off, one is told to hunt. (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 2). That does not mean that one must hunt, but that one may hunt if one so likes. Or, for instance, in Surah An-Nisa, permission to marry more than one wife has been given, saying: Marry two or three or four women whom you choose. Here, although the verb is in the imperative mood, no one has taken it in the meaning of a command. This gives the principle that the imperative form of the verb does not always imply an obligation or command. It sometimes implies the permission and sometimes exercise of choice or preference. The context determines where it implies the command, where the permission and where Allah's approval of the act, and not that the act is obligatory. Immediately after this very sentence itself, it has been said: And remember Allah

much. Here also the verb is in the imperative mood, but obviously it implies exercise of one's choice and not that it is a duty or compulsion.

Here, another thing worthy of mention is that although in the Quran, Friday has not been declared a public holiday like the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Sunday, yet no one can deny that Friday is a symbol of the Muslim community precisely in the same way as Saturday is a Jewish and Sunday a Christian symbol. And if declaring a day in the week a public holiday be a cultural necessity, then just as the Jews naturally select Saturday for it and the Christians Sunday, so a Muslim (if he has any Islamic feeling) will necessarily select only Friday for this purpose. The Christians did not even hesitate to impose their Sunday on some other countries where Christian population was negligible. When the Jews established their state in Palestine, the first thing they did was to announce Saturday as the weekly holiday instead of Sunday. In pre-partitioned India one conspicuous distinction between British India and the Muslim states was that in one part of the country Sunday was observed as a closed holiday and in the other Friday. However, where the Muslims lack Islamic values, they hold to Sunday even after attaining to sovereign power as we see in Pakistan. In case of excessive westernization, Friday is replaced by Sunday as the weekly holiday as was done by Mustafa Kamal in Turkey.

17. Remember Allah much: Do not forget Allah even when you are otherwise occupied, but remember Him under all circumstances and remain conscious of Him at all times. (For explanation, see(E.N. 63 of Surah Al-Ahzab).

18. At several places in the Quran, after giving an instruction or an admonition or a command words to the effect: "perhaps you achieve success" or "perhaps you may be shown mercy" have been used. The use of "perhaps" on such occasions does not mean that Allah, God forbid, is entertaining a doubt, but it is in fact a royal style of address. It is just like a kindly master's giving out hope to his servants to continue doing their best so that they may achieve and win the desired goal and reward, It contains a subtle promise which fills the servant with hope and he carries out his duties and obligations with enthusiasm.

As the commands pertaining to the Friday congregational prayer come to an end here, it would be useful to give a resume of the injunctions that the four schools of juristic thought have derived from the Quran, the Hadih, traditions of the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the general principles of Islam.

According to the Hanafi school of thought, the time for the Friday Prayer is the same as for Zuhr Prayer. The Friday Prayer can neither be held before it nor after it. Business and trade become forbidden with the first call to the Prayer and not with the second call which is made after the Imam has taken his place on the pulpit, for the words of the Quran in this regard are explicit and definite. Therefore, whichever call is made for the Friday Prayer after the declining of the sun when the Prayer time begins, the people should stop conducting business on hearing it. However, if a person has made a bargain at that time, it will not be void, but will only be a sin. The Friday Prayer cannot be held in every settlement but only in the misr- Jami which has been defined as a large town or city where there are market places, adequate security arrangements, and which has large enough population so that if all the people upon whom attendance at the Friday Prayer is obligatory gather together, they should be too many for the principal mosque to hold. The people who live outside the city

will have to offer the Prayer in the city only in case the call to the Prayer reaches them, or if they live within six miles of the city. The Prayer may not necessarily be held in the mosque, it may also be held in the open field and also on a ground which is outside the city but a part of it. The Friday Prayer can be validly held only in a place where any and every person may come to attend it without any hindrance. It will not be valid if it is held in a restricted place where every person is not allowed to join in no matter how many people may gather together. For the Prayer to be valid there should at least be three men (according to Imam Abu Hanifah beside the imam, or two men including the imam (according to imams Abu Yusuf and Mohammad), upon whom it is obligatory to attend the Friday Prayer. A person will be exempt from the Prayer if he is on a journey, or is so ill that he cannot walk to attend it, or is disabled of both the legs, or is blind (but according to Imam Abu Yusuf and Imam Muhammad, a blind person will be exempt from the Prayer duty only in case he does not find a man who can take him along for the Prayer), or he apprehends a danger to his life and honor, or an unbearable financial loss from a tyrant, or it is raining heavily and there is slush and rainwater on the way, or he is a prisoner. For the prisoner and the disabled, it is undesirable that they should perform the Zuhr Prayer on Friday in congregation. For those also who have missed the Friday Prayer it is undesirable to perform the Zuhr Prayer collectively, The sermon is one of the pre-requisites of the Friday Prayer to be valid, for the Prophet (peace be upon him) never performed the Friday Prayer without the sermon. The sermon must necessarily precede the prayer, and there should be two sermons. From the time the Imam steps towards the pulpit for the sermon, every kind of speech becomes forbidden till he brings it to an end; no prayer may be performed during it, whether one can hear the imam at the place where one is sitting or not. (Hedayah, Al-Fath ul-Qadir; al-Jassas: Ahkam al-Quran; Al-Fiqh alai-Madhahib al-Arbah; Umdat al-Qari).

According to the Shafeis, the time of the Friday Prayer is the same as of the Zuhr Prayer. Trade and business become forbidden and hastening to the remembrance of Allah becomes obligatory from the time the second call is sounded, i.e. the call which is sounded after the imam has taken his place on the pulpit. However, if a person carries out a transaction at this time, it does not become void. The Friday Prayer can be held in every such settlement among the permanent residents of which there are 40 such men upon whom it is incumbent to perform the Prayer. Attendance at the Friday Prayer is obligatory for those people of the suburbs whom the call may reach. The Friday service must be held within the bounds of the settlement, but it may not necessarily be held in the mosque. Thus, it is not obligatory for nomadic peoples who live in tents in the desert. For the Prayer to be valid there should at least be 40 such men including the imam in the congregation upon whom the Prayer is incumbent. A person would be exempt from the Prayer if he is on a journey, or intends to stay at a place for four or less than four days provided that the journey is lawful, or he is old or sick and cannot go to attend the Prayer even by a conveyance, or is blind and does not find a man who can take him along for the Prayer, or apprehends danger to life or property or honor, or is a prisoner provided that this imprisonment has not been caused by his own crime. There should be two sermons before the Prayer. Although it is according to the sunnah to sit quiet during the sermon, yet speech is not forbidden. For the person who is sitting close to the imam so that he can hear the sermon, speech is disapproved, but he can respond to a greeting, and can recite prayer on the Prophet (peace be upon him) aloud when he hears his name being mentioned. (Mughni al-Muhtaj Al-Fiqh alal- Madhahib al-Arbah).

According to the Malikis, the Friday Prayer time begins from the declining of the sun and lasts till such time in the evening that the sermon and the Prayer can be concluded before sunset. Business transactions become forbidden and hastening becomes obligatory with the second call. If a transaction takes place after it, it would be void and sinful. The Friday Prayer can be held in the settlements, residents of which live in permanent houses and do not migrate in the summer or the winter, and whose needs and requirements are met in the same settlements, and who can defend themselves on the basis of their strength. In temporary dwelling places the Friday Prayer cannot be established even though many people may be staying there and staying for long periods. Attendance at the Prayer is obligatory for the people who live within three miles of the settlement where the Prayer is held. The Prayer can be held only in the mosque, which is inside the settlement or adjoining it, and the building of which is not inferior to the houses of the common residents of the place. Some Malikis have also imposed the condition that the mosque should be roofed, and arrangements for offering collective Prayer five times daily should also exist in it. However, the better known view of the Malikis is that for the Prayer to be valid the mosque's being roofed is no pre-requisite. The Friday Prayer can also be held in a mosque which has been built only for the Friday Prayer and no arrangements exist in it for the five daily Prayers. For the Prayer to be valid there must at least be 12 other men, apart from the imam, in the congregation upon whom the Friday Prayer is incumbent. A person would be exempt from it if he is on a journey, or intends to stay for less than four days at a place during the journey, or is so ill that he cannot come to the mosque, or has an ailing mother or father, or wife, or child, or he is nursing a stranger who has nobody else to nurse him, or has a close relative who is seriously ill, or at the point of death, or apprehends an unbearable loss to property, or a danger to his life or honor, or is hiding from fear of imprisonment or punishment, provided that he is a wronged and oppressed person, or it is raining heavily and there is slush and rainwater on the way, or the weather is oppressive due to excessive heat or cold. The Prayer has to be preceded by two sermons; so much so that if the sermon is given after the Prayer, the Prayer has to be repeated, and the sermons must necessarily be delivered inside the mosque. It is forbidden to offer a voluntary Prayer after the imam has stepped towards the pulpit, and to talk when the sermon has begun, even if one is not hearing it, However, if the imam indulges in meaningless and absurd things in the sermon, or uses abusive language for a person who does not deserve it, or starts praising a person for whom praise is unlawful, or starts reciting something irrelevant to the sermon, the people have the right to protest. Furthermore, it is reprehensible that a prayer be made in the sermon for the temporal ruler, unless the imam apprehends danger to his life. The imam must necessarily be the same person who leads the Prayer; if another person than the one who gave the sermon led the Prayer it would be void. (Hashiyah ad-Dusuqi ila-sh-Sharh al-Kabir, Ibn Arabi, Ahkam al-Quran; Al-Fiqh alal-Madhahib al- Arba'h).

According to the Hanbalis, the Friday Prayer time begins when the sun has risen about a spear's length high and lasts till the beginning of the Asr Prayer time in the afternoon, but performing the Prayer before the declining of the sun is just permissible but after it obligatory and meritorious. Business transactions become forbidden and hastening to the Prayer becomes obligatory with the second call, A transaction contracted after it has no effect in the law. The Prayer can be held only at a place where 40 men on whom the Friday Prayer is incumbent have permanently settled in houses (and not in tents) and are not nomadic tribesmen. For this purpose, it will not make any difference if the houses of the

settlement or its different parts are scattered or compact; if their combination is called by one name, it will be one settlement even if its different parts are miles apart. Attendance at the Prayer will be obligatory for the people who live within three miles of the settlement. The congregation should consist of 40 men including the imam. The Prayer may not necessarily be performed in the mosque; it may be performed in the open as well. A person will be exempt from it if he is on a journey and intend to stay in the settlement for four or less than four days, or is so ill that he cannot come to the mosque even by a conveyance, or is blind unless he can grope his way to the mosque; (it is not obligatory for the blind man to come for the Prayer with another man's help), or he is prevented by extreme weather or heavy rain or slush and rainwater, or he is hiding to escape persecution or apprehends danger to life or honor, or fears an unbearable financial loss, The Prayer should be preceded by two sermons. The person who is sitting so close to the imam that he can hear him, is forbidden speech; however, the one sitting far away, who cannot hear the sermon, can speak. The people have to sit quiet during the sermon whether the person delivering the sermon is a just man or an unjust man. If Eid falls on a Friday, the people who have performed the Eid Prayer will be exempt from the Friday Prayer. In this matter, the viewpoint of the Hanbalis is different from that of the other three Imams. (Ghayat al-Muntaha; Al-Fiqh alal-Madhahib al-Arbah).

All jurists agree that if the person upon whom the Friday Prayer is not incumbent, joins in the Prayer, his Prayer would be valid, and he would be absolved from the Zuhr Prayer.

وَإِذَا رَأَوْا تِجَارَةً أَوْ لَهْوًا انْفَضُّوا إِلَيْهَا وَتَرَكُوكَ قَائِمًا ۚ قُلْ مَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ مِّنَ اللَّهْوِ
وَمِنَ التِّجَارَةِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ ﴿١١﴾

(62:11) Yet no sooner than they saw some trading or amusement, they flocked to it and left you standing by yourself.[19] Tell them: "That which is with Allah is far better than amusement and trading.[20] Allah is the Best Provider of sustenance."[21]

19. This is the incident because of which the commandments pertaining to the Friday congregational Prayer have been enjoined in the preceding verses. Its narrative as related in the collections of Hadith, on the authority of Jabir bin Abdullah, Abdullah bin Abbas, Abu Hurairah, Abu Malik, and Hasan Basri, lbn Zaid, Qatadah and Muqatil bin Hayyan is as follows: A trade caravan from Syria arrived in Al-Madinah right at the time of the Friday Prayer and its people started playing their drums to announce their arrival. The Prophet (peace be upon him) at that time was delivering the sermon, Hearing the drum the people in the congregation became impatient and rushed out towards Baqi where the caravan had halted, except for 12 men. The most authentic tradition in this narrative is of Jabir bin Abdullah, which has been related by Imam Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Abu Uwanah, Abd bin Humaid, Abu Yala and others through reliable channels. The only diversity is that in some traditions it is stated that the incident took place when the Prayer was in progress; in others that it happened when the Prophet was delivering the sermon. However, what appears to be correct when the tradition of Jabir and those of others are read together is that it happened during the sermon. Where Jabir says that it happened during

the Friday Prayer, he in fact has used the word Friday Prayer for the combination of the sermon and the Prayer. According to the tradition of Abdullah bin Abbas, seven women had remained behind with 12 men. (Ibn Marduyah). Qatadah says that one woman remained with 12 men, (lbn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim). According to the tradition of Daraqutni 40 individuals remained, of Abd bin Humaid 7 individuals and of Farra 8 individuals. But all these are weak traditions. The tradition of Qatadah that such a thing happened thrice is also weak. (Ibn Jarir). The authentic tradition in this regard is of Jabir, according to which the number of those who remained behind is stated to be 12. Apart from one tradition of Qatadah, all traditions of the other companions and their followers agree that this happened only once. When read together different traditions about those who remained behind show that they included Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, AIi, Abdullah bin Masud, Ammar bin Yasir, Salim (slave of Hudhaifah) and Jabir bin Abdullah. The tradition related by Hafiz Abu Yala from Jabir bin Abdullah says that when the people rushed out like that and only 12 companions were left behind, the Prophet (peace be upon him) addressed them, saying: By Him in Whose hand is my life, if all of you had left, and none had remained behind, this valley would have overflowed with fire. A theme resembling this has been cited by Ibn Marduyah from Abdullah bin Abbas and by Ibn Jarir from Qatadah.

The Shiite scholars have used this incident also for taunting and finding fault with the companions. They say that abandoning the sermon and the Prayer by such a large number of the companions for the sake of worldly gain and amusement is a proof that they preferred the world to the Hereafter. But this is a misplaced objection that can be raised only if one keeps his eyes closed to realities. As a matter of fact, this incident took place just after the migration. At that time, on the one hand, the collective training of the companions was in the initial stages, and on the other, the disbelievers of Makkah had subjected the people of Al-Madinah to a strict economic blockade because of which necessities of life had become scarce in the city. Hasan Basri says that the people at time were starving and the prices had risen abnormally high. (Ibn Jarir). Under such conditions when a trade caravan arrived, the people rushed out to buy things of daily need lest these were sold out before the Prayer was concluded. This was a weakness and error which became suddenly manifest due to insufficient training and severity of the conditions. But whoever sees the sacrifices made by the companions for the cause of Islam afterwards and sees what piety and righteousness they displayed in the matter of worship and dedication and dealings can never dare bring against them the allegation that they preferred the world to the Hereafter unless he himself bears malice against the companions.

However, just as this incident does not support the critics of the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), so it also does not support the ideas of those people who cherish exaggerated notions about them and claim that they never committed any error, or if they committed some, it should not be mentioned, for making mention of their error and calling it an error is derogatory and it reduces one's reverence and respect for them, and its mention goes against the verses of the Quran and the Hadith, which state that the companions are Allah's favorite people and have already been forgiven all their errors and mistakes. All this is exaggeration for which there is no basis in the Quran and the Hadith. Here, everyone can see for himself that Allah Himself has mentioned the error that happened to have been committed by a large number of the companions, in the Book that will be read by the entire ummah till Resurrection, and in the same Book which speaks of their having been forgiven

and being chosen people of Allah. Then in the books of the Hadith and commentary also details of this error have been described by all scholars, from the companions to the major scholars among the followers of the Sunnah. Does it mean that Allah has made this mention in order to destroy the reverence for the same companions whose reverence and esteem He wants to instill in all our hearts? And does it mean that the companions and their followers and the traditionists and commentators have mentioned these details of this incident because they were unaware of the religious aspect of the matter which these zealots show and describe? And have the people who read Surah Al-Jumuah and study its commentary really lost reverence and esteem for the companions from their hearts? If the answer to each of these questions is in the negative, and it is surely in the negative, then all those exaggerated ideas and notions, which some people express and show in regard to the reverence of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) companions, are erroneous.

The truth is that the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) were not supernormal beings: they were only human born in this very world. Whatever they attained, they attained through the persistent training imparted by the Prophet (peace be upon him) over many years. The method of this training as we learn from the Quran and the Hadith was; Whenever a weakness appeared in them, Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) turned immediate attention to it, and a program of education and training was established to overcome and eradicate it. In the matter of this very Friday Prayer, we see that when the incident of the trade caravan occurred, Allah sent down this section of the verses of Surah Al-Jumuah to administer warning and teach the etiquette of the Friday Service. Along with this the Prophet (peace be upon him) impressed on the people the importance of the obligatory nature of the service continuously in his sermons as explained in(E.N. 15) above. All these instructions are found in the Hadith in clear words. Abu Saeed Khudri says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Every Muslim must have full bath on Friday, should clean his teeth, put on the best available clothes, and use perfume if possible. (Musnad Ahmad Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, Nasai). Salman Farsi says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The Muslim who has bath on Friday, cleans and purifies himself as far as possible, applies oil to his hair, or uses perfume if available, and comes to the mosque and takes his place without disturbing others, then offers the (voluntary) Prayer that Allah has destined for him, then listens quietly when the imam speaks, he will have his sins and errors committed since the previous Friday forgiven. (Bukhari, Musnad Ahmad). Traditions containing almost the same theme have been reported by Abu Ayub Anati, Abu Hurairah and Nubaishat alHudhali also from the Prophet (peace be upon him). (Musnad Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Tabarani). Abdullah bin Abbas says that the Prophet said: The person who speaks when the imam is delivering the sermon is like the donkey loaded with books, and the person who tells him to keep quiet has also rendered his own Prayer void. (Musnad Ahmad). Abu Huraira says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: If on Friday during the sermon you said to a person, keep quiet, you too behaved wrong. (Bukhari, Muslim, Nasai, Tirmidhi, Abu Daud). Traditions closely resembling this have been related by Imam Ahmad, Abu Daud and Tabarani from Ali and Abu ad-Darda. To the person delivering the sermon also the Prophet (peace be upon him) instructed that he should not deliver a lengthy sermon to try the people's patience. His own practice on Friday was that he gave brief sermons and led short Prayers. Jabir bin Samurah says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) would never give a lengthy sermon, he was always very brief. (Abu Daud). Abdullah bin Abi Aufa says: The Prophet's (peace be upon him) sermon used

to be shorter than the Prayer, and the Prayer a little longer than the sermon. (Nasai). According to Ammar bin Yasir, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The prolongation of the Prayer and the brevity of the sermon are a sign that the Imam has deep insight in religion. (Musnad Ahmad, Muslim). Almost the same theme Bazzar has related from Abdullah bin Masud. All this shows how the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught the people the etiquette of the Friday congregational service till it began to be performed in the unique manner unknown in the congregational worship of any other people in the world.

20. This sentence by itself shows what was the nature of the error committed by the companions. God forbid, if it had been due to any weakness of the faith, or due to giving the world preference over the Hereafter, Allah's wrath and displeasure and reprimand would have been much severer. But since there was no such weakness, and whatever happened was only due to insufficient training, Allah first taught the people the etiquette of the Friday service, then, after pointing out the error, promised them that the reward they would get with Allah for listening to the sermon and performing the Prayer would be much greater than worldly gains and amusements.

21. That is, Allah is by far the best of all those providers who become a means of providing sustenance in the world, though only metaphorically. Sentences such as this have occurred at several places in the Quran, At some places Allah has been called the best of Creators, at others the best of Forgivers, the best of Rulers, the best of those who show mercy, or the best of Helpers. At all these places the reference of providing, creating, forgiving, showing mercy and offering help to the creatures is metaphorical, and to Allah real. It means that Allah is the best Provider, Creator, Forgiver, Helper and Bestower of Mercy of all those who appear to be giving you wages and means of sustenance, or who appear to be making things by their skill and workmanship, or who seem to be pardoning the errors of others, or showing mercy and helping other in this world.

63. Surah Al Munafiqoon (The Hypocrites)

Name

The Surah takes its name from the sentence Idha jaa kal-munafiquna of verse 1. This is the name of the Surah as well as the title of its subject matter, for in it a review has been made of the conduct and attitude of the hypocrites themselves.

Period of Revelation

As we shall explain below this Surah was sent down either during the Holy Prophet's return journey from his campaign against Bani al- Mustaliq, or immediately after his arrival back at Madinah, and we have established by argument and research in the Introduction to Surah An-Nur that the campaign against Bani al-Mustaliq had taken place in Sha'ban A. H. 6:Thus, the date of the revelation of this Surah is determined precisely.

Historical Background

Before we mention the particular incident about which this Surah was sent down, it is necessary to have a look at the history of the hypocrites of Madinah, for the incident that occurred on this occasion was not a chance happening but had a whole series of events behind it, which ultimately led up to it.

Before the Holy Prophet's emigration to Madinah the tribes of the Aus and the Khazraj, fed up with their mutual rivalries and civil wars, had almost agreed on the leadership of one man and were making preparations to crown him their king. This was Abdullah bin Ubayy bin Salul, the chief of the Khazraj. Muhammad bin Ishaq has stated that among the people of Khazraj his authority was never contested and never had the Aus and the Khazraj rallied to one man before this. (Ibn Hisham, vol. II, p. 234)

Such were the conditions when the voice of Islam reached Madinah and the influential people of both the tribes started becoming Muslims. When before the Emigration, invitation was being extended to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) to come to Madinah, Hadarat Abbas bin Ubadah bin Nadlah Ansari wanted to defer this invitation for the reason that Abdullah bin Ubayy also might join in the declaration of allegiance and invitation to the Holy Prophet, so that Madinah might become the center of Islam by common consent. But the delegation that arrived in Makkah to declare their allegiance did not give any importance to the proposal of Abbas bin Ubadah, and a11 its members, who included 75 men from both the tribes, became ready to invite the Holy Prophet in the face of every danger.(lbn Hisham, vol. II, P. 89). We have given the details of this event in the Introduction to Surah Al-Anfal.

Then, when the Holy Prophet arrived in Madinah, Islam had so deeply penetrated every house of the Ansar that Abdullah bin Ubayy became helpless and did not see any other way to save his leadership than to become a Muslim himself. So, he entered Islam along with many of his followers from among the chiefs and leaders of both the tribes although their hearts were burning with rage from within. Ibn Ubayy in particular was filled with grief, for the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) had deprived him of his kingship. For several years his hypocritical faith and grief of being deprived of his kingdom manifested

itself in different ways. On the one hand, when on Fridays the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) took his seat to deliver the Sermon, Abdullah bin Ubayy would stand up and say "O people, the Messenger of Allah is present among you, by whom Allah has honored you; therefore, you should support him and listen to what he says and obey him." (Ibn Hisham, vol. III, p. 111). On the other, his hypocrisy was being exposed day by day and the true Muslims were realizing that he and his followers bore great malice against Islam, the Holy Prophet and the Muslims.

Once when the Holy Prophet was passing on the way Abdullah bin Ubayy spoke to him in harsh words. When the Holy Prophet complained of it to Hadrat Sa'd bin Ubadah; he said: "O Messenger of Allah, don't be hard on him, for when Allah sent you to us we were making a diadem to crown him, and, by God, he thinks that you have robbed him of his kingdom." (Ibn Hisham vol: II, pp. 237-238).

After the Battle of Badr when the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) invaded the Jewish tribe of Bani Qainuqa on their breaking the agreement and un provoked revolt, this man stood up in support of them, and holding the Holy Prophet by his armor, said: "These 700 fighters have been helping and protecting me against every enemy; would you cut them down in one morning? By God, I will not leave you until you pardon my clients." (Ibn Hisham, vol. III, pp. 5l- 52).

On the occasion of the Battle of Uhud this man committed open treachery and withdrew from the battlefield with 300 of his companions. One should note that at this critical moment when he so acted, the Quraish had marched upon Madinah with 3,000 troops and the Holy Prophet had marched out with only 1,000 men to resist them. Of these 1,000 this hypocrite broke away with 300 men and the Holy Prophet was left with only 700 men to meet 3,000 troops of the enemy in the field.

After this incident the common Muslims of Madinah came to realize fully that he was certainly a hypocrite and his those Companions also were found who were his associates in hypocrisy. That is why when on the very first Friday, after the Battle of Uhud, this man stood up as usual to make a speech before the Holy Prophet's Sermon, the people pulled at his garment, saying "Sit down you are not worthy to say such things." That was the first occasion in Madinah when this man was publicly disgraced. Thereupon he was so filled with rage that he left the mosque jumping over the heads of the people. At the door of the Mosque some of the Ansar said to him, "What are you doing? Go back and ask the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) to pray for your forgiveness." He retorted "I do not, want him to pray for my forgiveness." (Ibn Hisham, vol. III, p. 111).

Then in A. H. 4 the Battle of Bani an-Nadir took place. On this occasion he and his companions supported the enemies of Islam even more openly. On the one side, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) and his devoted Companions were preparing for war against their enemy, the Jews, and on the other, these hypocrites were secretly sending messages to the Jews to the effect: "Stand firm we are with you: if you are attacked, we will help you, and if you are driven out, we too will go out with you." The secret of this intrigue was exposed by Allah Himself, as has been explained in Surah Al-Hashr: 11-17 above.

But in spite of being so exposed the reason why the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) was still treating him kindly was that he had a large band of the hypocrites behind him. Many of the chiefs of both the Aus and the Khazraj were his supporters. At least a third of the population of Madinah consisted of his companions, as became manifest on the occasion of the Battle of Uhud. Under such conditions it was not prudent to wage a war with these internal enemies combined with the external enemies. On this very account, in spite of being fully aware of their hypocrisy the Holy Prophet continued to deal with them according to their apparent profession of faith for a long time. On the other hand, these people too neither possessed the power nor the courage to fight the believers openly as disbelievers, or to join hands with an invader and face them in the battlefield. Apparently they were a strong hand but inwardly they had the weakness which Allah has vividly portrayed in Surah Al-Hashr: 12-14. Therefore; they thought their well being lay only in posing as Muslims. They came to the mosque, offered the prayers gave away the zakat, and would make tall oral claims to the faith, which the true Muslims never felt the need to do. They would offer a thousand justifications for each of their hypocritical acts by which they would try to deceive their compatriots, the Ansar, into believing that they were with them. By these designs they were not only saving themselves from the disadvantages which could naturally accrue if they separated themselves from the Ansar brotherhood, but also taking advantage of the opportunities to make mischief which were available to them as members of the Muslim brotherhood.

These were the causes which enabled Abdullah bin Ubayy and like minded hypocrites to get an opportunity to accompany the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) in his campaign against the Bani al-Mustaliq, and they simultaneously engineered two great mischiefs which could shatter the Muslim unity to pieces. However, by virtue of the wonderful training in discipline that the Muslim; had received through the pure teaching of the Quran and the companionship of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) both mischiefs were stopped in time, and the hypocrites themselves were disgraced instead. One of these was the mischief that has been mentioned in Surah An-Nur above, and the other which has been mentioned in this Surah.

This incident has been related by Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, Nasai, Tirmidhi, Baihaqi, Tabari, Ibn Marduyah, Abdur Razzaq, İbn Jarir Tabari, Ibn Sa'd and Muhammad bin Ishaq through many reliable channels. In some traditions the expedition in which it took place has not been named, and in others it has been connected with the Battle of Tabuk. But the authorities on the battles fought by the Holy Prophet and history are agreed that this incident took place on the occasion of the campaign against the Bani al- Mustaliq. The following seems to he the real story when all the traditions are read together.

When after crushing down the power of Bani al- Mustaliq the Islamic army had made a halt in the settlement at the well of al Muraisi. Suddenly a dispute arose between two men on taking water from the well; One of them was Jehjah bin Masud Ghifari, a servant of Hadrat Umar appointed to lead his horse. The other was Sinan bin Wabar al-Juhani, whose tribe was an ally of a clan of the Khazraj. Harsh words between them led to fighting and Jehjah kicked Sinan, which the Ansar, on account of their ancient Yamanite tradition, took as a great insult and disgrace. At this Sinan called out the men of Ansar and Jehjah the Emigrants for help. Hearing about the quarrel Ibn Ubayy started inciting and calling the men of the Aus and the Khazraj to come out and help their ally. From the other side some

Emigrants also came out. The dispute might have led to a fight between the Ansar and the Muhajirin themselves at the very place where they had just fought an enemy tribe jointly and crushing it had halted in its own territory. But hearing the noise the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) emerged and said :"what is this call of paganism? What have you to do with such a call? Leave it, it is a dirty thing." Thereupon the leading men of the two sides met and settled the dispute; Sinan pardoned Jehjah and peace was restored.

After this every person whose heart was disaffected came to Abdullah bin Ubayy and they all said to him, "Until now we had our hopes attached to you and you were protecting us, but now it seems you have become a helper of these paupers against us. Ibn Ubayy was already enraged: These words made him burst out, thus: "This is what you have done to yourselves. You have given these people shelter in your country, and have divided your property among them. So much so that they have now become our rivals. Nothing so fits us and the paupers of Quraish(or the Companions of Muhammad) as the ancient saying 'Feed your dog to fatten it and it will devour you.' If you hold back your property from them, they would go elsewhere. By God, when we return to Madinah, the honorable ones will drive out from it the mean ones."

Zaid bin Arqam, a young boy, also happened to be present in the assembly at that time. He heard this and mentioned it before his uncle, and his uncle who was one of the Ansar chiefs went to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) and told him the whole story. The Holy Prophet called Zaid and asked him what had happened and he repeated every word of what he had heard. The Holy Prophet said, "Zaid, you are perhaps displeased with Ibn Ubayy; you might have been mistaken in hearing; you. might have imagined Ibn Ubayy said this." But Zaid was sure and firm. He said, "No, I swear by God I have heard him say this and that." Thereupon the Holy Prophet called Ibn Ubayy, and he came and swore that he had not said any such thing. The people of the Ansar also said "Sir, a boy says this: he might have been mistaken in what he heard lbn Ubayy is a venerable old man and our chief. Do not believe what a boy says against him." The elderly people of the tribe reproved Zaid also, who became depressed and held his peace. But the Holy Prophet knew Zaid as well as Abdullah bin Ubayy. Therefore, he fully understood what had actually happened.

When Hadrat Umar came to know of this, he came to the Holy Prophet and said: "Please allow me to put this hypocrite to the sword. Or, if you do not think it is fit to give me the permission you may tell Muadh bin Jabal, or Abbad bin Bishr, or Sad bin Mu'adh, or Muhammad bin Maslamah from among the Ansar, to go and kill him." But the Holy Prophet said: "No, the people will say Muhammad kills his own Companions." After this he ordered the people to set off immediately, although it was at a time when the Holy Prophet was not accustomed to travel. The forced march continued for 30 hours at a stretch so that the people became exhausted. Then he halted, and as soon as they touched the ground they fell asleep. This he did to distract their minds from what had happened at the well of al-Muraisi. On the way, Hadrat Usaid bin Hudair, an Ansar chief, met the Holy Prophet, and said: "O Messenger of Allah, today you ordered the people to set off at a time which was disagreeable for traveling, a thing you have never done before." The Holy Prophet replied: "Have you. not heard of what your friend said?" When he asked who he meant, the Holy Prophet replied: Abdullah bin Ubayy. He asked what he had said. The Holy Prophet answered: "He has asserted that when he returns to Madinah the honorable ones will drive

out from it the mean ones. He answered : "By God, O Messenger of Allah, you are the honorable one and he is the mean one; you will drive him out whenever you want to."

By and by the news spread among the Ansar soldiers and it enraged them against Ibn Ubayy. The people advised him to go to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) and request for his forgiveness, but he retorted : "You asked me to believe in him, and I believed in him; you asked me to pay the zakat on my property, and I paid the zakat too; now the only thing left is that I should bow down to Muhammad." This further enraged the believing Ansar and everyone' started reproaching and cursing him roughly. When the caravan was about to enter Madinah, Abullah, the son of Abdullah bin Ubayy, stood before his father with a drawn out sword, and said: "You had said that when you reached Madinah, the honorable ones would drive out the mean ones. Now, you will know who is honorable you or Allah and His Messenger. By God, you cannot enter Madinah until the Messenger of Allah (upon whom be Allah's peace) permits you to enter." At this Ibn Ubayy cried out: "O people of Khazraj, look, my own son is preventing me from entering Madinah." The people conveyed this news to the Holy Prophet, and he said : "Tell Abdullah to let his father come home." Abdullah said, "If this is the Holy Prophet's order, then you may enter." Thereupon the Holy Prophet said to Hadrat Umar: "Now what do you think, Umar? Had you killed him on the day when you asked my permission to kill him, many people would have trembled with rage. Today if I order them to kill him, they will kill him immediately." Hadrat Umar replied "By God, I realize there was greater wisdom behind what the Apostle of Allah said than what I said."'

These were the circumstances under which this Surah was sent down most probably after the Holy Prophet's return to Madinah.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

اِذَا جَآءَكَ الۡمُنٰفِقُوۡنَ قَالُوۡا نَشۡهَدُ اِنَّكَ لَرَسُوۡلُ اللّٰهِ ۘ وَاللّٰهُ يَعۡلَمُ اِنَّكَ لَرَسُوۡلُهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ
يَشۡهَدُ اِنَّ الۡمُنٰفِقِيۡنَ لَكٰذِبُوۡنَ ۚ 1

(63:1) (O Prophet), when the hypocrites come to you, they say: “We bear witness that you are certainly Allah's Messenger.” Allah certainly knows that you are His Messenger. But Allah also bears witness that the hypocrites are utter liars![1]

1. That is, Although the thing they are uttering with the tongue is true by itself, it does not reflect their belief. Therefore they lie when they say that they bear witness that you are a Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah. Here, one should clearly understand that an evidence or witness is composed of two things: first, the actual thing to which one bears the witness; second, the concerned person’s own belief about the thing to which he bears the witness, Now, if the thing by itself is true and the belief of the bearer of witness also corresponds to what he says, he will be truthful in every respect. And if the thing in itself is false; but the bearer of the witness believes it to be right and true, he will be regarded as truthful in one way, for he is truthful in expressing his belief, and liar in another way, for the

thing he is bearing witness to is by itself false. Contrary to this, if the thing by itself is true but the belief of the bearer of the witness is opposed to it, he will be regarded as truthful because he is testifying to the right thing, and a liar because his own belief is contrary to what he is saying with the tongue. For instance, if a believer states that Islam is a true religion, he is truthful in every respect, but if a Jew, while he is steadfast in his Judaism, states the same thing, he would be stating the right thing but his evidence would be regarded as false, for he is testifying against his faith and belief. And if he calls it a false religion, he would be uttering a false thing but he would be bearing a true witness according to his belief.

اِتَّخَذُوْٓا اَيْمَانَهُمْ جُنَّةً فَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ سَآءَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ 2

(63:2) They shelter behind their oath,[2] and thus hinder their own selves and others from the Path of Allah.[3] Evil indeed is what they do.

2. That is, they use the oaths that they swear to convince others of their Islam and faith as a shield to save themselves from the wrath of the Muslims so that they do not treat them as they treat their open enemies.

These oaths may imply the oaths which they usually swear to convince others of their faith as well as those which they swore when they were caught committing some hypocritical act, and also those oaths which Abdullah bin Ubayy had sworn to contradict the report given by Zaid bin Arqam. Besides these, there is another probability that Allah might have regarded this statement of theirs as an oath: We bear witness that you are Allah's Messenger. This last probability has given rise to a dispute among the jurists, namely: If a person states something with the words: I bear witness, will it be regarded as an oath or not? Imam Abu Hanifah and his companions (except Imam Zufar), Imam Sufyan Thauri and Imam Auzai regard it as an oath (Yamin in the Shariah terminology). Imam Zufar says that it is not an oath. Two sayings from Imam Malik have been reported in this connection: First, that it is an oath absolutely, and second, that if while saying: I bear witness, his intention was to say: My God, I bear witness, or I bear witness before God, it would be a statement on oath, otherwise not. Imam Shafei says: Even if the person says the words: I bear witness before God. it would not be a statement made on oath, unless he uttered these words with the intention of swearing an oath, (AI-Jassas, Ahkam al- Quran; Ibn alArabi, Ahkam al-Quran).

3. The verb sadd in Arabic is transitive as well as intransitive. Therefore, saddu-un sabil-Allah means; They turn away from the way of Allah, as well as: they turn others away from the way of Allah. According to the first meaning the verse would mean: By means of these oaths, they first plant themselves firmly among the Muslims and then invent ways to escape fulfilling demands of the faith and to avoid obedience to Allah and His Messenger. According to the second meaning it would mean: They use their false oaths as a cover for committing evil deeds. Posing as Muslims they weaken the Muslim community from within: find out the secrets of the Muslims and convey these to their enemies: create doubts about Islam among the non-Muslims and use such devices for inspiring the simple Muslims with evil suggestions which only a hypocrite in the guise of a Muslim could do, for an open enemy of Islam cannot use them.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ اٰمَنُوْا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوْا فَطُبِعَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ 3

(63:3) All that is because they first believed and then disbelieved, and therefore a seal was set on their hearts; as a result they understand nothing.[4]

4. In this verse believing means professing the faith in order to be counted among Muslims, and disbelieving means not to believe sincerely and to persist in disbelief as usual. The verse means to say that when they, after due thought, decided to adopt this hypocritical attitude instead of adopting either belief or disbelief plainly, Allah caused a seal to be set on their hearts and deprived them of the grace to adopt the attitude and conduct of a true, sincere and noble person. Now, their power of understanding has been lost, their moral sense has become dead, and while following this way they never even feel that their habit of always telling lies, their deceitful behavior and the ever present contradictions between their word and deed is a wretched state in which they have involved themselves.

This is one of those verses in which the meaning of "causing a seal to be set on the heart of somebody by Allah" has been made clear. These people did not become hypocrites because Allah had set a seal on their hearts; so faith did not enter them, and they became hypocrites under compulsion. But, in fact, Allah set a seal on their hearts only when they decided to persist in disbelief in spite of professing the faith outwardly. Then, they were deprived of the capacity to believe sincerely and of the grace of the moral attitude resulting from it, and were helped to persist in the hypocrisy and hypocritical morals, which they had chosen to adopt for themselves.

وَاِذَا رَاَيْتَهُمْ تُعْجِبُكَ اَجْسَامُهُمْ ؕ وَاِنْ يَّقُوْلُوْا تَسْمَعْ لِقَوْلِهِمْ ؕ كَاَنَّهُمْ خُشُبٌ مُّسَنَّدَةٌ ؕ يَحْسَبُوْنَ كُلَّ صَيْحَةٍ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ هُمُ الْعَدُوُّ فَاحْذَرْهُمْ ؕ قٰتَلَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۚ اَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ 4

(63:4) When you look at them, their persons are pleasing, and when they speak, you pay heed to what they say.[5] But in truth they are (merely) beams of timber propped-up (against a wall).[6] They consider every shout they hear to be directed against them.[7] They are your utter enemies;[8] guard against them.[9] May Allah do away with them![10] How are they being turned away (from the Truth)?[11]

5. Abdullah bin Abbas has stated that Abdullah bin Ubayy was a strongly built, healthy, handsome and smoothtongued person, and the same was the case with most of his companions. They were all the nobles of Al-Madinah. When they came to sit in the Prophet's (peace be upon him) assembly, they would sit reclining on cushions against the walls and would talk agreeably and convincingly. From their outward appearance and manner of speech no one could imagine that those honorable people of the city would be so wretched and degraded in their character.

6. That is, those who sit reclining on cushions against the walls, are not but but pieces of timber. Comparing them to timber is meant to imply that they are devoid of the moral sense which is the essence of humanity. Then by comparing them to blocks of timber propped up

against the wall, it has also been pointed out that they are absolutely worthless, for the timber would be useful only when it has been utilized in making of a ceiling, or a door frame, or a piece of furniture. A block of timber that has just been placed against a wall serves no useful purpose at all.

7. This brief sentence portrays the state of their guilty conscience. Since they fully knew what game of hypocrisy they were playing under the screen of their superficial faith, they always remained in a state of alarm, thinking as to when the secret of their treason might be exposed, or the believers might feel disgusted with their evil deeds and machinations and take them to task for them. If ever a cry was raised anywhere in the city, or a noise was heard; they immediately grew alarmed and thought it was directed against themselves.

8. In other words, these hidden enemies are more dangerous than the open enemies.

9. That is, do not be deceived by their outward appearances. Beware of them, for they can deceive you at any moment.

10. This is not a curse but a declaration of the verdict about them by Allah that they have become worthy of His punishment and He will certainly inflict His punishment on them. It is also possible that Allah may not have used these words in their literal sense but in the meaning of a curse and condemnation according to Arabic idiom.

11. It has not been pointed out as to who perverts them from belief to hypocrisy. This by itself makes it clear that there is not one but many factors responsible for their perversion. There is Satan, there are their evil friends, and there are their own selfish motives. Someone's wife or children become his motive, and someone is driven to perversion by the evil ones in his society, or by jealousy, spite and pride.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا يَسْتَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ لَوَّوْا رُءُوسَهُمْ وَرَأَيْتَهُمْ يَصُدُّونَ

وَهُمْ مُسْتَكْبِرُونَ 5

(63:5) When it is said to them: "Come, Allah's Messenger will seek forgiveness for you," they (contemptuously) shake their heads and you see them holding back in pride.[12]

12. That is, they not only refuse to come to the Messenger to seek forgiveness, but also on hearing the invitation they shake their heads with arrogance and pride, and remain adamant, thinking that it would be disgraceful for them to approach the Messenger (peace be upon him) to seek forgiveness. This is a clear sign that they are not believers.

سَوَآءٌ عَلَيۡهِمۡ اَسۡتَغۡفَرۡتَ لَهُمۡ اَمۡ لَمۡ تَسۡتَغۡفِرۡ لَهُمۡ ؕ لَنۡ يَّغۡفِرَ اللّٰهُ لَهُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهۡدِى

الۡقَوۡمَ الۡفٰسِقِيۡنَ 6

(63:6) It is all the same for them whether you ask forgiveness for them or not; for Allah shall never forgive them.[13]Surely Allah does not direct the transgressing folk to the Right Way.[14]

13. This thing was reiterated in Surah At-Taubah, which was revealed three years after Surah Al-Munafiqoon, even in stronger words. In that Surah, Allah, while addressing the Prophet (peace be upon him) said this about the hypocrites: O Prophet (it will be all the same) whether you beg forgiveness for them or not, for Allah will not forgive them even if you beg forgiveness for them seventy times. This is because they have disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger, and Allah does not show guidance to the wrongdoers. (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 80). A little further on in that Surah it was again said: And never perform the funeral prayer for anyone of them who dies nor stand at his grave, for they have denied Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) and died while they were transgressors. (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 84).

14. Two things have been stated in this verse. First, that the prayer of forgiveness can be beneficial only for those who are guided aright. Let alone a common man, even if Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) himself prays for the forgiveness of the person, who has turned away from guidance and adopted the way of sin and transgression instead of obedience, he cannot be forgiven. Second, that it is not Allah's way to bless with guidance those who do not seek His guidance. If a person himself turns away from Allah's guidance, rather shakes his head with arrogance and rejects the invitation when he is called towards guidance, Allah has no need that He should go after him with His guidance and implore him to come to the right path.

هُمُ الَّذِيۡنَ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ لَا تُنۡفِقُوۡا عَلٰى مَنۡ عِنۡدَ رَسُوۡلِ اللّٰهِ حَتّٰى يَنۡفَضُّوۡا ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ خَزَآئِنُ

السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ وَلٰـكِنَّ الۡمُنٰفِقِيۡنَ لَا يَفۡقَهُوۡنَ 7

(63:7) It is they who say: "Give nothing to those who are with the Messenger of Allah so that they may disperse." (They say so although) the treasures of the heavens and the earth belong to Allah. But the hypocrites do not understand.

يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ لَئِنۡ رَّجَعۡنَاۤ اِلَى الۡمَدِيۡنَةِ لَيُخۡرِجَنَّ الۡاَعَزُّ مِنۡهَا الۡاَذَلَّ ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ الۡعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُوۡلِهٖ

وَلِلۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ وَلٰـكِنَّ الۡمُنٰفِقِيۡنَ لَا يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ع 8

(63:8) They say: "When we return to Madinah, the honourable ones will drive out from it those that are abject."[15] In truth, all honour belongs to Allah, and to His Messenger, and to the believers.[16] But the hypocrites do not know.

15. Zaid bin Arqam says: When I reported these words of Abdullah bin Ubayy to the Prophet (peace be upon him), and Abdullah bin Ubayy came and disowned them on oath, the elderly people of the Ansar, and even my own uncle, reproved me for this; so much so that I felt that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had also mistaken me for a liar and Abdullah bin Ubayy for a truthful person. This caused me great anguish and grief. Then, when these verses were revealed, the Prophet (peace be upon him) called me, and taking hold of my ear, said: The boy's ear was truthful Allah has himself testified to what it had heard. (Ibn Jarir. In Tirmidhi also there is a tradition on the same subject).

16. That is, all honor belongs to Allah in virtue of His essence, to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in virtue of his prophethood, and to the believers in virtue of their faith. As for the disbelievers, the wicked people and the hypocrites, they have no share whatsoever in the real true honor.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ لَا تُلۡهِكُمۡ أَمۡوَٰلُكُمۡ وَلَآ أَوۡلَٰدُكُمۡ عَن ذِكۡرِ ٱللَّهِۚ وَمَن يَفۡعَلۡ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلۡخَٰسِرُونَ 9

(63:9) Believers,[17] let your possessions and your offspring not make you negligent of Allah's remembrance.[18] For whoso does that, they will be the losers.

17. Now a word of admonition is being addressed to all those people who have entered Islam, whether they are true and sincere believers, or those who profess the faith merely verbally. As we have explained at several places above. the words alla-dhina amanu in the Quran are sometimes used to address the true believers and sometimes to address the hypocrites, for they profess the faith only with the tongue, and sometimes to address the Muslims of all kinds in general. The context itself shows which group is the audience at a particular place.

18. The mention of the possessions and the children, in particular, has been made for man mostly turns away from the demands of the faith for the sake of their well being and interests and becomes involved in hypocrisy, weakness of faith, or wickedness and disobedience; otherwise it implies everything of the world that allures and absorbs man so completely that he becomes heedless of the remembrance of God. This heedlessness in respect of the remembrance of God is indeed the root cause of all evil. If man only remembers that he is not free but the servant of One God, and that God is fully aware of all his actions and deeds, and he will be held accountable one day before Him for all his actions and deeds, he would never be involved in any deviation and wickedness, and if ever he commits an error due to a human weakness, he will immediately rectify it as soon as he comes to realize his wrongdoing and repent.

وَاَنۡفِقُوۡا مِنۡ مَّا رَزَقۡنٰكُمۡ مِّنۡ قَبۡلِ اَنۡ يَّاۡتِىَ اَحَدَكُمُ الۡمَوۡتُ فَيَقُوۡلَ رَبِّ لَوۡلَاۤ اَخَّرۡتَنِىۡۤ اِلٰٓى
اَجَلٍ قَرِيۡبٍ ۙ فَاَصَّدَّقَ وَاَكُنۡ مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيۡنَ 10

(63:10) And spend of what Allah has granted you by way of sustenance before death should come to any of you and he should say: “Lord, why did You not defer my return for a while so that I might give alms and be among the righteous?”

وَلَنۡ يُّؤَخِّرَ اللّٰهُ نَفۡسًا اِذَا جَآءَ اَجَلُهَا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ خَبِيۡرٌۢ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ع 11

(63:11) But when a person's term comes to an end, Allah never grants any respite. Allah is well aware of all that you do.

64. Surah At Taghabun (Mutual Loss and Gain)

Name

The Surah takes its name from the sentence Dhalika yaum-ut taghabun of verse 9, thereby implying that it is the Surah in which the word at taghabun has occurred.

Period of Revelation

Muqatil and Kalbi say that it was partly revealed at Makkah and partly at Madinah. Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas and Ata bin Yasar say that vv. 1-13 were revealed at Makkah and vv. 14-18 at Madinah. But the majority of commentators regard the whole of the surah as a Madinan Revelation. Although there is no internal evidence to help determine its exact period of revelation, yet a study of its subject matter shows that it might probably have been sent down at an early stage at Madinah. That is why it partly resembles the Makkah surahs and partly the Madinan Surahs.

Theme and Subject Matter

The theme of this surah is invitation to the Faith and obedience (to Allah) and the teaching of good morals. The sequence followed is that the first four verses are addressed to all men; verses 5-10 to those men, who do not believe in the invitation of the Qur'an; and verses 11-18 to those who accept and believe in this invitation.

In the verses addressed to all men, they have been made aware in a few brief sentences of the four fundamental truths:

First, that the universe in which they live is not Godless, but its Creator, Master and Ruler is an All Powerful God, and everything in it testifies to His being most Perfect and absolutely faultless.

Second, that the universe is not without purpose and wisdom, but its Creator has created it with truth no one should be under the delusion that it is a mock show, which began without a purpose and will come to an end without a purpose.

Third, that the excellent form that God has created you with and the choice that He has given you to choose between belief and unbelief is not a useless and meaningless activity so that it may be of no consequence whether you choose belief or unbelief. In fact, God is watching as to how you exercise your choice.

Fourth, that you have not been created irresponsible and un-answerable. You have to return ultimately to your Creator, and have to meet the Being who is aware of everything in the universe, from Whom nothing is hidden, to Whom even the innermost thoughts of the minds are known.

After stating these four fundamental truths about the Universe and Man, the address turns to the people who adopted the way of unbelief, and their attention is drawn to a phenomenon which has persisted throughout human history, namely that nation after nation has arisen and ultimately gone to its doom. Man by his intellect and reason has been

explaining this phenomenon in a thousand ways, but Allah tells the real truth and declares that the fundamental causes of the destruction of the nations were only two:

First, that they refused to believe in the Messengers whom He sent for their guidance, with the result that Allah too left them to themselves, and they invented their own philosophies of life and went on groping their way from one error to another.

Second, that they also, rejected the doctrine of Hereafter, and thought this worldly life to be an end in itself, and that there was no life hereafter when they would have to render an account of their deeds before God. This corrupted their whole attitude towards life, and their impure morals and character so polluted the world that eventually the scourge of God itself had to descend and eliminate them from the scene.

After stating these two instructive truths of human history, the deniers of the message of Truth have been admonished to wake up and believe in Allah, His Messenger and the Light of Guidance that Allah has sent in the form of the Qur'an if they want to avoid the fate met by the former peoples. Besides, they have been warned that the Day shall eventually come when all the former and the latter generations will be collected at one place and the fraud and embezzlement committed by each will be exposed before all mankind. Then the fate of each man will be decided finally on the basis as to who had adopted the path of the Faith and righteousness and who had followed the way of disbelief and denial of the Truth. The first group shalt deserve eternal Paradise and the second shall be doomed to everlasting Hell.

Then, addressing those who adopt the way of the Faith, a few important instructions have been given:

First, that whatever affliction befalls a person in the world, it befalls him by Allah's leave. Whoever in this state of affliction remains steadfast to the Faith, Allah blesses his heart with guidance; otherwise although the affliction of the one who in confusion or bewilderment turns away from the path of the Faith, cannot be averted except by Allah's leave, yet he becomes involved in another, the greatest affliction of all, namely that his heart is deprived of the guidance of Allah.

Secondly, that the believer is not required to affirm the faith with the tongue only, but after the affirmation of the Faith he should practically obey Allah and His Messenger. If he turns away from obedience he would himself be responsible for his loss, for the Holy Messenger of Allah (upon whom be His peace) has become absolved from the responsibility after having delivered the message of Truth.

Thirdly, that the believer should place his trust in Allah alone and not in his own power or some other power of the world.

Fourthly, that the worldly goods and children are a great trial and temptation for the believer, for it is their love which generally distracts man from the path of faith and obedience. Therefore, the believers have to beware some of their children, and wives lest they become robbers for them on the Way of God directly or indirectly; and they should

spend their wealth for the sake of God so that their self remains safe against the temptations of Satan.

Fifthly, that every man is responsible only to the extent of his power and ability. Allah does not demand that man should exert himself beyond his power and ability. However, the believer should try his best to live in fear of God as far as possible, and should see that he does not transgress the bounds set by Allah in his speech, conduct and dealings through his own negligence.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

يُسَبِّحُ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ لَهُ الۡمُلۡكُ وَلَهُ الۡحَمۡدُ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرٌ 1

(64:1) All that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth extols Allah's glory.[1] His is the sovereignty[2] and to Him is all praise due;[3] He has power over everything.[4]

1. For explanation, see(E.N. 1 of the commentary on Surah Al-Hadid). A study of the following theme by itself shows why the discourse has ban begun with this sentence. What has been stated below about the universe and man is that Allah alone is their Creator, Master, Ruler, and He has not made this universe without purpose and wisdom, that man has not been created and left irresponsible, so that he may act as he may please, and there should be nobody to call him to account, and that the Ruler of this universe is not a care-free and ignorant king so that he may have no knowledge of what is happening in his kingdom. The best introduction to this theme could be the same as has been couched in this brief sentence. In view of the context, the introduction means: In whichever direction you may turn your gaze, from the earth to the limitless vastnesses of the heavens, you will clearly see that everything from a particle to the great galaxies not only testifies to the existence of God but also bears evidence that its God is free from every defect, every weakness and error. Had there been the least probability of a defect or fault, weakness or deficiency, in His essence and attributes, in His acts and decrees, this perfect and wise system could not have come into being at all, nor continue to function so consistently and immutably from eternity to eternity.

2. That is, the Kingdom of the universe solely belongs to Him. He has not just created it and left it alone after giving it the initial creation, but He alone is actually ruling over it every moment. No one else has any role or share whatsoever in this rule and sovereignty. If others possess temporarily and on a limited scale some powers of ownership or rule somewhere in the universe, these are not their personal powers, which they might have acquired by virtue of their own ability, but these have been granted to them by Allah. They possess these powers as long as Allah wills, and they can be withdrawn as and when He so desires.

3. In other words; He alone is worthy of all praise. Whatever other being has any praiseworthy quality, it has ban granted by Allah. And if hamd (praise) be taken in the

sense of shukr (thankfulness), the meaning would be: In reality Allah alone is worthy of being thanked, for all good things in the world have been created by Him, and He alone is the real Benefactor of all kinds of creation. When we thank another being for favor, we thank it for the reason that Allah conveyed His blessing through it or him to us, otherwise neither the being itself is the creator of the blessing nor could it convey the blessing to you without Allah's permission and help.

4. That is, He is the possessor of absolute power: He can do whatever He wills, there is no power to restrain or limit His Omnipotence.

هُوَ الَّذِیۡ خَلَقَکُمۡ فَمِنۡکُمۡ کَافِرٌ وَّمِنۡکُمۡ مُّؤۡمِنٌ ؕ وَاللّٰہُ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ بَصِیۡرٌ 2

(64:2) He it is Who has created you: and among you are those that deny the Truth[5] and among you are those that believe in it.[6] Allah observes all that you do.

5. It has four meanings and all are correct in their respective places:

First, that He alone is your Creator, yet some of you deny His being the Creator and others acknowledge this truth. This meaning becomes obvious when the first and the second sentences are read together.

Second, that He Himself has created you with the nature that if you choose to adopt unbelief, you may do so, and if you choose to affirm belief, you may do so. He has not compelled you to either accept or reject the faith. Therefore, you yourselves are responsible for your adopting belief or unbelief. This meaning is confirmed by the following sentence: Allah sees whatever you do. That is, by giving you this choice He has put you to the test, and He is watching how you exercise this choice.

The third meaning is, He has created you with a sound, wholesome nature, which demands that you should all adopt the way of the faith, yet some of you adopted unbelief, which was opposed to the nature and purpose of their creation, and some of you adopted the way of the faith, which was in conformity with their nature. This theme becomes obvious when this verse is read along with (verse 30 of Surah Ar-Room) which says: Set your face sincerely and truly towards faith, and be steadfast on the nature whereupon Allah has created mankind. There can be no alteration in the nature made by Allah. This is the right and true faith. And this very theme is explained by several Ahadith in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) has repeatedly stated that every man has been created on true human nature; then polytheism and deviation befall him from outside (For further explanation, see(E.Ns 42 to 47 of the commentary of Surah Ar-Room). Here, it may he pointed out that no divine Book has ever presented the concept of man's being a sinner by birth, which Christianity has embraced as its fundamental doctrine for 1,500 years. Recently even Catholic scholars themselves have started expressing the view that there is no basis for this doctrine in the Bible. The famous German biblical scholar Rev. Herbert Haag writes in his book, Is Original Sin in Scripture: Among the earliest Christians, at least till the 3rd century A.D. there existed no such creed that man was a sinner by birth, and when this idea started spreading among the people, the Christian scholars continued to contradict it for two centuries. At last in the 5th century A.D. St Augustine by the power of his logic made this idea a part of the

fundamental beliefs of Christianity. Mankind is heir to the original sin committed by Adam, and there is no way to salvation for man except through the Atonement made by Christ.

The fourth meaning is: Only Allah brought you into existence from nonexistence: you were not, then you became. This was such a simple thing that if you had thought over it seriously and seen that life is the real blessing through which you are benefiting by the other blessings in the world, none of you would have adopted the attitude of disbelief and rebellion against your Creator. But some of you did not give it due thought or thought wrongly, and adopted the way of disbelief, and some others adopted the same way of belief and faith which was the very demand of correct thinking.

6. In this sentence seeing does not merely mean to see, but it automatically gives the meaning that man will be rewarded or punished according to his actions and deeds. It is just like a master's taking a person into service and then telling him: I shall see how you perform your duties, which implies: If you perform your duties well, I shall reward you fully; otherwise I shall call you to account for your negligence.

خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضَ بِالۡحَقِّ وَصَوَّرَكُمۡ فَاَحۡسَنَ صُوَرَكُمۡ ۚ وَاِلَيۡهِ الۡمَصِيۡرُ 3

(64:3) He created the heavens and the earth with Truth and shaped you, giving you excellent shapes. And to Him is your ultimate return.[7]

7. In this verse three things have been stated in their sequence, which are well connected logically:

First, it has been said that Allah has created this universe with the truth. When the word with the truth is spoken for a news, it means a true news; when it is spoken for a command, it means a command based on justice; when it is spoken for a statement, it means a correct statement; and when it is used for an act, it implies an act which is wise, reasonable and useful. Now, khalq (to create) is an act; therefore, to say that the universe has been created with the truth, would inevitably mean that the universe has not been created for fun but it is a serious work of a Wise Creator: everything in it has a rational object and purpose, and the element of its being purposeful is so evident that if a sensible person understands the nature of a thing well, it cannot be difficult for him to know the rational and wise purpose for which it has been created. All of modern science testifies that whenever man has succeeded in understanding the true nature of a thing by careful thought, research and investigation, he has also come to know eventually the purpose and object of its creation, and this understanding of its purpose has led him to countless inventions which are now being used in civilized human life. This could not be possible, had this universe been the plaything of a carefree person, devoid of any wisdom and purpose. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 46 of Surah Al- Anaam); (E.N. 11 of Surah Yunus); (E.N. 26 of Surah Ibrahim); (E.N. 46 of Surah An-Nahl); (E.Ns 15, 16 of Surah Al-Anbiya), (E.N. 102 of Surah Al-Mominoon); (E.N. 75 of Surah Al-Ankabut); (E.N. 6 of Surah Ar-Room); (E.N. 34 of Surah Ad-Dukhan); (E.N. 28 of Surah Al-Jathiyah).

Secondly, it has been said that in this universe Allah has created man in the best shape. Shape here does not imply only man's face but his whole bodily structure; it also includes all

those powers and abilities which man has been granted to function in this world. In both these aspects man has been given the best shape and form among the creatures of the earth, and on the same basis he has become worthy to rule over all the universe. He has been given an erect stature; he has been given most appropriate feet to walk on; he has been given most suitable hands to work with; he has been given such senses and organs to acquire knowledge by which he obtains every kind of information; he has been given a powerful mind to think and understand and deduce results from the body of acquired information; he has been given a moral sense and a power of discrimination by which he distinguishes between good and evil, right and wrong; he has been given the power of decision by using which he selects his own course of action, and decides as to where he should employ his efforts and where he should not. He has even been given the freedom that he may acknowledge his Creator and serve Him if he so likes and reject Him if he pleases, or may make whomever he likes his gods, or rebel even against Him Whom he regards as his God. Along with all these capabilities and powers Allah has granted him the authority to appropriate everything created by Him, and he is practically using this authority in the world. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 91 of Surah Al-Momin).

The third thing which logically follows from the first two, as explained above has been stated in the third sentence of the verse: To Him you have to return in the end. Obviously, when a creature endowed with power and authority has been created in a wise and purposeful system of the universe, wisdom does not require that he should be left to live irresponsibly in the world, but it necessarily requires that that creature should be accountable to the Being Who has granted it this position and rank and blessed it with these powers; Returning in this verse does not merely mean to return but to return for accountability. In the following verses it has been explained that this return will not be in this life but into the second life after death, and its right time will he when all mankind will be resurrected and gathered together simultaneously for accountability, and in consequence of the accountability man will be rewarded or punished on the ground whether he had used the powers given him by God in the right way or the wrong way. As for the question, why cannot this accountability be held in the present life of the world, and why is its right time only the second life after death, and why is it necessary that this accountability be held only when all mankind has passed away from this world, and all the former and the latter generations have been resurrected and gathered together simultaneously? If man only uses his common sense a little, he can understand that all this is perfectly rational as well as the very demand of wisdom and reason that accountability should be held in the second lift and of all mankind together. The first reason is that man is accountable for his whole life-work. Therefore, the right time of his accountability should necessarily be when his life-work has come to an end. The second reason is that man is responsible for all those effects and influences which he produces by his acts on the lives of others, and those influences and effects do not come to an end with his death but continue to influence others till ages after him Therefore, true accountability call he held only when the life-work of entire mankind has come to an end and all the former and the latter generations are gathered together simultaneously for accountability. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 30 of Surah Al-Aaraf); (E.Ns 10, 11 of Surah Younus); (E.N. 105 of Surah Houd); (E.N. 35 of Surah An- Nahl); (E.N. 9 of Surah AI-Hajj); (E.N. 27 of Surah An-Naml); (E.Ns 5, 6 of Surah Ar-Room); (E.Ns 29, 30 of Surah Suad), (E.N. 80 of Surah Al-Momin), (E.Ns 27 to 29 of Surah Al- Jathiyah).

يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُسِرُّوْنَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُوْنَ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ

الصُّدُوْرِ 4

(64:4) He knows what is in the heavens and the earth, and knows what you conceal and what you disclose.[8] Allah even knows what lies hidden in the breasts of people.[9]

8. Another translation can be: Whatever you do secretly and whatever openly.

9. That is, He is aware not only of those acts of man, which come to the notice of the people but He knows also those acts which remain hidden from them. Moreover, He does not only see the superficial form of the acts, but also knows what intention and purpose underlay each act of man and with what motive and aim he did whatever he did. This is such a truth that if man ponders over it seriously, he can fully understand that justice can be done only in the Hereafter, and only in God's court can real justice be possibly done. Man's own intellect itself demands that man must be punished for each of his crimes. But everyone knows that in the world most of the crimes remain hidden, or the culprit escapes punishment because of insufficient evidence, or even if the crime becomes revealed, the culprit is so influential and powerful that he cannot be punished. Then the intellect of man also requires that man should not be punished only because his behavior resembles a criminal act, but it should be ascertained that he has committed the act intentionally and deliberately and at the time he committed it, he was acting as a responsible agent, his intention, in fact, was to commit the crime, and he knew that what he was doing was a crime. That is why the worldly courts inquire into these things when they decide the cases, and regard such an inquiry as a demand of the rule of justice. But are there any means available in the world by which these things may be precisely ascertained beyond every shadow of doubt? Considered from this viewpoint, this verse also bears a deep logical relevance to Allah Almighty's saying: He has created the earth and the heavens with truth. The necessary demand of creating them with truth is that perfect justice should prevail in this universe. Such justice can be established only when every act of a responsible man may not only remain concealed from the eyes of the one administering justice but the intention with which a person performed an act also should not remain hidden from him. And obviously, there cannot be any being, apart from the Creator of the universe, who can administer such justice. Now, if a person denies Allah and the Hereafter, he in fact, asserts that we humans live in a universe which is devoid of justice, which is rather a place where justice cannot possibly be done. The person whose intellect, mind and conscience feel satisfied at such an assumption would be a shameless creature if be thought he was being progressive and rationalistic and those people antiquated and retrogressive who accept a highly rational concept about the universe, which the Quran presents.

اَلَمْ يَاْتِكُمْ نَبَؤُا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۫ فَذَاقُوْا وَبَالَ اَمْرِهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ 5

(64:5) Has the news of the unbelievers of the past not reached you? (They disbelieved) and then tasted its evil consequence. A grievous chastisement awaits them.[10]

10. That is, the evil that they tasted in the world in consequence of their misdeeds was neither the real punishment of their crimes nor the full punishment. The real and full punishment they have yet to suffer in the Hereafter. However, the people can learn a lesson from the torment that visited them. They can see how the nations which adopted an attitude of unbelief against their Lord, went an degenerating and consequently met with an evil and disgraceful end. (For further explanation, see (E.Ns 5, 6 of Surah Al-Aaraf), (E.N. 105 of Surah Houd).

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهٗ كَانَتْ تَّاْتِيْهِمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَقَالُوْٓا اَبَشَرٌ يَّهْدُوْنَنَا ۫ فَكَفَرُوْا وَتَوَلَّوْا وَّاسْتَغْنَى اللّٰهُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيْدٌ 6

(64:6) This was because their Messengers would come to them with Clear Signs,11 but they would say: "Shall mortals (like ourselves) guide us to the Right Way?"12 They rejected the Truth and turned away. Thereupon Allah became unconcerned with them, for Allah is Self-Sufficient, Innately Praiseworthy.13

11. The word bayyinet as used in the original has a vast meaning. Bayyin (singular of bayyinat) in Arabic is something which is very clear and manifest. Saying about the Prophets that they came with bayyinat gives the meaning that firstly, they brought such manifest signs as bore clear testimony to their having been appointed by Allah. Secondly, they presented whatever they presented with rational and clear arguments. Thirdly, there was no ambiguity in their teaching. They clearly explained what was the truth and what was falsehood, what was lawful and what was unlawful, what path man should follow and what he should avoid.

12. This was then the foremost and basic cause of their degeneration and ruin mankind could not have known the right course of action in the world unless their Creator gave them the correct knowledge, and there could be no practical means of bestowing such knowledge by the Creator unless He blessed some of the human beings with the knowledge and entrusted them with the duty to convey it to other human beings. For this purpose, He sent the Prophets with the manifest signs (bayyinat) so that there was no reasonable ground for the people to doubt their being on the truth. But the people refused to believe that a human being could be a Messenger of God. Then, obviously there could be no other way for them to receive guidance. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 11 of Surah YaSeen). In this connection, however, a strange manifestation of the ignorance and folly of human beings is seen. They have in fact, never shown any hesitation in accepting the guidance of men, so much so that they have carried out gods of wood and stone according to their guidance, they have made human beings themselves God, the incarnation of God, even son of God. And they have adopted such strange viewpoints by following the guidance of their misleaders blindly, which ruined human civilization and morals altogether. But when the Messengers of God came to them with the truth, and they presented the pure truth before them without any selfish motive, they said: Shall mere human beings show us guidance? This amounted to saying that if a human begin misled them, they would follow his guidance willingly, but if he showed the right path to them, his guidance was not acceptable.

13. That is, when they treated the guidance sent down by Allah with indifference, then Allah also became indifferent to them and did not care what pit they fell in. Allah did not stand in need of their acknowledging Him as God in order to sustain and support His Godhead. Nor was He in need of their worship, nor of their praise and adoration. He, in fact, willed to show them the right path only for their own good and well-being. But when they turned away from it, Allah also became heedless of them. Then, neither He gave them guidance, nor remained responsible for their protection, nor saved them from being afflicted with calamities, nor prevented them from bringing about their own ruin for they themselves were not keen for His guidance and help.

زَعَمَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اَنْ لَّنْ يُّبْعَثُوْا ۭ قُلْ بَلٰى وَرَبِّيْ لَتُبْعَثُنَّ ثُمَّ لَتُنَبَّؤُنَّ بِمَا عَمِلْتُمْ ۭ وَذٰلِكَ عَلَي اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرٌ 7

(64:7) The unbelievers have vehemently contended that they shall not be raised to life.[14] Say to them: "Yes, by my Lord, you shall surely be raised to life,[15] and you shall certainly be fully informed of all that you did. [16] That is easy enough for Allah."[17]

14. That is, this was the second basic error in which the deniers of the truth have been involved in every age, and which has ultimately brought about their ruin. Although no denier of the Hereafter ever had any means of knowing, nor has he today, nor will he have in the future, that there is no life after death, but these ignorant people have always asserted the same thing, whereas there neither exists any intellectual basis for denying the Hereafter with absolute certainty nor any scientific basis for it.

15. This is the third place where Allah Almighty has instructed His Prophet to tell the people by swearing an oath by his Lord that such a thing shall certainly happen. First, in Surah Younus, it was said: They ask, is what you say really true. Tell them: Yes, by my Lord, it is absolutely true and you have no power to avert it.(verse 53). Then, in Surah Saba, it was said: The disbelievers say: How is it that Resurrection is not overtaking us. Say: By my Lord, it will surely overtake you. (verse 3).

Here, the question arises: What difference does it make for a disbeliever in the Hereafter whether you give him the news of its coming by swearing an oath or without swearing an oath. When he does not believe in it at all, will he believe in it only because you are asserting this on oath. The answer is: In the first place, the addressees of the Prophet (peace be upon him) were the people who knew from their personal knowledge and experience that he had never uttered a lie in his life. Therefore, even if they might have forged the most shameless slander against him with their tongue, yet in their hearts they could never conceive that a truthful man like him could say a thing on oath by Allah of which he himself was not convinced by knowledge and experience. Secondly, the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not only present the doctrine of the Hereafter but also gave highly rational arguments for it. What distinguishes a Prophet from others is that the arguments, however strong and cogent, that others may give for the Hereafter, can at the most make the listener admit that the occurrence of the Hereafter is more reasonable and probable than its absence. On the contrary, a Prophet stands at a notch higher level than a philosopher. His real position is not

that be has arrived at the conclusion of the necessity of the Hereafter by the exercise of reason. But his real position is that he has the knowledge that the Hereafter shall occur and says with conviction that it shall surely occur. Therefore, only a Prophet can swear an oath to declare this but not a philosopher. Then, faith in the Hereafter can be generated only by a Prophet's statement; the reasoning of a philosopher does not have the power to induce even himself to adopt it as his religious creed on the basis of his own argument, not to speak of another person. If the philosopher is really correct, he cannot go beyond, should be or ought to be. Only a Prophet can assert with conviction that a thing is and certainly is.

16. This is the purpose for which the children of Adam will be resurrected. This also contains the answer to the question: What is the special need for it. If one keeps in view what has been discussed concerning verse 1,4 above, one can easily understand that in this universe, which has been created with the truth, it would be highly unreasonable to imagine about man who has been given freedom to choose either belief or unbelief, who has been granted authority to appropriate many of the things in this universe, and who after choosing the way of belief or unbelief has accomplished much good or done evil on his own responsibility by making the right or the wrong use of his authority during his life. That when he has done all this the good done by the virtuous and the evil committed by the criminal, one should neither bear any fruit, nor should there be any time when his deeds and actions should be subjected to security. The person who asserts such an irrational thing inevitably commits one of the two absurdities: either he thinks that although this universe is based on wisdom, yet a creature like man, who has been endowed with authority, has been created and left irresponsible here; or he thinks that this universe is a random creation devoid of the wisdom of a Wise Creator. In the first place, he makes a contradictory statement, for the existence of an irresponsible creature, endowed with authority, in a universe based on wisdom, is clearly against justice and wisdom. In the second case, he cannot give any rational being like man should come into being in a haphazardly created, foolish universe, and how he conceived the idea of justice. Only a stubborn person could uphold the belief that folly could generate wisdom and injustice could generate justice, or the one who has become a mental patient because of his obsession for hair splitting.

17. This is the second argument for the Hereafter. The first argument was for its necessity and this second is for its possibility. Obviously, when God could create such a grand and wonderful system of the universe without any difficulty and when He could create human beings in the world in the first instance, it cannot be difficult for Him to resurrect the same human beings and summon them before Himself for the purpose of accountability.

فَاٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَالنُّوْرِ الَّذِیْۤ اَنْزَلْنَا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِیْرٌ 8

(64:8) So believe in Allah and in His Messenger and in the Light that We have sent down.[18] Allah is fully aware of what you do.

18. That is, when this is the truth and the whole human history testifies that the real cause of the destruction of the nations has been their disbelieving the Messengers and their denial of the Hereafter, then they should not insist on meeting the same doom by following their example, but should believe in the guidance presented by Allah and His Messenger and the Quran. Here, as the context itself shows, by the light that We have sent down, means the

Quran. Just as light itself is clearly seen and reveals everything that was hidden in darkness around it, so is the Quran a light whose being based on the truth is self-evident; in its light man can solve and understand every problem that he cannot solve and understand exclusively by means of his own knowledge and intellect. Anyone who has the light can clearly see the straight path of truth out of the countless, crooked paths of thought and action, and can follow the straight path throughout life in such a way that at every step he can know where the crooked bypaths are misleading and where the pitfalls of destruction are situated on the way, and what is the path of safety and security among them.

يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُكُمْ لِيَوْمِ الْجَمْعِ ذٰلِكَ يَوْمُ التَّغَابُنِ ۗ وَمَنْ يُّؤْمِنْۢ بِاللّٰهِ وَيَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا يُّكَفِّرْ
عَنْهُ سَيِّاٰتِهٖ وَيُدْخِلْهُ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ۗ ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ
الْعَظِيْمُ 9

(64:9) (You shall come to know that) when He will assemble you on the Day of Gathering.[19] That shall be the Day (to determine) mutual gains and losses.[20] Whoever believes in Allah and acts righteously,[21] Allah will have his evil deeds expunged and will admit him to Gardens beneath which rivers flow. Therein they shall abide forever. That is the supreme triumph.

19. The Day of Gathering: the Resurrection, when all human beings born in the world from the beginning of creation till the Last Day will be gathered together simultaneously. This theme has been fully explained in the Quran at several places; e.g. in Surah Houd it has been said: That will be the Day when all the people shall gather together and will witness everything that will happen there. (verse 103). And in Surah Al-Waqiah: Say to them; Surely, the former and the latter, all shall be gathered together one day, the hour of which has already been appointed. (verse 50).

20. The word yaum-ut-taghabun as used in the original is too vast in meaning to be explained in a word, or even a sentence, of any other language. Of all the names of the Resurrection that occur in the Quran, this name probably is the most meaningful. Therefore, an explanation is necessary to understand its meaning.

Taghabun is from ghabn, which can be pronounced both as ghabn and as ghaban. Ghabn is mostly used concerning commercial and business transactions and ghaban concerning opinion. Lexically, it has other meanings also, e.g. heedlessness, forgetfulness, a person's being deprived of his share, a man's harming another inadvertently in business or mutual dealing, etc.

The derivative taghabun implies the occurrence of ghabn between two or more persons. Thus, taghabun-al-qaum means some people's treating others fraudulently, or a person's harming another person and the other's being harmed and damaged by him, or one's taking away the share of another and the other's being deprived of his share, or a person's

incurring loss in business and another's gaining a profit, or some people's proving heedless or weak-minded in comparison to others.

Now consider that in this verse it has been said about the Resurrection: That will be a Day of taghabun (mutual loss and gain) among the people. These words automatically give the meaning that in the world taghabun is a common thing, but this taghabun is superficial and deceptive, not the real and factual taghabun, the real taghabun will take place on the Day of Resurrection. There it will become manifest as to who actually incurred the loss and who actually earned the profits, who actually was deceived and who proved to be prudent and sensible, who actually had invested all his life capital in a wrong bargain and become bankrupt and who had invested all his energies and abilities, wealth and time, in a good bargain and earned all the benefits and gains, which the former also could have earned had he not been deceived in understanding the truth about the world.

The commentators while explaining the meaning of youmut- taghabun have given several meanings of it, which are all correct, and throw light on different aspects of its meaning. Some commentators have explained that on that Day the dwellers of Paradise will take away that share of the dwellers of Hell which they would have had in Paradise had they done good deeds in the world as did the dwellers of Paradise and the dwellers of Hell will take away that share of the people of Paradise, which they would have had in Hell had they done evil deeds is the world. This is supported by a Hadith, which Bukhari has related in kitab ar-Riqaq, on the authority of Abu Hurairah, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Whoever goes to Paradise will be shown the place which he would have had in Hell had he done evil deeds in the world so that he may give more and more thanks to God; and whoever goes to Hell will be shown the place which he would have had in Paradise had he done good deeds in the world so that he may feel more and more remorseful.

Some other commentators say that on that Day, the wronged one will take away so many of the good deeds done by the wrongdoer as may be a suitable compensation for the wrong suffered, or the wrongdoer will be equal in weight with his usurped rights. For on the Day of Resurrection man will not possess any wealth which he may give to make up for the wrong done, there the only commodity worth exchange will be one's conduct. Therefore, whoever had wronged another in the world, will have to make up for the wrong done by surrendering some of his own good deeds in his favor, or by taking some of his sins on himself and suffering the punishment for them. This theme also has been reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him) in Ahadith. In Bukhari (Kitab ar-Riqaq) a tradition has been related from Abu Hurairah, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Whoever bears a burden of a wrong done to his brother, should compensate him for it here, for in the Hereafter no one will have any wealth or money for compensation. There, some of his good deeds will he taken from him and given away to the wronged person, or if he did not have enough good deeds, some of the sins of the wronged person will be transferred to him. Likewise, in Musnad Ahmad there is a tradition from Jabir bin Abdullah bin Unais, saing that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: No dweller of Paradise will enter Paradise and no dweller of Hell will enter Hell until he will have compensated the other person for the wrong done to him so much so that one will have to compensate even for a slap given to another person. We asked; How will this compensation be made when on Resurrection we shall be naked and penniless? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Compensation will be made by means of the good deeds and the evil deeds. In Muslim and Musnad Ahmad

there is a tradition from Abu Hurairah, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) once asked the people sitting in his assembly: Do you know who is poor. The people replied: He who has nothing to possess. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: In my ummah the poor is he who appeared before his God on the Day of Resurrection with his acts of the Prayer and the Fast and the payment of the Zakat, while he had abused some one, usurped the property of another, and shed blood or hit still another. Then his good deeds were taken away and given over to each of the wronged and when nothing was left of his good deeds to make compensation, some of the sins of each wronged one were transferred to him and he was east into Hell. In another Hadith which Muslim and Abu Daud have related on the authority of Buraidah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: If in the absence from home of a soldier for the cause of Allah, a person treats his wife and the people of his house treacherously, the person would be made to stand before the soldier on the Day of Resurrection, and the latter would be asked to take away whatever he liked from his good deeds. Saying this, the Prophet (peace be upon him) turned to us and said: Then what do you say. That is, what do you think he would leave with him.

Some other commentators say that tile word taghabun is mostly used concerning commerce and business, and in the Quran at several places the attitude that the believer and the unbeliever adopt in their worldly lives has been compared to trade and commerce. If the believer giving up disobedience adopts obedience and invests his life and wealth and effort for the cause of God, he is giving up a bad bargain and investing his capital in a business which will fetch him much gain and profit in the end. On the contrary, if an unbeliever abandons the way of obedience and invests his entire capital in the way of disobedience to God, he in fact, is a trader who has purchased deviation for guidance, and will incur loss in the end. The gain and the loss of both will become manifest on the Day of Resurrection. It may well so happen in the world that the believer appears to be the loser and the disbeliever the gainer. But in the Hereafter they will see who actually had made the right bargain and who the wrong bargain This theme has occurred at many places in the Quran, e.g. in (Surah Al- Baqarah, Ayats 16,175, 207); (Surah Al-Imran, Ayats 77, 177); (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 74); (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 111); (Surah An-Nah, Ayat l95); (Surah Fatir, Ayat 29); (Surah As-Saff, Ayat 10).

Yet another from of taghabun is that in the world the people go on cooperating with one another in unbelief and sin, injustice and wickedness, with full peace of mind with the confidence that they are enjoying fully mutual love and friendship. The mutual intrigues and comradeship of the members of wicked families' immoral guides and their followers, gangs of thieves and robbers, alliances of corrupt and unjust officers and officials, groups of dishonest traders, industrialists and land owners, groups established to spread deviation, error and mischief, and nations and governments which support and uphold injustice and wickedness in the world, is based on the same confidence. The individuals belonging to each of these groups harbor the impression that they are good companions of one another and their mutual cooperation is proving very successful. But when these people reach the Hereafter, they will suddenly wake up to the realization that they had been grievously mistaken and deceived. Each one of them would feel that the one whom he considered his best father, brother, wife, husband, child, friend, companion, leader, guide, disciple or supporter and helper, had been, in fact, his worst enemy. Every kind of relationship and friendship and bond of love and reverence will change into enmity. They will all abuse and

curse each other and each one will desire that maximum responsibility of his crimes be laid an the other and will strive to get him severely punished. This theme also has occurred at many places in the Quran, e.g. in (Surah Al-Baqrah, Ayat 167); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 37 to 39); (Surah Ibrahim, Ayats 21-22); (Surah Al-Mominoom, Ayat 101); (Surah Al-Ankaboot, Ayats 12, 13, 25); (Surah Luqman, Ayat 33; (Surah Al-Ahzab, Ayats 67,68); (Surah Saba, Ayats 31 to 33); (Surah Fatir, Ayats 18); (Surah As- Saaffat, Ayats 27 to 31); (Surah Suad, Ayats 59 to 61); (Surah HaMim As-Sajdah, Ayat 29); (Surah Az-Zukhruf, Ayat 67); (Surah Ad-Dukhan, Ayat 41); (Surah AI-Maarij, Ayats 10 to 14); (Surah Abasa, Ayats 34 to 36).

21. Believing in Allah does not merely imply believing that Allah exists but believing in Him in the way Allah Himself has taught through His Messenger and His Book. This belief by itself includes belief in apostleship and belief in the Book. Likewise a good act also does not imply every such act as man may himself have adopted considering it a good act, or following a man-made criterion of morality, but it implies the righteous act that is in accordance with the law sent down by God. Therefore no one should have the misunderstanding that believing in Allah and doing good deeds, without the medium of the Messenger and the Book will lead to the results being mentioned below. Whoever studies the Quran carefully cannot remain unaware that according to it no such belief is genuine belief in Allah and no such act is righteous at all.

وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ وَبِئْسَ
الْمَصِيْرُ ۝10 ع

(64:10) As for those who disbelieved and gave the lie to Our Signs:22 they shall be the inmates of the Fire, and will abide in it. That is a woeful resort!

22. These words by themselves make manifest the meaning of unbelief (kufr). Unbelief is nothing but denying the verses of Allah's Book to be divine revelation, rejecting the truth expressed therein and refusing to follow and obey the commandments given in them; its results are those being mentioned below.

مَآ اَصَابَ مِنْ مُّصِيْبَةٍ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّؤْمِنْۢ بِاللّٰهِ يَهْدِ قَلْبَهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ
عَلِيْمٌ ۝11

(64:11) No misfortune23 ever befalls unless it be by Allah's leave.24 And whosoever has faith in Allah, Allah directs his heart along the Right Path.25 Allah has knowledge of everything.26

23. The discourse now turns to the believers. While reading this passage one should keep in mind the fact that at the time when these verses were revealed. Muslims were passing through great hardships. After years of persecution at Makkah they had left their home and emigrated to Madinah, where the sincere Muslims who had given them refuge had been

doubly burdened. On the one hand, they had to support and sustain hundreds of the emigrants who were coming to them from different parts of Arabia. On the other, they had become the target of the persecution and enmity of the enemies of Islam of entire Arabia.

24. This same theme has also occurred in (Surah Al-Hadid, Ayats 22-23) above and we have explained it in(E.Ns 39 to 42 of the commentary of that Surah). The same circumstances under which this thing was said there and the same object for which it was said underlie the verses here as well. This means that afflictions and hardships do not descend of themselves, nor has anyone in the world the power to cause an affliction to descend on anyone he may like by his own authority. All calamities wholly depend on Allah's leave. He may allow an affliction to descend upon someone or may disallow it. And Allah's leave in any case is based on one or other wisdom, directed to some ultimate good, which man neither knows, nor can understand.

25. That is, it is only belief in Allah which keeps man on the right path even in the face of an onslaught of afflictions and does not let him waver under the most trying circumstances. The one whose heart is devoid of belief either looks upon afflictions as a result of mere chance, or thinks they are brought or prevented by worldly powers, or considers them to be the work of such imaginary powers which human superstition regards as potent in bringing good and causing evil, or believes that God is the real Doer of everything but does not believe so truly and sincerely in all these different cases man degenerates. He endures the affliction, but then yields and bows to every false god, accepts every humiliation, is ready to do any mean thing and commit any wrong act he does not hesitate to abuse God, even commits suicide. On the contrary, the heart of the person who knows and believes sincerely that everything is in the hands of Allah. He alone in the Master and the Ruler of the universe. That only by His permission can an affliction befall and only by His command can it be averted. Such a person is blessed by Allah with the grace of patience and submission and of acquiescing in divine will, and is granted the power to face every circumstance with determination and courage. Even under the most straitened circumstances the candle of the hope of Allah's bounty lights up his way. No affliction, however severe and trying, can dishearten him as to cause him to swerve from the right path or bow to falsehood, or invoke others than Allah for the redress of his grievances. Thus, every affliction opens up for him a new door to well-being and happiness and no affliction remains an affliction for him. In fact, it becomes, in the final, a blessing in disguise. For whether he falls a victim to it or passes through if safely, in each case he emerges successful from the trial set for him by his Lord. This same thing has been stated by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in a Hadith which has been reported unanimously by all the reporters, saying: Strange is the affair of the believer! Whatever Allah decrees for him is good for him. When an affliction befalls him, he endures it patiently, and this proves good for him. When he is blessed with prosperity, he thanks his Lord, and this too proves good for him. Such a good fortune only falls to the lot of a believer.

26. In this context this has two meanings: First, that Allah knows who really believes and what is the measure of his belief. So, on the basis of His knowledge, He grants guidance only to that heart, which has belief in it, and grants it guidance precisely in accordance with the measure of belief. Another meaning can also be: That Allah is not unaware of the condition of His believing servants. He has not left them alone after having invited them to faith and subjected them at the same time to severe trials and temptations of the world. He knows exactly what hardships a believer is passing through in the world, and under what

circumstances he is fulfilling the demands of his faith. Therefore, O believers, you should rest assured that whatever affliction descends upon you by Allah's leave, in Allah's knowledge it must be directed to some ultimate good, which must be for your own well-being. For Allah is well-wisher of His believing servants. He does not will to subject them to afflictions and hardships without good reason.

وَاَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوا الرَّسُوْلَ ۚ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاِنَّمَا عَلٰى رَسُوْلِنَا الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ 12

(64:12) Obey Allah and obey the Messenger. But if you turn away from obedience, (then know that) Our Messenger has no other duty than to clearly convey the Truth.[27]

27. In view of the context, it means: Whatever the circumstances, good or bad, you should remain steadfast to obedience to Allah and His Messenger. But if under the pressure of hardships you turned away from obedience, you would only harm your own selves. The only responsibility of Our Messenger was to guide you to the right path, which the Messenger has fulfilled in the best way possible.

اَللّٰهُ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ 13

(64:13) Allah there is no god but He; in Allah should the believers put all their trust.[28]

28. That is, all divine powers belong to Allah alone. No one else has any power to make or mar your destiny. He alone can bring about a good time and He alone can avert a bad time. Therefore, whoever believes sincerely that Allah is One, has absolutely no other choice than to place his full trust in Him and to continue doing his duty as a believer with the conviction that goodness and well being only lie in the way that Allah has shown him. If he attains to success in this way, it will only be by Allah's help and leave; there is no other helper. And if he encounters difficulties, hardships, dangers and disasters in this way, Allah alone will rescue him, for there is no other rescuer beside Him.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِنَّ مِنْ اَزْوَاجِكُمْ وَاَوْلَادِكُمْ عَدُوًّا لَّكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوْهُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ تَعْفُوْا وَتَصْفَحُوْا وَتَغْفِرُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ 14

(64:14) Believers, there are enemies to you from among your spouses and your off-spring, so beware of them. But if you forgive and overlook their offences and pardon them, then surely Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Compassionate.[29]

29. This verse has two meanings:

According to the first meaning, it applies to most of those difficulties which are encountered by many believing men from their wives and the women from their husbands and the parents from their children in following the way of God. It seldom so happens in the world that a man has a wife or a wife has a husband, who are full companions and helpers of each

other in the matter of faith and righteousness, and that both may also have such children as may be the comfort of their eyes as regards to faith and deeds, morals and conduct. But generally it so happens that if the husband is righteous and honest, the wife and children look upon his honesty and piety and righteousness as a misfortune for themselves, and want that the husband and the father should earn Hell for their sake, and, by giving up the distinction between the lawful and the unlawful, should provide means of luxury and enjoyment, sin and vice, for them in every passable way. On the contrary, many a time a pious believing woman happens to have a husband, who does not at all approve her obedience to the laws of God. And the children, following in the footsteps of the father, make the life of the mother miserable by their deviation and evil deeds. Then, particularly, when during the conflict between Islam and unbelief a man's faith demands that he should suffer losses for the sake of Allah and this religion, run risks, emigrate from the country or even endanger his life by joining the war against unbelief, the greatest hindrance in his way are the people of his own household.

The second meaning relates to those special circumstances which most of the Muslims were facing at the time these verses were sent down, and also today they are faced by every person who embraces Islam in a non-Muslim society. At that time in Makkah and in other parts of Arabia a situation that was commonly being experienced was that a man would embrace Islam but his wife and children would not only be disinclined to accept it but would try their best to press him to give up Islam. And similar were the situation encountered by the women who alone embraced Islam in the family.

Addressing the believers who may be confronted with either situation, three things have been impressed:

First, they have been warned as if to say: Although from the worldly point of view these are the dearest relations of man, yet from the religious point of view, they are your enemies. This enmity may be for the reason that they hinder you from good and induce you to do evil, or that they restrain you from belief and pull you towards unbelief, or that their sympathies are with he unbelievers, and through you if they ever come to know any of the war secrets of the Muslims, they convey it to the enemies of Islam. Owing to these the nature and quality of enmity may vary, but in any case it is enmity; and if you hold your faith dearer to your heart, you should regard them as your enemies. In their love you should never forget that between you and them there stands the barrier of belief and unbelief, or of obedience and disobedience.

Then, it is said: Beware of them. That is, you should not ruin your eternal life for the sake of their worldly life. Let not their love so overwhelm you that they become a hindrance for you in your relationship with Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) and your loyalty to Islam. Do not place such reliance on them that the secrets of the Muslim community should come to their notice and through them reach your enemies only by your negligence and carelessness. This is the first thing of which the Prophet (peace be upon him) has warned the Muslims in a Hadith: A person will be brought up on the Day of Resurrection, and it will be proclaimed: His wife and children ate up all his good deeds.

In the end, it is said: If you pardon and overlook and forgive, Allah is surely All-Forgiving, All-Merciful. It means: You are being made aware of their enmity so that you may beware of

them and do your best to save your faith from them. This warning does not, however, mean that you should treat your wife and children harshly, or strain your relations with them so as to make your own and their domestic lift miserable and wretched. For if you did so, two of the disadvantages would obviously result: First, it may close down every avenue to the reformation of the wife and children forever; second, it may give rise to suspicions and misgivings against Islam in the society and the people around may form the impression that a Muslim turns unduly rigid and ill-tempered for his own children in his own house as soon as he has embraced Islam. In this connection, one should also keep in mind that in the beginning when the people became Muslims, they encountered a special difficulty if their parents were unbelievers. They would press their children to give up the new faith. They would face another difficulty when their wives and children (or in case of women, their husbands and children) persisted unbelief and would force them to abandon the faith of truth. About the first difficulty, instruction was given in (Surah Al-Ankabut, Ayat 8) and (Surah Luqman, Ayat 14-15), saying: Treat your parents well but if they press you to join with Me another about whom you have no knowledge, do not obey them at all. About the second difficulty the instruction has been given here, saying: You must try to save your faith from your children and family members but do not treat them harshly, but rather politely and leniently. (For further explanation, see (Surah At-Taubah, Ayats 23-24); (E N. 37 of Surah Al-Mujadalah); (E.Ns 1 to 3 of Surah Al- Mumtahanah); (E.N. 18 of Surah Munafiqoon).

إِنَّمَآ أَمۡوَٰلُكُمۡ وَأَوۡلَٰدُكُمۡ فِتۡنَةٞۚ وَٱللَّهُ عِندَهُۥٓ أَجۡرٌ عَظِيمٞ 15

(64:15) Your possessions and your offspring are nothing but a trial for you. And there awaits a great reward[30] for you with Allah.

30. For explanation, see (E.N. 23 of Surah Al-Anfaal). Here one should also keep in view the Prophet's (peace be upon him) saying which Tabarani has related on the authority of Abu Malik al-Ashari, saying: Your real enemy is not he whom, if you kill there is success for you, and if he kills you, there is Paradise for you; but your real enemy may be your own child who is born of your own loins, or the wealth of which you are the owner. That is why here as well as in Surah (Al-Anfaal, Ayat 28), Allah says: If you save yourselves from the temptation and allurements of worldly possessions and children and succeed in keeping love of them subject to the love of Allah, there are rich rewards for you with Allah.

فَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ مَا ٱسۡتَطَعۡتُمۡ وَٱسۡمَعُواْ وَأَطِيعُواْ وَأَنفِقُواْ خَيۡرٗا لِّأَنفُسِكُمۡۗ وَمَن يُوقَ شُحَّ نَفۡسِهِۦ فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلۡمُفۡلِحُونَ 16

(64:16) So hold Allah in awe as much as you can,[31] and listen and obey, and be charitable. This is for your own good. And whoever remains safe from his own greediness, it is such that will prosper.[32]

31. At another place in the Quran it has been said: Fear Allah as rightfully He should be feared. (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 102). At still another place: Allah does not burden any one

with a responsibility heavier than he can bear. (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 286) And here: Fear Allah as much as you can. When these three verses are read together it appears that the first verse sets an ideal which every believer should try to attain. The second verse lays down the principle that no one has been required to exert himself beyond his power and ability, for in Allah's religion one has been made responsible only for what is within his power and ability. This verse enjoins every believer to try to attain piety and consciousness of God as far as he can. He should carry out His commands and avoid His disobedience as best as he possibly can. For if he shows laxity in this regard, he will not be able to escape punishment. However, one will not be held accountable for what was beyond his power and Allah alone can decide best what was really beyond a person's power and ability.

32. For explanation, see (E.N. 19 of Surah Al-Hashr).

إِنْ تُقْرِضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يُضٰعِفْهُ لَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ شَكُوْرٌ حَلِيْمٌ ۙ 17

(64:17) If you give Allah a goodly loan, He will increase it for you several fold[33] and will forgive you. Allah is Most Appreciative, Most Forbearing.[34]

33. For explanation, see (E.N. 267 of Surah Al-Baqarah); (E.N. 33 of Surah Al-Maidah); (E.N. 16 of Surah Al-Hadid).

34. For explanation, see (E.Ns 52, 59 of Surah Fatir); (E.N. 42 of Surah Ash-Shura).

عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ۧ 18

(64:18) He knows that which is beyond the ken of perception as well as that which can be perceived. He is the Most Mighty, the Most Wise.

65. Surah At Talaq (Divorce)

Name

At-Talaq is not only the name of this Surah but also the title of its subject matter, for it contains commandments about Talaq (divorce) itself. Hadrat `Abdullah bin Mas`ud has described it as Surah an-Nisa al-qusra also, i.e. the shorter Surah an-Nisa.

Period of Revelation

Hadrat Abdullah bin Masud has Pointed out, and the internal evidence of the subject matter of the Surah confirms the same, that it must have been sent down after those verses of surah Al-Baqarah in which commandments concerning divorce were given for the first time. Although it is difficult to determine precisely what is its exact date of revelation, yet the traditions in any case indicate that when the people started making errors in understanding the commandments of Surah Al-Baqarah, and practically also they began to commit mistakes, Allah sent down these instructions for their correction.

Theme and Subject Matter

In order to understand the commandments of this Surah, it would be useful to refresh one's memory about the instructions which have been given in the Qur'an concerning divorce and the waiting period (Iddat) above.

"Divorce may be pronounced twice; then the wife may either be kept back in fairness or allowed to separate in fairness." (Al Baqarah 229)

"And the divorced women (after the pronouncement of the divorce) must wait for three monthly courses... and their husbands are fully entitled to take them back (as their wives) during this waiting period, if they desire reconciliation." (Al Baqarah 228)

"Then, if the husband divorces his wife (for the third time), she shall not remain lawful for him after this divorce, unless she marries another husband..." (Al-Baqarah : 230)

"When you marry the believing women, and then divorce them before you have touched them, they do not have to fulfill a waiting period, the completion of which you may demand of them." (Al-Ahzab : 49)

"And if those of you who die, leave wives behind, the women should abstain (from marriage) for four months and ten days." (Al-Baqarah 234)

The rules prescribed in these verses were as follows:

1. A man can pronounce at the most three divorces on his wife.
2. In case the husband has pronounced one or two divorces he is entitled to keep the woman back as wife within the waiting period and if after the expiry of the waiting period the two desire to re-marry, they can re- marry there is no condition of legalization (tahlil). But if the husband has pronounced three divorces, he forfeits his right to keep her as his wife within the waiting. period, and they cannot re-marry

unless the woman re-marries another husband and he subsequently divorces her of his own free will.

3. The waiting period of the woman, who menstruates and marriage with whom has been consummated, is that she should pass three monthly courses. The waiting period in case of one or two divorces is that the woman is still the legal wife of the husband and he can keep her back as his wife within the waiting period. But if the husband has pronounced three divorces, this waiting period cannot be taken advantage of for the purpose of reconciliation, but it is only meant to restrain the woman from re-marrying another person before it comes to an end.
4. There is no waiting. period for the woman, marriage with whom has not been consummated, and who is divorced even before she is touched. She can re-marry, if she likes, immediately after the divorce.
5. The waiting period of the woman whose husband dies, is four months and ten days.

Here, one should understand well that Surah At-Talaq was not sent down to annul any of these rules or amend it, but it was sent down for two purposes;

First, that the man who has been given the right to pronounce divorce should be taught such judicious methods of using this right as do not lead to separation, as far as possible however, if separation does take place, it should only be in case all possibilities of mutual reconciliation have been exhausted. For in the Divine Law provision for divorce has been made only as an unavoidable necessity; otherwise Allah does not approve that the marriage relationship that has been established between a man and a woman should ever break. The Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) has said "Allah has not made lawful anything more hateful in His sight than divorce." (Abu Daud). And: "Of all the things permitted by the Law, the most hateful in the sight of Allah is the divorce, (Abu Daud)

The second object was to complement this section of the family law of Islam by supplying answers to the questions that had remained after the revelation of the commandments in Surah Al-Baqarah. So, answers have been supplied to the following questions: What would be the waiting period of the women, marriage with whom has been consummated and who no longer menstruate, or those who have not yet menstruated, in case they are divorced? What would be the waiting period of the woman, who is pregnant, or the woman whose husband dies, if she is divorced? And what arrangements would be made for the maintenance and lodging of the different categories of divorced women, and for the fosterage of the child whose parents have separated on account of a divorce?

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ فَطَلِّقُوْهُنَّ لِعِدَّتِهِنَّ وَاَحْصُوا الْعِدَّةَ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ رَبَّكُمْ ۚ لَا تُخْرِجُوْهُنَّ مِنْۢ بُيُوْتِهِنَّ وَلَا يَخْرُجْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّاْتِيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ ۚ وَتِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّتَعَدَّ حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهٗ ۚ لَا تَدْرِيْ لَعَلَّ اللّٰهَ يُحْدِثُ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ اَمْرًا 1

(65:1) O Prophet, when you divorce women, divorce them for their waiting-period,[1] and compute the waiting period accurately,[2] and hold Allah, your Lord, in awe. Do not turn them out of their homes (during the waiting period) – nor should they go away (from their homes)[3]– unless they have committed a manifestly evil deed.[4] Such are the bounds set by Allah; and he who transgresses the bounds set by Allah commits a wrong against himself. You do not know: maybe Allah will cause something to happen to pave the way (for reconciliation).[5]

1. That is, O believers, you should not make undue haste in the matter of pronouncing divorce: your minor family quarrels should not so incite you that you should pronounce the final divorce in a fit of anger and there remains no chance for reconciliation. However When you have to divorce your wives, you should divorce them for their prescribed waiting period. Pronouncing divorce for the waiting period has two meanings and both are implied here.

First, that you should divorce them at a time when their waiting period can begin. This thing has already been prescribed in(Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 228). The waiting period of the married woman who menstruates is three monthly courses after the pronouncement of divorce. If this commandment is kept in view the only appropriate time of pronouncing divorce that the waiting period may duly begin is when she is not in her courses, for the waiting period cannot begin from the course during which she may have been divorced, and divorcing her in that state would mean that, contrary to the divine command, her waitingperiod should extend to four courses instead of three courses. Furthermore, this commandment also demands that the woman should not be divorced in the period of purity during which the husband may have had sexual intercourse with her. For in this case, at the time divorce is pronounced, neither the husband nor the wife can know whether she has conceived in consequence of the intercourse or not. Because of this neither the waiting period can begin on the hypothesis that this would be reckoned in view of the succeeding monthly courses nor on the hypothesis that this would be the waiting period of a pregnant woman. So, this commandment lays down two rules simultaneously. First, that divorce should not be pronounced during menstruation. Second, that divorce may be pronounced either in the period of purity during which there was no sexual intercourse with the woman, or in the state when the woman's being pregnant was known. A little consideration of the matter will show that the restrictions imposed on the pronouncement of divorce are for good reasons. The reason for imposing the restriction on the pronouncement of divorce during menstruation is that in this state the husband and the wife are somewhat estranged from each other because of the prohibition of sexual intercourse in this state and also from the medical viewpoint it is confirmed that the woman is not temperamentally normal

during the courses. Therefore, if a quarrel starts between them in this state, both the husband and the wife would be helpless to an extent to put an end to it, and if the matter is deferred till the woman is free from her courses, there is the possibility that the woman also may return to her normal temperamental state and the mutual attraction that nature has placed between them also may work and reunite them. Likewise, the reason for prohibiting the pronouncement of divorce during the purity period in which sexual intercourse may have taken place, is that if in consequence of it conception takes place, it can neither be known to the husband nor to the wife. Therefore, it cannot be a suitable time for pronouncing the divorce. If the man comes to know that conception has taken place, he would think a hundred times before deciding finally whether he should pronounce divorce or not on the woman who carries his child in her womb. The woman also in view of the future of her child would try her best to remove the causes of her husband's displeasure. But if a decision is taken blindly, in undue haste, and then it is known that conception had taken place, both will regret it later.

This is the first meaning of divorcing for the prescribed waiting period, which applies only to those women marriage with whom has been consummated, who menstruate and may possibly conceive. As for its second meaning it is this: If you have to divorce your wives, you should divorce them till the expiry of their waiting period. That is, do not pronounce three divorces all at once leading to permanent separation, but pronounce one, or at the most two divorces, and wait till the end of the waiting period, so that there remains some chance for reconciliation for you at any time during this period. According to this meaning; this commandment is also useful in respect of those woman marriage with whom has been consummated and who menstruate as well as of those who no longer menstruate, or those who have not yet menstruated, or those whose pregnancy at the time of the pronouncement of divorce is known. If this divine command is rightly followed, no one will regret after having pronounced divorce, for if divorce is pronounced in this way, there remains room for reconciliation within the waiting period, and even after the expiry of the waiting period the possibility remains that the separated husband and wife may remarry if they wish reconciliation.

This same meaning of talliqu-hunna li-iddati hinna (divorce them for their prescribed waiting-period) has been given by the earliest commentators. Ibn Abbas has given this commentary of it: One should not pronounce divorce during menstruation nor in the period of purity (tahr) during which the husband may have had sexual intercourse. But one should leave the wife alone till she attains purity after the course; then one may pronounce a single divorce on her. In this case even if there is no reconciliation and the waiting period expires, she would be separated by the single divorce. (Ibn Jarir).

Abdullah bin Masud says:

Divorce for the waiting period means that one should pronounce the divorce in the woman’s state of purity without having had an intercourse with her. The same commentary has been reported from Abdullah bin Umar, Ata, Mujahid, Maimun bin Mahran, Muqatil bin Hayyan, and Dahhak, Ibn Kathir. Ikrimah has explained it thus: One may pronounce the divorce in the state when the woman’s being pregnant is known, and not when one has had sexual intercourse with her and it is not known whether she has conceived or not. (Ibn Kathir). Both Hasan Basri and lbn Sirin say: Divorce should be pronounced during the state

of purity without having had sexual intercourse or when the woman's being pregnant becomes known. (Ibn Jarir).

The intention of this verse was best explained by the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself on the occasion when Abdullah bin Umar had divorced his wife while she was discharging the menses. The details of this incident have been reported in almost all collections of Hadith and the same, in fact, are the source of the law in this connection. It so happened that when Abdullah divorced his wife while she was menstruating, Umar came before the Prophet (peace be upon him) and mentioned it to him. The Prophet (peace be upon him) expressed great displeasure and said: command him to take her back and keep her as his wife till she is purified, that she again menstruates and is again purified: then if he so desires he may divorce her in her state of purity without having any sexual intercourse with her. This is the waiting period which Allah Almighty has prescribed for the divorce of women. In a tradition the words are to the effect: Either one may pronounce the divorce in the woman's state of purity without having a sexual intercourse, or in the state when her being pregnant becomes fully known.

The intention of this verse is further explained by a few other Ahadith which have been reported from the prophet (peace be upon him) and some of the major companions. Nasai has related that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was informed that a person had pronounced three divorces on his wife in one sitting. He stood up in anger and said: Are the people playing with the Book of Allah, although I am present among you? Seeing the Prophet's extreme anger on this occasion, a person asked: Should I not go and kill the man?

Abdur Razzaq has reported about Ubadah bin as-Samit that his father pronounced one thousand divorces on his wife. He went before the Prophet (peace be upon him) and asked his ruling on it. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: By the three divorces the woman stood separated from him along with Allah's disobedience, and 997 pronouncement remained as acts of injustice and sin, for which Allah might punish him if He so willed and forgive him if He so willed.

In the details of the incident concerning Hadrat Abdullah bin Umar, which have been related in Daraqutni and Ibn Abi Shaibah, another thing also is that when the Prophet (peace be upon him) commanded Abdullah bin Umar to take his wife back, he asked: Had I pronounced three divorces on her, could I have taken her back even then? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: No, she would have stood separated from you, and this would have been an act of sin. In another tradition the Prophet's (peace be upon him) words are to the effect: Had you done this, you would have committed disobedience of your Lord while your wife would have been separated from you.

The legal rulings reported from the companions in this regard are also in complete conformity with the Prophet's (peace be upon him) injunctions. According to a tradition in Muwatta, a person came to Abdullah bin Masud and said: I have pronounced eight divorces on my wife. Ibn Masud asked: What legal opinion have you been given in this regard? He said: I have been told that the woman stands separated from me. Ibn Masud said: The people have said the right thing: the legal position is the same as they have told you.

Abdur Razzaq has related from Alqamah that a person said to Ibn Masud: I have pronounced 99 divorces on my wife. He said: Three divorces separate her from you; the rest are (acts of sin) excesses.

Waki bin al-Jarrah in his sunah has reported this very viewpoint of both Uthman and Ali. A person came to Uthman and said: I have pronounced a thousand divorces on my wife. He replied: She stood separated from you by three divorces. When a similar problem was presented before Ali he replied; By three divorces she stood separated from you. You may distribute the rest of your pronouncements on the rest of your wives if you so like.

Abu Daud and Ibn Jarir have related, with a little variation in wording, a tradition from Mujahid, saying: While I was sitting with Ibn Abbas, a person came and said: I have pronounced three divorces on my wife. Ibn Abbas heard it but kept silent for so long that I thought he was perhaps going to return his wife to him. Then he said: One of you first commits the folly of pronouncing the divorces; then he comes and says: O lbn Abbas, O Ibn Abbas! whereas Allah has said that whoever fears Him in whatever he does, He will open a way for him out of the difficulties. You did not fear Allah; now I do not find any way for you: you have disobeyed your Lord, and your wife stands separated from you.

Another tradition, which also has been reported from Mujahid and related with a little variation in wording in muwatta and Tafsir by Ibn Jarir, says: A person pronounced a hundred divorces on his wife; then he asked Ibn Abbas for his opinion. He replied: By three divorces she stood separated from you. With the other 97 you made a jest of the revelations of Allah! This is according to Muwatta. According to Ibn Jarir the words of Ibn Abbas were to the effect: You disobeyed your Lord, and your wife stood separated from you, and you did not fear Allah that He might open a way for you out of the difficulty.

Imam Tahavi has related that a man came to Ibn Abbas and said: My uncle has pronounced three divorces on his wife. He replied: Your uncle has disobeyed Allah and committed a sin and followed Satan. Now, Allah has left no way open for him out of the difficulty.

According to a tradition in Muwatta and Abu Daud, a man pronounced three divorces on his wife before the consummation of marriage; then desired to remarry her, and came out to know the legal aspect of the matter. The reporter of the Hadith, Muhammad bin lyas bin Bukair, says: I accompanied him to Ibn Abbas and Abu Hurairah. The reply each one gave was: You have let slip from your hand whatever opportunity was there for you. Zamakhshari has stated in al-Kashshaf that Umar used to beat the man who would pronounce three divorces on his wife (at one and the same time) and then would enforce his divorces.

Saeed bin Mansur has related this very thing from Anas on sound authority. In this connection, the general opinion of the companions which Ibn Abi Shaibah and Imam Muhammad have related from Ibrahim Nakhai was: The companions approved of this method that one may pronounce a single divorce on the wife and leave her alone till she completes three monthly courses. These are the words of Ibn Abi Shaibah. The words of Imam Muhammad are to the effect: The approved method with them was that in the matter of divorce one should not exceed one divorce till the waiting period is completed.

The detailed law that the jurists of Islam have compiled with the help of these Ahadith and traditions in the light of the above mentioned Quranic verse, is as follows:

(1) The Hanafis regard divorce as of three kinds: Ahsan, hasan, and bidi. The ahsan form of divorce is that one may pronounce only one divorce on his wife during a tahr (purity) period in which one must refrain from sexual intercourse and leave the wife to complete her waiting period. The hasan form of divorce is that one may pronounce one divorce in each period of purity: in this case pronouncement of three divorces, one each in three periods of purity, is also not against the Shariah, although the best approved method is to pronounce only one divorce and leave the wife to complete her waiting period. The bidi form of divorce is that one must pronounce three divorces in a single sitting, or pronounce three divorces at different times during the same period of purity, or pronounce divorce during menstruation, or pronounce it in the period of purity during which he has had a sexual intercourse. Of these whichever course one may adopt one will be guilty a sin. This is the law in respect of the woman marriage with whom has been consummated and who has regular courses. As for the woman marriage with whom has not been consummated, she can be divorced both in the state of purity and during menstruation, and this is according to the sunnah. And if the woman is such a one marriage with whom has been consummated who no longer menstruates, or the one who has not yet menstruated, she can be divorced even after the sexual intercourse for there is no chance of her being pregnant. And if the woman is pregnant, she also can be divorced after the sexual intercourse, for her pregnancy is already established. But the method of pronouncing divorce on these women according to the sunnah, is that the divorce may be pronounced at the interval of one month in each case. However, the ahsan method is that only one divorce may be pronounced and the woman left to complete her waiting period. (Hedayah, fath al-Qadir, Ahkam al-Quran Al- Jassas, Umdat al-Qari).

According to Imam Malik divorce is also of three kinds. sunni, bidi makruh and bidi haram. The divorce according to the sunnah is that a single divorce be pronounced on the woman marriage with whom has been consummated and who menstruates, during her state of purity without having had sexual intercourse, and the woman be left to complete her waiting period. The bidi makruh form is that divorce be pronounced in the period of purity during which one may have had sexual intercourse, or more divorces than one be pronounced in the period of purity while there was no sexual intercourse, or three divorces be pronounced, one each in separate periods of purity within the waitingperiod, or three divorces be pronounced all at once. And bidi haram is that divorce be pronounced during menstruation. (Hashiyah ad-Dusuqi alal-Sharh-al-Kabir Ibn aI- Arabi, Ahkam al-Quran).

The authentic viewpoint of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal which is generally agreed upon by the Hanbalis is: The approved method (i.e. the one according to the sunnah) of divorcing a wife with whom marriage has been consummated and who menstruates is that a single divorce be pronounced on her in her period of purity without having had sexual intercourse with her, and then she be left to complete her waiting period. But if she is giver three divorces, one each in three separate periods of purity or three divorces in one and the same period of purity, or divorced thrice at once, or divorced during the courses, or divorced in the period of purity during which the husband has had sexual intercourse and her being pregnant is not known, all these would be disapproved and forbidden forms of divorce. But if the woman is such that marriage with her has been consummated but who no longer

menstruates, or such who has not yet menstruated, or is pregnant, in her case there is neither any difference of approved and disapproved with regard to time nor with regard to the number of divorces pronounced. (Al-Insaf fi Marifat-ar-Rajih min al-Khilaf ala Madhhab Ahmad bin Hanbal).

According to Imam Shafei, in the matter of divorce the difference between the approved (i.e. according to the sunnah) and the reprehensible (i.e. against the sunnah) forms of divorce is only with regard to time and not with regard to number, That is, to pronounce divorce on a woman marriage with whom has been consummated and who menstruates, during menstruation or to pronounce divorce on a ovarian, who can conceive, during such a period of purity in which the husband has had sexual intercourse with her and the woman's pregnancy is unknown, is disapproved and forbidden. As for the number, whether three divorces are pronounced at one time, or pronounced in the same period of purity, or pronounced in separate periods of purity, they are not against the sunnah in any case. In case the woman is such that marriage with her has not been consummated, or the one who no longer menstruates, or the one who has not yet menstruated, or the one whose being pregnant is known, there is no difference between the approved and the disapproved forms of divorce. (Mughni al-Muhtaj).

(2) A divorce being irregular, reprehensible, forbidden, or sinful with the four Imams does not mean that it does not have effect. According to all the four Sunni Schools, whether a divorce is pronounced during menstruation, or thrice at once, or pronounced in the period of purity during which the husband has had sexual intercourse and the woman's being pregnant is unknown, or pronounced in a manner disapproved by an Imam, in any case it does become effective, although the pronouncer commits an act of sin. But some other scholars differ in this regard from the four Imams.

Sai bin al-Musayyab and some other immediate followers of the companions say that the divorce of the person who pronounces it during menstruation, or pronounces it thrice at one time, does not take place at all. The same is the opinion of the Imamiah sect of the Shias. The basis of this opinion is that since this form of divorce is forbidden and utterly irregular, it is ineffective, whereas the Ahadith that we have cited above, clearly show that when Abdullah bin Umar divorced his wife during menstruation, the Prophet (peace be upon him) commanded him to take her back; had the divorce not taken effect at all, the command to take the wife back would have been meaningless. And this also confirmed by many Ahadith that the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the major companions considered the pronouncement of more divorces than one at one time sinful but did not regard his divorce as ineffective.

Taus and Ikrimah say that only one divorce takes place if divorce is pronounced thrice at once, and this very view has been adopted by Imam Ibn Taimiyyah. The source of his this opinion is that Abu as-Sahba asked Ibn Abbas: Don't you know that in the lifetime of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and Abu Bakr and in the early period of Umar a triple divorce was considered a single divorce? He replied: Yes. (Bukhari, Muslim). And in Muslim, Abu Daud and Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Abbas's this statement has been cited: In the lifetime of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and Abu Bakr and during the first two years of the caliphate of Umar a triple divorce was considered a single divorce. Then Umar expressed the view: As

the people have started acting hasty in a matter in which they had been advised to act judiciously and prudently, why should we not enforce this practice? So, he enforced it.

But this view is not acceptable for several reasons. In the first place, according to several traditions lbn Abbas's own ruling was against it, as we have explained above. Secondly, it is contrary to those Ahadith also, which have been reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the major companions, in which the ruling given about the pronouncement of a three-fold divorce at one time is that all his three divorces become effective. These Ahadith have also been cited above. Thirdly, from Ibn Abbas's own tradition itself it becomes evident that Umar had publicly enforced the triple divorce in the assembly of the companions, but neither then nor after it these companions ever expressed any difference of opinion. Now, can it be conceived that Umar could decide an issue against the Sunnah? And could the companions also accept his decision without protest? Furthermore, in the story concerning Rukanah bin Abdi Yazib, a tradition has been related by Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, Imam Shafei, Darimi and Hakim, saying that when Rukanah pronounced three divorces on his wife in one and the same sitting, the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked him to state on oath whether his intention was to pronounce one divorce only, (That is, the two subsequent divorces were pronounced only to lay emphasis on the first divorce; the triple divorce was not intended to create separation permanently). And when he stated this on oath, the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave him the right to take his wife back. This brings out the truth of the matter as to what kind of divorces were considered a single divorce in the earliest period of Islam. On this very basis, the interpreters of the Hadith have explained the tradition of Ibn Abbas thus: As in the early period of Islam deceit and fraud in religious matters was almost unknown among the people, the statement of the pronouncer of a triple divorce was admitted that his real intention was to pronounce only a single divorce, and the two subsequent divorces had been pronounced only for the sake of emphasis. But when Umar saw that the people first pronounced three divorces in haste and then presented the excuse of pronouncing them only for the sake of emphasis, he refused to accept this excuse. Imam Nawawi and Imam Subki regard this as the best interpretation of the tradition from Ibn Abbas, Finally, there is disagreement in the traditions of Abu as-Sahba himself, which he has related concerning the saying of Ibn Abbas. Muslim, Abu Daud and Nasai have related from this same Abu as-Sahba another tradition; saying that on an inquiry by him. Ibn Abbas said: When a person pronounced a three-fold divorce on his wife before consummation of marriage, it was considered a single divorce in the lifetime of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and Abu Bakr and in the early period of Umar, Thus, one and the same reporter has reported from Ibn Abbas traditions containing two divergent themes and this diversity weakens both the traditions.

(3) As the Prophet (peace be upon him) had commanded the pronouncer of the divorce during menstruation to take his wife back, the dispute has arisen among the jurists as to what is the exact sense of this command. Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Shafei, Imam Ahmad, Imam Auzai, Ibn Abi Laila, Ishaq bin Rahawaih and Abu Thaur say that such a person would be commanded to take his wife back, but would not be compelled to do so. (Umdat al-Qari). The Hanafi viewpoint as stated in Hedayah is that in this case taking the wife back is not only preferable but also obligatory. In Mughni al-Muhtaj the Shafei viewpoint has been stated to be that the approved (i.e. one according to Sunnah) method for the one who has pronounced divorces during menstruation, but has not pronounced a triple divorce, is

that he should take his wife back, and should refrain from pronouncing divorce in the following period of purity, but should pronounce it, if he so likes, in the period of purity when the wife has become free from her next menstrual course and attained purity, so that his revocation of the divorce pronounced during menstruation is not taken in jest. The Hanbali viewpoint as presented in Al-Insaf is that in this state it is preferable for the pronouncer of divorce to take his wife back. But Imam Malik and his companions say that pronouncement of divorce during menstruation is a cognizable offense. Whether the woman makes a demand or not, it is in any case the duty of the ruler that if such an act of some one is brought to his notice, he must compel the person to take his wife back and should continue to press him till the end of the waiting-period; and if he refuses to take her back, he should imprison him; if he still refuses, he should beat him; and if he still does not accede, the ruler should give his own decision, saying: I return your wife to you. And the ruler's this decision would be effective after which it would be lawful for the man to have sexual intercourse with the woman, whether he intends to take her back or not, for the ruler's intention represents his intention. (Hashiyah ad-Dusuqi). The Malikis also say that if the person, who has taken his wife back willingly or unwillingly, after divorcing her during menstruation, has made up his mind to repudiate her, the preferable method for him is that he should refrain from divorcing her in the period of purity following the menstruation during which he divorced her, but should divorce her in the period of purity following the next menstruation. The prohibition to pronounce divorce in the period of purity following the menstruation in which divorce was pronounced, has been enjoined so that the return of the pronouncer during menstruation does not remain merely oral, but he should have sexual intercourse with the woman during the period of purity. Then, since the pronouncement of divorce in the period of purity in which sexual intercourse has taken place is prohibited, the right time for pronouncing it is the following period of purity only. (Hashiyah ad-Dusuqi).

(4) As to the question: Till when has the pronouncer of one revocable divorce the power to take his wife back? Difference of opinion has arisen among the jurists and this difference has occurred on the question: What do the words thalathata quru-in of(Surah AI-Baqarah, Ayat 228) imply: three menstruation or three periods of purity? According to Imam Shafei and Malik, qara implies a period of purity, and this view is held on the authority of Aishah, Ibn Umar and Zaid bin Thabit. The Hanafi viewpoint is that qara implies menstruation and the same is the authentic viewpoint of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal too. This view is based on the authority of all the four rightly-guided Caliphs, Abdullah bin Masud, Abdullah bin Abbas, Ubayy bin Kab, Muadh bin Jabal, Abu ad-Darda, Ubadah bin as- Samit and Abu Musa al-Ashari. Imam Muhammad in his Muwatta has cited a saying of Shabi, saying that he met thirteen of the Prophet's companions and they all held this same opinion, and this very view was adopted by many of the immediate followers of the companions also.

On account of this difference of opinion, according to the Shafeis and the Malikis, the waiting period of the woman comes to an end as soon as she enters the third menstruation, and the man's power to take her back is terminated. And if the divorce has been pronounced during menstruation, this menstruation will not be counted towards the waiting-period but the waiting-period will come to an end as soon as the woman enters the fourth menstruation. (Mughni al-Muhtaj; Hashiyah ad-Dusuqi). The Hanafis viewpoint is that if the menstrual discharge in the third menstruation stops after ten days, the

waitingperiod of the woman will come to an end with it whether she takes purification bath or not; and if the discharge ceases within less than ten days, the waiting-period will not come to an end until the woman has taken her purification bath, or until a prayer time has passed. In case water is not available, according to Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam Abu Yusuf, the man's right to return to her will be terminated, when she has performed her prayer with tayammum (purification with dust), and, according to Imam Muhammad, as soon as she has performed tayammwn itself. (Hedayah). Imam Ahmad's authentic viewpoint which is held by the majority of the Hanbalis is that as long as the woman does not have her purification bath after the third menstruation, the man's right to return to her will remain. (Al-Insaf).

(5) As for the question that is the method of taking the wife back? The jurists agree that the person, who has pronounced a revocable divorce on his wife, can return to her whenever he likes before the expiration of the waitingperiod, whether the woman is desirous of this or not, for the Quran says: Their husbands are best entitled to take them back as their wives during this waiting-period. (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 228). From this it can automatically be concluded that until the expiry of the waiting-period, the marriage tie remains intact and the husbands can take them back before they are separated absolutely and finally. In other words, taking the wife back does not mean renewal of marriage for which the woman's consent may be necessary. After being unanimous so far, the jurists have different opinions about the method of taking the wife back.

According to the Shafeis, return can take place only by the oral word, not by conduct. If the husband does not say with the tongue that he has taken the wife back, no act of intercourse or intimacy, even if performed with the intention of resuming marital relationship, will be considered resumption of the relationship. Rather in this case seeking of any kind of enjoyment from the woman is unlawful even if it is without lust. But there is no ban on having sexual intercourse with the woman, who has been divorced revocably, for the scholars have not agreed on its being unlawful. However, the one who believes in its being unlawful will be punishable. Furthermore, according to the Shafei viewpoint, it is in any case, incumbent to pay a proper or customary dower (mahr mithal) in case the husband has intercourse with the wife whom he had divorced revocably, whether after it he takes her back orally or not. (Mughni a-Muhtaj).

The Malikis say that return can be effected both orally and by conduct. If for the purpose of resumption by word of mouth the husband uses express words, the resumption will take place whether he intended it or not; even if he uttered express words of resumption in jest, these words would amount to return and resumption. But if the words are not express, they would be considered resumption of relationship only in case they were pronounced with the intention of resumption. As for resumption by conduct, no act whether it is an act of intimacy or sexual intercourse, can be considered resumption as long as it has not been performed with the intention of the resumption of marital relation. (Hashiyah adDusuqi; Ibn Arabi; Ahkam al- Quran).

As for resumption of relationship by the word of mouth, the Hanafi and the Hanbali viewpoint is the same as the Maliki. As for resumption by conduct, the ruling of both the Schools, contrary to the Malikis, is that if the husband performs sexual intercourse with the woman whom he has divorced revocably within the waiting-period, it would by itself

amount to resumption whether there was the intention of resumption or not. However, the difference between the viewpoints of the two Schools is that according to the Hanafis every act of intimacy amounts to resumption even if it is of a lesser degree than sexual intercourse; whereas the Hanbalis do not regard a mere act of intimacy as resumption of marital relationship. (Hedayah, Fath al- Qadir, Umdat al-Qari Al-Insaf).

(6) As for the consequences of talaq as-sunnah (regular form of divorce according to the sunnah) and talaq al-bidi (irregular form of divorce) the difference is this: In case one or two divorces have been pronounced, the divorced woman and her former husband can re-marry by mutual consent even if the waiting-period has expired. But if a man has pronounced three divorces, resumption of marital relation is neither possible within the waiting-period, nor after the expiry of the waiting period, unless, however, the woman marries another person, the marriage is duly contracted and consummated, and then either the second husband divorces her or dies; then if the woman and her former husband wish to re-marry by mutual consent, they can do so. In most collections of the Ahadith, a tradition has been reported on sound authority, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked: A man pronounced three divorces on his wife, then the woman married another man and the two had privacy but there was no intercourse; then he divorced her. Now, can this woman re-marry her former husband? The Prophet replied: No, unless her second husband has enjoyed her just as her first husband had enjoyed her. As for the prearranged marriage (tahlil) which is meant to legalize the woman for her former husband, so that she would marry another man, who would divorce her after having had sexual intercourse with her, this is invalid according to Imam Abu Yusuf, and according to Imam Abu Hanifah, the woman would become lawful for her former husband by this ceremony but such a thing is reprehensible to the extent of being unlawful. Abdullah bin Masud has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: AIIah has cursed both, the legaliser (muhallil) and the one for whom legalization is performed (muhallil-lahu). (Tirmidhi, Nasai). Uqbah bin Amir says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked his companions: Should I not tell you as to who is a hired bull? The companions said that he should. He said: It is he who performs tahlil (legalization of marriage). Allah's curse falls both on the muhalil (legalizer) and on the muhallal-lahu (the one for whose sake marriage is legalized). (Ibn Majah, Daraqutni).

2. This command is addressed to the men as well as the women and the people of their families. It means: Do not treat divorce lightly; it is a grave matter, which gives birth to many legal questions for the man, the woman, their children and the people of their house. Therefore, when divorce is pronounced, its time and date should be remembered and also the state in which divorce was pronounced on the woman; one should keep an accurate account of when the waiting period started and when it would expire. On this reckoning will depend the determination of the following questions: Till when the husband has the power to take the wife back? Till when he has to keep her in the house? Till when is he bound to maintain her? Till when will he inherit the woman and the woman him? When will the woman be separated from him finally and obtain the right to remarry? And if this matter takes the shape of a law-suit, the court also in order to arrive at the correct decision, will need to know the correct date and time of pronouncing the divorce and the woman's state at the time, for without this information, it cannot give the right decision on the questions arising from the divorce in respect of the women who have been enjoyed, or not,

pregnant, or not, who menstruate, or no longer menstruate, and who have been divorced revocably or irrevocably.

3. That is, neither should the man turn out the woman in anger, nor the woman herself should leave the house in anger and haste. The house is hers during the waitingperiod, and both the man and the wife should live together so that advantage may be taken if there is any chance of reconciliation. If the divorce is revocable, the husband may at any time be inclined towards the wife, and the wife also may try to win the husband's pleasure by removing the causes of dispute and difference. If both stay together in the same house, there may appear many an occasion for reconciliation during the three months or the three menstrual periods, or till child birth in case of pregnancy. But if the man turns her out in angry haste, or the woman returns to her parents imprudently, chances of reconciliation diminish, and the divorce generally leads to permanent separation. That is why the jurists have even suggested that in case of a revocable divorce the woman should adorn herself during her waiting-period so as to attract the husband. (Hedayah; Al-Insaf).

The jurists agree that the revocably divorced woman has a right to lodging and maintenance during the waitingperiod, and it is not lawful for the woman to leave the house without the husband's permission, nor is it lawful for the husband to turn her out of the house. If the husband turns her out, he will be guilty of an act of sin and if the woman leaves of her own accord, she will not only commit a sin but will also forfeit her right to lodging and maintenance.

4. Several meanings of this have been given by different jurists. Hasan Basri, Amir Shabi, Zaid bin Aslam, Dahhak, Mujahid, Ikrimah, Ibn Zaid, Hammed and Laith say that it implies adultery. Ibn Abbas says that it implies abusive language that the woman may continue to use against the husband and the people of his house even after the divorce, during the waiting-period. Qatadah says that it implies the woman's disobedient to her husband. That is, if the wife has been divorced because of her disobedience, she may continue to be disobedient to her husband even during the waiting-period. Abdullah bin Umar, Suddi, Ibn as-Saib and Ibrahim Nakhai say that this implies the woman's leaving the house of herself. That is, in their opinion the woman's leaving the house in the waiting-period by itself amounts to committing an open indecency, and the command: Nor should they themselves leave the house except in case they commit an open indecency, is an admonition of this nature: Do not abuse others except in case you wish to be known as a discourteous person. According to the first three of these four viewpoints, "except in case" is related with "Do not turn them out of their houses," and the sentence means that if they are guilty of immorality or of using invectives or of disobedience, it would he lawful to turn them out of the houses. And according to the fourth view, it is related with "nor should they themselves leave their houses," and it means that if they leave their houses they would be guilty of open indecency.

5. Both these sentences refute the viewpoint of those who hold that divorce does not take place at all if it is pronounced during menstruation or thrice at once, and also the view of those who think that a triple divorce amounts to a single divorce. The question arises: If an irregular (bidi) divorce does not take place, or a triple divorce amounts to a single revocable divorce, what then is the need of saying: Whoever transgresses the bounds set by Allah (i.e. the method taught by the Sunnah), would wrong his own self; and you do not know Allah may after this bring about a situation of reconciliation? These two things would be

meaningful only in case pronouncement of divorce against the method taught by the Sunnah should be harmful for which one may have to regret later, and the pronouncement of a triple divorce at once may not leave any room for reconciliation; otherwise, obviously by pronouncing a divorce which does not take effect at all one does not transgress the bounds set by Allah, which may be regarded as wronging one's own self, and after a divorce which is in any case only revocable there does remain room for reconciliation; thus, there would be no need to say: Allah may after this bring about a situation of re-conciliation.

Here, one should again understand well the mutual relationship between (verses 228-230 of Surah Al-Baqarah) and (these verses of Surah At-Talaq). In Surah Al-Baqarah the number of divorces laid down is three of which after pronouncing the first two one retains the right to take his wife back and the right to re-marry her in case the wailingperiod has expired, without resort to legalization (tahlil), and if divorce is pronounced for the third time, the husband forfeits both these rights. These verses of Surah At-Talaq were not sent down to amend or cancel this rule but to teach the people how to use wisely the powers that they have been given to divorce their wives, which if used rightly could save homes from ruin, could protect the husband from remorse if he had pronounced a divorce. could provide him maximum opportunities for reconciliation, and even if separation had taken place, could show him a way to reunite in marriage as a last resort if the couple so desired. But if a person happens to use these powers unwisely, in a wrong way, he could only be wronging his own self and wasting all opportunities for making amends. It is just like a father's giving three hundred rupees in his son's possession and telling him to spend the amount as he may like; then advising him to the effect: Spend the money given to you carefully, at the right place, and piece meal, so that you may benefit by it fully. Otherwise, if you spend it unwisely and carelessly in wrong places, or spend the whole of it at once, you will incur losses, and then I would not give you any more. This advice would be meaningless it the father did not give the amount in the son's possession at all, so that if he had wanted to spend it in a wrong place, he should be powerless to spend it, or if he had wanted to spend the whole amount, he could only take out a part of it while the rest lay safe with him in any case. If the condition be such, there could obviously be no need for this kind of advice.

فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ فَارِقُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَأَشْهِدُوا ذَوَيْ عَدْلٍ
مِنْكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلَّهِ ذَٰلِكُمْ يُوعَظُ بِهِ مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۚ وَمَنْ
يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّهُ مَخْرَجًا 2

(65:2) And when they reach the end of their term (of waiting), then either honourably retain them (in the bond of wedlock) or honourably part with them,[6] and call two persons of known probity as witnesses from among yourselves,[7] and (let these witnesses) give upright testimony for the sake of Allah. That is to what all those that believe in Allah and the Last Day are exhorted.[8] Allah will find a way out for him who fears Allah,[9]

6. That is, in case you have pronounced one or two revocable divorces, you should take a decision before the expiry of the waiting-period whether you would keep the wife in wedlock or send her away. If you decide to keep her, then you should keep her with honor and dignity and not with a view to tormenting and harassing her and getting another opportunity to prolong her waiting-period by divorcing her once again; and if you decide to part with her, then you should part with her gracefully, without indulging in any quarrel or vilification. If you still owe her the dower, or a part of it, pay it off, and give her something in addition also at her departure according to your means, as has been enjoined in (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 241). (For further explanation, see (E.N. 86 of Surah Al-Ahzab).

7. Ibn Abbas says that this implies calling to witness two men both at divorce and at reconciliation. (Ibn Jarir). Imran bin Husain was asked: A man divorced his wife and then took her back, but he neither called anybody to witness pronouncement of the divorce nor resumption of the relation. He replied: You pronounced the divorce against the sunnah and you took your wife back against the sunnah. You should call to witness men both at divorce and at resumption of relation, and you should not commit this mistake again. (Abu Daud, Iba Majah). But the four Sunni Imams agree that to call men to witness the divorce and the resumption and separation is no condition for these acts to be valid, so that if there was no witness, neither divorce should take place nor resumption should be valid nor separation. But this condition has been enjoined so that the parties may not deny any of the facts later and in case there was a dispute the matter might be settled easily and any suspicions and doubts might also be removed. This command is just like the command: Have witnesses in case of commercial transactions. (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 282). This does not mean that it is obligatory to have witnesses at business transactions, and if there was no witness, the transaction would be invalid; but this is a wise instruction which has been given to prevent disputes and it is good to follow it. Likewise, in the case of divorce and resumption also although a person's act and conduct would be legally valid even without the witnesses yet caution demands that whatever is done, it should be witnessed, simultaneously or later, by two just men.

8. These words clearly show that the instructions given above are in the nature of advice and not law. If a man pronounces divorce against the approved method as explained above, or fails to reckon the waiting-period accurately, or expels the wife from the house without a good reason, or returns to her at the end of the waitingperiod only to harass her, or sends her away after a quarrel, or fails to call the men to witness the divorce, reconciliation, or separation, if will not affect the legal effects of divorce or reconciliation or separation at all. However, his acting against Allah's advice would be a proof that his heart was devoid of the taste faith in Allah and the Last Day. That is why he adopted a course which a true believer would never adopt.

9. The context itself shows that here "fearing Allah in whatever one does" means to pronounce divorce in accordance with the approved method taught by the Sunnah, to reckon the waiting-period accurately, to avoid turning the wife out of the house, to take the wife back if one decides to keep her at the expiry of the waiting-period with the intention of keeping her equitably and to send her away in a fair manner if one decides to part with her, and to call two just men to witness the divorce, reconciliation or separation, as the case may be. In respect of this, Allah says that whoever acts in fear of Him, He will open for him a way out of the difficulties. This automatically gives the meaning that whoever does not fear

Allah in these matters, will create for himself such complications and difficulties from which he will find no way out.

A study of these words clearly shows that the view of those who hold that the irregular (bidi) form of divorce does not take place at all and of those who regard a triple divorce pronounced at once or during the same period of purity as a single divorce, is not correct. For if an irregular form of divorce does not take place at all, it does not create any complication from which one may have to find a way out; and if only a single divorce takes place when one has pronounced three divorces at once, then also there arises no need for a person to seek a way out of a difficulty or complication.

وَّيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهٗ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بَالِغُ اَمْرِهٖ ؕ
قَدْ جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا 3

(65:3) and will provide him sustenance from whence he never even imagined.[10] Whoever puts his trust in Allah, He shall suffice him. Surely Allah brings about what He decrees;[11] Allah has set a measure for everything.

10. It means: keeping the divorced wife in the house during the waiting period, to maintain her and to pay her the dower, or something in addition at departure certainly burdens a man financially. To spend on a woman whom one has already decided to send away because of strained relations will surely be irksome, and if the man is also poor, this expenditure will further pinch him. But a man, who fears Allah, should endure all this gracefully. Allah is not niggardly as the people are. If a person spends his wealth in accordance with His law, He will provide for him in a manner beyond all expectations.

11. That is, there is no power that can prevent Allah's decree from enforcement.

وَالّٰٓـِٔيْ يَئِسْنَ مِنَ الْمَحِيْضِ مِنْ نِّسَآئِكُمْ اِنِ ارْتَبْتُمْ فَعِدَّتُهُنَّ ثَلٰثَةُ اَشْهُرٍ ۙ وَّالّٰٓـِٔيْ لَمْ
يَحِضْنَ ؕ وَاُولَاتُ الْاَحْمَالِ اَجَلُهُنَّ اَنْ يَّضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَّقِ اللّٰهَ يَجْعَلْ لَّهٗ مِنْ
اَمْرِهٖ يُسْرًا 4

(65:4) The waiting period of those of your women who have lost all expectation of menstruation shall be three months[12] in case you entertain any doubt; and the same shall apply to those who have not yet menstruated.[13] As for pregnant women, their waiting period shall be until the delivery of their burden.[14] Allah will create ease for him who fears Allah.

12. This is in respect of the women who no longer menstruation and have reached menopause because of age. Their waiting-period will be reckoned from the day divorce was pronounced on them and three months imply three lunar months. If divorce was pronounced at the commencement of the lunar month, it is agreed that the waiting-period will be reckoned with regard to the sighting of the new moon; and if it was pronounced somewhere in the middle of the month, according to Imam Abu Hanifah, three months will have to be completed reckoning each month of 30 days. (Badaias-Sami).

As for the women whose courses are irregular due to some reason, the jurists have held different opinions:

Saeed bin al-Musayyab says that Umar ruled: If the woman who has been divorced stops having menses after having them once or twice after the divorce, she will wait for 9 months. If signs of pregnancy appear, well and good, otherwise after the passage of 9 months, she should observe the waiting-period of three additional months. Then she would be lawful for marriage to another person.

Ibn Abbas, Qatadah and Ikrimah say that the waitingperiod of the woman who has not menstruated for a year is three months.

Taus says that the waiting-period of the woman who menstruates once in a year, is three menstruations. This very opinion has been reported from Uthman, Ali and Zaid bin Thabit.

Imam Malik relates that a person by the name Habban divorced his wife during the period when she was suckling her child. A year passed on it, but she did not have the menses. Then the man died. The divorced wife laid claim to inheritance. The case came before Uthman. He consulted with AIi and Zaid bin Thabit, and gave the decision that the woman was an heiress. The argument given was that the woman was neither of those women a who might have despaired of menstruation, nor of those girls who may not have menstruated yet: therefore, up till the husband's death she was on the menses she had discharged last, and had still to pass her waiting-period.

The Hanafis say that the waiting-period of the woman, who no longer menstruates, which may not be on account of menopause so that there may be no hope of her having it later will either be reckoned from the menstruation if she has it in the future, or in accordance with the age at which women generally reach menopause, and after attaining that age she will pass three months of the waiting period in order to be released from the marriage bond. The same opinion is held by Imam Shafei, Imam Thauri and Imam Laith, and the same also is the view of Umar, Uthman and Zaid bin Thabit. Imam Malik has adopted the view of Umar and Abdullah bin Abbas and it is this: The woman will first pass nine months. If she does not have her menses during this period, she will pass three months of the waiting-period like the woman who has despaired of menstruation. Ibn al-Qasim explaining the viewpoint of Imam Malik says: The period of nine months will be reckoned from the day she became free from the previous menstrual discharge and not from the day divorce was pronounced on her. (All these have been taken from al-Jassas, Ahkam al-Quran and al-Kasani, Badai as-Sanai).

Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal says that if the woman whose waiting-period started from menstruation despairs of menstruation during the waiting-period, she will be required to pass the waiting-period of the menopausal woman and not of the women who menstruate regularly. And if she stops menstruating and the cause of the cessation is unknown, she will first pass nine months in the doubt of pregnancy, and then will have to complete three months of the waiting-period, And if the cause of the cessation of the menses becomes known, e.g. a disease, or suckling, or some other cause, she will lie in the waiting-period till the time that either she starts having the menses again so that the waiting-period may be reckoned in accordance with the courses, or she reaches menopause and may pass the waiting-period of the menopausal woman. (Al-Insaf).

13. They may not have menstruated as yet either because of young age, or delayed menstrual discharge as it happens in the case of some women, or because of no discharge at all throughout life which, though rare, may also be the case. In any case, the waiting-period of such a woman is the same as of the woman, who has stopped menstruation. That is three months from the time divorce was pronounced.

Here, one should bear in mind the fact that according to the explanations given in the Quran the question of the waiting period arises in respect of the women with whom marriage may have been consummated, for there is no waitingperiod in case divorce is pronounced before the consummation of marriage. (Surah Al-Ahzab, Ayat 49). Therefore, making mention of the waiting-period for the girls who have not yet menstruated, clearly proves that it is not only permissible to give away the girl in marriage at this age but it is also permissible for the husband to consummate marriage with her. Now, obviously no Muslim has the right to forbid a thing which the Quran has held as permissible.

The girl who is divorced in the state when she has not yet menstruated and then she starts having the menses during the waiting-period, will reckon her waiting-period from the same menstruation and her waiting-period will be reckoned just like the woman who menstruates regularly.

14. The consensus of scholarly opinion is that the waitingperiod of the pregnant divorced woman is till child birth. But a difference of opinion has occurred about whether the same also applies to the woman whose husband may die during her pregnancy. The dispute has arisen because in (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 234) the waiting-period of the woman whose husband dies has been laid down as four months and ten days, and there is no mention whatever whether this injunction applies to all widows generally or only to those who are not pregnant.

Ali and Abdullah bin Abbas, reading both these verses together, have drawn the rule that the waiting-period of the pregnant divorced woman is till child-birth, but that of the pregnant widow is the longer of the two periods, whether it be of the divorced woman or of the pregnant woman. For example, if delivery takes place before four months and ten days, she will have to observe a waiting period of four months and ten days, and if it does not take place till then, her waiting period will come to an end at delivery. The same is the viewpoint of the Imamiah sect of the Shias.

Abdullah bin Masud says that this verse of Surrah At- Talaq was sent down after the verse of Surah Al-Baqarah; therefore, the later injunction has made the earlier injunction particularly applicable to the non pregnant widow, and has laid down the waiting-period of every pregnant woman as till child birth, whether she is divorced or widowed. Accordingly, whether delivery takes place immediately after the husband's death, or takes longer than four months and ten days, the woman's waitingperiod in any case will come to an end at the birth of the child. This view is supported by this tradition of Ubayy bin Kaab. He says: When this verse of Surah At-Talaq came down, I asked the Prophet (peace be upon him): Is it both for the divorced woman and for the widow? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Yes. In another tradition the Prophet (peace be upon him) further explained it thus: The waiting period of every pregnant woman is till child-birth. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abu Hatim). Ibn Hajar says that although its reliability is questionable, yet as it has been related through several chains of transmitters, one has to admit that it has some basis. More than that, it is further confirmed by the incident concerning Subaiah-i Aslamiyyah which occurred in the sacred time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself. She became a widow during her pregnancy and a few days after her husband's death (according to some traditions 20 days, (according to others 23 days, 25 days, 35 days or 40 days) she delivered her burden. The Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked for his ruling concerning her and he permitted her to remarry. This incident has been related by Bukhari and Muslim in different ways on the authority of Umm Salamah. This same incident has been related by Bukhari Muslim, Imam Ahmed, Abu Daud, Nasai and Ibn Majah with different chains of transmitters on the authority of Miswar bin Makhramah also. Muslim has cited this statement of Subaiah-i Aslamiyyah herself: I was the wife of Saed bin Khawalah. He died during the Farewell Pilgrimage when I was pregnant. A few days after his death I gave birth to a child. A man told me that I could not remarry before the expiry of four months and ten days. I went and asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) and he gave the verdict: You have become lawful as soon as you gave birth to the child: you can re-marry if you so like. This tradition has been related briefly by Bukhari also.

This same viewpoint has been reported from a large number of the companions. Imam Malik, Imam Shafei, Abdur Razzaq, Ibn Abi Shaibah and Ibn al-Mundhir have related that when Abdullah bin Umar was asked concerning the pregnant widow, he replied that her waiting-period is till childbirth. At this a man from among the Ansar confirmed, saying: Umar had said that even if the deceased husband had not yet been buried, and his body still lay on bed in the house and his wife gave birth to a child, she would become pure and lawful for remarriage. The same opinion was held by Abu Hurairah, Abu Mansur Badri and Aishah, and the same has been adopted by the four Sunni Imams and the other early jurists.

The Shafeis say that if the pregnant woman has more children than one in her womb, her waiting-period will come to an end at the birth of the last child; even if it is still born, the waiting-period will expire at its birth. In case of abortion, if the mid-wives, on the basis of their knowledge and experience, state that it was not merely a piece of flesh but had human form, or that it was not a tumor but a human embryo, their statement will be admitted and the waiting period will expire. (Mughni, al-Muhtaj). The viewpoint of the Hanbalis and the Hanafis is also very close to it. But in case of abortion, their viewpoint is that unless the human form is clearly visible, the mid-wives' statement that it is human embryo, will not be admitted and this will not bring the waiting-period to an end. (Bade ias-Sanei; Al- Insaf). But

in the modern times by means of medical investigation it can be easily ascertained whether what has been expelled from the womb was actually something of the nature of human fetus or a kind of tumor or congealed blood. Therefore, whenever it is possible to obtain expert medical opinion, it can be easily decided whether what is described as abortion, was really abortion or not, and whether it has brought the waiting-period to an end or not. However, in cases when such medical investigation is not possible, the viewpoint of the Hanbalis and the Hanafis itself is preferable and it is not fit to rely on the ignorant mid-wives.

ذٰلِكَ اَمۡرُ اللّٰهِ اَنۡزَلَهٗۤ اِلَيۡكُمۡ ؕ وَمَنۡ يَّتَّقِ اللّٰهَ يُكَفِّرۡ عَنۡهُ سَيِّاٰتِهٖ وَيُعۡظِمۡ لَهٗۤ اَجۡرًا 5

(65:5) This is the commandment of Allah that He has revealed to you. Whoever fears Allah, He will expunge his evil deeds and will richly reward him.[15]

15. Although this is a general exhortation which applies to all matters and conditions of human life, yet in this particular context the object is to warn the Muslims to follow the commands mentioned above in fear of God, no matter what responsibilities they may have to shoulder in consequence thereof, for as a reward for this Allah will remove their ills and will forgive their sins and will enhance their rewards in the Hereafter. Obviously, the waitingperiod of the divorced woman whose term has been prescribed as three months will be longer than that of the woman whose term has been appointed as three menstruation, and the term of the pregnant woman may be several months longer. To shoulder the responsibility of the maintenance and lodging of the woman whom a man may have decided to give up, during this whole period, will be an unbearable burden for the people, but Allah's promise is that He will lighten the burden that is borne in fear of Him and in following His command, by His special bounty and grace, and will reward the person much more generously and richly in comparison to the small burden borne by him in the world.

اَسۡكِنُوۡهُنَّ مِنۡ حَيۡثُ سَكَنۡتُمۡ مِّنۡ وُّجۡدِكُمۡ وَلَا تُضَآرُّوۡهُنَّ لِتُضَيِّقُوۡا عَلَيۡهِنَّ ؕ وَاِنۡ كُنَّ اُولَاتِ حَمۡلٍ فَاَنۡفِقُوۡا عَلَيۡهِنَّ حَتّٰى يَضَعۡنَ حَمۡلَهُنَّ ۚ فَاِنۡ اَرۡضَعۡنَ لَكُمۡ فَاٰتُوۡهُنَّ اُجُوۡرَهُنَّ ۚ وَاۡتَمِرُوۡا بَيۡنَكُمۡ بِمَعۡرُوۡفٍ ۚ وَاِنۡ تَعَاسَرۡتُمۡ فَسَتُرۡضِعُ لَهٗۤ اُخۡرٰى ؕ 6

(65:6) (During the waiting period) lodge them according to your means wherever you dwell, and do not harass them to make them miserable.[16] And if they are pregnant, provide for them maintenance until they have delivered their burden.[17] And if they suckle your offspring whom they bore you, then give them due recompense, and graciously settle the question of compensation between yourselves by mutual understanding.[18] But if you experience difficulty (in determining the compensation for suckling) then let another woman suckle the child.[19]

16. The jurists agree that if the woman has been divorced revocable, the husband is responsible for her lodging and maintenance. They also agree that if the woman is pregnant, the husband will bear the responsibility of her lodging and maintenance till child-birth whether she has been divorced revocable or irrevocably. However, the difference of opinion has arisen about whether the nonpregnant woman who has been divorced irrevocably is entitled to both lodging and maintenance, or only to lodging, or to neither.

One group says that she is entitled to both lodging and maintenance. This is the opinion of Umar, Abdullah bin Masud, Ali bin Husain (Imam Zain al-Abidin), Qadi Shuraih and Ibrahim Nakhai. The same has been adopted by the Hanafis, and the same is also the viewpoint of Imam Sufyan Thauri and Hasan bin Saleh. This is supported by the Hadith of Daraqutni in which Abdullah bin Jabir reports that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The woman who has been divorced thrice has a right to lodging and maintenance during the waiting-period. This is further supported by those traditions in which it has been reported that Umar had rejected the Hadith of Fatimah bint-Qais, saying: We cannot abandon the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of our Prophet (peace be upon him) on the word of a woman. This shows that the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the knowledge of Umar must be that such a woman is entitled to both maintenance and lodging. Furthermore in a tradition from Ibrahim Nakhai there is the explanation that Umar rejecting the Hadith of Fatimah bint-Qais, had said: I have heard the Prophet (peace be upon him) say that such a woman has a right to lodging as well as to maintenance. The first argument that Imam Abu Bakr al Jassas has given in his discussion of this question in his Ahkam al-Quran is that Allah has explicitly said: Divorce them for their prescribed waiting periods. This divine command also applies to that person who might have taken his wife back after divorcing her twice in the first instance, and now he is left with only one divorce to pronounce. His second argument is: When the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught this method of pronouncing divorce that one should either pronounce divorce in such a period of purity in which one may not have had sexual intercourse, or in a state when the signs of a woman's being pregnant might have appeared. In this he did not make any distinction between the first, second, or final divorce. Therefore, the divine command: Lodge them (in the waiting period) where you yourselves live, will be regarded as relevant to every form of divorce. His third argument is: The maintenance and lodging of the pregnant woman, whether divorced revocable or irrevocably, is binding on the husband, and in respective the non-pregnant revocably divorced woman also both these rights are binding. This shows that the maintenance and lodging have not been made incumbent on the basis of pregnancy but because both are legally bound to stay in the husband's house. Now, if the same injunction be applicable to the irrevocably divorced non-pregnant woman also, there can be no reason why her lodging and maintenance should not be incumbent on the man divorcing her.

The second group says that the irrevocably divorce woman has a right to lodging but not to maintenance. This is the viewpoint of Saed bin al-Musayyab, Suleman bin Yasar, Ata, Shabi, Auzai, Laith and Abu Ubaid, and Imam Shafei and Imam Malik also have adopted the same. But in Mughni al-Muhtaj a different viewpoint of Imam Shafei has been stated as will be explained below.

The third group say that the irrevocably divorced woman is neither entitled to lodging nor to maintenance. This is the viewpoint of Hasan Basri, Hammad Ibn Laila, Amr bin Dinar, Taus, Ishaq bin Rahawaih and Abu Thaw. Ibn Jarir has cited this very viewpoint as of Ibn

Abbas, Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal and the Imamiah sect of the Shias also have adopted the same, and in Mughni al-Muhtaj the viewpoint of the Shafeis also has been stated to be this: The woman who is passing her waiting-period on the basis of divorce has an obligatory right to lodging, whether she is pregnant or not, but for the woman who has been irrevocably divorced, it is not obligatory. And for the nonpregnant irrevocably divorced woman there is neither maintenance nor clothing. This viewpoint in the first place is based on this verse of the Quran: You do not know: Allah may after this bring about a situation (of reconciliation). From this they conclude that this could be correct only about a revocably divorced woman, and not about an irrevocably divorced one. Therefore, the command of lodging the divorced woman in the house is specifically applicable only to the revocably divorced woman. Their second reasoning is from the Hadith of Fatimah bint-Qais, which has been reported in the collections of Hadith through many authentic channels.

This Fatimah bint-Qais al-Fihriyyah was one of the earliest emigrants. She was esteemed for her wisdom and sagacity, and the consultative body of the companions on the occasion of Umar's martyrdom had met together at her house. She was first married to Abu Amr bin Hafs bin al- Mughirah al-Makhzumi. After she was separated by him by three divorces, the Prophet (peace be upon him) married her to Usamah bin Zaid. According to reports, her husband, Abu Amr had pronounced two divorces on her. Then, when he was sent to Yemen along with Ali, he also sent from there the third and final divorce. According to some, lodge her in the house during the waiting-period and maintain her. According to some others, she herself had laid claim to maintenance and lodging. Whatever be the case, the husband's relatives refused to concede her claim. Thereupon she took her case to the Prophet (peace be upon him), and he gave the decision that she was neither entitled to maintenance nor to lodging. According to a tradition, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The husband is under obligation to provide maintenance and lodging to the woman only in case he had a right to return to her, but when he had no such right, she was neither entitled to maintenance nor to lodging. (Musnad Ahmad). Tabarani and Nasai have also related almost the same tradition, the concluding words of which are to the effect: But when she is not lawful for him until she marries another man than him, there is neither maintenance for her nor lodging. After giving this decision the Prophet (peace be upon him) first commanded her to pass her waiting period in the house of Umm Sharik and then told her to stay in the house of Ibn Umm Muktum.

However, the arguments of those who have not accepted this Hadith are as follows:

In the first place, she had been commanded to leave the house of her husband's relatives because she was rude of tongue and they were fed up with her ill-temper. Saed bin al-Musayyab says: This lady by reporting her Hadith has misguided the people. The truth is that she was rude and impudent, that is why she was lodged in the house of Ibn Umm Maktum. (Abu Daud). In another tradition Saed bin al Musayyab is reported to have said: She had been impudent and rude to her husband's relatives; that is why she was commanded to shift from that house. (Al-Jassas). Suleman bin Yasar says: Her expulsion from the house was because of her ill-temper. (Abu Daud).

Secondly, her tradition was repudiated by Umar at a time when many of the companions were still living, and the matter could be fully investigated. Ibrahim Nakhai says: When this Hadtih of Fatimah reached Umar, he said: We cannot abandon a verse of the Book of Allah

and a saying of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) because of the saying of a woman who seems to be conjecturing. I have myself heard the Prophet (peace be upon him) say that the woman who has been divorced irrevocably is entitled to both lodging and maintenance. (AI-Jassas). Abu Ishaq says: I was sitting with Aswad bin Yazid in the mosque of Kufah, when Shabi made mention of the Hadith of Fatimah bint-Qais. Aswad thereupon threw pebbles at Shabi and said: When in the time of Umar this tradition of Fatimah was brought to his notice, he said: We cannot cast off the Book of our Lord and the Sunnah of our Prophet (peace be upon him) on the strength of the tradition of a woman. Maybe she has forgotten. The woman has a right to maintenance as well as to lodging, for Allah says: Do not turn them out of their houses. This tradition has been reported in Muslim, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi and Nasai with some variation in wording.

Thirdly, during the reign of Marwan when a dispute arose in respect of the irrevocably divorced woman, Aishah had subjected the tradition of Fatimah bint-Qais to severe criticism. Qasim bin Muhammad says: I asked Aishah: Don't you know the incident concerning Fatimah? She replied: Better not mention the Hadith of Fatimah. (Bukhari), The words of Aishah in the other tradition related by Bukhari are to the effect: What has happened to Fatimah? Is she not afraid of God? In the third tradition Urwah bin Zubair says that Aishah said: There is no good for Fatimah in reporting this hadith. In still another tradition Urwah says that Aishah expressed great indignation against Fatimah and said: She in fact was in an empty house, where she had no sympathizer; therefore, for the sake of her convenience the Prophet (peace be upon him) instructed her to change her house.

Fourthly, this lady was later married to Usamah bin Zaid, and Muhammad bin Usamah says: Whenever Fatimah made mention of this Hadith, my father would throw at her whatever fell in his hand. (AI-Jassas). Obviously, had not Usamah known that the Sunnah was contrary to what Fatimah said, he could not have felt so annoyed at the mention of this Hadith.

17. There is complete consensus that whether the woman has been divorced revocably or irrevocably, her husband is responsible for her lodging and maintenance till child-birth if she is pregnant. However, a difference of opinion has arisen in case the husband of the pregnant woman may have died, irrespective of whether he may have died after pronouncing the divorce, or may not have pronounced any divorce and the woman may have been widowed during pregnancy. In this regard, the jurists have expressed the following views:

(1) Ali and Abdullah bin Masud hold that she has an obligatory right to maintenance in the husband's undivided legacy. The same has also been cited as the view of Abdullah bin Umar, Qadi Shuraih, Abul Aliyah, Shabi and Ibrahim Nakhai, and a saying of Abdullah bin Abbas also supports the same. (Alusi, Al-Jassas).

(2) Ibn Jarir has cited another view of Abdullah bin Abbas to the effect: If the deceased person has left some inheritance, expenditure should be made on her from the share of the child of her womb; and if he has left no inheritance, the heirs of the deceased should spend on her, for Allah says: And the same responsibility for the maintenance of the mother devolves upon the heir. (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 233).

(3) Jabir bin Abdullah, Abdullah bin Zubair, Hasan Basri, Hadrat Saed bin al-Musayyab and Ata bin Abi Rabah say that there is no maintenance for her in the inheritance of the deceased husband. A third saying from Abdullah bin Abbas also has been cited to be the same. (Al-Jassas). This means that she can meet her expenses from the share of inheritance that she may receive from the husband's legacy, but she has no right of inheritance on the husband's combined legacy, which may burden the other heirs.

(4) Ibn Abi Laila says: Her maintenance in the deceased husband's legacy is as obligatory as is somebody's debt obligatory in his legacy. (Al-Jassas). That is, just as a debt has to be paid out of a combined legacy, so also should her maintenance be paid out of it.

(5) Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Abu Yusuf, Imam Muhammad and Imam Zufar say: She has neither any right to lodging in the deceased husband's legacy nor to maintenance, for nothing belongs to the deceased after death: whatever remains after him belongs to the heirs. The widowed pregnant woman, therefore, cannot have any maintenance in their property. (Hedayah, Al-Jassas). The same is the viewpoint of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal (Al- Insaf).

(6) Imam Shafei says: There is no maintenance for her; but she has a right to lodging (Mughni al-Muhtaj). His reasoning is based on the incident concerning Furaiah bint- Malik, sister of Abu Saed Khudri: when her husband was put to death, the Prophet (peace be upon him) commanded her to pass her waiting-period in the house of her husband. (Abu Daud, Nasai, Timtidhi). Furthermore, they deduce their view from the tradition of Daraqutni: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: there is no maintenance for the widowed pregnant woman. The same is the view of Imam Malik also. (Hashiyah ad-Dusuqi).

18. This divine command teaches several important things:

(1) That the woman is the owner of her milk; otherwise, obviously she could not be authorized to receive wages for it.

(2) That as soon as she becomes free from the marriage bond with her previous husband at child-birth, she is not legally bound to nurse her child; but if the father desires that she nurse it, and she also is willing for it, she would suckle it and would be entitled to receive the wages.

(3) that the father also is not legally bound to have the child suckled only by its mother;

(4) that the maintenance of the child is the responsibility of the father.

(5) that the mother is best entitled to suckle the child, and the other woman can be employed for suckling only in case the mother herself is not willing for it, or demands too high a wage for the father to pay. The sixth rule that automatically follows is that if the other woman also demands the same wages as the mother, then the mother's right is superior.

The following are the opinions of the jurists in this regard:

Dahhak says: The child's mother is best entitled to suckle it, but she has the option to suckle it or not. However, if the child does not take to the new nurse-maid, the mother will be compelled to suckle it. A similar opinion is held by Qatadah, Ibrahim Nakhai and Sufyan

Thauri. ibrahim Nakhai adds: In case another woman is not available for nursing the child, the mother will be compelled to nurse it. (Ibn Jarir). According to Hedayah: If at the separation of the parents the child has not yet been weaned, it is not obligatory that the mother alone should suckle it. However, if another woman is not available, the mother would be compelled to suckle the child. And if the father says: I shall employ another woman to suckle the child on wages instead of having it suckled by the mother on wages, and if the mother demands the same wages as the other woman, or is willing to perform the service gratis, the mother's right will be regarded as superior. And if the child's mother demands higher wages, the father will not be compelled to accede to her demand.

19. This contains a severe rebuke both for the father and for the mother. The style clearly shows that if the two do not settle the question of the child's suckling amicably, overlooking the previous bitterness that led to divorce, it is not approved by Allah, The woman has been warned to the effect: If you demand too high a wage only in order to embarrass the man, the fosterage of the child is not dependent on you alone: some other woman will muse it. And the man has also been warned as if to say: It would be unfair if you pressed the mother unjustly only because she was the mother. In this connection, also see (Surah Al- Baqarah, Ayat 233) for details.

لِيُنفِقْ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِّن سَعَتِهِ ۖ وَمَن قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهُ فَلْيُنفِقْ مِمَّا آتَاهُ اللَّهُ ۚ لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ
نَفْسًا إِلَّا مَا آتَاهَا ۚ سَيَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا ۝ 7

(65:7) Whoever has abundant means, let him spend according to his means; and he whose means are straitened, let him spend out of what Allah has given him. Allah does not burden any human being beyond the means that He has bestowed upon him. Possibly Allah will grant ease after hardship.

وَكَأَيِّن مِّن قَرْيَةٍ عَتَتْ عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهَا وَرُسُلِهِ فَحَاسَبْنَاهَا حِسَابًا شَدِيدًا وَعَذَّبْنَاهَا
عَذَابًا نُّكْرًا ۝ 8

(65:8) How many towns[20] rebelled against the commandment of their Lord and His Messengers. Then We called them to a stern accounting, and subjected them to a harrowing chastisement.

20. Now, the Muslims are being warned of the fate they would meet in this world and in the Hereafter is they disobeyed the commands they have been given through the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah and His Book and the rewards they would receive if they adopted obedience.

فَذَاقَتْ وَبَالَ اَمْرِهَا وَكَانَ عَاقِبَةُ اَمْرِهَا خُسْرًا 9

(65:9) So they tasted the evil fruit of their deeds; and the fruit of their deeds was utter loss.

اَعَدَّ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيْدًا ۙ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ يٰٓاُولِى الْاَلْبَابِ ۚ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ۟ قَدْ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْكُمْ ذِكْرًا ۙ 10

(65:10) Allah has laid in store for them a grievous chastisement. So fear Allah, O people of understanding who have attained to faith. Allah has sent down to you an Exhortation,

رَّسُوْلًا يَّتْلُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ مُبَيِّنٰتٍ لِّيُخْرِجَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّؤْمِنْۢ بِاللّٰهِ وَيَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا يُّدْخِلْهُ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ؕ قَدْ اَحْسَنَ اللّٰهُ لَهٗ رِزْقًا 11

(65:11) a Messenger[21] who rehearses to you Allah's verses that clearly expound the Guidance so that He may bring out those that believe and act righteously, from every kind of darkness into light.[22] He will admit whosoever believes in Allah and acts righteously to Gardens beneath which rivers flow. They shall abide in them forever. For such has Allah made an excellent provision.

21. Some of the commentators opine that admonition here implies the Quran and Messenger, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Some others say that admonition implies the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself, because he was admonition for the people through and through. We are of the opinion that this second interpretation is more correct, for according to the first commentary the sentence would read: We have sent down to you an ddmonition and sent such a Messenger. Obviously, there is no need for such an interpolation in the Quranic passage when it is perfectly meaningful, even more so, without it.

22. Out of darknesses into light: out of the darknesses of ignorance into the light of knowledge. The full significance of this divine saying becomes obvious only when one studies the other ancient and modern family laws of the world pertaining to divorce, waiting-period and provision of maintenance. This comparative study will show that in spite of the un-ending alterations, modifications and continual legislation no nation has been able so far to build for itself such a rational, natural and socially useful law as had been given by this Book and the Messenger (peace be upon him) who brought it 1500 wears ago.

It has never stood in need of revision nor it ever will. There is no occasion here for a detailed comparative study of it; we have, however, given a brief specimen of it in the concluding portion of our book Huquq az-Zaujain; the scholars who are interested in the subject can for themselves compare the world's religious and secular laws with this law of the Quran and Sunnah.

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ وَّمِنَ الْاَرْضِ مِثْلَهُنَّ ؕ یَتَنَزَّلُ الْاَمْرُ بَیْنَهُنَّ لِتَعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰی كُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِیْرٌ ۙ وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ اَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَیْءٍ عِلْمًا ۧ 12

(65:12) Allah it is He Who created seven heavens, and, like them, the earth.[23] His commandment descends among them. (All this is being stated so that you know) that Allah has power over everything, and that Allah encompasses all things in His knowledge.

23. "The like of them" does not mean that He created as many earths as the heavens, but it means that He has also created several earths as He has created several heavens. "Of the earth" means that just as this earth which is inhabited by man is serving as bed and cradle for the creatures living on it, so has Allah made and set other earths also in the universe. which serve as beds and cradles for the creatures living on them. Moreover, there are clear pointers in the Qur'an to the effect that living creatures are not found only on the earth but also in the heavens. (For instance, see (Surah Ash-Shura: 29 and E.N. 50) on it. In other words! the countless stars and planets seen in the sky are not all lying desolate, but like the earth there are many among them which are inhabited.

From among the earliest commentators Ibn Abbas is the one, who had expressed this truth in the period when man was not even prepared to imagine that in the universe there are other habitats also, apart from the earth, where rational creatures live. Even the scientists of today are yet in doubt about this being a reality, nothing to say of the people living 1500 years ago, That is why Ibn Abbas felt hesitant about whether he should say such a thing before the common people are not, because he feared it might affect their faith. Mujahid says that when he was asked the meaning of this verse, he said: "If I give you the commentary of this verse, you will turn disbelievers, and your disbelief will be that you will deny it." Almost the same thing has been related from Sa'id bin Jubair, saying; Ibn Abbas said: what can be the guarantee that if I tell you its meaning, you would not turn disbelievers?" (lbn Jarir, 'Abd bin Humaid). However, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Hakim and Baihaqi in Shu'ab al-Iman and Kitab al-Asma' was Sifat have cited, on the authority of Abud-Doha, this commentary from Ibn Abbas in different words: "In each of those earths there is a Prophet like your Prophet, an Adam like your Adam, a Noah like your Noah, an Abraham like your Abraham, and a Jesus like your Jesus." This tradition has been related by Ibn Hajar in Fath al-Bat and by Ibn Kathir in his Commentary, and Imam Dhahbi says: "It has been reported authentically, but in my knowledge none apart from Abud-Doha has related it; therefore, it is an uncommon and rare tradition." Some other scholars regard it as a falsehood and Mulla 'AIi; Qari, in his Maudu at Kabir (p. 19), has described it as a fabrication, and written: `Even if it is a tradition from Ibn 'Abbas, it is based on Israelite traditions." But the truth is that the

actual reason why the people have rejected it is their regarding it as remote from reason and beyond understanding; otherwise there is nothing in it which may by itself be opposed to reason. Thus, Allama Alusi in his discussion of it in his commentary writes: "There is neither any intellectual barrier to taking it as correct nor religious. It only means that in every earth there is a creation which turns to its origin just as mankind in our earth turns to Adam (peace be upon him). and in every earth there are individuals, who are distinguished among others just as the Prophets Noah and Abraham (peace be upon them) are distinguished among us. " A little below the Allama writes: "The earths may be more than seven, and likewise the heavens also may not be only seven. To rest content with the number seven, which is an indivisible integer, does not necessarily negate the higher numbers." Then, about the distances between one heaven and another, which have been stated as five hundred years or so in some Ahadith. the 'Allama says: "This is not meant to give the exact measurement of the distances, but to express the truth in a manner easily comprehensible to the people."

It is would be intresting to note that lately the Rand Corporation of America has estimated on the basis of their astronomical observations that only in the Galaxy to which our earth belongs there are about 600,000,000 (600 million) planets physical conditions on which closely resembles those on earth, and there is a possibility that they may be inhabited just as in the earth by living creatures. (Economist, London, 26 July, 1969)

66. Surah At Tahrim (The Prohibition)

Name

The Surah derived its name from the words lima tuharrimu of the very first verse. This too is not a title of its subject matter, but the name implies that it is the Surah in which the incident of tahrim (prohibition, forbiddance) has been mentioned.

Period of Revelation

In connection with the incident of tahrim referred to in this Surah, the traditions of the Hadith mention two ladies who were among the wives of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) at that time Hadrat Safiyyah and Hadrat Mariyah Qibtiyyah. The former (i. e. Hadrat Safiyyah) was taken to wife by the Holy Prophet after the conquest of Khaiber, and Khaiber was conquered, as has been unanimously reported, in A. H. 7. The other lady, Hadrat Mariyah, had been presented to the Holy Prophet by Muqawqis, the ruler of Egypt, in A. H. 7 and she had borne him his son, Ibrahim, in Dhil-Hijjah, A. H. 8.These historical events almost precisely determine that this Surah was sent down some time during A.H. 7 or A. H 8.

Theme and Topics

This is a very important Surah in which light has been thrown on some questions of grave significance with reference to some incidents concerning the wives of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace).

First, that the powers to prescribe the bounds of the lawful and the unlawful, the permissible and the forbidden, are entirely and absolutely in the hand of Allah and nothing has been delegated even to the Prophet of Allah himself, not to speak of any other man. The Prophet as such can declare something lawful or unlawful only if he receives an inspiration from Allah to do so whether that inspiration is embodied in the Qur'an, or imparted to, him secretly. However, even the Prophet is not authorized to declare anything made permissible by Allah unlawful by himself, much less to say of another man.

Second, that in any society the position of a Prophet is very delicate. A minor incident experienced by an ordinary man in his life may not be of any consequence, but it assumes the status of law when experienced by a Prophet. That is why the lives of the Prophets have been kept under close supervision by Allah so that none of their acts, not even a most trivial one, may deviate from Divine Will. Whenever such an act has emanated from a Prophet, it was rectified and rectified immediately so that the Islamic law and its principles should reach the people in their absolute purity not only through the Divine Book but also through the excellent example of the Prophet, and they should include nothing which may be in disagreement with Divine Will,

Thirdly, and this automatically follows from the above mentioned point, that when the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) was checked on a minor thing, which was not only corrected but also recorded, it gives us complete satisfaction that whatever actions and commands and instructions we now find in the pure life of the Holy Prophet concerning which there is nothing on record in the nature of criticism or correction from Allah, they are

wholly based on truth, are in complete conformity with Divine Will and we can draw guidance from them with full confidence and peace of mind.

The fourth thing that we learn from this discourse is that about the Holy Messenger himself, whose reverence and respect Allah Himself has enjoined as a necessary part of the Faith of His servants, it has been stated in this Surah that once during his sacred life he made a thing declared lawful by Allah unlawful for himself only to please his wives; then Allah has severely reproved for their errors those very wives of the Holy Prophet, whom He Himself has declared as mothers of the faithful and worthy of the highest esteem and honor by them. Then, this criticism of the Prophet and the administration of the warning to the wives also has not been made secretly but included in the Book, which the entire Ummah has to read and recite for ever. Obviously, neither the intention of making mention of it in the Book of Allah was, nor it could be, that Allah wanted to degrade His Messenger and the mothers of the faithful in the eyes of the believers; and this also is obvious that no Muslim has lost respect for them, in his heart after reading this Surah of the Qur'an. Now, there cannot be any other reason of mentioning this thing in the Qur'an than that Allah wants to acquaint the believers with the correct manner of reverence for their great personalities. The Prophet is a Prophet, not God, that he may commit no error. Respect of the Prophet has not been enjoined because he is infallible, but because he is a perfect representative of Divine Will, and Allah has not permitted any of his errors to pass by unnoticed. This gives us the satisfaction that the noble pattern of life left by the Prophet wholly and fully represents the will of Allah. Likewise, the Companions of the holy wives of the Prophet, were human, not angels or super men. They could commit mistakes. Whatever ranks they achieved became possible only because the guidance given by Allah and the training imparted by Allah's Messenger had moulded them into the finest models. Whatever esteem and reverence they deserve is on this very basis and not on the presumption that they were infallible. For this reason, whenever in the sacred lifetime of the Prophet (upon him be peace) the Companions or holy wives happened to commit an error due to human weakness, they were checked. Some of their errors were corrected by the Holy Prophet, as has been mentioned at many places in the Hadith; some other errors were mentioned in the Qur'an and Allah Himself corrected them so that the Muslims might not form any exaggerated notion of the respect and reverence of their elders and great men, which might raise them from humanity to the position of gods and goddesses. If one studies the Quran carefully, one will see instances of this one after the other. In Surah Al-Imran, in connection with the Battle of Uhud, the Companions have been addressed and told:

"Allah did fulfill His promise (of help) to you : in the initial stage of the battle, it was you who were killing them by Allah's leave until you lost heart and disputed about your duty and disobeyed your leader, when Allah showed you what (the spoils) you coveted for there were among you sortie who hankered after the life of this world, and others: who cherished the life after death. Then Allah caused your retreat before the disbelievers in order to test you, but the fact is that even then Allah pardoned you, for Allah is very gracious to the believers." (v. 152).

In surah An-Nur, in connection with the Slander against Hadrat Aisha, the Companions were told,

"When you heard of it, why did not the believing men and the believing women have a good opinion of themselves, and why did they not say: this is a manifest slander?.....Were it not for Allah's grace and mercy towards you in this world and in the Hereafter, a painful scourge would have visited you because of the slander. (Just consider) when you passed this lie on from one tongue to the other and uttered with your mouths that of which you had no knowledge. You took it as a trifling matter whereas it was a grave offense in the sight of Allah. Why did you not, as soon as you heard of it, say 'It is not proper for us to utter such a thing? Glory be to Allah! This is a great slander'. "Allah admonishes you that in future you should never repeat anything like this, if you are true believers." (vv. 12-I7).

In surah Al-Ahzab, the holy wives have been addressed thus: "O Prophet, say to your wives If you seek the world and its adornments, come, I shall give you of these and send you off in a good way. But if you seek Allah and His Messenger and the abode of the Hereafter, you should rest assured that Allah has prepared a great reward for those of you, who do good." (vv. 28-29).

In Surah Jumu'ah about the Companions it was said:

"And when they saw some merchandise and amusement they broke off to it and left you (O Prophet) standing (in the course of the Sermon). Say to them : that which is with Allah is far better than amusement and merchandise, and Allah is the best of all providers." (v. 11).

In Surah Al-Mumtahinah, Hadrat Hatib bin Abi Balta'ah, a Companion who had fought at Badr, was severely taken to task because he had sent secret information to the disbelieving Quraish about the Holy Prophet's invasion before the conquest of Makkah.

All these instances are found in the Qur'an itself, in the same Qur'an in which Allah Himself has paid tribute to the Companions and the holy wives for their great merits, and granted them the certificate of His good pleasure, saying: "Allah became well pleased with them and they with Allah." It was this same moderate and balanced teaching of the reverence and esteem of the great men, which saved the Muslims from falling into the pit of man worship in which the Jews and the Christians fell, and it is a result of the same that in the books that the eminent followers of the Sunnah have compiled on the subjects of the Hadith, Commentary of the Qur'an and History, not only have the excellences and great merits of the Companions and holy wives and other illustrious men been mentioned, but also no hesitance has been shown in mentioning the incidents relating to their weaknesses, errors and mistakes, whereas those scholars were more appreciative of the merits and excellences of the great men and understood the bounds and limits of reverence better than those who claim to be the upholders of reverence for the elders today.

The fifth thing that has been explicitly mentioned in this Surah is that Allah's Religion is absolutely fair and just. It has for every person just that of which he becomes worthy on the basis of his faith and works. No relationship or connection even with the most righteous person can be beneficial for him in any way and no relationship or connection with the most evil and wicked person can be harmful for him in any way. In this connection three kinds of women have been cited as examples before the holy wives in particular. One example is of the wives of the Prophets Noah and Lot, who, if they had believed and cooperated with their illustrious husbands, would have occupied the same rank and position in the Muslim

community. which is enjoyed by the wives of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings). But since they were disbelievers, their being the wives of the Prophets did not help them and they fell into Hell. The second example is of the wife of Pharaoh, who in spite of being the wife of a staunch enemy of God believed and chose a path of action separate from that followed by the Pharaoh's people, and her being the wife of a staunch disbeliever did not cause her any harm, and Allah made her worthy of Paradise. The third example is of Hadrat Maryam (Mary) (peace be upon her), who attained to the high rank because she submitted to the severe test to which Allah had decided to put her. Apart from Mary no other chaste and righteous girl in the world ever has been put to such a hard test that in spite of being unmarried, she might have been made pregnant miraculously by Allah's command and informed what service her Lord willed to take from her. When Hadrat Maryam accepted this decision, and agreed to bear, like a true believer, everything that she inevitably had to bear in order to fulfill Allah's will, then did Allah exalt her to the noble rank of Sayyidatu an-nisa' fil- Jannah: "Leader of the women in Paradise" (Musnad Ahmad).

Besides, another truth that we learn from this Surah is that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) did not receive from Allah only that knowledge which is included and recorded in the Qur'an, but he was given information about other things also by revelation, which has not been recorded in the Qur'an. Its clear proof is verse 3 of this Surah. In it we are told that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) confided a secret to one of his wives, and she told it to another. Allah informed the Holy Prophet of this secret. Then, when the Holy Prophet warned his particular wife on the mistake of disclosure and she said: "Who has informed you of this mistake of mine7" he replied: "I have been informed of it by Him Who knows everything and is All Aware." Now, the question is where in the Qur'an is the verse in which Allah has said "O Prophet, the secret that you had confided to one of your wives, has been disclosed by her to another person, or to so and so? If there is no such verse in the Qur'an, and obviously there is none, this is an express proof of the fact that revelation descended on the Holy Prophet besides the Qur'an as well. This refutes the claim of the deniers of Hadith, who allege that nothing was sent down to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) apart from the Qur'an.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّبِىُّ لِمَ تُحَرِّمُ مَاۤ اَحَلَّ اللّٰهُ لَكَ ۚ تَبۡتَغِىۡ مَرۡضَاتَ اَزۡوَاجِكَ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِيۡمٌ ۝١

(66:1) O Prophet, why do you forbid what Allah has made lawful for you?[1] Is it to please your wives?[2] Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Compassionate.[3]

1. This is not, in fact, a question but an expression of disapproval. The object is not to ask the Prophet (peace be upon him) why he had done so, but to warn him that his act to make unlawful for himself what Allah had made lawful is not approved by Allah. This by itself gives the meaning that nobody has the power to make unlawful what Allah has made

lawful; so much so that the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself also did not possess any such power. Although the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not regard this as unlawful as a matter of faith nor legally but only forbade himself its use, yet since he was not an ordinary man but Allah's Messenger, and his forbidding himself something could have the effect that his followers too would have regarded it as forbidden, or at least reprehensible, or the people of his community might have thought that there was no harm in forbidding oneself something his Allah had made lawful, Allah pointed it out to him and commanded him to refrain from such prohibition.

2. This shows that in this case the Prophet (peace be upon him) had not made a lawful thing unlawful because of a personal desire but because his wives had wanted him to do so, and he had made it unlawful for himself only in order to please them. Here, the question arises: why has Allah particularly made mention of the cause of making the thing unlawful besides pointing out the act of prohibition? Obviously, if the object had been to make him refrain from making a lawful thing as unlawful, this could be fulfilled by the first sentences and there was no need that the motive of the act also should have been stated. Making mention of it in particular clearly shows that the object was not to check the Prophet (peace be upon him) only for making a lawful thing as unlawful, but along with that to warn the his wives also to the effect that in their capacity as the Prophet's wives they had not understood their delicate responsibilities and had made the Prophet (peace be upon him) do a thing which could lead to making a lawful thing as unlawful.

Although it has not been mentioned in the Quran as to what it was that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had made forbidden upon himself, yet the traditionists and commentators have mentioned in this regard two different incidents, which occasioned the revelation of this verse. One of these relates to Mariyah Qibiyyah (Mary, the Copt lady) and the other to his forbidding upon himself the use of honey.

The incident relating to Mariyah is that after concluding the peace treaty of Hudaibiyah, one of the letters that the Prophet (peace be upon him) sent to the rulers of the adjoining countries was addressed to the Roman Patriarch of Alexandria also, whom the Arabs called Muqawqis. When Hatib bin Abi Baltaa took this letter to him, he did not embrace Islam but received him well, and in reply wrote: I know that a Prophet is yet to rise, but I think he will appear in Syria. However, I have treated your messenger with due honor, and am sending two slave-girls to you, who command respect among the Coptics. (Ibn Saad). One of those slave-girls was Sirin and the other Mariyah (Mary). On his way back from Egypt, Hatib presented Islam before both and they believed. When they came before the Prophet (peace be upon him), he gave Sirin in the ownership of Hassan bin Thabit and admitted Mariyah into his own household. In Dhil-Hijjah, A.H. 8 she gave birth to the Prophet's (peace be upon him) son, Ibrahim. (Al-Istiab; Al-Isabah). This lady was very beautiful. Hafiz Ibn Hajar in Al-Isabah has related this saying of Aishah about her: No woman's entry into the Prophet's household vexed me so much as that of Mariyah, because she was very beautiful and pleased him much. Concerning her the story that has been narrated in several ways in the Hadith is briefly as follows:

One day the Prophet (peace be upon him) visited the house of Hafsah when she was not at home. At that time Mariyah came to him there and stayed with him in seclusion. Hafsah took it very ill and complained of it bitterly to him. Thereupon, in order to please her, the

Prophet (peace be upon him) vowed that he would have no conjugal relation with Mariyah in future. According to some traditions, he forbade Mariyah for himself, and according to others, he also swore an oath on it. These traditions have been mostly reported by the immediate successors of the companions without mentioning any intermediary link. But some of these have been reported from Umar, Abdullah bin Abbas and Abu Hurairah also. In view of the plurality of the methods of narration, Hafiz Ibn Hajar in Fath al-Bari has expressed the view that there is some truth in the story. But in none of the six authentic collections of the Hadith has this story been narrated. In Nasai only this much has been related from Anas: The Prophet (peace be upon him) had a slave-girl with whom he had conjugal relations. Then, Hafsah and Aishah began to point out this to him repeatedly until he forbade her for himself. There upon, Allah sent down this verse: O Prophet, why do you make unlawful that which Allah has made lawful for you.

The other incident has been related in Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, Nasai and several other books of Hadith from Aishah herself and its purport is as follows:

The Prophet (peace be upon him) usually paid a daily visit to all his wives after the Asr Prayer. Once it so happened that he began to stay in the house of Zainab bint-Jahsh longer than usual, for she had received some honey from somewhere as a gift and the Prophet was very fond of sweet things; therefore, he would have a drink of honey at her house. Aishah states that she felt envious of this and spoke to Hafsah, Saudah and Safiyyah about it and together they decided that whoever of them was visited by the Prophet, she should say to him: Your mouth smells of maghafir. Maghafir is a kind of flower, which gives out an offensive smell, and if the bee obtains honey from it, it is also tainted by the same odor. They all knew that the Prophet was a man of very fine taste and he abhorred that he should emit any kind of unpleasant smell. Therefore, this device was contrived to stop him from staying in the house of Zainab and it worked. When several of his wives told him that his mouth smelt of maghafir, he made a promise not to use the honey any longer. In one tradition his words are to the effect: Now, I will never have a drink from it: I have sworn an oath. In another tradition he only said: I will never have a drink from it, and there is no mention of the oath. And in the tradition which Ibn al Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Tabarani and Ibn Marduyah have related from Ibn Abbas the words are to the effect: By God, I will not drink it.

Our eminent scholars regard this second version as correct and the first as unreliable. Imam Nasai says: About honey the Hadith reported from Aishah is authentic, and the story of forbidding Mariyah for himself by the Prophet (peace be upon him) has not been narrated in a reliable way. Qadi Iyad says: The truth is that this verse was sent down concerning honey and not Mariyah. Qadi Abu Bakr Ibn al- Arabi also regards the story about honey as correct and the same is the opinion of Imam Nawawi and Hafiz Badruddiu Aini. Ibn Humam writes in Fath al-Qadir: The story of the prohibition of honey has been narrated in Bukhari and Muslim from Aishah who was herself a party to it; therefore, it is much more reliable.

Hafiz Ibn Kathir says: The truth is that this verse was sent down about forbidding honey upon himself by the Prophet (peace be upon him).

3. That is, although the act of making a lawful thing unlawful only in order to please your wives was an act unbecoming of your high and responsible office, yet it was no sin, which

might have entailed a punishment. Therefore, Allah has only pointed it out to you and corrected it, and has forgiven you for this error.

قَدْ فَرَضَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ تَحِلَّةَ اَيْمَانِكُمْ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ مَوْلٰىكُمْ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيْمُ الْحَكِيْمُ 2

(66:2) Allah has prescribed for you a way for the absolution of your oaths.[4] Allah is your Guardian. He is All-Knowing, Most Wise.[5]

4. It means: Act according to the method Allah has prescribed for absolution from oaths by expiation in(Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 89)and break your promise that you have made to forbid yourself of a lawful thing. Here, an important legal question arises and it is this: Is this command applicable to the case when a person has forbidden upon himself a lawful thing on oath, or is forbidding oneself a lawful thing by itself tantamount to swearing an oath, whether the words of the oath have been used or not. The jurists in this regard have expressed different opinions:

One section of them says that mere forbidding oneself of a lawful thing is not an oath. If a person without swearing an oath has forbidden upon himself a wife, or some other lawful thing, it is an absurd thing which does not entail any expiation, but he can resume without any expiation the use of the thing that he had forbidden for himself. This is the opinion of Masruq, Shabi, Rabiah and Abu Salamah; and the same view is held by Ibn Jarir and all the Zahiris. According to them forbidding oneself of something would be an oath only in case express words of oath are used when forbidding it for oneself. In this regard, their reasoning is that since the Prophet (peace be upon him) while forbidding himself a lawful thing had also sworn an oath, as has been reported in several traditions, Allah told him to act according to the method that had been appointed for absolving oneself from oaths.

The second group says that to forbid oneself something without using the words of oath is not an oath by itself, but the case of the wife is an exception. If a person has forbidden himself a garment, or an article of food, it is meaningless, and one can use it without expiation. But if concerning a wife or a slave-girl he has said: I forbid myself an intercourse with her, she would not become unlawful and forbidden, but one would have to expiate the oath before going in to her. This is the opinion of the Shafeis. (Mughni al-Muhtaj). And a similar opinion on this question is held by the Malikis. (Ibn al-Arabi, Ahkam al-Quran).

The third group says that to forbid oneself something is by itself an oath even if the words of oath have not been used. This is the opinion of Abu Bakr. Aishah, Umar, Abdullah bin Masud, Zaid bin Thabit and Abdullah bin Abbas. Although from Ibn Abbas another opinion has been reported in Bukhari to the effect: If a man has forbidden himself his wife, it is meaningless, yet it has been interpreted to mean that according to him this is not divorce but an oath which entails an expiation. For, in Bukhari, Muslim and Ibn Majah, another saying of Ibn Abbas has been reported that to forbid oneself one's wife entails an expiation, and in Nasai the tradition is to the effect that when Ibn Abbas was asked his opinion on this, he said: She is not forbidden to you, but you must pay the expiation. And in Ibn Jarir's tradition the words of Ibn Abbas are to the effect: If the people forbid themselves what Allah has made lawful for them, they must expiate their oath. This same is the opinion of Hasan Basri, Ata, Taus, Suleman bin Yasar, Ibn Jubair and Qatadah, and the same has been

adopted by the Hanafis. Imam Abu Bakr al- Jassas says: The words of the verse lima tuharrimu do not indicate that the Prophet (peace be upon him) along with forbidding himself the lawful thing had also sworn an oath, therefore, one will have to admit that tahrim (to forbid oneself something) itself is an oath; for after it Allah made obligatory the expiation of the oath in connection with the prohibition. Farther on he writes again: Our companions (i.e. the Hanafis) regard tahrim as an oath in case it is not accompanied by the intention of divorce. If a person forbade upon himself his wife, he in fact said: By God, I will not come near you, thus, he committed ila (act of temporary separation). And if he forbade himself an article of food, etc, he in a way said: By God, I will not use that article. For Allah first said: Why do you forbid that which Allah has made lawful. And then said: Allah has appointed a way to absolve you from your oaths. Thus, Allah has regarded tahrim as an oath, and the word tahrim in its meaning and legal effect becomes synonymous with an oath.

Here, for the benefit of the common man, it would be useful to tell what the legal command is, according to the jurists, in respect of someone forbidding upon himself his wife and the other things besides the wife.

The Hanafis say that if without the intention of divorce somebody forbade upon himself his wife, or swore an oath that he would not have conjugal relations with her, this would be ila (temporary separation), and in this case he would have to expiate his oath before having the sexual relation. But if with the intention of divorce he said: You are unlawful to me, it will have to be ascertained what was his real intention. If his intention was of three divorces, the three divorces will take place, and if the intention was of a lesser number, of one or two divorces, only one divorce will take place in either case. And if somebody says: I have forbidden myself whatever was lawful for me, this would not apply to the wife unless he said these words with the intention of forbidding himself the wife. Apart from the wife, one cannot use the thing he has forbidden upon himself until he has expiated the oath. (Badai as-Sanai: Hedayah; Fath Al-Qadir, al-Jassas, Ahkam al-Quran).

The Shafeis say that if one forbids upon himself the wife with the intention of divorce or zihar, the intended thing would become effective, whether it is a revocable divorce or an irrevocable divorce or zihar. And if a person used the words of tahrim with the intention of both divorce and zihar, he would be asked to choose one, or the other, for both divorce and zihar cannot be established at one and the same time. Divorce dissolves marriage but in case of zihar it continues and if without any intention the wife is forbidden, she would not become forbidden, but expiation of the oath would become necessary. And if another thing, apart from the wife, is forbidden, it would be meaningless; there is no expiation for it. (Mughni al-Muhtaj).

The Malikis say that if a person forbids upon himself anything other than the wife, it neither becomes forbidden nor entails an expiation. But if he says to the wife: You are unlawful, or unlawful for me, or I am unlawful for you, this would amount to a triple divorce in any case whether this was said to a wife with whom marriage has been consummated, or to one with whom it has not yet been consummated, unless his intention was of less than three divorces. Asbagh says: If a person says: whatever was lawful for me, is unlawful, the wife also becomes forbidden unless he makes an exception of the wife. In al- Mudawwanah, distinction has been made between the wife with whom marriage has been consummated

and the wife with whom it has not been consummated. If one forbids upon himself the former, a threefold divorce will take place irrespective of the intention, but in case of the latter the same number of divorces would take effect as was intended, and if there was no intention of any particular number, it would be considered a triple divorce. (Hashiyah ad-Dusuqi). Qadi Ibn al-Arabi in his Ahkam al-Quran has cited three statements of Imam Malik: (1) That forbidding oneself the wife amounts to an irrevocable divorce. (2) That it amounts to three divorces. (3) That in case of the wife with whom marriage has been consummated it amounts to three divorces, but in case of the one with whom it has not been consummated, to only one divorce if one was intended. Then he says: The correct thing is that forbidding oneself the wife amounts to one divorce only. For if the man uses the word divorce instead of calling her unlawful without specifying the number, only one divorce will take place.

Three different views in this regard have been reported from Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal: (1) That to forbid oneself the wife, or to make a lawful thing absolutely unlawful for oneself, is zihar, whether zihar was intended or not. (2) That this is an express allusion to divorce, and it amounts to pronouncing a triple divorce whether only one divorce was intended. (3) That it is an oath, unless the man had the intention of divorce or zihar and in this case the same would take effect as was intended. Of these only the first one is the best known view among the Hanbalis. (Al-Insaf).

5. That is, Allah is your Master and Guardian of your affairs. He knows best in what lies your own good, and whatever commands He has given, they are all based on wisdom. The first thing means: You are not independent in this world, but you are servant of Allah and He is your Master; therefore, none of you possesses any power to alter or change the ways and methods prescribed by Him; the best thing for you is to entrust your affairs to Him and continue to obey Him.

The second thing means that all the methods and laws that Allah has enjoined, are based on knowledge and wisdom. Whatever He has made lawful, has been made lawful on the basis of knowledge and wisdom and whatever He has made unlawful also has been made unlawful on the basis of knowledge and wisdom. Nothing has been made lawful or unlawful at random. Therefore, those who believe in Allah should understand that it is Allah Who is All-Knowing and All-Wise and not they. And their well-being lies only in carrying out duly the commands given by Him.

وَإِذْ أَسَرَّ النَّبِيُّ إِلَىٰ بَعْضِ أَزْوَاجِهِ حَدِيثًا ۖ فَلَمَّا نَبَّأَتْ بِهِ وَأَظْهَرَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ عَرَّفَ
بَعْضَهُ وَأَعْرَضَ عَن بَعْضٍ ۚ فَلَمَّا نَبَّأَهَا بِهِ قَالَتْ مَنْ أَنبَأَكَ هَٰذَا ۖ قَالَ نَبَّأَنِيَ الْعَلِيمُ
الْخَبِيرُ 3

(66:3) The Prophet confided something to one of his wives and then she disclosed it (to another); so after Allah revealed to the Prophet (that she had disclosed that secret), he made a part of it known to her and passed over a part of it. And when he told her

about this (i.e., that she had disclosed the secret entrusted to her), she asked: "Who informed you of this?" He said: "I was told of it by He Who is All-Knowing, All-Aware."[6]

6. Different things have been reported in different traditions, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had told such and such a thing to one of his wives in confidence, which she disclosed to another wife. But for us, in the first place, it is not right to investigate it, for it is on the disclosure of a secret that Allah is taking a wife to task, it cannot therefore be right for us to inquire into it and try to uncover it. Secondly, in view of the object for which this verse was sent down, it is not at all important to know what the secret was. Had it any connection with the object of the discourse, Allah would Himself have mentioned it. The real object for which this incident has been related in the Quran is to warn the Prophet's (peace be upon him) wives and through them, the wives of the responsible people among the Muslims not to be careless in the matter of guarding secrets. Had it been only a private and personal affair, as is generally the case between the husband and the wife in the world, there was no need that Allah should have directly informed the Prophet (peace be upon him) of it through revelation, and then did not rest content only with giving the information, but should also have recorded it in the Book which the whole world has to recite forever. The reason why it was given such importance was that this wife was not the wife of an ordinary husband but of that illustrious husband, whom Allah had appointed to the office of the highest responsibility, who was locked in an incessant battle with the disbelievers, polytheists and hypocrites at all times and under whose leadership a fierce conflict was going on for establishing Islam in place of paganism. In the house of such an illustrious man there could be countless things which if not kept secret but disclosed before time, could harm the great mission which he was performing. Therefore, when a lady of the house happened to show this weakness for the first time in that she disclosed a secret that had been told her in confidence, to another (a member of her own household), the weakness was immediately pointed out to her, not secretly but openly in the Quran, so as to impart training in the guarding of secrets not only to the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) but also to the wives of all responsible people of the Muslim community. In the verse the question whether the secret disclosed pertained to a matter of any consequence or not, and whether its disclosure could cause any harm to the mission or not, has been altogether ignored. What has been disapproved and pointed out in particular is that the secret was disclosed to another. The higher the position of responsibility a person holds the more dangerous would be the leakage of secrets from his house. No matter whether a thing is of any consequence or not, once a person becomes careless in the matter of guarding secrets, he may reveal important things as well as trivial matters.

إِنْ تَتُوبَآ إِلَى اللّٰهِ فَقَدْ صَغَتْ قُلُوبُكُمَا ۚ وَإِنْ تَظٰهَرَا عَلَيْهِ فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ مَوْلٰهُ وَجِبْرِيلُ
وَصَالِحُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۚ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ ظَهِيرٌ 4

(66:4) If the two of you turn in repentance to Allah (that is better for you), for the hearts of both of you have swerved from the Straight Path.[7] But if you support one

another against the Prophet,[8] then surely Allah is his Protector; and after that Gabriel and all righteous believers and the angels are all his supporters.[9]

7. The word saghat in the original is from saghy which means to swerve and to become crooked. Shah Waliyullah and Shah Rafiuddin have translated this sentence thus: Crooked have become your hearts. Abdullah bin Masud, Abdullah bin Abbas, Sufyan Thauri and Dahhak have given this meaning of it: Your hearts have swerved from the right path. Imam Razi explains it thus: Your hearts have swerved from what is right, and the right implies the right of the Prophet (peace be upon him). And Allama Alusis commentary is although it is incumbent on you that you should approve what the Messenger (peace be upon him) approves and disapprove what he disapproves, yet in this matter your hearts have swerved from conformity with him and turned in opposition to him.

8. The word tazahur means to cooperate mutually in opposition to another person, or to be united against another person. Shah Waliyullah has translated this sentence, thus: If you mutually join together to cause distress to the Prophet. Shah Abdul Qadir's translation is: If you both overwhelm him. Ashraf Ali Thanwi's translation says: And if you both continued to work thus against the Prophet. And Shabbir Ahmad Uthmami has explained it thus: If you two continued to work and behave thus (against the Prophet, peace be upon him).

The verse is clearly addressed to two ladies and the context shows that these ladies are from among the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) for in (verses 1-5 of this Surah) the affairs concerning the Prophet's (peace be upon him) wives only have been discussed continuously, and this becomes obvious from the style of the Quran itself. As for the question who were the wives, and what was the matter which caused Allah's displeasure, the details are found in the Hadith. In Musnad Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi and Nasai, a detailed tradition of Abdullah bin Abbas has been related, which describes the incident with some variation in wording. Ibn Abbas says:

I had been thinking for long time to ask Umar as to who were the two of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) wives, who had joined each other against him, and about whom Allah sent down this verse: In tatuba.....; but I could not muster courage because of his awe-inspiring personality until he left for Hajj and I accompanied him. On our way back while helping him to perform ablutions for the Prayer at one place I had an opportunity to ask him this question. He replied: they were Aishah and Hafsah. Then he began to relate the background, saying: We, the people of Quraish, were used to keeping our women folk under strict control. Then, when we came to Al-Madinah, we found that the people here were under the control of their wives, and the women of Quraish too started learning the same thing from them. One day when I became angry with my wife, I was amazed to see that she argued with me. I felt badly about her conduct. She said: Why should you feel so angry at my behavior. By God, the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) answer him back face to face, (the word in the original is li yuraji nahu) and some one of them remains angrily apart from him for the whole day. (According to Bukhari: the Prophet, peace be upon him, remains angry and apart from her the whole day). Hearing this I came out of my house and went to Hafsah (who was Umar's daughter and the Prophet's, peace be upon him, wife). I asked her: Do you answer back to the Prophet (peace be upon him) face to face? She said: Yes. I asked: And does one of you remain apart from him for the whole day, (according to Bukhari: the Holy Prophet remains angry and apart from her for the entire day). She said:

Yes. I said: Wretched is the one from among you, who behaves thus. Has one of you become so fearless of this that Allah should afflict her with His wrath because of the wrath of His Prophet (peace be upon him) and she should perish, So, do not be rude to the Prophet (peace be upon him). Here also the words are: la turaji-i, nor demand of him anything, but demand of me whatever you desire. Do not be misled by this that your neighbor (i.e. Aishah) is more beautiful and dearer to the Prophet (peace be upon him). After this I left her house and went to the house of Umm Salamah, who was related to me, and talked to her on this subject. She said: Son of Khattab, you are a strange man: you have meddled in every matter until you are now interfering in the affair between Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) and his wives. She discouraged me. Then it so happened that an Ansari neighbor came to my house at night and he called out to me. We used to sit in the Prophet's (peace be upon him) assembly by turns and each used to pass on to the other the news of the day of his turn. It was the time when we were apprehending an attack by the Ghassanids any time. On his call when I came out of my house, he said that something of grave significance had happened. I said: Have the Ghassanids launched an attack? He said: No, but something even more serious. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has divorced his wives. I said: Doomed is Hafsah (the words in Bukhari are: Raghima anfu Hafsah wa Aishah). I already had a premonition of this.

We have left out what happened after this, how next morning Umar went before the Prophet (peace be upon him) and tried to appease his anger. We have described this incident by combining the traditions of Musnad Ahmad and Bukhari. In this the word murajat which Umar has used cannot be taken in its literal sense, but the context shows that the word has been used in the sense of answering back face to face and Umar's saying to his daughter: La turaji-i Rasul Allah clearly has the meaning: Do not be impudent to the Messenger of Allah.

Some people say that this is a wrong translation, and their objection is: Although it is correct to translate murajaat as answering back, or answering back face to face, yet it is not correct to translate it as being impudent. These objectors do not understand that if a person of a lower rank or position answers back or retorts to a person of a higher rank and position, or answers him back face to face this very thing is described as impudence. For example, if a father rebukes his son for something or feels angry at his behavior, and the son instead of keeping quiet or offering an excuse, answers back promptly, this could only be described as impudence. Then, when the matter is not between a father and a son, but between the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah and an individual of his community, only a foolish person could say that it was not impudence. Some other people regard this translation of ours as disrespectful, whereas it could be disrespectful in case we had had the boldness to use such words in respect of Hafsah from ourselves. We have only given the correct meaning of the words of Umar, and these words he had used while scolding and reproving his daughter for her error. Describing it as disrespectful would mean that either the father should treat his daughter with due respect and reverence even when scolding and rebuking her or else the translator should render his rebuke and reproof in a way as to make it sound respectful and reverent.

Here, what needs to be considered carefully is that if it was such an ordinary and trivial matter that when the Prophet (peace be upon him) said something to his wives they would retort to Him, why was it given so much importance that in the Quran Allah administered a

severe warning directly to the wives themselves? And why did Umar take it as such a grave matter that first he reproved his own daughter, then visited the house of the other wives and asked them to fear the wrath of Allah? And, above all, was the Prophet (peace be upon him) also so sensitive that he would take offense at minor things and become annoyed with his wives, and was he, God forbid, so irritable that once having been annoyed at such things he had severed his connections with all his wives and retired to his private apartment in seclusion? If a person considers these questions deeply, he will inevitably have to adopt one of the two views in the explanation of these verses. Either on account of his excessive concern for reverence for the wives he should not at all mind if a fault is imputed to Allah and His Messenger, or else he should admit in a straightforward way that at that time the attitude and behavior of these wives has actually become so objectionable that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was justified in becoming annoyed over it, and more than that, Allah Himself was justified that He should administer a severe warning to the wives on their unseemly behavior and attitude.

9. That is, you would only harm yourselves if you upheld and supported each other against the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), for none could succeed against him whose Protector is Allah and who had Gabriel and the angels and all the righteous believers on his side.

عَسٰى رَبُّهٗۤ اِنۡ طَلَّقَكُنَّ اَنۡ يُّبۡدِلَهٗۤ اَزۡوَاجًا خَيۡرًا مِّنۡكُنَّ مُسۡلِمٰتٍ مُّؤۡمِنٰتٍ قٰنِتٰتٍ تٰٓئِبٰتٍ عٰبِدٰتٍ سٰٓئِحٰتٍ ثَيِّبٰتٍ وَّاَبۡكَارًا 5

(66:5) Maybe if he were to divorce you, your Lord might grant him in exchange wives better than you[10] – those who truly submit to Allah,[11] are full of faith, obedient,[12] disposed to repentance,[13] and given to worship[14] and fasting[15] – both previously wedded ones and virgins.

10. This shows that the fault did not lie only with Aisha and Hafsah but the other wives also had some share in it. That is why, after them, all the other wives too, have been warned in this verse. No light has been thrown on the nature of the error in the Quran. However, some details are found in the Hadith, which we shall relate below.

In Bukhari, a tradition has been reported from Anas, saying that Umar said: The Prophet's (peace be upon him) wives because of their mutual envies and rivalries had utterly displeased him. At this I said to them: It may well be that if the Prophet (peace be upon him) divorced you, Allah would give him in your place better wives than you. Ibn Abi Hatim has, on the authority of Anas, reported the statement of Umar in these words: I was informed that a discord had been created between the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his wives. At this I went to each of them and asked them to refrain from vexing the Prophet (peace be upon him); otherwise Allah would give him in their stead better wives than themselves. So much so that when I went to the last of them (and according to a tradition of Bukhari, to Umm Salamah), she said to me: O Umar, is not the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself enough to admonish his wives? Then why should you come out to counsel them. This made me quiet, and after this Allah sent down this verse.

In Muslim, Abdullah bin Abbas has related that Umar said to him: When the Prophet (peace be upon him) separated himself from his wives, I went to the mosque and found the people worried and upset and playing with pebbles and saying to one another: The Prophet (peace be upon him) has divorced his wives. After this Umar related his visiting the apartments of Aishah and Hafsah and admonishing them. Then he said: I went before the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said: Why do you feel upset with regard to your wives? If you divorce them, Allah is with you, all the angels and Gabriel and Michael are with you, and I and Abu Bakr and all the believers are with you. I thank Allah that seldom has it so happened that I said a thing and did not have hope from Allah that He would testify to what I said. So, after this these verses of Surah At-Tahrim were sent down. Then I asked the Prophet (peace be upon him): Have you divorced your wives? He said: No. Thereupon I stood at the entrance of the Mosque and announced in a loud voice: The Prophet has not divorced his wives.

The traditions related in Bukhari from Anas and in Musnad Ahmad from Abdullah bin Abbas, Aishah and Abu Hurairah say that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had pledged to remain away from his wives for a month and he retired in seclusion to his apartment. When 29 days passed, Gabriel came and said: You have fulfilled your oath: a month has come to completion. Hafiz Badruddin Aini in Umdat al-Qari has related this on the authority of Aishah: The wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) had become divided into two parties. One party consisted of Aishah herself and Hafsah, Saudah and Safiyyah, and the other of Zainab, Umm Salamah and the rest of the wives. These traditions indicate to some extent the conditions that existed in the Prophet's (peace be upon him) domestic life at that time, which made it necessary that Allah Almighty should intervene and reform the attitude of the wives. Although the wives were the best ladies of society, yet they were human beings and were not free from human weaknesses. Sometimes, when it became difficult for them to lead a life of continuous poverty and hardship, they would become restive, impatient and would start pressing the Prophet (peace be upon him) for better maintenance. At this Allah sent down (verses 28-29 of Surah Al-Ahzab)and admonished them to the effect: If you seek the world and its adornments, our Messenger will give you of these and send you of in a good way. But if you seek Allah and His Messenger and the Hereafter, you should bear up against the hardships with patience, which you might have to face when living with the Messenger. (For details, see(E.N. 41 of Surah Al-Ahzab)and the introduction to it). Then on account of the feminine nature they sometimes happened to behave in a way, which though not unusual in everyday human life, did not go well with the unique dignity and great responsibilities of the house to which Allah had given them the honor to belong. So, when it was apprehended that those things might embitter the Prophet's domestic life and might even adversely affect the great mission that Allah had entrusted to him, He sent down this verse in the Quran, and reformed them so that the wives may realize the responsibilities of the position and rank which they had attained as the life-companions of the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah, and should not regard themselves as ordinary women and their household as a common household. The very first sentence of this verse was such as might have caused their hearts to shudder. There could be no severer warning for them than this: It may well be that if the Prophet (peace be upon him) divorces all of you, Allah will give him in your place better wives than yourselves. In the first place, even the thought of being divorced by the Prophet (peace be upon him) was unbearable for them: more than that, this would deprive them of the honor of being mothers of the believers, and the other women whom Allah would give as wives to the Prophet (peace be upon him) would be

better than them, After this it was no longer possible for the wives to behave in a way as would have occasioned a reproof from Allah. That is why we find only two places in the Quran where these selected and distinguished ladies have been administered a warning, in Surah Al-Ahzab and here in Surah At-Tahrim.

11. In the places where the words Muslim and momin have been used together, Muslim means the one who carries out Ddivine commands practically, and momin the one who believes sincerely and truly. Thus, the foremost quality of the best Muslim wives is that they should be believing in Allah and His Messenger and His religion (deen) sincerely and also practically following Allah's religion in their morals, habits, customs and conduct.

12. Obedient has two meanings and both are implied here.

(1) They are obedient to Allah and His Messenger.

(2) They are obedient to their husbands.

13. The word when used as attribute of a man does not imply the one who offers repentance only once but the one who continues to implore Allah again and again for the forgiveness of his mistakes, whose conscience is alive and active, who is always aware of his weaknesses and errors and is penitent for them. Such a person never feels proud, arrogant and conceited, but is gentle and clement by nature.

14. A worshiper can never be so heedless of God as a nonworshiper. This also helps much in making a woman a good wife. Being devout she adheres to the bounds set by Allah, recognizes and discharges the rights of others and keeps her faith fresh and alive at all times. Because of these qualities she can better be expected that she would not reject obedience to divine commands.

15. The word saihat in the original has been interpreted by several companions and large number of their successors to mean the same as saimat (those given to fasting). The reason why the word siyahat journeying has been used for fasting is that in the ancient times journeys were mostly undertaken by the monks and ascetics, who had no provisions and had to go without food till they got something to eat from somewhere. On that account fasting also is a kind of asceticism, for a faster has to remain hungry until the time of breaking the fast. Ibn Jarir in his commentary of (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 12) has cited a saying of Aishah, saying: The journeying (i.e. asceticism) of the Ummah is fasting. Here, making mention of fasting as an attribute of the pious wives does not mean that they observe the obligatory fasting month of Ramadan only but that they observe voluntary fasts also besides the obligatory fasts.

Addressing the wives Allah's saying: If the Messenger (peace be upon him) divorces all of you, Allah will give him in your place better wives who will have this quality does not mean that the wives were not virtuous, but it means; Give up your wrong conduct which is causing so much distress to the Prophet (peace be upon him); instead, pay attention to developing in yourselves these noble qualities to the highest degree.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا قُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَاَهْلِيْكُمْ نَارًا وَّقُوْدُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا

مَلٰٓئِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَّا يَعْصُوْنَ اللّٰهَ مَآ اَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُوْنَ مَا يُؤْمَرُوْنَ 6

(66:6) Believers, guard yourselves and your kindred against a Fire whose fuel is human beings and stones,[16] a Fire held in the charge of fierce and stern angels who never disobey what He has commanded them, and always do what they are bidden.[17]

16. This verse tells that a person's responsibility is not confined to making effort to save himself from the punishment of God but it is also his responsibility that he should so educate and also train to the best of his ability members of his family to become Allah's favorite servants, who have been entrusted to his care in the natural process of life; and if they might be following a path to Hell, he should try, as much as he can, to correct them. His concern should not only be that his children should lead a happy and prosperous life in the world but, more than that, he should be anxious to see that they do not become fuel of Hell in the Hereafter. According to a tradition reported in Bukhari by Abdullah bin Umar, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Each one of you is a herdsman and is accountable with regard to his herd. The ruler is a herdsman and is accountable with regard to his subjects. The man is a herdsman of his family and is accountable with regard to them. And the woman is a herdsman of her husband's house and his children and is accountable with regard to them.

"Whose fuel...stone' probably implies coal. Ibn Masud, Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir and Suddi say that this will be brimstone.

17. That is, they will enforce on every culprit precisely the same punishment which they will be commanded to enforce on him without making any alteration in it, or showing any pity for him.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا الْيَوْمَ ۭ اِنَّمَا تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ع 7

(66:7) (It will then be said): "Unbelievers, make no excuses today. You are being recompensed for nothing else but your deeds."[18]

18. The style of both these verses contains a severe warning for the Muslims. In the first verse the Muslims have been addressed and told that they should save themselves and their households from the dreadful punishment. In the second that this will be said to the disbelievers while subjecting them to punishment in Hell. This by itself gives the meaning that the Muslims in the world should avoid adopting that conduct and behavior in consequence of which they may have to meet with the fate as the disbelievers in the Hereafter.

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا تُوْبُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوْحًا ؕ عَسٰى رَبُّكُمْ اَنْ يُّكَفِّرَ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ
ۚ
وَيُدْخِلَكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۙ يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِي اللّٰهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ
ۚ
نُوْرُهُمْ يَسْعٰى بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَبِاَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَآ اَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُوْرَنَا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا

اِنَّكَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ 8

(66:8) Believers, turn to Allah in sincere repentance;[19] maybe your Lord will expunge your evil deeds and admit you to the Gardens beneath which rivers flow.[20] This will be on the Day when Allah will not disgrace the Prophet and those who have embraced faith and are with him;[21] their light will be running before them and on their right hands, and they will say: "Our Lord, perfect for us our light and forgive us. Surely You have power over everything."[22]

19. Literally, taubat an-nasuh-an may either mean that one should offer such true repentance as may have no tinge of pretense and hypocrisy in it, or that one should wish his own self well and repenting of sin should save oneself from the evil end, or that one should so adorn and improve his life after repentance as to become a cause of admonition for others, and seeing his example others also also reform themselves accordingly. These are the meanings of taubat an-nasuh which are indicated by its literal sense. As for its religious meaning, its explanation is found in the Hadith which Ibn Abi Hatim has related on the authority of Zirr bin Hubaish. He says: When I asked Ubayy bin Kaab the meaning of taubat an-nasuh, he said that he had asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) the same question, and he had replied: It implies that when you happen to commit an error, you should feel penitent for it, then should implore Allah for forgiveness remorsefully, and then should refrain from committing the same error again. This same meaning has been reported from Umar, Abdullah bin Masud and Abdullah bin Abbas also, and in a tradition Umar has defined taubat an-nasuh, thus: After offering repentance one should not even think of committing the sin, not to speak of repeating it. (Ibn Jarir). Ali once heard a desert Arab chanting the words of repentance and forgiveness quickly and mechanically and remarked: This is the repentance of the liars. The man asked: What is true repentance? Ali replied: It should be accompanied by six things

(1) You should feel penitent for the wrong you have done. (2) You should carry out the duties that you have ignored. (3) Restore the rights that you have usurped. (4) Ask forgiveness of him whom you have wronged. (5) Make a resolve not to repeat the sin again. (6) Consume yourself in obedience to Allah as you have so far been consuming it in wrongdoing, and cause it to taste the bitterness of obedience as you have so far been causing it to enjoy the sweet taste of disobedience and sin. (Al- Kashshaf).

In connection with repentance there are also some other points which should be well understood. (1) That repentance, in fact, is to show remorse for an act of disobedience only

because it is a disobedience of Allah. Otherwise to make a resolve to refrain from a sin because it is harmful for health, for instance, or it is likely to cause defamation or financial loss, is no repentance. (2) That man should offer repentance as soon as he realizes that he has committed disobedience of Allah and should compensate for it without delay in whatever form possible and should not defer it in any way. (3) That violating one's repentance again and making a jest of repentance and repeating the sin again and again of which one has repented, is a proof of the falsity of one's repentance. For the essence of repentance is penitence, and breaking his repentance repeatedly is a sign that it has not been motivated by penitence. (4) that if the person who has repented sincerely and resolved not to repeat the sin again, happens to repeat it once again because of human weakness, it will not revive his past sin. However, he should offer a fresh repentance for the latter sin and should resolve more firmly that he would not commit the sin in future. (5) That it is not necessary to renew one's repentance again every time one remembers the disobedience committed in the past, but if one's self derives pleasure from the remembrance of the past, sinful life, one should offer repentance again and again until the remembrance of the sins causes remorse instead of pleasure and enjoyment. For the person who has actually repented of disobedience because of fear of God cannot derive pleasure from the thought that he has been disobeying God. His deriving pleasure from it is a sign that fear of God has not taken root in his heart.

20. The words of the verse deserve deep consideration. It has not been said that if you repeat, you will surely be forgiven and will certainly be admitted to Paradise, but that: If you offer true repentance, it may well be that Allah will treat you kindly. It means that it is not incumbent upon Allah to accept the repentance of the sinner and to grant him Paradise instead of subjecting him to punishment but it will be His kindness and compassion that He may forgive well as reward His servant. One should have hope of His forgiveness, but one should not commit a sin with the confidence that he will achieve forgiveness by repentance.

21. That is, He will not allow the reward of their good deeds to go to waste. He will not let the disbelievers and the hypocrites taunt the believers that they had gained nothing in spite of their worship. Humiliation will be the fate of the rebels and the disobedient and not of the faithful and obedient.

22. When this verse is read along with (verses 12-13 of Surah Al-Hadid), it becomes clear that the running of the light before the believers will take place when they will be proceeding towards Paradise from the Plain of Resurrection. There it will be pitch dark all around and those who will have been condemned to Hell, will be groping about in it. The light will only be with the believers by which they will be traveling on their way. On this critical occasion, hearing the wailings and groaning of those groping in the dark the believers will be feeling terror stricken. In view of their past errors and shortcomings they will be afraid lest they too should be deprived of their light and made to grope about like those wretched people. Therefore, they will pray: O our Lord, forgive us our sins and let our light remain with us until we reach Paradise. Ibn Jarir has cited Abdullah bin Abbas as explaining the meaning of Rabbana-atimim lava nurana thus: They will implore Allah Almighty that their light be allowed to remain with them and kept from going out until they have crossed the bridge across Hell. The commentary given by Hasan Basri, Mujahid and Dahhak is also almost the same. Ibn Kathir has cited theirs this saying: When the believers

see that the hypocrites have been deprived of the light, they will pray to Allah for the perfection of their light. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 17 of Surah Al-Hadid).

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّبِيُّ جَٰهِدِ ٱلْكُفَّارَ وَٱلْمُنَٰفِقِينَ وَٱغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ وَمَأْوَىٰهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۖ وَبِئْسَ
ٱلْمَصِيرُ 9

(66:9) O Prophet, strive against the unbelievers and the hypocrites, and be severe with them.[23] Hell shall be their resort. What a grievous end!

23. For explanation see (E. N. 82 of Surah At-Taubah).

ضَرَبَ ٱللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ ٱمْرَأَتَ نُوحٍ وَٱمْرَأَتَ لُوطٍ ۖ كَانَتَا تَحْتَ عَبْدَيْنِ مِنْ
عِبَادِنَا صَٰلِحَيْنِ فَخَانَتَاهُمَا فَلَمْ يُغْنِيَا عَنْهُمَا مِنَ ٱللَّهِ شَيْـًٔا وَقِيلَ ٱدْخُلَا ٱلنَّارَ مَعَ
ٱلدَّٰخِلِينَ 10

(66:10) Allah has set forth for the unbelievers the parable of the wives of Noah and Lot. They were wedded to two of Our righteous servants, but each acted treacherously with her husband,[24] and their husbands could be of no avail to them against Allah. The two of them were told: "Enter the Fire with all the others who enter it."

24. This betrayal was not in the sense that they had committed an indecency but in the sense that they did not follow the Prophets Noah and Lot (peace be upon them) on the way of faith but sided with their enemies against them. Ibn Abbas say: No Prophet's wife has ever been wicked and immoral. The betrayal of these two women in fact was in the matter of faith and religion. They did not acknowledge the religion of the Prophets Noah and Lot (peace be upon them). The Prophet Noah's wife used to convey news about the believers to the wicked of her people, and the Prophet Lot's wife used to inform the immoral people about those who visited him in his house. (Ibn Jarir).

وَضَرَبَ ٱللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِّلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ ٱمْرَأَتَ فِرْعَوْنَ إِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ ٱبْنِ لِى عِندَكَ بَيْتًا فِى
ٱلْجَنَّةِ وَنَجِّنِى مِن فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهِۦ وَنَجِّنِى مِنَ ٱلْقَوْمِ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ 11

(66:11) Allah has set forth for the believers the parable of Pharaoh's wife. She prayed: "My Lord, build for me a house with You in Paradise and deliver me from Pharaoh and his misdeeds;[25] and deliver me from the iniquitous people."

25. From Pharaoh and his work: from the evil end that Pharaoh would meet in consequence of his evil deeds.

وَمَرْيَمَ ابْنَتَ عِمْرٰنَ الَّتِيْٓ اَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِنَا وَصَدَّقَتْ بِكَلِمٰتِ رَبِّهَا وَكُتُبِهٖ وَكَانَتْ مِنَ الْقٰنِتِيْنَ ع 12

(66:12) Allah has also set forth the parable of Mary, the daughter of Imran,[26] who guarded her chastity,[27] and into whom We breathed of Our Spirit,[28] and who testified to the words of her Lord and His Books. She was among the obedient.[29]

26. It may be that the name of Mary's father was Imran, or she may have been called daughter of Imran because she belonged to the family of Imran.

27. This is a refutation of the accusation by the Jews that the birth of Jesus was, God forbid, the result of a sin of his mother. Their same accusation has been called a monstrous calumny in (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 156). (For explanation, see (E.N. 190 of Surah An-Nisa).

28. That is, without her having any connection with a man, Allah breathed into her womb a Spirit from Himself. (For explanation, see (E.Ns 212, 213 of Surah An-Nisa) and (E.N. 89 of Surah Al-Anbiya).

29. For the explanation of the object for which these three kinds of women have been cited as an example, see the Introduction to the Surah.

67. Surah Al Mulk (The Kingdom)

Name

The Surah takes its name al-Mulk from the very first sentence.

Period of Revelation

It could not be known from any authentic tradition when this Surah was revealed, but the subject matter and the style indicate that it is one of the earliest Surahs to be revealed at Makkah.

Theme and Subject Matter

In this surah, on the one hand, the teachings of Islam have been introduced briefly, and, on the other, the people living in heedlessness have been aroused from their slumber in a most effective way. A characteristic of the earliest surahs of the Makkan period is that they present the entire teachings of Islam and the object of the Holy Prophet's mission, not in detail, but briefly, so that they are assimilated by the people easily. Moreover, they are particularly directed to make the people shun heedlessness, to make them think, and to arouse their dormant conscience.

In the first five verses man has been made to realize that the universe in which he lives is a most well organized and fortified Kingdom in which he cannot detect any fault, any weakness or flaw, how ever hard he may try to probe. This Kingdom has been brought from nothing into existence by Allah Almighty Himself and All the powers of controlling, administering and ruling it are also entirely in Allah's hand and His power is infinite. Besides, man has also been told that in this wise system he has not been created without a purpose, but he has been sent here for a test and in this test he can succeed only by his righteous deeds and conduct.

In vv. 6-11, dreadful consequences of disbelief which will appear in the Hereafter have been mentioned, and the people told that Allah, by sending His Prophets, has warned them of these consequences in this very world, as if to say "Now, if you do not believe in what the Prophets say and correct your attitude and behavior accordingly, in the Hereafter you will yourself have to admit that you really deserved the punishment that was being meted out to you."

In vv. 12-l4, the truth that has been impressed on the minds is that the Creator cannot be unaware of His creation, as if to say: "He is aware of each open and hidden secret of yours, even of the innermost ideas of your hearts. Hence, the right basis of morality is that man should avoid evil, fearing the accountability of the unseen God, whether in the world there is a power to take him to task for this or not, and whether in the world there is a possibility of being harmed by such a power or not. Those who adopt such a conduct in the world alone will deserve forgiveness and a rich reward in the Hereafter."

In vv. 15-23, making allusions, one after the other to those common truths of daily occurrence, which man does not regard as worthy of much attention, he has been invited to consider them seriously. It has been said: "Look: the earth on which you move about with

full satisfaction and peace of mind, and from which you obtain your sustenance has been subdued for you by Allah; otherwise this earth might at any time start shaking suddenly so as to cause your destruction, or a typhoon might occur, which may annihilate you completely. Look at the birds that fly above you; it is only Allah Who is sustaining them in the air. Look at your own means and resources: if Allah wills to inflict you with a scourge, none can save you from it; and if Allah wills to close the doors of sustenance on you, none can open them for you. These things are there to make you aware of the truth, but you see them like animals, which are unable to draw conclusions from observations, and you do not use your sight, hearing and minds which Allah has bestowed on you as men; that is why you do not see the right way."

In vv. 24-27, it has been said: "You have ultimately to appear before your God in any case. It is not for the Prophet to tell you the exact time and date of the event. His only duty is to warn you beforehand of its inevitable occurrence. Today you do not listen to him and demand that he should cause the event to occur and appear prematurely before you; but when it does occur, and you see it with your own eyes, you will then be astounded. Then, it will be said to you "This is the very thing you were calling to be hastened."

In vv. 28-29 replies have been given to what the disbelievers of Makkah said against the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) and his Companions. They cursed the Holy Prophet and prayed for his and the believers destruction. To this it has been said: "Whether those who call you to the right way are destroyed, or shown mercy by Allah, how will their fate change your destiny? You should look after yourselves and consider who would save you if you were overtaken by the scourge of God?You regard those who believe in God and put their trust in Him as the misguided. A time will come when it will become evident as to who was misguided in actual truth.

In conclusion, the people have been asked this question and left to ponder over it "If the water which has come out from the earth at some place in the desert or hill country of Arabia and upon which depends your whole life activity, should sink and vanish underground, who beside Allah can restore to you this life giving water?"

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

تَبٰرَكَ الَّذِىۡ بِيَدِهِ الۡمُلۡكُ ۖ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرُ ۙ 1

(67:1) Blessed is He[1] in Whose Hand is the dominion of the Universe,[2] and Who has power over everything;[3]

1. Tabaraka is a superlative from barkat. Barkat comprehends the meanings of exaltation and greatness, abundance and plentiful, permanence and multiplicity of virtues and excellences. When the superlative tabaraka is formed from it, it gives the meaning that Allah is infinitely noble and great. He is superior to everything beside Himself in His essence and attributes and works. His beneficence is infinite, and His excellences are permanent and everlasting. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 43 of Surah Al-Aaraf); (E.N. 1-4 of Surah Al-Muminoon); (E.Ns 1 and 19 of Surah Al-Furqan).

2. As the word al-Mulk has been used, it cannot be taken in any limited meaning. Inevitably, it would imply sovereignty over everything that exists in the universe. In Whose hand is the dominion does not mean that He has physical hands, but that He is possessor of all power and authority and no one else has any share in it.

3. That is, He can do whatever He wills, nothing can frustrate or hinder Him from doing what He pleases.

ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ ٱلْمَوْتَ وَٱلْحَيَوٰةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۚ وَهُوَ ٱلْعَزِيزُ ٱلْغَفُورُ ۙ 2

(67:2) Who created death and life that He might try you as to which of you is better in deed.[4] He is the Most Mighty, the Most Forgiving;[5]

4. That is, the object of giving life to man in the world and causing his death is to test him to see which of them is best in deeds. Allusion has been made in this brief sentence to a number of truths:

(1) That life and death are given by Allah, no one else can grant life nor cause death.

(2) That neither the life nor the death of a creation like man, which has been given the power to do both good and evil, is purposeless. The Creator has created him in the world for the test. Life is for him the period of the test and death means that the time allotted for the test has come to an end.

(3) That for the sake of this very test the Creator has given every man an opportunity for action, so that he may do good or evil in the world and practically show what kind of a man he is.

(4) That the Creator alone will decide who has done good or evil. It is not for us to propose a criterion for the good and the evil deeds but for Almighty Allah. Therefore, whoever desires to get through the test, will have to find out what is the criterion of a good deed in His sight. Every person will be recompensed according to his deeds, for if there was no reward or punishment the test would be meaningless.

5. This has two meanings and both are implied here:

(1) That He is Almighty, in spite of being dominant over all His creatures, He is Merciful and Forgiving for them, not tyrannous and cruel.

(2) That He has full power to punish the evildoers. No one can escape His punishment. But He is forgiving for him who feels penitent, refrains from evil and asks for His forgiveness.

ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَٰوَٰتٍ طِبَاقًا ۖ مَّا تَرَىٰ فِى خَلْقِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ مِن تَفَٰوُتٍ ۖ فَٱرْجِعِ ٱلْبَصَرَ ۙ

هَلْ تَرَىٰ مِن فُطُورٍ 3

(67:3) Who created the seven heavens one upon another.[6] You will see no incongruity in the Merciful One's creation.[7]Turn your vision again, can you see any flaw?[8]

6. For explanation, see(E.N. 34 of Surah Al-Baqarah); (E.N. 2 of Surah Ar-Raad); (E.N. 8 of Surah Al-Hijr); (E.N. 113 of Surah Al-Hajj); (E.N. 15 of Surah Al-Muminoon); (E.N. 5 of Surah As-Saaffat); (E.N. 90 of Surah Al-Mumin).

7. Literally, tafawut is disproportion: two things being out of accord and in disagreement with each other. So, the divine words mean: You will not see any indiscipline, any disorder and discordance anywhere in the universe, there is nothing disjointed and out of proportion in this world created by Allah: all its parts are well connected and in perfect harmony and coordination.

8. The word futoor means a crack, rift, fissure, or a thing's being split and broken. The verse means to say that the whole universe is so closely well-knit and everything in it, from a particle on the earth to the huge galaxies, so well connected and coherent that the continuity of the system of the universe seems to break nowhere, however hard one may try to probe and investigate. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 8 of Surah Qaf).

ثُمَّ ارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنْقَلِبْ إِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَّهُوَ حَسِيْرٌ 4

(67:4) Then turn your vision again, and then again; in the end your vision will come back to you, worn out and frustrated.

وَلَقَدْ زَيَّنَّا السَّمَآءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيْحَ وَجَعَلْنٰهَا رُجُوْمًا لِّلشَّيٰطِيْنِ وَاَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابَ السَّعِيْرِ 5

(67:5) We have adorned the lower heaven[9] with lamps,[10] and have made them a means to drive away the satans.[11] We have prepared for them the chastisement of the Blazing Fire.

9. The world's heaven: the heaven the stars and planets of which can be seen with the naked eye; the objects beyond that which can be seen only through telescopes are the distant heaven; and the heavens still farther away are those which have not yet been seen even with telescopes.

10. The word masabih in the original has been used as a common noun, and therefore, automatically gives the meaning of the lamp's being splendid and glorious. It means: We have not created this universe dark, dismal and desolate, but have beautified and decorated it with stars, the glory and grandeur of which at night strike man with amazement.

11. This does not mean that the stars themselves are pelted at the Satans, nor that the meteorites shoot out only to drive away the Satans, but it means that the countless meteorites which originate from the stars and wander in space at tremendous speeds and which also fall to the earth in a continuous shower prevent the Satans of the earth from

ascending to the heavens. Even if they try to ascend heavenward these meteorites drive them away. This thing has been mentioned here because the Arabs believed about the soothsayers, and this also was the claim made by the soothsayers themselves, that the Satans were under their control, or that they had a close contact with them, and through them they received news of the unseen, and thus, could foretell the destinies of the people. That is why at several places in the Quran, it has been stated that there is absolutely no possibility for the Satans ascending to the heavens and bringing news of the unseen. (For explanation, see (E.Ns 9-12 of Surah Al-Hijr), (E.Ns 6, 7 of Surah As- Saaffat).

As for the truth about meteorites, man's information in this regard is still without a scientific basis. However, the theory which seems best to account for all the facts known today and the information gathered from the examination of the meteorites fallen on the earth, is that meteorites originate from the disintegration of one or more planets and wander in space and sometimes fall to the earth under its gravitational pull. (See Encyclopedia Britannica, vol. XV, under Meteorites).

وَلِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ 6

(67:6) The chastisement of Hell awaits those who disbelieve in their Lord.[12] What a wretched destination!

12. That is, the fate of all those, whether men or Satans, who disbelieve in their Lord. (For the explanation of the meaning of disbelieving in the Lord (Rabb), see(E.N 161 of Surah Al-Baqarah); (E.N. 178 of Surah An-Nisa); (E.N. 39 of Surah Al-Kahf); (E.N. 3 of Surah Al-Momin).

إِذَا أُلْقُوا فِيهَا سَمِعُوا لَهَا شَهِيقًا وَهِيَ تَفُورُ ۙ 7

(67:7) When they will be cast into it, they will hear it roar as it boils,[13]

13. The word shahiq is used for producing a cry like the donkey's braying. The sentence may also mean that it could be the sound of Hell itself, as well as that it would be the sound coming from Hell, where the people already flung into it would be screaming and crying. This second meaning is supported by (Surah Houd, Ayat 106), where it has been said: Therein they will pant and hiss (because of thirst), and the first meaning is confirmed by (Surah Al- Furqan, Ayat 12), which says: When the Hell will see them from afar, they will hear the sounds of its raging and roaring. On this basis, the correct meaning is that it would be the noise made both by Hell and by the dwellers of Hell.

تَكَادُ تَمَيَّزُ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ ۖ كُلَّمَا أُلْقِيَ فِيهَا فَوْجٌ سَأَلَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَذِيرٌ 8

(67:8) as though it will burst with rage. Every time a multitude is cast into it, its keepers will ask them: "Did no warner come to you?"[14]

14. The real nature of this question will not be of a question that the keepers of Hell would like to ask them whether a warner from Allah had come to them or not, but the object would be to make them realize that no injustice had been done to them by casting them into Hell. They would try to make them confess that Allah had not kept them uninformed and unwarned. He had sent the Prophets to them. He had informed them of the truth and of the right way. He had warned them that if they followed a way other than the right way, it would lead them to Hell, in which they had been cast. But they had not listened to the Prophets. Hence, they rightly deserved the punishment which was being meted out to them at that time.

This thing has been pointed out over and over again in the Quran that the test for which Allah has sent man in the world is not being conducted by keeping man absolutely unaware and uninformed of the requirements of the test only to see whether he found the right way by himself or not; but Allah has made the most appropriate arrangements that could possibly be made of guiding him to the right way, and it is that He has raised the Prophets and sent down the Books. Now the test of man lies in this whether he accepts the Prophets and the Books brought by them and adopts the straight way, or turns away from them to follow his own desires, wishes and speculations. Thus, the Prophethood, in fact, is Allah's argument which He has established against man and his entire future life depends on its acceptance or rejection. No one, after the appointment of the Prophets, can present the excuse that he remained unaware of the truth, or that he has been caught and put to the hard test unawares, or that he is being punished while he was innocent. This theme has been presented in many different ways in the Quran; for instance, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 213, and E.N. 230); (Surah An-Nisa, Ayats 41-42, 165 and E.Ns 64 and 208); (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayats 130-131 and E.Ns 98-100); (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 15 and E.N. 17); (Surah Ta Ha, Ayat 134); (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayats 47, 59, 65 and E.Ns 66, 83); (Surah Fatir, Ayat 37); (Surah Al-Momin, Ayat 50 and E.N. 66).

قَالُوا بَلٰى قَدْ جَآءَنَا نَذِيْرٌ ۙ فَكَذَّبْنَا وَقُلْنَا مَا نَزَّلَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۖ اِنْ اَنْتُمْ اِلَّا فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ كَبِيْرٍ 9

(67:9) They will say: "Yes, a warner came to us, but we gave the lie to him and said: 'Allah has revealed nothing. You are surely in huge error.'[15]

15. That is, not only you but the people who have believed in and followed you also are misguided and lost in grave error.

وَقَالُوْا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ اَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِيْٓ اَصْحٰبِ السَّعِيْرِ 10

(67:10) They will say: 'If we had only listened and understood,[16] we would not be among the inmates of the Blazing Fire.'"

16. If we had listened or understood: If we had listened to the Prophets with attention as seekers after truth or used our intellect to understand what actually was the message they

were presenting before us. Here listening has been given priority over understanding, the reason being that the pre-requisite of obtaining guidance is to listen to what the Prophet teaches, or to read if it is in the written form, like a seeker after truth. To ponder over it in an attempt to understand the truth is secondary. Without the Prophet's guidance man cannot by himself reach the truth directly by using his intellect and common sense.

فَاعْتَرَفُوا بِذَنْۢبِهِمْ ۚ فَسُحْقًا لِّاَصْحٰبِ السَّعِيْرِ 11

(67:11) Thus will they confess their sins.[17] Damned are these inmates of the Blazing Fire.

17. The word dhanb (sin) has been used in the singular. It means that the real sin because of which they became worthy of Hell was to belie the Messengers and refuse to obey them. All other sins are its consequences.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَيْبِ لَهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَّاَجْرٌ كَبِيْرٌ 12

(67:12) Surely forgiveness and a mighty reward[18] await those who fear Allah without seeing Him.[19]

18. That is, there are two inevitable results of fearing God unseen.

(1) That whatever errors and sins one will have committed because of human weaknesses, will be forgiven provided these were not committed because of fearlessness of God.

(2) That whatever good acts a man performs on the basis of this belief, he will be rewarded richly for them.

19. This is the real basis of morality in religion. A person's refraining from an evil because it is an evil in his personal opinion, or because the world regards it as an evil, or because its commission is likely to bring loss in the world, or because it may entail a punishment by a worldly power, is a very flimsy basis for morality. A man's personal opinion may be wrong, he may regard a good thing as bad and a bad thing as good because of some philosophy of his own. In the first place, the worldly standards of good and evil have never been the same: they have been changing from time to time. No universal and eternal standard in the moral philosophies is found today, nor has it ever been found before. The fear of worldly loss also does not provide a firm foundation for morality. The person who avoids an evil because he fears the loss that may result from it for himself, cannot keep himself from committing it when there is no fear of incurring such a loss. Likewise, the danger of the punishment by a worldly power also is not something which can turn a person into a gentleman. Everybody knows that no worldly power is knower of both the seen and the unseen. Many crimes can be committed unseen and unobserved. Then, there are many possible devices by which one can escape the punishment of every worldly power; and the Laws made by a worldly power also do not cover all evils. Most evils are such as do not come within the purview of the mundane laws, whereas they are even worse than the evils which they regard as punishable. That is why, the Religion of Truth has raised the edifice of morality on the basis that one

should refrain from an evil in fear of the unseen God Who sees man under all conditions, from Whose grasp man cannot escape in any way, Who has given man an all-pervading, universal and everlasting criterion of good and evil. To forsake evil and adopt good only out of fear of Him is the real good which is commendable in religion. Apart from this, if a man refrains from committing evil for .any other reason or adopts acts which in view of their external form are regarded as good acts, his these moral acts will not be worth any merit and value in the Hereafter, for they are like a building which has been built on sand.

وَاَسِرُّوْا قَوْلَكُمْ اَوِ اجْهَرُوْا بِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ 13

(67:13) Whether you speak in secrecy or aloud, (it is all the same to Allah). He even knows the secrets that lie hidden in the breasts of people.[20]

20. The address is to all human beings, whether they are believers or unbelievers. For the believer, it contains the admonition that while living his life in the world he should always remember that not only his open and hidden deeds but even his secret intentions and innermost thoughts are not hidden from Allah. And for the unbeliever, the warning that he may do whatever he may please fearless of God, but nothing that he does can remain un-noticed and unseen by Him.

اَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ ؕ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيْفُ الْخَبِيْرُ ع 14

(67:14) Would He not know, He Who has created,[21] when He is All-Subtle,[22] All-Aware?

21. Another translation can be: Would He not know His own creatures? In the original text khalaqa has been used, which may mean: Who has created as well as whom He has created, In both cases the meaning remains the same. This is the argument for what has been said in the preceding sentence. That is, how is it possible that the Creator should be unaware of His creation? The creation may remain unaware of itself, but the Creator cannot be unaware of it. He has made every vein of your body, every fiber of your heart and brain. You breathe because He enables you to breathe, your limbs function because He enables them to function, How then can anything of yours remain hidden from Him.

22. The word Latif as used in the original means the One Who works in imperceptible ways as well as the One Who knows the hidden truths and realities.

هُوَ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ ذَلُوْلًا فَامْشُوْا فِيْ مَنَاكِبِهَا وَكُلُوْا مِنْ رِّزْقِهٖ ؕ وَاِلَيْهِ النُّشُوْرُ 15

(67:15) He it is Who made the earth subservient to you. So traverse in its tracks and partake of the sustenance[23] He has provided. To Him will you be resurrected.[24]

23. That is, this earth has not become subdued for you of its own accord, and the provisions also that you are eating have not become available here by themselves, but Allah has so arranged it by His wisdom and power that your life became possible here and this splendid globe became so peaceful that you are moving about on it with full peace of mind, and it has become such a vast table spread with food that it contains endless and limitless provisions for your sustenance. If you are not lost in heedlessness and look about yourself intelligently, you will find how much wisdom underlies in the making of this earth habitable for you and arranging in it immeasurable stores of provisions for you. (For explanation, see (E.Ns 73, 74, 81 of Surah An-Naml); (E.Ns 29, 32 of Surah YaSeen); (E.Ns 90, 91 of Al-Momin), (E.N. 7 of Surah Az-Zukhruf), (E.N. 7 of Surah Al-Jathiyah), (E.N. 18 of Surah Qaf).

24. That is, while you move about on the earth and eat of what Allah has provided for you here, you should not forget that ultimately you have to appear before God one day.

ءَاَمِنتُم مَّن فِى السَّمَآءِ اَن يَّخسِفَ بِكُمُ الاَرضَ فَاِذَا هِىَ تَمُورُ ۙ 16

(67:16) Do you feel secure that He Who is in the heaven[25] will not cause the earth to cave in with you, and then suddenly it will begin to rock violently?

25. This does not mean that Allah lives in the heavens, but it has been so said because man naturally looks up to the heaven whenever he wants to turn to Allah, raises his hands heavenward in prayer and implores Allah turning his eyes up to heaven whenever he finds himself helpless in an affliction. Then whenever a calamity befalls him suddenly, he says it has descended from heaven; whenever something unusual happens, he says it has come from heaven; and he calls the Books revealed by Allah as heavenly Books. Accordingly to a tradition in Abu Daud, a person came before the Prophet (peace be upon him) with a black slavegirl and said: It has become obligatory on me to set a slave free; can I set this slave-girl free? Prophet (peace be upon him) asked the slave-girl: Where is Allah? She pointed heavenward with her forger. The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked: Who am I? She first pointed towards him and then towards the heaven, by which she obviously meant to say: You have come from Allah. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Set her free; she is a believer. (A story closely resembling this has been narrated in Muwatta, Muslim and Nasai also). About Khawla bint Thaibah, Umar once said to the people: She is the lady whose complaint was heard above the seven heavens. (In (E.N. 2 of Surah al-Mujadalah), we have given full details concerning this). All this clearly shows that it is natural with man that whenever he thinks of God, his mind turns to the heaven above and not to the earth below. In view of this very thing the words man fis-samaa (He Who is in the heaven) have been used about Allah. There is no room here for any doubt that the Quran regards Allah Almighty as living in the heaven. In fact, there cannot be any basis for this doubt, for in the very beginning of this Surah Al-Mulk, it has been stated: He Who created seven heavens, one above the other, and in Surah Al-Baqarah it has been said: You will face Allah in whatever direction you turn your face. (verse 115).

اَم اَمِنتُم مَّن فِى السَّمَآءِ اَن يُّرسِلَ عَلَيكُم حَاصِبًا ؕ فَستَعلَمُونَ كَيفَ نَذِيرِ 17

(67:17) Do you feel secure that He Who is in the heaven will not let loose upon you a storm of stones?[26] Then shall you know what My warning is like![27]

26. The object is to impress this: Your very survival and well-being on the earth are at all times dependent upon Allah Almighty's grace and bounty: you are not strutting about on this earth at will by your own power: you are under obligation only to Allah's protection for each moment of your life that you are passing here, otherwise Allah at any moment may cause such an earthquake to occur as may make this very earth to become your grave instead of the cradle that it is, or may cause a windstorm to blow razing all your towns and settlements to the ground.

27. My warning: the warning that was being given through the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Quran to the disbelievers of Makkah to the effect: If you do not refrain from your disbelief and polytheism and do not accept the message of Tauhid being given to you, you will be overtaken by the scourge of God.

وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ 18

(67:18) Those who came before them also gave the lie (to the Messengers): then how awesome was My chastisement![28]

28. The allusion is to the communities who had belied the Messengers, who had come to them previously and consequently been afflicted with divine punishment.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الطَّيْرِ فَوْقَهُمْ صَافَّاتٍ وَيَقْبِضْنَ ۚ مَا يُمْسِكُهُنَّ إِلَّا الرَّحْمَٰنُ ۚ إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ بَصِيرٌ 19

(67:19) Have they not seen birds above them spreading and closing their wings, with none holding them except the Merciful One?[29] He oversees everything.[30]

29. That is, each bird that flies in the air, does so in the protection of the All-Merciful God. He it is Who has given to each bird the form and structure by which it became able to fly. He it is Who has taught each bird the method to fly. He it is Who has made the air obey the laws by which it became possible for the heavier than air bodies to fly in it, and He it is Who upholds every bird in the air, otherwise the moment Allah withdraws His protection from it, it drops to the ground.

30. That is, this is not confined only to birds, but whatever exists in the world, exists because of Allah's keeping and guardianship. He alone provides the means necessary for the existence of everything, and He alone keeps watch that everything created by Him is provided with the necessities of life.

اَمَّنۡ هٰذَا الَّذِیۡ هُوَ جُنۡدٌ لَّکُمۡ یَنۡصُرُکُمۡ مِّنۡ دُوۡنِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ ؕ اِنِ الۡکٰفِرُوۡنَ اِلَّا فِیۡ غُرُوۡرٍ ۚ

20

(67:20) Which is your army that will come to your aid against the Merciful Lord?[31] But the unbelievers are in utter delusion.

31. Another translation can be: Who is there beside the Merciful, who comes to your rescue as your army? The translation that we have adopted in the text above has relevance to the following sentence, and this second to the preceding discourse.

اَمَّنۡ هٰذَا الَّذِیۡ یَرۡزُقُکُمۡ اِنۡ اَمۡسَکَ رِزۡقَهٗ ۚ بَلۡ لَّجُّوۡا فِیۡ عُتُوٍّ وَّنُفُوۡرٍ 21

(67:21) Who shall provide for you if He withholds His sustenance? Nay; but they persist in rebellion and aversion.

اَفَمَنۡ یَّمۡشِیۡ مُکِبًّا عَلٰی وَجۡهِهٖۤ اَهۡدٰۤی اَمَّنۡ یَّمۡشِیۡ سَوِیًّا عَلٰی صِرَاطٍ مُّسۡتَقِیۡمٍ 22

(67:22) Who is better guided: he who walks grovelling on his face,[32] or he who walks upright on a Straight Path?

32. Walking fallen on his face: walking with face turned down like the cattle on the same track on which someone put him.

قُلۡ هُوَ الَّذِیۡۤ اَنۡشَاَکُمۡ وَجَعَلَ لَکُمُ السَّمۡعَ وَالۡاَبۡصَارَ وَالۡاَفۡـِٕدَةَ ؕ قَلِیۡلًا مَّا تَشۡکُرُوۡنَ 23

(67:23) Say: “He it is Who has brought you into being, and has given you hearing and sight, and has given you hearts to think and understand. How seldom do you give thanks!”[33]

33. That is, Allah had made you men, not cattle. You were not meant to follow blindly whatever error and deviation you found prevailing in the world, without considering for a moment whether the way you had adopted was right or wrong. You have not been given these ears that you may refuse to listen to the one who tries to distinguish the right from the wrong for you, and may persist in whatever false notions you already had in your mind. You have not been given these eyes that you may follow others like the blind and may not bother to see whether the signs scattered around you in the world testified to the unity of God, which the Messenger (peace be upon him) of God is preaching, or whether the system of the universe is Godless, or is being run by many gods simultaneously. Likewise, you have also not been given this knowledge and intelligence that you may give up thinking and

understanding to others and may adopt every crooked way that was enforced by somebody in the world, and may not use your own intellect to see whether it was right or wrong. Allah has blessed you with knowledge and intelligence, sight and hearing, so that you may recognize the truth, but you are being ungrateful to Him in that you are employing these faculties for every other object than the one for which these had been granted. (For further explanation, see (E.Ns 72, 73 of Surah An- Naml); (E.Ns 75, 76 of Surah Al-Mominoon); (E.Ns 17, 18 of Surah As-Sajdah); (E.N. 31 of Surah Al-Ahqaf).

قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِیْ ذَرَاَكُمْ فِی الْاَرْضِ وَاِلَیْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ 24

(67:24) Say: "Allah it is Who multiplied you in the earth and to Him you will be mustered."[34]

34. That is, after being resurrected from death, you will be gathered together from every corner of the earth and presented before Allah.

وَیَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰی هٰذَا الْوَعْدُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِیْنَ 25

(67:25) They say: "If you are truthful, tell us when will this promise (of the Hereafter) be fulfilled?"[35]

35. They did not ask this question in order to know the time and date of Resurrection so that if they were told the year, the month, the day and time of its occurrence, they would accept it. But, in fact, they thought that Resurrection was impossible, and its occurrence remote from reason, and they asked this question in order to have an excuse for denying it. They meant to say: When will this strange story of Resurrection and gathering together, that you are telling us, materialize? What for has it been put off? Why don't you make it appear forthwith so that we are assured of it? In this connection, one should understand that one can be certain of Resurrection only by rational arguments, and these have been elaborated at many places in the Quran. As for the date of its occurrence only an ignorant person could raise such a question about it, for even if it is told, it does not make any difference. The unbeliever would say: Well, when it does occur on the date you tell, I shall then believe in it; how can I believe today that it will actually occur on that very day? (For further explanation, see (E.N. 63 of Surah Luqman); (E.N. 116 of Surah Al-Ahzab); (E.Ns 5, 48 of Surah Saba) (E.N. 45 of YaSeen).

قُلْ اِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ۫ وَاِنَّمَاۤ اَنَا نَذِیْرٌ مُّبِیْنٌ 26

(67:26) Say: "Allah alone knows about that; and I am no more than a plain warner."[36]

36. That is, this I know that it will certainly come, and knowing this much only is enough for warning the people before its actual occurrence. As for the question when it will actually come, the knowledge of it is with Allah, not with me, and there is no need of this knowledge for administering the warning. This can be better understood by an example. As to the exact time when a person will die, it is only known to Allah; however, all know that everyone has

to die one day. Our this knowledge is enough that we may warn a heedless friend of ours that he should look after himself and his interests before death. For this warning it is not necessary to know the exact day on which he will die.

فَلَمَّا رَاَوْهُ زُلْفَةً سِيْٓـَٔتْ وُجُوْهُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَقِيْلَ هٰذَا الَّذِيْ كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تَدَّعُوْنَ 27

(67:27) When they will see it near at hand, the faces of all those who had denied it will be distraught,[37] and then they will be told: "This is the doom which you used to ask for."

37. That is, they will be in the same agony as is suffered by the criminal who is being taken to the gallows.

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ اَهْلَكَنِيَ اللّٰهُ وَمَنْ مَّعِيَ اَوْ رَحِمَنَا ۙ فَمَنْ يُّجِيْرُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ مِنْ عَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ 28

(67:28) Say to them: "Did you ever consider: whether Allah destroys me and those that are with me, or shows mercy to us, who can protect the unbelievers from a grievous chastisement?"[38]

38. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) started his mission in Makkah and the members of the different clans of Quraish began to embrace Islam, the people of every house started cursing him and his companions. They started practicing magic and charms on him to cause his death, even devising plots to kill him. At this, it was said: Say to them: what will it profit you whether we perish or we live by the grace of God? You should worry for yourselves as to how you will save yourselves from the punishment of Allah?

قُلْ هُوَ الرَّحْمٰنُ اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ وَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا ۚ فَسَتَعْلَمُوْنَ مَنْ هُوَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ 29

(67:29) Say to them: "He is Merciful, and it is in Him that we believe, and it is in Him that we put all our trust.[39] Soon will you know who is in manifest error."

39. That is, we have believed in God, and you are denying Him; we have put our trust in Him, and you have put your trust in yourself, your own resources and false deities besides Allah; therefore, only we deserve to be shown mercy by Allah, not you.

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ اَصْبَحَ مَآؤُكُمْ غَوْرًا فَمَنْ يَّاْتِيْكُمْ بِمَآءٍ مَّعِيْنٍ ع 30

(67:30) Say to them: "Did you even consider: if all the water that you have (in the wells) were to sink down into the depths of the earth, who will produce for you clear, flowing water?"[40]

40. That is, does anyone else another beside Allah have the power to restore these springs of water to you? If none else has this power, and you know well that none has it, then who is worthy of worship: God or your false deities, who do not have the power to restore them? Then ask your own selves as to who is misled and misguided, those who believe in One God or those who believe in many gods.

68. Surah Al Qalam (The Pen)

Name

This Surah is called Nun as well as Al-Qalam, the words with which it begins.

Period of Revelation

This too is one of the earliest surahs to be revealed at Makkah, but its subject matter shows that it was sent down at the time when opposition to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) had grown very harsh and tyrannical.

Theme and Subject Matter

It consists of three themes: Replies to the opponents objections, administration of warning and admonition to them, and exhortation to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) to patience and constancy.

At the outset, the Holy Prophet has been addressed, to the effect: "The disbelievers call you a madman whereas the Book that you are presenting and the sublime conduct that you practice, are by themselves sufficient to refute their false accusations. Soon they will see as to who was mad and who was sane; therefore, do not at all yield to the din of opposition being kicked up against you, for all this is actually meant to cow you and make you resort to a compromise with them."

Then, in order to enlighten the common people the character of a prominent man from among the opponents, whom the people of Makkah fully well recognized, has been presented, without naming him: At that time, the Holy Prophet's pure and sublime conduct was before them, and every discerning eye could also see what sort of character and morals were possessed by the chiefs of Makkah, who were leading the opposition against him.

Then, in vv. 17-33, the parable of the owners of a garden has been presented, who after having been blessed by Allah turned ungrateful to Him, and did not heed the admonition of the best man among them when it was given them. Consequently, they were deprived of the blessing and they realized this, when all they had lay devastated. With this parable the people of Makkah have been warned to the effect: "With the appointment of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) to Prophethood, you, O people of Makkah, too, have been put to a test similar to the one to which the owners of the garden had been put. If you do not listen to him, you too will be afflicted with a punishment in the world, and the punishment of the Hereafter is far greater."

Then, in vv. 34-47 continuously, the disbelievers have been admonished, in which the address sometimes turns to them directly and sometimes they are warned through the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace). A summary of what has been said in this regard, is this: Well being in the Hereafter inevitably belongs to those who spend their lives in the world in full consciousness of God. It is utterly against reason that the obedient servants should meet in the Hereafter the same fate as the guilty. There is absolutely no basis of the disbelievers misunderstanding that God will treat them in the manner they choose for themselves, whereas they have no guarantee for this. Those who are being called upon to bow before

God in the world and they refuse to do so, would be unable to prostrate themselves on the Day of Resurrection even if they wanted to do so, and thus would stand disgraced and condemned. Having denied the Qur'an they cannot escape Divine punishment. The rein they are being given, has deluded them. They think that since they are not being punished in spite of their denial, they must be on the right path, whereas they are following the path of ruin. They have no reasonable ground for opposing the Messenger, for he is a preacher without any vested interest: he is not asking any reward of them for himself, and they cannot either make the claim that they know with certainty that he is not a true Messenger, nor that what he says is false.

In conclusion, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) has been exhorted to the effect: "Bear with patience the hardships that you may have to face in the way of preaching the Faith till Allah's judgment arrives, and avoid the impatience which caused suffering and affliction to the Prophet Jonah (peace be on him)."

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

نٓ ۚ وَالۡقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسۡطُرُوۡنَ ۙ 1

(68:1) Nun. By the pen and what the scribes write.[1]

1. The great commentator Mujahid says that by pen here is meant the pen with which the Quran was being written down. From this it automatically follows that that which was being written implies the Quran itself.

مَآ اَنۡتَ بِنِعۡمَةِ رَبِّكَ بِمَجۡنُوۡنٍ ۚ 2

(68:2) By your Lord's Grace, you are not afflicted with madness,[2]

2. That is, for which an oath has been sworn by the pen and by the Book. It means that this Quran which is being inscribed by the hands of the writers of revelation, is by itself enough to refute the slander of the disbelievers who say that the Prophet (peace be upon him) is, God forbid, a madman, Before his claim to the Prophethood, the people of Makkah looked upon him as the best of their men and trusted his honesty, intelligence and sagacity. But when he started reciting the Quran before them, they began to call him a madman. This meant that the Quran itself in their sight was the cause because of which they accused him of madness; Therefore, it was said: The Quran by itself is a sufficient proof for the refutation of this slander. The presentation of this highly eloquent revelation which consists of sublime themes, is an argument which proves that Muhammad (peace be upon him) has been especially favored by Allah, and nor an argument which might be used to prove that he has, God forbid, gone mad. Here, one should remember that although the address apparently is directed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), yet the real object is to nail the calumny of the disbelievers. Therefore, no one should have the doubt that this verse was sent down only to assure the Prophet (peace be upon him) that he was not mad. Obviously, the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself had no such doubt for removing which he might have stood in need

of such an assurance. The object was to tell the disbelievers, as if to say: The Quran because of which you are calling the one presenting it a madman, is by itself an argument that your accusation is false. (For further explanation see (E.N. 22 of Surah At-Toor).

وَإِنَّ لَكَ لَأَجْرًا غَيْرَ مَمْنُونٍ ۚ 3

(68:3) and surely yours shall be a never-ending reward,[3]

3. That is, you will get an unlimited and continuous reward, for although you have to hear discouraging and disturbing things in response to the efforts that you are making for the instruction and guidance of the people, yet you are steadfastly performing your mission of calling them to the right way.

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ 4

(68:4) and you are certainly on the most exalted standard of moral excellence.[4]

4. Here, this sentence gives two meanings:

(1) That you stand exalted to a high and noble character; that is why you are enduring all these hardships in your mission of guiding the people to the right way, otherwise a man of weak character could not have done so.

(2) That besides the Quran, your high and noble character is also a clear proof that the accusation of madness that the disbelievers bring against you is absolutely false, for high morals and madness cannot co-exist in one and the same person.

A madman is he whose balance of mind is upset, who has lost his temperamental equilibrium. Contrary to this, the high morals of a person testify that he is a right-minded and sound-natured person, who possesses perfect temperamental equilibrium. The people of Makkah were not unaware of the morals and character possessed by the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah. Therefore, it was enough just to make a reference to them so that every reasonable man of Makkah was made to think how shameless were those people who were calling a man of such sublime morals and character a madman. Their absurd conduct was not at all harmful for the Prophet (peace be upon him) but for themselves, for maddened in their craze for opposition they were saying such a thing about him which could not be regarded as credible by any man of understanding. The same is also the case with those men of knowledge and scholarship, who in the modern time are accusing the prophet (peace be upon him) of having fits of madness and epilepsy. The Quran is available everywhere in the world and the Holy Prophet's life also exists in the written form in entire detail. Every person can see it for himself what a foolish and meaningless thing is being uttered in their blind enmity by those who regard this man, who brought this unique and matchless Book and who possessed such sublime morals and character, as a mentally deranged person.

The best description of the Holy Prophet's character has been given by Aishah in her statement: Kana khuluqu-hul- Quran: the Quran was his character. Imam Ahmad, Muslim,

Abu Daud. Nasai, Ibn Majah, Darimi and Ibn Jarir have cited, with a little variation in wording, this saying with several chains of transmitters. This means that the Prophet had not merely presented the teaching of the Quran before the world but also given its practical demonstration by his personal example. Whatever was enjoined in the Quran was acted upon practically by himself in the first instance. Whatever was forbidden in it was shunned and avoided by himself most of all. His own self was characterized most of all by the moral qualities which were declared as sublime by it, and his own self was most free from those qualities which were declared as abhorrent and reprehensible by it. In another tradition Aishah has stated: The Prophet (peace be upon him) never hit a servant, never raised his hand on a woman, never used his hand to kill a person outside the battlefield, never avenged himself on anyone for an injury caused unless someone violated a sanctity enjoined by Allah and he avenged it for the sake of Allah. His practice was that whenever he had to choose between two things, he would choose the easier one unless it was a sin, and if it was a sin he would keep away from it most of all (Musnad Ahmad). Anas says: I served the Prophet (peace be upon him) for ten years. He never did so much as express even a slight disgust over what I did or said. He never asked why I had done what I had done, and never inquired why I had not done what I had not done. (Bukhari, Muslim).

فَسَتُبۡصِرُ وَيُبۡصِرُوۡنَ ۙ 5

(68:5) So you will soon see, and they too will see,

بِاَيِّيۡكُمُ الۡمَفۡتُوۡنُ 6

(68:6) which of you is afflicted with madness.

اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَنۡ ضَلَّ عَنۡ سَبِيۡلِهٖ ۖ وَهُوَ اَعۡلَمُ بِالۡمُهۡتَدِيۡنَ 7

(68:7) Surely your Lord knows well those who have strayed from His Way just as He knows well those who are on the Right Way.

فَلَا تُطِعِ الۡمُكَذِّبِيۡنَ 8

(68:8) Do not, then, yield to those who reject the Truth, decrying it as false;

وَدُّوۡا لَوۡ تُدۡهِنُ فَيُدۡهِنُوۡنَ 9

(68:9) they would wish you to be pliant so that they too may be pliant.[5]

5. That is, if you slackened a little in your propagation of Islam, they also would slacken in their opposition to you. Or, if you became inclined to effect some changes in your faith to suit these people, they too would effect a compromise with you.

وَلَا تُطِعۡ كُلَّ حَلَّافٖ مَّهِينٍ ۝10

(68:10) And do not yield to any contemptible swearer,[6]

6. The word mahin is used for a contemptible, degraded and mean person. This is indeed a necessary quality of a person who swears many oaths. He swears an oath for every minor thing because he himself has the feeling that the people take him for a liar and would not believe him until he swore an oath. For this reason he is not only degraded in his own eyes but commands no respect in society either.

هَمَّازٖ مَّشَّآءِۭ بِنَمِيمٖ ۝11

(68:11) the fault-finder who goes around slandering,

مَّنَّاعٖ لِّلۡخَيۡرِ مُعۡتَدٍ أَثِيمٍ ۝12

(68:12) the hinderer of good,[7] the transgressor, the sinful;[8]

7. Khayr in Arabic is used both for wealth and for good. If it is taken in the meaning of wealth, the meaning would be that he is miserly and stingy; he would not even spend a farthing on anyone. And if khayr is taken in the meaning of goodness and virtue, it would mean that he creates a hindrance in every good work as well as that he is very active in hindering the people from accepting Islam.

8. The word utul is used for a person who is stout and strong and greedy in eating and drinking and is also illmannered, quarrelsome and cruel at the same time.

عُتُلِّۭ بَعۡدَ ذَٰلِكَ زَنِيمٍ ۝13

(68:13) the coarse-grained, and above all mean and ignoble;[9]

9. The word zanim is used to describe a person of illegitimate birth, who does not, in fact, belong to a family but has joined it. Saeed bin Jubair and Shabi say that this word is used for a person who is notorious among the people for his evildoing.

The views of the commentators with regard to the person who has been described in these verses are different. Some one says it was Walid bin Mughirah; another one says it was Aswad bin Abdi Yaghuth, and still another has applied this description to Akhnas bin Shurayq, and some other people have pointed to some other persons. But the Quran has only described his attributes without naming him. This shows that in Makkah the man concerned was so notorious for his such qualities that there was no need to name him definitely. Hearing his description every person could understand who was being referred to.

أَنْ كَانَ ذَا مَالٍ وَّبَنِيْنَ ؕ 14

(68:14) (who so acts) simply because he has wealth and sons,[10]

10. This sentence may be connected with the preceding theme as well as with the following sentence. In the first case, it would mean: Do not yield to the influence of such a person just because he has plenty of wealth and children. In the second: He has become proud because he possesses abundance of wealth and children; so when Our revelations are recited to him, he says: These are tales of ancient times.

اِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِ اٰيٰتُنَا قَالَ اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ 15

(68:15) and whenever Our verses are rehearsed to him, he says: "These are fairy- tales of times gone by."

سَنَسِمُهٗ عَلَى الْخُرْطُوْمِ 16

(68:16) Soon shall We brand him on his snout.[11]

11. Because he thought he was a man of high prestige, his nose has been called a snout, and branding him on the snout means disgracing him. That is, We shall so disgrace him in the world and in the Hereafter that his mark of disgrace will become indelible.

اِنَّا بَلَوْنٰهُمْ كَمَا بَلَوْنَآ اَصْحٰبَ الْجَنَّةِ ۚ اِذْ اَقْسَمُوْا لَيَصْرِمُنَّهَا مُصْبِحِيْنَ ۙ 17

(68:17) We have put them [i.e., the Makkans] to test even as We put to test the owners of the orchard[12] when they vowed that they would gather the fruit of their orchard in the morning,

12. Here, one should also keep (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayat 32-44)in view, in which the parable of the owners of two gardens has been cited for teaching a lesson.

وَلَا يَسْتَثْنُوْنَ 18

(68:18) without making any allowance (for the will of Allah).[13]

13. That is, they were so sure and confident of their power and authority that they swore they would surely pluck the fruit of their garden next morning, without feeling any need to say: We shall do so if Allah so willed.

فَطَافَ عَلَيْهَا طَآئِفٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ وَهُمْ نَآئِمُوْنَ 19

(68:19) Thereupon a calamity from your Lord passed over it while they were asleep,

فَاَصۡبَحَتۡ كَالصَّرِيۡمِ ۙ 20

(68:20) and so by morning the orchard lay as though it had been fully harvested.

فَتَنَادَوۡا مُصۡبِحِيۡنَ ۙ 21

(68:21) At daybreak they called out to one another:

اَنِ اغۡدُوۡا عَلٰى حَرۡثِكُمۡ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ صٰرِمِيۡنَ 22

(68:22) "Hurry to your orchard[14] if you would gather its fruit."

14. The word tilth probably has been used because in the garden there were also fields of crops in between the trees.

فَانۡطَلَقُوۡا وَهُمۡ يَتَخَافَتُوۡنَ ۙ 23

(68:23) So off they went, whispering to one another:

اَنۡ لَّا يَدۡخُلَنَّهَا الۡيَوۡمَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ مِّسۡكِيۡنٌ ۙ 24

(68:24) "No destitute person shall enter it today."

وَّغَدَوۡا عَلٰى حَرۡدٍ قٰدِرِيۡنَ 25

(68:25) They went forth early, believing that they had the power (to gather the fruit).[15]

15. The word hurd in Arabic is used for hindering and withholding for a purpose and resolution and for making haste. Hence, the composite rendering adopted by us.

فَلَمَّا رَاَوۡهَا قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّا لَضَآلُّوۡنَ ۙ 26

(68:26) But as soon as they beheld the orchard, (they cried out): "We have certainly lost the way;

بَلۡ نَحۡنُ مَحۡرُوۡمُوۡنَ 27

(68:27) rather, we are utterly ruined."[16]

16. That is, on seeing the garden they didn't believe it was their own garden, and they said: Perhaps we have lost our way and come to another place. But, when they considered it seriously and found it was their own garden, they cried out: Alas we are deprived.

قَالَ اَوۡسَطُهُمۡ اَلَمۡ اَقُلۡ لَّكُمۡ لَوۡلَا تُسَبِّحُوۡنَ 28

(68:28) The best among them said: "Did I not say to you: why do you not give glory to (your Lord)?"[17]

17. This means that when they were saying on oath: We shall surely pluck the fruit of our garden tomorrow, this person had warned them at that time, saying: Have you forgotten God? Why don't you say: If Allah so wills? But they did not listen to him. Then, while they were making up their mind not to give away anything to the needy, he again advised them to remember Allah and to desist from their evil intention, but they persisted in what they had resolved.

قَالُوۡا سُبۡحٰنَ رَبِّنَاۤ اِنَّا كُنَّا ظٰلِمِيۡنَ 29

(68:29) They cried out: "Glory be to our Lord! Certainly we were sinners."

فَاَقۡبَلَ بَعۡضُهُمۡ عَلٰى بَعۡضٍ يَّتَلَاوَمُوۡنَ 30

(68:30) Then they began to reproach one another.[18]

18. That is, each reproached and blamed the other that because of his wrong counsel they had forgotten God and resolved upon an evil course. 3

قَالُوۡا يٰوَيۡلَنَاۤ اِنَّا كُنَّا طٰغِيۡنَ 31

(68:31) They said: "Woe to us! We had indeed transgressed.

عَسٰى رَبُّنَاۤ اَنۡ يُّبۡدِلَنَا خَيۡرًا مِّنۡهَاۤ اِنَّاۤ اِلٰى رَبِّنَا رٰغِبُوۡنَ 32

(68:32) Maybe our Lord will give us a better orchard in its place; to our Lord do we penitently turn."

كَذٰلِكَ الۡعَذَابُ ؕ وَلَعَذَابُ الۡاٰخِرَةِ اَكۡبَرُ ۘ لَوۡ كَانُوۡا يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ع 33

(68:33) Such is the chastisement; and the chastisement of the Hereafter is assuredly even greater, if only they knew.

إِنَّ لِلۡمُتَّقِيۡنَ عِنۡدَ رَبِّهِمۡ جَنّٰتِ النَّعِيۡمِ 34

(68:34) Surely[19] the God-fearing shall have Gardens of bliss with their Lord.

19. This is, a rejoinder to the chiefs of Makkah, who argued with the Muslims, thus: The blessings that we are enjoying in the world are a sign that we are favorites of Allah, and the miserable lives that you are living are a proof that you are under the wrath of Allah. Therefore, even if there was any life after death, as you say, we shall have good time there too, and the torment would be imposed on you, not on us.

اَفَنَجۡعَلُ الۡمُسۡلِمِيۡنَ كَالۡمُجۡرِمِيۡنَ ؕ 35

(68:35) What! Shall We treat those who have submitted (to Our command) like those who have acted as criminals?

مَا لَكُمۡ ۟ كَيۡفَ تَحۡكُمُوۡنَ ۚ 36

(68:36) What is the matter with you? How ill do you judge![20]

20. That is, it is against reason that God should not differentiate between the obedient servant and the guilty. How do you regard this as reasonable that the Creator of the universe should, like a blind ruler, not judge which people in the world obeyed His commands and refrained from evildoing, and which people committed every sin and crime and perpetrated every cruelty fearless of His punishment? You have seen the adversity of the believers and your own prosperity, but you have not appreciated the distinction between their good morals and your own evildoing, and have given your judgment without the thought that these obedient people will be treated like culprits by God and the guilty like you will be granted Paradise.

اَمۡ لَكُمۡ كِتٰبٌ فِيۡهِ تَدۡرُسُوۡنَ ۙ 37

(68:37) Or do you have a Book[21] wherein you read

21. That is, the Book sent down by Allah.

اِنَّ لَكُمۡ فِيۡهِ لَمَا تَخَيَّرُوۡنَ ۚ 38

(68:38) that (in the Hereafter) you shall have all that you choose for yourselves?

اَمۡ لَكُمۡ اَيۡمَانٌ عَلَيۡنَا بَالِغَةٌ اِلٰى يَوۡمِ الۡقِيٰمَةِ ۙ اِنَّ لَكُمۡ لَمَا تَحۡكُمُوۡنَ ۚ 39

(68:39) Or have We sworn a covenant with you which We are bound to keep till the Day of Resurrection, (a covenant requiring that whatever you ordain for yourselves shall be yours)?

سَلْهُمْ أَيُّهُم بِذَٰلِكَ زَعِيمٌ ۚ 40

(68:40) Ask them: "Which of them can guarantee that?[22]

22. Zaeem in Arabic is used for a person who stands a surety on behalf of another, or is a spokesman of others. Thus, the verse means to ask: Which of you will come forward and say that he has made such and such a covenant with Allah on your behalf.

أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ ۚ فَلْيَأْتُوا بِشُرَكَائِهِمْ إِن كَانُوا صَادِقِينَ 41

(68:41) Or has something been guaranteed by any of those whom they associate with Allah in His Divinity?" If so, let them bring forth their associates, if they are truthful.[23]

23. That is, the judgment you are passing concerning yourselves has no basis whatever. It is against reason and you cannot show any such thing written in any divine Book either. No one can make the claim that he has made Allah promise some such thing, and you cannot make any of your deities vouch that they would take the responsibility of securing Paradise for you from God. How then have you been involved in such a misunderstanding.

يَوْمَ يُكْشَفُ عَن سَاقٍ وَيُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى السُّجُودِ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ۙ 42

(68:42) On the Day when the dreadful calamity will unfold,[24] when people will be summoned to prostrate themselves, and yet they will not be able to prostrate.

24. Literally: The Day the Shin shall be uncovered. A section of the companions and their successors says that these words have been used idiomatically, for according to Arabic idiom, kashf-i-saq implies befalling of an affliction. Abdullah bin Abbas has also given this same meaning of this and has supported it by evidence from Arabic poetry. According to another saying that has been cited from Ibn Abbas and Rabi bin Anas, kashf-i-saq implies uncovering the facts and truths. In view of this interpretation, the meaning would be: The Day when all truths shall be bared and the people's deeds shall become open and manifest.

خَاشِعَةً أَبْصَارُهُمْ تَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ ۖ وَقَدْ كَانُوا يُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى السُّجُودِ وَهُمْ سَالِمُونَ 43

(68:43) Their eyes shall be downcast and ignominy shall overwhelm them. For when they were safe and sound, they were summoned to prostrate themselves, (and they refused).[25]

25. It means: On the Resurrection Day it will be openly and publicly demonstrated as to who in the world had actually worshiped Allah and who was disinclined to do so. For this purpose the people will be called upon to prostrate themselves before Allah. Then, those

who had been sincerely worshiping Allah in the world would prostrate themselves, and those who had declined to bow before Him in the world would be unable to do so. It will become impossible for them to put up a false show of being worshipers. Therefore, they will remain standing, degraded and downcast with shame.

فَذَرْنِيْ وَمَنْ يُّكَذِّبُ بِهٰذَا الْحَدِيْثِ ۭ سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ 44

(68:44) So leave Me, (O Prophet), to deal with him who gives the lie to this Discourse.[26] We shall draw them little by little (to their undoing) in a way that they will not know.[27]

26. That is, do not worry yourself as to how to deal with them, it is for Me to see how to chastise them.

27. A form of leading somebody to ruin in imperceptible ways is that an enemy of the truth and wicked person may be blessed in the world, and be granted health, wealth, children and worldly successes, by which he may be deluded into believing that whatever he is doing, he is doing well and right. There is nothing wrong with his acts and deeds. Thus, he may go on getting more and more deeply involved in enmity of the truth and wickedness and rebellious conduct and may not realize that the blessings he is being favored with are not a reward but, in fact, a means of his own ruin.

وَاُمْلِيْ لَهُمْ ۭ اِنَّ كَيْدِيْ مَتِيْنٌ 45

(68:45) I am giving them a respite. Great is My scheme![28]

28. The word kayd in the original means to devise a secret scheme against another. It is an evil only in case it is devised to harm somebody unjustly, otherwise there is nothing wrong with it, especially when such a scheme is adopted against a person who has made himself worthy of it.

اَمْ تَسْـَٔلُهُمْ اَجْرًا فَهُمْ مِّنْ مَّغْرَمٍ مُّثْقَلُوْنَ ۚ 46

(68:46) Or are you asking them for some compensation so that they feel burdened with debt?[29]

29. The question apparently is being asked of the Prophet (peace be upon him), but its real audience are the people, who were crossing all limits in their opposition to him. They are being asked: Is Our Messenger asking you for a reward which makes you feel so upset. You know that he is absolutely selfless in his invitation and is exerting himself only for your own benefit and well-being. If you do not want to believe in what he says, you may not, but why are you feeling so enraged at his this invitation to you. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 31 of Surah At-Toor).

أَمْ عِنْدَهُمُ الْغَيْبُ فَهُمْ يَكْتُبُونَ 47

(68:47) Or do they have any knowledge of the Unseen which they are now writing down?[30]

30. This second question also appears to be directed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), but, in fact, its audience are his opponents. It means: Have you, O people, peered behind the unseen and found that the Messenger, in fact, is not a Messenger sent by God, and the truth that he is presenting before you is also false. That is why you are being so stubborn in belying what he says (For explanation, see (E.N. 32 of Surah At-Toor).

فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُنْ كَصَاحِبِ الْحُوتِ إِذْ نَادَىٰ وَهُوَ مَكْظُومٌ 48

(68:48) So bear with patience until the Judgement of your Lord[31] comes, and do not belike the man in the fish (i.e., Jonah)[32] who called out, choking with grief:[33]

31. That is, the time when Allah will issue His decree about your success and victory and your opponents' defeat, is yet far off. Till then you should go on enduring with patience whatever hardships and afflictions you may have to face in the way of preaching the faith.

32. That is, do not behave impatiently as did the Prophet Jonah (peace be on him), who an account of his impatience was driven into the fish's belly. Immediately after exhorting the Prophet (peace be upon him) to have patience until Allah issued forth His decree, to tell him not to behave like the Prophet Jonah (peace be upon him) by itself gives the meaning that the latter had shown some kind of impatience before Allah gave His decision and thus had incurred His wrath. (For explanation, see(Surah Yunus, Ayat 98, and E.N, 99); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 87-88 and E.Ns 82 to 85); (Surah As-Saaffat, Ayat 139-148 and E.Ns 78 to 85).

33. In Surah Al-Anbiya it has been explained thus: From inside the fish's belly and the darkness of the sea, the Prophet Jonah (peace be upon him) invoked Allah, saying: La ilaha ills anta subhanaka inni kuntu min-az-zalimin: There is no god but You; glory be to You: I had indeed committed a wrong. Thereupon Allah heard his prayer and delivered him from this affliction. (verses 87-88).

لَوْلَا أَنْ تَدَارَكَهُ نِعْمَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ لَنُبِذَ بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ مَذْمُومٌ 49

(68:49) had his Lord not bestowed His favour upon him, he would have been cast upon that barren shore (and would have remained there) in disgrace.[34]

34. When this verse is read with (Surah As-Saaffat, Ayats 142-146), one learns that at the time the Prophet Jonah (peace be upon him) was caused to be swallowed by the fish, he was blameworthy. But when he glorified Allah and confessed his fault, although he was thrown out from the belly of the fish on a bare beach in a state of sickness, he was not blameworthy at that time. Allah by His mercy caused a creeper to grow over him so that its leaves should provide him shade and its fruit food and drink.

فَاجْتَبٰهُ رَبُّهٗ فَجَعَلَهٗ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ 50

(68:50) But his Lord exalted him, and included him among His righteous servants.

وَاِنْ يَّكَادُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَيُزْلِقُوْنَكَ بِاَبْصَارِهِمْ لَمَّا سَمِعُوا الذِّكْرَ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ اِنَّهٗ لَمَجْنُوْنٌ ۘ 51

(68:51) When the unbelievers hear this Exhortation, they look at you as though they would knock you off your feet with their (hostile) glances.[35] They say: "Surely he is afflicted with madness";

35. Would make you slip: Would eat you up with their eyes. For a similar expression of the Makkan disbelievers' rage and fury against the Prophet (peace be upon him), see also Surah Bani Israil, Aya

وَمَا هُوَ اِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ع 52

(68:52) although this is nothing but an Exhortation (to goodness) for everyone in the world.

69. Surah Al Haaqqa (The Inevitable)

Name

The Surah takes its name from the word al-Haaqqah with which it opens.

Period of Revelation

This too is one of the earliest surahs to be revealed at Makkah. Its subject matter shows that it was sent down at the time when opposition to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) had started but had not yet become tyrannical. Musnad Ahmad contains a tradition from Hadrat Umar, saying: "Before embracing Islam one day I came out of my house with a view to causing trouble to the Holy Prophet, but he had entered the Masjid al-Haram before me. When I arrived I found that he was reciting surah Al-Haaqqah in the Prayer. I stood behind him and listened. As he recited the Qur'an I wondered at its literary charm and beauty. Then suddenly an idea came to my mind that he must be a poet as the Quraish alleged. Just at that moment he recited the words: "This is the Word of an honorable Messenger: it is not the word of a poet." I said to myself: Then, he must be a soothsayer, if not a poet. Thereupon be recited the words: "Nor is it the word of a soothsayer: little it is that you reflect. It is a Revelation from the Lord and Sustainer of the worlds. On hearing this Islam entered deep into my heart." This tradition of Hadrat Umar shows that this surah had been sent down long before his acceptance of Islam, for even after this event he did not believe for a long time, and he continued to be influenced in favor of Islam by different incidents from time to time, till at last in the house of his own sister he came by the experience that made him surrender and submit to the Faith completely. (For details, see introduction to surah Maryam and Introduction to surah Al-Waqiah).

Theme and Subject Matter

The first section (vv. 1-37) is about the Hereafter and the second (vv. 38-52) about the Qur'an's being a revelation from Allah and the Holy Prophet's being a true Messenger of Allah.

The first section opens with the assertion that the coming of the Resurrection and the occurrence of the Hereafter is a truth which has to take place inevitably. Then in vv. 4-12, it has been stated that the communities that denied the Hereafter in the past became worthy of Allah's scourge ultimately. In vv. 13-17 the occurrence of Resurrection has been depicted. In vv. 18-37 the real object for which Allah has destined a second life for mankind after the present worldly life has been enunciated. In it we are told that on that Day all men shall appear in the Court of their Lord, where no secret of theirs shall remain hidden each man's record will be placed in his hand. Those who had spent lives in the world with the realization that one day they would have to render an account of their deeds before their Lord, and who had worked righteously in the world and provided beforehand for their well being in the Hereafter, will rejoice when they see that they have been acquitted and blessed with the eternal bliss of Paradise. On the contrary, those who neither recognized the rights of Allah, nor discharged the rights of men, will have no one to save them from the punishment of Allah, and they will be cast into Hell.

In the second section (vv. 38-52) the disbelievers of Makkah have been addressed and told: "You think this Qur'an is the word of a poet or soothsayer, whereas it is a Revelation sent dawn by Allah, which is being presented by the noble Messengers. The Messenger by himself had no power to increase or decrease a word in it. If he forges something of his own composition into it, We will cut off his neck-vein (or heart- vein). For this is the Truth absolute and pure: and those who give it a lie, will have ultimately to regret and repent.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

اَلۡحَآقَّةُ ۙ 1

(69:1) The indubitable event![1]

1. The word al-Haaqqah as used in the text means an event which has inevitably to take place and the occurrence of which in the future is so certain as to admit of no doubt or suspicion. To use this word for Resurrection and to begin the discourse with it by itself shows that the people were denying its occurrence. They are being told: That which you are denying is inevitable: your denial will not prevent its occurrence.

مَا الۡحَآقَّةُ ۚ 2

(69:2) And what is that indubitable event?

وَمَاۤ اَدۡرٰىكَ مَا الۡحَآقَّةُ ؕ 3

(69:3) And what do you know what that indubitable event is?[2]

2. These two questions, one after the other, have been put to arouse the listeners, to make them understand the importance of the theme and listen to what follows with full attention.

كَذَّبَتۡ ثَمُوۡدُ وَعَادٌۢ بِالۡقَارِعَةِ 4

(69:4) The Thamud[3] and the Ad denied the (possibility of a) sudden calamity,[4] calling it false.

3. As the disbelievers of Makkah denied Resurrection and took the news of its coming lightly, they have been warned at the outset, as if to say: Resurrection is inevitable: whether you believe in it or not, it will in any case take place. Then, they are told: It is not a simple and ordinary thing that a person accepts the news of the coming of an event or not, but it has a deep relationship with the morals of the nations and with their future. The history of the nations, which lived before you, testifies that the nation which refused to believe in the Hereafter and thought this worldly life only to be the real life and denied that man would have ultimately to render an account of his deeds before God, corrupted itself morally until the punishment of God overtook it and eliminated it from the world.

4. The word al-qariah is derived from qar, which means to hammer, to beat, to knock and to strike one thing upon the other. This other word for Resurrection has been used to give an idea of its terror and dread.

فَاَمَّا ثَمُوۡدُ فَاُهۡلِكُوۡا بِالطَّاغِيَةِ 5

(69:5) Then the Thamud were destroyed by an awesome upheaval;[5]

5. In Surah (Al-Aaraf, Ayat 78), it has been called ar-rajfah (a terrible earthquake); in (Surah Houd, Ayat 67) as-sayhah (a violent blast); in (Surah HaMim As-Sajdah, Ayat 17), it has been said: They were overtaken by saiqa-tul-adhab (a humiliating scourge); and here the same punishment has been described as at-taghiyah (a violent catastrophe). These words describe different aspects of the same calamity.

وَاَمَّا عَادٌ فَاُهۡلِكُوۡا بِرِيۡحٍ صَرۡصَرٍ عَاتِيَةٍ ۙ 6

(69:6) and the Ad were destroyed by a furiously raging wind-storm

سَخَّرَهَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ سَبۡعَ لَيَالٍ وَّثَمٰنِيَةَ اَيَّامٍ ۙ حُسُوۡمًا فَتَرَى الۡقَوۡمَ فِيۡهَا صَرۡعٰى ۙ كَاَنَّهُمۡ اَعۡجَازُ نَخۡلٍ خَاوِيَةٍ ۚ 7

(69:7) which He let loose upon them for seven nights and eight days in succession; so that (if you had been there) you might have seen people lying prostrate, as though they were uprooted trunks of hollowed palm trees.

فَهَلۡ تَرٰى لَهُمۡ مِّنۡۢ بَاقِيَةٍ 8

(69:8) Do you now see any trace of them?

وَجَآءَ فِرۡعَوۡنُ وَمَنۡ قَبۡلَهٗ وَالۡمُؤۡتَفِكٰتُ بِالۡخَاطِئَةِ ۚ 9

(69:9) Pharaoh and those before him and the people of the overturned habitations[6] all engaged in the same great sin.

6. The reference is to the towns and settlements of the people of the Prophet Lot (peace upon be him), about which it has been said in(Surah Houd, Ayat 82) and(Surah Al-Hijr, Ayat 74), We turned them upside down.

فَعَصَوۡا رَسُوۡلَ رَبِّهِمۡ فَاَخَذَهُمۡ اَخۡذَةً رَّابِيَةً 10

(69:10) They did not follow the Messenger of their Lord, and so He seized them with a severe grip.

إِنَّا لَمَّا طَغَا الْمَاءُ حَمَلْنَاكُمْ فِي الْجَارِيَةِ ۝11

(69:11) Verily when the water rose to great heights,[7] We bore you upon a floating vessel (i.e. the Ark)[8]

7. The illusion is to the deluge of the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him), in which a whole nation was drowned because of this very crime, and only those people were saved, who had listened to and obeyed the Messenger of Allah.

8. We boarded you: Because the whole human race that exists today has descended from the people who were boarded in the Ark thousands of years ago and thus saved from the deluge. It means: You exist in the world today because in that deluge Allah had caused only the infidels to be drowned and had saved the believers.

لِنَجْعَلَهَا لَكُمْ تَذْكِرَةً وَتَعِيَهَا أُذُنٌ وَاعِيَةٌ ۝12

(69:12) so that We might make it an instructive event for you, and retentive ears might preserve its memory.[9]

9. The conscious ears: the ears which may hear it consciously and take it in. Although the word ear has been used, it implies the hearers who may hear the event and always remember it, take heed from it, and may never forget what dreadful fate the deniers of the Hereafter and the disbelievers of the Messenger of God would ultimately suffer.

فَإِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ نَفْخَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ ۝13

(69:13) So[10] when the Trumpet is blown with a single blast

10. While reading the following verses one should keep in mind that at some places in the Quran the three stages of Resurrection which will occur one after the other at different times have been mentioned separately, and at others all the three have been combined and mentioned as a single event. For example, in (Surah An-Naml, Ayat 87) the first blowing of the Trumpet has been mentioned, when everyone will be suddenly struck with terror. At that time they will witness the general confusion and the upsetting of the order of the universe, as described in (Surah Al-Hajj, Ayats 1-2); (Surah YaSeen, Ayats 49-50) and (Surah At- Takweer, Ayats 1-6). In (Surah Az-Zumar, Ayats 67-70), mention has been made of the second and third blowing of the Trumpet. On the second blowing of it everyone will fall down dead, and when it is blown for the third time, all dead men will rise back to life and present themselves before Allah. In (Surah TaHa, Ayats 102-112); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 101-103); (Surah YaSeen, Ayats 51-53)and (Surah Qaf, Ayats 20-22), only the third sounding of the Trumpet has been mentioned. (For explanation, see (E.N. 78 of Surah TaHa); (E.N. 1 of Surah Al-Hajj); (E.Ns 46, 47 of Surah YaSeen). But here and at many other places in the

Quran all the events of Resurrection, from the blowing of the first Trumpet till the people's entry into Heaven and Hell have been described as a single event.

وَحُمِلَتِ الْاَرْضُ وَالْجِبَالُ فَدُكَّتَا دَكَّةً وَّاحِدَةً ۙ 14

(69:14) and the earth and the mountains are carried aloft and are crushed to bits at one stroke,

فَيَوْمَئِذٍ وَّقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ ۙ 15

(69:15) on that Day shall that indubitable event come to pass;

وَانْشَقَّتِ السَّمَآءُ فَهِيَ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَّاهِيَةٌ ۙ 16

(69:16) when the sky will be rent asunder, the grip holding it together having loosened on that Day,

وَّالْمَلَكُ عَلٰٓى اَرْجَآئِهَا ؕ وَيَحْمِلُ عَرْشَ رَبِّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ ثَمٰنِيَةٌ ؕ 17

(69:17) and the angels will stand on the sides, with eight of them bearing aloft the Throne[11] of your Lord on that Day.

11. This is an ambiguous verse the meaning of which is difficult to determine. We can neither know what the Throne is nor can understand what will be the nature of the eight angels upholding it on the Day of Resurrection. It is, however inconceivable that Allah Almighty would be sitting on the Throne and the eight angels would be upholding it along with Him. The verse also does not say that Allah at that time would be sitting on the Throne. Besides, the conception of God that the Quran gives also prevents one from imagining that the Being Who is free from physical existence as to body, direction and place, should be residing somewhere and His creatures should sustain Him. Therefore, pursuing any research to determine its meaning would be tantamount to disbelief. However, one should understand that in order to give an idea of Allah Almighty's rule and sovereignty, and of the matters associated with it, the same scene has been depicted by the Quran as of worldly kingship and the same terms have been used for it as are common for kingship and its accompaniments in order to enable us to understand matters pertaining to sovereignty of the universe to some extent only by means of this very scene and terms. All this is meant to bring the real Truth within human understanding; it is not, therefore, right to take it literally.

يَوْمَئِذٍ تُعْرَضُوْنَ لَا تَخْفٰى مِنْكُمْ خَافِيَةٌ 18

(69:18) That will be the Day when you shall be brought forth (before Allah) and no secret of yours shall remain hidden.

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتٰبَهٗ بِيَمِيْنِهٖ ۙ فَيَقُوْلُ هَآؤُمُ اقْرَءُوْا كِتٰبِيَهْ ۚ 19

(69:19) On that Day, he whose Record is given to him in his right hand[12] will say: "Lo! Read my Record![13]

12. The record's being given in the right hand will by itself show that the concerned person's account is clear and settled and he is appearing in the divine court as a righteous man and not as a culprit. It is probable that at the time the records are distributed the righteous man himself will extend his right hand forward to receive his record. For on account of the good treatment that he would have received right from the moment of death till his appearance in the Plain of Assembly at Resurrection would have given him the satisfaction that he was there to be blessed and not to be punished. At many a place in the Quran it has been explicitly stated that right at death itself it becomes clear to every man whether he is entering the next world in a blessed or wretched state. Then from the moment of death till Resurrection the righteous man is treated like a guest and the evil man as a culprit under custody. After this, from the time the second life starts on the Day of Resurrection, the condition and state of the righteous is entirely different from the condition and state of the disbelievers, hypocrites and culprits. (For details, see (Surah Al-Anfaal, Ayat 50); (Surah An-Nahl, Ayats 28-32); (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 97); (Surah TaHa, Ayats 102, 103, 124-126); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 1-3); (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayat 24); (Surah An-Naml, Ayat 89); (Surah Saba, Ayat 51); (Surah YaSeen, Ayats 26-27); (Surah Al-Momin, Ayats 45-46); (Surah Muhammad, Ayat 27); (Surah Qaf, Ayats 19-23)and the corresponding Notes.

13. That is, he will be overjoyed as soon as he receives his record and will show it to his companions. In(Surah Allnshiqaq, Ayat 9), it has been said: He will return to his kinsfolk rejoicing.

اِنِّيْ ظَنَنْتُ اَنِّيْ مُلٰقٍ حِسَابِيَهْ ۚ 20

(69:20) Verily I was sure that I would be handed over my account."[14]

14. That is, he was fortunate because he had been conscious of the Hereafter in the world and had lived his life with the belief that he would have to appear before God one day and render his account to Him.

فَهُوَ فِيْ عِيْشَةٍ رَّاضِيَةٍ ۙ 21

(69:21) Then he shall find himself in a life of bliss;

فِيْ جَنَّةٍ عَالِيَةٍ ۙ 22

(69:22) in a lofty Garden

قُطُوفُهَا دَانِيَةٌ 23

(69:23) the clusters of whose fruit will be hanging low to be within reach (of the inmates of Paradise).

كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا هَنِيٓـًٔا بِمَآ أَسْلَفْتُمْ فِي الْأَيَّامِ الْخَالِيَةِ 24

(69:24) (They will be told): "Eat and drink with good cheer as a reward for the good deeds you did in the days that have passed by."

وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَٰبَهُۥ بِشِمَالِهِۦ ۙ فَيَقُولُ يَٰلَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُوتَ كِتَٰبِيَهْ ۚ 25

(69:25) As for him whose Record will be given to him in his left hand,[15] he will exclaim: "Would that I had never been given my Record,[16]

15. In Surah Al-Inshiqaq it has been said: And the one whose record is given him behind his back. Probably it will be like this: As the culprit would already be knowing that he was a culprit, and would be aware of what his record contained, he would dejectedly extend his left hand forward to receive it, and then would immediately hide it behind his back so that no one else saw what he had received.

16. That is, I should not have been given this record in the Plain of Assembly and thus publicly disgraced before all mankind, but should have been awarded secretly whatever punishment I deserved.

وَلَمْ أَدْرِ مَا حِسَابِيَهْ ۚ 26

(69:26) and had not known my account.[17]

17. That is, I should not have been told what I had done in the world. Another meaning of this verse can also be: I never knew what an account was: I never had imagined that one day I would also have to render my account and that all my deeds would be presented before me."

يَٰلَيْتَهَا كَانَتِ الْقَاضِيَةَ ۚ 27

(69:27) Oh! Would that the death that came to me in the world had made an end of me![18]

18. That is, I should have become extinct after death in the world and should have experienced no other life after death.

مَآ اَغۡنٰى عَنِّىۡ مَالِيَهۡ ۚ 28

(69:28) My riches have not availed me,

هَلَكَ عَنِّىۡ سُلۡطٰنِيَهۡ ۚ 29

(69:29) and my authority has vanished."[19]

19. The word sultan of the text is used both for an argument and for power and authority. If it is taken in the sense of an argument, the meaning would be: The arguments that I used to give would not work here. Here, I have no argument which I can present in self-defense. And if it is taken in the sense of power, it would imply: The power of which I was so proud in the world is no more. I have no army here and there is none to obey me. I stand as a miserable helpless creature, who can do nothing to defend himself.

خُذُوۡهُ فَغُلُّوۡهُ ۙ 30

(69:30) (A command will be issued): "Seize him and shackle him,

ثُمَّ الۡجَحِيۡمَ صَلُّوۡهُ ۙ 31

(69:31) then cast him in the Fire,

ثُمَّ فِىۡ سِلۡسِلَةٍ ذَرۡعُهَا سَبۡعُوۡنَ ذِرَاعًا فَاسۡلُكُوۡهُ ؕ 32

(69:32) then fasten him with a chain, seventy cubits long.

اِنَّهٗ كَانَ لَا يُؤۡمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ الۡعَظِيۡمِ ۙ 33

(69:33) He would not believe in Allah, the Most Great;

وَلَا يَحُضُّ عَلٰى طَعَامِ الۡمِسۡكِيۡنِ ؕ 34

(69:34) nor would he urge the feeding of the poor.[20]

20. That is, not to speak of feeding a poor man himself, he did not even like to say to others that they should feed the hungry.

فَلَيۡسَ لَهُ الۡيَوۡمَ هٰهُنَا حَمِيۡمٌ ۙ 35

(69:35) Today he has been left here friendless;

وَّلَا طَعَامٌ اِلَّا مِنۡ غِسۡلِيۡنٍ ۙ 36

(69:36) and has no food except the filth from the washing of wounds,

لَّا يَاۡكُلُهٗۤ اِلَّا الۡخٰطِـُٔوۡنَ ؕ 37

(69:37) which only the sinners will eat."

فَلَاۤ اُقۡسِمُ بِمَا تُبۡصِرُوۡنَ ۙ 38

(69:38) But no;[21] I swear by what you see,

21. That is, the truth is not as you think it to be.

وَمَا لَا تُبۡصِرُوۡنَ ۙ 39

(69:39) and by what you do not see,

اِنَّهٗ لَقَوۡلُ رَسُوۡلٍ كَرِيۡمٍ ۚ 40

(69:40) that this is the speech of an honourable Messenger,[22]

22. Here, "a noble Messenger" implies the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and in(Surah At- Takweer, Ayat 19). the angel Gabriel, the argument being that after describing the Quran as the word of an honorable Messenger, it has been said: It is not the word of a poet nor of a soothsayer, and obviously the disbelievers of Makkah branded the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and not Gabriel as a poet and soothsayer. On the contrary, in Surah At-Takweer, after describing the Quran as the word of "a noble messenger" it has been said: That Messenger has great power, and has high ranks with the Owner of the Throne: there he is obeyed and held as trustworthy. And Muhammad (peace be upon him) has seen him on the bright horizon. (verses 20-23). Almost the same thing has been stated in (Surah An-Najm, Ayats 5-10) about Gabriel.

Here, the question arises; In what sense has the Quran been described as the word of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and of Gabriel. The answer is: the people were hearing it being recited by the tongue of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Prophet (peace be upon him) by the tongue of Gabriel. Thereupon, in one way it was the word of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and in another way of Gabriel, but a little below it has been explicitly stated: It is indeed a Revelation from the Lord of the worlds, which is being presented before Muhammad (peace be upon him) by the tongue of Gabriel and before the people by the tongue of Muhammad (peace be upon him). The word Messenger itself points to the truth that the word belongs to neither of them but they have presented it as Messengers of the One Who has sent it down.

وَّمَا هُوَ بِقَوۡلِ شَاعِرٍ ؕ قَلِيۡلًا مَّا تُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ۙ 41

(69:41) not the speech of a poet. Little do you believe![23]

23. One meaning of "little it is that you believe", according to Arabic idiom, can be: You do not believe it at all. Another meaning also can be: Hearing the Quran your heart sometimes itself cries out: This cannot be mortal word. Yet you behave stubbornly and refuse to believe in it.

وَلَا بِقَوۡلِ كَاهِنٍ ؕ قَلِيۡلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُوۡنَ ؕ 42

(69:42) Nor is this the speech of a soothsayer. Little do you reflect!

تَنۡزِيۡلٌ مِّنۡ رَّبِّ الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ 43

(69:43) It has been revealed by the Lord of the Universe.[24]

24. In short: I swear by whatever you see and by whatever you do not see that this Quran is not the word of a poet or a soothsayer, but it is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds, which is being presented by the Messenger (peace be upon him) who is noble and gentle. Let us now consider in what sense this oath has been sworn. That which was visible to the people was.

(1) This Word was being presented by a person who being noble and gentle was not hidden from anybody in the society of Makkah. Everyone knew that he was the best man of their nation in conduct. It could not be expected of such a man that he would forge a lie and attribute it to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

(2) They also saw clearly that he had no selfish motive in presenting that word before the people, but had rather sacrificed all His personal interests to it. He had ruined his business, he had abandoned every ease and comfort, he was being cursed and abused by the same people who had shown him the highest veneration and esteem and had caused even his family and children to be subjected to these agonies besides himself. A person having selfish motives could not have submitted himself to such tribulations.

(3) They could also see that the lives of the people in their own society, who believed in him, underwent a sudden transformation. The word of no poet or soothsayer has been known to have brought about such a wonderful moral change in the people that his follower should become ready to face every hardship and bear up against every persecution for his sake.

(4) They were also not unaware of the language of poetry and the diction of the soothsayers. Apart from stubborn disbelievers, no one could say that the language of the Quran was the language of poetry or sorcery. (For a detailed discussion of this, see (E.N. 7 of Surah Al-Anbiya), (E.Ns 142-145 of Surah Ash-Shuara), (E.N. 22 of Surah At- Toor).

(5) This also was before their eyes that no one in entire Arabia was so eloquent of speech that his word could be brought to match with the Quran. Not to speak of equaling it, not even the greatest poet's eloquence could even approach anywhere near that of Quran.

(6) This was also not hidden from them that the language used by Muhammad (peace be upon him) himself was very different in its literary beauty and merit from the language of the Quran. No Arabic speaking person could, after hearing the Prophet's (peace be upon him) own speech, and the Quran, say that both emanated from one and the same person.

(7) The people of Makkah had never heard, even until a day before Muhammad (peace be upon him) made the claim to Prophethood, anything relating to the themes that the Quran consisted of, nor they knew that he had any means of obtaining that knowledge and information. That is why even if his opponents alleged that he obtained that information secretly from somewhere, no one in Makkah was prepared to believe it. (For explanation, see (E.N. 107 of Surah An-Nahl) and (E.N. 12 of Surah Al-Furqan).

(8) They could also see the wonderful workshop of existence, from the earth to the heavens, which was functioning before their eyes, and in which they could see a supreme, wise law and an all-pervading order and system at work. In it they could see no sign and evidence of the polytheism and denial of the Hereafter, which the Arabs had adopted as their creed, but there were signs and proofs of the existence of One God and of the truth of the Hereafter which the Quran was presenting.

All this they could see, and what they did not see was: Allah Almighty alone is the Creator and Master and Ruler of this universe: all others are only creatures: none beside Him is God. Resurrection has to take place inevitably; Muhammad (peace be upon him) has really been appointed a Messenger by Allah Himself Who is sending down the Quran to him. An oath has been sworn by both truths to affirm that which has been stated in the preceding verses.

وَلَوْ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضَ الْأَقَاوِيلِ ۙ 44

(69:44) And if he [i.e., the Prophets] had forged this Discourse and thereafter ascribed it to Us,

لَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِينِ ۙ 45

(69:45) We would surely have seized him by the right hand,

ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ الْوَتِينَ ۖ 46

(69:46) and then severed his life vein;

فَمَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حَاجِزِينَ 47

(69:47) and not one of you would have been able to withhold Us from doing so.[25]

25. The object is to impress the point that the Prophet (peace be upon him) has no authority whatsoever to make any change in the revelation. If he did so, he would be severely punished. The style depicts the prompt and quick action of a king who strikes off the head of an official, holding him by the hand, if he commits a forgery in his name. Some people have misconstrued this verse to mean that if the heart-vein or neck-vein of an impostor is not immediately severed by Allah, it would be a proof that he was a true prophet, whereas in this verse what has been said is about a true prophet and not about the impostors. Same impostors have even claimed to be God and have thrived and lived long lives in the world, so it could not be a proof of the truth of their claim. For a full discussion of this question, see(E.N. 23 of Surah Younus).

وَاِنَّهٗ لَتَذۡكِرَةٌ لِّلۡمُتَّقِيۡنَ 48

(69:48) Surely it is a Good Counsel for the God-fearing.[26]

26. That is, the Quran is an admonition for those who wish to avoid wrongdoing and its evil consequences. (For explanation, see(E.N. 3 of Surah Al-Baqarah).

وَاِنَّا لَنَعۡلَمُ اَنَّ مِنۡكُمۡ مُّكَذِّبِيۡنَ 49

(69:49) We certainly know that some among you will give the lie to it,

وَاِنَّهٗ لَحَسۡرَةٌ عَلَى الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ 50

(69:50) and surely it will be a cause of regret for the unbelievers.[27]

27. That is, they will ultimately have to despair and regret as to why they had rejected this

وَاِنَّهٗ لَحَقُّ الۡيَقِيۡنِ 51

(69:51) Certainly it is a Truth of absolute certainty.

فَسَبِّحۡ بِاسۡمِ رَبِّكَ الۡعَظِيۡمِ ع 52

(69:52) So glorify the name of your Lord Most Great.

70. Surah Al Maarij (The Ascending Steps)

Name

The Surah takes its name from the word *dhil Ma'arij* in verse 3.

Period of Revelation

The subject matter bears evidence that this Surah too was sent down in conditions closely resembling those under which Surah Al Haaqqah was sent down.

Theme and Subject Matter

It admonishes and gives warning to the disbelievers who made fun of the news about Resurrection and the Hereafter, and Hell and Heaven, and challenged the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) to cause Resurrection with which he threatened them to take place if what he said was true and they had become worthy of the punishment in Hell by denying it. The whole Surah is meant to answer this denial.

The Surah opens with words to the effect: "A demander has demanded a torment, the torment which must befall the deniers; and when it takes place, there will be none to prevent it, but it will take place at its own appointed time. Allah has His own way of doing things, but He is not unjust. Therefore, have patience, O Prophet, at what they say. They think it is far off, but We see it as near at hand."

Then it is said: "Resurrection, which they desire to be hastened out of jest and fun, is terrible, and when it comes, it will cause great distress to the culprits. At that time they will even be prepared to give away their wives and children and their nearest kinsfolk in ransom to escape the punishment, but they will not be able to escape it.

Then the people have been warned to the effect; "On that Day the destinies of men will be decided strictly on the basis of their belief and their conduct. Those who turn away from the Truth in the world and amass wealth and withhold it from the needy, will be doomed to Hell; and those who fear the punishment of God here, believe in the Hereafter, keep up the Prayer, discharge the rights of the needy out of their wealth, strictly avoid immoral and wicked deeds, practice honesty in all their dealings, fulfill their pledges and trust and bear true witness, will have a place of honor in Paradise"

In conclusion, the disbelievers of Makkah who rushed in upon the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) from every side as soon as they saw him, in order to make fun of him, have been warned to the effect: "If you do not believe, Allah will replace you by other people who will be better than you", and the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) has been consoled, so as to say: "Do not take to heart their mockery and jesting; leave them to indulge in their idle talk and foolish conduct if they are bent upon experiencing the disgrace and humiliation of the Resurrection; they will themselves see their evil end."'

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

سَاَلَ سَآئِلٌۢ بِعَذَابٍ وَّاقِعٍ ۙ 1

(70:1) A beseecher besought the visitation of chastisement,[1]

1. Some commentators have taken the verb saala in the text in the meaning of asking, and have interpreted the verse to mean: The asker has asked: whom will the torment with which we are being threatened befall. And Allah has answered it, saying: It will befall the disbelievers. But most of the commentators have taken saala here in the meaning of demanding. Nasai and other traditionists have related a tradition from Ibn Abbas, and Hakim hold it as authentic, that Nadr bin al-Harith Kaladah had said: O God, if it is really the truth sent dawn by You, then rain down stones on us from the heavens, or send down any other painful torment on us. (Surah Al-Anfaal, Ayat 32). Apart from this, at several places in the Quran the disbelievers' this challenge has been related: Why don't you bring down on us the torment that you threaten us with? For instance, see (Surah Younus, Ayats 46-48); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 36-41); (Surah An-Naml, Ayats 67-72); (Surah Saba, Ayats 26-30); (Surah YaSeen, Ayats 45-52); (Surah Al-Mulk, Ayats 24-27).

لِّلْكٰفِرِيْنَ لَيْسَ لَهٗ دَافِعٌ ۙ 2

(70:2) (a chastisement meant) for the unbelievers, one which none can avert;

مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ذِى الْمَعَارِجِ ؕ 3

(70:3) a chastisement from Allah, the Lord of the ascending steps,[2]

2. Maarij is plural of Miraj, which means a stairway, or a ladder, or something by which one may go up. To call Allah dhil-Maaij (Owner of the ways of ascent) means that He is Most High and in order to go up into His Presence the angels have to ascend many heights, one above the other, as has been stated in the following verses.

تَعْرُجُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَالرُّوْحُ اِلَيْهِ فِىْ يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهٗ خَمْسِيْنَ اَلْفَ سَنَةٍ ۚ 4

(70:4) by which the angels and the Spirit[3] ascend to Him[4] in one Day the duration of which is fifty thousand years.[5]

3. "The Spirit": the Angel Gabriel, who has been mentioned separately from the angels in order to impress his unique glory and greatness. In Surah Ash-Shuara it has been said: The trustworthy Spirit has come down with this Quran upon your heart, (verse 193), and in Surah Al- Baqarah, say to them: Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel, should understand that he has, by Allah's command, revealed upon your heart this Quran. (verse 97). These verses when read together show that Ar-Rooh (the Spirit) implies the Angel Gabriel.

4. This is an ambiguous theme the meaning of which cannot be determined precisely. We neither have any knowledge of the reality of the angels, nor can understand the nature of

their ascent, nor can conceive the stairways on which they ascend. Besides, about Allah also it cannot be imagined that He lives in a particular place, for He is exalted and free from the restrictions of space and time.

5. In (Surah Al-Hajj, Ayat 47), it has been said: These people are demanding of you to hasten the torment. Allah will never fail to fulfill His threat, but a day with your Lord is equal to a thousand years as you reckon. In(Surah As- Sajdah, Ayat 5), it has been said: He administers the affairs of the world from the heavens to the earth, and the report of this administration ascends (to be presented) before Him in a Day whose length, according to your reckoning, is a thousand years. And here, in response to the demand for the torment, the measure of Allah's one day has been stated to be fifty thousand years. Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been consoled, saying: Have patience at the demand for the torment which the people make out of jest and fun, and then it is said: They think it is far off, but We see it as near at hand. When all these verses are read together, what becomes obvious is: The people, because of their narrow and restricted outlook, measure the time of Allah's decrees by their own scales of time and, therefore, consider a hundred years or so to be a very lengthy period, whereas in the divine conduct of affairs there are schemes spreading over a thousand years each, or fifty thousand years each, as you reckon, and this measure also is only by way of example; otherwise schemes in the universe may extend over millions and billions of years as well. Of these one is the scheme under which mankind has been created on the earth, and a time limit has been set during which it has been allowed to function here. No man can know when this scheme began, what time-limit has been decreed for its completion, what hour has been appointed for bringing it to an end, when Resurrection will take place, and what time has been fixed for raising all men, born since the beginning of creation till Resurrection, from death simultaneously and calling them to account for their deeds. We only know to some extent that part of the scheme which is passing before us, or a partial history of the past ages which exists with us. As for its beginning and end, to say nothing of knowing it, we do not even have the power to understand it, not to speak of understanding the wisdom which works behind and underlies it. Now the people who demand that the scheme be cut short and its conclusion be brought immediately before them, and if this is not done, they use it for an argument to prove that the universe has no end and conclusion. They, in fact, present a proof of their own ignorance and folly. (For further explanation, see (E.Ns 92, 93 of Surah Al-Hajj); (E.N. 9 of Surah As-Sajdah).

فَاصْبِرْ صَبْرًا جَمِيلًا 5

(70:5) So, (O Prophet), persevere with gracious perseverance.[6]

6. A gracious patience: A kind of patience that behooves a magnanimous person like you.

إِنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَهُ بَعِيدًا ۙ 6

(70:6) Verily they think that the chastisement is far off,

وَّنَرٰىهُ قَرِيْبًا ۭ 7

(70:7) while We think that it is near at hand.[7]

7. This can have two meanings:

(1) That these people think it cannot possibly take place, and in Our view it is going to take place very soon.

(2) That these people think Resurrection is yet remote and far off, and in Our sight it is close at hand and may occur any moment.

يَوْمَ تَكُوْنُ السَّمَاۗءُ كَالْمُهْلِ ۙ 8

(70:8) It shall befall on a Day[8] whereon the sky will become like molten brass,[9]

8. A section of the commentators regard this sentence as related to "a day whose measure is fifty thousand years"; they say that the day whose measure has been stated to be fifty thousand years is the Day of Resurrection. In Musnad Ahmad and in the Tafsir by Ibn Jarir, a tradition has been related on the authority of Abu Saeed Khudri, saying: When wonder and amusement was expressed before the Prophet (peace be upon him) about the length of this Day with reference to this verse, he replied: By Him in Whose hand is my life, the believer will find the Day even lighter (of shorter duration) than the time he takes in performing an obligatory Prayer in the world. Had this tradition been reported through authentic channels, this verse could not be interpreted in any other way, but two of its transmitters, Darraj and his teacher Abul Haytham, are both weak and untrustworthy.

9. That is, it will change its color over and over again.

وَتَكُوْنُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ ۙ 9

(70:9) and the mountains will become like dyed tufts of wool,[10]

10. As the colors of the mountains are different, when they are uprooted and they drift about weightless, they will appear like flakes of carded wool of different colors.

وَلَا يَسْـَٔلُ حَمِيْمٌ حَمِيْمًا ۚ 10

(70:10) and no bosom friend will enquire about any of his bosom friends

يُّبَصَّرُوْنَهُمْ ۭ يَوَدُّ الْمُجْرِمُ لَوْ يَفْتَدِيْ مِنْ عَذَابِ يَوْمِىِٕذٍۢ بِبَنِيْهِ ۙ 11

(70:11) although they shall be within sight of one another.[11] The guilty one would fain ransom himself from the torment of that Day by offering his children,

11. Not so that they will not see each other, therefore they will not ask after each other's welfare, but each will be seeing the other in agony and distress, yet will ignore him, being wholly preoccupied with his own torment.

وَصَاحِبَتِهٖ وَاَخِيْهِ ۙ 12

(70:12) and his spouse and his brother,

وَفَصِيْلَتِهِ الَّتِيْ تُـْٔوِيْهِ ۙ 13

(70:13) and his kinsfolk who had stood by him,

وَمَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا ۙ ثُمَّ يُنْجِيْهِ ۙ 14

(70:14) and all persons of the earth, if only he could thus save himself.

كَلَّا ۭ اِنَّهَا لَظٰى ۙ 15

(70:15) By no means! It will be the fierce flame

نَزَّاعَةً لِّلشَّوٰى ۖ 16

(70:16) that will strip off the scalp.

تَدْعُوْا مَنْ اَدْبَرَ وَتَوَلّٰى ۙ 17

(70:17) It shall insistently summon him who turned his back and retreated,

وَجَمَعَ فَاَوْعٰى 18

(70:18) and amassed wealth and covetously hoarded it.[12]

12. Here also, as in (Surah Al-Haqqah, Ayats 33-34), two causes have been mentioned of a person's evil end in the Hereafter:

(1) His repudiation of the truth and refusal to affirm faith.

(2) His worship of the world and stinginess because of which he amasses wealth and refuses to spend it on any good cause.

إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا ۙ 19

(70:19) Verily man is impatient by nature:[13]

13. "Man has been created impatient": It is man's nature or his natural weakness to be impatient. Here, one should keep in view that at many places in the Quran, after making mention of mankind's common moral weaknesses, those who believe and adopted righteousness have been made an exception; the same theme is being expressed in the following verses. This by itself explains the truth that these hereditary weaknesses are not unalterable. If man accepts the guidance sent down by God and tries to reform himself practically, he can remove them, and if he gives a free rope to his self, these become ingrained in him deeply. (For further explanation, (see E.N. 41 of Surah Al-Anbiya), (E.Ns 23-28 of Surah Az-Zumar); (E.N. 75 of Surah Ash- Shura).

إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا ۙ 20

(70:20) bewailing when evil befalls him,

وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا ۙ 21

(70:21) and tight-fisted when good fortune visits him,

إِلَّا الْمُصَلِّينَ ۙ 22

(70:22) except those that pray,[14]

14. A person's performing the salat necessarily implies that he believes in Allah, His Messenger (peace be upon him), His Book and the Hereafter as well as tries to act according to his belief.

الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ دَائِمُونَ ۖ 23

(70:23) and are constant in their Prayer;[15]

15. That is, no laziness or love of ease and comfort, no occupation or interest hinders them from being punctual and regular at the prayer. When the Prayer time comes, they abandon every occupation and activity and stand up to perform worship of their God. Another meaning which Uqbah bin Amir has given of ala salat-i-him daaimun is that they perform the Prayer with full peace of mind, tranquility and humility; they do not try to offer the Prayer in a hurry in order to get rid of it somehow, nor think irrelevant things during the Prayer.

وَالَّذِيْنَ فِيْٓ اَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَّعْلُوْمٌ ۙ 24

(70:24) and those in whose wealth there is a known right

لِّلسَّآئِلِ وَالْمَحْرُوْمِ ۙ 25

(70:25) for those that ask and those that are dispossessed,[16]

16. In (Surah Adh-Dhariyat, Ayat 19), it has been said: In their wealth there is a right of the beggar and the needy, and here: In their wealth there is a due share of the beggar and the needy. Some people have understood this to mean that the due share implies the obligatory zakat, for in the zakat both the exemption limit and the rate have been fixed. But this commentary cannot be accepted on the ground that the Surah Al-Maarij is unanimously a Makkan Revelation, and the zakat with its specific exemption limit and rate was enjoined at Al-Madinah. Therefore, the correct meaning of the due share is that they have of their own accord set aside a share in their possessions of the beggar and needy, which they discharge regularly and honestly. This same meaning of this verse has been given by Abdullah bin Abbas, Abdullah bin Umar, Mujahid, Shabi and Ibrahim Nakhai.

Here, saail does not imply a beggar but a needy person, who asks someone for help, and mahroom implies a person who is jobless, or the one who tries to earn a living but does not earn enough to meet his needs, or the one who has become disabled because of an accident or calamity, and is unable to make a living. About such people when it becomes known that they are destitute, a God-worshipper does not wait that they should ask for help, but helps them of his own accord as soon as he comes to know that they are needy and stand in need of help. (For further explanation, (see E.N. 17 of Surah Adh-Dhariyat).

وَالَّذِيْنَ يُصَدِّقُوْنَ بِيَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ ۙ 26

(70:26) those who firmly believe in the Day of Recompense,[17]

17. "Who believe in the Day of Recompense": Who do not think they are irresponsible but believe that one Day they will have to appear before their God and render to Him an account of their deeds.

وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّهِمْ مُّشْفِقُوْنَ ۚ 27

(70:27) and fear the chastisement of their Lord[18]–

18. In other words, they are not like the disbelievers, who do not fear God even after they have committed every heinous sin and crime and perpetrated every cruelty in the world, but they, in spite of having adopted a righteous attitude in morals and deeds as best as they could, fear God and continue to remain in constant awe lest their shortcomings should exceed their good works before Him and they should be declared as worthy of punishment.

(For further explanation, see(E.N. 54 of Surah Al-Mominoon), (E.N. 19 of Surah Adh-Dhariyat).

إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّهِمْ غَيْرُ مَأْمُونٍ 28

(70:28) surely the chastisement of their Lord is a thing none can feel secure from –

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ ۙ 29

(70:29) and those who guard their private parts,[19]

19. "Who guard their private parts": Who abstain from adultery as well as from nudity and exposing their private parts before others. (For explanation, see(E.N. 6 of Surah Al-Mominoon), (E.Ns 30, 32 of Surah An-Noor) and (E.N. 62 of Surah Al-Ahzab).

إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ ۚ 30

(70:30) except in regard to their spouses and those whom their right hands possess, for in regard to them they are not reproachable,[20]

20. For explanation, see (E.N. 7 of Surah Al-Mominoon).

فَمَنِ ابْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ ۚ 31

(70:31) but any who seeks to go beyond that, it is indeed they who are the transgressors,

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ ۖ 32

(70:32) and those who fulfil their trusts and their covenants,[21]

21. "Trusts" imply those trusts which Allah has entrusted to men as well as those which one man entrusts to another because of faith and confidence. Likewise, "promises" imply those promises which man makes with his God as well as those which one man makes with another. Keeping and fulfilling both these kinds of trusts and promises is a necessary characteristic of a believer. In a Hadith Anas has reported that whenever the Prophet (peace be upon him) addressed his companions, he would always give them the instruction: Beware, the one who does not keep his trust has no faith, and one who does not fulfill his pledges, has no religion. (Baihaqi, Ash-Shuab al-Imam).

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِشَهَادَاتِهِمْ قَائِمُونَ ۖ 33

(70:33) and those who are upright in their testimonies;[22]

22. That is, they neither conceal evidence nor change it in any way for selfish motives.

وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ عَلٰى صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُوْنَ ۟ 34

(70:34) and who take due care of their Prayer:[23]

23. This gives an idea of the importance of the Prayer (salat). The description of the merits of the high and sublime character of those who have been declared as worthy of Paradise, began with the Prayer and has been concluded with it. To be a performer of the Prayer is their first characteristic, to be steadfast and ever constant with regard to the Prayer is their second characteristic, and to guard their Prayer is their last characteristic. Guarding the Prayer implies many things: to perform the Prayer at its right time, to make sure before the Prayer that one's body and clothes are clean and pure, to have performed the ablutions and to have washed the limbs well, to perform the basic elements of the Prayer with its obligatory and desirable parts with due care and attention, to observe the requisite rites of the Prayer carefully, to avoid disobedience of God, which is destructive of the Prayer. All these are included in the guarding of the Prayer.

اُولٰٓئِكَ فِيْ جَنّٰتٍ مُّكْرَمُوْنَ ۠ ۟ 35

(70:35) all these shall live honourably in the Gardens.

فَمَالِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا قِبَلَكَ مُهْطِعِيْنَ ۙ 36

(70:36) But what is the matter with the unbelievers who are hurrying towards you

عَنِ الْيَمِيْنِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ عِزِيْنَ 37

(70:37) in crowds, both on the right and on the left?[24]

24. This refers to those disbelievers who would rush in towards the Prophet (peace be upon him) from every side to mock and ridicule him when they heard him preach Islam and recite the Quran.

اَيَطْمَعُ كُلُّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ اَنْ يُّدْخَلَ جَنَّةَ نَعِيْمٍ ۙ 38

(70:38) Does everyone of them wish to enter the Garden of Bliss?[25]

25. It means that God's Paradise is only for those righteous people whose characteristics have just been described above, Now, can these people who are not at all inclined to listen to the truth and who are rushing in towards the Prophet (peace be upon him) in order to suppress every invitation to the truth, be the candidates for Paradise? Has God prepared

His Paradise only for such people as these. Here, one should also keep in view (verses 34-41 of Surah Al-Qalam) in which an answer has been given to this saying of the disbelievers of Makkah: Even if there is any life after death, we shall have good time there too, as we are having in the world, and the torment would befall Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his followers and not us.

كَلَّاۖ إِنَّا خَلَقْنٰهُمْ مِّمَّا يَعْلَمُونَ 39

(70:39) By no means! They know that which We have created them from.[26]

26. Here, this sentence can have two meanings:

(1) If it is taken to be related to the preceding theme, it will mean: As for the substance these people have been created from, all men are equal. For if the substance itself be the cause of man's entry into Paradise, then the good and the bad, the wicked and the just, the guilty and the innocent, all should go to Paradise. But a little common sense is enough to decide that man's qualifications for Paradise are created not on the basis of the substance of his creation but only on the basis of his merit and excellence.

(2) If this sentence is regarded as an introduction to the following theme, it would mean: These people think they are secure from Our torment and mock the one who warns them of Our punishment, whereas We can punish them even in this world as and when We please, as well as resurrect them after death as and when We like. They themselves know that We began their creation from an insignificant sperm-drop and developed them into a living man. If they had only considered this mode of their creation, they would never have been involved in the misunderstanding that they now have escaped Our grasp, or that We have no power to create them over again.

فَلَآ أُقْسِمُ بِرَبِّ الْمَشٰرِقِ وَالْمَغٰرِبِ إِنَّا لَقٰدِرُونَۙ 40

(70:40) I swear[27] by the Lord of the easts and the wests[28] that We have the power

27. That is, the truth is not that which these people think it is.

28. Here, Allah has sworn an oath by Himself. The words Easts and Wests have been used because the sun rises and sets at a new angle every day during the year, and goes on rising and setting successively at different times around the globe. Thus considered the Easts and the Wests are not one but many. From another point of view as against the north and the south there is a direction of east and a direction of west. On this basis in(Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayat 28) and(Surah Al-Muzzammi1, Ayat 19)the words Rabb-ulrnashriqi wal-maghrib have been used. From still another view-point the earth has two easts and two wests, for when the sun sets on one hemisphere, it rises on the other. On this basis the words Rabb-ul-mashriqayn wa Rabb-ulmaghribayn (Lord of two easts and two wests) have been used in (Surah Ar-Rahman, Ayat 17). (For further explanation, see (E.N. 17 of Surah Ar-Rahman).

عَلٰٓى اَنۡ نُّبَدِّلَ خَيۡرًا مِّنۡهُمۡ ۙ وَمَا نَحۡنُ بِمَسۡبُوۡقِيۡنَ 41

(70:41) to replace them by others who would be better than they; and We shall certainly not be overpowered.[29]

29. This is that for which Allah Almighty has sworn an oath of His being Lord of the Easts and Wests. It means: As We are Owners of the Easts and Wests, the whole earth is under Our control and power, and you have no power to escape Our punishment: We can destroy you as and when We like and can create another people that may be better than you.

فَذَرۡهُمۡ يَخُوۡضُوۡا وَيَلۡعَبُوۡا حَتّٰى يُلٰقُوۡا يَوۡمَهُمُ الَّذِىۡ يُوۡعَدُوۡنَ ۙ 42

(70:42) So leave them to engage in vain talk and to amuse themselves until they come face to face with the Day which they are promised,

يَوۡمَ يَخۡرُجُوۡنَ مِنَ الۡاَجۡدَاثِ سِرَاعًا كَاَنَّهُمۡ اِلٰى نُصُبٍ يُّوۡفِضُوۡنَ ۙ 43

(70:43) the Day on which they will hastily come forth from their graves, as though they were hurrying on to the altars of their deities.[30]

30. There is a difference of opinion among the commentators about the meaning of the word nusub. Some have interpreted it to mean idols, according to which the meaning would be: They would be racing towards the place appointed by the Lord of Resurrection as they race today towards the shrines of their idols; and some others have taken nusub to mean the goal signs which are set for the competitors in a race, so that each tries to reach and touch the appointed post before the

خَاشِعَةً اَبۡصَارُهُمۡ تَرۡهَقُهُمۡ ذِلَّةٌ ؕ ذٰلِكَ الۡيَوۡمُ الَّذِىۡ كَانُوۡا يُوۡعَدُوۡنَ ع 44

(70:44) Their eyes will be downcast and disgrace will overwhelm them. Such is the Day that they were promised.

71. Surah Nuh (Noah)

Name

"Nuh" is the name of this Surah as well as the title of its subject matter, for in it, from beginning to the end, the story of the Prophet Noah has been related.

Period of Revelation

This also is one of the earliest Surahs to be revealed at Makkah, but the internal evidence of its subject matter shows that it was sent down in the period when opposition to the Holy Prophet's message of Islam by the disbelievers of Makkah had grown very strong and active.

Theme and Subject

In this surah the story of the Prophet Noah has not been related only for the sake of story telling, but its object is to warn the disbelievers of Makkah, so as to say: "You, O people of Makkah, are adopting towards Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) the same attitude as the people of the Prophet Noah had adopted towards him; if you do not change this attitude, you too would meet with the same end." This had not been said in so many words anywhere in the Surah, but in the background of the conditions under which this story was narrated to the people of Makkah, this subject itself became obvious.

Vv. 2-4 briefly explain how he began his mission and what he preached.

Then after suffering hardships and troubles in the way of preaching his mission for ages the report that he made to his Lord has been given in vv. 5-20. In it he states how he had been trying to bring his people to the right path and how his people had stubbornly opposed him.

After this, the Prophet Noah's final submission has been recorded in vv. 21-24, in which he prays to his Lord, saying: "These people have rejected my invitation: they are blindly following their chiefs, who have devised a tremendous plot of deceit and cunning. Time now has come when these people should be deprived of every grace to accept guidance." This was not an expression of impatience by the Prophet Noah, but when after having preached his message under extremely trying circumstances for centuries be became utterly disappointed with his people, he formed the opinion that no chance whatever was left of their coming to the right path. His this opinion fully conformed to Allah's own decision. Thus, in the next verse (25), it has been said: "The torment of Allah descended on those people because of their misdeeds."

In the concluding verse, the Prophet Noah's supplication that he made to his Lord, right at the time the torment descended, has been recorded. In it he prays for his own and for all the believers' forgiveness, and makes a submission to Allah to the effect: "Do not leave any of the disbelievers alive on the earth, for they have become utterly devoid of every good: they will not beget any but disbelieving and wicked descendants."

While studying this Surah one should keep in view the details of the Prophet Noah's story which have been given in the Qur'an above. For this see Al-Araf: 59-64 Yunus: 71,73, Hud:

25-49, Al-Mu'minun: 23-31, Ash- Shua'ra: 105-122, Al-Ankabut: 14,15, As-Saaffat: 75-82, Al-Qamar: 9-16.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اِنَّاۤ اَرۡسَلۡنَا نُوۡحًا اِلٰی قَوۡمِہٖۤ اَنۡ اَنۡذِرۡ قَوۡمَکَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِ اَنۡ یَّاۡتِیَہُمۡ عَذَابٌ اَلِیۡمٌ 1

(71:1) We sent Noah to his people (and directed him): "Warn your people before a grievous chastisement[1] comes upon them."

1. "Warn your people": Warn them that the errors and moral evils that they were involved in would only earn them Allah's punishment if they did not desist from them, and tell them what way they should adopt in order to ward off that punishment.

قَالَ یٰقَوۡمِ اِنِّیۡ لَکُمۡ نَذِیۡرٌ مُّبِیۡنٌ ۙ 2

(71:2) Noah said: "My people, I have certainly been sent as a clear warner to you,

اَنِ اعۡبُدُوا اللّٰہَ وَ اتَّقُوۡہُ وَ اَطِیۡعُوۡنِ ۙ 3

(71:3) that you serve Allah and fear Him, and follow me;[2]

2. The three things which the Prophet Noah presented before his people at the outset of his mission of Prophethood were:

(1) Worship of Allah.

(2) Adoption of piety (taqwa).

(3) Obedience of the Messenger.

Worship of Allah meant that they should give up worship and service of all others and should acknowledge Allah alone as their Deity and should worship and carry out His commands alone. Taqwa (piety) meant that they should refrain from all those works which caused Allah's anger and displeasure, and should instead adopt such attitude in their lives as the God fearing people should adopt. As for "obey me", it meant that they should obey the commands that he gave them as Allah's Messenger.

یَغۡفِرۡ لَکُمۡ مِّنۡ ذُنُوۡبِکُمۡ وَ یُؤَخِّرۡکُمۡ اِلٰۤی اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّی ؕ اِنَّ اَجَلَ اللّٰہِ اِذَا جَآءَ لَا یُؤَخَّرُ ۘ

لَوۡ کُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ 4

(71:4) He will forgive your sins[3] and will grant you respite until an appointed term.[4] Indeed when Allah's appointed term comes, it cannot be deferred;[5] if you only knew!"[6]

3. The sentence yaghfir la-kum min dhunub-i-kum in the original does not mean that Allah will forgive some of their sins, but its correct meaning is: If you accept and acknowledge the three things which are being presented before you, He will forgive all the sins that you have committed in the past.

4. That is, if you accepted these three things, you would be given respite to live in the world until the time that Allah has appointed for your natural death.

5. "A term appointed": The time fixed by Allah for sending down a torment on a people. In this regard the Quran has at several places stated explicitly that when Allah's torment has been decreed for a certain people, they are not pardoned even if they affirm the faith after it.

6. That is, if you come to know that the time which is now passing after you have received Allah's message through me is, in fact, a period of respite that has been granted to you for affirming the faith and there is no chance of escape from Allah's torment after the term of respite has elapsed, you would testify to the faith without delay and would not like to postpone it until the torment actually started descending on you.

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي دَعَوْتُ قَوْمِي لَيْلًا وَنَهَارًا ۙ 5

(71:5) He said:[7] "My Lord, I called my people by night and by day,

7. Omitting the history of a long period of preaching, now the Prophet Noah's petition that he made to Allah in the last stage of his worldly mission is being related.

فَلَمْ يَزِدْهُمْ دُعَائِي إِلَّا فِرَارًا 6

(71:6) but the more I called, the farther they fled.[8]

8. That is, as I went on calling them towards You, they went on fleeing farther and farther away from You.

وَإِنِّي كُلَّمَا دَعَوْتُهُمْ لِتَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ جَعَلُوا أَصَابِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِمْ وَاسْتَغْشَوْا ثِيَابَهُمْ وَأَصَرُّوا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا اسْتِكْبَارًا ۚ 7

(71:7) And every time I called them so that You might forgive them,[9] they thrust their fingers into their ears and wrapped up their faces with their garments[10] and obstinately clung to their attitude, and waxed very proud.[11]

9. "That you may forgive them": That they might give up their attitude of disobedience and beg forgiveness of Allah, for in that way alone they could be forgiven by Allah.

10. They covered their faces either because they did not even like to have a look at Prophet Noah's (peace be upon him) face, not to speak of listening to what he said, or they did so in order to hide their own faces from him as they passed by him so that he could not recognize and address them. This precisely was the attitude and conduct which the disbelievers of Makkah were adopting towards the Prophet (peace be upon him). In (Surah Houd, Ayat 5), their attitude has been described thus: Behold, they turn aside their chests in order to hide themselves from him: Beware, even when they cover themselves up with their garments, Allah knows alike what they hide and what they show. He indeed knows even the secrets they conceal in their breasts. (For explanation, see (E.Ns 5, 6 of Surah Houd).

11. Arrogance implies that they thought it was below their dignity to bow before the truth and accept the admonition of Allah's Messenger. As for example, if a gentleman admonishes a perverted person and he, in response, shakes his head and walks away haughtily, this would amount to rejecting the admonition with arrogance.

ثُمَّ إِنِّي دَعَوْتُهُمْ جِهَارًا ۙ 8

(71:8) Then I summoned them openly,

ثُمَّ إِنِّي أَعْلَنتُ لَهُمْ وَأَسْرَرْتُ لَهُمْ إِسْرَارًا ۙ 9

(71:9) and preached to them in public, and also addressed them in secret.

فَقُلْتُ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ۖ إِنَّهُ كَانَ غَفَّارًا ۙ 10

(71:10) I said to them: "Ask forgiveness from your Lord; surely He is Most Forgiving.

يُرْسِلِ السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْكُم مِّدْرَارًا ۙ 11

(71:11) He will shower upon you torrents from heaven,

وَيُمْدِدْكُم بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَنِينَ وَيَجْعَل لَّكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ وَيَجْعَل لَّكُمْ أَنْهَارًا ۖ 12

(71:12) and will provide you with wealth and children, and will bestow upon you gardens and rivers.[12]

12. This theme has been expressed at several places in the Quran that the rebellious attitude against God causes man to lead a wretched life not only in the Hereafter but also in this world, Contrary to this, if a nation adopts the way of faith and piety and obedience to divine commands, instead of disobedience, it benefits it not only in the Hereafter but also in the world; it is favored with every kind of blessing. In Surah TaHa it has been said: And

whoever turns away from My admonition, will have a wretched life in the world, and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Resurrection. (verse 124). In Surah Al-Maidah it has been said: Had the people of the Book observed the Torah and the Gospel and the other Books which had been sent down by their Lord, abundance of provisions would have been given to them from above and from beneath.(verse 66). In Surah Al-Aaraf: Had the people of the settlements believed and adopted the way of piety, We would have opened on them doors of blessings from the heavens and the earth. (verse 96). In Surah Houd, the Prophet Houd (peace be upon him) addressed his people, saying: And O my people, beg forgiveness of your Lord, then turn to Him in penitence, and He will open the gates of heavens for you and add more strength to your present strength.(verse 52). Through the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself in this very Surah Houd, the people of Makkah have been admonished to the effect: And you should beg forgiveness of your Lord, then return to Him, and He will provide you with good provisions of life till an appointed term. (verse 3). According to the Hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to the Quraish: There is a word which if you accept, would enable you to rule over the Arab as well as the non- Arab world. (For explanation, see (E.N. 96 of Surah Al- Maidah); (E.Ns 3, 57 of Surah Houd); (E.N. 105 of TaHa); Introduction to Surah Suad).

Acting on this same instruction from the Quran, once during a famine Umar came out to invoke Allah for the rain and begged only forgiveness of Him. The people said: O commander of the faithful, you have not prayed for the rain. He replied: I have knocked at the doors of heaven wherefrom the rain is sent down, and then he recited these verses of Surah Nooh to them. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). Likewise, when in the assembly of Hasan Basri, a person complained of drought, he said to him "Beg forgiveness of Allah." Another person complained of poverty, a third one said that he was not being blessed with children, a fourth one said that his harvest had failed, and he continued to remind everyone to beg forgiveness of Allah. The people asked: How is it that you have suggested to all the people one and the same cure for the different complaints? He in response recited these verses of Surah Nooh to them. (Al-Kashshaf).

مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَرْجُونَ لِلّٰهِ وَقَارًا ۚ 13

(71:13) What is amiss with you that you do not look forward to the majesty of Allah[13]

13. It means: as for the petty chiefs of the world, you think it would be dangerous to do anything against their dignity, but as for the Creator and Lord of the universe, you do not expect that He would also be a Being endowed with dignity. You rebel against Him, associate others in His Divinity, disobey His commands, and yet you are not at all afraid that He would punish you for your misconduct.

وَقَدْ خَلَقَكُمْ أَطْوَارًا 14

(71:14) when He has created you in stages?[14]

14. That is, He has brought you to the present stage after passing you through different stages of creation and phases of development. In the beginning you lay in the form of

sperm and ovum separately in the loins of your father and mother. Then the two were combined by the power of Allah and you were conceived. Then for nine months in the womb of the mother you were gradually formed into a perfect human form and were endowed with all those capabilities which you needed to function as a man in the world. Then you came out as a child from the mother's womb, and you were developed from one state to another constantly until you attained to full youth and then old age. While passing through all these stages you lay wholly in the power of Allah at all times. Had He so willed, He would not have allowed you to be conceived but allowed another person to be conceived in your place. Had He so pleased, He would have made you blind, deaf, dumb, or a cripple in the mother's womb itself, or made you mentally deficient. Had He so liked, you would not have been born as a living child. Even after your birth He could have destroyed you any time by causing you to fall a victim to one or other accident suddenly. About that God under Whose power you are so powerless, how could you have taken it into your head that you could commit any insolence against Him, could regard Him with every treachery and ingratitude, could rebel against Him as and when you pleased, and could do all this with impunity?

اَلَمۡ تَرَوۡا كَيۡفَ خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ سَبۡعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ طِبَاقًا ۙ 15

(71:15) Do you not see how Allah has created seven heavens, one upon the other,

وَّجَعَلَ الۡقَمَرَ فِيۡهِنَّ نُوۡرًا وَّجَعَلَ الشَّمۡسَ سِرَاجًا ۙ 16

(71:16) and has placed the moon in them as a light, and the sun as a radiant lamp?

وَاللّٰهُ اَنۡۢبَتَكُمۡ مِّنَ الۡاَرۡضِ نَبَاتًا ۙ 17

(71:17) And Allah has caused you to grow out of the earth so wondrously,[15]

15. Here, the creation of man out of the substances of the earth has been compared to the growth of vegetation. Just as at one time there was no vegetation on the earth, then Allah caused it to grow, so at one time man did not exist, then Allah created him.

ثُمَّ يُعِيۡدُكُمۡ فِيۡهَا وَيُخۡرِجُكُمۡ اِخۡرَاجًا 18

(71:18) and He will later cause you to return to it and will then again bring you out of it.

وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَـكُمُ الۡاَرۡضَ بِسَاطًا ۙ 19

(71:19) Allah has made the earth a wide expanse for you

لِّتَسْلُكُوا مِنْهَا سُبُلًا فِجَاجًا ۚ 20

(71:20) so that you may tread its spacious paths."

قَالَ نُوحٌ رَّبِّ إِنَّهُمْ عَصَوْنِي وَاتَّبَعُوا مَن لَّمْ يَزِدْهُ مَالُهُ وَوَلَدُهُ إِلَّا خَسَارًا ۚ 21

(71:21) Noah said: "My Lord, they did not pay heed to what I said, and followed those (nobles) whose possession of wealth and children has led them to an even greater loss.

وَمَكَرُوا مَكْرًا كُبَّارًا ۚ 22

(71:22) They contrived a plot of great magnitude.[16]

16. "Mighty plot": All those deceits, deceptions and frauds which the chiefs and religious guides were employing in an attempt to mislead the common people against the teachings of the Prophet Noah. For example, they said: Noah is no more than a mere man like yourselves. How can one believe that Allah sends down Revelations to him? (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 63); (Surah Houd, Ayat 27). We also see that only the meanest of us have become his followers without due thought. Had there been some weight in what he says, the elders of the people would have believed in him.(Surah Houd, Ayat 27). Had Allah willed, He would have sent down angels. (Surah Al-Mominoon, Ayat 24). Had he been sent by Allah, he would possess treasures, he would know the unseen, and he would be free from all human needs, like the angels (Surah Houd, Ayat 31). We find nothing in him that might give him superiority over us. (Surah Houd, Ayat 27). He merely intends to obtain superiority over you. (Surah Al-Mominoon, Ayat 24). Obviously, this man is possessed. (Surah Al-Mominoon, Ayat 25). Similar were the things that the Quraish chiefs said to mislead the people against the Prophet (peace be upon him).

وَقَالُوا لَا تَذَرُنَّ آلِهَتَكُمْ وَلَا تَذَرُنَّ وَدًّا وَلَا سُوَاعًا ۛ وَلَا يَغُوثَ وَيَعُوقَ وَنَسْرًا ۚ 23

(71:23) They said: "Do not abandon your deities; do not abandon Wadd, nor Suwa, nor Yaghuth, nor Yauq, nor Nasr.[17]

17. Of the gods of the Prophet Noah's people only those gods have been mentioned whom later the people of Arabia had also started worshipping and whose shrines were found all over the country at the advent of Islam. It is not impossible that the later generations heard the names of the ancient gods of Noah's people from the people who were saved from the flood, and when ignorance once again spread among their children, they made idols of the same gods and started worshipping them again.

Wadd was the god of the Bani Kalb bin Wabash, a branch of the Qudaah tribe, whose shrine had been built at Daumat al-Jandal. In the ancient Arabian inscriptions he has been named as Waddam ibam (father Wadd). Kalbi has stated that the image built to him was of a man

of enormous size. The Quraish also acknowledged him as god and called him Wudd. It is after him that a person has been named Abd-i Wudd (slave of Wudd) in history.

Suwa was the goddess of the Hudhayl tribe and her idol was a female figure. Her temple was situated at Ruhat near Yanbu.

Yaghuth was the god of Anum, a branch of the Tay tribe, and of some branches of the Madhjih tribe. The people of Madhjih had installed its idol, the image of a lion, at Jurash, a place between Yaman and Hijaz. Among the Quraish also some people had been named Abd-i Yaghuth.

Yauq was the god of Khaywan, a branch of the Hamdan tribe, in the territory of Hamdan in Yaman; its idol was of the horse's figure.

Nasr was the god of Al-i dhul-Kula, a branch of the Himyar tribe, in the territory of Himyar; it had its idol installed at Balkha and had the image of the vulture. In the ancient inscriptions of Saba its name has been written as Nasor. Its temple was called bayt Nasor (house of Nasor) and its devotees ahl Nasor (people of Nasor). The ruins of the ancient temples that are found in Arabia and in the adjoining lands have the image of the vulture made on the doors of most of them.

وَقَدْ اَضَلُّوْا كَثِيْرًا ۚ وَلَا تَزِدِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ اِلَّا ضَلٰلًا 24

(71:24) They have misled many. So do not enable these evildoers to increase in anything except straying (from the Right Way)."[18]

18. As we have explained in the introduction to this Surah, the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) did not invoke this curse out of impatience but he invoked it when, after doing full justice to the preaching of his mission for many centuries, he became totally despaired of any success with his people. Similar were the conditions under which the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had also cursed Pharaoh and his people, thus: Lord, destroy their wealth and harden their hearts in a manner so that they do not believe until they see the painful torment. And Allah, in response, had said: The prayer of you both has been granted (Surah Younus, Ayats 88-89). Like the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), the Prophet Noah's (peace be upon him) curse was also in complete conformity with divine will. Thus, in Surah Houd, it has been said: And it was revealed to Noah (peace be upon him): No more of your people will believe in you now than those who have already believed. So, do not grieve at their misdeeds. (verse 36).

مِّمَّا خَطِيْٓـٰٔتِهِمْ اُغْرِقُوْا فَاُدْخِلُوْا نَارًا ۙ فَلَمْ يَجِدُوْا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اَنْصَارًا 25

(71:25) And so they were drowned on account of their sins, and then cast into the Fire,[19] and did not find any other than Allah,[20] to come forth to their help.

19. That is, drowning was not their end, but after death their souls were immediately subjected to the punishment of the Fire. This precisely was the treatment that was meted out

to Pharaoh and his people, as has been stated in (Surah Al-Momin, Ayats 45-46). (For explanation, (see E.N. 63 of Surah Al-Momin). This verse also is of those verses which prove the punishment of barzakh (intermediary stage between death and Resurrection).

20. That is, none of the gods whom they looked upon as their supporters and helpers came to their rescue. This, in fact, was a warning to the people of Makkah, as if to say: If you too are subjected to the torment of Allah, these gods on whom you have placed all your reliance, will avail you absolutely nothing.

وَقَالَ نُوحٌ رَّبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَى الْاَرْضِ مِنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ دَيَّارًا 26

(71:26) Noah said: "My Lord, do not leave out of these unbelievers even a single dweller on earth,

اِنَّكَ اِنْ تَذَرْهُمْ يُضِلُّوْا عِبَادَكَ وَلَا يَلِدُوْٓا اِلَّا فَاجِرًا كَفَّارًا 27

(71:27) for certainly if You should leave them (alive), they will mislead Your servants, and will beget none but sinners and utter unbelievers.

رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِيْ وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِمَنْ دَخَلَ بَيْتِيَ مُؤْمِنًا وَّلِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ۭ وَلَا تَزِدِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ اِلَّا تَبَارًا ع 28

(71:28) My Lord, forgive me and my parents, and whoever enters my house as a believer, and forgive all believers, both men and women, and do not increase the wrong-doers in anything except perdition."

72. Surah Al Jinn (The Jinn)

Name

"Al-Jinn" is the name of this Surah as well as the title of its subject matter, for in it the event of the Jinn's hearing the Qur'an and returning to their people to preach Islam to them, has been related in detail.

Period of Revelation

According to a tradition related in Bukhari and Muslim, on the authority of Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas, once the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) was going to Visit the Fair of Ukaz with some of his Companions, On the way be led the Fajr Prayer at Nakhlah. At that time a company of the jinn happened to pass that way. When they heard the Quran being recited, they tarried and listened to it attentively. This very event has been described in this Surah.

Most of the commentators, on the basis of this tradition, believe that this relates to the Holy Prophet's well known journey to Taif, which had taken place three years before the Hijrah in the 10th year of the Prophethood. But this is not correct for several reasons. The jinn's hearing the Qur'an during the journey to Taif has been related in Al-Ahqaf 29-32. A cursory reading of those verses shows that the jinn who had believed after hearing the Qur'an on that occasion were already believers in the Prophet Moses and the previous scriptures. On the contrary, vv. 2- 7 of this surah clearly show that the jinn who heard the Qur'an on this occasion were polytheists and deniers of the Hereafter and Prophethood. Then, it is confirmed historically that in his journey to Taif none accompanied the Holy Prophet except Hadrat Zaid bin Harithah. On the contrary, concerning this journey Ibn Abbas says that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) was accompanied by some of his Companions. Furthermore, the traditions also agree that in that journey the jinn heard the Qur'an when the Holy Prophet had stopped at Nakhlah on his return journey from Taif to Makkah, and in this journey, according to the traditions of Ibn Abbas, the event of the jinn's hearing the Qur'an occurred when the Holy Prophet was going to Ukaz from Makkah. Therefore, in view of these reasons what seems to be correct is that in Surah Al-Ahqaf and Surah Al Jinn, one and the same event has not been narrated, but these were two separate events, which took place during two separate journeys.

As far as Surah Al-Ahqaf is concerned, it is agreed that the event mentioned in it occurred on the return journey from Taif in the 10th year of Prophethood. As for the question, when this second event took place, its answer is not given by the tradition of Ibn Abbas, nor any other historical tradition shows as to when the Holy Prophet had gone to the Fair of Ukaz along with some of his Companions. However, a little consideration of vv 8-10 of this surah shows that this could only be an event of the earliest stage of Prophethood. In these verses it has been stated that before the appointment of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) to Divine Mission the jinn used to have one or another opportunity to eavesdrop in the heavens in order to hear news of the unseen, but after it they suddenly found that angels had been set as guards and meteorites were being shot on every side so that they could find no place of safety from where they could hear the secret news. Thereupon they had set about searching for the unusual thing that had occurred on the earth, or was going to occur,

because of which the security measures had been tightened up. Probably since then many companies of the jinn must have been moving about in search of the unusual occurrence and one of them after having heard the Qur'an from the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) must have formed the opinion that that was the very thing for the sake of which all the gates of the heavens had been shut against the jinn.

Reality of Jinn

Before one starts the study of this Surah one must clearly know what is the reality of the jinn so as to avoid any possible mental confusion. Many people of the modern times are involved in the misunderstanding that the jinn are not real, but only a figment of the ancient superstition and myths. They have not formed this opinion on the basis that they have known all the realities and truths about the universe and have thus discovered that the jinn do not exist. They cannot claim to possess any such knowledge either. But they have assumed without reason and proof that nothing exists in the universe except what they can see, whereas the sphere of human perceptions as against the vastness of this great universe is not even comparable to a drop of water as against the ocean. Here, the person who thinks that what he does not perceive, does not exist, and what exists must necessarily be perceived, in fact, provides a proof of the narrowness of his own mind. With this mode of thought, not to speak of the jinn, man cannot even accept and acknowledge any reality, which he cannot directly experience and observe, and he cannot even admit the existence of God, to say nothing of admitting any other unseen reality.

Those of the Muslims who have been influenced by modernism, but cannot deny the Qur'an either, have given strange interpretations of the clear statements of the Qur'an about the jinn, Iblis and Satan. They say that this does not refer to any hidden creation, which may have its own independent existence, but it sometimes implies man's own animal forces, which have been called Satan, and sometimes it implies savage and wild mountain tribes, and sometimes the people who used to listen to the Qur'an secretly. But the statements of the Qur'an in this regard are so clear and explicit that these interpretations bear no relevance to them whatever.

The Qur'an frequently mentions the jinn and the men in a manner as to indicate that they are two separate creations. For this, see Al Araf: 38, Hind : 119, Ha Mim As-Sajdah: 25,29, Ahqaf: 18, Adh Dhariyat: 56, and the entire surah Ar-Rahman, which bears such clear evidence as to leave no room to regard the jinn as a human species.

In Surah Al-Araf: 12, Al Hijr : 26-27 and Ar-Rahman : 14-19, it has been expressly stated that man was created out of clay and jinn out of fire.

In Surah Al Hijr: 27, it has been said that the jinn had been created before man. The same thing is testified by the story of Adam and Iblis, which has been told at seven different places in the Qur'an, and at every place it confirms that Iblis was already there at the creation of man. Moreover, in surah Al-Kahf: 50, it has been stated that Iblis belonged to the jinn.

In surah Al-Araf: 27, it has been stated in clear words that the jinn see the human beings but the human beings do not see them.

In surah Al-Hijr: 16-l8, surah As- Saaffat: 6-10 and surah Al-Mulk: 5, it has been said that although the jinn can ascend to the heavens, they cannot exceed a certain limit; if they try to ascend beyond that limit and try to hear what goes on in the heavens, they are not allowed to do so, and if they try to eavesdrop they are driven away by meteorites. By this the belief of the polytheistic Arabs that the jinn possess the knowledge of the unseen, or have access to Divine secrets, has been refuted. The same error has a]so been refuted in Saba: 14.

Al-Baqarah: 30-34 and Al- Kahf: 50 show that Allah has entrusted man with the vicegerency of the earth and the men are superior to the jinn. Although the jinn also have been given certain extraordinary powers and abilities an example of which is found in An-Naml 39, yet the animals likewise have been given some powers greater than man, but these are no argument that the animals are superior to man.

The Qur'an also explains that the jinn, like men, are a creation possessed of power and authority, and they, just like them, can choose between obedience and disobedience, faith and disbelief. This is confirmed by the story of Satan and the event of the jinn affirming the faith as found in Surahs Al-Ahqaf and Al-Jinn.

At scores of places in the Qur'an, it has also been stated that Iblis at the very creation of Adam had resolved to misguide mankind, and since then the Satanic jinn have been persistently trying to mislead man, but they do not have the power to overwhelm him and make him do something forcibly. However, they inspire him with evil suggestions, beguile him and make evil seem good to him. For this, see An-Nisa 117- 120, Al-Araf: 11-17, Ibrahim: 22, Al-Hijr: 30-42, An-Nahl 98-100, Bani Israil 61-65.

The Qur'an also tells us that in the pre Islamic ignorance the polytheistic Arabs regarded the jinn as associates of God, worshiped them and thought they were descended from God. For this, see A1-An'am: 100, Saba : 40-41, As Saffat: 158.

From these details, it becomes abundantly clear that the jinn have their own objective existence and are a concealed creation of an entirely different species from man. Because of their mysterious qualities, ignorant people have formed exaggerated notions and concepts about them and their powers, and have even worshiped them, but the Qur'an has explained the whole truth about them, which shows what they are and what they are not.

Theme and Topics

In this Surah in vv. 1-15, it has been told what was the impact of the Qur'an on the company of the jinn when they heard it and what they said to their fellow jinn when they returned to them. Allah, in this connection, has not cited their whole conversation but only those particular things which were worthy of mention. That is why the style is not that of a continuous speech but sentences have been cited so as to indicate that they said this and this. If one studies these sentences spoken by the jinn carefully, one can easily understand the real object of the narration of this event of their affirming the faith and or mentioning this conversation of theirs with their people in the Qur'an. The explanations that we have given of their statements in our Notes will be of further help in understanding this object.

After this, in vv 16-l8, the people have been admonished to the effect: "If you refrain from polytheism and follow the way of righteousness firmly, you will be blessed; otherwise if you turn away from the admonition sent down by Allah, you will meet with a severe punishment." Then, in vv. 19-23, the disbelievers of Makkah have been reproached, as if to say: When the Messenger of Allah calls you towards Allah, you surround and mob him from every side, whereas the only duty of the Messenger is to convey the messages of Allah. He does not claim to have any power to bring any gain or cause any harm to the people." Then, in vv. 24-25 the disbelievers have been warned to the effect: "Today you are trying to overpower and suppress the Messenger seeing that he is helpless and friendless, but a time will come when you will know who in actual fact is helpless and friendless. Whether that time is yet far off, or near at hand, the Messenger has no knowledge thereof, but it will come to pass in any case." In conclusion, the people have been told: The Knower of the unseen is Allah alone. The Messenger receives only that knowledge which Allah is pleased to give him. This knowledge pertains to matters connected with the performance of the duties of Prophethood and it is delivered to him in such security which does not admit of any external interference whatever.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

قُلۡ اُوۡحِىَ اِلَىَّ اَنَّهُ اسۡتَمَعَ نَفَرٌ مِّنَ الۡجِنِّ فَقَالُوۡۤا اِنَّا سَمِعۡنَا قُرۡاٰنًا عَجَبًا ۙ 1

(72:1) Say, (O Prophet), it was revealed to me that a band of jinn attentively listened[1] to (the recitation of the Qur'an) and then (went back to their people) and said:

1. This shows that the jinn at that time were not visible to the Prophet (peace be upon him), nor he knew that they were hearing the Quran being recited, but Allah informed him of the incident afterwards by revelation. Abdullah bin Abbas has also, in connection with this incident, stated: The Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah had not recited the Quran before the jinn, nor did he see them. (Muslim, Tirmidhi, Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Jarir).

يَّهۡدِىۡۤ اِلَى الرُّشۡدِ فَاٰمَنَّا بِهٖ ؕ وَلَنۡ نُّشۡرِكَ بِرَبِّنَاۤ اَحَدًا ۙ 2

(72:2) “We have indeed heard a wonderful Qur'an[2] which guides to the Right Way; so we have come to believe in it, and we will not associate aught with Our Lord in His Divinity”;[3]

2. The words in the original are: Quran-un-ajaba, which means “something which is read again and again”, and the jinn probably used this word in this very meaning, for they were introduced to this divine revelation for the first time, and they did not perhaps know then that what they were hearing, was the Quran itself. Ajab is a superlative, which is used in Arabic for a wonderful thing. So, what the jinn said means: We have heard such a wonderful recital which is unique both in its language and in its subject-matter.

This also shows that the jinn not only hear what human beings say but also understand their language, although it is not necessary that all the jinn might know all the human languages.

It is possible that those of them who live in a particular region of the earth might know the language of the people of that region. But in any case this statement of the Quran clearly shows that the jinn who listened to the Quran at that time were so conversant with the Arabic language that they not only appreciated the matchless eloquence of the divine word but also understood its sublime subject-matter.

3. This throws light on several things:

(1) That the jinn do not deny Allah's existence and His being Lord and Sustainer.

(2) That among them there are polytheists also, who like polytheistic human beings ascribe divinity to others than Allah: thus, the community of the jinn whose members heard the Quran was polytheistic.

(3) That the Prophethood and revelation of divine scriptures does not exist among the jinn, but whoever of them believe, they believe in the Prophets raised among human beings and in the Books brought by them. This same thing is confirmed by(Surah Al-Ahqaf, Ayats 29-30), where it has been stated that the jinn who had then heard the Quran, were from among the followers of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), and they after having heard the Quran, had invited their people to believe in the revelation that had been sent down by God confirming the previous scriptures. Surah Ar-Rahman also points to the same, for its whole subject-matter shows that the audience of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) invitation are both the men and the jinn.

وَّاَنَّهٗ تَعٰلٰى جَدُّ رَبِّنَا مَا اتَّخَذَ صَاحِبَةً وَّلَا وَلَدًا ۙ 3

(72:3) and that "He – exalted be His Majesty – has not taken to Himself either a wife or a son";[4]

4. From this we know two things:

(1) That these jinn were either from among the Christian jinn, or they were followers of a different religion in which Allah was regarded as having children and families.

(2) That at that time the Prophet (peace be upon him) was reciting some such part of the Quran hearing which they realized the error of their creed and knew that it was sheer ignorance and impudence to ascribe wife and children to the High and Exalted Being of Allah.

وَّاَنَّهٗ كَانَ يَقُوْلُ سَفِيْهُنَا عَلَى اللّٰهِ شَطَطًا ۙ 4

(72:4) and that "the foolish among us[5] have been wont to say outrageous things about Allah";

5. The word safihuna as used in the text can be spoken for an individual as well as for a group. If it is taken for a foolish individual, it would imply Iblis and if for a group, it would imply a group of foolish jinn who said such things.

وَّاَنَّا ظَنَنَّآ اَنْ لَّنْ تَقُوْلَ الْاِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا ۙ 5

(72:5) and that "we had thought that men and jinn would never speak a lie about Allah",[6]

6. That is, we were misled by those falsehoods because we could never think that the men or the jinn could ever dare forge a lie about Allah, but having heard this Quran we now know that they were, in fact, liars.

وَّاَنَّهٗ كَانَ رِجَالٌ مِّنَ الْاِنْسِ يَعُوْذُوْنَ بِرِجَالٍ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَزَادُوْهُمْ رَهَقًا ۙ 6

(72:6) and that "some from among the humans used to seek protection of some among the jinn, and thus they increased the arrogance[7] of the jinn";

7. Ibn Abbas says that in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance when the Arabs had to spend a night in some uninhabited, desolate valley, they would shout out: We seek refuge of the jinn, who is owner of this valley. In other traditions of the pre-Islamic ignorance also the same thing has been reported frequently. For example, if in a place they ran short of water and fodder, the wandering Bedouins would send one of their men to some other place to see if water and fodder were available; and when they reached the new site under his direction, they would shout out before they halted to pitch the camp: We seek refuge of the sustainer of this valley so that we may live here in peace from every calamity. They believed that every un-inhabited place was under the control of one or another jinn and if someone stayed there without seeking his refuge, the jinn would either himself trouble the settlers, or would let others trouble them. These believing jinn are referring to this very thing. They meant that when man, the vicegerent of the earth, started fearing them without any reason, and started seeking their refuge instead of God's, it caused their people to become even more arrogant, haughty and wicked, and they became even more fearless and bold in adopting error and disbelief.

وَّاَنَّهُمْ ظَنُّوْا كَمَا ظَنَنْتُمْ اَنْ لَّنْ يَّبْعَثَ اللّٰهُ اَحَدًا ۙ 7

(72:7) and that "they thought, even as you thought, that Allah would never raise anyone (as a Messenger)";[8]

8. Another meaning of this sentence can be: Allah will not resurrect anyone after death. As the words are comprehensive, they can be taken to mean that, as among human beings, so among the jinn were those who denied both the Prophethood and the Hereafter. However, in view of the theme that follows, the meaning that we have given in the text above is preferable, for according to it these believing jinn tell the people of their community: Your view is proved wrong that Allah will not appoint anyone as a Messenger. In fact, the gates of heavens have been closed on us only because Allah has already appointed a Messenger.

وَّاَنَّا لَمَسۡنَا السَّمَآءَ فَوَجَدۡنٰهَا مُلِئَتۡ حَرَسًا شَدِيۡدًا وَّشُهُبًا ۙ 8

(72:8) and that "we tried to pry (the secrets of) the heaven, but we found it full of terrible guards and shooting meteors";

وَّاَنَّا كُنَّا نَقۡعُدُ مِنۡهَا مَقَاعِدَ لِلسَّمۡعِ ؕ فَمَنۡ يَّسۡتَمِعِ الۡاٰنَ يَجِدۡ لَهٗ شِهَابًا رَّصَدًا ۙ 9

(72:9) and that "we would take up stations in the heaven to try to hear but anyone who now attempts to listen finds a shooting meteor in wait for him";[9]

9. This is the reason why these jinn were now out searching as to what particularly had happened or was going to happen on the earth, which had necessitated strict security measures against eavesdropping so that they were driven away from wherever they tried to eavesdrop in any way.

وَّاَنَّا لَا نَدۡرِىۡۤ اَشَرٌّ اُرِيۡدَ بِمَنۡ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ اَمۡ اَرَادَ بِهِمۡ رَبُّهُمۡ رَشَدًا ۙ 10

(72:10) and that "we do not know whether evil is intended for those on the earth, or whether their Lord intends to direct them to the Right Way";[10]

10. This shows that such extraordinary measures were adopted in the heavens only on two kinds of occasions. First, when Allah might decide to inflict the dwellers of the earth with a torment, and the divine will might be that before it was actually inflicted the jinn might not know and convey its news to warn their friendly human beings of the impending disaster. Second, that Allah might appoint a Messenger on the earth, and strict security measures might be adopted so that neither the messages being conveyed to him be interfered with by the satans nor should they be able to know beforehand what instructions were being given to the Messenger. Thus, the saying of the jinn means: When we noticed that strict security measures had been adopted in the heavens for the safeguard of the news, and the meteorites were being showered profusely, we wanted to know which of the two things had happened: Whether Allah had caused a torment to descend suddenly on some people of the earth, or a Messenger had been raised somewhere on the earth. We were on the lookout for the same when we heard the wonderful revelation, which guides to the right path, and we came to know that Allah had not sent down a torment but had raised a Messenger to show the right way to the people. For further explanation, see(E.Ns 8 to 12 of Surah Al-Hijr); (E.N. 7 of Surah As- Saaffat) and (E.N. 11 of Surah Al-Mulk).

وَّاَنَّا مِنَّا الصّٰلِحُوۡنَ وَمِنَّا دُوۡنَ ذٰلِكَ ؕ كُنَّا طَرَآئِقَ قِدَدًا ۙ 11

(72:11) and that "some of us are upright and some of us are otherwise for we follow widely divergent paths";[11]

11. That is, morally there are also good and bad jinn among us, and from the viewpoint of creed as well, all do not follow one and the same religion, but we are divided into different

groups. With these words the believing jinn want to convince the other jinn of their community that they certainly stood in need of finding out the right way and could not dispense with this need.

وَّاَنَّا ظَنَنَّاۤ اَنۡ لَّنۡ نُّعۡجِزَ اللّٰهَ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ وَلَنۡ نُّعۡجِزَهٗ هَرَبًا ۙ 12

(72:12) and that "we thought that we will neither be able to frustrate Allah on earth, nor frustrate Him by flight";[12]

12. That is, we were led by this very idea to the way of success. As we were not fearless of Allah and we believed that we would not be able to avoid His punishment if we disobeyed Him. So when we heard the divine revelation that had been sent to show the right way, we could not have the courage and boldness to persist in the beliefs that our foolish people had spread among us after we have known the truth.

وَّاَنَّا لَمَّا سَمِعۡنَا الۡهُدٰۤى اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ ؕ فَمَنۡ يُّؤۡمِنۡۢ بِرَبِّهٖ فَلَا يَخَافُ بَخۡسًا وَّلَا رَهَقًا ۙ 13

(72:13) and that "when we heard the teaching of the Right Way we came to believe in it; he who believes in His Lord shall have no fear of suffering loss or being subjected to any injustice";[13]

13. Fear of deprivation: Fear of being given a lesser reward than what one actually deserves for one's good deeds. Injustice: That one may be deprived of the reward for the good deeds done but duly punished for the errors committed or punished innocent; no believer has any fear of such an injustice from Allah.

وَّاَنَّا مِنَّا الۡمُسۡلِمُوۡنَ وَمِنَّا الۡقٰسِطُوۡنَ ؕ فَمَنۡ اَسۡلَمَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ تَحَرَّوۡا رَشَدًا 14

(72:14) and that "among us some are Muslims (Those who have submitted to Allah), and some of us are deviant. So those who became Muslims found the Right Course;

وَاَمَّا الۡقٰسِطُوۡنَ فَكَانُوۡا لِجَهَنَّمَ حَطَبًا ۙ 15

(72:15) but those who deviated from the Truth, will be the fuel for Hell."[14]

14. Here, one may ask: When, according to the Quran, the jinn have been created from the fire, what harm can the fire of Hell do them? The answer is: Even according to the Quran, man has been created out of the earth; why does then man feel hurt when a clod of earth is thrown at him? The truth is that although the whole body of man has been made from the earthly substances, when a living man of flesh and blood is molded from them he becomes an entirely different thing from those substances; then other things made from the same substances become a means of causing harm to him. Likewise, although the jinn have also been created from the fire, when a living and sentient creation has been made from it, the

same fire becomes a means of causing harm and hurt for it. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 15 of Surah Ar-Rahman).

وَّاَنْ لَّوِ اسْتَقَامُوْا عَلَى الطَّرِيْقَةِ لَاَسْقَيْنٰهُمْ مَّآءً غَدَقًا ۙ 16

(72:16) If[15] people were to keep firmly to the Right Way, We would have vouchsafed them abundant rain[16]

15. The conversation of the jinn having come to an end, with this begins the speech of Allah.

16. This is the same thing as has been said in(Surah Nooh, Ayats 10-11). Seek forgiveness of Allah. He will send abundant rains for you from heaven. (For explanation, see(E.N. 12 of Surah Nooh). Abundance of water has been used for abundance of blessings metaphorically for human life, and habitations also depend on water. Without water there can be no human settlement, nor can man's basic needs be fulfilled, nor his industries work and prosper.

لِّنَفْتِنَهُمْ فِيْهِ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّعْرِضْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّهٖ يَسْلُكْهُ عَذَابًا صَعَدًا ۙ 17

(72:17) so that We might try them through this bounty.[17] Whoso turns away from the remembrance of his Lord,[18] He will cause him to suffer a grievous chastisement;

17. We might try them by that blessing: We might see whether they remain grateful after having received the blessing or not, and whether they put Our blessing to right use or not.

18. Turns away from the remembrance of his Lord, means that one may reject the advice and admonition sent down by Allah, or one may disdain giving ear to Allah's remembrance, or one may turn away from His worship.

وَّاَنَّ الْمَسٰجِدَ لِلّٰهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوْا مَعَ اللّٰهِ اَحَدًا ۙ 18

(72:18) and that "mosques belong to Allah, so do not invoke anyone with Him";[19]

19. The commentators generally have taken mosques to mean the places of worship. Accordingly, the verse means: None should be associated in the worship of Allah in the places of worship. Hasan Basri says: The entire earth is a place of worship, and the verse means to say: Polytheism ought not to be committed anywhere on God's earth, He has reasoned out this meaning from the Prophet's (peace be upon him) Hadith: For me the entire earth has been made a place of worship and a means of obtaining purity. Saeed bin Jubair has interpreted masajid to imply the parts of the body on which one prostrates oneself, i.e. the hands, the knees, toes and forehead. According to this explanation, the verse means: These limbs have been made by Allah; no one should prostrate oneself on these before anyone other than Allah.

وَّاَنَّهٗ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللّٰهِ يَدْعُوْهُ كَادُوْا يَكُوْنُوْنَ عَلَيْهِ لِبَدًا ؕ 19 ع

(72:19) and when Allah's servant[20] stood up to call on Him, they well-nigh swarmed him.

20. Servant of Allah: the Prophet (peace be upon him).

قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اَدْعُوْا رَبِّيْ وَلَآ اُشْرِكُ بِهٖٓ اَحَدًا 20

(72:20) Say, (O Prophet): "I call on my Lord alone, and I do not associate aught with Him in His Divinity."[21]

21. That is, to call upon Allah is no objectionable thing, which may so provoke the people. The evil thing, however, is that one should associate another with Allah in His divinity, and this I never do; this is done by those who mob and surround me when they hear God mentioned by me.

قُلْ اِنِّيْ لَآ اَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَّلَا رَشَدًا 21

(72:21) Say: "Surely neither it is in my power to hurt you nor to bring you to the Right Way."

قُلْ اِنِّيْ لَنْ يُّجِيْرَنِيْ مِنَ اللّٰهِ اَحَدٌ ۙ وَّلَنْ اَجِدَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مُلْتَحَدًا ۙ 22

(72:22) Say: "None can protect me from Allah, nor can I find a refuge apart from Him.

اِلَّا بَلٰغًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِسٰلٰتِهٖ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّعْصِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَاِنَّ لَهٗ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ؕ 23

(72:23) (My task is no more than) to deliver Allah's proclamation and His messages.[22] And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, surely the Fire of Hell awaits him; therein he will abide in perpetuity."[23]

22. That is, I do not claim to have any share or role in the Godhead of Allah, nor that I possess any power in making or marring the people's destinies. I am only a Messenger and the mission that has been entrusted to me is no more than that I should convey the messages of Allah to you. As for the powers of Godhead, they wholly belong to Allah. Not to speak of benefiting or harming others, I do not have the power to cause good or harm even to myself. If I disobey Allah, I cannot seek and have refuge anywhere from His punishment, and I have no helper and protector beside Allah. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 7 of Surah Ash-Shura).

23. This does not mean that every sin and act of disobedience will cause one to live in Hell forever, but in view of the context in which this thing bas been said, the verse means: the

one who does not accept the invitation to Tauhid given by Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) and does not refrain from polytheism will suffer in Hell forever.

حَتّٰٓى اِذَا رَاَوْا مَا يُوْعَدُوْنَ فَسَيَعْلَمُوْنَ مَنْ اَضْعَفُ نَاصِرًا وَّاَقَلُّ عَدَدًا 24

(72:24) (They shall not change their ways) until they see that against which they had been warned, and then they will know whose helpers are weaker and whose supporters are fewer in number.[24]

24. The background of this verse is that those of the Quraish who used to mob and surround the Prophet (peace be upon him) as soon as they heard his invitation calling to Allah were under the delusion that they had a strong band at their back and that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had only a handful of men with him, and therefore, they would easily overwhelm him. At this it is being said: Today these people find the Messenger (peace be upon him) helpless and friendless and they themselves supported and strengthened by great hosts and, therefore, feel encouraged and emboldened to suppress the invitation to the truth. But when the evil time with which they are being threatened comes, they will know who in fact is helpless and friendless.

قُلْ اِنْ اَدْرِيْٓ اَقَرِيْبٌ مَّا تُوْعَدُوْنَ اَمْ يَجْعَلُ لَهٗ رَبِّيْٓ اَمَدًا 25

(72:25) Say: "I know not whether what you are promised is near or whether my Lord will prolong its term.[25]

25. The style itself shows that this is an answer which has been given without citing the question. Probably, hearing what has been said above, the opponents might have asked mockingly and tauntingly: When will the time come with which you are threatening us. In response, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was commanded to say: The time will certainly come, but I have not been told the date of its coming. Allah alone knows whether it will come soon or whether a distant term has been set for it.

عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلٰى غَيْبِهٖٓ اَحَدًا ۙ 26

(72:26) He is the Knower of the Unseen, and He does not disclose His Unseen to anyone[26]

26. That is, the knowledge of the unseen entirely rests with Allah: He does not give the whole of this knowledge to anyone.

اِلَّا مَنِ ارْتَضٰى مِنْ رَّسُوْلٍ فَاِنَّهٗ يَسْلُكُ مِنْۢ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهٖ رَصَدًا ۙ 27

(72:27) other than to a Messenger whom He chooses[27] (for the bestowal of any part of the knowledge of the Unseen), whereafter He appoints guards who go before him and behind him,[28]

27. That is, the Messenger (peace be upon him) by himself is no knower of the unseen, but when Allah chooses him to perform the mission of Prophethood, He grants him the knowledge of those of the unseen truths which He is pleased to grant.

28. Guards: Angels, that is, when Allah sends down the knowledge of the unseen realities to the Messenger (peace be upon him) by revelation, He appoints angels on every side to safeguard it so that the knowledge reaches the Messenger in a safe condition, free from any kind of adulteration. This is the same thing which has been expressed in verses 8-9 above, saying: After the appointment of the Messenger (peace be upon him) the jinn found that all the doors to the heavens had been closed, and they noticed that strict security measures had been adopted because of which no room had been left for them to eavesdrop.

لِّيَعْلَمَ أَن قَدْ أَبْلَغُوا رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَحَاطَ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ وَأَحْصَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عَدَدًا ۝ 28

(72:28) so that He may know that they have delivered the messages of their Lord.[29] He encompasses in His knowledge their surroundings and keeps a count of all things."[30]

29. This can have three meanings: (1) That the Messenger (peace be upon him) may know that the angels have delivered the messages of Allah to him precisely and accurately. (2) That Allah may know that the angels have conveyed the messages of their Lord to His Messenger (peace be upon him) precisely and accurately. (3) That Allah may know that the Messenger (peace be upon him) has conveyed the messages of his Lord to His servants precisely and accurately. The words of the verse are comprehensive and may possibly imply all the three meanings. Besides, the verse also points out two other things. First, that the Messenger (peace be upon him) is given that knowledge of the unseen which is necessary for him to perform his mission of Prophethood. Second, that the angels keep watch that the revelation reaches the Messenger (peace be upon him) safely and also that the Messenger (peace be upon him) conveys the messages of his Lord to His servants precisely and accurately.

30. That is, Allah's power so encompasses the Messenger (peace be upon him) as well as the angels that if they swerve even a little from His will, they can be detected immediately. Moreover, a complete record has been kept of each letter of the messages sent down by Allah. The Messengers (peace be upon him) and the angels cannot dare add or subtract even a letter from them.

73. Surah Al Muzzammil (The One Who is Covered Up)

Name

The Surah has been so designated after the word al-muzzammil occurring in the very first verse. This is only a name and not a title of its subject matter.

Period of Revelation

The two sections of this Surah were revealed in two separate periods.

The first section (vv. 1-19) is unanimously a Makki Revelation, and this is supported both by its subject matter and by the traditions of the Hadith. As for the question, in which specific period of the life at Makkah it was revealed, it is not answered by the tradition, but the internal evidence of the subject matter of this section helps to determine the period of its revelation.

First, in it the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) has been instructed to the effect: "Arise during the night and worship Allah so that you may develop the capability to shoulder the heavy burden of Prophethood and to discharge its responsibilities." This shows that this Command must have been given in the earliest period of the Prophethood when training was being imparted to the Holy prophet by Allah for this office.

Secondly, a Command has been given in it that the Qur'an be recited in, the Tahajjud Prayer for half the night, or thereabout. This Command by itself points out that by that time at least so much of the Qur'an had been revealed as could be recited for that long.

Thirdly, in this section the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) has been exhorted to have patience at the excesses being committed by his opponents, and the disbelievers of Makkah have been threatened with the torment. This shows that this section was revealed at a time when the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) had openly started preaching Islam and the opposition to him at Makkah had grown active and strong.

About the second section (v. 20) although many of the commentators have expressed the opinion that this too was sent down at Makkah, yet some other commentators regard it as a Madani Revelation, and this same opinion is confirmed by the subject matter of this section. For it mentions fighting in the way of Allah, and obviously, there could be no question of it at Makkah; it also contains the Command to pay the obligatory zakat, and it is fully confirmed that the zakat at a specific rate and with an exemption limit (nisab) was enjoined at Madinah.

Theme and Subject Matter

In the first seven verses the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) has been commanded to the effect: "Prepare yourself to shoulder the responsibilities of the great Mission that has been entrusted to you; its practical form is that you should rise during the hours of night and stand up in Prayer for half the night, or for a little more or less of it."

In vv. 8-14, he has been exhorted to the effect: "Devote yourself exclusively to that God Who is the Owner of the whole universe. Entrust all your affairs to Him with full satisfaction of the heart. Bear with patience whatever your opponents may utter against you. Do not be intimate with them. Leave their affair to God: He Himself will deal with them."

Then, in vv. 15-19, those of the people of Makkah, who were opposing the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) have been warned, so as to say: "We have sent a Messenger to you just as We sent a Messenger to the Pharaoh. Just consider what fate the Pharaoh met when he did not accept the invitation of the Messenger of Allah. Supposing that you are not punished by a torment in this world, how will you save yourselves from the punishment for disbelief on the Day of Resurrection."

This is the subject matter of the first section. The second section, according to a tradition from Hadrat Sa'id bin Jubair, was sent down ten years later, and in it the initial Command given in connection with the Tahajjud Prayer, in the beginning of the first section, was curtailed. The new Command enjoined, "Offer as much of the Tahajjud Prayer as you easily can, but what the Muslims should particularly mind and attend to is the five times obligatory Prayer a day:, they should establish it regularly and punctually; they should discharge their zakat dues accurately; and they should spend their wealth with sincere intentions for the sake of Allah. In conclusion, the Muslims have been exhorted, saying: "Whatever good works you do in the world, will not go waste, but they are like the provision which a traveler sends up in advance to his permanent place of residence. Whatever good you send up from the world, you will find it with Allah, and the provision thus sent up is much better than what you will have to leave behind in the world, and with Allah you will also get a much better and richer reward than what you have actually sent up before."

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الۡمُزَّمِّلُ ۙ 1

(73:1) O you the (sleeping) enwrapped one![1]

1. To address the Prophet (peace be upon him) with these words and then to command him to rise and keep standing in the Prayer at night, shows that at the time he either lay asleep, or had wrapped himself up in a sheet in order to go to sleep. Here, to address him with: O you who sleeps wrapped up instead of with: O Prophet, or O Messenger, is a fine way of address, which by itself gives the meaning: Gone is the time when you used to enjoy peaceful sleep at will; now you lie under the burden of a great mission, whose demands and duties are different as well as onerous.

قُمِ الَّيۡلَ اِلَّا قَلِيۡلًا ۙ 2

(73:2) Stand up in Prayer by night, all but a small part of it;[2]

2. This can have two meanings:

(1) Pass the night standing up in the Prayer and spend only a little of it in sleep.

(2) There is no demand from you to pass the whole night in the Prayer, but have rest as well and spend a little part of the night in worship too.

But in view of the theme that follows the first meaning seems to be more relevant, and the same is supported by (Surah Ad-Dahr, Ayat 26), in which it has been said: Prostrate yourself before Him in the night and glorify Him during the long hours of night.

نِّصۡفَهٗۤ اَوِ انۡقُصۡ مِنۡهُ قَلِيۡلًا ۙ 3

(73:3) half of it, or reduce it a little;

اَوۡ زِدۡ عَلَيۡهِ وَرَتِّلِ الۡقُرۡاٰنَ تَرۡتِيۡلًا ؕ 4

(73:4) or add to it a little;[3] and recite the Qur'an slowly and distinctly.[4]

3. This is an explanation of the duration of time commanded to be spent in worship. In it the Prophet (peace be upon him) was given the option to spend half of the night in the Prayer, or a little less than that, or a little more than that. But the style shows that half the night has been regarded as preferable, for the measure is the same, which may be decreased or increased, as the people may like and choose.

4. Recite the Quran: Do not recite it quickly and in haste, but slowly and distinctly: pause at every verse so that the mind understands the meaning and purport of divine revelation well and takes effect from it. if it contains the mention of Allah's Being and Attributes, it may awe-inspire the heart with His glory and majesty. If it expresses His mercy, the heart may be filled with feelings of gratitude to Him. If it mentions His wrath and His punishment, the heart may be overwhelmed by fear of Him. If it enjoins something or forbids something, one may understand what has been enjoined and what has been forbidden. In short, the recital does not only consist in uttering the words with the tongue, but it should involve thoughtful consideration of the meaning. When Anas was asked about the Prophet's (peace be upon him) method of reciting the Quran, he replied: The Messenger (peace be upon him) stretched the words when reciting them. For example, when he recited Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim, he would stretch and prolong the sound of Allah, Rahman and Rahim (Bukhari). When Umm Salamah was asked the same question, she replied that the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited every verse separately and distinctly and observed a pause at the end of every verse. For instance, he recited Al-hamdu-lillahi Rabbil-alamin, and paused, then recited ar-Rahmanir- Rahim, and paused, and then recited Maliki-yaumid-din. (Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi). In another tradition, Umm Salamah has stated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited each word distinctly and clearly. (Tirmidhi, Nasai). Hudhaifah bin Yaman says: Once I stood beside the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the night Prayer to see how he recited the Quran. I noticed that he glorified Allah where He should be glorified, invoked and supplicated Allah where He should be invoked and

supplicated, and sought refuge of Allah where His refuge should be sought. (Muslim, Nasai). Abu Dharr has stated that once during the night Prayer when the Prophet (peace be upon him) came to the sentence: in-to-adhdhib-hum ... (If You punish them, then they are Your servants; and if You forgive them, then You are Almighty, All-Wise), he went on repeating it over and over again until it became dawn. (Musnad Ahmad, Bukhari).

إِنَّا سَنُلْقِي عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلًا 5

(73:5) Behold, We shall cast upon you a Weighty Word.[5]

5. That is, you are being commanded to stand up in the night Prayer because We are going to send down on you a weighty word, to bear the burden of which you must develop necessary power in yourself, and you can develop this power only by abandoning your ease and comfort of the night and by standing up in the Prayer and passing half the night or thereabout in the worship of your Lord. The Quran has also been called a weighty word for the reason that acting on its commands, demonstrating its teaching practically, extending its invitation in the face of the whole world, and bringing about a revolution in the entire system of belief and thought, morals and manners, civilization and social life, according to it, is indeed the weightiest task any human being ever has been charged with. It has also been called a weighty word because bearing the burden of its revelation was a difficult and heavy duty. Zaid bin Thabit says: Once revelation came down upon the Prophet (peace be upon him) in a state when he was resting his head upon my knee. I felt such a pressure of the weight on my knee that I thought it would break. Aishah says: I have seen the state of the Prophet's receiving revelation during intense cold, drops of perspiration started falling from his forehead. (Bukhari, Muslim, Malik, Tirmidhi, Nasai). In another tradition Aishah has stated: Whenever revelation came down on the Prophet (peace be upon him) while he was riding on his she-camel, the she-camel would be forced to rest her chest on the ground and could not move until the revelation was over. (Musnad Ahmad, Hakim, Ibn Jarir).

إِنَّ نَاشِئَةَ اللَّيْلِ هِيَ أَشَدُّ وَطْئًا وَأَقْوَمُ قِيلًا 6

(73:6) Surely getting up at night[6] is the best means of subduing the self[7] and is more suitable for uprightness in speech.[8]

6. About the meaning of the word nashiat allail, as used in the original, the commentators and lexicographers have expressed four different viewpoints:

(1) That nashiat implies the person himself who rises at night.

(2) That it implies the hours of night.

(3) That it means the rising by night.

(4) That it does not only apply to the rising in the night but rising after having had some sleep.

Aishah and Mujahid have adopted this fourth viewpoint.

7. The word ashaddu wat-an as used in the text is so vast in meaning that it cannot be explained in any one sentence. Its one meaning is: As the rising for worship by night and standing up for a long time in the Prayer is against human nature and the self of man seeks ease and comfort at that time, this act is an exercise which is most effective in controlling and disciplining the self. The person who governs himself by this method and gains dominance over his body and mind becomes able to use his power in the way of God, can work more efficiently and firmly to make the message of true faith prevail in the world. The second meaning is: This is a very effective means of producing harmony and concord between the heart and the tongue, for during these hours of the night none else intervenes between the servant and his God, and whatever man utters with his tongue in this state, is the very voice of his heart. The third meaning is: This is a very efficacious means of bringing about conformity between the exterior and the interior of man, for the person who in the solitude of the night would abandon his comfort and ease and arise for worship, would do so only out of sincerity: there can be no tinge of display and hypocrisy in this. The fourth meaning is: As this worship is harder on man than the worship of the daytime, it develops steadfastness in him: he is enabled to walk in the path of God more firmly and can face and endure the hardships of that way with greater constancy and determination.

8. Literally, Makes the speech most upright and sound. But the purport is to say that at that time man can read the Quran with greater peace of mind, attention and understanding. lbn Abbas has explained it thus: That it is the most suitable time for man to ponder over the Quran well. (Abu Daud).

إِنَّ لَكَ فِي النَّهَارِ سَبْحًا طَوِيلًا ۖ 7

(73:7) You are indeed much occupied during the day with the affairs of the world.

وَاذْكُرِ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَتَبَتَّلْ إِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيلًا ۚ 8

(73:8) So remember the name of your Lord[9] and devote yourself to Him with exclusive devotion.

9. After making mention of the occupation of the daytime, the exhortation to remember the name of your Lord by itself gives the meaning: Never be heedless of the remembrance of your Lord even when you are deeply involved in your worldly occupations, and continue to commemorate His name in one way or another at all times. (For explanation, see (E.N. 63 of Surah Al-Ahzab).

رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَاتَّخِذْهُ وَكِيلًا 9

(73:9) He is the Lord of the East and the West; there is no god but He. So take Him alone for your Guardian,[10]

10. Wakil is a person in whom one has complete faith; so much so that one can entrust all his affairs to him with full satisfaction of the heart. Thus, the verse means: Do not feel distressed

at the hardships that you are experiencing at the storm of opposition that has been provoked by your invitation to the faith. Your Lord is He Who is the Owner of the East and the West, (i.e. of the whole universe) besides Whom no one else possesses the powers of Godhead. Entrust your affair to Him and be satisfied that He will fight your case, He will deal with your opponents, and He will look after all your interests well.

وَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَاهْجُرْهُمْ هَجْرًا جَمِيلًا 10

(73:10) And bear patiently the vain things they utter, and gracefully[11] forsake them.

11. Depart from them does not mean break off all ties with them and stop preaching to them, but it means: Do not have intimate and friendly relations with them, disregard their foolish behavior and their nonsense. However, you should do so without showing any grief, anger or temper but gracefully like a noble person, who would disregard the abusive remarks of a mean person without minding them at all. This should not create the misunderstanding that the Prophet's (peace be upon him) conduct was any different from it, therefore, Allah gave him this instruction. As a matter of fact, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was already following this very mode of conduct. This instruction was given in the Quran so as to tell the disbelievers: It is not due to any weakness on the part of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that he is not responding to what you are saying against him, but Allah Himself has taught His Messenger (peace be upon him) to adopt this noble way of conduct in response to your foolish behavior.

وَذَرْنِي وَالْمُكَذِّبِينَ أُولِي النَّعْمَةِ وَمَهِّلْهُمْ قَلِيلًا 11

(73:11) Leave it to Me to deal with the affluent ones who give the lie[12] (to the Truth), and bear with them for a while.

12. These words clearly contain the sense that the people, who were actually denying the Prophet (peace be upon him) in Makkah and were inciting the common people to oppose and resist him by stirring up prejudices and by deceit and fraud, were the well-to-do, prosperous and affluent people, for it was their interests, which were being hit by the reforming message of Islam. The Quran tells us that this was not peculiar only to the Prophet's case but in every age this very class of the people have been the main obstacle to every movement of reform. For example, see (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 60, 66, 75,88); Surah Al-Mominoon, Ayat 33); (Surah Saba, Ayats 34, 35); (Surah Az-Zukhruf, Ayat 23).

إِنَّ لَدَيْنَا أَنكَالًا وَجَحِيمًا 12

(73:12) We have heavy fetters[13] and a blazing Fire in store for them;

13. Heavy shackles in Hell will not be put on the criminals' feet to stop them from escape but in order that they are not able to stand up and move; these will not be used to prevent their escape but as an instrument of their torment.

وَّطَعَامًا ذَا غُصَّةٍ وَّعَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ۙ 13

(73:13) and a food that chokes, and a grievous chastisement.

يَوْمَ تَرْجُفُ الْاَرْضُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَكَانَتِ الْجِبَالُ كَثِيْبًا مَّهِيْلًا 14

(73:14) (They will come across all this) on the Day when the earth and the mountains shall tremble violently and the mountains shall crumble into heaps of scattered sand.[14]

14. Since at that time the cohesive force to bind the parts of the mountains together will cease to work, first they will become like crumbling dunes of fine sand, then because of the earthquake which will be shaking the earth; the sand will scatter and shift and the whole earth will turn into an empty level plain. This last state has been described in (Surah TaHa, Ayats 105-107), thus: They ask you, where will the mountains go on that Day. Say: My Lord will reduce them to fine dust and scatter it away. He will turn the earth into an empty level plain, wherein you will neither see any curve no crease.

اِنَّآ اَرْسَلْنَآ اِلَيْكُمْ رَسُوْلًا ۙ شَاهِدًا عَلَيْكُمْ كَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَآ اِلٰى فِرْعَوْنَ رَسُوْلًا ؕ 15

(73:15) Surely[15] We have sent to you a Messenger as a witness over you,[16] just as We had sent a Messenger to Pharaoh.

15. The address now turns to the disbelievers of Makkah, who were denying the Prophet (peace be upon him) and persecuting him relentlessly.

16. Sending the Prophet (peace be upon him) to be a witness over the people also means that he should testify to the truth by his word and deed before them in the world and also that in the Hereafter when Allah's court is established, he will testify that he had presented the whole truth before the people in the world. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 144 of Surah Al-Baqarah); (E.N. 64 of Surah An-Nisa); (Surah An-Nahl, Ayats 84, 89); (E.N. 82 of Surah Al-Azab); (E.N. 14 of Surah Al-Fath).

فَعَصٰى فِرْعَوْنُ الرَّسُوْلَ فَاَخَذْنٰهُ اَخْذًا وَّبِيْلًا 16

(73:16) But Pharaoh disobeyed Our Messenger, so We seized him with a terrible seizing.

فَكَيْفَ تَتَّقُوْنَ اِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ يَوْمًا يَّجْعَلُ الْوِلْدَانَ شِيْبًا ۖ ۙ 17

(73:17) If you persist in disbelieving, how will you guard yourself against the (woe of the) Day that will turn children grey-haired,[17]

17. That is, in the first place, you should be afraid that if you do not accept the invitation of the Messenger (peace be upon him) sent by Us, you will have to meet the same evil end in this world, which the Pharaoh has already met in consequence of this very crime. But even if no torment is sent on you in the world, how will you save yourselves from the punishment of the Day of Resurrection.

ٱلسَّمَآءُ مُنفَطِرٌۢ بِهِۦ ۚ كَانَ وَعۡدُهُۥ مَفۡعُولًا 18

(73:18) the Day whose severity shall cause the heaven to split asunder? Allah's promise is ever bound to be fulfilled.

إِنَّ هَٰذِهِۦ تَذۡكِرَةٌ ۖ فَمَن شَآءَ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِۦ سَبِيلًا ۧ 19

(73:19) Indeed this is nothing but a Good Counsel; so let him who will take a way leading to his Lord.

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَعۡلَمُ أَنَّكَ تَقُومُ أَدۡنَىٰ مِن ثُلُثَيِ ٱلَّيۡلِ وَنِصۡفَهُۥ وَثُلُثَهُۥ وَطَآئِفَةٞ مِّنَ ٱلَّذِينَ
مَعَكَ ۚ وَٱللَّهُ يُقَدِّرُ ٱلَّيۡلَ وَٱلنَّهَارَ ۚ عَلِمَ أَن لَّن تُحۡصُوهُ فَتَابَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ فَٱقۡرَءُواْ مَا تَيَسَّرَ
مِنَ ٱلۡقُرۡءَانِ ۚ عَلِمَ أَن سَيَكُونُ مِنكُم مَّرۡضَىٰ ۙ وَءَاخَرُونَ يَضۡرِبُونَ فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِ يَبۡتَغُونَ
مِن فَضۡلِ ٱللَّهِ ۙ وَءَاخَرُونَ يُقَٰتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ ۖ فَٱقۡرَءُواْ مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنۡهُ ۚ وَأَقِيمُواْ
ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَءَاتُواْ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَأَقۡرِضُواْ ٱللَّهَ قَرۡضًا حَسَنًا ۚ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُواْ لِأَنفُسِكُم مِّنۡ خَيۡرٖ
تَجِدُوهُ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ هُوَ خَيۡرٗا وَأَعۡظَمَ أَجۡرٗا ۚ وَٱسۡتَغۡفِرُواْ ٱللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ غَفُورٞ رَّحِيمٞ ۧ 20

(73:20) (O Prophet),[18] your Lord knows that you sometimes stand up in Prayer nearly two-thirds of the night, and sometimes half or one-third of it, [19] and so does a party of those with you;[20] Allah measures the night and the day. He knows that you cannot keep an accurate count of it, so He has shown mercy to you. So now recite as much of the Qur'an as you can.[21] He knows that there are among you those who are sick and others who are journeying in the land in quest of Allah's bounty,[22] and still others who are fighting in the cause of Allah.[23] So recite as much of the Qur'an as you easily can, and establish Prayer, and pay Zakah,[24] and give Allah a goodly loan.[25] Whatever good you send forth for yourselves, you shall find it with Allah. That is better and its

reward is greater.[26] And ask for Allah's forgiveness; surely He is Most Forgiving, Most Compassionate.

18. About this verse in which reduction has been made in the injunction concerning the tahajjud Prayer, there are different traditions. Musnad Ahmad, Muslim and Abu Daud have related a tradition, on the authority of Aishah, saying that this second command was sent down one year after the first command, and the standing up in the Prayer at night was made voluntary instead of obligatory. Another tradition which Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Hatim have related, again on the authority of Aishah, says that this command came down eight months after the first command, and a third tradition which Ibn Abi Hatim has related again from her, says that it came down sixteen months later. Abu Daud, Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Hatim have cited the period of one year from Abdullah bin Abbas. But Saeed bin Jubair has stated that it was sent down ten years later. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim). In our opinion this last view is most sound, for the subject matter of the first section clearly shows that it was sent down in Makkah and that too in the earliest stage when at the most four years might have passed since the advent of Prophethood. Contrary to this, this second section, in view of the express evidence of its subject matter, seems to have been revealed at Al-Madinah when fighting had started with the disbelievers and the zakat also had been enjoined as an obligatory duty. On this basis inevitably the two sections should have been sent down at an interval of at least ten years between them.

19. Although the initial command to the Prophet (peace be upon him) was to keep standing up in the Prayer for half the night, or thereabout, it was difficult to compute the time precisely in the absorption of the Prayer, especially when there were no watches either to measure time accurately; therefore, sometimes two thirds of the night passed in the prayer and sometimes only one-third of it.

20. In the initial command only the Prophet (peace be upon him) was addressed and only he was instructed to stand up in the Prayer by night. But since the Muslims at that time were ardently desirous of following him in everything he did and of earning more and more good and virtues, many of the companions also performed this night Prayer regularly.

21. As the Prayer is prolonged due mainly to a lengthy recital of the Quran, it is said: You may recite as much of the Quran as you easily can in the tahajjud Prayer This would automatically cause the Prayer to be shortened. Although the words here are apparently in the imperative mood, it is agreed by all that tahajjud is not an obligatory but a voluntary Prayer. In the Hadith, it has also been explained that on an enquiry by a person the Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Five times Prayer in the day and night is obligatory on you. He asked: Is anything besides this is also binding on me. The Prophet said: No, unless you may like to offer something of your own accord. (Bukhari, Muslim). This verse also shows another thing. Just as the bowing (ruku) and prostration (sajdah) are obligatory in the Prayer, so is the recital of the Quran. For just as Allah at other places has used the words ruku and sajdah for the prayer, so here He has mentioned recital of the Quran, which implies its recital in the Prayer. If somebody objects to this conclusion, saying: When the tahajjud Prayer itself is voluntary, how can recital of the Quran in it be obligatory? The answer is: Even in case of the voluntary Prayer it is incumbent on one to fulfill all the pre-requisites of the Prayer and to perform all its basic elements and obligatory parts. No one can say that in case of the voluntary Prayer, purity of the garments and body, ablutions and concealment of

the satar (minimal part of the body to be covered) are not obligatory, and the standing up and sitting and performance of ruku and sajdah in it are also only voluntary.

22. Travelling to earn one's living by lawful and permissible methods has been described in many places in the Quran as the seeking of Allah's bounty.

23. Here, the way Allah has made mention of seeking pure livelihood and fighting in the way of Allah together and declared these two, besides the compulsion on account of illness, as reasons for exemption from the tahajjud Prayer, or concession in it, shows how meritorious it is in Islam to earn one's livelihood by lawful methods. In the Hadith, Abdullah bin Masud has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The person who came to a city of the Muslims with food grains and sold it at the rate of the day, will attain to a place nearest to Allah, and then the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited this very verse. (lbn Marduyah). Umar once said: Except for fighting in the way of Allah, the state in which I would love to be overtaken by death, is the state when I am overtaken by it while passing through a mountain pass in search of livelihood and then he recited this very verse. (Baihaqi, Shuab al-Iman).

24. Commentators agree that this implies observance of the obligatory Prayer five times a day and giving away of the obligatory zakat.

25. Ibn Zaid says this implies spending one's wealth in the cause of Allah besides the zakat, whether it is in the cause of fighting in the way of Allah, or for helping the needy, or for public utilities, or other good works. The meaning of giving to Allah a good loan has been explained at several places above. See (E.N. 267 of Surah Al-Baqarah); (E.N. 33 of Surah Al-Maidah); (E.N. 16 of Surah Al-Hadid).

26. It means: Whatever you have sent forward for the good of your Hereafter is more beneficial for you than what you withheld in the world and did not spend in any good cause for the pleasure of Allah. According to a Hadith reported by Abdullah bin Masud the Prophet (peace be upon him) once asked: Which of you has a greater love for his own wealth than for the wealth of his heir. The people said: There is none among us, O Messenger of Allah, who would not have greater love for his own wealth than for the wealth of his heir. He said: Consider well what you are saying. The people submitted: This indeed is our considered opinion, O Messenger of Allah. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Your own property is only that which you have sent forward (for the good of your Hereafter), and whatever you held back, indeed belongs to the heir. (Bukhari. Nasai, Musnad Abu Yala).

74. Surah Al Muddaththir (The Cloaked One)

Name

The Surah takes its name from the word al- muddaththir in the first verse. This also is only a name, not a title of its subject matter.

Period of Revelation

The first seven verses of this Surah belong to the earliest period at Makkah. Even according to some traditions which have been related in Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Musnad Ahmad, etc., on the authority of Hadrat Jabir bin Abdullah, these are the very earliest verses of the Qur'an to be revealed to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace). But the Muslim Ummah almost unanimously agreed that the earliest Revelation to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) consisted of the first five verses of Surah Al-Alaq(XCVI) However, what is established by authentic traditions is that after this first Revelation, no Revelation came down to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) for quite some time. Then, when it was resumed, it started with theme verses of Surah Al- Muddaththir. Imam Zuhri has given the following details of it:

"Revelation to the Holy Prophet remained suspended for quite some time, and it was such a period of deep grief and distress for him that he started going early to the tops of the mountains to throw himself down from them. But whenever he stood on the edge of a peak, the Angel Gabriel would appear and tell him that he was Allah's Prophet. This would console him and restore to him full peace of mind." (Ibn Jarir).

After this Imam Zuhri relates the following tradition on the authority of Hadrat Jabir bin Abdullah:

"The Holy Messenger of Allah describing the period of falrat al-wahi (break in revelation) said: One day when I was passing on the way, I suddenly heard a call from heaven. I raised my head and saw that the same Angel who had visited me in the Cave of Hira was sitting on a throne between heaven and earth. This struck terror in my heart, and reaching home quickly, I said: 'Cover me up, cover me up'. So the people of the house covered me up with a quilt (or blanket). At that time Allah sent down the Revelation: Ya ayyuhal-Muddaththiru... From then on revelation became intense and continuous." (Bukhari, Muslim Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Jarir).

The rest of the Surah (vv. 8-56) was revealed when the first Hajj season came after public preaching of Islam had begun in Makkah. This has been fully well described in the Sirah by Ibn Hisham and we shall cite it below.

Theme and Subject Matter

As has been explained above, the earliest Revelation to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) consisted of the first five verses of Surah Al-Alaq, in which it had been Said: "Read (O Prophet), in the name of your Lord, Who created: created man from a clot of congealed blood. Read: and your Lord is Most Generous, Who taught knowledge by the pen, taught man what he did not know."

This was the first experience of Revelation met with suddenly by the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace). in this message it was not told what great mission he had been entrusted with and what duties he had to perk form in future. He was only initiated into it and then left alone for a time so that the great strain this experience had caused should pass away and he should mentally become prepared to receive the Revelation and perform the prophetic mission in the future. After this intermission when Revelation Was resumed, the first seven verses of this Surah Were revealed: In these he Was for the first time commanded to arise and warn the people of the consequences of the way of life they were following and to proclaim the greatness of God in the world where others were being magnified without any right. Along with that he was given this instruction: The demand of the Unique mission that you have to perform, now is that your life should be pure in every respect and you should carry out the duty of reforming your people sincerely irrespective of any worldly gain. Then, in the last sentence, he was exhorted to endure with patience, for the sake of his Lord, all the hardships and troubles that he might have to face while performing his mission.

In the implementation of this Divine Command when the Holy Messenger of Allah began to preach Islam and recite the Qur'anic Surahs revealed successively, the people of Makkah felt alarmed, and it provoked a great storm of opposition and hostility. A few months passed in this state until the Hajj season approached. The people of Makkah feared that if Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) started visiting the caravans of the pilgrims coming from all over Arabia at their halting places and reciting the spell binding and unique Revelations of the Qur'an in their assemblies on the occasion of Hajj, his message would reach every part of Arabia and influence countless people. Therefore, the Quraish chiefs held a conference and settled that they would start a propaganda campaign against the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) among the pilgrims as soon as they arrived.

After they had agreed on this, Walid bin al-Mughirah said to the assembled people: "If you said contradictory things about Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings), we all would lose our trust among the people. Therefore, let us agree upon one opinion, which we should all say without dispute.

Some people said that they would call Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) a soothsayer. Walid said: “No, by God, be is not a soothsayer. We have seen the soothsayers: what they murmur and what they utter has no remote resemblance with the Qur'an.”

Some other people said: “Then we say he is possessed.” Walid said: He is not a possessed one: we have seen mad and insane people; the way one talks disjointedly and behaves foolishly in that state is known to all: who would believe that what Muhammad (upon whom be peace) presented was the incoherent speech of a madman?”

The people said: “Then we say he is a poet.” Walid said: “No, he is not a poet, for we know poetry in all its forms, and what he presents conforms to no form of it.”

The people said: “Then he is a sorcerer.” Walid said: “He is no sorcerer either: we have seen sorcerers and we also know what methods they adopt for their sorcery. This also does not apply to Muhammad.”

Then he said: "Whichever of these things you said about Muhammad, it would be known to be a false accusation. By God, his speech is sweet, his root is deep and his branches are fruitful." At this Abu Jahl urging on Walid said: "Your people will never be pleased with you unless you say something about Muhammad." He said: "Let me think over it awhile."

Then, after prolonged thought and consideration, he said: "The nearest thing to the truth is that you tell the Arabs that he is a sorcerer, who has brought a message by which he separates a man from his father; and from his brother, and from his wife and children, and from his family." They all agreed on what Walid had proposed.

Then, according to a scheme the men of Quraish spread among the pilgrims in the Hajj season and they warned everyone they met of the sorcery of Muhammad (upon whom be peace) and of his stirring up divisions in the families by it." But the result was that by their this plan the Quraish chiefs themselves made the name of the Holy Messenger known throughout Arabia. (Ibn Hisham, pp. 288-289. That Walid had made this proposal on the insistence of Abu Jahl has been related by Ibn Jarir in his Tafsir on the authority of Ikrimah).

This same event has been reviewed and commented upon in the second section of this Surah. The sequence of its contents is as follows:

In vv. 8-10 the deniers of Truth have been warned, saying: "You will see the evil result of what you are doing today on the Resurrection Day."

In vv. 11-26, without naming Walid bin al-Mughirah, it has been told how Allah had blessed him and how inimical he proved to be to true Faith. In this connection, his mental conflict has been portrayed, telling that, on the one hand, he was fully convinced of the truth of Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) and the Qur'an, but, on the other, he did not want to risk his leadership and position among his people. Therefore, not only he did not believe himself but after a long-drawn-out conflict with his conscience he also came out with the proposal that in order to restrain the people from believing the Qur'an should be branded as magic. After exposing his evil nature, it has been said: "Notwithstanding such evil inclinations and misdeeds, this person desires that he should be further blessed, whereas he has now become worthy of Hell, and never of further blessings."

In vv. 27-48, the dreadfulness of Hell has been depicted and it has been explained as to people of what character and morals really deserve it.

In vv. 49-53, the root cause of the disbelievers' aversion has been pointed out, saying: "Since they are fearless of the Hereafter, and look upon this worldly life as an end in itself, they flee from the Qur'an as though they were wild asses fleeing away from the lion: therefore, they propose unreasonable conditions for believing, whereas even if each and every condition of theirs was fulfilled, they could not advance even an inch on the way of Faith with their denial of the Hereafter."

In conclusion, it has been explicitly stated: Allah does not stand in need of anybody's faith that He may fulfill his conditions. The Qur'an is an admonition that has been presented before the people openly; now whoever wills may accept it. Allah has a right that the people should fear His disobedience and He alone has the power to forgive the one who adopts

piety and an attitude of God consciousness even though one may have committed many acts of disobedience in the past.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

یٰۤاَیُّهَا الۡمُدَّثِّرُ ۙ 1

(74:1) O you enveloped in your cloak![1]

1. A study of the background of the revelation of these verses given in the introduction above can help one understand why the Prophet (peace be upon him) on this occasion has been addressed with Ya ayyuhal-Muddaththiru instead of Ya ayyuhar-Rasulu (O Messenger), or Ya ayyuhan-Nabiyyu (O Prophet). As the Prophet (peace be upon him) had been terrified when he had suddenly seen the Angel Gabriel, sitting on a throne between heaven and earth, and had returned hastily home and asked the people of the house to cover him up, so Allah addressed him with Ya ayyuhal-Muddaththiru. From this fine way of address the meaning which automatically follows is: O My dear servant, why have you lain down thus enwrapped? You have been put under the burden of a great mission: you must now arise from your solitude to perform this mission with resolution and courage.

قُمۡ فَاَنۡذِرۡ ۖ 2

(74:2) Arise, and warn,[2]

2. A command of this very nature had been given to the prophet Noah (peace be upon him) while appointing him to the office of Prophethood: Warn the people of your nation before they are overtaken by a painful torment. (Surah Nooh, Ayat 1) The verse means: O you who lays enwrapped, stand up and arouse the people who live in heedlessness around you. Warn them of the fate which would certainly overtake them if they remained involved in the same heedlessness. Warn them that they are not living in a lawless kingdom where they are free to conduct themselves as they like and where they can do wherever they please without any fear or being called to account for it.

وَرَبَّكَ فَكَبِّرۡ ۖ 3

(74:3) and magnify the glory of your Lord,[3]

3. This is the primary duty of a Prophet (peace be upon him), which he has to perform in this world. His foremost duty is to refute the greatness of all those whom the ignorant people might be holding as great, and publicly proclaim that the greatness in this universe belongs to none but Allah alone. For this very reason the phrase Allahu Akbar has been held as of supreme importance in Islam. The adhan (call to prayer) begins with the proclamation of Allahu Akbar. The Muslim enters the Prayer itself with Allahu Akbar and repeats Allahu Akbar every time he sits or stands, He also pronounces Bismillahi Allahu Akbar when slaughtering an animal. The slogan of Allahu Akbar has become a most distinctive and

prominent emblem of Muslims throughout the world today, for the Prophet (peace be upon him) of this ummah himself had embarked on his mission with the magnification and glorification of Almighty Allah.

Here, there is another fine point, which must be understood well. As we have learned from the background of the revelation of these verses, this was the first occasion when the Prophet (peace be upon him) had been commanded to arise for performing the duties of the great mission of Prophethood, and it was obvious that the city and society in which he was commanded to perform this mission, was the centre of polytheism. Not only were the people around him polytheistic like the common Arabs but, more than that, the city of Makkah had become the most sacred place of pilgrimage for the polytheistic Arabs, and the Quraish were its attendants. Arising of a person in such a place all by himself and proclaiming the Oneness of God in the face of polytheism was full of risks. That is why the exhortation to proclaim the greatness of your Lord just after arise and warn contains this meaning also: Do not at all mind the terrifying and dreadful forces that seem to be obstructing and impeding your work and proclaim publicly that your Lord is the greatest of all those who can hinder and resist you from giving your message. This is indeed the greatest encouragement for a person who embarks on a divine mission. The one who has Allah's greatness and majesty deeply embedded in his heart will feel no hesitation at all in facing and fighting the entire world by himself for the sake of Allah.

وَثِيَابَكَ فَطَهِّرْ ۝٤

(74:4) and purify your robes,[4]

4. These are very comprehensive words, which are full of meaning.

They mean this: Keep your garments free from every filth and impurity, for the purity of the body and garments and the purity of the spirit are inter-linked and inter-dependent. A pure spirit and an impure body with impure garments cannot live together. The society in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) had arisen with the invitation to Islam, was not only steeped in the evils of unbelief and immorality, but was also devoid of even the most elementary concepts of purity and cleanliness, and the Prophet's (peace be upon him) task was to teach its members cleanliness in every way of life. Therefore he was instructed to establish and present a high standard of purity in his external life as well. Thus, it is the result of the same instruction that the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave mankind such detailed teaching about the cleanliness of the body and garments as is not possessed even by the most civilized nations of today, not to speak of the Arabs of the pre-Islamic days of ignorance. So much so that in most of the languages of the world there is no word synonymous with taharat. On the contrary, in Islam every book of the Hadith and Fiqh begins with injunctions and instructions on taharat (purity), which distinguishes between purity and impurity and gives minute details about the methods and means of obtaining purity.

The second meaning of these words is: Keep your garments neat and clean. The criterion of religiosity given to the world by the monastic concepts was that a man was holy to the extent he was unclean. If a person happened to put on neat clothes, he was looked upon as a

worldly man, whereas the fact is that human nature abhors filth and uncleanness and even a person of ordinary fine taste loves to be associated only with a neat and clean person. On this very basis, for the one calling the people to Allah it was made imperative that externally he should also look so neat and clean that the people should regard him with esteem and his personality should not be stained in any way so as to repel others.

The third meaning of this divine command is: Keep your garments free from moral evils: your dress should be neat and clean but it should bear no tinge of vanity and pride, display and exhibition, pomp and show. The dress is the first thing that introduces the personality of a person to others. The kind of dress a person wears makes the people judge at first sight what kind of a man he is. The dresses of the rulers and princes, the dresses of the religious functionaries, the dresses of the vain and conceited people, the dresses of the mean and shallow people, the dresses of the evil-natured and characterless people, all represent the tastes and tempers of those who wear them. The temper of the one calling to Allah is naturally different from all such people. Therefore, his dress should also necessarily be different from all of them. He should wear such a dress as should make everyone else feel that he is a noble and refined person, who is not involved in any evil of the self.

Its fourth meaning is: Keep away from moral evils. Ibn Abbas, Ibrahim Nakhai, Shabi, Ata, Mujahid. Qatadah, Saeed bin Jubair, Hasan Basri and other major commentators have given this very meaning to this verse: keep yourself morally pure and avoid all that is blameworthy. Also in Arabic usage when it is said: So and so is clean in his garments, it implies that he is morally good and pure; on the contrary, when it is said: He is filthy in his garments, it means that he is dishonest and fraudulent in his dealings: he is unreliable.

وَالرُّجْزَ فَاهْجُرْ ۖ 5

(74:5) and shun uncleanness,[5]

5. Un-cleanliness implies every kind of filth, whether of belief and thought, of morals and deeds, of the body, dress or mode of life. The verse means: Keep yourself free from the filth of evils which are prevalent in society around you: no one should ever impute to you the blame that your own life itself is stained in some degree with the evils that you tell others to avoid.

وَلَا تَمْنُن تَسْتَكْثِرُ ۖ 6

(74:6) and bestow not favour in order to seek from others a greater return,[6]

6. The words wala tamnun tastakthir in the original are so vast in meaning that no one sentence can convey their full sense in translation.

Their one meaning is: Whomever you favor, you should favor him without any selfish motive. Your bestowal of an endowment and donation, your generosity and good treatment should be only for the sake of Allah: there should be no trace in it of the desire that you

should receive any worldly gains in return for the favor done. In other words, do good to others for the sake of Allah, not for seeking any benefits.

The second meaning is: Although the mission of Prophethood that you are performing is a great favor in itself, for the people are obtaining true guidance because of it, do not remind the people of this favor, nor try to obtain any personal benefits from it.

The third meaning is: Although you are performing a great service, you should never gloat over it, nor should ever have the idea that by performing your prophetic duties, at the risk of life, you are doing any favor to your Lord.

وَلِرَبِّكَ فَاصْبِرْ ۝7

(74:7) and persevere for your Lord's sake.[7]

7. That is, the task that is being entrusted to you is full of hazards: you will meet with great hardships and difficulties and troubles on this way: even your own people will turn hostile against you and the whole of Arabia will become your enemy. Yet you should endure with patience, for the sake of your Lord, whatever you may have to face in this way, and carry out all your duties firmly and resolutely. Fear, greed, friendship, enmity, love, all these will hinder your way, but you should stand your ground firmly and steadfastly.

These were the very preliminary instructions which Allah gave His Messenger (peace be upon him) at the time when He commanded him to arise and start the work of Prophethood. If a person ponders over these brief sentences and their meaning his heart will testify that no better instructions could be given to a Prophet at the commencement of his prophetic mission. In these he was told what he was required to do, what kind of life, morals and dealings he should adopt, and taught with what intention, mentality and mode of thought he should go about his mission and also forewarned what kind of conditions he would meet with in the performance of his mission and how he would have to face and overcome them. Today the people who, blinded by their prejudices, say that these words were, God forbid, uttered by the Prophet (peace be upon him) during epileptic fits, should study these sentences carefully and judge for themselves whether these are the product of any epileptic fits, or the instructions of a God, which He gave to His servant while appointing him to the mission of Apostleship.

فَإِذَا نُقِرَ فِي النَّاقُورِ ۝8

(74:8) When the Trumpet shall be sounded,

فَذَٰلِكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَوْمٌ عَسِيرٌ ۝9

(74:9) that will surely be a hard day,[8]

8. As already explained in the introduction, this part of the Surah was sent down a few months after the initial verses when at the beginning of the first ever Hajj season, after the

advent of Islam, the Quraish chiefs decided in a conference to start a powerful propaganda campaign to dissuade the outsiders, who came to visit the Kabah, from the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). In these verses, this very scheming of the Quraish has been reviewed, and the review has begun with the words, as if to say: You may act as you please, but even if you succeed in achieving your object by these devices in the world, how will you save yourselves from your evil end on the Day when the Trumpet will be sounded and Resurrection will be established. (For explanation of the Trumpet, see(E.N. 47 of Surah Al-Anaam); (E.N. 57 of Surah Ibrahim); (E.N. 78 of Surah TaHa); (E.N. 1 of Surah Al-Hajj); (E.Ns 46, 47 of Surah YaSin), (E.N. 79 of Surah Az-Zumar); (E.N. 52 of Surah Qaf).

عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ غَيْرُ يَسِيْرٍ 10

(74:10) not an easy day for the unbelievers.[9]

9. These words by themselves support the conclusion that that Day will be light for the believers, and its hardships will be specially intended only for the deniers of the truth. Moreover, these words also contain the meaning that the severity of that Day will be of an enduring and permanent nature for disbelievers, it will not be a severity which might be expected to become mild with the passage of time.

ذَرْنِيْ وَمَنْ خَلَقْتُ وَحِيْدًا ۙ 11

(74:11) Leave Me with him[10] whom I alone have created,[11]

10. The address is directed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and it means: O Prophet, leave the case of the person (Walid bin al-Mughirah) to Me, who in the disbelievers' conference proposed that you should be branded as a sorcerer among the pilgrims coming from different parts of Arabia; it is now for Me to deal with him; you need not bother yourself about it at all.

11. This sentence can have two meanings and both are correct:

(1) That when I created him, he was not at that time born with any wealth and children and position of authority and chieftainship.

(2) That I alone was his Creator: those other gods whose godhead he is so ardently trying to keep established and is opposing your invitation to One God for the same object, were not My associates in creating him.

وَّجَعَلْتُ لَهٗ مَالًا مَّمْدُوْدًا ۙ 12

(74:12) whom I have endowed with abundant riches,

وَّبَنِيْنَ شُهُوْدًا ۙ 13

(74:13) and sons ever present with him,[12]

12. Walid bin al-Mughirah had ten or twelve sons of whom Khalid bin Walid became most famous. For these sons the word shuhud has been used, which can have several meanings:

(1) That they do not have to run about and go abroad in search of their livelihood: they have enough provisions at home; therefore, they can always remain at the beck and call of their father.

(2) That all his sons are prominent and influential people: they sit in assemblies and conferences with him.

(3) That they are the people of high rank and position and their testimony is accepted in all matters of life.

وَّمَهَّدتُّ لَهٗ تَمۡهِيۡدًا ۙ 14

(74:14) and for whom I have smoothed the way (to power and riches),

ثُمَّ يَطۡمَعُ اَنۡ اَزِيۡدَ ۙ 15

(74:15) and who still greedily desires that I should bestow upon him more.[13]

13. Its one meaning is that there is still no end to his greed. In spite of having all this he still desires that he should be granted every good thing of the world. Another meaning which Hasan Basri, and some other scholars have given is: He used to say: If what Muhammad (peace be upon him) says is really true that there is another life after death, and there will be a Paradise also in it, then that Paradise too has been prepared for me.

كَلَّا ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ لِاٰيٰتِنَا عَنِيۡدًا ؕ 16

(74:16) By no means; he is stubbornly opposed to Our Signs.

سَاُرۡهِقُهٗ صَعُوۡدًا ؕ 17

(74:17) I shall soon constrain him to a hard ascent.

اِنَّهٗ فَكَّرَ وَقَدَّرَ ۙ 18

(74:18) He reflected and then hatched a scheme.

فَقُتِلَ كَيۡفَ قَدَّرَ ۙ 19

(74:19) Ruin seize him, how did he hatch a scheme?

ثُمَّ قُتِلَ كَيْفَ قَدَّرَ ۝٢٠

(74:20) Again, ruin seize him, how did he hatch a scheme?

ثُمَّ نَظَرَ ۝٢١

(74:21) He looked (at others);

ثُمَّ عَبَسَ وَبَسَرَ ۝٢٢

(74:22) then frowned and scowled;

ثُمَّ أَدْبَرَ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ ۝٢٣

(74:23) then he retreated and waxed proud,

فَقَالَ إِنْ هَٰذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ يُؤْثَرُ ۝٢٤

(74:24) and said: "This (Qur'an) is merely a sorcery of yore;

إِنْ هَٰذَا إِلَّا قَوْلُ الْبَشَرِ ۝٢٥

(74:25) this is nothing but the word of a mere mortal!"[14]

14. The reference is to what happened in the conference of the disbelievers of Makkah. From the details of it that we have given in the introduction, it becomes obvious that this man in his heart had become fully convinced of the Quran's being divine word, but in order to save his position as a chief of his people, he was not prepared to affirm faith. When in the conference he himself turned down all the accusations that the Quraish chiefs were proposing against the Prophet (peace be upon him), he was compelled to devise an accusation from himself, which could be spread among the Arabs in order to bring a bad name to the Prophet (peace be upon him). Then, the way he struggled against his conscience, and the way he devised an accusation at last after a prolonged mental conflict, has been vividly depicted here.

سَأُصْلِيهِ سَقَرَ ۝٢٦

(74:26) Him shall I soon roast in Hell.

وَمَآ أَدۡرَىٰكَ مَا سَقَرُۖ 27

(74:27) And what do you know what Hell is?

لَا تُبۡقِي وَلَا تَذَرُۚ 28

(74:28) It spares nothing; it leaves nothing intact;[15]

15. This can have two meanings: first, that it will burn to ashes whoever is cast into it, but even after death he will not escape from punishment: he will be given life once again and burnt once again, This very subject has been treated at another place thus: He will neither die in it nor live. (Surah Al-Aala, Ayat 13). Another meaning can also be: It will leave none who has deserved the punishment and it will spare none from being punished.

لَوَّاحَةٞ لِّلۡبَشَرِ 29

(74:29) it scorches (even) the skin.[16]

16. After saying that it will leave nothing of the body unconsumed, making mention of scorching of the skin separately seems to be somewhat unnecessary. But this form of the punishment has been mentioned separately in particular because it is the skin of a man's face and body which actually makes his personality prominent, and it is its ugliness which makes him feel most ill at ease. He is not so grieved at the internal troubles of his body as, for instance, at his face being ugly, or that there should be spots on the skin of the exposed parts of his body, abhorrent to others. That is why it has been said: If the people who feel proud of their personalities in the world because of having handsome faces and splendid bodies, treat the revelations of Allah mockingly, as did Walid bin al-Mughirah, their faces will be scorched and their skins will be burned black.

عَلَيۡهَا تِسۡعَةَ عَشَرَ 30

(74:30) Over it are nineteen keepers.

وَمَا جَعَلۡنَآ أَصۡحَٰبَ ٱلنَّارِ إِلَّا مَلَٰٓئِكَةٗ وَمَا جَعَلۡنَا عِدَّتَهُمۡ إِلَّا فِتۡنَةٗ لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ لِيَسۡتَيۡقِنَ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ ٱلۡكِتَٰبَ وَيَزۡدَادَ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ إِيمَٰنٗا وَلَا يَرۡتَابَ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ ٱلۡكِتَٰبَ وَٱلۡمُؤۡمِنُونَ وَلِيَقُولَ ٱلَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٞ وَٱلۡكَٰفِرُونَ مَاذَآ أَرَادَ ٱللَّهُ بِهَٰذَا

مَثَلًا ۚ كَذٰلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَهْدِىْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۚ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ جُنُوْدَ رَبِّكَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ

وَمَا هِىَ اِلَّا ذِكْرٰى لِلْبَشَرِ ۔ 31

(74:31) We[17] have appointed none but angels as the keepers of the Fire,[18] and We have not made their number but as a trial for the unbelievers[19] so that those who have been endowed with the Book will be convinced[20] and the believers' faith will increase, [21] and neither those who have been endowed with the Book nor the believers will fall into any doubt. As for those in whose hearts there is a sickness[22] as well as the unbelievers, they will say: "What did Allah aim at by this strange parable?"[23] Thus does Allah let whomsoever He pleases to go astray, and directs whomsoever He pleases[24] to the Right Way. And none knows the hosts of your Lord but He.[25] (And Hell has only been mentioned here) that people may take heed.[26]

17. The whole passage from here to "none knows the hosts of your Lord but He Himself", is a parenthetical sentence, which has been inserted here to answer an objection of the disbelievers, who had started mocking it when they heard the Prophet (peace be upon him) say that 19 keepers had been appointed over Hell.

Their objection was: How strange that, on the one hand, we are told that all human beings, from the time of the Prophet Adam till Resurrection, who disbelieved and committed evil, will be cast into Hell, and, on the other hand, that there will be only 19 keepers, who will administer punishment to the countless numbers of men in such a huge Hell.

This caused a huge laughter among the chiefs of Quraish. Abu Jahl said: Brothers, are you so powerless that even as many as ten of you at a time will not be able to overpower a single policeman of Hell. At this a wrestler of the Bani Jumha said: Well I will deal with and overpower at least 17 of them by myself; as for the remaining two, you all together can tackle them. In response these sentences have been inserted as a parenthetical clause.

18. That is, it is foolish on your part to compare the angelic powers to human powers. They will be angels, not men, and you cannot imagine what tremendous powers Allah has granted to the angels He has created.

19. That is, although apparently there was no need to mention the number of the keepers of Hell, yet We have mentioned it so that it becomes a trial for every such person who may be concealing any kind of unbelief in his heart. Such a man may be making a great display of his faith but if he conceals even a tinge of the doubt about the Godhead and supreme powers of God, or about revelation and Prophethood, anywhere in his heart, his disbelief would immediately be exposed as soon as he would hear that only 19 policemen would control countless numbers of the culprits from among the jinn and men in such a huge jail and would also administer punishment to each of them individually.

20. Some commentators have explained it thus: As in the scriptures of the Jews and Christians, the same number of the angels has also been mentioned as keepers of Hell, they

would be convinced of this thing's being truly from Allah as soon as they heard it. But in our opinion this commentary is not correct for two reasons. First, we have not been able to see anywhere in the existing scriptures of the Jews and Christians in spite of search that the number of the angels appointed over Hell is 19. Second, there are many things in the Quran, which have also been mentioned in the scriptures of the Jews and Christians, yet they explain them away, saying that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has plagiarized these from their books. For these reasons the correct meaning of this statement in our opinion is: The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) knew that he would be ridiculed as soon as the disbelievers heard that 19 angels had been appointed over Hell, but in spite of this, he presented without the least hesitation and fear publicly before the people what had been revealed to him from Allah, and did not at all mind the jesting and mocking by the people. The pagans of Arabia were unaware of the unique distinction of the Prophets, but the followers of the earlier scriptures were fully aware that the Prophets in every age used to convey to their people intact whatever they received from God, whether it pleased them or displeased them. On this very basis it was to be expected of the Jews and the Christians that they would be convinced of the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) truth for only a Prophet could present an apparently strange thing without any hesitation before the people in an environment charged with antagonism and hostility. This is also evident that such a thing was shown by the Prophet (peace be upon him) on many other occasions. Its most prominent example is the event of the miraj (ascension) which he related openly before a general assembly of the disbelievers and did not at all care how his opponents would behave and react after they had heard the story of the wonderful event.

21. It has been explained at several places in the Quran that on the occasion of every trial when a believer remains steadfast to his faith, and forsaking the way of doubt and denial, disobedience or disloyalty to the faith, adopts the way of faith, obedience and loyalty to it, it increases and strengthens him all the more in faith and resignation (For explanation, see(Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 173);(Surah Al- Anfal, Ayat 2); (Surah At-Taubah, Ayats 124-125); (Surah Al- Ahzab, Ayat 22); (Surah Al-Fath, Ayat 4 and the corresponding E.Ns).

22. As sickness of the heart in the Quran is generally understood to imply hypocrisy, seeing this word here some commentators have expressed the view that this verse was revealed at Al-Madinah, for the hypocrites appeared at Al- Madinah. But this view is not correct for several reasons. In the first place, the assertion itself that there were no hypocrites at Makkah is false, and its falsehood has been exposed in the Introduction to the (Surah Al-Ankabut and in its verses 10-11).

Secondly, in our opinion it is not a correct way of writing commentary that in respect of a certain sentence occurring in a particular discourse which was revealed on a particular occasion, under particular circumstances, one should declare that it had been sent down on another occasion but has been inserted here without any relevance. The historical background of this part of Surah Al-Muddaththir is well known to us from authentic traditions. This was revealed in connection with a particular event of the early period of the life at Makkah. The whole context bears full relevance to the event. What could, therefore, be the occasion in this context that this one sentence, if it was revealed many years later at Al- Madinah, should have been inserted here?

As for the question what is implied by the disease of the heart here, its answer is that it implies the disease of doubt. Not only in Makkah but in the entire world there have been, and are, very few such people, who might deny God, Hereafter, Revelation, Prophethood, Heaven, Hell, etc. absolutely. In every age the greater majority by far has been of those people, who have been involved in the doubt whether there is God, or no God, Hereafter or no Hereafter, whether Heaven and Hell really exist, or are mere figments of the imagination, and whether the Messengers did really come and receive revelation or not. This same doubt has led most people to unbelief, otherwise the number of such people in the world who denied these truths absolutely has never been great. For a person who has any common sense knows that there is no rational ground whatever for denying the possibility of the existence of these things, or of declaring them absolutely impossible.

23. This does not mean that they accepted it as divine word but wondered why Allah had said such a thing. But what they actually meant was: A discourse which contained such an irrational and impossible thing could not be a revelation from Allah.

24. That is, Allah in this very way sometimes sends down in the course of His revelations and commandments such things as become a means of test and trial for the people. It is one and the same thing which a truth-loving, goodnatured and right-minded person hears and understanding its right meaning in the right way and adopts the straight path. But when heard by an obstinate, perverse and willful wrongdoer, makes him to misconstrue it and make it a new excuse for fleeing from the truth. Since the first man is himself a lover of the truth, Allah grants him guidance, for it is not the way of Allah to lead the seekers after truth forcibly astray. And since the second man himself does not want guidance, but chooses only error for himself, Allah also pushes him on to the way of error and deviation, for it is also not the way of Allah to forcibly pull to the way of the truth him who has an aversion to the truth. (The question of Allah's granting guidance and misguidance has been fully explained at many places for example, see (E.Ns 10,16, 19, 20 of Surah Al-Baqarah); (E.N. 173 of Surah An-Nisa); (E.Ns 17, 28, 90 of Surah Al-Anaam); (E.N. 13 of Surah Younus); (E.N. 54 of Surah Al-Kahf); (E.N. 71 of Surah Al- Qasas).

25. That is, none knows but Allah what different kinds and how many of the creatures He has created in the universe, what powers He has granted them, and what services He is taking from them. If the man clinging to the tiny globe of the earth seeing the tiny world around himself with his limited sight, is involved in the misunderstanding that the universe of God contains nothing but what he can perceive by his senses or by his instruments, this would only be his own shortsightedness, otherwise this universe is so vast and limitless that it is not in the power of man to obtain full knowledge about any of the things here, not to speak of comprehending mentally the concept of all its vastnesses.

26. The people may take heed: the people may recover their senses and wake up before they make themselves worthy of Hell and suffer its punishment, and should think of saving themselves from it. 32. No, never!

كَلَّا وَالْقَمَرِ ۙ 32

(74:32) Nay,[27] by the moon,

27. That is, it is not a hollow thing which may be mocked like that.

وَالَّيۡلِ اِذۡ اَدۡبَرَ ۙ 33

(74:33) and by the night when it recedes,

وَالصُّبۡحِ اِذَاۤ اَسۡفَرَ ۙ 34

(74:34) and by the day when it dawns (with its radiance),

اِنَّهَا لَاِحۡدَى الۡكُبَرِ ۙ 35

(74:35) surely (Hell) is one of the greatest Signs,[28]

28. That is, just as the moon and the night and the day are the great signs of the powers of Allah, so also is Hell a great sign of His powers. If the existence of the moon and the alternation of the night and day so regularly were not impossible, why should the existence of Hell be impossible as you think it is. You see these phenomena day and night; therefore, they do not surprise you: otherwise these things in themselves also are great marvels of the powers of Allah. If you had not observed them and somebody were to tell you that there is also such a thing as the moon in the world, or, there is a sun which leaves the world dark when it hides and makes the world shine forth with light when it appears, then the people like you would have made jests of it too as you make jests of Hell.

نَذِيۡرًا لِّلۡبَشَرِ ۙ 36

(74:36) a warning to humankind,

لِمَنۡ شَآءَ مِنۡكُمۡ اَنۡ يَّتَقَدَّمَ اَوۡ يَتَاَخَّرَ ؕ 37

(74:37) a warning to everyone of you whether he would like to come forward or lag behind.[29]

29. That is, the people have been warned to this effect. Now, let him who heeds the warning go forward on the right way, and let him who wills still lag behind.

كُلُّ نَفۡسٍۢ بِمَا كَسَبَتۡ رَهِيۡنَةٌ ۙ 38

(74:38) Each one is a hostage to one's deeds,[30]

30. For explanation, see(E.N. 16 of Surah At-Toor).

إِلَّآ أَصۡحَٰبَ ٱلۡيَمِينِۖ 39

(74:39) save the People of the Right Hand

فِي جَنَّٰتٖۛ يَتَسَآءَلُونَ ۙ 40

(74:40) who shall be in the Gardens,[31] and shall ask

31. In other words, the people of the left hand will be seized in consequence of their misdeeds, but the people of the right hand will have their debts settled. (For explanation of the people of the right hand and the left hand, see (E.Ns 5, 6 of Surah Al-Waqiah).

عَنِ ٱلۡمُجۡرِمِينَ ۙ 41

(74:41) about the guilty ones:[32]

32. At several places in the Quran, it has been stated that the dwellers of Paradise and the dwellers of Hell will be able to see and communicate with each other directly without the agency of any instrument whenever they will so desire, although they will be living hundreds of thousands of miles away from each other. For instance, see(Surah Al- Aaraf, Ayats 44-50 and E.N. 35); (Surah As-Saaffat, Ayats 50-57 and E.N. 32) on it.

مَا سَلَكَكُمۡ فِي سَقَرَ 42

(74:42) “What drove you to Hell?”

قَالُواْ لَمۡ نَكُ مِنَ ٱلۡمُصَلِّينَ ۙ 43

(74:43) They will answer: “We were not among those who observed Prayer,[33]

33. That is, we were not of those who after having believed in Allah and His Messenger and His Book, performed the foremost duty imposed by Allah, i.e. the Prayer. Here, it should be understood well that unless a person has believed he cannot offer the Prayer at all. Therefore, one’s being of those who performed the Prayer, by itself implies that one is a believer. But by attributing one’s going to Hell to his not being of those who performed their Prayer, it has been made explicit that one cannot escape Hell even after having believed if he does not perform his Prayers regularly.

وَلَمۡ نَكُ نُطۡعِمُ ٱلۡمِسۡكِينَ ۙ 44

(74:44) and we did not feed the poor,[34]

34. This shows how grave a sin it is in Islam to see a hungry man and fail to feed him even if one can, for this has been particularly mentioned as one of the causes of going to Hell.

وَكُنَّا نَخُوضُ مَعَ الْخَآئِضِينَ ۙ 45

(74:45) and we indulged in vain talk with those who indulged in vain talk,

وَكُنَّا نُكَذِّبُ بِيَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ ۙ 46

(74:46) and we gave the lie to the Day of Judgement

حَتّٰٓى اَتٰىنَا الْيَقِيْنُ ؕ 47

(74:47) until the inevitable event overtook us."[35]

35. Until the inevitable certainty overtakes: Until death came upon us. Here, the inevitable implies death as well as the Hereafter.

فَمَا تَنْفَعُهُمْ شَفَاعَةُ الشّٰفِعِيْنَ ؕ 48

(74:48) The intercession of the intercessors shall then be of no avail to them.[36]

36. That is, even if an intercessor interceded for a person who persisted in this way of life till death, he would not be forgiven. The question of intercession has been fully explained at many places in the Quran that no one can have any difficulty in knowing and understanding as to who can intercede and who cannot, when one can intercede and when one cannot, for whom one can intercede and for whom one cannot, and for whom intercession is beneficial and for whom it is not. As one of the major causes of the people's deviation in the world is their false concept about intercession, it has been explained at such length in the Quran as to leave no room for any doubt and ambiguity. For example, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 255); (Surah Al- Anaam, Ayat 94); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 53); (Surah Younus, Ayats 3-18); (Surah Maryam, Ayat 87); (Surah TaHa, Ayat 109); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 28); (Surah Saba, Ayat 23); (Surah Az-Zumar, Ayats 43-44); (Surah Al-Momin, Ayat 18); (Surah Ad-Dukhan, Ayat 86); (Surah An-Najm, Ayat 26); (Surah An-Naba, Ayat 37-38).

فَمَا لَهُمْ عَنِ التَّذْكِرَةِ مُعْرِضِيْنَ ۙ 49

(74:49) What is the matter with people that they are turning away from this Exhortation,

كَاَنَّهُمْ حُمُرٌ مُّسْتَنْفِرَةٌ ۙ 50

(74:50) as though they were frightened wild asses,

فَرَّتۡ مِنۡ قَسۡوَرَةٍ ؕ 51

(74:51) fleeing from a lion?[37]

37. This is an idiomatic expression in Arabic which depicts the character of wild donkeys who flee stupefied and stunned as soon as they smell a lion or hear a hunter.

بَلۡ يُرِيۡدُ كُلُّ امۡرِئٍ مِّنۡهُمۡ اَنۡ يُّؤۡتٰى صُحُفًا مُّنَشَّرَةً ۙ 52

(74:52) No indeed; each one of them desires that open letters be sent to each of them.[38]

38. That is, they desire that if Allah really has appointed Muhammad (peace be upon him) as His Prophet, He should send a letter to each one of the chiefs and elders of Makkah telling him that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is Allah's Prophet; therefore he should obey and follow him. And these letters should be such as may convince them that they have been written by Allah Himself. At another place in the Quran, this saying of the disbelievers of Makkah has been cited: We will not believe in it unless we are given the like of what has been given to the Messengers of Allah. (Al- Anaam, Ayat 124). At still another place their this demand has been cited: Or you ascend the sky ... and bring down to us a writing that we may read. (Surah Bani lsrail, Ayat 93).

كَلَّا ؕ بَلۡ لَّا يَخَافُوۡنَ الۡاٰخِرَةَ ؕ 53

(74:53) No indeed; the truth is that they have no fear of the Hereafter.[39]

39. That is, the real cause of their failure to affirm the faith is not that their demands are not fulfilled, but the real cause is that they are fearless of the Hereafter. They think that this world is an end in itself and they do not have any idea that there is another life after this worldly life in which they will have to render an account of their deeds. This very thing has made them careless and irresponsible in the world. They regard the question of truth and falsehood as utterly meaningless, for they do not see any truth following which may have necessarily led to a good result in the world, nor do they see any falsehood which might have always led to an evil result in the world. Therefore, they think it is useless merely to consider as to what is really true and what is false. This question can be worthy of serious consideration only for the person who regards the present life of the world as transitory and admits that the real and everlasting life is the life hereafter, where the truth will necessarily lead to a good result and falsehood necessarily to an evil result. Such a person will certainly believe when he sees the rational arguments and the pure teachings presented in the Quran and will use his common sense to understand what is actually wrong with the beliefs and deeds which the Quran calls wrong. But the denier of the Hereafter who is not at all serious in his search for the truth, will present ever new demands every day for not believing, and will present a new excuse for his denial even if all his demands are fulfilled. This same thing has been expressed in (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 7) thus: O Prophet, even if We had sent down

to you a Book written on paper, and even if they had touched it with their own hands, the disbelievers would have said: This is nothing but manifest sorcery.

كَلَّآ إِنَّهُۥ تَذۡكِرَةٞ ۚ 54

(74:54) Nay;[40] this is an Exhortation.

40. That is, no such demand of theirs will ever be fulfilled.

فَمَن شَآءَ ذَكَرَهُۥ ۝ 55

(74:55) So, whoever wills may benefit from it.

وَمَا يَذۡكُرُونَ إِلَّآ أَن يَشَآءَ ٱللَّهُ ۚ هُوَ أَهۡلُ ٱلتَّقۡوَىٰ وَأَهۡلُ ٱلۡمَغۡفِرَةِ ۝ 56

(74:56) But they will not benefit from it unless Allah Himself so wills.[41] He is worthy to be feared;[42] and He is worthy to forgive (those that fear Him).[43]

41. That is, a person's taking heed does not wholly depend upon his own will, but he takes heed only when Allah also wills to grant him the grace to take heed. In other words, the truth that has been expressed here is that no act of man takes a concrete shape solely by his own will, but each act is implemented only when the will of God combines with the will of the man. This is a very delicate question, failure to understand which has often made human thought falter. Briefly it can be understood thus: If in this world every man had the power to accomplish whatever he wanted to accomplish, the system of the world would be disturbed. This system continues to hold only because the will of Allah is dominant over all other wills. Man can accomplish whatever he wants to accomplish only when Allah also wills that he be allowed to accomplish it. The same is also the case with guidance and error. Only man's own desiring to have guidance is not enough for him to have guidance; he receives guidance only when Allah also takes a decision to fulfill his desire. Likewise, only man's desiring to go astray by itself is also not enough, but when Allah in view of his desire decides that he be allowed to wander into evil ways, then he wanders into the evil ways in which Allah allows him to wander. As for example, if a person wants to become a thief, only his desire is not enough that he may enter into any house he likes and walk away with whatever he likes, but he can fulfill his desire only at the time and to the extent and in the form that Allah allows him to fulfill it, according to His supreme wisdom and expedience.

42. That is, the admonition being given to you to avoid Allah's displeasure is not for the reason that Allah needs it, and if you did not take it, Allah would be harmed, but you are being so admonished because it is Allah's right that His servants should seek His pleasure and good will and should avoid doing anything against His will.

43. That is, it behooves only Allah that He should receive into His mercy whoever desists from evil no matter how many acts of disobedience he might have committed in the past.

Allah is not vengeful to His servants so that He may refuse to forgive their errors and be bent upon punishing them in any case.

75. Surah Al Qiyama (The Resurrection)

Name

The Surah has been so named after the word al-Qiyamah in the first verse. This is not only the name but also the title of this Surah, for it is devoted to Resurrection itself.

Period of Revelation

Although there is no tradition to indicate its period of revelation, yet there is in the subject matter of this Surah an internal evidence, which shows that it is one of the earliest Surahs to be sent down at Makkah. After verse 15 the discourse is suddenly interrupted and the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) told: "Do not move your tongue to remember this Revelation hastily. It is Our responsibility to have it remembered and read. Therefore, when We are reciting it, listen to its recital carefully. Again, it is Our responsibility to explain its meaning." Then, from verse 20 onward the same theme which was interrupted at verse 15, is resumed. This parenthetical passage, according to both the context and the traditions, has been interposed here for the reason that when the Angel Gabriel was reciting this Surah to the Holy Prophet, the Holy Prophet, lest he should forget its words later, was repeating them at the same moment. This in fact happened at the time when the coming down and receipt of Revelation was yet a new experience for him and he was not yet fully used to receiving it calmly. There are two other instances also of this in the Qur'an. First, in Surah Ta Ha the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) has been told: "And see that you do not hasten to recite the Qur'an before its revelation is completed to you." (v. 114). Then, in Surah Al-A'la, it has been said: "We shall enable you to recite:, then you shall never forget. (v. 6). Later, when the Holy Prophet became fully used to receiving the Revelation well, there remained no need to give him any such instruction. That is why except for these, three, there is no other instance of this in the Qur'an.

Theme and Subject Matter

Most of the Surahs, from here till the end of the Qur'an, in view of their content and style, seem to have been sent down in the period when after the first seven verses of Surah Al-Muddaththir, revelation of the Qur'an began like a shower of rain: Thus, in the successively revealed Surahs Islam and its fundamental concepts and moral teachings were presented so forcefully and effectively in pithy, brief sentences and the people of Makkah warned so vehemently on their errors and deviations that the Quraish chiefs were utterly confounded. Therefore, before the next Hajj season came they held the conference for devising schemes to defeat the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) as has been mentioned in the Introduction to the Surah Al-Muddaththir above.

In this Surah, addressing thee deniers of the Hereafter, replies have been given to each of their doubts and objections, strong arguments have been given to prove the possibility, occurrence and necessity of the Resurrection and Hereafter, and also it has been pointed out clearly that the actual reason of the people's denying the Hereafter is not that they regard it as impossible rationally but because their selfish motives do not allow them to affirm it. At the same time, the people have been warned, as if to say: "The event, the occurrence of which you deny, will inevitably come: all your deeds will be brought and placed before you.

As a matter of fact, even before any of you sees his record, he will be knowing fully well what he has done in the world, for no man is unaware of himself, no matter what excuses and pretenses he may offer to deceive the world and deceive himself in respect of his misdeeds."

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

لَاۤ أُقۡسِمُ بِیَوۡمِ الۡقِیٰمَةِ ۙ 1

(75:1) Nay,[1] I swear by the Day of Resurrection;

1. To begin the discourse with 'Nay' by itself indicates that the Surah was sent down to refute some argument which was already in progress. The theme that follows shows that the argument was about Resurrection and life after death, which the people of Makkah were denying and also mocking at it at the same time. This can be understood by an example. If a person only wants to affirm the truth of the Messenger, he will say: By God, the Messenger has come with the truth. But if some people might be denying the truth of the Messenger, he in response would rejoin, thus: Nay, by God, the Messenger has come with the truth. It would mean: That which you say is not true. I swear that the truth is this and this.

وَلَاۤ أُقۡسِمُ بِالنَّفۡسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ ؕ 2

(75:2) and nay, I swear by the self-reproaching soul![2]

2. The Quran has mentioned three kinds of human self:

(1) Ammarah: the self that urges man to evil.

(2) Lawwamah: the self that feels repentant at doing wrong, thinking wrong and willing wrong and reproaches man for this; and the same is called conscience in modern terminology.

(3) Mumtmainnah: the self that feels full satisfaction at following the right path and abandoning the wrong path.

Here the thing for which Allah has sworn an oath by the Resurrection (al-Qiyamah) and the self-reproaching self, has not been mentioned, for the following sentence itself points it out. The oath has been sworn to stress the truth that Allah will certainly resurrect man after death and He has full power to do so. Now, the question arises: What is the relevance of swearing an oath by these two truths to this thing?

As for the Day of Resurrection, the reason of swearing by it is certainty. The whole system of the universe testifies that it is neither eternal nor everlasting. Its own nature tells that it has neither existed since eternity nor can last till eternity. Human intellect has never had any strong argument to support the baseless view that this ever changing world could have existed since ever and would last for ever. But as the knowledge of man about this world

goes on increasing, it goes on becoming more and more certain for man himself that this workhouse of life had a beginning in time before which it was not, and necessarily it has also an end in time after which it will not be. For this reason, Allah has sworn an oath by Resurrection itself on the occurrence of Resurrection, and this is an oath of the kind that we might swear addressing a skeptical person, who may be skeptical about his own existence, saying: By you yourself, you exist, i.e. your own being itself testifies that you exist.

But an oath by the Day of Resurrection is only an argument for the truth that this system will one day be upset. As for the truth that after that man shall be resurrected and called upon to account for his deeds and made to see the good or evil results thereof, another oath has been sworn by the self reproaching soul. No man exists in the world who may not have a faculty called conscience in him. This conscience is necessarily conscious of the good and evil, and no matter how perverted and degraded a man might be, his conscience always checks him on doing evil and for not doing good irrespective of the fact whether the criterion of good and evil that he had set for himself might in itself be right or wrong. This is an express pointer that man is not merely an animal but a moral being. He naturally can distinguish good from evil; he regards himself as responsible for the good or the evil he does; and even if he might feel pleased suppressing the reproaches of his conscience over the evil he has done to another, he, on the contrary, feels and demands from within that the other one who has done the same evil to him, must deserve punishment. Now, if the existence of a self-reproaching soul of this kind in man himself is an undeniable truth, then this truth too is undeniable that the same self-reproaching soul is an evidence of the life hereafter, which exists in man's own nature itself. For this demand of nature that man must be rewarded or punished for his good or evil deeds for which he himself is responsible, cannot be met in any other way than in the life hereafter. No sensible man can deny that if man becomes non existent after death, he will certainly be deprived of the rewards of his good deeds and escape the just and lawful punishment of many of his evil deeds. Therefore, unless one comes to believe in the absurd idea that a rational being like man has stumbled into an irrational system of the universe and a moral being like man has happened to be born in a world which basically has nothing to do with morality, he cannot deny the life hereafter. Likewise, the philosophy of the transmigration of souls also is no reply to this demand of nature, for if man goes on being born and reborn in this very world for the sake of being rewarded and punished for his moral acts, in every cycle of life he will perform some additional moral acts, which again will need to be rewarded and punished, thus making his account more and more lengthy and complicated in an endless way instead of being settled finally and for good. Therefore, this demand of nature is fulfilled only in case man in this world should have only one life and then, after the whole human race has been brought to an end, there should be another life in which all acts of man should be judged and assessed rightly and justly and he should be fully rewarded or punished in consequence thereof. (For further explanation, (see E.N. 30 of Surah Al- Aaraf).

أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنسَانُ أَلَّن نَّجْمَعَ عِظَامَهُ ۖ 3

(75:3) Does man imagine that We will not be able to bring his bones together again?[3]

3. The above two arguments, which have been presented in the form of the oaths, only prove two things. First, that the end of the world (i.e. the first stage of Resurrection) is a

certainty; and second, that another life after death is necessary, for without it the logical and natural demands of man's being a moral being cannot be fulfilled; and this will certainly happen, for the existence of the conscience in man testifies to it. Now, this third argument has been given to prove that life after death is possible. The people of Makkah who denied it, said again and again: How can it be that the people who died hundreds of thousands of years ago, whose bodies have disintegrated into particles and mixed in the dust, whose bones decayed and were scattered away by the winds, some of whom were burnt to ashes, others devoured by the beasts of prey, still others drowned in the seas and swallowed by fish, the material constituents of their bodies should re-assemble and every man should rise up as the same person that he once was ten or twenty thousand years before? Allah has given its very rational and highly forceful reply in the form of this brief question: Does man think that We shall not be able to put his bones together? That is, If you had been told that the scattered particles of your body would reunite of their own accord some time in the future, and you would come back to life by yourself with this very body, you would no doubt have been justified in regarding it as impossible. But what you have actually been told is that such a thing will not happen by itself, but Allah Almighty will do this. Now, do you really think that the Creator of the universe, Whom you yourself also regard as the Creator, would be powerless to do so? This was such a question in answer to which nobody who believed in God to be the Creator of the universe; could say, neither then nor today, that even God Himself could not do this even if He so willed. And if a disbeliever says such a thing, he can be asked: How did God in the first instance make the body in which you at present exist, by gathering its countless particles together from the air, water and earth and many other places you do not know. How, then, can you say that the same God cannot gather its constituent parts together once again.

بَلٰى قٰدِرِيْنَ عَلٰٓى اَنْ نُّسَوِّيَ بَنَانَهٗ 4

(75:4) Yes indeed; We have the power to remould even his finger-tips.[4]

4. That is, not to speak of building up your skeleton once again by gathering together the major bones? We are able to make whole the most delicate parts of your body, even your finger tips, as they used to be before.

بَلْ يُرِيْدُ الْاِنْسَانُ لِيَفْجُرَ اَمَامَهٗ ۚ 5

(75:5) But man desires to persist in his evil ways.[5]

5. In this brief sentence the real disease of the deniers of the Hereafter has been clearly diagnosed. What makes them deny the Hereafter is not, in fact, their regarding the Resurrection and Hereafter as impossible but they deny it because acceptance of the Hereafter inevitably imposes certain moral restrictions on them, which they detest. They desire that they should continue roaming in the world at will as they have been roaming before. They should have full freedom to go on committing whatever injustice, dishonesty, sin and wickedness that they have been committing before, and there should be no deterrent to obstruct their freedom and to warn them that one day they will have to appear and

render an account of their deeds before their God. Therefore, it is not their intellect which is hindering them from believing in the Hereafter but their desires of the self.

يَسْـَٔلُ اَيَّانَ يَوْمُ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۟ 6

(75:6) He asks: "When will the Day of Resurrection be?"[6]

6. This question was not put as a question but derisively and to deny Resurrection, That is, they did not want to ask when Resurrection would take place but asked mockingly: What has happened to the day with which you are threatening us. When will it come.

فَاِذَا بَرِقَ الْبَصَرُ ۙ 7

(75:7) When the sight is dazed,[7]

7. Literally, the words bariq al-basaru mean dazzling of the eyes by lightning, but in the Arabic idiom these words do not specifically carry this meaning only but are also used for man's being terror-stricken and amazed, or his being confounded on meeting with an accident suddenly and his eyes being dazed at some distressing sight before him. This subject has been expressed at another place in the Quran, thus: Allah is only deferring their case to the Day when the eyes shall stare with consternation. (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 42).

وَخَسَفَ الْقَمَرُ ۙ 8

(75:8) and the moon is eclipsed,

وَجُمِعَ الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ ۙ 9

(75:9) and the sun and the moon are joined together,[8]

8. This is a brief description of the chaotic condition of the system of the universe that will prevail in the first stage of Resurrection. The darkening of the moon and the joining of the moon and the sun together can also mean that not only will the moon lose its light, which is borrowed from the sun, but the sun itself will become dark and both will become devoid of light similarly. Another meaning can be that the earth will suddenly start rotating in the reverse order and on that day both the moon and the sun will rise simultaneously in the west. And a third meaning can be that the moon will suddenly shoot out of the earth's sphere of influence and will fall into the sun. There may possibly be some other meaning also of this which we cannot understand today.

يَقُوْلُ الْاِنْسَانُ يَوْمَئِذٍ اَيْنَ الْمَفَرُّ ۚ 10

(75:10) on that Day will man say: "Whither the refuge?"

كَلَّا لَا وَزَرَ ۝11

(75:11) No, there is no refuge.

إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ ٱلْمُسْتَقَرُّ ۝12

(75:12) With your Lord alone will be the retreat that Day.

يُنَبَّؤُا۟ ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ يَوْمَئِذٍۭ بِمَا قَدَّمَ وَأَخَّرَ ۝13

(75:13) On that Day will man be apprised of his deeds, both the earlier and the later.[9]

9. Bima qaddama wa akhkhara is a very comprehensive sentence, which can have several meanings and probably all are implied:

(1) That man on that Day will be told what good or evil he had earned in his worldly life before death and sent forward for his hereafter, and also informed what effects of his good or evil acts he had left behind in the world, which continued to work and to influence the coming generations for ages after him.

(2) That he will be told everything he ought to have done but which he did not do, and did what he ought not to have done.

(3) That the full date wise account of what he did before and what he did afterwards will be placed before him.

(4) That he will be told whatever good or evil he had done as well as informed of the good or the evil that he had left undone.

بَلِ ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِۦ بَصِيرَةٌ ۝14

(75:14) But lo, man is well aware of himself,

وَلَوْ أَلْقَىٰ مَعَاذِيرَهُۥ ۝15

(75:15) even though he might make up excuses.[10]

10. That is, the object of placing man's record before him will not be to inform the culprit of his crimes, but this will be done because the demands of justice are not fulfilled unless the proof of the crime is produced before the court; otherwise everyman fully knows what he actually is. For the sake of self-knowledge he does not need that another one should tell him what he is. A liar can deceive the whole world but he himself knows that he lies. A thief can devise a thousand devices to conceal his crime but he himself is aware that he is a thief. A person involved in error can present a thousand arguments to assure the people that he is

honestly convinced of the disbelief, atheism or polytheism, which he professes and follows, but his own conscience is never unaware of why he persists in that creed and what, in fact, prevents him from understanding and admitting its error and falsity. An unjust, wicked, dishonest, unmoral and corrupt person can even suppress the voice of his own conscience by inventing one or another excuse so that it may stop reproaching him and should be satisfied that he is doing whatever he is doing only because of certain compulsions, expediencies and genuine needs, but despite this he has in any case the knowledge of what wrong he has committed against a certain person, how he has deprived another of his rights, how he deceived still another and that unlawful methods he used to gain what he has gained. Therefore, at the time when one appears in the court of the Hereafter, every disbeliever, every hypocrite, every wicked person and culprit will himself be knowing what he has done in the world and for what crime he stands before his God.

لَا تُحَرِّكْ بِهٖ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهٖ ؕ 16

(75:16) (O Prophet),[11] do not stir your tongue hastily (to commit the Revelation to memory).

11. The whole passage from here to "Then, indeed, it is upon Us its clarification" is a parenthesis, which has been interposed here as an address to the Prophet (peace be upon him). As we have explained in the introduction above, in the initial stages of the Prophethood when the Prophet (peace be upon him) was not yet fully used to receiving the revelation, he was afraid when revelation came down to him whether he would be able to remember exactly what the Angel Gabriel was reciting to him or not. Therefore, he would try to commit to memory rapidly what he heard from the Angel simultaneously. The same thing happened when Gabriel was reciting these verses of Surah Al- Qiyamah. Therefore, interrupting what was being revealed, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was instructed to the effect: Do not try to memorize the words of the revelation, but listen to it attentively and carefully. It is Our responsibility to enable you to remember it by heart and then to recite it accurately. Rest assured that you will not forget even a word of this revelation, nor ever commit a mistake in reciting it.

After this instruction the original theme is resumed with: Nay, but you love the worldly life. The people who are not aware of this background regard these sentences as entirely unconnected with the context when they see them interposed here. But one does not see any irrelevance when he has understood their background. This can be understood by an example. A teacher seeing the inattentiveness of a student in the course of the lesson might interrupt the lesson to tell him: Listen to me carefully, and then resume his speech, This sentence will certainly seem to be irrelevant to those who might be unaware of the incident and might read the lesson when it is printed and published word for word, But the one who is aware of the incident because of which this sentence was interposed, will feel satisfied that the lesson has been reproduced verbatim and nothing has been increased or decreased in it in the process of reproduction.

The explanation that we have given above of the interpolation of the parenthesis in the present context is not merely based on conjecture, but it has been explained likewise in the authentic traditions. Imam Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, Nasai, Tirmidhi Ibn Jarir, Tabarani,

Baihaqi and other traditionists have related with authentic chains of transmitters a tradition from Abdullah bin Abbas, saying that when the Quran was revealed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), he would start repeating the words of the revelation rapidly as the Angel Gabriel recited them, fearing lest he should forget some part of it later. Thereupon, he was instructed: Do not move your tongue to remember this revelation hastily. The same thing has been related from Shabi, Ibn Zaid, Dahhak, Hasan Basri, Qatadah, Mujahid and other early commentators.

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْاٰنَهُ ۚ صلے 17

(75:17) Surely it is for Us to have you commit it to memory and to recite it.

فَإِذَا قَرَأْنٰهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْاٰنَهُ ۚ 18

(75:18) And so when We recite it,[12] follow its recitation attentively;

12. Although it was Angel Gabriel who recited the Quran to the Prophet (peace be upon him), since he recited it on behalf of Allah and not on his own behalf, Allah said: When We have recited it.

ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ ۖ 19

(75:19) then it will be for Us to explain it.[13]

13. This gives the feeling, and some early commentators have also given expression to the same, that probably in the beginning the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah used to ask of the Angel Gabriel the meaning of a verse or a word or a command of the Quran even in the very midst of the revelation itself. Therefore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was not only given the instruction that he should listen quietly to revelation when it came down to him, and assured that its each word would be preserved in his memory precisely, and he would be enabled to recite the Quran exactly as it was revealed, but at the same time it was also promised that he would be made to understand the meaning and intention of each command and each instruction of divine revelation.

This is a very important verse, which proves certain fundamental concepts which, if understood well, can protect one against the errors which some people have been spreading before as they are spreading them today.

First, it clearly proves that the Prophet ((peace be upon him) did not receive only the revelation which is recorded in the Quran but besides that he was also given such knowledge by revelation as is not recorded in it. For, if the meaning and intention of the commandments of the Quran, its allusions, its words and its specific terms, which the Prophet (peace be upon him) was made to understand had been recorded in the Quran, there was no need to say that it was also Allah's own responsibility to explain its meaning, for it should then be there in the Quran itself. Hence, one will have to admit that the

explanations which were given by Allah of the meanings of the contents of the Qur'an, were in any case in addition to the words of the Quran. This is another proof of the secret revelation to the Prophet (peace be upon him) which the Quran provides. (For further proofs of this from the Quran, see our book Sunnat ki Aaini Haithiyat pp. 94-95 and pp. 118-125).

Secondly, the explanation of the meaning and intention of the Quran and of its commandments that was given by Allah to the Prophet (peace be upon him), was given for the purpose that he should make the people understand the Quran by his word and deed according to it and teach them to act on its commands. If this was not the object, and the explanation was only given so that he may restrict its knowledge to himself, it was then an exercise in futility, for it could not help in any way in the performance of the prophetic duties. Therefore, only a foolish person could say that this explanatory work had no legal value at all. Allah Himself has said in(Surah An-Nahl, Ayat 44): And O Prophet, We have sent down this admonition to you so that you may make plain and explain to the people the teaching which has been sent for them. (For explanation, (see E.N. 40 of Surah An-Nahl). And at four places in the Quran Allah has stated that the Prophet's task was not only to recite the verses of the Book of Allah but also to teach the Book. (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 129, 151); (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 164); (Surah Al-Jumuah, Ayat 2). We have fully explained all these verses at pp. 74-77 of Sunnat ki Aaini Haithiyat. After this, how can a believer of the Quran deny that the Quran's correct and authoritative, as a matter of fact official, explanation is only that which the Prophet (peace be upon him) has given by his word and deed, for it is not his personal explanation but the explanation given by the God Who sent down the Quran to him. Apart from this, or leaving this aside any person who explains a verse, or a word, of the Quran according to his personal whim and desire, commits a boldness which no true believer could ever commit.

Thirdly, even if a person has read the Quran only cursorily, he cannot help feeling that there are many things in it whose actual meaning and intention cannot be understood by a reader of Arabic only from the words of the Quran, nor can he know how to act on the commands enjoined in them. Take the word salat for instance. The act which has been most stressed by the Quran after the affirmation of faith is the act of salat. But no man only with the help of the dictionary can determine its actual meaning. At the most what one can understand from the way it has been repeatedly mentioned in the Quran is that this Arabic word has been used in some special terminological sense, and it probably implies some special act which the believers are required to perform. But merely by reading the Quran no reader of Arabic can determine what particular act it is, and how it is to be performed. The question: If the Sender of the Quran had not appointed a teacher from Himself and explained to him the precise and exact meaning of this term and taught him the method in full detail of implementing the command of salat, could there be even two Muslims in the world who would have agreed on one method of acting on the command of salat just by reading the Quran. The reason why Muslims have been performing salat in one and the same way, generation after generation, for more than 1500 years, and the way millions and millions of Muslims are carrying out the command of salat similarly in every part of the world, is that Allah had not only revealed the words of the Quran to His Messenger (peace be upon him) but had also explained to him fully the meaning of those words and the same meaning he

taught to the people who accepted the Quran as the Book of Allah and him as the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah.

Fourthly, the means of knowing the explanation of the words of the Quran that Allah taught His Messenger (peace be upon him) and the Messenger (peace be upon him) his ummah by word and deed, is none but the Hadith and the sunnah, The Hadith implies the traditions which the earliest followers passed on to the later generations about the sayings and acts of the Messenger (peace be upon him) on sound authority, and the sunnah implies the way of life which became prevalent in the individual and collective life of the Muslims by the Messenger's (peace be upon him) oral and practical teaching, the details of which have been bequeathed by the former to the latter generations by reliable traditions as well as seen by them practically in the life of the earliest followers. The person who refuses to acknowledge this means of knowledge, in fact, says that Allah after taking the responsibility of explaining the meaning of the Quran to His Messenger (peace be upon him) had, God forbid, failed to fulfill His promise. For this responsibility had not been taken to explain the meaning only to the Messenger in his personal capacity but for the purpose that the ummah also be made to understand the meaning of the divine Book through the agency of the Messenger (peace be upon him). And as soon as the Hadith and the sunnah are denied to be a source of law, it virtually amounts to saying that Allah has failed to carry out His responsibility. May Allah protect us froth such blasphemy. To the one who argues that many people had also fabricated Hadith, we would say that fabrication of Hadith itself is a major proof of the fact that in the beginning the entire ummah gave the sayings and acts of the Messenger (peace be upon him) the status of law, otherwise why should the people who wanted to spread error have fabricated false Hadith. For only those coins are counterfeited which are current in the bazaar; nobody would print paper currency which had no value in the bazaar. Then, those who say such a thing perhaps do not know that this ummah had seen to it from the very beginning that no falsehood was ascribed to the holy man whose sayings and acts had the status of law, and as the danger of ascribing false things to him increased, the wellwishers of the ummah made greater efforts to distinguish the genuine from the counterfeit. The science of distinguishing the genuine from the false traditions is a unique science invented and developed only by the Muslims. Unfortunate indeed are those who without acquiring this science are being misled by the western orientalists to look upon the Hadith and the sunnah as unauthentic and unreliable and do not realize how grievously they are harming Islam by their foolhardiness.

كَلَّا بَلْ تُحِبُّونَ الْعَاجِلَةَ ۙ 20

(75:20) Nay;[14] the truth is that you love ardently (the good of this world) that can be obtained hastily,

14. The theme is again resumed from where it was interrupted by the parenthesis. Nay implies: You deny the Hereafter not because you regard the Creator of the universe as helpless to bring about Resurrection and raise the dead, but because of this and this other reason.

وَتَذَرُوْنَ الْاٰخِرَةَ ؕ 21

(75:21) and are oblivious of the Hereafter.[15]

15. This is the second reason for denying the Hereafter, the first being the one mentioned in verse 5 above, saying: Since man wants to avoid the moral restrictions which are inevitably imposed by the belief in the Hereafter, his selfish motives, in fact, urge him to deny the Hereafter, and then he tries to present arguments in order to rationalize his denial. Now, the second reason being presented is that the deniers of the Hereafter are narrow-minded and shortsighted; for them only those results are all important, which appear in this world, and they do not give any importance to those effects which will appear in the Hereafter. They think that they should spend all their labor and effort in attaining whatever benefits, pleasures or joys they can attain here, for if one attained this, one attained everything, no matter what evil end this might lead to in the Hereafter. Likewise, they think that the loss or trouble or grief that can afflict one here is a thing that one must avoid, no matter how great a reward it might earn one in the Hereafter if one endured it here. They are only interested in the cash bargain. For the sake of as remote a thing as the Hereafter they can neither abandon a profit nor suffer a loss today. With this mode of thought when they discuss the question of the Hereafter rationally, it is not true rationalism but a mode of thinking because of which they are resolved not to acknowledge the Hereafter in any case even if their conscience might be crying froth within that the arguments for the possible occurrence and necessity of the Hereafter given in the Quran are highly rational and their own reasoning against it is very weak.

وُجُوْهٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ نَّاضِرَةٌ ۙ 22

(75:22) Some faces on that Day will be fresh and resplendent,[16]

16. Some faces shall be radiant; will be beaming with joy and delight, for the Hereafter which they had believed in, will be before them precisely accordingly to their belief. Thus, when they see the Hereafter for the sake of which they had given up the unlawful benefits of the world and suffered the lawful losses, actually established before their very eyes, they will have the satisfaction that they had made the correct decision about their way of life, and the time had come when they would enjoy its best and plentiful fruits.

اِلٰى رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ ۚ 23

(75:23) and will be looking towards their Lord;[17]

17. Some commentators have understood this allegorically. They say that the words looking towards someone are used idiomatically for having expectations from some one, awaiting his decision and hoping for his mercy and kindness: so much so that even a blind person also says that he is looking towards some one in the hope to see how he helps him. But in a large number of the Ahadith the commentary that has been reported of it from the Prophet (peace be upon him) is that in the Hereafter the illustrious servants of Allah will be blessed

with the vision of their Lord. According to a tradition in Bukhari: You will openly see your Lord. Muslim and Tirmidhi have related on the authority of Suhaib that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: When the righteous people enter Paradise, Allah will ask them: Do you want that I should bless you with something more? They will answer: Have You not made our faces bright: Have You not admitted us into Paradise and saved us from Hell? Thereupon, Allah will remove the curtain and none of the blessings that they had been blessed with until then will be dearer to them than that they should be blessed with the vision of their Lord. And this very reward is the additional reward about which the Quran says: Those who have done excellent works, will get excellent rewards, and even something in addition to that. (Surah Younus, Ayat 26). Bukhari and Muslim have related, on the authority of Abu Saeed Khudri and Abu Hurairah: The people asked: O Messenger of Allah, shall we see our Lord on the Day of Resurrection. The Messenger (peace be upon him) replied: Do you find any difficulty in seeing the sun and the moon when there is no cloud in between? They said that they did not. The Messenger (peace be upon him) said: Likewise, you will see you Lord. Another tradition bearing almost on the same subject has been reported in Bukhari and Muslim from Jarir bin Abdullah, Imam Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Daraqutni, lbn Jarir, Ibn AlMundhir, Tabarani, Baihaqi, Ibn Abi Shaibah and some other traditionists have related, with a little variation in wordings a tradition from Abdullah bin Umar, saying: The man of the lowest rank among the dwellers of Paradise will see the vastness of his kingdom up to a distance covered in two thousand years, and the people of the highest rank among them will see their Lord twice daily. Then, the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited this verse: On that Day some faces shall be radiant, looking towards their Lord. A tradition in Ibn Majah from Jabir bin Abdullah is to the effect: AIIah will look towards them, and they will look towards Allah. Then, until Allah hides Himself from them, they will not pay attention to any other blessing of Paradise, and will continue to look towards Him. On the basis of this and many other traditions, the followers of the sunnah almost unanimously understand this verse in the meaning that in the Hereafter the dwellers of Paradise will be blessed with the vision of Allah, and this is supported by this verse of the Quran too: Nay, surely on that Day they (the sinners) shall be kept away from their Lord's vision. (Surah Al-Mutaffifin, Ayat 15). From this one can automatically conclude that this deprivation will be the lot of the sinners, not of the righteous.

Here, the question arises how can man ever see God? A thing is seen when it is there in a particular direction, place, form and color, and the rays of light are reflected from it to the eye of man and its image is conveyed from the eye to the sight area in the brain. Is it ever conceivable with regard to the Being of Allah, Lord of the Universe, that man would be able to see Him in this way? But this question, in fact, springs from a grave misunderstanding. It does not take into account the distinction between two things: the essence of seeing and the specific form of the occurrence of the act of seeing with which we are familiar in the world. The essence of seeing is that the seer should be characterized by the power of sight: he should not be blind, and the thing to be seen should be manifest to him, not hidden from him. But in the world what we experience and observe is only the specific form of seeing in which a man or an animal practically sees something, and for this it is necessary that the seer should have an organ called the eye in his body, the eye should have the power of sight, it should have a physically bounded, colored object before it, which should reflect rays of light to the eye, and the eye should be able to receive its image. Now, if a person thinks that the practical demonstration of the essence of seeing can take place only in the form with

which we are familiar in the world, he would be only showing the narrowness of his own mental outlook; otherwise there can be in the Kingdom of God countless ways of seeing, which we cannot even imagine. The one who disputes this should tell us whether his God is seeing or blind. If He is seeing and sees His whole Universe and everything in it, does He see all this with an organ called the eye with which men and animals see things in the world, and does the act of seeing issue forth from Him as it issues forth from us? Obviously, the answer to this is in the negative, and when it is so, why should a sensible man find it difficult to understand that in the Hereafter the dwellers of Paradise will not see Allah in the specific form in which man sees something in the world, but their nature of seeing will be different, which we cannot comprehend here. The fact is that it is even more difficult for us to understand the nature of the Hereafter precisely and accurately than it is for a two-year-old child to understand what matrimonial life is, whereas he himself will experience it when he grows up.

وُجُوهٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍۢ بَاسِرَةٌ ۙ 24

(75:24) and some faces on that Day will be gloomy,

تَظُنُّ اَنْ يُّفْعَلَ بِهَا فَاقِرَةٌ ؕ 25

(75:25) believing that a crushing calamity is about to strike them.

كَلَّاۤ اِذَا بَلَغَتِ التَّرَاقِىَ ۙ 26

(75:26) Nay;[18] when a man's soul reaches up to the throat,

18. The word Nay relates to the context, and means: You are wrong in thinking that you will be annihilated after death and you will not return to your Lord.

وَقِيْلَ مَنْ ۜ رَاقٍ ۙ 27

(75:27) and it is said: "Is there any enchanter who can step forward and help (by his chanting)?"[19]

19. The word raqin in the original may he derived from ruqayyah, which means resort to charming, enchanting and exercising, and also from raqi, which means ascending. In the first case, the meaning would be: At last, when the attendants of the patient are disappointed with every remedy and cure, they will say: Let us at least call in an enchanter, who may save him. In the second case, the meaning would be: At that time the angels will say: which angels are to take his soul: the angels of punishment or the angels of mercy? In other words, at that very time the question will be decided in what capacity the dying one is entering the Hereafter; if he is a righteous person, the angels of mercy will take him, and if he is wicked, the angels of mercy will keep away and the angels of punishment will seize him and take him away.

وَّظَنَّ اَنَّهُ الۡفِرَاقُ ۙ 28

(75:28) and he realises that the hour of parting is come,

وَالۡتَفَّتِ السَّاقُ بِالسَّاقِ ۙ 29

(75:29) and calf is inter-twined with calf.[20]

20. Some commentators have taken the word saq (leg, shank) in its literal meaning, thereby implying that at death one lean leg will join the other lean leg; some others have taken it metaphorically in the sense of difficulty, vehemence and hardship so as to mean: At that time one affliction will be joined with another affliction, one of being separated from the world and all its enjoyments, and the other of being seized and taken to the Hereafter as a culprit, and this will be experienced by every disbeliever, hypocrite and sinner.

اِلٰى رَبِّكَ يَوۡمَئِذِ ۨالۡمَسَاقُ ؕ ع 30

(75:30) On that Day you will be driven to your Lord.

فَلَا صَدَّقَ وَلَا صَلّٰى ۙ 31

(75:31) But he did not verify the Truth, nor did he observe Prayer;

وَلٰكِنۡ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلّٰى ۙ 32

(75:32) on the contrary, he gave the lie to the Truth and turned his back upon it,

ثُمَّ ذَهَبَ اِلٰٓى اَهۡلِهٖ يَتَمَطّٰى ؕ 33

(75:33) then he went back to his kinsfolk, elated with pride.[21]

21. It means that the one who was not prepared to believe in the Hereafter, heard all that has been described in the above verses; yet he persisted in his denial, and hearing these verses went back to his household, arrogantly. Mujahid, Qatadah and Ibn Zaid say that this person was Abu Jahl. The words of the verse also indicate that it was some particular person, who adopted such a conduct after having heard the above-mentioned verse of Surah Al-Qiyamah. The words, He neither affirmed the truth nor offered the Prayer, are particularly noteworthy. They clearly show that the first and necessary demand of acknowledging the truth about Allah and His Messenger and Book is that one should perform the Prayer, The occasion and time to carry out the other injunctions of the divine Shariah come later but the Prayer time approaches soon after one has affirmed the faith, and then it becomes known whether what one has affirmed with the tongue was really the voice of his heart, or it was only a puff of the wind which one sent out from his mouth in the form of words.

أَوۡلٰى لَكَ فَأَوۡلٰى ۙ 34

(75:34) This (attitude) is worthy of you, altogether worthy;

ثُمَّ أَوۡلٰى لَكَ فَأَوۡلٰى ۙ 35

(75:35) again, it is worthy of you, altogether worthy.[22]

22. The commentators have given several meanings of the word aula laka: shame on you, may you perish, woe to you, may you hasten to your doom. But in our opinion, in view of the context, the most appropriate meaning is that which Hafiz Ibn Kathir has given in his commentary: When you have had the boldness to disown your Creator, then it only behooves a person like you to persist in the sort of conduct you display. This is the same sort of sarcastic remark as occurred in(Surah Ad-Dukhan, Ayat 49). While meting out punishment to the culprit in Hell, it will be said: Taste this, a mighty and honorable man that you are.

أَيَحۡسَبُ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنُ أَن يُتۡرَكَ سُدًى ۙ 36

(75:36) Does man[23] think that he will be left alone, unquestioned?[24]

23. Now, in conclusion, the same theme is being repeated with which the discourse began life-after-death is necessary as well as possible.

24. The word suda when used with regard to a camel implies a camel who is wandering aimlessly, grazing at will, without there being anybody to look after him. Thus, the verse means: Does man think that he has been left to himself to wander at will as if his Creator had laid no responsibility on him, had imposed no duty on him, had forbidden nothing to him, that at no time in future he would be required to account for his deeds. This same theme has been expressed in (Surah Al-Mominoon, Ayat 115) thus: On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will ask the disbelievers: Did you think that We had created you without any purpose, and that you would never be brought back to Us. At both these places the argument for the necessity of the life hereafter has been presented as a question. The question means: Do you really think that you are no more than mere animals? Don't you see the manifest difference between yourself and the animal. The animal has been created without the power of choice and authority, but you have been blessed with the power of choice and authority; there is no question of morality about what the animal does, but your acts are necessarily characterized by good and evil. Then, how did you take it into your head that you had been created irresponsible and unanswerable as the animal has been? Why the animal will not be resurrected, is quite understandable. The animal only fulfilled the fixed demands of its instinct, it did not use its intellect to propound a philosophy; it did not invent a religion; it did not take anyone its god nor became a god for others; it did nothing that could be called good or bad; it did not enforce a good or bad way of life, which would influence others, generation after generation, so that it should deserve a reward or punishment for it. Hence, if it perished to annihilation, it would be understandable, for it

could not be held responsible for any of its acts to account for which it might need to be resurrected. But how could you be excused from life-after-death when right till the time of your death you continued to perform moral acts, which your own intellect judged as good or bad and worthy of reward or punishment? Should a man who killed an innocent person, and then fell a victim to a sudden accident immediately after it, go off free and should never be punished for the crime of murder he committed? Do you really feel satisfied that a man, who sowed corruption and iniquity in the world, which entailed evil consequences for mankind for centuries after him, should himself perish like an insect; or a grasshopper, and should never be resurrected to account for his misdeeds, which corrupted the lives of hundreds of thousands of human beings after him? Do you think that the man, who struggled throughout his life for the cause of truth and justice, goodness and peace, and suffered hardships for their sake, was a creation of the kind of an insect, and had no right to be rewarded for his good acts.

اَلَمۡ يَكُ نُطۡفَةً مِّنۡ مَّنِىٍّ يُّمۡنٰى ۙ 37

(75:37) Was he not a drop of ejaculated semen,

ثُمَّ كَانَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقَ فَسَوّٰى ۙ 38

(75:38) then he became a clot, and then Allah made it into a living body and proportioned its parts,

فَجَعَلَ مِنۡهُ الزَّوۡجَيۡنِ الذَّكَرَ وَالۡاُنۡثٰى ؕ 39

(75:39) and then He made of him a pair, male and female?

اَلَيۡسَ ذٰلِكَ بِقٰدِرٍ عَلٰٓى اَنۡ يُّحۡىِۦَ الۡمَوۡتٰى ؕ ع 40

(75:40) Does He, then, not have the power to bring back the dead to life?[25]

25. This is an argument for the possibility of life-afterdeath. As for the people who believe that the whole act of creation, starting from the emission of a sperm-drop till its development into a perfect man, is only a manifestation of the power and wisdom of Allah, they cannot in fact refute this argument in any way, for their intellect however shamelessly and stubbornly they might behave, cannot refuse to admit that the God Who thus brings about man in the world, also has the power to bring the same man into being once again. As for those who regard this expressly wise act only as a result of accident, do not in fact have any explanation to offer, unless they are bent upon stubbornness, how in every part and in every nation of the world, from the beginning of creation till today, the birth of boys and girls has continuously been taking place in such proportion that at no time it has so happened that in some human population only males or only females might have been born and there might be no possibility of the continuation of the human race. Has this also been happening just accidentally. To make such an absurd claim one should at least be so

shameless as to come out one day with the claim that London and New York, Moscow and Peking, have come into existence just accidentally. (For further explanation, see (E.Ns 27 to 30 of Surah Ar-Room); (E.N. 77 of Surah Ash-Shura).

There are several traditions to show that whenever the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited this verse, he would sometimes respond with bala (why not), sometimes with Subhanaka Allahumma fa-bala (Glorified are You, O AIlah, why not) and sometimes with Subhanaka fa-bala or Subhanaka wa-bala. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Abu Daud). Abu Daud contains a tradition from Abu Hurairah, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: When in Surah At-Teen, you read the verse; Alais-Allahu bi-ahkamil- Hakimin (Is not Allah the greatest Ruler of all), you should respond to it, saying: Bala waana ala dhalika min-ashshahidin (Why not? I am of those who bear witness to this). And when you read this verse of Surah Al-Qiyamah, say: Bala; and when you read verse: Fabi ayyi hadith-in ba da hu yu minun (Now, what message is there after this, Quran, in which they will believe) of Surah Al-Mursalat, say: Amanna billah (We believed in Allah). Traditions on this subject have also been related by Imam Ahmad Tirmidhi, lbn al-Mundhir, lbn Marduyah, Baihaqi and Hakim.

76. Surah Al Insan (Man), also known as Surah Ad Dahr (Time)

Name

This Surah is called Ad-Dahr as well as Al-Insan after the words occurring in the first verse.

Period of Revelation

Most of the commentators, including Allama Zamakhshari, Imam Razi, Qadi, Baidawi, Allama Nizam ad-Din Nisaburi, Hafiz Ibn Kathir and many others, regard it as a Makki Surah, and, according to Allama Alusi, the same is the opinion of the majority of scholars. However, some commentators hold the view that the Surah was revealed at Madinah, and some others say that it was revealed at Makkah but vv. 8-10 of it were sent down at Madinah.

As far as the subject matter and the style of the Surah are concerned, these are very different from those of the Madani Surahs. A little study of it rather shown that it is not only a Makki Surah but it was revealed during the earliest period at Makkah, which began just after the revelation of the first seven verses of Surah Al-Muddaththir. As for vv 8-10, they are so naturally set in the theme of the Surah that if they are read in their proper context, no one can say that the theme preceding and following them had been sent down 15 to 16 years earlier but these three verses which were revealed many years later were inserted here unnaturally.

In fact, the basis of the idea that this Surah; or some verses of it were revealed at Madinah, is a tradition which has related from Ibn Abbas (may Allah bless him). He says that once Hadrat Hasan and Husain fell ill The Holy Prophet and some of his Companions visited them. They wished Hadrat Ali to make a vow to Allah for the recovery of the two children. Thereupon, Hadrat Ali, Hadrat Fatimah and Fiddah their maid servant, vowed a fast of three days if Allah restored the children to health. The children recovered by the grace of Allah and the three of them began to fast as avowed. As there was nothing to eat in the house, Hadrat Ali borrowed three measures (sa') of barley from somebody (according to another tradition, earned through labor). When on the first day they sat down to eat after breaking the fast, a poor man came and begged for food. They gave all their food to him, drank water and retired to bed. The next day when they again sat down to eat after breaking the fast, an orphan came and begged for something. They again gave away the whole food to him, drank water and went to bed. On the third day when they were just going to eat after breaking the fast, a captive came up and begged for food likewise. Again the whole food was given away to him. On the fourth day Hadrat Ali took both the children with him and went before the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace). The Holy Prophet (on whom be peace) seeing the weak condition of the three, returned with them to the house of Hadrat Fatimah and found her lying in a corner half dead with hunger. This moved him visibly. In the meantime the Angel Gabriel (peace be on him) came and said; "Look, Allah has congratulated you on the virtues of the people of your house!" When the Holy Prophet asked what it was, he recited this whole Surah in response. (According to Ibn Mahran's tradition, he recited it from verse 5 till the end. But the tradition which Ibn Marduyah has related from Ibn Abbas only says that the verse Wa yut'imun-at ta'am... was sent down concerning Hadrat Ali and Hadrat Fatimah; there is no mention of this story in it). This

whole story has been narrated by Ali bin Ahmad al-Wahidi in his Commentary of the Qur'an, entitled Al'Basit, and probably from the same it has been taken by Zamakhshari, Razi, Nisaburi and others.

In the first place, this tradition is very weak as regards its chain of transmission. Then, from the point of view of its subject matter also, it is strange that when a poor man, or an orphan, or a captive, comes to beg for food, he is given all the food. He could be given one member's food and the five of them could share the rest of it among themselves: Then this also is incredible that illustrious persons like Hadrat Ali and Hadrat Fatimah, who possessed perfect knowledge of Islam, should have regarded it as an act of virtue to keep the two children, who had just recovered their health and were still weak, hungry for three consecutive days. Moreover, in respect of the captives also, it has never been a practice under the Islamic government that they should be left to beg for food for themselves. For if they were prisoners of the government, the government itself was responsible to arrange food and clothing for them, and if they were in an individual's custody, he was made responsible to feed and clothe them. Therefore, it was not possible that in Madinah a captive should have gone about begging food from door to door. However, overlooking the weaknesses of transmission and the probability of subject matter, even if the narrative is accepted as it goes, at the most what it shows is that when the people of the Holy Prophet's house acted righteously as they did, Gabriel came and gave him the good news that Allah had much appreciated their act of virtue, for they had acted precisely in the righteous way that Allah had commanded in these verses of Surah Ad-Dahr. This does not necessitate that these verses too were sent down on that very occasion. The same is the case with many traditions concerning the occasion of revelation. When about a certain verse it is said that it was sent down on a particular occasion, it in fact does not mean that the verse was sent down on the very occasion the incident took place. But it means that the verse applies precisely and exactly to the incident. Imam Suyuti in Al-Itqan has quoted this from Hafiz Ibn Taimiyyah: "When the reporters say that a verse was sent down concerning a particular incident, it sometimes implies that the same incident (or matter) occasioned its revelation, and sometimes that the verse applies to the matter although it may not have occasioned its revelation." Further on he quotes Imam Badr ad-Din Zarkashi's view from his Al-Burhan fi Ulum al-Quran: “It is well known in respect of the Companions and their immediate successors that when one of them says that a verse was sent down concerning a particular matter, it means that the ruling contained in it applied to that matter and not that the matter itself occasioned the revelation of the verse. Thus, it only uses the ruling of the verse for the purpose of reasoning and not for stating a fact." (Al-Itqan fi Ulum al-Quran, vol. I, p. 31, Ed. 1929).

Theme and Subject Matter

The theme of this Surah is to inform man of his true position in the world and to tell him that if he understood his true position rightly and adopted the attitude of gratefulness, he would meet with such and such good end, and if he adopted the way of disbelief, he would meet with such and such evil ends In the longer Surahs of the Qur'an this same theme has been presented at length, but a special characteristic of the style of the earliest Surahs revealed at Makkah is that the subjects dealt with at length in the later period, "have been presented in a brief but highly effective way in this period in such concise, elegant sentences as may automatically be preserved in the memory of the hearers.

In this Surah, first of all man has been reminded that there was a time when he was nothing; then a humble beginning of him was made with a mixed drop of sperm and ovum of which even his mother was not aware; even she did not know that he had been conceived nor anyone else seeing the microscopic cell could say that it was a man, who in future would become the best of creation on the earth. After this, man has been warned, so as to say: "Beginning your creation in this way We have developed and shaped you into what you are today in order to test and try you in the world. That is why, unlike other creatures, you were made intelligent and sensible and were shown both the way of gratitude and the way of ingratitude clearly so that you may show, in the interval that you have been granted here for work, whether you have emerged as a grateful servant from the test or an unbelieving, Un-grateful wretch!"

Then, just in one sentence, it has been stated decisively what will be the fate to be met with in the Hereafter by those who emerged as unbelievers from this test.

After this, in vv. 5-22 continuously, the blessings with which those who do full justice to servitude in the world, will be favored, have been mentioned in full detail. In these verses, not only have their best rewards been mentioned but they have also been told briefly what are the acts on the basis of which they would become worthy of those rewards. Another special characteristic of the earliest Surahs revealed at Makkah is that besides introducing in them briefly the fundamental beliefs and concepts of Islam, here and there, those moral qualities and virtuous acts have been mentioned, which are praiseworthy according to Islam, and also those evils of deed and morality of which Islam strives to cleanse human life. And these two things have not been mentioned with a view to show what good or evil result is entailed by them in the transitory life of the world, but they have been mentioned only to point out what enduring results they will produce in the eternal and everlasting life of the Hereafter, irrespective of whether an evil quality may prove useful or a good quality may prove harmful in the world.

This is the subject matter of the first section (vv. 1-22). In the second section, addressing the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace), three things have been stated: first, that "it is in fact We Ourself Who are revealing this Qur'an piecemeal to you, and this is intended to inform the disbelievers, not you, that the Qur'an is not being fabricated by Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) but it is "We Who are revealing it, and it is Our Own wisdom which requires that We should reveal it piece by piece and not all at once." Second, the Holy Prophet has been told: "No matter how long ,it may take for the decree of your Lord to be enforced and no matter what afflictions may befall you in the meantime, in any case you should continue to perform your mission of Apostleship patiently, and not to yield to the pressure tactics of any of these wicked and unbelieving people." The third thing he has been told is: "Remember Allah day and night, perform the Prayer and spend your nights in the worship of Allah, for it is these things which sustain and strengthen those who call to Allah in the face of iniquity and disbelief."

Then in one single sentence, the actual cause of the disbelievers wrong attitude has been stated: they have forgotten the Hereafter and are enamored of the world. In the second sentence, they have been warned to the effect: "You have not come into being by yourself: We have created you. You have not made these broad chests, and strong, sturdy hands and feet for yourselves, it is We Who made these for you; and it so lies in Our power to treat you

as We please. We can distort your figures, We can destroy you and replace you by some other nation. We can cause you to die and can recreate you in whatever form We like."

In conclusion, it has been said: This is an Admonition: whoever wills may accept it and take a path to his Lord. But man's own will and desire is not everything in the world. No one's will and desire can be fulfilled unless Allah (also) so wills. And Allah's willing is not haphazard: whatever He wills, He wills it on the basis of His knowledge and wisdom. He admits into His mercy whomever He regards as worthy of His mercy on the basis of His knowledge and wisdom, and He has prepared a painful torment for those whom He finds unjust and wicked.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

هَلۡ اَتٰی عَلَی الۡاِنۡسَانِ حِیۡنٌ مِّنَ الدَّهۡرِ لَمۡ یَکُنۡ شَیۡئًا مَّذۡکُوۡرًا 1

(76:1) Was there a period of time when man was not even worthy of a mention? [1]

1. Most of the commentators and translators have taken hal in the first sentence hal ata alal-insan-i, in the meaning of qad. Accordingly, they interpret this sentence to mean; "No doubt, there has indeed passed on man a time." But, in fact, the word hal in Arabic is used only as an interrogative particle, and its object is not to ask a question in every case, but this apparently interrogative particle is used in different meanings on different occasions. For example, sometimes, in order to find out whether a certain incident has taken place or not, we ask: "Has this thing happened?" Sometimes, we do not mean to ask a question but to deny something and we express the denial, thus: "Can any other also do this?" Sometimes, we want somebody to affirm something and so ask him: "Have I paid what was due to you?" And sometimes, we do not intend to have something just affirmed but we put a question in order to make the addressee pay particular attention to something which follows his affirmation as a sequel. For example, we ask someone: "Have I harmed you in any way?" The object is not only to make him affirm that one has not done him any harm, but also to make him think how far one is justified to harm somebody who has not harmed him in any way. The interrogative sentence in the verse before us illustrates this last meaning. The object is not only to make man affirm that there has indeed passed on him such a time but also to make him think that the God Who developed and shaped him into a perfect man from an insignificant, humble beginning, would not be helpless to create him once again.

In the second sentence, hin um-min ad-dahr the word dahr implies the endless time, the beginning and end of which are unknown to man and this is the particular period of time which might at some time have passed during this endless period. What is meant to be said is that in this immensely long span of time there has passed a long period when human race was altogether non-existent. Then a time came in it when a species called man was created, and in the same period a time has passed on every person when a beginning was made to bring him into existence from nothingness.

The third sentence, "When he was not a thing (even) to be mentioned" implies that a part of him existed in the form of a microscopic gene in the sperm drop of the father and a part in

the form of a microscopic ovum in the mother. For long ages man did not even know that he comes into being when the sperm gene and the ovum combined. Now both have been observed by means of powerful microscopes but even now no one can say how much of man exists in the father's sperm and how much in the mother's ovum. Then, the initial cell that comes into being by the combination of the two at the time of conception is such an insignificant thing that it can be seen only through highly powerful microscopes, and seeing it also no one at first sight can claim that it is a man taking shape, nor that even if a man emerges from this humble beginning, what will be his size and stature, what will be his form and figure, and what will be his capabilities and personality like. This is the meaning of the sentence that at that time he was not yet a thing worthy of any mention although a beginning of his being as a man had been made.

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنسَانَ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ ۖ صلے نَّبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا 2

(76:2) Verily We created man out of a drop of intermingled sperm[2] so that We might try him,[3] and We therefore endowed him with hearing and sight.[4]

2. "From a mixed sperm drop": From the intermingling of the male sperm with the female ovum and not separately from the sperm or the ovum. During sexual intercourse normally 200-500 million sperms are deposited into the female birth canal. The sperms swim and reach site of mixing with ovum in 4-6 hours on an average time. Most of the sperms are lost in this journey. Chemical changes occur during this travel and sperms remove their protective covering from their heads while getting ready to release special chemicals from the heads in their attempts and preparation to penetrate into the ovum. Usually, only one sperm is allowed to fuse and mix with the ovum. (Ref. Maternity and Gynecology Care, Mosby Year Book Publishing Inc. St Louis Missouri USA Chapter 7, Page 162).

3. This shows man's real position in the world and the position of the world for man. He is not like the trees and animals that the object of his creation be fulfilled on the earth itself, and he should die and perish here after he has played his appointed role over a period of time according to the law of nature. Furthermore, this world is neither a place of punishment for him, as the monks think, nor a place of rewards as the believers of the law of transmigration think, nor a place of entertainment and enjoyment, as the materialists think, nor a battlefield, as the followers of atheists think, but in fact it is a place of test and trial for him. That which he regards as his age, is in fact the time given to him for the test. Whatever powers and capabilities he has been given in the world, the things that have been placed under his control and authority, the various positions and capacities in which he functions, and the relationships that he enjoys with other people, all these are the countless manners of the test and this test continues till the last breath of his life. The result is not to be announced in this world but in the Hereafter when all his answer books will have been assessed, decision will be given whether he has come out successful or failed. And his success or failure wholly depends on what he thought of himself while he functioned here and how he answered the questions that were given to him here. If he believed that he had no God, or that he was the slave of many gods, and while answering the questions he thought that he was not to be held accountable before his Creator in the Hereafter, his whole lifework went wrong. And if he regarded himself as the slave of One God and worked in the way

approved by God, with the accountability of the Hereafter always in view, he stood successful in the test. This theme has occurred at many places in the Quran.

4. The words sami (hearing) and baseer (seeing) in the original text actually imply being "sensible and intelligent". These words of the Arabic language are never used in respect of the animal although it also hears and sees. Thus, hearing and seeing here do not imply the powers of hearing and seeing which have been given to the animals too, but those means through which man obtains knowledge and then draws conclusions from it. Besides, since hearing and seeing are among the most important means of knowledge for man, only these two have been mentioned briefly; otherwise it actually implies giving man all those senses of the body by which he gathers information. Then the senses given to man are quite different in their nature from those given to animals, for at the back of every sense he has a thinking brain, which collects information gained through the senses; arranges it, draws conclusions from it, forms opinions, and then takes some decisions which become the basis of his attitude and conduct in life. Hence, after saying, "We created man in order to try him," to say, "therefore, We made him capable of hearing and seeing" actually contains the meaning that Allah gave him the faculties of knowledge and reason to enable him to take the test. Obviously, if this were not the meaning and the meaning of making man hearing and seeing just implied the one who could hear and see, then a blind and deaf person would stand exempted from the test, whereas unless a person is utterly devoid of knowledge and reason, there can be no question of his being exempted from the test.

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا 3

(76:3) Surely We showed him the Right Path, regardless of whether he chooses to be thankful or unthankful[5] (to his Lord).

5. That is, We did not just leave him to himself after giving him the powers of knowledge and reason, but We also guided him so that he knows which is the path of gratefulness and which of ungratefulness, so that whichever path he chooses in his later life, he himself is responsible for it. In Surah Al-Balad, the same subject has been expressed, thus "And We showed him both the conspicuous ways (of good and evil)." And in Surah Ash-Shams, thus: "By the human self, and by Him Who balanced it (with all the external and internal powers), then inspired it with its wickedness and its piety." When all these explanations are kept in view, and also those detailed statements of the Quran in which it has been stated what arrangements Allah has made for man's guidance in the world, it becomes evident that in this verse "We guided him to the way" does not imply any one form of guidance but many forms of it which are limitless and countless. For example:

(1) Along with the faculties of knowledge and reason, man has also been endowed with a moral sense by which he discerns between good and evil, regards some acts and qualities as evil even if he himself is involved in them, and regards some other acts and qualities as good even if he himself is avoiding them. So much so that even those people who for the satisfaction of their selfish motives and desires have invented philosophies by which they have justified many evils for themselves, protest loudly when they are themselves treated with the same evils by others, and then it becomes known that in spite of their false philosophies they actually regard them as evil. Likewise, when a man himself is benefited

by a good treatment from another person, he is from within forced to commend and appreciate it even though he might be looking upon good acts and qualities as ignorance folly and antiquated things,

(2) In every man Allah has placed the faculty of conscience (the lawwamah), which checks and pricks him every time he is about to commit an evil, or is in the process of committing it, or has already committed it. However hard man may try to silence his conscience or make it insensitive, he does not have the power to destroy it completely. He may become shameless and prove himself to be absolutely devoid of the conscience, he may also try to deceive the world by argumentation, he may even invent a thousand excuses to justify his acts in order to deceive himself, but despite all this the censor, that Allah has placed in his nature, is so active and powerful that it does not let remain hidden from an evil person what he actually is. This same thing has been stated in Surah Al-Qiyamah, thus: "Man knows his own self best even though he may offer many excuses." (Ayat 15).

(3) In man's own self and outside of him, from the earth to the heavens, there lie scattered in the universe countless such signs which clearly show that all this could not happen without a God, nor could there be many gods to create this life and control and administer it. Likewise, these very signs, inside man and outside him, clearly point also to the Resurrection and Hereafter. If man shuts down his eyes on them, or refuses to ponder over them intelligently, or avoids to admit the truths which they point out, he himself would be to blame. For Allah has shown no negligence in laying out every possible sign of the truth for the guidance of man.

(4) Man does come across in his own life, and in the contemporary world and in the experiences of past history, countless such incidents which prove that a supreme power is ruling over him and the entire universe, before Whom he is absolutely powerless, whose Will is dominant over everything and whose help he needs at every moment. These experiences and observations which point to the truth do not exist only outside him but in man's own nature as well there exists the evidence of the existence of the supreme power on the basis of which even the most confirmed atheist spreads out his hands in prayer before God when in distress, and the most hardened polytheist abandons all false gods and starts invoking One God only for help.

(5) Man's intellect and his nature assert positively that crime ought to be punished and good deeds ought to be rewarded. On this very basis in every society of the world a system of the courts is established in one form or another. The services and works, which are regarded as commendable are also rewarded in one way or another. This is a clear proof of the fact that there is a necessary relationship between morality and the law of retribution, which man cannot possibly deny. Now, if it is admitted that in this world there are countless such crimes which cannot be punished at all to say nothing of punishing them fully and adequately, and there are also countless such virtues, which cannot be rewarded at all, to say nothing of rewarding them fully and adequately, there is no alternative but to acknowledge the Hereafter. Unless, of course, a foolish person may assume, or a stubborn person may insist on having the opinion, that man who has been endowed with the concept of justice, has taken birth in a world which in itself is devoid of the concept of justice; and then it remains for him to answer the question as to how and wherefrom this man, who was born in such a world, obtained this concept of justice.

To reinforce these means of guidance Allah sent Messengers and revealed Books in the world for the purpose of giving clear and definite guidance to man. In these Books it was clearly explained what is the way of gratefulness and what is the way of ungratefulness and unbelief and what will be the consequences of following either way. The teaching brought by the Prophets and the Books has spread throughout the world in countless perceptible, and imperceptible ways, on such a large scale that no section of human population has remained unaware of the concept of God and the Hereafter, of the distinction between good and evil, and of the moral principles and legal rulings presented by them, whether it knows or does not know that it has obtained this knowledge only through the teachings of the Prophets and the Books they brought. Even those who disbelieve in the Prophets and the Books today, or are unaware of them, also are following many of those things which have reached to them actually through their teachings while they do not know what is the real source of these teachings. 4

إِنَّآ أَعۡتَدۡنَا لِلۡكَٰفِرِينَ سَلَٰسِلَا۠ وَأَغۡلَٰلٗا وَسَعِيرًا 4

(76:4) For the unbelievers, We have kept ready chains and fetters and a Blazing Fire.

إِنَّ ٱلۡأَبۡرَارَ يَشۡرَبُونَ مِن كَأۡسٖ كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا كَافُورًا ۚ 5

(76:5) The virtuous[6] shall drink from a cup tempered with camphor water.

6. The word abrar as used in the original implies the people who have done full justice to their Lord's obedience, have carried out the duties enjoined by Him and abstained from the things forbidden by Him.

عَيۡنٗا يَشۡرَبُ بِهَا عِبَادُ ٱللَّهِ يُفَجِّرُونَهَا تَفۡجِيرًا 6

(76:6) This will be a gushing spring[7] wherefrom Allah's servants[8] shall drink wine, a spring from which they will take out channels wherever they wish.[9]

7. That is, it will not be camphor-mixed water but a natural fountain, the purity, coolness and agreeable odor of its water will resemble camphor.

8. Although the words ibad Allah (servants of Allah), or ibad ar-Rehman (servants of ar-Rehman), can be used for all men literally, for every human being is God's servant, yet wherever these words occur in the Quran they only imply the righteous men. In other words, the wicked ones who have excused themselves from Allah's servitude do not deserve that Allah should honor them with the honorable title of ibad-Allah or ibad ar-Rehman, attributing them to His own Holy Name.

9. It does not mean that they will use spades and picks to dig out its channels and will take out its branches whithersoever they please, but that their one single command and desire will be enough to cause a fountain to gush forth from wherever they please in Paradise.

يُوفُونَ بِالنَّذْرِ وَيَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا كَانَ شَرُّهُ مُسْتَطِيرًا 7

(76:7) These will be the ones who fulfil their vows[10] and dread the Day whose woe shall be spread far and wide;

10. One meaning of fulfilling the vow is that one should fulfill. The second, that one should fulfill what one has pledged oneself to do. The third, that one should fulfill what one has been enjoined; what is obligatory for one to do, whether one has been enjoined it, or is self imposed. Of these three the second meaning is the best known and generally the same is implied by fulfilling the vow. In any case, these righteous people have been regarded as praiseworthy either because they carry out the duties enjoined by Allah, or because if they vow to Allah to perform certain good deeds which Allah has not enjoined on them, they fulfill even those self imposed vows, not to speak of showing any negligence in carrying out the duties which Allah has actually enjoined on them.

As for the commandments concerning the vow, it would be useful to explain at length here so as to enable the people to avoid the errors and rid themselves of the misunderstandings with regard to fulfilling the vow and learn the correct rules pertaining to it.

(1) The jurists have mentioned four kinds of the vow: (a) that one should pledge to Allah that he would perform such and such a good act to earn His good pleasure; (b) that one should make a vow that he would perform such and such a good act in gratitude to Allah if He fulfilled his such and such wish and desire or need. Both these kinds of the vow have been termed nadhr tabarrur (i.e. vows for a good cause) by the jurists, and it is agreed by all that it is obligatory to fulfill them; (c) That one should pledge to do an unlawful thing or to refrain from an obligatory thing; (d) that one should bind oneself to do a permissible thing, or to refrain from an obligatory thing, or pledge to do an unworthy thing. These two kinds of the vow have been termed nadhr lajaj (i.e. vow of ignorance, disputation and stubbornness) by the jurists. About the third kind of the vow (c), it is agreed that it does not take place at all; and about the fourth kind of the vow (d), the juristic opinion is divided. Some jurists say that it should be fulfilled; some others say that one should expiate the breaking of the oath, and still others that one has the option to fulfill the vow or to expiate it. According to the Shafeis and the Malikis this vow does not take place at all, and according to the Hanafis both these kinds of the vow entail expiation.

(2) Several Ahadith show that the Prophet (peace be upon him) has forbidden making a vow with a view to changing the destiny, or with a view to making an offer to Allah that if He fulfilled his such and such wish, he would perform such and such good act, not in gratitude to Allah, but in exchange for His help. Abdullah bin Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) has reported that once the Prophet (peace be upon him), while he forbade the making of a vow, said; “It cannot avert anything which is about to befall, but through it something is extracted from the miserly person.” The last sentence of the Hadith means: The miserly person is not prone to spend anything in the cause of Allah; because of the vow he gives away something in charity in the greed that Allah would accept his offer and change his destiny for him. Another tradition from Abdullah bin Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) is to the effect; The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: the vow can neither hasten anything nor defer anything, but through it something is extracted from the miserly person. In

another tradition he says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade making of the vow and said: "It does not bring any good, but it is a means whereby something is extracted from the miserly person." Several traditions on the same subject have been related by Muslim from Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), and in one tradition which both Bukhari and Muslim have related, he reports that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "As a matter of fact, the vow cannot bring the son of Adam anything which Allah has not ordained for him, but the vow sometimes coincides with the destiny itself and through it the divine will takes out from the possession of the miserly person that which he was not inclined to give away willingly." This same theme is further explained by the tradition of Abdullah bin Amr bin Aas according to which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "True vow is that whereby Allah's goodwill and approval may be sought."

(3) Another rule that the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave concerning the vow is that only that vow should be fulfilled, which is in obedience to Allah; the vow made in disobedience to Allah should never be fulfilled. Likewise, there can be no vow concerning a thing which is not in his power to perform. Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "The one who made a vow that he would obey Allah, should obey Him, and the one who made a vow that he would disobey Allah, should not disobey." Thabit bin Dahhak says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "There can be no question of fulfilling a vow made in the disobedience of Allah, nor in something which is not in his possession." Muslim has related a tradition on the same subject from Imran bin Husain; and in Abu Daud a tradition has been reported in greater detail from Abdullah bin Amr bin Aas, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "No vow and no oath is of any use in an act which is not in the power of man to perform, or which involves disobedience of Allah, or severance of relations with kindred."

(4) One should not fulfill a vow which is made to perform an act which is of no good in itself, which is useless, or involves unbearable hardship or self torture, and might have been self imposed as an act of virtue. In this connection, the sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him) are very clear and definite. Abdullah bin Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) says that once when the Prophet (peace be upon him) was giving a sermon, he saw a man who was standing in the sun. He asked who he was and why he was standing in the sun. The people said that he was Abu Israil: he had vowed that he would keep standing and would not sit, nor take shade, nor speak to anybody, and would keep fasting. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Tell him to speak, to come in the shade and sit, but to observe the fast." Uqbah bin Amir Juhani says: "My sister vowed that she would go for Hajj barefoot and also vowed that she would not cover her head with a garment during the journey. The Prophet said: Tell her to go by a conveyance and to cover her head." Muslim has related several traditions on this subject with a little variation in wordings. Abdullah bin Abbas reporting the incident concerning Uqbah bin Amir's sister, has reported the Prophet's (peace be upon him) words to the effect: "Allah has no need of her vow: tell her to use a conveyance." In another tradition Ibn Abbas says, "A man said: My sister has vowed to go and perform Hajj on foot. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: "Allah has no need that your sister should undergo hardship. She should go for Hajj by a conveyance." Anas bin Malik has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) saw, probably during the Hajj journey, an old man being supported between his two sons. When he asked what was the matter with him, it was said that the old man had vowed to go on foot. Thereupon the

Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Allah is free from this that the man should place himself in agony. Then he commanded him to ride."

(5) If it is not practically possible to fulfill a vow, it may be fulfilled in some other way. Jabir bin Abdullah says: "On the day of the conquest of Makkah, a man stood up and said: O Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah, I had vowed that if Allah made Makkah fall at your hand, I would pray two rakahs in Bait al-Maqdis (Jerusalem). The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied, say the prayer here. He again asked the same thing and the Prophet (peace be upon him) again gave the same reply. When he asked it again, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: All right, as you please." According to another tradition, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "By Him Who has sent Muhammad with the truth, if you pray here it will suffice for you instead of your praying at Bait al Maqdis."

(6) The opinion among the jurists is divided concerning the person who vows to give away all his possessions for the cause of Allah. Imam Malik says that he should give away one third of his possessions, and Sahnun from among the Malikis has expressed the opinion that he should give away so much of his possessions as does not subject him to hardship later. Imam Shafei says that if the vow is of the nature of tabarrur (i.e. for a good cause), he should give away all his possessions, and if it is of the nature of lajaj (i.e. a vow of ignorance), he has the option to fulfill the vow or to expiate the oath. Imam Abu Hanifah says that he should give away all such possessions as are subject to zakat, but the vow will not apply to those possessions which are exempt from zakat, e.g. house, or other such properties. Imam Zufar from among the Hanafis is of the opinion that he should give away everything in charity after he has taken out two months' maintenance for his family.

Hadrat Kaab bin Malik says: "When I was granted forgiveness for incurring Allah's displeasure for staying behind on the occasion of the Battle of Tabuk, I went before the Prophet (peace be upon him) and submitted: My repentance also included that I would give away all my possessions in charity for the sake of Allah and His Messenger. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: No, do not do that. I said, then half of the possessions? He said: No. I said, then one third of the possessions? He replied: Yes. According to another tradition, the Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: "Withhold some of your possessions for yourself: this would be better for you." Imam Zuhri says: "Information has reached to me that Abu Lubabah (who had similarly incurred displeasure in connection with the battle of Tabuk) said to the Prophet (peace be upon him): "I shall give away all my possessions for the sake of Allah and His Messenger in charity." The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: "For you it would be enough to give away only one third of it."

(7) Should a person who vowed to perform a good act before embracing Islam, fulfill it after he has embraced Islam? The Prophet's (peace be upon him) ruling in this connection is that he should fulfill it. According to a tradition in Abu Daud and Tahavi, Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) is reported to have vowed in the pre Islamic days that he would observe itikaf (devotional seclusion) in the Masjid al-Haram (for one night, or according to others, one day). After embracing Islam when he asked for the Prophet's (peace be upon him) ruling, he replied: "Fulfill your vow." Some jurists have taken this ruling of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to mean that it is obligatory to do so, and some others that it is commendable.

(8) About the question whether the heirs are under obligation to fulfill a vow made by the deceased person or not, the juristic opinion is divided. Imam Ahmad, Ishaq bin Rahawaih, Abu Thaur and the Zahiris say that if the deceased person had vowed to observe the fasting or perform the prayer but could not fulfill the vow, the heirs have to fulfill it. The Hanafis say that if the vow pertained to a bodily worship (e.g. the prayer or the fasting), the heirs are under no obligation to fulfill it, and if it pertained to monetary worship and the deceased did not leave any will for his heirs to fulfill it, they are again under no obligation to fulfill it, but if he left a will, it will be obligatory for the heirs to fulfill it from his inheritance up to one third of its extent. The Maliki viewpoint also is somewhat the same. The Shafeis say that if the vow pertains to a non monetary worship, or if it pertains to a monetary worship and the deceased person did not leave any inheritance, the heirs are under no obligation to fulfill it; and if the deceased left some inheritance, the heirs would be bound to fulfill the vow pertaining to a monetary worship, no matter whether the dying person left a will or not. In the Hadith there is a tradition from Abdullah bin Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) on this subject to the effect: Saad bin Ubadah asked for the Prophet's (peace be upon him) verdict, saying: My mother has died and she had made a vow which she could not fulfill. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Fulfill the vow on her behalf. Another tradition from Ibn Abbas is to the effect: A woman went on a sea journey and vowed that if she returned home safe and sound, she would observe fast for a month. On her return home she died. Her sister or her daughter came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) to ask for his decision. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: "Observe the fast on her behalf." Abu Daud has related another tradition with the same content from Buraidah, saying: "A woman asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) a similar thing and he gave the same reply as mentioned above." Since these traditions are not explicit as to whether the rulings the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave pertained to its being obligatory or commendable, and since about the vow made by Saad bin Ubadah's mother also it is not clear whether it pertained to a monetary worship, or a bodily worship, there have arisen differences among the jurists on this question.

(9) As for an unlawful vow it is clear that it should not be fulfilled. However, there is a difference of opinion as to whether it entails expiation or not. On this point, since the traditions differ, the juristic opinion is also divided. According to one kind of the traditions the Prophet (peace be upon him) commanded the person concerned to make the expiation. Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: There is no vow in the disobedience of Allah, and its expiation is the expiation of breaking the oath. In the case of Uqbah bin Amir Juhani's sister (mentioned above), the Prophet (peace be upon him) commanded that she should break her vow and fast for three days. In the case of another woman also who had vowed to go for Hajj on foot, he commanded that she should go by a conveyance and should make expiation for the oath. Ibn Abbas has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The one who made a vow but did not specify what the vow was about, should expiate for the oath, and the one who made a vow to perform a sinful act, should expiate for the oath, and the one who made a vow to perform something which he does not have the power to perform, should expiate for the oath, and the one who made a vow to do something which he can do, should fulfill it. On the other hand, there are the traditions which show that there is no expiation in this case. The person who had vowed that he would stand in the sun and would not speak to anyone. Making a reference to him in Muwatta, Imam Malik writes: "I could not know by any means

whether the Prophet (peace be upon him) besides commanding him to break the vow might also have told him to make the expiation. Abdullah bin Amr bin Aas has reported that the Prophet said: "If one swearing an oath for something later finds that another thing was better than that, he should abandon it and should adopt the better course and the abandonment itself is the expiation." Baihaqi says that this Hadith and Abu Hurairah's this tradition: "He should adopt the better course and this is its expiation" are not established. Imam Nawawi discussing these traditions of the Hadith in his commentary of Sahih Muslim writes: "Imam Malik, Shafei, Abu Hanifah, Daud, Zahiri and other scholars say that the vow made to do a sinful thing is void and ineffectual and it does not entail any expiation if not fulfilled, but lmam Ahmad says that it entails expiation."

وَيُطْعِمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلٰى حُبِّهٖ مِسْكِيْنًا وَّيَتِيْمًا وَّاَسِيْرًا 8

(76:8) those who, for the love of Him,[11] feed the needy, and the orphan, and the captive,[12]

11. Most of the commentators hold the view that the pronoun in hubbi-hi refers to food. Accordingly, they interpret the sentence to mean: "In spite of the food's being agreeable and tasty and that they need it, they give it away to others." Ibn Abbas and Mujahid say: They do so because of their fondness for feeding the poor (ala hubb-il-it am); and Fudail bin Iyad and Abu Suleman ad-Darani say: They do so out of love for Allah. In our opinion the sentence in the next Ayat "We feed you only for the sake of Allah" supports the last meaning.

12. The custom in the ancient days was that the prisoners were put in fetters and shackles and taken out daily to go about the streets begging food. Later the Islamic government abolished this custom. In this verse, the captive implies every such person who is in bondage, whether he is an unbeliever, a Muslim, a war prisoner, or imprisoned in consequence of a crime, and whether he is provided food in that state, or made to beg for it. In any case, to feed a helpless person who cannot do anything to earn a living is an act of great virtue.

اِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللّٰهِ لَا نُرِيْدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَآءً وَّلَا شُكُوْرًا 9

(76:9) (saying):[13] "We feed you only for Allah's sake; we do not seek of you any recompense or thanks,[14]

13. Although feeding a poor man is in itself a great virtue, yet fulfilling the other needs of an indigent person is no less virtuous. For example, to clothe a poor man, to arrange treatment for a sick person, or to help a debtor who is harassed by his creditor, is an act of equally great virtue. Here, a particular kind of virtue in view of its importance has been presented only as an example, but the real object is to stress giving help to the needy.

14. It is not necessary that this may be said in so many words while feeding the poor man. It may be said in the heart; in the sight of Allah this is as meritorious as saying it with the tongue. But saying these words with the tongue has been particularly mentioned so as to set

the person being helped at ease that no thanks or recompense is due from him, so that he eats with full satisfaction and peace of mind.

إِنَّا نَخَافُ مِن رَّبِّنَا يَوْمًا عَبُوسًا قَمْطَرِيرًا 10

(76:10) we fear from our Lord a Day that shall be long and distressful."

فَوَقَاهُمُ اللَّهُ شَرَّ ذَٰلِكَ الْيَوْمِ وَلَقَّاهُمْ نَضْرَةً وَسُرُورًا ۚ 11

(76:11) So Allah shall guard them against the woe of that Day, and will procure them freshness and joy,[15]

15. Radiance and joy: radiance of the face and joy of the heart. In other words, all the severities and terrors of the Day of Resurrection will be meant only for the disbelievers and the culprits. The righteous will on that Day remain immune from every hardship and will be well pleased with their lot. The same theme has been expressed in (Surah AlAnbiya: Ayat 103), thus: The time of great fright will not trouble them at all; the angels will rush forth to receive them, saying: this is the Day that you were promised; and in (Surah An-Naml: Ayat 89) thus: He who brings good deeds, will have a reward better than that, and such people shall be secure from the terror of that Day.

وَجَزَاهُم بِمَا صَبَرُوا جَنَّةً وَحَرِيرًا ۙ 12

(76:12) and will reward them for their steadfastness[16] with Paradise and robes of silk.

16. Here the word sabr (patience) has been used in a very comprehensive sense. The whole worldly life of the righteous believers in fact has been described as a life of patience. From the time a man attains discretion, or believes, till death; his suppressing of unlawful desires, adhering to the bounds set by Allah, carrying out the duties enjoined by Him, sacrificing his time, his wealth, his effort, powers and abilities, even his life if so required, ignoring every greed and temptation, which might turn him away from Allah's way, meeting every danger and enduring every hardship faced on the way of the truth, giving up every gain and pleasure accruing from unlawful ways and means, bearing every loss and suffering and affliction incurred on account of his love for truth, and doing all this with full faith in the promise of Allah that He will bless the doer with the fruits of this righteous conduct not in this world but in the second life after death, turns the whole life of a believer into a life of patience, eternal and perpetual patience, all pervasive and life long patience.

مُّتَّكِئِينَ فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ ۖ لَا يَرَوْنَ فِيهَا شَمْسًا وَلَا زَمْهَرِيرًا ۖ 13

(76:13) There they will recline on elevated couches and will be subjected neither to the burning heat of the sun nor to bitter cold.

وَدَانِيَةً عَلَيْهِمْ ظِلٰلُهَا وَذُلِّلَتْ قُطُوْفُهَا تَذْلِيْلًا 14

(76:14) The shades of Paradise will bend over them, and its fruits will be brought within their easy reach;

وَيُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِاٰنِيَةٍ مِّنْ فِضَّةٍ وَّاَكْوَابٍ كَانَتْ قَوَارِيْرَا ۟ۙ 15

(76:15) and there shall be passed around them vessels of silver[17] and goblets of crystal,[18]

17. According to (Surah Az-Zukhruf: Ayat 71), vessels of gold shall be passed round to them, but here of silver. This shows that vessels of gold as well as of silver shall be passed round to them as required by the occasion.

18. That is, though silver, it will be as transparent as glass, vessels of this kind of transparent, crystal like silver will be the special characteristic of the vessels in which drinks will be served to the people of Paradise.

قَوَارِيْرَا ۟ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ قَدَّرُوْهَا تَقْدِيْرًا 16

(76:16) goblets bright as crystal but made of silver, filled to exact measure.[19]

19. "In due measure": filled accurately according to the desire of every person, neither over-filled nor under-filled. In other words, the attendants of the dwellers of Paradise will be so judicious and discerning that they will have accurate judgment about everybody whom they serve wine as to how much of it he wishes to drink. (For the characteristics of the wine of Paradise, see (Surah As-Saaffat: Ayats 45-47 and the E.Ns 24-27), (Surah Muhammad: Ayat 15 and E.N. 22), (Surah At-Tur: Ayat 23 and E.N. 18), (Surah Al-Waqiah: Ayat 19 and E.N. 10).

وَيُسْقَوْنَ فِيْهَا كَاْسًا كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا زَنْجَبِيْلًا ۚ 17

(76:17) Therein they shall be served a cup flavoured with ginger,

عَيْنًا فِيْهَا تُسَمّٰى سَلْسَبِيْلًا 18

(76:18) drawn from a spring (in Paradise) called Salsabil.[20]

20. This is to suit the taste of the Arabs who liked the wine flavored with ginger mixed water. But this flavoring will not be achieved by adding ginger mixed water to it: it will be a natural fountain which will have the flavor of ginger but without its bitterness; Therefore, it will be called Salsabil, which implies such water as flows gently and pleasantly down the throat on account of its being sweet, light and palatable. Most commentators think that the word salsabil has been used here as an adjective of the fountain and not as a name for it.

وَيَطُوْفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وِلْدَانٌ مُّخَلَّدُوْنَ ۚ اِذَا رَاَيْتَهُمْ حَسِبْتَهُمْ لُؤْلُؤًا مَّنْثُوْرًا 19

(76:19) There boys of everlasting youth shall go about attending them: when you see them, you would think that they are scattered pearls.[21]

21. For explanation, see(Surah As-Saaffat: E.N. 26), (Surah At-Tur: E.N. 19), (Surah Al-Waqiah: E.N. 9).

وَاِذَا رَاَيْتَ ثَمَّ رَاَيْتَ نَعِيْمًا وَّمُلْكًا كَبِيْرًا 20

(76:20) Whitherto you look around, you will see an abundance of bliss and the glories of a great kingdom.[22]

22. Even if a person might have lived a pauper in the world, in the Hereafter when he is admitted to Paradise, on the basis of his good deeds, he will live as though he were the owner of a splendid kingdom.

عٰلِيَهُمْ ثِيَابُ سُنْدُسٍ خُضْرٌ وَّاِسْتَبْرَقٌ ۫ وَّحُلُّوْٓا اَسَاوِرَ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ ۚ وَسَقٰىهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُوْرًا 21

(76:21) They [i.e., the virtuous] shall be attired in garments of fine green silk and rich brocade[23] and will be adorned with bracelets of silver.[24] Their Lord will give them a pure wine to drink.[25]

23. The same theme has been expressed in (Surah Al-Kahf: Ayat 31), thus: "They (the dwellers of Paradise) will wear colored robes of silk and rich brocade and will be reclining upon raised thrones." On this basis, the opinion of the commentators who have expressed the view that this implies the sheets of cloth which will be hanging over their thrones or bedsteads or that this would be the dress of the boys who would be moving about serving them does not seem to be correct.

24. In (Surah Al-Kahf: Ayat 31), it has been said: "They will be adorned with bracelets of gold." This same theme has also occurred in(Surah Al-Hajj: Ayat 23) and (Surah Fatir:Ayat 33) above. When all these verses are read together, three possibilities become obvious.

(1) That sometimes they would like to wear bracelets of gold and sometimes bracelets of silver, both kinds of the ornaments being available for use as and when required;

(2) that they will wear bracelets of both gold and silver at the same time, for the combination of the two enhances the personal charms of the wearer;

(3) that whosoever desires will wear bracelets of gold and whosoever desires will wear bracelets of silver.

As for the question, why will the men be adorned with the ornaments when these are usually worn by the women? The answer is that in the ancient times the custom was that the kings and their nobles used to adorn their hands and necks and the crowns of their heads with different kinds of ornaments. In(Surah Az-Zukhruf: Ayat 53), it has been said that when the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) arrived in the Pharaoh's court in his simple dress, with only a staff in hand, and told him that he was a Messenger sent by Allah, Lord of the worlds, the Pharaoh said to his courtiers: "What kind of a messenger is he, who has appeared before me in this state? If he was sent by the King of the universe, why were not bracelets of gold sent down on him, or a company of angels as attendants?"

25. Two kinds of the wine have been mentioned above, first that to which water will be added from the fountain of camphor; second that to which water will be added from the fountain of ginger, After these, making mention of another wine, with the remark that their Lord shall give them a pure wine to drink, gives the meaning that this will be some superior kind of wine, which they will be given to drink as a special favor from Allah.

إِنَّ هَٰذَا كَانَ لَكُمْ جَزَاءً وَكَانَ سَعْيُكُم مَّشْكُورًا ۝22

(76:22) Behold, this is your recompense and your endeavour has been appreciated.[26]

26. In the original, kana sayu kum mashkura: "your endeavors have been accepted and recognized." Saii implies the entire lifework that a person accomplished in the world, the works and objectives to which he applied his energies and abilities; and its being mashkur means that Allah has appreciated it. Shukr when expressed by the servant to God implies his gratefulness to Him for His blessings, and when it is expressed by God for the servant, it means that He has appreciated his services. It is indeed the kindness of the Master that He should appreciate the endeavors of the servant when the servant has only carried out his duties according to the Master's will.

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ تَنزِيلًا ۝23

(76:23) (O Prophet), indeed We have revealed the Qur'an to you in portions.[27]

27. Though the addressee here apparently is the Prophet (peace be upon him), the discourse is directed to the disbelievers who said, "Muhammad (peace be upon him) composes the Quran deliberately by himself piece by piece; had it been from Allah, it would be revealed all at once. At some places on the Quran this objection bas been cited and answered see(E.Ns 102, 104, 105, 106 of Surah An-Nahl) and (E.N. 119 of Surah Bani Israil), but here Allah has answered it without citing it, saying emphatically: "It is We Who are sending it down, it is not the composition of Muhammad, and it is We Who are sending it gradually. That is, it is the requirement of Our wisdom that We should not send down Our message all together in a book form, but should send it piece by piece."

فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تُطِعْ مِنْهُمْ آثِمًا أَوْ كَفُورًا ۝24

(76:24) So persevere with the command of your Lord[28] and do not pay any heed to the wicked and the unbelieving,[29]

28. "Be patient": Face patiently the hardships and difficulties of the great Mission your Lord has entrusted to upon you; endure firmly and steadfastly whatever comes to pass, without showing any weakness in this regard.

29. "Do not obey": Do not yield to any one of them so as to give up preaching of the true faith; do not be inclined to make even the least change in the religious beliefs for the sake of any denier of the truth, or in the moral teachings for the sake of a wicked person. Proclaim whatever is unlawful and forbidden to be so openly even if an immoral person might press you hard to show some lenience in this condemnation, and proclaim whatever is false as false and whatever is true as true publicly even if the disbelievers might use all their influence to silence you, or to make you adopt a little lenience in this regard.

وَاذْكُرِ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ بُكْرَةً وَّاَصِيْلًا ۚ ج صلے 25

(76:25) and remember the name of your Lord, morning and evening;

وَمِنَ الَّيْلِ فَاسْجُدْ لَهٗ وَسَبِّحْهُ لَيْلًا طَوِيْلًا 26

(76:26) and prostrate yourself before Him at night, and extol His Glory during the long watches of the night.[30]

30. The rule followed in the Quran is that wherever the Muslims have been exhorted to show patience against the disbelievers, immediately after it they have been commanded to remember Allah much and to observe the Prayer, which automatically implies that the power needed to meet the resistance of the enemies of the truth in the way of true faith can be obtained only by this means. To remember Allah morning and evening may also imply remembering Allah always but when the command to remember Allah at specific times is given, it implies the salat (Prayer). In this verse, bukrah means the morning and asil the time from the sun's decline till sunset, which obviously covers the Zuhr and the Asr times. Night starts after sunset; therefore, the command "to prostrate yourself in the night" would apply to both the Maghrib and the Isha Prayers. Then, the command "to glorify Allah in the long hours of night", clearly points to the time of the Tahajjud Prayer. see (E.Ns 92-97 of Surah Bani Israil), (E.N. 2 of Surah Al-Muzzammil). This also shows that these have been the Prayer times in Islam from the beginning. However, the command making the Prayer obligatory five times a day with fixed times and number of rakahs was given on the occasion of miraj (ascension).

اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ يُحِبُّوْنَ الْعَاجِلَةَ وَيَذَرُوْنَ وَرَآءَهُمْ يَوْمًا ثَقِيْلًا 27

(76:27) Verily they love (the good of this world) that is hastily obtainable and are oblivious of the burdensome Day ahead of them.[31]

31. That is, the reason why the disbelieving Quraish still persist in the errors and deviations of belief and morality and why they turn a deaf ear to your invitation to the truth is, in fact, their worship of the world and their heedlessness of the Hereafter. Therefore, the way being followed by a true God-worshipper is so different from and opposed to their way that there can be no question of any compromise between them.

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنٰهُمْ وَشَدَدْنَآ اَسْرَهُمْ ۚ وَاِذَا شِئْنَا بَدَّلْنَآ اَمْثَالَهُمْ تَبْدِيْلًا 28

(76:28) We created them and strengthened their joints; and whenever We wish, We can change their faces entirely.32

32. The sentence, "And when We will, We can replace with others like them with a complete replacement" can have several meanings:

(1) That whenever We please We can destroy them and replace them by other people of their own kind, who will be different from them in conduct;

(2) That whenever We please We can change their forms; that is, just as We can make someone healthy and sound in body, so also We have the power to make somebody a paralytic, cause someone to be struck with facial paralysis and other to fall a victim to some disease or accident and become a cripple permanently;

(3) That whenever We will We can recreate them in some other form after death.

اِنَّ هٰذِهٖ تَذْكِرَةٌ ۚ فَمَنْ شَآءَ اتَّخَذَ اِلٰى رَبِّهٖ سَبِيْلًا 29

(76:29) Verily this is an Exhortation; so let him who so will take a way to his Lord.

وَمَا تَشَآءُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ۙ صلے 30

(76:30) But your willing shall be of no avail until Allah Himself so wills.33 Surely Allah is All-Knowing, Most Wise.

33. Three things have been said in these verses:

(1) That whoever wills may adopt the way to his Lord;

(2) that one's willing to do a thing is not enough unless Allah so wills;

(3) That Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. If one considers these three things deeply one can fully understand the relationship between man's freedom of choice and Allah's Will, and it helps to remove all the confusions from the people's minds about the question of destiny.

The first verse shows that in this world the authority granted to man is only to the extent that he may decide to adopt any one of the different courses available for passing life here. This is the freedom of choice that Allah has given to him. For example, when a man

confronts the question of earning a living for himself, he finds many ways before him of which some are lawful, as for example lawful kinds of labor, service, trade and business, industry, or agriculture, and some are unlawful as thievery, robbery, picking pockets, prostitution, trading in money (on interest), gambling, bribery and unlawful kinds of services and business, etc. The decision to adopt any one of these ways has been left to man's own free choice as to how he would like to earn his living. Likewise, there are different modes of morality. On the one side, there are the good qualities, like honesty, nobility, decency, justice, pity, sympathy and chastity, and on the other, the evil traits like wickedness, meanness, tyranny, dishonesty, and frivolity. Man has full freedom to adopt any mode of morality he likes. The same is the case with religion; man has many ways open before him in this regard also; atheism and denial of God, polytheism and idol worship, different combinations of monotheism and polytheism, and the unalloyed creed of God worship which is taught by the Quran. In these also, the decision to choose has been left to man as to which of them he wants to adopt. Allah does not impose on him any decision of His own. If man may like to choose a lawful means of earning his living, Allah will not force him to adopt an unlawful means for it. Or that, man may like to follow the Quran, Allah will not force him to become an atheist, polytheist or disbeliever. Or that, man may like to become a good man, Allah will not force him to become an evil man.

But after man has exercised this freedom of choice whether can he practically also do the same which he wants to do, depends on Allah's Will, His leave and His grace. If the Will of Allah be to let the man do what he has willed or decided to do, then alone can he do it; otherwise he cannot do anything without Allah's Will and His leave, however hard and seriously he may try to do it. This same thing has been said in the second verse. This can be explained by an example. If man had been delegated all the powers in the world and permitted to do whatever he pleased, the system of the world would have been disrupted. One murderer was enough to murder all the people in the world if he were given the freedom to kill anybody he liked. One pickpocket could pick the pocket of everyone if he were given the option to pick anyone's pocket he pleased. One thief was enough to steal whatever he liked; one adulterer to commit rape on every woman, one robber to plunder every house, if each one of these had full powers to act as he desired. Therefore, Allah has kept this in His own power whether He may allow or disallow the man to follow the right or the wrong path that he chooses to follow or not. The person who, giving up error, wants to adopt the right way is also granted righteousness only by Allah's leave and will. However, the condition is that the decision to give up error and choose guidance should have been taken by the man himself; otherwise just as Allah does not make anybody a thief or murderer or atheist or polytheist forcibly, so also He does not make anybody a believer forcibly.

After this, the third verse removes the misunderstanding whether Allah's willing may not be arbitrary. That is why it has been said that "Allah is All-Knowing, Al-Wise." That is whatever He does, He does it on the basis of knowledge and wisdom; therefore, there can be no possibility of any error in His decisions. He decided with full knowledge and wisdom as to who should be given a particular kind of help and who should not be given it, who should be allowed to do a particular work and who should not be allowed to do it. To the extent that Allah provides opportunities to man and makes the conditions favorable for him, he can work according to his desire, whether it be good or evil. The question of guidance

also is no exception to it. Allah alone knows on the basis of His knowledge and He alone determines on the basis of His wisdom as to who deserves to be guided and who does not. see(E.N. 41 of Surah Al-Muddaththir).

يُّدۡخِلُ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ فِىۡ رَحۡمَتِهٖ ؕ وَالظّٰلِمِيۡنَ اَعَدَّ لَهُمۡ عَذَابًا اَلِيۡمًا ۚ 31

(76:31) He admits to His Mercy whomsoever He pleases. As for the wrong-doers, He has prepared for them a grievous chastisement.[34]

34. In this verse "wrongdoers" imply the people whom the revelations of Allah and the teachings of His Prophet (peace be upon him) may reach, yet they deliberately and consciously decide that they would not obey and follow them. This also includes those unjust people who may plainly say that they do not accept the revelation as God's revelation and the Prophet as God's Prophet, or that they do not believe in God at all, and also those wicked people who may not refuse to believe in God and the Prophet and the Quran, but they are resolved not to obey and follow them. As a matter of fact, both these groups are unjust and wicked. As regards the first group, their case is clear and obvious; but the second group is no less wicked; it is also hypocritical and treacherous. Verbally, they say that they believe in God and the Messenger and the Quran, but in their hearts and minds they are resolved not to follow them, and their practical conduct of life is also opposed to it. About both Allah has declared that He has prepared for them a painful torment. They might strut about in the world, enjoy life as they like, boast and brag of their superiority, but ultimately they will be subjected to a disgraceful punishment; they cannot enter and enjoy Allah's mercy in any way.

77. Surah Al Mursalat (The Winds Which Are Sent)

Name

The Surah takes its name from the word wal-mursalat in the first verse.

Period of Revelation

Its subject matter bears full evidence that it was revealed in the earliest period at Makkah. If this Surah is read together with the two Surahs preceding it, namely Al-Qiyamah and Ad-Dahr, and the two Surahs following it, namely An-Naba and An-Naziat, it becomes obvious that all these Surahs are the Revelations of the same period, and they deal with one and the same theme, which has been impressed on the people of Makkah in different ways.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is to affirm the Resurrection and Hereafter and to warn the people of the consequences which will ultimately follow the denial and the affirmation of these truths.

In the first seven verses, the system of winds has been presented as an evidence of the truth that the Resurrection which is being foretold by the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) must come to pass. The reasoning is that the power of All-Mighty Allah Who established this wonderful system on the earth, cannot be helpless in bringing about the Resurrection, and the express wisdom which underlies this system bears full evidence that the Hereafter must appear, for no act of an All-Wise Creator can be vain and purposeless, and if there was no Hereafter, it would mean that the whole of one's life was useless and absurd.

The people of Makkah repeatedly asked, "Bring about the Resurrection with which you threaten us; only then shall we believe in it. "In vv. 8-l5, their demand has been answered, saying: “Resurrection is no sport or fun so that whenever a jester should ask for it, it should be brought forth immediately. It is indeed the Day of Judgment to settle the account of all mankind and of all its individuals. For it Allah has fixed a specific time it will take place at its own time, and when it takes place with all its dreads and horrors, it will confound those who are demanding it for fun today. Then their cases will be decided only on the evidence of those Messengers whom these deniers of the truth are repudiating with impunity. Then they will themselves realize how they themselves are responsible for their dooms

In vv. 16-28 arguments have been given continuously for the occurrence and necessity of the Resurrection and Hereafter. In these it has been stated that man's own history, his own birth, and the structure of the earth on which he lives, bear the testimony that the coming of Resurrection and the establishment of the Hereafter are possible as well as the demand of Allah Almighty's wisdom. History tells us that the nations which denied the Hereafter ultimately became corrupted and met with destruction. This means that the Hereafter is a truth which if denied and contradicted by a nation by its conduct and attitude, will cause it to meet the same doom, which is met by a blind man who bushes headlong into an approaching train. And it also means that in the kingdom of the universe only physical laws are not at work but a moral law also is working in it, under which in this very world the process of retribution is operating. But since in the present life of the world retribution is not

taking place in its complete and perfect form, the moral law of the universe necessarily demands that there should come a time when it should take its full course and all those good works and evil deeds, which could not be rewarded here, or which escaped their due punishment should be fully rewarded and punished. For this it is inevitable that there should be a second life after death. If man only considers how he takes his birth in the world, his intellect, provided it is sound intellect, cannot deny that for the God Who began his creation from an insignificant sperm drop and developed him into a perfect man, it certainly possible to create the same man once again. After death the particles of man's body do not disappear but continue to exist on the same earth on which he lived his whole life. It is from the resources and treasures of this very earth that he is made and nourished and then into the same treasures of the earth he is deposited. The God who caused him to emerge from the treasures of the earth, in the first instance, can also cause him to re-emerge from the same treasures after he has been restored to them at death. If one only considers the powers of Allah, one cannot deny that He can do this; and if one considers the wisdom of Allah, one also cannot deny that it is certainly the very demand of His wisdom to call man to account for the right and wrong use of the powers that He has granted him on the earth; it would rather be against wisdom to let him off without rendering an account.

Then, in vv. 28-40, the fate of the deniers of the Hereafter has been depicted, and in vv. 41-45 of those who affirming faith in it in their worldly life, endeavored to improve their Hereafter, and abstained from the evils of disbelief and thought, morality and deed, conduct and character which might be helpful in man's worldly life, but are certainly ruinous for his life hereafter.

In the end, the deniers of the Hereafter and those who turn away from God-worship, have been warned as if to say: "Enjoy your short-lived worldly pleasure as you may, but your end will ultimately be disastrous." The discourse concludes with the assertion that the one who fails to obtain guidance from Book like the Qur'an, can have no ether source in the world to afford him Guidance.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

وَالۡمُرۡسَلٰتِ عُرۡفًا ۙ 1

(77:1) By the (winds) sent forth in quick succession,

فَالۡعٰصِفٰتِ عَصۡفًا ۙ 2

(77:2) which then blow tempestuously

وَّالنّٰشِرٰتِ نَشۡرًا ۙ 3

(77:3) and raise (clouds) and scatter them around,

فَالْفٰرِقٰتِ فَرْقًا ۙ 4

(77:4) then winnow them thoroughly,

فَالْمُلْقِيٰتِ ذِكْرًا ۙ 5

(77:5) and then cast (Allah's) remembrance (in people's hearts),

عُذْرًا اَوْ نُذْرًا ۙ 6

(77:6) to serve as an excuse or a warning.[1]

1. That is, sometimes the failure of winds causes the people to be alarmed at the prospect of a famine, and they turn to Allah to repent of their sins. Sometimes they bring a lot of rain and the people turn to Allah in gratitude, and sometimes their blowing violently causes dread in the hearts and the people turn to Allah from fear of destruction.

In these verses initially the order of rain-bringing winds has been stated, which is thus: first, winds start blowing in succession; then they assume the proportions of a storm; then they raise the clouds and spread them; then they split and separate them. After this, instead of making mention of the rainfall, it is said that the winds infuse the hearts with the remembrance of Allah, as an excuse or as a warning. That is, it is an occasion when either because of fear man is compelled to remember Allah, or else he confesses his errors and invokes Allah to protect and save him from ruin and bless him with rain. If it has not rained for a long time, and the people are thirsty for rain, even the most hardened disbeliever sometimes begins to remember God when he sees the winds blowing and the clouds advancing. The drought's being mild and severe makes the difference. In case the drought is mild, the common man who is not far from Allah, will remember Him, but others will offer scientific explanations, saying that there was no cause for anxiety: it did not rain because of such and such a cause and it would be weak-mindedness to start praying to God on such an ordinary thing. However, if the drought is unusually prolonged, and the whole country is faced with a calamitous situation, even the confirmed disbelievers begin to remember God. If they feel shy to use their tongue, in their hearts they feel penitent on their wrongdoing and ingratitude and pray to God to cause rain throughout the country from the winds which are raising the clouds. This is infusion of God's remembrance in the hearts as an excuse. As for its infusion as a warning, it happens when the wind develops into a cyclone and destroys settlement after settlement or it rains so heavily as to cause a deluge. In such a state even a confirmed atheist starts imploring God out of awe for Him, and then all scientific explanations of the cyclone or deluge evaporate from his mind. Thus, after describing the blowing of winds in their succession to say that they infuse the hearts with Allah's remembrance as an excuse or as a warning, is meant to impress the truth that the system working in the world keeps on reminding man that everything on the earth has not been placed under his control but there is a Supreme Power above him, which rules his destiny. That Power is so supreme and mighty that it can use the elements for the

sustenance and nourishment of man when it so wills and can use the same elements for his destruction when it so wills.

After this the same system of winds has been proffered as an argument to prove that the Resurrection which is being promised to man, must come to pass. Now, let us see how this system testifies to this truth.

Man generally is perplexed in the case of Resurrection and the Hereafter at two questions. First: is the occurrence of Resurrection possible? Second: what is its need and necessity? And then being perplexed at these questions, he starts entertaining doubts whether it will at all occur or not, or whether it was only a figment of the imagination. In this connection, the Quran has at some places reasoned out and proved its possibility, its necessity and occurrence from the system of the universe, and at others adopted another mode of reasoning: oaths have been sworn by some of the countless signs of God's kingdom and it has been asserted that it shall surely come to pass. This mode of reasoning contains arguments for its possibility as well as arguments for its necessity and arguments for its occurrence.

Here, adopting the same mode of reasoning only the system of the circulation of winds and rainfall has been presented as a sign of the truth that it is a regular system, which has been established by the design of an All-Wise, All-Mighty Sovereign; it is not a chance occurrence, as a result of which a system might have been generated in the atmosphere of the earth that vapors should arise from the seas, winds should carry them and gather them into clouds, then split and separate them into pieces and transport them to different parts of the earth and then should cause them to fall as rain. This system has not been devised accidentally by some blind and deaf nature, but it is a wellconsidered and well-designed plan, which is functioning regularly according to a law. That is why it never so happens that the heat of the sun should produce ice on the surface of the sea instead of vapors, but the sun always raises only vapors from the sea. It never so happens that the monsoons should blow in the reverse order and suppress vapors into the sea but they always raise them up into the atmosphere. It never so happens that the formation of clouds should cease, or the winds should stop to carry them to dry lands or the falling of rain on the earth should discontinue. The same law has been at work since millions and millions of years under which this system is functioning. Had it not been so our coming into existence on the earth and survival here would not be possible.

In this system one finds a clear purpose and the working of a regular law. One can clearly see that on the earth the life of man, animal and vegetation deeply relates to the winds and rainfall, and this arrangement testifies that water has been provided to bring animate life into existence and keep it alive precisely according to their requirements and a law. This purpose and regularity is not found only in this aspect but in the entire system of the universe, and man's whole scientific progress is based on it. About every thing man tries to find out what is its purpose and on what principle it works. Then as he goes on gaining insight into the purposes of the creation of different things and the principles on which they work, he goes on devising new and ever new methods of their use and making new inventions for the progress of his civilization. Had there been no such concept in the mind of man naturally that the world is a meaningful world and everything in it is working on a

principle, he would never have entertained the question about anything as to what was its purpose and how it could be put to use.

Now, when this world and everything in it has meaning, and if there is a law working in this world and in everything it contains, and if it has been functioning with the same purpose and regularity since millions and millions of years, then a stubborn person only could refuse to accept that an All-Knowing, All-Mighty God has made it, and about that God it would be foolish to assume that although He could make and cause it to function but cannot break it, and after breaking it, cannot reconstruct it in any other form if He so wills. The concept about matter that it is imperishable was the chief support of the ignorant atheist of the past, but the progress of knowledge has proved it also false. Now it is an acknowledged scientific fact that matter can change into energy and energy into matter. Therefore, it is perfectly according to knowledge and reason that this material world will last only as long as the Living and Eternal God sustains it. As soon as He wills to change it into energy, He can change it by a simple command and His one command is enough to re-create it into any other material form and shape He wills.

This much then about the possibility of the Resurrection, which cannot now be rejected by any scientific and rational argument. As for the question that it must take place so that man is rewarded for his good works and punished for his evil deeds, the person who acknowledges man's moral responsibility and also believes that rewarding the good services and punishing the crimes is the necessary demand of this moral responsibility, cannot but admit that there must be the Hereafter. There is no law or government in the world, which can punish every crime and reward every good act. To say that the prick of the conscience is a sufficient punishment for the culprit and the satisfaction of the conscience is sufficient reward for the doer of good is no more than meaningless philosophizing. The question is: How and when did the conscience of the person who killed an innocent man and then himself died in an accident immediately after it helped him? And when did the conscience of the man who went to fight for the sake of truth and justice and fell a victim to a bomb blast suddenly, have the satisfaction that he had laid down his life for a good cause? Thus, the truth is that the pretences invented to avoid the belief in the Hereafter are all meaningless. Man's intellect wants, his nature requires, that there should be justice, but in the present life of the world it is not possible to have full and perfect justice. Justice can be had only in the Hereafter and only under the judgment and command of the All-Knowing, Omnipotent God. Denial of the necessity of the Hereafter is, in fact, denial of the necessity of justice.

Intellect can go only so far as to convince man that the Hereafter is possible and it should come about. As for the truth that it will surely come about, the knowledge of it can be obtained only through revelation, and revelation has given us the news that that which you are being promised must happen. We cannot attain this knowledge by intellectual reasoning; however, we can attain the certainty of its being true on the basis that the thing of which we are being informed by revelation is both possible and necessary.

إِنَّمَا تُوعَدُونَ لَوَاقِعٌ ۝ 7

(77:7) Surely what you are promised[2] shall come to pass. [3]

2. Another meaning can be: That which you are being threatened with, i.e. the Resurrection and Hereafter.

3. Here an oath has been sworn by five things on the inevitability of the Resurrection:

(1) Those which are sent forth in succession, or for a good cause.

(2) Those which blow violently and tempestuously.

(3) Those which disperse and scatter.

(4) "those which split and separate;" and

(5) Those which inspire the remembrance. As these words only describe the characteristics and it has not been specified what thing or things they qualify, this has given rise to a difference of opinion among the commentators as to whether these are the qualities of one particular thing or of different things and what the thing or things are? One group of them says that all the five are qualify the winds; the second group says that all the five imply the angels; the third group says that the first three imply the winds and the remaining two the angels; the fourth says that the first two imply the winds and the other three the angels; another group has opined that the first quality implies the angels of mercy, the second the angels of punishment and the remaining three imply the verses of the Quran.

In our opinion, the first thing worthy of consideration is that when five characteristic have been mentioned continuously in one and the same context and there is no indication to show as to what has been qualified up to a certain point and wherefrom has the qualification of another thing begun, it cannot be correct, on the basis of a baseless conjecture, to understand that in these verses oaths have been sworn by two or three different things. Rather in this case the continuity of the subject by itself requires that the whole passage be regarded as related to the characteristics of one and the same thing. Secondly, wherever in the Quran an oath bas been sworn by a certain thing or things in order to convince the doubters or deniers of an unseen truth, there the oath stands for an argument or reasoning which is meant to tell that the thing or things point to the truth's being right and correct. For this purpose obviously it cannot be correct to present one imperceptible thing as an argument for another imperceptible thing; for, only a perceptible thing can be presented as an argument for an imperceptible thing. Hence in our opinion the correct explanation is that it implies the winds and the explanation of the people who interpret the five things to mean the angels cannot be acceptable, for the angels are as imperceptible as is the occurrence of the Resurrection.

Now, let us consider as to how these different states of winds point to the occurrence of the Resurrection. One of the most important factor which has made animal and vegetable life possible on the earth is the air. The relationship its qualities bear with every kind of life testify that there is an All-Powerful, All-Wise Creator, Who willed to create life on this earth and for this purpose created here a thing whose qualities exactly and precisely correspond to the requirements of the existence of living beings. Then, He did not only wrap up the earth in the air and left it alone, but by His power and wisdom characterized this air with

countless different states, which are being regulated since millions and millions of years in such a way that they cause the change of seasons and weather: sometimes it is close and sometimes a soft breeze blows; sometimes it is hot and sometimes cold; sometimes it brings clouds and sometimes it drives away clouds; sometimes it causes pleasant gusts to blow and sometimes disastrous windstorms; sometimes it brings beneficial rains and sometimes there is drought; in short, there are different kinds of winds which blow in their own time, and every kind serves one or the other purpose. This arrangement is the proof of a dominant Power, for which neither it can be impossible to bring life into existence, nor to obliterate it, nor to re-create it after having annihilated it. Likewise, this arrangement is also a proof of a supreme wisdom about which only a foolish man could think that all this was being done for fun, without any higher object in view. As against this wonderful system man is so helpless that he can neither cause a favorable wind to blow for himself, nor can prevent a disastrous cyclone from blowing on himself. However shameless, obstinate and stubborn he may be, the wind does at one time or another remind him that a Mighty Sovereign is ruling over him, Who can turn this principal means of his life into a cause of blessing for him or into a cause of ruin for him whenever He so likes, and man does not have the power to prevent or avert any of His decisions. (For further explanation, see(E.N. 7 of Surah Al-Jathiyah); (E.Ns 1 to 4 of Surah Adh-Dhariyat).

فَإِذَا النُّجُومُ طُمِسَتْ ۝٨

(77:8) So when the stars are extinguished,[4]

4. That is, when they lose their light and luster.

وَإِذَا السَّمَاءُ فُرِجَتْ ۝٩

(77:9) and the sky is rent asunder,[5]

5. When the heaven is rent asunder: when the system and discipline of the heavens under which every star and planet is established and moving in its orbit and everything in the universe is adhering to the bounds set for it, is broken.

وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ نُسِفَتْ ۝١٠

(77:10) and the mountains are blown away,

وَإِذَا الرُّسُلُ أُقِّتَتْ ۝١١

(77:11) and the appointed time to bring the Messengers together arrives,(then shall the promised event come to pass).[6]

6. At several places in the Quran it has been stated that when the case of mankind will be presented before Allah on the Day of Resurrection, the Messenger of every nation will be

called upon to testify that he had conveyed Allah's messages intact to his people. This will be Allah's first and major argument against the culprits and the wicked people to prove that they were themselves responsible for their wrong attitude and conduct in life, for there had been no negligence on the part of Allah to show guidance and administer warnings . For instance, see (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 172, 173 and E.Ns 134, 135); (Surah Az-Zumar, Ayat 69 and E.N. 80); (Surah Al-Mulk, Ayat 8 and E.N. 14).

لِاَيِّ يَوۡمٍ اُجِّلَتۡ ؕ 12

(77:12) To which Day has this task been deferred?

لِيَوۡمِ الۡفَصۡلِ ۚ 13

(77:13) To the Day of Judgement.

وَمَاۤ اَدۡرٰىكَ مَا يَوۡمُ الۡفَصۡلِ ؕ 14

(77:14) What do you know what the Day of Judgement is?

وَيۡلٌ يَّوۡمَئِذٍ لِّلۡمُكَذِّبِيۡنَ 15

(77:15) Woe on that Day to those that give the lie to the Truth![7]

7. Deniers: those people who took the news of the coming of Resurrection as a lie, and spent their lives in the world under the delusion that the time would never come when they would have to present themselves before their God and render an account of their deeds.

اَلَمۡ نُهۡلِكِ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ ؕ 16

(77:16) Did We not destroy many a nation of the earlier times?[8]

8. This is an argument from history for the Hereafter, It means: Consider your own history in the world. Whichever nations denied the Hereafter and took this worldly life to be real life and based their moral attitude on the results appearing here regarding them as the criterion of good and evil, ultimately went to their doom without exception. This is a proof of the fact that the Hereafter is a reality overlooking and ignoring which causes the same kind of harm to a person which is caused when he chooses to close his eyes to the hard facts of life." (For further explanation, see (E.N. 12 of Yunus), (E.N. 86 of An-Naml), (E.N. 8 of Ar-Rum), (E.N. 25 of Saba).

ثُمَّ نُتۡبِعُهُمُ الۡاٰخِرِيۡنَ 17

(77:17) And We shall cause those of later times[9] to follow them.

9. That is, this is a permanent law with Us. Just as denial of the Hereafter has proved disastrous for the nations of the past so it will always prove disastrous also for the nations of the future. No nation has been an exception to it before nor will any be so in the future.

كَذٰلِكَ نَفۡعَلُ بِالۡمُجۡرِمِيۡنَ 18

(77:18) Thus do We deal with the guilty.

وَيۡلٌ يَّوۡمَئِذٍ لِّلۡمُكَذِّبِيۡنَ 19

(77:19) Woe on that Day to those that give the lie to the Truth![10]

10. This sentence in the present context means: The fate they have met or will meet in the world, is not their real punishment; their real doom will descend on them on the Day of Decision. The punishment here is only in the nature of a person's being arrested when he commits one crime after the other fearlessly and is not inclined to mend and change his ways. The court where his case is to be decided and he is to be punished for all his misdeeds, will not be established in this world but in the Hereafter, and that indeed will be the real day of his ruin and disaster. (For further explanation, (see E.Ns 5, 6 of Surah Al-Aaraf); (E.N. 105 of Surah Houd).

اَلَمۡ نَخۡلُقۡكُّمۡ مِّنۡ مَّآءٍ مَّهِيۡنٍ ۙ 20

(77:20) Did We not create you of a mean fluid,

فَجَعَلۡنٰهُ فِىۡ قَرَارٍ مَّكِيۡنٍ ۙ 21

(77:21) which We then placed in a secure repository[11]

11. A secure place: The mother's womb in which the child is so firmly lodged as soon as it has been conceived and where such arrangements are made for its security and nourishment that abortion cannot take place unless there is a disaster, and even for artificial abortion extraordinary devices have to be adopted, which are both risky and harmful in spite of modern developments in medical science.

اِلٰى قَدَرٍ مَّعۡلُوۡمٍ ۙ 22

(77:22) until an appointed time?[12]

12. The words qadar im-malum do not only mean that the term is appointed and fixed but they also contain the sense that it is known to Allah alone. About child, no one knows by any means how many months, days, hours, minutes and seconds it will remain in the

mothers womb and what will be its exact and precise time of birth. Allah alone has fixed a specific term for every child and He alone knows it. 2

فَقَدَرۡنَا ۖ فَنِعۡمَ الۡقٰدِرُوۡنَ 23

(77:23) See that We had the power to do so. Great indeed is Our power to do what We will.[13]

13. This is an express argument for the possibility of the life-after-death What is meant to be said is: When We had the power to shape and develop you into a perfect and complete man from an insignificant sperm-drop, how shall We be helpless to re-create you in some other way? Our this creation in consequence of which you exist as a living being, is a proof that We are excellent Possessors of power; We cannot be so helpless as to be unable to re-create you after having created you in the first instance.

وَيۡلٌ يَّوۡمَئِذٍ لِّلۡمُكَذِّبِيۡنَ 24

(77:24) Woe on that Day to those that give the lie to the Truth![14]

14. This sentence here gives the meaning that in spite of the express argument for the possibility of life-after-death, the people who are denying it, may mock it as they may and look down upon its believers as people of antiquated ideas and whims, but when the Day comes which they are denying today, they will themselves know that it is a day of their own ruin and disaster.

اَلَمۡ نَجۡعَلِ الۡاَرۡضَ كِفَاتًا ۙ 25

(77:25) Did We not make the earth a receptacle,

اَحۡيَآءً وَّاَمۡوَاتًا ۙ 26

(77:26) for the living and the dead,

وَّجَعَلۡنَا فِيۡهَا رَوَاسِىَ شٰمِخٰتٍ وَّاَسۡقَيۡنٰكُمۡ مَّآءً فُرَاتًا ؕ 27

(77:27) and did We not firmly fix towering mountains on it and give you sweet water to drink?[15]

15. This is yet another argument for the possibility and reasonableness of the Hereafter. It is this very earth which since millions and millions of years has been sustaining and providing for countless different kinds of creatures. Every kind of vegetation and every kind of animal and man are living on it. To meet the requirements of all unmeasureable treasures of provisions of different kinds are coming out of its belly. Then it is on this very earth that countless members of all kinds of creatures die every day, but there exists a wonderful

arrangement in that the dead bodies of all creatures are deposited in the same earth, and it again becomes ready for sustaining life and providing home to the new members of every species. This earth has not been shaped like a smooth-surfaced ball either, but here and there on it there have been set high mountains and mountain-ranges, which play an important role in causing the change of seasons and rainfall, the birth of rivers, creation of fertile valleys, growth of trees which supply timber, and provisions of a variety of minerals and stones. Then in the interior of this very earth, sweet water has been stored and on its surface rivers of sweet water have been arranged and also from the saline waters of the sea vapors of pure water are raised and caused to fall as rain from the sky. Is not all this an argument to prove that an All- Powerful Sovereign has created all this and He is not only All-Powerful but All-Knowing and All-Wise as well? Now, if this earth has been thus equipped and provisioned only by His power and wisdom, why should an intelligent man find it difficult to understand that the same Sovereign by His power can wind up this world and create another world on a new pattern, and the demand of His wisdom is that he should create another world after it so that He may call man to account for the deeds he has done in this world?

وَيْلٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ 28

(77:28) Woe on that Day to those that give the lie to the Truth![16]

16. Here, this sentence signifies that the people who deny the coming of the Hereafter and regard it as impossible and irrational in spite of seeing these manifest signs of Allah's power and wisdom, may remain lost in their vain imaginations if they so like. But the day when all this takes place against their expectations, they will realize that they have earned ruin on account of their own folly.

اِنْطَلِقُوْٓا اِلٰى مَا كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تُكَذِّبُوْنَ ۚ 29

(77:29) Proceed[17] now towards that which you were wont to deny as false;

17. After giving proofs of the coming of the Hereafter, now it is being stated how the deniers will be dealt with when it has actually taken place.

اِنْطَلِقُوْٓا اِلٰى ظِلٍّ ذِيْ ثَلٰثِ شُعَبٍ ۙ 30

(77:30) proceed towards the three-pronged shadow,[18]

18. Shadow: Shadow of smoke; three columns: Because when a big smoke arises, it is divided into several parts at the top.

لَّا ظَلِيْلٍ وَّلَا يُغْنِيْ مِنَ اللَّهَبِ ؕ 31

(77:31) which neither provides (cooling) shade nor protection against the flames;

إِنَّهَا تَرۡمِي بِشَرَرٖ كَٱلۡقَصۡرِ ٣٢

(77:32) it indeed throws up sparks like castles,

كَأَنَّهُۥ جِمَٰلَتٞ صُفۡرٞ ٣٣

(77:33) which seem as though they are yellow-coloured camels.[19]

19. That is, each spark will be like a castle, and when these huge sparks will rise and burst and fly about in all directions it will seem as though they were yellow camels running and jumping about ceaselessly.

وَيۡلٞ يَوۡمَئِذٖ لِّلۡمُكَذِّبِينَ ٣٤

(77:34) Woe on that Day to those that give the lie to the Truth!

هَٰذَا يَوۡمُ لَا يَنطِقُونَ ٣٥

(77:35) That will be the Day on which they will not (be able to) utter a word,

وَلَا يُؤۡذَنُ لَهُمۡ فَيَعۡتَذِرُونَ ٣٦

(77:36) nor will they be allowed to proffer excuses.[20]

20. This will be their ultimate state at the time they will be entering Hell. Before this in the plain of Resurrection they will be offering all sorts of excuses, blaming others for their errors and proving their own selves to be innocent, abusing their leaders and guides who led them astray; so much so that some of them will even disown their crimes shamelessly, as has been stated at several places in the Quran. But when their being criminals will have been established by every kind of evidence, and when their own hands and feet and limbs will have borne witness against them to prove their guilt fully, and when after fulfilling all requirements of justice rightly and truly, the sentence will be passed on them, they will be dumbfounded and no room will be left for them to offer any excuse. To refuse an opportunity or permission to offer an excuse, does not mean that judgment will be passed against them without giving them a chance for self defense, but it means that their guilt and crime will be proved to the fullest and they will not be able to offer any excuse after it.

وَيۡلٞ يَوۡمَئِذٖ لِّلۡمُكَذِّبِينَ ٣٧

(77:37) Woe on that Day to those that give the lie to the Truth!

هٰذَا يَوْمُ الْفَصْلِ ۚ جَمَعْنٰكُمْ وَالْاَوَّلِيْنَ 38

(77:38) That is the Day of Judgement on which We have assembled you as well as all those who went before you.

فَاِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ كَيْدٌ فَكِيْدُوْنِ 39

(77:39) So if you have any ploy, try it against Me![21]

21. That is, in the world you used every kind of deception and trick in self-interest. Now, if you have any trick to escape My punishment, you may use it to defeat Me and My plan.

وَيْلٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ع 40

(77:40) Woe on that Day to those that give the lie to the Truth!

اِنَّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ فِيْ ظِلٰلٍ وَّعُيُوْنٍ ۙ 41

(77:41) Behold, today the God-fearing[22] will be amidst shades and springs,

22. As this world has been used here in contrast to the deniers; the righteous here implies the people who refrained from denying the Hereafter and accepted it and passed their life in the world with the belief that in the Hereafter they would have to render an account of their word and deed and their conduct and character.

وَّفَوَاكِهَ مِمَّا يَشْتَهُوْنَ ؕ 42

(77:42) and the fruits that they desire (will be ready at hand).

كُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا هَنِيْٓـًٔا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ 43

(77:43) Eat and drink and may every joy attend you as a reward for your deeds.

اِنَّا كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ 44

(77:44) Thus do We reward those that do good.

وَيْلٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ 45

(77:45) Woe on that Day to those that give the lie to the Truth![23]

23. Here this sentence means that one of their afflictions. as mentioned above, will be that they will be standing as culprits in the plain of Resurrection. Their crimes will have been proved and established openly and they will not be in a position even to open their mouths to put forward a plea in self defense, and shall ultimately become fuel of Hell. Their other affliction, and by far the worse will be that they will see the same believers enjoying themselves in Paradise, whom they had been opposing and resisting and mocking throughout their lives as foolish, narrow-minded, mean and old fashioned people.

كُلُوْا وَتَمَتَّعُوْا قَلِيْلًا اِنَّكُمْ مُّجْرِمُوْنَ 46

(77:46) Eat[24] and enjoy yourselves for a while.[25] Surely you are evil-doers.

24. In conclusion, these words are being addressed not only to the disbelievers of Makkah but to all disbelievers of the world.

25. For a while: In their brief life of the world.

وَيْلٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ 47

(77:47) Woe on that Day to those that give the lie to the Truth!

وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمُ ارْكَعُوْا لَا يَرْكَعُوْنَ 48

(77:48) When it is said to them: "Bow down (before Allah)," they do not bow down.[26]

26. Bowing before Allah: does not only imply worshipping Him but also means believing in the Messenger (peace be upon him) sent by Allah and in the Book revealed by Him and following and obeying His commands.

وَيْلٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ 49

(77:49) Woe on that Day to those that give the lie to the Truth!

فَبِاَيِّ حَدِيْثٍۢ بَعْدَهٗ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ع 50

(77:50) In what discourse after this (Qur'an) will they, then, believe?[27]

27. That is, the greatest message that could distinguish the truth from falsehood for man and show him right guidance, has been sent down in the shape of the Quran. If a person does not believe even after reading it or hearing it read, what else after this can show him the correct guidance?

78. Surah An Naba (The News)

Name

The Surah derived its name from the word an-Naba in the second verse. This is not only a name but also a title of its subject matter, for Naba implies the news of Resurrection and Hereafter and the whole Surah is devoted to the same theme.

Period of Revelation

As we have explained in the introduction to Surah Al-Mursalat, the theme of all the Surahs, from Al-Qiyamah to An-Naziat, closely resembles one another's, and all these seem to have been revealed in the earliest period at Makkah.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme also is the same as of Surah Al-Mursalat, i. e. to affirm the Resurrection and Hereafter, and to warn the people of the consequences of acknowledging or disacknowledging it.

When the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) first started to preach Islam in Makkah, his message consisted of three elements: (1) That none be held as an associate with Allah in Godhead; (2) that Allah had appointed him as His Messenger; (3) that this world will come to an end one day and then another world will be established when all the former and the latter generations will be resurrected with the same bodies in which they lived and worked in the world; then they will be called to account for their beliefs and deeds and those who emerge as believing and righteous in this accountability will go to Paradise and those who are proved to be disbelieving and wicked will live in Hell for ever.

Of these although the first thing was highly unpleasant for the people of Makkah, yet in any case they were not disbelievers in the existence of Allah. They believed in His Being the Supreme Sustainer, Creator and Providence and also admitted that all those beings whom they regarded as their deities, were themselves Allah's creatures. Therefore, in this regard the only thing they disputed was whether they had any share in the attributes and powers of Divinity and in the Divine Being itself or not.

As for the second thing, the people of Makkah were not prepared to accept it. However, what they could not possibly deny was that during the 40 years life that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) had lived among them before his claim to Prophethood, they had never found him a lying deceitful person or the one who would adopt unlawful methods for selfish ends. They themselves admitted that he was a man possessed of wisdom, righteousness and moral superiority. Therefore, in spite of charging him with a thousand false accusations, nothing to say of making others believe, they were finding it difficult even for themselves to believe that although he was an honest and upright man in every other affair and dealing of life, yet, God forbid, a liar only in his claim to be a Prophet.

Thus, the first two things were not in fact so perplexing for the people of Makkah as the third thing. When this was presented before them, they mocked it most of all, expressed unusual wonder at it, and regarding it as remote from reason and impossible, started talking

against it as incredible, even inconceivable, in their assemblies. But in order to bring them to the way of Islam it was absolutely essential that the doctrine of the Hereafter should be instilled into their minds, for without belief in this doctrine, it was not at all possible that they could adopt a serious attitude with regard to the truth and falsehood, could change their standard of values in respect of good and evil, and giving up worship of the world, could be inclined to follow the way that Islam urged them to follow. That is why in the earliest Surahs revealed at Makkah the doctrine of the Hereafter has been impressed and stressed more than anything else. However, the arguments for it have been given in such a way that the doctrine of the Oneness of God (Tauhid) also is impressed on the minds automatically. This also contains brief arguments, here and there, to confirm the truth of the Holy Messenger of Allah and the Qur'an.

After understanding well why the theme of the Hereafter has been so frequently repeated in the Surahs of this period, let us now have a look at the subject matter of this Surah. In it first of all, allusion has been made to the common talk and the doubts that were being expressed in every street of Makkah and in every assembly of the people of Makkah on hearing the news about Resurrection. Then, the deniers have been asked: "Don't you see this earth which We have spread as a carpet for you? Don't you see the high mountains which we have so firmly placed in the earth? Don’t you consider your own selves how We have created you as pairs of men and women? Don’t you consider your sleep by which We make you seek a few hours rest after every few hours labour and toil so as to keep you fit for work in the world? Don't you see the alternation of the night and day which We are so regularly perpetuating precisely according to your needs and requirements? Don’t you see the strongly fortified system of the heavens above you? Don't you see the sun by means of which you are receiving your light and heat? Don't you see the rains which fall from the clouds and help produce corns and vegetables and luxuriant gardens? Do these things only tell you that the power of the Almighty Being Who has created them, will be unable to bring about Resurrection and establish the Next World? Then, from the supreme wisdom which is clearly working in this world around you, do you only understand this that although each part of it and each function of it is purposive, yet life is meaningless? Nothing could be more absurd and meaningless that after appointing man to the office of foreman and granting him vast powers of appropriation, in this workhouse, when he leaves the world after fulfilling his role, he should be let off without any accountability. He should neither be rewarded and granted pension on satisfactory work, nor subjected to any accountability and punishment on unsatisfactory performance of duty.

After giving these arguments it has been emphatically stated that the Day of Judgment shall certainly come to pass on its appointed time. No sooner is the Trumpet sounded than whatever is being foretold shall appear before the eyes, and whether you believe in it today, or not, at that time you will come out in your multitudes from wherever you would be lying dead and buried to render your account. Your denial cannot in any way avert this inevitable event.

Then, in vv. 21-30; it has been stated that every single misdeed of those who do not expect any accountability to take place and have thus belied Our Revelations, lies reckoned and recorded with Us, and Hell is ever lying an ambush to punish them and punish them fully for all their doings. Then, in vv. 31-36, the best rewards of those who lived as responsible people in the world and have provided for their Hereafter beforehand have been mentioned.

They have been reassured that they will not only be rewarded richly for their services but in addition they will also be given sufficient gifts.

In conclusion, the Divine Court in the Hereafter has been depicted, making it plain that there will be no question of somebody's being adamant in the matter of getting his followers and associates forgiven, none will speak without leave, and leave will be granted on the condition that intercession be made only for the one to whom leave of intercession will have been given, and the intercessor will say only what is right. Moreover, leave for intercession will be given only for those who had acknowledged the Truth in the world but were sinners; rebels of God and rejectors of the Truth will deserve no intercession at all.

The discourse has been concluded with this warning: The Day the coming of which is being foretold, shall certainly come to pass. Do not think it is yet far off, it is close at hand. Now, whoever wills, let him believe in it and take the way towards his Lord. But he who disbelieves, in spite of the warning, "will have all his deeds placed before him: and he will exclaim regretfully: "Oh, would that I were not born in the world!" At that time, his regrets will be about the same world of which he is so enamored today!

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

عَمَّ يَتَسَآءَلُوۡنَ ۚ 1

(78:1) About what are they asking one another?

عَنِ النَّبَاِ الۡعَظِيۡمِ ۙ 2

(78:2) Is it about the awesome tiding

الَّذِىۡ هُمۡ فِيۡهِ مُخۡتَلِفُوۡنَ ؕ 3

(78:3) that they are in utter disagreement?[1]

1. The great news: the news of the Resurrection and Hereafter, which the people of Makkah heard with amazement, then raised questions and doubts about it in their assemblies. When they met each other they would ask: Did you ever hear that the dead will be resurrected to life? Is it credible that life will be infused once again into the bones which have decayed and become rotten? Does it stand to reason that the former and the latter generations will rise up and gather together at one place? Is it possible that these huge mountains which are so firmly set in the earth will fly about like flakes of wool? Can it so happen that the sun and the moon and the stars should be extinguished and the order and system of the world be overturned and upset? What has happened to him who was until yesterday a sane and wise man among us? Today he is giving us strange, impossible news. Where were this Hell and Heaven of which we had never heard from him before? Wherefrom have they appeared suddenly so that he has started depicting them so vividly before us?

Another meaning of fi-hi mukhtalifun also can be: As these people themselves have not agreed on any one view about the end of the world, they hold varying views about it. Some one has been influenced by the Christian belief and believes in the life after death but thinks that the second life would not be a physical but only a spiritual life. Another does not deny the Hereafter absolutely but doubts whether it was possible or not. The Quran relates the view of these very people when it says: We do only guess: we are not certain. (*Surah Al-Jathiyah, Ayat 32*). And another plainly said: There is no other life than this present life, and we shall never be raised back to life after our death. (*Surah 6. Al- Anaam, Ayat 29*). Then, there were some atheists, who said: Life is only this worldly life of ours. Here we shall die and live and nothing but the change of time destroys us. (*Surah Al-Jathiyah, Ayat 24*). There were some others who were not atheistic but they regarded the second life as impossible. According to them it was beyond the power of God to raise the dead back to life. They said: Who will give life to these bones when they are rotten. (*Surah YaSeen, Ayat 78*). Their different views by themselves were a proof that they had no knowledge in this regard; they were only conjecturing and guessing. Had they any knowledge, they would have agreed on one view. (For further explanation, see *E.N. 6 of Surah Adh-Dhariyat*).

كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ ۝4

(78:4) No indeed;[2] soon will they come to know;[3]

2. That is, whatever they say about the Hereafter is false, and all their concepts about it are wrong.

3. That is, the time is not far off when the same thing about which they are expressing all sorts of meaningless doubts and misgivings, will appear before them as a reality. Then they will realize that what the Messenger (peace be upon him) had foretold was absolutely true and what they were saying on the basis of conjecture and speculation had no truth in it.

ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ ۝5

(78:5) again, no indeed; soon will they come to know.

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ مِهَادًا ۝6

(78:6) Have We not spread the earth like a bed,[4]

4. Enough light has been thrown at several places in the meaning of the Quran on the supreme wisdom and power of Allah that underlies His making the earth a carpet, i.e. an abode of perfect peace and rest. For explanation, see E.Ns 73, 74, 81 of Surah An-Naml; E.N. 29 of Surah YaSeen; E.Ns 90, 91 of Surah Al-Momin; E.N. 7 of Surah Az-Zukhruf; E.N. 7 of Surah Al-Jathiyah; E.N. 18 of Surah Qaaf.

وَّالۡجِبَالَ اَوۡتَادًا ۙ 7

(78:7) and fixed the mountains like pegs,[5]

5. For the wisdom of creating mountains on the earth, see E.N. 12 of Surah An-Nahl; E.N. 74 of Surah An-Naml; E.N. 15 of Surah Al-Mursalat.

وَّخَلَقۡنٰكُمۡ اَزۡوَاجًا ۙ 8

(78:8) and created you in pairs (as men and women),[6]

6. For explanation of the supreme wisdom that underlies the creation of men and women into pairs, see E.N. 69 of Surah Al-Furqan; E. Ns 28 to 30 of Surah Ar-Room, E.N. 31 of Surah YaSeen; E.N. 77 of Surah Ash-Shura; E N. 12 of Surah Az-Zukhruf; E.N. 25 of Surah Al-Qiyamah.

وَّجَعَلۡنَا نَوۡمَكُمۡ سُبَاتًا ۙ 9

(78:9) and made your sleep a means of repose,[7]

7. The explanation of the wisdom for which Allah Almighty has placed a desire for sleep in man's nature in order to make him fit for work in the world, and which impels him to a few hours' sleep after every few hours of work, has been given in E.N. 33 of Surah Ar-Room.

وَّجَعَلۡنَا الَّيۡلَ لِبَاسًا ۙ 10

(78:10) and made the night a covering,

وَّجَعَلۡنَا النَّهَارَ مَعَاشًا ۖ 11

(78:11) and made the day to seek livelihood,[8]

8. That is, the night has been made dark so that protected from light, you could enjoy a peaceful sleep more easily and made the day bright for the reason that you could work for your livelihood with greater ease and facility. Reference has been made to only one benefit out of countless benefits of the continuous alternation of night and day regularly on the earth to tell that all this is not happening without a purpose or accidentally, but there is supreme wisdom underlying it, which has a deep connection with your own immediate interests. The darkness that was needed for the peace and rest of your body in view of its structure has been provided in the night and the light that was needed for earning livelihood has been provided in the day. This arrangement that has been made precisely in accordance with your needs by itself testifies that it could not be possible without the wisdom of a Wise Being. (For further explanation, see E.N. 65 of Surah Younus; E.N. 32 of Surah YaSeen; E.N. 85 of Suarh Al-Momin; E.N. 4 of Surah Az- Zukhruf).

وَّبَنَيۡنَا فَوۡقَكُمۡ سَبۡعًا شِدَادًا ۙ 12

(78:12) and built above you seven strong firmaments,[9]

9. Strong, in the sense that their boundaries are so strongly fortified that no change whatever occurs in them, nor does any of the countless stars and planets in the heavens, violating these boundaries, collide with the other, nor falls down to the earth. (For further explanation, see E.N. 34 of Suarh Al-Baqarah; E.N. 2 of Suarh Ar-Raad; E.Ns 8, 12 of Surah Al-Hijr; E.N. 15 of Surah Al-Mominoon; E.N. 13 of Surah Luqman; E.N. 37 of Suarah YaSeen; E.Ns 5, 6 of Surah As-Saaffat; E.N. 90 of Surah Al-Momin; E.Ns 7, 8 of Surah Qaaf).

وَّجَعَلۡنَا سِرَاجًا وَّهَّاجًا ۙ 13

(78:13) and placed therein a hot, shining lamp,[10]

10. A bright, blazing lamp: the sun. The word wahhaj used for the sun means both intensely hot and intensely bright. Hence our rendering. In this brief sentence, allusion has been made to a most wonderful and glorious sign of Allah Almighty's power and wisdom which the sun is. Its diameter is 109 times that of the earth's and its size more than 333,000 times that of the earth's. Its temperature is 14,000,000°C. In spite of shining 93,000,000 miles away from the earth, its light and brightness is dazzling, and man can look at it with the naked eye only at the risk of losing his eye-sight. As for its heat, temperature in some parts of the earth reaches 140°F because of its radiation. It is only Allah Who by His wisdom has placed the earth at the right distance from it, neither it is too hot for being close to it, nor too cold for being very far away from it. For this very reason life of man, animal and vegetable became possible on it. Measureless treasures of energy from it are reaching the earth and sustaining life. It helps ripen our crops to provide sustenance to every creature; its heat causes vapors to rise from the seas, which spread to different parts of the earth by means of the winds and fall as rain. In the sun Allah has kindled such a mighty furnace that has been constantly radiating light, heat and different kinds of rays throughout the entire solar system since millions and millions of years.

وَّاَنۡزَلۡنَا مِنَ الۡمُعۡصِرٰتِ مَآءً ثَجَّاجًا ۙ 14

(78:14) and sent down abundant water from the clouds

لِّنُخۡرِجَ بِهٖ حَبًّا وَّنَبَاتًا ۙ 15

(78:15) so that We may thereby bring forth grain and vegetation,

وَّجَنّٰتٍ اَلۡفَافًا ؕ 16

(78:16) and gardens dense with foliage?[11]

11. For the details of the wonderful manifestations of Allah Almighty's power and wisdom in making arrangements for the rain and the growth of vegetation thereby, see E.N. 53 (a) of Surah An-Nahl; E.N. 17 of Surah Al-Mominoon; E.N. 5 of Surah Ash-Shuara; E.N. 35 of Surah Ar-Room; E.N. 19 of Surah Fatir; E.N. 29 of Surah YaSeen; E.N. 20 of Al- Momin; E.Ns 10, 11 of Surah Az-Zukhruf; E.Ns 28 to 30 of Surah Al-Waqiah.

After presenting a number of the signs and testimonies, one after the other, in these verses, the deniers of the Resurrection and Hereafter have been exhorted, so as to say: If you consider the earth and the mountains and your own creation, your sleep and wakefulness, and the system of the day and night intelligently, and consider the well-fortified system of the universe and the shining sun in the heavens, the rain falling from the clouds and the vegetables growing thereby, you will see two things very clearly: first, that all this could neither come into existence without a mighty power, nor continue to exist and function so regularly; second, that in each of these great wisdom is working and nothing that happens here is purposeless. Now, only a foolish person could say that the Being Who by His power has brought these things into existence, does not have the power to destroy them and create them once again in some other form, and this also could be said only by an unreasonable person that the Wise Being Who has not done anything without purpose in this universe, has given to man in His world understanding and intelligence, discrimination between good and evil, freedom to obey or disobey, and powers of appropriation over countless of His creatures, without any purpose and design: whether man uses and employs the things granted by Him in the right way or the wrong way, it does not make any difference; whether man continues to do good throughout life till death, he will end up in the dust, or continues to do evil till death, he will likewise end up in the dust. Neither the virtuous man will receive any reward for the good deeds nor the bad man will be held accountable for his evil deeds. These very arguments for life after death and Resurrection and Hereafter have been given here and there in the Quran, e.g. see E.N. 7 of Surah Ar-Raad; E.N. 9 of Surah Al-Hajj; E.N. 6 of Surah Ar-Room; E.Ns 10, 12 of Surah Saba; E.Ns 8, 9 of Surah As-Saaffat.

إِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفَصْلِ كَانَ مِيقَاتًا ۙ 17

(78:17) Surely the Day of Judgement has an appointed time;

يَوْمَ يُنفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَتَأْتُونَ أَفْوَاجًا ۙ 18

(78:18) the Day when the Trumpet shall be blown, and you will come forth in multitudes;[12]

12. This implies the final sounding of the Trumpet at which all dead men will rise back to life forthwith. You implies not only those who were the addressees at that time but all those humans who will have been born from the beginning of creation till Resurrection. (For explanation, see E.N. 57 of Surah Ibrahim; E.N. 1 of Surah Al-Hajj; E.Ns 46, 47 of Surah YaSeen; E.N. 79 of Surah Az-Zumar).

وَّفُتِحَتِ السَّمَآءُ فَكَانَتۡ اَبۡوَابًا ۙ 19

(78:19) and when the sky shall be opened up and will become all doors;

وَّسُيِّرَتِ الۡجِبَالُ فَكَانَتۡ سَرَابًا ؕ 20

(78:20) and the mountains will be set in motion and become a mirage.[13]

13. One should bear in mind the fact that here also, as at many other places in the Quran, the different states of Resurrection have been mentioned all together. In the first verse, mention has been made of what will happen at the final sounding of the Trumpet and in the following two verses of the state which will appear at the second sounding of the Trumpet. This we have already explained in E.N. 10 of Surah Al-Haaqqah above. The heavens shall be opened means: All obstacles in the heavens will be removed and every heavenly calamity from every side will befall freely as though all doors for it were open and no door had remained closed to obstruct its happening. The mountains will be set in motion till they become as a mirage means: In no time will the mountains be uprooted from their places and then will be scattered away in particles leaving nothing but vast, empty sand plains behind. This same state has been described in Surah TaHa, thus: They ask you, well, where will the mountains go on that Day? Say to them: My Lord will reduce them to fine dust and scatter it away. He will turn the earth into an empty level plain, wherein you will neither see any curve nor crease. (verses 105-107 and the corresponding E. N . 83).

اِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ كَانَتۡ مِرۡصَادًا ۙ 21

(78:21) Surely the Hell is an ambush,[14]

14. An ambush: a place contrived to entrap game by surprise. Hell has been described as an ambush, because the rebels of God are fearless of it and are enjoying life thinking that the world is a haven of bliss for them. They do not know that Hell is lying in ambush for them, which will trap them suddenly and keep them trapped.

لِّلطّٰغِيۡنَ مَاٰبًا ۙ 22

(78:22) a resort for the rebellious;

لّٰبِثِيۡنَ فِيۡهَاۤ اَحۡقَابًا ۚ 23

(78:23) therein they shall abide for ages,[15]

15. The word ahqab as used in the original means successive periods of long time appearing continuously one after the other. From this word some people have tried to argue that there will be eternity in the life of Paradise but no eternity in the life of Hell. For however long these ages may be, they will not be endless but will come to an end at some time. But this

argument is wrong for two reasons. First, that lexically, the word haqab (sing. of ahqab) itself contains the meaning that one haqab should be closely followed by another haqab; therefore, ahqab will necessarily be used only for such periods of time as continue to appear successively one after the other and there should be no period which is not followed by another period. Second, that as a rule it is wrong to put a meaning on a verse of the Quran pertaining to a particular theme which clashes with other statements of the Quran pertaining to the same theme. At 34 places in the Quran the word khulud (eternity) has been used concerning the dwellers of Hell. At three places not only the word khulud has been used but the word abadan (for ever and ever) also has been added to it; and at one place it has been clearly stated: They will wish to get out of Hell but shall not be able to come out of it and theirs shall be an everlasting torment. (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 37). At another place it has been said: Therein they shall abide forever, as long as the earth and the heavens shall last, unless your Lord ordains otherwise. And the same thing has been said about the dwellers of Paradise too: They shall dwell in Paradise forever, as long as the earth and the heavens shall last, unless your Lord wills something else. (Houd, Ayats 107- 108). After these explanations, how can one argue, on the basis of the word ahqab, that the stay of the rebels of God in Hell will not be eternal, but it will come to an end at some stage in time?

لَّا يَذُوقُونَ فِيهَا بَرْدًا وَّلَا شَرَابًا ۙ 24

(78:24) they shall taste in it no coolness, nor any pleasant drink

إِلَّا حَمِيمًا وَّغَسَّاقًا ۙ 25

(78:25) save boiling water and wash of the wounds;[16]

16. The word ghassaq as used in the original applies to pus, blood, pus-blood and all those fluids that flow out from the eyes and skins as a result of a grievous penalty. Besides, this word is also used for a thing which stinks and gives out horrid, offensive smell.

جَزَآءً وِّفَاقًا ؕ 26

(78:26) a befitting recompense for their deeds.

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا لَا يَرْجُونَ حِسَابًا ۙ 27

(78:27) For indeed they did not look forward to any reckoning,

وَّكَذَّبُوا بِاٰيٰتِنَا كِذَّابًا ؕ 28

(78:28) and roundly denied Our Signs as false.[17]

17. This is the reason for which they will deserve this dreadful penalty of Hell. Firstly, they lived in the world thinking that the time will never come when they will have to appear

before God and render an account of their deeds; second, that they utterly refused to accept and acknowledge the revelations that Allah had sent through His Prophets for their instruction and treated them as falsehood.

وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ اَحْصَيْنٰهُ كِتٰبًا ۙ 29

(78:29) And everything have We recorded in a Book.[18]

18. That is, We were continuously preparing a complete record of their sayings and doings, their movements and occupations, even of their intentions, thoughts and aims in life and nothing was being left un-recorded, whereas the foolish people in their heedlessness thought that they were living in a lawless kingdom where they were free to do whatever they pleased and desired, and there was no power to call them to account.

فَذُوْقُوْا فَلَنْ نَّزِيْدَكُمْ اِلَّا عَذَابًا ع 30

(78:30) So taste (the fruit of your deeds). We shall only increase your torment.

اِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ مَفَازًا ۙ 31

(78:31) Surely the state of triumph awaits the God-fearing:[19]

19. Here, the word righteous has been used in contrast to those who did not expect any accountability and who had belied Allah's revelations. Therefore, this word inevitably implies those people who believed in Allah's revelations and lived in the world with the understanding that they had to render an account of their deeds ultimately.

حَدَآئِقَ وَاَعْنَابًا ۙ 32

(78:32) gardens and vineyards,

وَّكَوَاعِبَ اَتْرَابًا ۙ 33

(78:33) and youthful maidens of like age,[20]

20. This may mean that they will be of equal age among themselves as well as that they will be of equal age with their husbands. This same theme has already occurred in Surah Suad, Ayat 52 and Surah Al-Waqiah, Ayat 37.

وَّكَاْسًا دِهَاقًا ؕ 34

(78:34) and an overflowing cup.

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا وَّلَا كِذّٰبًا ۚ 35

(78:35) Therein they shall hear no idle talk, nor any falsehood;[21]

21. At several places in the Quran this has been counted as among the major blessings of Paradise. Human ears there will remain secure against idle, false and indecent talk. There will be no nonsensical, meaningless gossiping in Paradise; no one will tell lies nor belie others; nor will there be any use of abusive language, slandering; calumnies and false accusations which are so common in the world. (For further explanations, see E.N. 28 of Surah Maryam, E.Ns 13, 14 of Surah Al-Waqiah).

جَزَآءً مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ عَطَآءً حِسَابًا ۙ 36

(78:36) a recompense from your Lord and an ample reward[22]

22. A reward and generous gift: that is, they will not only be given their due rewards which they will deserve for their good deeds, but over and above these they will be given additional and generous gifts and prizes as well. Contrary to this, in respect of the dwellers of Hell it has been said: They will be recompensed fully for their misdeeds. That is, they will neither be punished less than what they will deserve for their crimes nor more. This theme has been explained at length at many places in the Quran, for example, see Surah Younus, Ayats 26-27; Surah An-Naml, Ayats 89-90; Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 84; Surah Saba, Ayats 33-38; Surah Al-Momin, Ayat 40.

رَّبِّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا الرَّحْمٰنِ لَا يَمْلِكُوْنَ مِنْهُ خِطَابًا ۚ 37

(78:37) from the Lord of the heavens and the earth and of that which is between them; the Most Merciful Lord before Whom none dare utter a word.[23]

23. That is, the court of Allah Almighty will be so aweinspiring that no one, whether belonging to the earth or to the heavens, will dare open his mouth of his own will before Allah, nor interfere in the court's work and proceedings.

يَوْمَ يَقُوْمُ الرُّوْحُ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ صَفًّا ۭ لَّا يَتَكَلَّمُوْنَ اِلَّا مَنْ اَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمٰنُ وَقَالَ صَوَابًا

38

(78:38) The Day when the Spirit[24] and the angels are ranged row on row. None shall speak save he whom the Merciful Lord will permit; and he too will speak what is right.[25]

24. According to most commentators, the Spirit implies the Angel Gabriel, who has been mentioned separately from the angels because of his high rank and position with Allah. (For further explanation, see E.N. 3 of Surah Al-Maarij).

25. To speak: to intercede, and intercession has been made conditional upon two things: (1) That the person who is granted permission by Allah to intercede for a sinner will alone be allowed to intercede and for the particular sinner only. (2) That the intercessor will say only what is right and proper, and nothing derogatory, and the one for whom he is interceding should have at least acknowledged the truth in the world. That is, he should only be a sinner, not an unbeliever. (For further explanation, see E.N. 281 of Surah Al-Baqarah; E.N. 5 of Surah Younus; E.N. 106 of Surah Houd; E.N. 52 of Surah Maryam; E.Ns 85, 86 of Surah TaHa; E.N. 27 of Surah Al-Anbiya; E.Ns 40, 41 of Surah Saba; E.N. 32 of Surah Al-Momin; E.N 63 of Surah Az- Zukhruf; E N. 21 of Surah An-Najm; E.N. 36 of Surah Al- Muddaththir).

ذٰلِكَ الْيَوْمُ الْحَقُّ ۚ فَمَنْ شَآءَ اتَّخَذَ اِلٰى رَبِّهٖ مَاٰبًا 39

(78:39) That Day is sure to come. So let him who will seek a resort with his Lord.

اِنَّآ اَنْذَرْنٰكُمْ عَذَابًا قَرِيْبًا ۚ يَّوْمَ يَنْظُرُ الْمَرْءُ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدٰهُ وَيَقُوْلُ الْكٰفِرُ يٰلَيْتَنِيْ كُنْتُ تُرٰبًا ع 40

(78:40) Lo! We warn you of a chastisement near at hand;[26] the Day when a man will look on what his own hands have sent forth, and the unbelievers shall say: "Oh would that I were utter dust."[27]

26. Apparently, one might think that the people who were the audience of this verse died fourteen centuries ago, and even now it cannot be said how many hundreds or thousands or millions of years Resurrection will take to come. Then, in what sense has it been said: The torment of which you have been warned, has approached near at hand? And what is the meaning of saying in the beginning of the Surah: Soon they shall know? The answer is that man can have the feeling of time only until he is passing a physical life in the world within the bounds of space and time. After death when only the soul will survive, he will lose every feeling and consciousness of time, and on the Day of Resurrection when man will rise back to life, he will feel as though some one had aroused him from sleep suddenly. He will not at all be conscious that he has been resurrected after thousands of years. (For further explanation, see E.N. 26 of Surah An-Nahl; E.N. 56 of Surah Bani Israil; E.N. 80 of Surah TaHa; E.N. 48 of Surah YaSeen).

27. Would that I were mere dust: "Would that I had not been born in the world, or had become mere dust after death, and thus reduced to nothingness.

79. Surah Naziat (Those Who Tear Out)

Name

It is derived from the word wan-nazi`at with which the Surah opens.

Period of Revelation

According to Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas, this Surah was sent down after Surah An-Naba. Its subject matter also testifies that it belongs to the earliest period at Makkah.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is affirmation of Resurrection and the life hereafter; It also warns of the consequences of belying the Messenger of God.

The Surah opens with oaths sworn by the angels who take the soul at deaths and those who hasten to carryout Allah's Commands, and those who conduct the affairs of the universe according to Divine Will, to assure that the Resurrection will certainly come to pass and the second life after death will certainly take place. For the angels who are employed to pluck out the soul today can also be employed to restore the soul tomorrow, and the angels who promptly execute Allah's Commands and conduct the affairs of the universe today can also upset the order of the universe tomorrow by orders of the same God and can also bring about a new order.

After this the people have been told, so as to say: "This work which you regard as absolutely impossible, is not any difficult for Allah, for which He may have to make lengthy preparations. Just a single jolt will upset this system of the world and a second jolt will be enough to cause you to appear as living beings in the new world. At that time the same people who were wont to deny it, would be trembling with fear and seeing with awe struck eyes all that they thought was impossible.

Then, relating the story of the Prophet Moses and Pharaoh briefly, the people have been warned to the effect: "You know full well what fate the Pharaoh met in consequence of belying the Messenger and rejecting the guidance brought by him and endeavoring to defeat his mission by trickery and deceit. If you do not learn any lesson from it and do not change your ways and attitude accordingly, you also will have to meet the same fate.

Then, in vv. 27-13, arguments have been given for the Hereafter and life after death. In this regard, the deniers have been asked the question: “Is your resurrection a more difficult task or the creation of the huge Universe which spreads around you to infinite distances with myriads of its stars and planets? Your recreation cannot be difficult for the God for Whom this was an easy task. Thus, after presenting in a single sentence, a decisive argument for the possibility of the Hereafter, attention has been drawn to the earth and its provisions that have been arranged in it for the sustenance of man and animal and of which everything testifies that it has been created with great wisdom for fulfilling some special purpose. Pointing to this the question has been left for the intellect of man to ponder for itself and form the opinion whether calling man to account after having delegated authority and responsibilities to a creature like him in this wise system would be more in keeping with the

demands of wisdom, or that he should die after committing all sorts of misdeeds in the world and should perish and mix in the dust for ever and should never be called to account as to how he employed the authority and fulfilled the responsibilities entrusted to him. Instead of discussing this question, in vv. 34-41, it has been said: "When the Hereafter is established, men's eternal future will be determined on the criterion as to which of them rebelled against his God transgressing the bounds of service and made the material benefits and pleasures his objective of life and which of them feared standing before his Lord and refrained from fulfilling the unlawful desires of the self." This by itself provides the right answer to the above question to every such person who considers it honestly, free from stubbornness. For the only rational, logical and moral demand of giving authority and entrusting responsibilities to man in the world is that he should be called to account on this very basis ultimately and rewarded or punished accordingly.

In conclusion, the question of the disbelievers of Makkah as to when Resurrection will take place, has been answered. They asked the Holy Prophet this question over and over again. In reply it has been said that the knowledge of the time of its occurrence rests with Allah alone. The Messenger is there only to give the warning that it will certainly come. Now whoever wishes may mend his ways, fearing its coming, and whoever wishes may behave and conduct himself as he likes, fearless of its coming. When the appointed time comes, those very people who loved the life of this world and regarded its pleasures as the only object of life, would feel that they had stayed in the world only for an hour or so. Then they will realize how utterly they had ruined their future for ever for the sake of the short lived pleasures of the world.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

وَالنّٰزِعٰتِ غَرۡقًا ۙ 1

(79:1) By those (angels) that pluck out the soul from depths,

وَّالنّٰشِطٰتِ نَشۡطًا ۙ 2

(79:2) and gently take it away;

وَّالسّٰبِحٰتِ سَبۡحًا ۙ 3

(79:3) and by those that speedily glide along (the cosmos),

فَالسّٰبِقٰتِ سَبۡقًا ۙ 4

(79:4) and vie with the others(in carrying out their Lord's behests);

فَالْمُدَبِّرٰتِ اَمْرًا ۟ 5

(79:5) and then manage the affairs of the Universe(according to their Lord's commands).[1]

1. Here, the object for which an oath has been sworn by beings having five qualities has not been mentioned; but the theme that follows by itself leads to the conclusion that the oath has been sworn to affirm that the Resurrection is a certainty, which must come to pass, when all dead men shall be resurrected. Nor is there any mention as to what are the beings possessed of the qualities. However, a large number of the companions and their immediate successors and most of the commentators have expressed the opinion that they are the angels. Abdullah bin Masud, Abdullah bin Abbas, Masruq, Saeed bin Jubair, Abu salih Abud-Duha and Suddi say that "those who pull out with violence and those who draw out gently" imply the angels, who wrench out the soul of man at death from the very depths of his body, from its every fiber. "Those who glide about swiftly", according to Ibn Masud, Mujahid, Saeed bin Jubair and Abu Salih, also imply the angels, who hurry about swiftly in execution of divine commands as though they were gliding through space. The same meaning of "those who hasten out as in a race" has been taken by Ali, Mujahid, Masruq, Abu Salih and Hasan Bari, and hastening out implies that each one of them hurries on his errand as soon as he receives the first indication of divine will. "Those who conduct the affairs" also imply the angels as has been reported from Ali, Mujahid, Ata Abu Salih, Hasan Bari, Qatadah, Rabi bin Anas and Suddi. In other words, these are the workers of the kingdom of the universe, who are conducting all the affairs of the world in accordance with Allah's command and will. Though this meaning of these verses has not been reported in any authentic Hadith from the Prophet (peace be upon him), while this meaning has been given by some major companions and their immediate successors and pupils, one is led to form the view that they must have obtained this knowledge from the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself.

Now the question arises: On what basis has the oath been sworn by these angels for the occurrence of the Resurrection and life after death when they themselves are as imperceptible as the thing for the occurrence of which they have been presented as an evidence and as an argument. In our opinion the reason is (and Allah has the best knowledge) that the Arabs were not deniers of the existence of the angels. They themselves admitted that at the death the soul was taken out by the angels; they also believed that the angels moved at tremendous speeds; they could reach any place between the earth and the heavens instantly and promptly execute any errand that was entrusted to them. They also acknowledged that the angels are subordinate to divine will and they conduct the affairs of the universe strictly and precisely in accordance with divine will; they are not independent and masters of their will. They regarded them as daughters of Allah out of ignorance and worshipped them as deities, but they did not believe that they possessed the real authority as well. Therefore, the basis of the reasoning from the above mentioned attributes for the occurrence of the Resurrection and life after death is that the angels who took the soul by the order of God, could also restore the soul by the order of the same God; and the angels who conducted the affairs of the universe by the order of God could also upset this universe by the order of the same God whenever He so ordered them and could also bring about a new

world order. They would not show any negligence or delay in the execution of His command.

يَوْمَ تَرْجُفُ الرَّاجِفَةُ ۙ 6

(79:6) The Day when the quaking will cause a violent convulsion,

تَتْبَعُهَا الرَّادِفَةُ ۭ 7

(79:7) and will be followed by another quaking.[2]

2. The first jolt implies the jolt which will destroy the earth and everything on it, and the second jolt at which all dead men will rise up from death and from their graves. This same state has been described in Surah Az-Zumar, thus: And when the Trumpet shall be blown on that Day, all those who are in the heavens and the earth shall fall down dead except those whom Allah may allow (to live). Then the Trumpet shall be blown again and they will all stand up, looking around. (verse 68).

قُلُوْبٌ يَّوْمَىِٕذٍ وَّاجِفَةٌ ۙ 8

(79:8) On that Day some hearts shall tremble (with fright),[3]

3. Hearts shall tremble: because, according to the Quran, only the disbelievers, the wicked people and the hypocrites will be terror-stricken on the Resurrection Day, the righteous believers will remain secure from this terror. About them in Surah Al-Anbiya (verse 103) it has been said: The time of great fright will not trouble them at all; the angels will rush forth to receive them, saying: This is the very day which you were promised.

اَبْصَارُهَا خَاشِعَةٌ ۘ 9

(79:9) and their eyes shall be downcast with dread.

يَقُوْلُوْنَ ءَاِنَّا لَمَرْدُوْدُوْنَ فِي الْحَافِرَةِ ۭ 10

(79:10) They say: “Shall we indeed be restored to life,

ءَاِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا نَّخِرَةً ۭ 11

(79:11) even after we have been reduced to bones, hollow and rotten?”

قَالُوْا تِلْكَ اِذًا كَرَّةٌ خَاسِرَةٌ ۘ 12

(79:12) They say: “That will then be a return with a great loss!”[4]

4. That is, when they were told that they would surely be raised back to life after death, they started mocking it, saying to one another: Well, if we have really to be restored to our former state of life, then we would certainly be doomed.

فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ زَجْرَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ ۙ 13

(79:13) Surely they will need no more than a single stern blast,

فَإِذَا هُم بِالسَّاهِرَةِ ۖ 14

(79:14) and lo, they will all be in the open plain.[5]

5. That is, they are mocking it as an impossibility, whereas it is not at all a difficult task for Allah for the performance of which He may have to make lengthy preparations. For it only a single shout or cry is enough at which your dust of ash will gather together from wherever it lay, and you will suddenly find yourself alive on the back of the earth. Thinking this return to be a return to loss, you may try to escape from it however hard you may, but it will inevitably take place; it cannot be averted by your denial, escape or mockery.

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَىٰ ۘ 15

(79:15) Has[6] Moses' story reached you?

6. As the denial of the Resurrection and Hereafter by the disbelievers of Makkah and their mockery of it was not, in fact, rejection of a philosophy but belying Allah’s Messengers, and the tricks that they were employing against the Prophet (peace be upon him) were not against an ordinary man but were meant to frustrate the mission of Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him), the story of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and the Pharaoh is being related before giving additional arguments for the occurrence of the Hereafter so that they are warned of the consequences of fighting with the Messenger and resisting the God Who sent him.

إِذْ نَادَاهُ رَبُّهُ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى ۚ 16

(79:16) When his Lord called him in the sacred valley of Tuwa,[7]

7. According to general opinion among the commentators the sacred valley of Tuwa means the sacred valley which was named Tuwa. But, besides this, two other meanings of it also have been given:

(1) The valley that was blessed and made sacred twice, for it was first made sacred when Allah spoke to Moses (peace be upon him) in it for the first time, and it was blessed and

made sacred for the second time when the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) led the children of Israel out of Egypt and brought them into it.

(2) Called out to him in the sacred valley in the night, and this is according to the meaning of tuwa in the Arabic idiom.

اِذۡهَبۡ اِلٰى فِرۡعَوۡنَ اِنَّهٗ طَغٰى ۖ صلے 17

(79:17) and directed him: "Go to Pharaoh, he has rebelled,

فَقُلۡ هَلۡ لَّكَ اِلٰٓى اَنۡ تَزَكّٰى ۙ 18

(79:18) and say to him: 'Are you willing to be purified,

وَاَهۡدِيَكَ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ فَتَخۡشٰى ۚ 19

(79:19) that I may direct you to your Lord and then you hold Him[8] in awe?' "

8. Here, one should understand a few things well:

(1) The dialogue that took place between the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and Allah Almighty at the time of appointing him to the office of Prophethood has been related at some places briefly and at others in full detail in the Quran as the occasion demanded. Here, brevity was the need, therefore, only a resume has been given. Full details are found in(Surah TaHa, Ayats 9-48); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 10-17); (Surah An-Naml, Ayats 7-12), (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayats: 29-35).

(2) The rebellion of the Pharaoh referred to here relates to his transgressing the bounds of service and rebelling both against the Creator and against His creatures. As for his rebellion against the Creator, it is being mentioned a little below when he gathered his people together and proclaimed: I am your lord, the supreme. As against the creatures his rebellion was that he had divided his subjects into classes; he treated the weak classes tyrannically and had reduced his entire nation to slavery as has been mentioned in(Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 4) and (Surah Az- Zukhruf, Ayat 54).

(3) The instruction given to Moses (peace be upon him) was: Go, you and your brother Aaron, to Pharaoh for he has transgressed all bounds. Talk to him gently; maybe that he is convinced by admonition or is imbued with fear. (Surah TaHa, Ayat 44). One model of the gentle speech has been given in these verses, which shows what right method a preacher should adopt when preaching to a perverted man. Other models are given in (Surah TaHa, Ayats 49-52); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 23-28) and (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 37). These verses are of those in which Allah has taught the correct methods of preaching Islam in the Quran.

(4) The Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had not been sent to Pharaoh only for the deliverance of the children of Israel as some people seem to think but the primary object of his appointment was to show Pharaoh and his people the right way, and the second object

was that if he did not accept the right way, the children of Israel (who in fact were a Muslim people) should be taken out of his slavery and from Egypt. This thing becomes plain from these verses too, for there is no mention whatsoever in these of the deliverance of the children of Israel, but the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) has been commanded to present the message of the truth before Pharaoh, and this is confirmed by those verses also in which the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) has preached Islam as well as demanded freedom of the children of Israel, e.g. see (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 104-105), (Surah TaHa, Ayats 47-52); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 16-17, 23-28). (For further explanation, see (E.N. 74 of Younus).

(5) Here, to adopt purity means to adopt purity of belief, morals and deeds, or, in other words, to accept Islam. Ibn Zaid says: Wherever in the Quran the word tazakka (purity) has been use, it implies acceptance of Islam. As an example of this he has cited the following three verses: And this is the reward of him who adopts purity, i.e. accepts Islam; and what would make you know that he might adopt purity, i.e. becomes a Muslim (Surah Abasa, Ayat 3); And you would not be responsible if he did not adapt purity, i.e. did not become a Muslim (Surah Abasa, Ayat 7). (Ibn Jarir).

(6) That I may guide you to your Lord so that you may have fear (of Him) means: When you recognize your Lord and come to know that you are His slave, and not a free man, you will inevitably have fear of Him in your heart, for fear of God is the thing on which depends the right attitude of man in the world. Without the knowledge and fear of God no purity of the self can be possible.

فَأَرٰىهُ الْاٰيَةَ الْكُبْرٰى ۖ صلے 20

(79:20) Then Moses (went to Pharaoh and) showed him the Great Sign;[9]

9. The great sign: The turning of the staff into a serpent, as has been mentioned at several places in the Quran. Obviously there could be no greater sign than that a lifeless staff should turn into a living serpent right in front of the eyes of the people, that it should devour the artificial serpents produced by the magicians out of their staffs and cords, and when the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) should pick it up, it should become a walking stick again. This was proof that it was Allah, Lord of the worlds, Who had sent Moses (peace be upon him) as a Prophet.

فَكَذَّبَ وَعَصٰى ۖ صلے 21

(79:21) but he denied it as false and disobeyed,

ثُمَّ اَدْبَرَ يَسْعٰى ۖ صلے 22

(79:22) and then he turned back to have recourse to his craftiness,[10]

10. According to the details given at other places in the Quran, he summoned skilful magicians from all over Egypt and made them produce serpents out of sticks and cords in front of the assembled people so that they were convinced that Moses (peace be upon him) was not a Prophet but a magician, and that the miracle worked by him of turning a staff into a serpent, could also be worked by other magicians. But this device of his recoiled upon himself and the defeated magicians themselves admitted that what Moses (peace be upon him) had displayed was no magic but a miracle.

فَحَشَرَ فَنَادٰى ۙ 23 صلے

(79:23) and gathered his people and declared:[11]

11. This proclamation of Pharaoh has been mentioned at several places in the Quran. On one occasion he said to the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him): If you took another one as a deity beside me, I would cast you in the prison. (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayat 29). On another occasion he had addressed his courtiers, saying: O chiefs, I do not know of any god of yours other than myself. (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 38). By this Pharaoh did not mean, nor could he ever mean, that he himself was the creator of the universe and he had made the world, nor that he denied the existence of Allah and claimed to be lord of the universe, nor that he regarded only himself as a deity of the people in the religious sense. In the Quran itself there is a clear testimony that as regards to religion he himself worshipped other gods. Once his courtiers said to him: Will you leave Moses (peace be upon him) and his people free to spread chaos in the land, and let them discard you and your deities? (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 127). And in the Quran itself this saying of the Pharaoh has also been cited: Had Moses (peace be upon him) been sent by Allah, why were not bracelets of gold sent down to him, or a company of angels as attendants? (Surah Az-Zukhruf, Ayat 53). Thus, in fact, he called himself a god and supreme deity not in the religious but in the political sense. What he meant was that he possessed the sovereign rights: no one beside him had the right to rule in his kingdom and there was no superior power whose orders could be enforced in the land. (For further explanation. see (E.N. 85 of Surah Al- Aaraf); (E.N. 21 of Surah TaHa); (E.Ns 24, 26 of Surah Ash- Shuara); (E-Ns 52, 53 of Surah Al-Qasas); (E.N. 49 of Surah Az-Zukhruf).

فَقَالَ اَنَا رَبُّكُمُ الْاَعْلٰى ۙ 24 صلے

(79:24) “I am the supreme lord of you all.”

فَاَخَذَهُ اللّٰهُ نَكَالَ الْاٰخِرَةِ وَالْاُوْلٰى ؕ 25

(79:25) Thereupon Allah seized him for the chastisement of the World to Come as well as of the present.

اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّمَنْ يَّخْشٰى ؕ ع 26

(79:26) Surely there is a great lesson in it for whoever would fear (Allah).[12]

12. Who fears: who fears the consequences of denying God's Messenger, which the Pharaoh experienced in the past.

ءَاَنتُمۡ اَشَدُّ خَلۡقًا اَمِ السَّمَآءُ ؕ بَنٰٮهَا ۞ 27

(79:27) Is[13] it harder to create you or the heaven?[14] But Allah built it,

13. Now arguments are being given for the possibility of Resurrection and life after death and their being the very demand and requirement of wisdom.

14. Here, creation implies the recreation of men, and the heaven the entire firmament which contains countless stars and planets, and innumerable solar systems and galaxies, means to say: You think that your resurrection after death is something extremely improbable and you express wonder saying: How is it possible that when our very bones will have decayed and become rotten the scattered particles of our bodies will be reassembled and made living once again. But have you ever also considered whether the great universe is harder to create or your own re-creation in the form in which you were created in the first instance. The God Who created you in the first instance cannot be powerless to create you once again. This same argument for life after death has been given at several places in the Quran. For example, in Surah YaSeen it has been said: Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like of them (again). Why not, when He is the skillful Creator. (verse 81). And in Surah Al-Momin it has been said: Surely the creation of the heavens and the earth is a greater task than the creation of man, but most people do not know. (verse 57).

رَفَعَ سَمۡكَهَا فَسَوّٰٮهَا ۙ 28

(79:28) and raised its vault high and proportioned it;

وَاَغۡطَشَ لَيۡلَهَا وَاَخۡرَجَ ضُحٰٮهَا ۖ 29

(79:29) and covered its night with darkness and brought forth from it its day;[15]

15. The night and the day have been attributed to the heaven, for the night falls when the sun of the heavens sets and the day dawns when it rises. The word cover has been used for the night in the sense that after the sun has set the darkness of the night so spreads over the earth as though it has covered it from above by a curtain.

وَالۡاَرۡضَ بَعۡدَ ذٰلِكَ دَحٰٮهَا ؕ 30

(79:30) and thereafter spread out the earth,[16]

16. After that He spread out the earth, does not mean that Allah created the earth after the creation of the heavens, but it is a style of expression just like our saying after making

mention of something: Then this is noteworthy. The object is not to express the sequence of occurrence between the two things but to draw attention from the first to the second thing although both may exist together. Several instances of this style are found in the Quran, e.g. in Surah Al-Qalam it is said: (He is) oppressive, and after that, ignoble by birth. This does not mean that first he became oppressive and then he turned ignoble by birth, but it means: He is oppressive, and above all, ignoble by birth. Likewise, in Surah Al-Balad it is said: Should free a slave, then be of those who believe. This also does not mean that first he should act righteously and then believe, but that along with doing righteous deeds he should also be characterized by belief. Here, one should also understand that at some places in the Quran the creation of the earth has been mentioned first and then the creation of the heavens, as in (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 29), and at others the creation of the heavens has been mentioned first and then of the earth, as in these verses. There is, in fact, no contradiction in this. At no place the object is to tell what was created first and what afterwards, but wherever the context requires that the excellences of the power of Allah be made prominent, the heavens have been mentioned first and then the earth, and where the context requires that the people be made to appreciate and acknowledge the blessings that they are benefiting by on the earth, the mention of the earth has been made before that of the heavens. (For further explanation, see(E.Ns 13,14 of Surah HaMim As-Sajdah).

اَخۡرَجَ مِنۡهَا مَآءَهَا وَمَرۡعٰىهَا ۖ 31

(79:31) and brought out of it its water and its pasture,[17]

17. Pasture, here does not only imply pasture and fodder for the animals but all kinds of herbal produce suitable for consumption both by man and by animal. An example of the use of raat, which is generally used in Arabic for the grazing animals, is found in (Surah Yusuf, Ayat 12), signifying that this word is sometimes used for man also. The brothers of Joseph said to their father: Send Joseph with us tomorrow that he may freely graze and enjoy sport. Here, the word grace (raat) for the child has been used in the meaning that he may move about freely in the jungle and pluck and eat fruit.

وَالۡجِبَالَ اَرۡسٰىهَا ۙ 32

(79:32) and firmly fixed in it mountains;

مَتَاعًا لَّكُمۡ وَلِاَنۡعَامِكُمۡ ؕ 33

(79:33) all this as provision for you and your cattle.[18]

18. In these verses arguments have been given for the Resurrection and life after death from two aspects: First, that it is not at all difficult to establish these for the power of that God Who has made this vast and huge universe with such wonderful balance and this earth with such provisions. Second, that the pointers to the perfect wisdom of Allah which are clearly visible in the universe and the earth, point out that nothing is happening here purposelessly. The balance that exists between countless stars and planets and galaxies in the heavens,

testifies that all this has not happened haphazardly, but there is a well thought-out plan working behind it. The regular alternation of the night and day is an evidence that this system has been established with supreme wisdom and knowledge for making the earth a home and place of settlement. On this very earth are found regions where the alternation of the night and day takes place within 24 hours and also those regions where there are longer days and longer nights. A very large part of the earth's population lives in the first kind of the regions. Then as the days and nights go on becoming longer and longer, life goes on becoming harder and harder and population thinner and thinner. So much so that the regions where there are six-month-long days and six-month-long nights, are not at all fit for human settlement. Arranging both these types of the land on this very earth Allah has provided the evidence that this regular order of the alternation of night and day has not come about accidentally but has been brought about with great wisdom precisely in accordance with a scheme to make the earth a place fit for human settlement. Likewise, spreading out the earth so that it becomes a fit place to live in, providing in it that water which should be palatable for man and animal and a cause of growth for vegetation, setting in it mountains and creating all those things which may become a means of life for both man and animal. All these are a manifest sign that they are not chance happenings of the purposeless works of a care-free person but each one of these has been arranged purposefully by a Supreme, Wise Being. Now every sensible and intelligent man can consider for himself whether the necessity and occurrence of the Hereafter is the requirement of wisdom or its negation. The person who in spite of seeing all this says that there is no Hereafter, in fact, says that everything in the universe is happening wisely and purposefully, but only the creation of man on the earth as a being endowed with sense and power is meaningless and foolish. For there could be nothing more purposeless than delegating to man vast powers of appropriation in the earth and providing him an opportunity to do good as well as evil deeds but then failing to ever subject him to accountability.

فَإِذَا جَآءَتِ الطَّآمَّةُ الْكُبْرٰى ۝ صلے 34

(79:34) But when the great calamity will come about[19]

19. This implies the Resurrection for which the words at- Taammat alkubra have been used. Taammah by itself is a grievous calamity which afflicts everybody. Then it has been further qualified by the word kubra (great), which shows that the mere word taammah is not enough to describe fully its intensity and severity.

يَوْمَ يَتَذَكَّرُ الْإِنسَانُ مَا سَعٰى ۝ لا 35

(79:35) on the Day when man will recall all his strivings,[20]

20. That is, when man will see that the same Day of accountability of which he was being foretold in the world, has come, he will start remembering each one of his misdeeds done in the world even before his records are handed over to him. Some people experience this even in the world. If at some time they come across a dangerous situation suddenly when death

seems to be staring them in the face, their whole life-film flashes across their mind's eye all at once.

وَبُرِّزَتِ الْجَحِيمُ لِمَن يَرَىٰ 36

(79:36) and Hell will be brought in sight for anyone to see:

فَأَمَّا مَن طَغَىٰ ۙ 37

(79:37) then he who transgressed

وَآثَرَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا ۙ 38

(79:38) and preferred the life of this world,

فَإِنَّ الْجَحِيمَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ ۖ 39

(79:39) most surely his abode shall be Hell.

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ۙ 40

(79:40) But he who feared to stand before his Lord, and restrained himself from evil desires,

فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ ۖ 41

(79:41) most surely his abode shall be Paradise.[21]

21. Here, in a few words, it has been told briefly what shall be the criterion of the final judgment in the Hereafter. One kind of the conduct of life in the world is that transgressing all bounds of service man should rebel against his God and should make up his mind that he would seek only the benefits and pleasures of this world in whatever way they could be sought and achieved. The other kind of conduct is that while man passes life in the world he should constantly keep in view the truth that ultimately one day he has to stand before his Lord, and should refrain from fulfilling the evil desires of the self only for the fear that if he earned an unlawful benefit in obedience to his self, or enjoyed an evil pleasure, what answer he would give to his Lord. The criterion of the judgment in the Hereafter will be which of the two kinds of conduct he adopted in the world. If he had adopted the first kind of conduct, his permanent abode would be Hell, and if he had adopted the second kind of conduct, his permanent home would be Paradise.

يَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ اَيَّانَ مُرْسٰىهَا ؕ 42

(79:42) They ask you about the Hour: "When will it be?"[22]

22. The disbelievers of Makkah asked this question of the Prophet (peace be upon him) over and over again. By this they did not mean to know the time and date of the coming of Resurrection but to mock it. (For further explanation, see(E.N. 35 of Surah Al-Mulk).

فِيْمَ اَنْتَ مِنْ ذِكْرٰىهَا ؕ 43

(79:43) What concern do you have to speak about that?

اِلٰى رَبِّكَ مُنْتَهٰىهَا ؕ 44

(79:44) Its knowledge rests with your Lord.

اِنَّمَاۤ اَنْتَ مُنْذِرُ مَنْ يَّخْشٰىهَا ؕ 45

(79:45) You are only a warner to him who has a fear of it.[23]

23. This we also have explained in(E.N. 36 of Surah Al- Mulk). As for the words "you are only a Warner to him who fears it", they do not mean that it is not your duty to warn those who do not fear, but it means: Your warning will benefit only him who fears the coming of that Day.

كَاَنَّهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَهَا لَمْ يَلْبَثُوْۤا اِلَّا عَشِيَّةً اَوْ ضُحٰىهَا ع 46

(79:46) On the Day they see it, they will feel as though they had stayed (in the grave) no more than one evening or one morning.[24]

24. This theme has occurred at several places in the Quran and been explained in the following notes. For it, see (E.N. 53 of Surah Younus); (E.N. 56 of Surah Bani Israil); (E.N. 80 of Surah TaHa); (E.N. 101 of Surah Al-Mominoon); (E.Ns 81, 82 of Surah Ar-Room); (E.N. 48 of Surah Ya Sin). Besides, this theme has also occurred in Al-Ahqaf: 35 but we have not explained it there for fear of repetition.

80. Surah Abasa (He Frowned)

Name

The Surah is so designated after the word `abasa with which it opens.

Period of Revelation

The commentators and traditionists are unanimous about the occasion of the revelation of this Surah. According to them, once some big chiefs of Makkah were sitting in the Holy Prophet's assembly and he was earnestly engaged in trying to persuade them to accept Islam. At that very point, a blind man, named Ibn Umm Maktum, approached him to seek explanation of some point concerning Islam. The Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) disliked his interruption and ignored him. Thereupon Allah sent down this Surah. From this historical incident the period of the revelation of this Surah can be precisely determined.

In the first place, it is confirmed that Hadrat Ibn Umm Maktum was one of the earliest converts to Islam. Hafiz Ibn Hajar and Hafiz Ibn Kathir have stated that he was one of those who had accepted Islam at a very early stage at Makkah.

Secondly, some of the traditions of the Hadith which relate this incident show that he had already accepted Islam and some others show that be was inclined to accept it and had approached the Holy Prophet in search of the truth. Hadrat Aishah states that coming to the Holy Prophet he had said: "O Messenger of Allah, guide me to the straight path." (Tirmidhi, Hakim, Ibn Hibban, Ibn Jarir, Abu Ya'la. According to Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas, he had asked the meaning of a verse of the Qur'an and said to the Holy Prophet: "O Messenger of Allah, teach me the knowledge that Allah has taught you." Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abu Hatim). These statements show that he had acknowledged the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace as a Messenger of Allah and the Quran as a Book of Allah. Contrary to this, Ibn Zaid has interpreted the words la allahu yazzakka of verse 3 to mean: la allahu yuslim: "maybe that he accepts Islam." (Ibn Jarir) And Allah's own words: "What would make you know that he might reform, or heed the admonition, and admonishing might profit him?" and "The one who comes to you running, of his own will, and fears, from him you turn away", point out that by that time he had developed in himself a deep desire to learn the truth: he had come to the Holy Prophet with the belief that he was the only source of guidance and his desire would be satisfied only through him; his apparent state also reflected that if he was given instruction, he would benefit by it.

Thirdly, the names of the people who were sitting in the Holy Prophet's assembly at that time, have been given in different traditions. In this list we find the names of `Utbah, Shaibah, Abu Jahl, Umayyah bin Khalaf, Ubayy bin Khalaf, who were the bitterest enemies of Islam. This shows that the incident took place in the period when these chiefs were still on meeting terms with the Holy Prophet and their antagonism to Islam had not yet grown so strong as to have stopped their paying visits to him and having dialogues with him off and on. All these arguments indicate that this is one of the very earliest Surahs to be revealed at Makkah.

Theme and Subject Matter

In view of the apparent style with which the discourse opens, one feels that in this Surah Allah has expressed His displeasure against the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) for his treating the blind man with indifference and attending to the big chiefs exclusively. But when the whole Surah is considered objectively, one finds that the displeasure, in fact, has been expressed against the disbelieving Quraish, who because of their arrogant attitude and indifference to the truth, were rejecting with contempt the message of truth being conveyed by the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace). Then, besides teaching him the correct method of preaching, the error of the method that he was adopting at the start of his mission has also been pointed out. His treating the blind man with neglect and disregard and devoting all his attention to the Quraish chiefs was not for the reason that he regarded the rich as noble and a poor blind man as contemptible, and, God forbid, there was some rudeness in his manner for which Allah reproved him. But, as a matter of fact, when a caller to Truth embarks on his mission of conveying his message to the people, he naturally wants the most influential people of society to accept his message so that his task becomes easy, for even if his invitation spreads among the poor and weak people, it cannot make much difference. Almost the same attitude had the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) also adopted in the beginning, his motive being only sincerity and a desire to promote his mission and not any idea of respect for the big people and hatred for the small people. But Allah made him realize that that was not the correct method of extending invitation to Islam, but from his mission's point of view, every man, who was a seeker after truth, was important, even if he was weak, or poor, and every man, who was heedless to the truth, was unimportant, even if he occupied a high position in society. Therefore, he should openly proclaim and convey the teachings of Islam to all and sundry, but the people who were really worthy of his attention, were those who were inclined to accept the Truth, and his sublime and noble message was too high to be presented before those haughty people who in their arrogance and vanity thought that they did not stand in need of him but rather he stood in need of them.

This is the theme of vv. 1-16. From verse 17 onward the rebuke directly turns to the disbelievers, who were repudiating the invitation of the Holy Messenger of Allah (upon whom be peace). In this, first they have been reproved for their attitude which they had adopted against their Creator, Providence and Sustainer. In the end, they have been warned of the dreadful fate that they would meet in consequence of their conduct on the Day of Resurrection.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

عَبَسَ وَتَوَلّٰۤی ۙ 1

(80:1) He frowned and turned away

اَنۡ جَآءَہُ الۡاَعۡمٰی ؕ 2

(80:2) that the blind man came to him.[1]

1. The style of this first sentence is elegant and subtle. Although in the following sentences the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been directly addressed, which by itself shows that the act of frowning and turning aside had issued forth from him, the discourse has been opened in a manner as though it was not him but someone else who had so acted. By this style the Prophet (peace be upon him), by a subtle method, has been made to realize that it was an act unseemly for him. Had somebody familiar with his high morals witnessed it, he would have thought that it was not him but some other person who had behaved in that manner.

The blind man referred to here implies, as we have explained in the Introduction, the well-known companion, Ibn Umm Maktum. Hafiz Ibn Abdul Barr in Al-Istiab and Hafiz Ibn Hajar in Al-Isbah have stated that he was a first cousin of the Prophet's wife, Khadijah. His mother, Umm Maktum, and Khadijah's father, Khuwailid, were sister and brother to each other. After one knows his relationship with the Prophet (peace be upon him), there remains no room for the doubt that he had turned away from him regarding him as a poor man having a low station in life, and attended to the high-placed people, for he was the Prophet's (peace be upon him) brother-in-law and a man of noble birth. The reason why the Prophet (peace be upon him) had shown disregard for him is indicated by the word aama (blind man), which Allah Himself has used as the cause of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) inattention. That is, the Prophet (peace be upon him) thought that even if a single man from among the people whom he was trying to bring to the right path, listened to him and was rightly guided, be could become a powerful means of strengthening Islam. On the contrary, Ibn Umm Maktum was a blind man, who could not prove to be so useful for Islam because of his disability as could one of the Quraish elders on becoming a Muslim. Therefore, he should not interrupt the conversation at that time; whatever he wanted to ask or learn, he could ask or learn at some later time.

وَمَا يُدۡرِيۡكَ لَعَلَّهٗ يَزَّكّٰۤى 3

(80:3) How could you know? Perhaps he would cleanse himself,

اَوۡ يَذَّكَّرُ فَتَنۡفَعَهُ الذِّكۡرٰى ؕ 4

(80:4) or he might be mindful and good counsel might avail him.

اَمَّا مَنِ اسۡتَغۡنٰى ۙ 5

(80:5) Now he who waxes indifferent,

فَاَنۡتَ لَهٗ تَصَدّٰى ؕ 6

(80:6) you attend to him,

وَمَا عَلَيْكَ أَلَّا يَزَّكَّىٰ ۝7

(80:7) though you are not to blame if he would not cleanse himself.

وَأَمَّا مَنْ جَاءَكَ يَسْعَىٰ ۝8

(80:8) But he who comes to you running,

وَهُوَ يَخْشَىٰ ۝9

(80:9) and fears (Allah),

فَأَنْتَ عَنْهُ تَلَهَّىٰ ۝10

(80:10) you pay no heed to him.[2]

2. This is the real point which the Prophet (peace be upon him) had overlooked in the preaching of Islam on that occasion, and for teaching him the same Allah first reproved him on his treatment of Ibn Umm Maktum, and then told him what really deserved to occupy his attention as preacher of the truth and what did not. There is a man whose apparent state clearly shows that he is a seeker after truth: he fears lest he should follow falsehood and invite Allah's wrath; therefore, he comes all the way in search of the knowledge of the true faith. There is another man, whose attitude clearly reflects that he has no desire for the truth; rather on the contrary, he regards himself as selfsufficient, having no desire to be guided to the right way. Between these two kinds of men one should not see whose becoming a Muslim would be of greater use for Islam and whose becoming a believer could not be of any use in its propagation. But one should see as to who was inclined to accept the guidance and reform himself, and who was least interested in this precious bargain. The first kind of man, whether he is blind, lame, crippled or an indigent mendicant, who might apparently seem incapable of rendering any useful service in the propagation of Islam, is in any case a valuable man for the preacher to the truth. To him therefore he should attend, for the real object of this invitation is to reform the people, and the apparent state of the person shows that if he was instructed he would accept guidance. As for the other kind of man, the preacher has no need to pursue him, no matter how influential he is in society. For his attitude and conduct openly proclaim that he has no desire for reform; therefore, any effort made to reform him would be mere waste of time. If he has no desire to reform himself, he may not, the loss would be his, the preacher would not at all be accountable for it.

كَلَّا إِنَّهَا تَذْكِرَةٌ ۝11

(80:11) No indeed;[3] this is only a Reminder.[4]

3. That is, you should never do so: do not give undue importance to those who have forgotten God and become proud of their high worldly position. The teaching of Islam is not such that it should be presented solicitously before him who spurns it, nor should a man like you try to invite these arrogant people to Islam in a way as may cause them the misunderstanding that you have a selfish motive connected with them, and that your mission would succeed only if they believed, otherwise not, whereas the fact is that the truth is as self-sufficient of them as they are of the truth.

4. The allusion is to the Quran.

فَمَنۡ شَآءَ ذَكَرَهُ ۝12

(80:12) So whoso wills may give heed to it.

فِىۡ صُحُفٍ مُّكَرَّمَةٍ ۙ ۝13

(80:13) It is contained in scrolls highly honoured,

مَّرۡفُوۡعَةٍ مُّطَهَّرَةٍ ۙ ۝14

(80:14) most exalted and purified,[5]

5. Purified: free from all kinds of mixtures of false ideas and thoughts, and presenting nothing but the pure truth. There is no tinge whatever in these scrolls of the impurities with which the other religious books of the world have been polluted. They have been kept pure and secure from all kinds of human speculation and evil suggestions.

بِاَيۡدِىۡ سَفَرَةٍ ۙ ۝15

(80:15) borne by the hands of scribes,

كِرَامٍۢ بَرَرَةٍ ؕ ۝16

(80:16) noble[6] and purified.[7]

6. This refers to the angels who were writing the scrolls of the Quran under the direct guidance of Allah, were guarding them and conveying them intact to the Prophet (peace be upon him). Two words have been used to qualify them: karim, i.e. noble, and barara, i.e. virtuous. The first word is meant to say that they are so honored and noble that it is not possible that such exalted beings would commit even the slightest dishonesty in the trust reposed in them. The second word has been used to tell that they carry out the responsibility entrusted to them of writing down the scrolls, guarding them and conveying them to the Messenger with perfect honesty and integrity.

7. If the context in which these verses occur, is considered deeply, it becomes obvious that here the Quran has not been praised for the sake of its greatness and glory but to tell the arrogant people, who were repudiating its message with contempt, plainly: The glorious Quran is too holy and exalted a Book to be presented before you humbly with the request that you may kindly accept it if you so please. For it does not stand in need of you as you stand in need of it. If you really seek your well-being, you should clear your head of the evil thoughts and submit to its message humbly; otherwise you are not so self-sufficient of this Book as this Book is self-sufficient of you. Your treating it with scorn and contempt will not affect its glory and greatness at all, rather your own pride and arrogance will be ruined on account of it.

قُتِلَ الْاِنْسَانُ مَآ اَكْفَرَهٗ ؕ 17

(80:17) Accursed[8] be man![9] [10] How stubbornly he denies the Truth.

8. From here the rebuke turns directly against the disbelievers, who were treating the message of the truth with scant attention. Before this, from the beginning of the Surah to verse 16, the address though apparently directed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), was actually meant to reprimand the disbelievers, as if to say: O Prophet (peace be upon him), why are you ignoring a seeker after truth and paying all your attention to those who are worthless from your mission's point of view? They do not deserve that a great Prophet like you should present a sublime thing like the Quran before them.

9. At all such places in the Quran, man does not imply every individual of the human race but the people whose evil traits of character are intended to be censured. At some places the word man is used because the evil traits are found in most of human beings, and at others for the reason that if the particular people are pin-pointed for censure, it engenders stubbornness. Therefore, admonition is given in general terms so as to be more effective. (For further explanation, see(E.N. 65 of Surah HaMim As- Sajdah); (E.N. 75 of Surah Ash-Shura).

10. Another meaning also can be: "What caused him to be inclined to kufr?" Or, in other words: "On what strength does he commit kufr?' Kufr?" then means denial of the Truth as well as ingratitude for the favors of one's benefactor and also rebellious attitude against one's Creator, Providence and Master.

مِنْ اَيِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهٗ ؕ 18

(80:18) Out of what did Allah create him?

مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ ؕ خَلَقَهٗ فَقَدَّرَهٗ ۙ 19

(80:19) Out of a sperm-drop[11] did He create him and then determined a measure for him,[12]

11. That is, let him first consider out of what he was created, where he was nourished and developed, by what way he came into the world, and from what helpless state he began his life in the world. Why does he forget his such beginning and becomes involved in conceit and haughtiness and why does he feel so puffed up as to resist his Creator and stand before Him as an adversary? (The same theme has been expressed in(Surah YaSeen, Ayats 77-78).

12. That is, he was yet developing and taking shape in his mother's womb when his destiny was set for him. It was determined what would be his sex, his color, his size; the extent and volume of his body, the extent to which his limbs would be sound or unsound, his appearance and voice, the degree of physical strength and mental endowments, what would be the land, the family, the conditions and environments in which he would take birth, develop and be molded into a specific person, what would be the hereditary influences and effects of the surroundings and the role and impact of his own self in the make-up of his personality, the part he would play in his life of the world, and how long he would be allowed to function on the earth. He cannot swerve even a hair-breadth from his destiny, nor can effect the slightest alteration in it. Then, how strange is his daring and stubbornness! He commits disbelief of the Creator before Whose destiny he is so helpless and powerless.

ثُمَّ السَّبِيلَ يَسَّرَهُۥ ۙ 20

(80:20) and then made the course of life easy for him,13

13. That is, He created all those means and provisions in the world, which he could utilize, otherwise all the capabilities of his body and mind would have remained useless, had not the Creator provided the means and created the possibilities on the earth to employ them. Furthermore, the Creator also gave him the opportunity to choose and adopt for himself whichever of the ways, good or evil, of gratitude or ingratitude, of obedience or disobedience that he pleased. He opened up both the ways before him and made each way smooth and easy so that he could follow any way that he liked.

ثُمَّ أَمَاتَهُۥ فَأَقۡبَرَهُۥ ۙ 21

(80:21) then He caused him to die and brought him to the grave,14

14. That is, not only in the matter of birth and destiny but also in the matter of death he is absolutely helpless before his Creator. Neither can he take birth by his choice nor die by his choice, nor can defer his death even by a moment. He dies precisely at the appointed time, in the appointed place, under the appointed circumstances that have been decreed for his death, and he is deposited in the type of grave destined for him whether it is the belly of the earth, the depths of the sea, a bonfire or the stomach of a beast. Nothing to say of the man. The whole world together cannot change the Creator's decree in respect of any person.

ثُمَّ إِذَا شَآءَ أَنشَرَهُۥ ۜ 22

(80:22) and then, whenever He wishes, He will raise him back to life.15

15. That is, he does not either have the power to refuse to rise up when the Creator may will to resurrect him after death. When he was first created, he was not consulted: he was not asked whether he wanted to be created or not. Even if he had refused, he would have been created. Likewise, his resurrection is also not dependent upon his will and assent that he may rise from death if he so likes, or refuse to rise if he does not like. In this matter, he is also absolutely helpless before the Creator's will. Whenever He wills, He will resurrect him, and he will have to rise whether he likes it or not.

كَلَّا لَمَّا يَقْضِ مَا أَمَرَهُ ۖ 23

(80:23) Nay, but man did not fulfil what Allah had enjoined upon him.16

16. He commanded him: Implies the duty that Allah has enjoined on every man in the form of natural guidance as well as the duty to which man's own existence and every particle of the universe, from the earth to the heavens, and every manifestation of divine power are pointing, and also that duty which Allah has conveyed in every age through His Prophets and Books and disseminated through the righteous people of every period. (For explanation, see(E.N. 5 of Surah Ad-Dahr). In the present context the object is to express the meaning that on the basis of the truths stated in the above verses, it was man's duty to have obeyed his Creator, but, contrary to this, he adopted the way of disobedience and did not fulfill the demand of his being His creature.

فَلْيَنظُرِ الْإِنسَانُ إِلَىٰ طَعَامِهِ ۙ 24

(80:24) So let man just consider his food:17

17. That is, let him consider the food, which he regards as an ordinary thing, how it is created. Had God not provided the means for it, it was not in the power of man himself to have created the food on the earth in any way.

أَنَّا صَبَبْنَا الْمَاءَ صَبًّا ۙ 25

(80:25) We poured water, pouring it in great abundance,18

18. This refers to rainwater. Water vapors are raised in vast quantities from the oceans by the heat of the sun, then they are turned into thick clouds, then the winds blow and spread them over different parts of the earth, then because of the coolness in the upper atmosphere the vapors turn back to water and fall as rain in every area in a particular measure. The water not only falls as rain directly on the earth but also collects underground in the shape of wells and fountains, flows in the form of rivers and streams, freezes on the mountains as snow and melts and flows into rivers in other seasons as well than the rainy season. Has man himself made all these arrangements? Had his Creator not arranged this for his sustenance, could man survive on the earth.

ثُمَّ شَقَقْنَا الْأَرْضَ شَقًّا ۙ 26

(80:26) and cleaved the earth, cleaving it asunder;[19]

19. Then We split the earth in clefts: Implies cleaving it in a way that the seeds, or seed-stones, or vegetable seedlings that man sows or plants in it, or which are deposited in it by winds or birds, or by some other means, should sprout up. Man can do nothing more than to dig the soil, or plough it, and bury in it the seeds that God has already created. Beyond this everything is done by God. It is He Who has created the seeds of countless species of vegetable; it is He Who has endowed these seeds with the quality that when they are sown in the soil, they should sprout up and from every seed, vegetable of its own particular species should grow. Again it is He Who has created in the earth the capability that in combination with water it should break open the seeds and develop and nourish every species of vegetable with the kind of food suitable for it. Had God not created the seeds with these qualities and the upper layers of the earth with these capabilities, man could not by himself have arranged any kind of food on the earth.

فَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا حَبًّا ۙ 27

(80:27) then caused the grain to grow out of it,

وَعِنَبًا وَقَضْبًا ۙ 28

(80:28) together with grapes and vegetables,

وَزَيْتُونًا وَنَخْلًا ۙ 29

(80:29) and olives and palms,

وَحَدَائِقَ غُلْبًا ۙ 30

(80:30) and dense orchards,

وَفَاكِهَةً وَأَبًّا ۙ 31

(80:31) and fruits and pastures –

مَتَاعًا لَكُمْ وَلِأَنْعَامِكُمْ ۚ 32

(80:32) all this as a provision for you and your cattle.[20]

20. That is, a means of sustenance not only for you but also for those animals from which you obtain items of food like meat, fat, milk, butter, etc. and which also perform countless other services for your living. You benefit by all this and yet you disbelieve in God Whose provisions sustain you.

فَإِذَا جَآءَتِ الصَّآخَّةُ ۝33

(80:33) But when the deafening cry shall be sounded[21]

21. The final terrible sounding of the Trumpet at which all dead men shall be resurrected to life.

يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ ۝34

(80:34) on the Day when each man shall flee from his brother,

وَأُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ ۝35

(80:35) and his mother and his father;

وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَبَنِيهِ ۝36

(80:36) and his consort and his children;[22]

22. A theme closely resembling to this has already occurred in Surah Al-Maarij, Ayats 10-14. Fleeing may also mean that when he sees those nearest and dearest to him in the world, involved in distress, instead of rushing forth to help them, he will run away from them lest they should call out to him for help. And it may also mean that when they see the evil consequences of committing sin for the sake of one another and misleading one another, fearless of God and heedless of the Hereafter, in the world, each one would flee from the other lest the other should hold him responsible for his deviation and sin. Brother will fear brother, children their parents, husband his wife, and parents their children lest they should become witnesses in the case against them.

لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ شَأْنٌ يُغْنِيهِ ۝37

(80:37) on that Day each will be occupied with his own business, making him oblivious of all save himself.[23]

23. A tradition has been reported in the Hadith by different methods and through different channels, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: On the Day of Resurrection all men will rise up naked. One of his wives (according to some reporters, Aishah, according to others, Saudah, or a woman) asked in bewilderment: O Messenger of Allah, shall we (women) appear naked on that Day before the people. The prophet (peace be upon him)

recited this very verse and explained that on that Day each one will have enough of his own troubles to occupy him, and will be wholly unmindful of others. (Nasai, Tirmidhi, Ibn Abi Hatim,

وُجُوهٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ مُّسْفِرَةٌ ۙ 38

(80:38) Some faces on that Day shall be beaming with happiness,

ضَاحِكَةٌ مُّسْتَبْشِرَةٌ ۚ 39

(80:39) and be cheerful and joyous.

وَوُجُوهٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ عَلَيْهَا غَبَرَةٌ ۙ 40

(80:40) Some faces on that Day shall be dust-ridden,

تَرْهَقُهَا قَتَرَةٌ ۭ 41

(80:41) enveloped by darkness.

اُولٰۗىِٕكَ هُمُ الْكَفَرَةُ الْفَجَرَةُ ۧ 42

(80:42) These will be the unbelievers, the wicked.

81. Surah At Takwir (The Folding Up)

Name

It is derived from the word kuwwirat in the first verse. Kuwwirat is passive voice from takvir in the past tense, and means "that which is folded up", thereby implying that it is a Surah in which the "folding up" has been mentioned:

Period of Revelation

The subject matter and the style clearly show that it is one of the earliest Surahs to be revealed at Makkah.

Theme and Subject Matter

It has two themes: the Hereafter and the institution of Prophethood.

In the first six verses the first stage of the Resurrection has been mentioned when the sun will lose its light, the stars will scatter, the mountains will be uprooted and will disperse, the people will become heedless of their dearest possessions, the beasts of the jungle will be stupefied and will gather together, and the seas will boil up. Then in the next seven verses the second stage has been described when the souls will be reunited with the bodies, the records will be laid open, the people will be called to account for their crimes, the heavens will be unveiled, and Hell and Heaven will be brought into full view. After depicting the Hereafter thus, man has been left to ponder his own self and deeds, saying: "Then each man shall himself know what he has brought with him."

After this the theme of Prophethood has been taken up. In this the people of Makkah have been addressed, as if to say "Whatever Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) is presenting before you, is not the bragging of a madman, nor an evil suggestion inspired by Satan, but the word of a noble, exalted and trustworthy messenger sent by God, whom Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) has seen with his own eyes in the bright horizon of the clear sky in broad day light. Whither then are you going having turned away from this teaching?"

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

اِذَا الشَّمۡسُ كُوِّرَتۡ ۙ 1

(81:1) When the sun shall be folded up,[1]

1. This is a matchless metaphor for causing the sun to lose its light. Takwir means to fold up; hence takwir al-amamah is used for folding up the turban on the head. Here, the light which radiates from the sun and spreads throughout the solar system has been likened to the turban and it has been said that on the Resurrection Day the turban will be folded up about the sun and its radiation will fade.

وَإِذَا النُّجُومُ انكَدَرَتْ ۖ 2

(81:2) when the stars shall scatter away,[2]

2. That is, when the force which is keeping them in their orbits and positions is loosened and all the stars and planets will scatter in the universe. The word inkidar also indicates that they will not only scatter away but will also grow dark.

وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ سُيِّرَتْ ۖ 3

(81:3) when the mountains shall be set in motion,[3]

3. In other words, the earth will also lose its force of gravity because of which the mountains have weight and are firmly set in the earth. Thus, when there is no more gravity the mountains will be uprooted from their places and becoming weightless will start moving and flying as the clouds move in the atmosphere.

وَإِذَا الْعِشَارُ عُطِّلَتْ ۖ 4

(81:4) when the ten-months pregnant camels shall be abandoned,[4]

4. This was by far the best way of giving an idea of the severities and horrors of Resurrection to the Arabs. Before the buses and trucks of the present day there was nothing more precious for the Arabs than the she-camel just about to give birth to her young. In this state she was most sedulously looked after and cared for, so that she is not lost, stolen, or harmed in any way. The people's becoming heedless of such she-camels, in fact, meant that at that time they would be so stunned as to become unmindful of their most precious possessions.

وَإِذَا الْوُحُوشُ حُشِرَتْ ۖ 5

(81:5) when the savage beasts shall be brought together,[5]

5. When a general calamity befalls the world, all kinds of beasts and animals gather together in one place, then neither the snake bites, nor the tiger kills and devours.

وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ سُجِّرَتْ ۖ 6

(81:6) when the seas shall be set boiling,[6]

6. The word sujjirat as used in the original in passive voice from tasjir in the past tense. Tasjir means to kindle fire in the oven. Apparently it seems strange that on the Resurrection Day fire would blaze up in the oceans. But if the truth about water is kept in view, nothing would seem strange. It is a miracle of God that He combined oxygen and hydrogen, one of which helps kindle the fire and the other gets kindled of itself and by the combination of

both He created a substance like water which is used to put out fire. A simple manifestation of Allah's power is enough to change this composition of water so that the two gases are separated and begin to burn and help cause a blaze, which is their basic characteristic.

وَإِذَا النُّفُوسُ زُوِّجَتْ ۝٧

(81:7) when[7] the souls shall be rejoined (with their bodies), [8]

7. From here begins mention of the second stage of Resurrection.

8. That is, men will be resurrected precisely in the state as they lived in the world before death with body and soul together.

وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُۥدَةُ سُئِلَتْ ۝٨

(81:8) and when the girl-child buried alive shall be asked:

بِأَيِّ ذَنۢبٍ قُتِلَتْ ۝٩

(81:9) for what offence was she killed?[9]

9. The style of this verse reflects an intensity of rage and fury inconceivable in common life. The parents who buried their daughters alive, would be so contemptible in the sight of Allah that they would not be asked: Why did you kill the innocent infant? But disregarding them the innocent girl will be asked: For what crime were you slain? And she will tell her story how cruelly she had been treated by her barbarous parents and buried alive. Besides, two vast themes have been compressed into this brief verse, which though not expressed in words, are reflected by its style and tenor. First that in it the Arabs have been made to realize what depths of moral depravity they have touched because of their ignorance in that they buried their own children alive; yet they insist that they would persist in the same ignorance and would not accept the reform that Muhammad (peace be upon him) was trying to bring about in their corrupted society. Second, that an express argument has been given in it of the necessity and inevitability of the Hereafter. The case of the infant girl who was buried alive, should be decided and settled justly at some time, and there should necessarily be a time when the cruel people who committed this heinous crime, should be called to account for it, for there was none in the world to hear the cries of complaint raised by the poor soul. This act was looked upon with approval by the depraved society; neither the parents felt any remorse for it, nor anybody in the family censured them, nor the society took any notice of it. Then, should this monstrosity remain wholly unpunished in the Kingdom of God?

This barbaric custom of burying the female infants alive had become widespread in ancient Arabia for different reasons. One reason was economic hardship because of which the people wanted to have fewer dependents so that they should not have to bear the burden of bringing up many children. Male offspring were brought up in the hope that they would

later help in earning a living, but the female offspring were killed for the fear that they would have to be raised till they matured and then given away in marriage. Second, the widespread chaos because of which the male children were brought up in order to have more and more helpers and supporters; but daughters were killed because in tribal wars they had to be protected instead of being useful in any way for defense. Third, another aspect of the common chaos also was that when the hostile tribes raided each other and captured girls they would either keep them as slave-girls or sell them to others. For these reasons the practice that had become common in Arabia was that at childbirth a pit was kept dug out ready for use by the woman so that if a girl was born, she was immediately cast into it and buried alive. And if sometimes the mother was not inclined to act thus, or the people of the family disapproved of it, the father would raise her for some time half-heartedly, and then finding time would take her to the desert to be buried alive. This tyranny and hardheartedness was once described by a person before the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself. According to a Hadith related in the first chapter of Sunan Darimi, a man came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and related this incident of his pre-Islamic days of ignorance: I had a daughter who was much attached to me. When I called her, she would come running to me. One day I called her and took her out with me. On the way we came across a well. Holding her by the hand I pushed her into the well. Her last words that I heard were: Oh father, oh father! Hearing this, the Prophet (peace be upon him) wept and tears started falling from his eyes. One of those present on the occasion said: O man, you have grieved the Prophet (peace be upon him). The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Do not stop him, let him question about what he feels so strongly now. Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked him to narrate his story once again. When he narrated it again the Prophet (peace be upon him) wept so much that his beard became wet with tears. Then he said to the man: Allah has forgiven what you did in the days of ignorance: now turn to Him in repentance.

It is not correct to think that the people of Arabia had no feeling of the harshness of this hideous, inhuman act. Obviously, no society, however corrupted it may be, can be utterly devoid of the feeling that such tyrannical acts are evil. That is why the Quran has not dwelt upon the vileness of this act, but has only referred to it in awe-inspiring words to the effect: A time will come when the girl who was buried alive, will be asked for what crime she was slain? The history of Arabia also shows that many people in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance had a feeling that the practice was vile and wicked. According to Tabarani, Sasaah bin Najiyah al-Mujashii, grandfather of the poet, Farazdaq, said to the Prophet (peace be upon him): O Messenger of Allah, during the days of ignorance I have also done some good works, among which one is that I saved 360 girls from being buried alive: I gave two camels each as ransom to save their lives. Shall I get any reward for this? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Yes, there is a reward for you, and it is this that Allah has blessed you with Islam.

As a matter of fact, a great blessing of the blessings of Islam is that it not only did put an end to this inhuman practice in Arabia but even wiped out the concept that the birth of a daughter was in any way a calamity, which should be endured unwillingly. On the contrary, Islam taught that bringing up daughters, giving them good education and enabling them to become good housewives, is an act of great merit and virtue. The way the Prophet (peace be upon him) changed the common concept of the people in respect of girls can be judged from

his many sayings which have been reported in the Hadith. As for example, we reproduce some of these below:

The person who is put to a test because of the birth of the daughters and then he treats them generously, they will become a means of rescue for him from Hell. (Bukhari, Muslim).

The one who brought up two girls till they attained their maturity, will appear along with me on the Resurrection Day. Saying this, the Prophet (peace be upon him) joined and raised his fingers. (Muslim).

The one who brought up three daughters, or sisters, taught them good manners and treated them with kindness until they became self-sufficient, Allah will make Paradise obligatory for him. A man asked: what about two, O Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: the same for two. Ibn Abbas, the reporter of the Hadith, says: Had the people at that time asked in respect of one daughter, the Prophet (peace be upon him) would have also given the same reply about her. (Sharh as-Sunnh).

The one who has a daughter born to him and he does not bury her alive, nor keeps her in disgrace, nor prefers his son to her, Allah will admit him to Paradise. (Abu Daud).

The one who has three daughters born to him, and he is patient over them, and clothes them well according to his means, they will become a means of rescue for him from Hell. (Bukhari, Al-Adab al-Mufrad, Ibn Majah).

The Muslim who has two daughters and he looks after them well, they will lead him to Paradise. (Bukhari: Al- Adab al-Mufrad).

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to Suraqah bin Jusham: Should I tell you what is the greatest charity (or said: one of the greatest charities)? He said: Kindly do tell, O Messenger of Allah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Your daughter who (after being divorced or widowed) returns to you and should have no other bread-winner. (Ibn Majah, Bukhari Al-Adab al-Mufrad).

This is the teaching which completely changed the viewpoint of the people about girls not only in Arabia but among all the nations of the world, which later become blessed with Islam. 1

وَإِذَا الصُّحُفُ نُشِرَتْ ۝ 10

(81:10) and when the scrolls of (men's) deeds shall be unfolded,

وَإِذَا السَّمَآءُ كُشِطَتْ ۝ 11

(81:11) and when Heaven is laid bare;[10]

10. That is, everything which is hidden from view now will become visible. Now one can only see empty space, or the clouds, hanging dust, the moon, the sun or stars, but at that

time the Kingdom of God will appear in full view before the people, without any veil in between, in its true reality.

وَإِذَا الْجَحِيمُ سُعِّرَتْ ۙ 12

(81:12) and Hell is stoked,

وَإِذَا الْجَنَّةُ أُزْلِفَتْ ۙ 13

(81:13) and Paradise brought nigh:[11]

11. That is, in the Plain of Resurrection, when the hearing of the cases of the people will be in progress, the blazing fire of Hell will also be in full view, and Paradise with all its blessings will also be visible to all, so that the wicked would know what they are being deprived of and where they are going to be cast, and the righteous as well would know what they are being saved from and with what being blessed and honored.

عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا أَحْضَرَتْ ۝ 14

(81:14) then shall each person know what he has brought along.

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالْخُنَّسِ 15

(81:15) No indeed;[12] I swear by the alternating stars

12. That is, you are not correct that what is being presented in the Quran is the bragging of an insane person, or the evil suggestion of a devil.

الْجَوَارِ الْكُنَّسِ 16

(81:16) that hide,

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا عَسْعَسَ 17

(81:17) and by the night as it recedes,

وَالصُّبْحِ إِذَا تَنَفَّسَ 18

(81:18) and the morn as it breathes.[13]

13. That for which the oath has been sworn, has been stated in the following verses. The oath means: Muhammad (peace be upon him) has not seen a vision in darkness, but when the

stars had disappeared, the night had departed and the bright morning had appeared, he had seen the Angel of God in the open sky. Therefore, what he tells you is based on his own personal observation and on the experience that he had in full senses in the full light of day.

إِنَّهُۥ لَقَوۡلُ رَسُولٖ كَرِيمٖ ١٩

(81:19) Verily this is the word of a noble message-bearer;[14]

14. A noble messenger: the Angel who brought down revelation, as becomes explicit from the following verses. The word of a noble messenger does not mean that the Quran is the word of the Angel himself, but, as the context shows, of Him Who appointed him a messenger. In (Surah Al-Haaqqah, Ayat 40), likewise, the Quran has been called the word of Muhammad (peace be upon him), and there too it does not mean that it is the Prophet's (peace be upon him) own composition, but describing it as the word of an honorable messenger, it has been made clear that the Prophet (peace be upon him) is presenting it in his capacity as the Messenger of God and not as Muhammad bin Abdullah (peace be upon him). At both places, the word has been attributed to the Angel and to Muhammad (peace be upon him) on the ground that the message of Allah was being delivered to Muhammad (peace be upon him) by the Angel and to the people by Muhammad (peace be upon him). (For further explanation, see (E.N. 22 of Surah Al- Haaqqah).

ذِي قُوَّةٍ عِندَ ذِي ٱلۡعَرۡشِ مَكِينٖ ٢٠

(81:20) one mighty[15] and held in honour with the Lord of the Throne;

15. (Surah An-Najm, Ayat 45) deals with the same theme, thus "It is but a revelation which is sent down to him. One, mighty in power, has taught him." As to what is implied by the mighty powers of the Angel Gabriel is ambiguous. In any case it at least shows that he is distinguished even among the angels because of his extraordinary powers. In Muslim (kitab-al-iman) Aishah has reported the Prophet's (peace be upon him) saying to the effect: I have twice seen Gabriel in his real shape and form: his glorious being was encompassing the whole space between the earth and the heavens. According to the tradition reported from Abdullah bin Masud in Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi and Musnad Ahmad, the Prophet (peace be upon him) had seen Gabriel with his six hundred wings. From this one can have an idea of his mighty powers.

مُّطَاعٖ ثَمَّ أَمِينٖ ٢١

(81:21) there he is obeyed[16] and held trustworthy.[17]

16. That is, he is the chief of the angels and all angels work under his command.

17. That is, he is not one who would tamper with divine revelation, but is so trustworthy that he conveys intact whatever he receives from God.

وَمَا صَاحِبُكُمْ بِمَجْنُونٍ ۚ 22

(81:22) (O people of Makkah), your companion[18] is not mad;

18. Your Companion: the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). Here, making mention of the Prophet (peace be upon him) as the companion of the people of Makkah, they have been made to realize that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was no stranger for them. He was not an outsider but a man of their own clan and tribe; he had lived his whole life among them; even their children knew that he was a very wise man. They should not be so shameless as to call such a man a mad man. (For further explanation, see (E.Ns 2, 3 of Surah An-Najm).

وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ بِالْأُفُقِ الْمُبِينِ ۚ 23

(81:23) he indeed saw the message-bearer on the clear horizon;[19]

19. (In Surah An-Najm, Ayats 7-9), this observation of the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been described in greater detail, (For explanation, see (E.Ns 7. 8 of Surah An-Najm).

وَمَا هُوَ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ بِضَنِينٍ ۚ 24

(81:24) nor does he grudge (conveying this knowledge about) the Unseen;[20]

20. That is, the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah does not conceal anything from you. Whatever of the unseen realities are made known to him by Allah, whether they relate to the essence and attributes of Allah, the angels, life-after death and Resurrection, or to the Hereafter, Heaven and Hell, he conveys everything to you without change.

وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَيْطَانٍ رَّجِيمٍ ۙ 25

(81:25) nor is it a word of an accursed Satan.[21]

21. That is, you are wrong in thinking that some Satan comes and whispers these words into the ear of Muhammad (peace be upon him). It does not suit Satan that he should divert man from polytheism, idol worship, atheism and sin and turn him to God-worship and Tauhid, make man realize that he should live a life of responsibility and accountability to God instead of living an irresponsible, care-free life, should forbid man to adopt practices of ignorance, injustice, immorality and wickedness and lead him to a clean life of justice, piety and high morals. (For further explanation, see (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 210-212 along with E.Ns 130 to 133), and (Ayats 221-223 along with E.Ns 140, 141).

فَأَيْنَ تَذْهَبُونَ ۖ 26

(81:26) Where to are you then heading?

إِنۡ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكۡرٞ لِّلۡعَٰلَمِينَ ٢٧

(81:27) It is nothing but Good Counsel for everyone in the world,

لِمَن شَآءَ مِنكُمۡ أَن يَسۡتَقِيمَ ٢٨

(81:28) for everyone of you who wishes to follow the Straight Way;[22]

22. In other words, although this is an admonition for all mankind, only such a person can benefit by it, who is himself desirous of adopting piety and righteousness. Man's being a seeker after truth and a lover of right is the foremost condition of his gaining any benefit from it.

وَمَا تَشَآءُونَ إِلَّآ أَن يَشَآءَ ٱللَّهُ رَبُّ ٱلۡعَٰلَمِينَ ٢٩

(81:29) but your wishing will not avail unless Allah, the Lord of the Universe, so wishes.[23]

23. This theme has already occurred in (Surah Al- Muddaththir, Ayat 56) and (Surah Ad-Dahr, Ayat 20). For explanation, see(E.N. 41 of Surah Al-Muddaththir).

82. Surah Al Infitar (The Cleaving)

Name

It is derived from the word *infatarat* in the first verse. *Infitar* is an infinitive which means to cleave or split asunder, thereby implying that it is the Surah in which the splitting asunder of the sky has been mentioned.

Period of Revelation

This Surah and the Surah At-Takwir closely resemble each other in their subject matter. This shows that both were sent down in about the same period.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is the Hereafter. According to a tradition related in Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Ibn al-Mundhir, Tabarani, Hakim and Ibn Marduyah, on the authority of Hadrat Abdullah bin Umar, the Holy Messenger (upon whom be peace) said: "The one who wants that he should see the Resurrection Day as one would see it with one's eyes, should read Surah At-Takwir, Surah Al-Infitar and Surah Al-Inshiqaq."

In this Surah first the Resurrection Day has been described and it is said that when it occurs, every person will see whatever he has done in the world. After this, man has been asked to ponder the question: "O man, what has deluded you into thinking that the God, Who brought you into being and by Whose favor and bounty you possess the finest body, limbs and features among all creatures, is only bountiful and not just? His being bountiful and generous does not mean that you should become fearless of His justice." Then, man has been warned, so as to say: "Do not remain involved in any misunderstanding. Your complete record is being prepared. There are trustworthy writers who are writing down whatever you do." In conclusion, it has been forcefully stated that the Day of Resurrection will surely take place when the righteous shall enjoy every kind of bliss in Paradise and the wicked shall be punished in Hell. On that day no one shall avail anyone anything. All powers of judgment shall be with Allah.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

اِذَا السَّمَآءُ انۡفَطَرَتۡ ۙ 1

(82:1) When the heaven is split asunder,[1]

1. In Surah At-Takwir it has been said: When the oceans are set ablaze, and here: When the oceans are torn apart. When the two verses are read together, and this fact is also kept in view that even according to the Quran a terrible earthquake will occur on the Resurrection Day, which will shake up the entire earth all at once, the state of the splitting of the oceans and their being set ablaze, seems to be as follows: first, because of the terrible convulsion, the bottom of the oceans will split asunder and their water will start sinking into the interior of the earth where an intensely hot lava is constantly boiling up. Coming into contact with

the lava, water will dissolve into its two constituent parts, oxygen which helps combustion, and hydrogen, which is itself combustible. Thus, in the process of dissolution and combustion, a chain reaction will start, which will set all the oceans of the world ablaze. This is our conjecture, the correct knowledge is only with Allah.

وَإِذَا الْكَوَاكِبُ انْتَثَرَتْ ۙ 2

(82:2) when the stars are scattered,

وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ فُجِّرَتْ ۙ 3

(82:3) when the seas are made to burst forth,

وَإِذَا الْقُبُورُ بُعْثِرَتْ ۙ 4

(82:4) and when graves are laid open,[2]

2. In the first three verses, the first stage of the Resurrection has been mentioned and in this verse the second stage is being described. Opening of the graves implies resurrection of the dead.

عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ وَأَخَّرَتْ �طَ 5

(82:5) everyone shall know all his deeds, both the earlier and the later.[3]

3. The words ma qaddamat wa akhkharat can have several meanings and all are implied here:

(1) Ma qaddamat is the good or evil act which man has sent forward, and ma akhkharat is what he refrained from doing. Thus, these Arabic words correspond to the acts of commission and omission in one's life.

(2) Ma qaddamat is what one did earlier and ma akhkharat what one did later; i.e. the whole life-work of man will appear before him date-wise and in proper sequence.

(3) Whatever good and evil deeds a man did in his life is ma qaddamat and whatever effects and influences of his acts he left behind for human society is ma akhkharat.

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنسَانُ مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَبِّكَ الْكَرِيمِ ۙ 6

(82:6) O man! What has deceived you about your generous Lord

الَّذِي خَلَقَكَ فَسَوّٰىكَ فَعَدَلَكَ ۙ 7

(82:7) Who created you, shaped you, and made you well-proportioned,

فِيْٓ اَيِّ صُوْرَةٍ مَّا شَآءَ رَكَّبَكَ ؕ 8

(82:8) and set you in whatever form He pleased?[4]

4. That is, in the first place, the bounty and favor of your Beneficent Sustainer required that you should have acknowledged his bounties and become an obedient servant and should have felt shy of disobeying Him, but you were deluded into thinking that you have become whatever you are by your own effort, and you never thought that you should acknowledge that favor of Him Who gave you life. Secondly, it is your Lord's bounty and kindness that you can freely do whatever you like in the world and it never so happens that whenever you happen to commit an error, He should punish you with paralysis, or blind your eyes, or cause lightning to strike you. But you took His bountifulness for weakness and were beguiled into thinking that the kingdom of your God was devoid of justice

كَلَّا بَلْ تُكَذِّبُوْنَ بِالدِّيْنِ ۙ 9

(82:9) No indeed;[5] (the fact is that) you deny the Reckoning,[6] declaring it a lie;

5. That is, there is no reasonable ground for you to be deluded. Your own physical existence itself tells that you did not come into being by yourself; your parents also did not make you. Man also did not come about as a result of the elements combining together by themselves accidentally; but a Wise and Powerful God has composed you into this perfect human shape and form. There are other kinds of animals in the world compared with which your excellent form and structure and your superior powers and faculties stand out in sharp contrast. Reason demanded that in view of all this you should have submitted gratefully and should never have dared commit disobedience of your beneficent Sustainer. You also know that your Lord and Sustainer is not only Compassionate and Bountiful but Almighty and Omnipotent as well. When an earthquake, cyclone or flood occurs by His command, all your devices and measures fail to be effective. You also know that your Lord and Sustainer is not ignorant and foolish but Wise and Knowing, and the necessary demand of wisdom and knowledge is that whoever is given intellect should also be held responsible for his acts; whoever is given powers should also be held accountable as to how he used those powers; and whoever is given the choice to do good or evil on his own responsibility, should also be rewarded for his good act and punished for his evil act. All these truths are clearly and plainly known to you; therefore, you cannot say that there exists a reasonable ground for you to be deluded concerning your Lord. Your own nature is sufficient evidence that the beneficence of the Master should never cause the servant to be fearless of Him, and be involved in the misunderstanding that he may do whatever he pleases, no one can harm him in any way.

6. That is, you have not been deluded and beguiled by any good reason but by your foolish concept that there is going to be no meting out of rewards and punishments after the life of this world. It is this wrong and baseless concept which has made you heedless of God, fearless of His justice and irresponsible in your moral attitude.

وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ لَحَٰفِظِينَ ۙ 10

(82:10) you do so the while there are watchers over you;

كِرَامًا كَٰتِبِينَ ۙ 11

(82:11) noble scribes,

يَعْلَمُونَ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ 12

(82:12) who know what you do.7

7. That is, whether you deny the meting out of rewards and punishments, belie it, or mock it, the reality cannot change. The reality is: that your Lord has not left you to your self in the world, but has appointed over each one of you honest and upright guardians, who are recording objectively and faithfully all your good and evil acts, and none of your acts is hidden from them, whether you commit it in darkness, or in private, or in far off jungles, or in secret when you are fully satisfied that whatever you have done has remained hidden from human eye. For these guardian angels Allah has used the words kiram-an katibin, i.e. writers who are honorable and noble They are neither attached in personal love with somebody, nor are inimical to anybody, so that they would prepare a fictitious record on the basis of their favoring one man and un-favoring another unduly. They are neither dishonest that without being present on duty they would make wrong entries by themselves; nor are they bribable so that they would take bribes and make false reports in favor of or against somebody. They are far above these moral weaknesses. Therefore, both the good and the bad people should be fully satisfied that each man's good acts will be recorded without any omission, and no one will have an evil act recorded in his account which he has not done. Then the second quality that has been mentioned of these angels is: They know whatever you do. That is, they are not like the secret, intelligence agencies of the world, from which, despite all their search and scrutiny, many things remain hidden. They are fully aware of everyone's deeds. They accompany every person, at all places, under all conditions, in such a way that he himself does not know that someone is watching him, and they also know with what intention has somebody done a certain thing. Therefore the record prepared by them is a complete record in which nothing has been left un-recorded. About this very thing it has been said in (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayat 49): Woe to us! What sort of a book it is, it has left nothing unrecorded of our doings, small or great. They will see before them everything, whatever they had done.

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ ۚ 13

(82:13) Surely the virtuous shall be in Bliss,

وَإِنَّ الْفُجَّارَ لَفِي جَحِيمٍ ۖ 14

(82:14) and the wicked shall be in the Blazing Fire.

يَصْلَوْنَهَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ 15

(82:15) They shall enter it on the Day of Recompense

وَمَا هُمْ عَنْهَا بِغَائِبِينَ ۝ 16

(82:16) and then shall never come out of it.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ ۝ 17

(82:17) What do you know what the Day of Recompense is?

ثُمَّ مَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ ۝ 18

(82:18) Again, what do you know what the Day of Recompense is?

يَوْمَ لَا تَمْلِكُ نَفْسٌ لِّنَفْسٍ شَيْئًا ۝ وَالْأَمْرُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلَّهِ ۝ 19

(82:19) It is the Day when no one shall have the power to do anything for another,[8] and all command shall be Allah's.

8. That is, no one there will have the power to save anyone from suffering the consequences of his deeds; no one there will be so influential, strong, or such a favorite with Allah that he should behave stubbornly in the divine court and say: Such and such a one is a close relative or associate of mine; he will have to be forgiven, no matter what evils He might have committed in the world.

83. Surah Al Mutaffifin (Those Who Deal in Fraud)

Name

It is derived from the very first verse; Wayl-ul-lil mutaffifin.

Period of Revelation

The style of the Surah and its subject matter clearly show that it was revealed in the earliest stage at Makkah, when surah after surah was being revealed to impress the doctrine of the Hereafter on the people's minds. This Surah was revealed when they had started ridiculing the Muslims and disgracing them publicly in the streets and in their assemblies, but persecution and manhandling of the Muslims had not yet started. Some commentators regard this as a Madani Surah. This misunderstanding has been caused by a tradition from Ibn Abbas according to which when the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) arrived in Madinah, the evil of giving short weight and measure was widespread among the people there. Then Allah sent down Waylul-lil mutaffifin and the people began to give full weight and measure. (Nasa'i, Ibn Majah, Ibn Marduyah, Ibn Jarir, Baihaqi: Shu`ab-il-Iman) But, as we have explained in the introduction to Surah Ad-Dahr, the common practice with the Companions and their successors was that when they found that a verse applied to a certain matter of life, they would say that it had been sent down concerning that particular matter. Therefore, what is proved by the tradition of Ibn Abbas is that when after his emigration to Madinah the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) saw that the evil was widespread among the people there, he recited this Surah before them by Allah's Command and this helped them mend their ways.

Theme and Subject Matter

The theme of this Surah too is the Hereafter. In the first six verses the people have been taken to task for the prevalent evil practice in their commercial dealings. When they had to receive their due from others, they demanded that it be given in full, but when they had to measure or weigh for others, they would give less than what was due. Taking this one evil as an example out of countless evils prevalent in society, it has been said that it is an inevitable result of the heedlessness of the Hereafter. Unless the people realized that one day they would have to appear before God and account for each single act they performed in the world, it was not possible that they would adopt piety and righteousness in their daily affairs. Even if a person might practice honesty in some of his less important dealings in view of "honesty is the best policy," he would never practice honesty on occasions when dishonesty would seem to be "the best policy". Man can develop true and enduring honesty only when he fears God and sincerely believes in the Hereafter, for then he would regard honesty not merely as "a policy" but as "a duty" and obligation, and his being constant in it, or otherwise, would not be dependent on its being useful or useless in the world.

Thus, after making explicit the relation between morality and the doctrine of the Hereafter in an effective and impressive way, in vv. 7-17, it has been said: The deeds of the wicked are already being recorded in the black list of the culprits, and in the Hereafter they will meet with utter ruin. Then in vv. 18-28, the best end of the virtuous has been described and it has

been laid that their deeds are being recorded in the list of the exalted people, on which are appointed the angels nearest to Allah.

In conclusion, the believers have been consoled, and the disbelievers warned, as if to say: "The people who are disgracing and humiliating the believers today, are culprits who, on the Resurrection Day, will meet with a most evil end in consequence of their conduct, and these very believers will feel comforted when they see their fate."

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

وَیۡلٌ لِّلۡمُطَفِّفِیۡنَ ۙ 1

(83:1) Woe to the stinters; [1]

1. In the original the word mutaffifin has been used, which is derived from tatfif, a word used for an inferior and base thing in Arabic. Terminologically, tatfif is used for giving short weight and short measure fraudulently, for the person who acts thus while measuring or weighing, does not defraud another by any substantial amount, but skimps small amounts from what is due to every customer cleverly, and the poor customer does not know of what and of how much he is being deprived by the seller.

الَّذِیۡنَ اِذَا اکۡتَالُوۡا عَلَی النَّاسِ یَسۡتَوۡفُوۡنَ ۖ 2

(83:2) those who, when they take from others by measure, take their full share; [2]

2. At several places in the Quran, giving of short measure and weight has been condemned and measuring fully and weighing rightly has been stressed. In Surah Al-Anaam, it has been enjoined: You should use a full measure and a just balance. We charge one only with that much responsibility that one can bear. (verse 152). In Surah Bani Israil, it has been said: Give full measure when you measure and weigh with even scales. (verse 35). In Surah Ar-Rehman, it has been stressed: Do not upset the balance: weigh with equity and do not give short weight. (verses 8-9). The people of the Prophet Shuaib (peace be upon him) were punished for the reason that the evil of giving short measure and weight had become widespread among them and in spite of his counsel and advice they did not refrain from it.

وَاِذَا کَالُوۡہُمۡ اَوۡ وَّزَنُوۡہُمۡ یُخۡسِرُوۡنَ ؕ 3

(83:3) but who, when they measure or weigh for others, give less than their due.

اَلَا یَظُنُّ اُولٰٓئِکَ اَنَّہُمۡ مَّبۡعُوۡثُوۡنَ ۙ 4

(83:4) Do they not realise that they will be raised to life

لِيَوۡمٍ عَظِيۡمٍ ۙ 5

(83:5) on a Great Day, [3]

3. A Great Day: the Day of Resurrection when all men and jinn will be called to account together in the divine court and decisions of vital importance will be made pertaining to rewards and punishments.

يَّوۡمَ يَقُوۡمُ النَّاسُ لِرَبِّ الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ؕ 6

(83:6) a Day when mankind will stand before the Lord of the Universe?

كَلَّاۤ اِنَّ كِتٰبَ الۡفُجَّارِ لَفِىۡ سِجِّيۡنٍ ؕ 7

(83:7) No indeed![4] Verily the deeds of the wicked are in the Record locked up in the prison-house![5]

4. That is, these people are wrong in thinking that they will be let off without being called to account when they have committed such and such crimes in the world. .

5. The word sijjin in the original is derived from sijn (a prison) and the explanation of it that follows shows that it implies the general register in which the actions and deeds of the people worthy of punishment are being recorded.

وَمَاۤ اَدۡرٰىكَ مَا سِجِّيۡنٌ ؕ 8

(83:8) And how would you know what the Record of the prison-house is?

كِتٰبٌ مَّرۡقُوۡمٌ ؕ 9

(83:9) It is a Book inscribed.

وَيۡلٌ يَّوۡمَئِذٍ لِّلۡمُكَذِّبِيۡنَ ۙ 10

(83:10) Woe, then, to those that give the lie,

الَّذِيۡنَ يُكَذِّبُوۡنَ بِيَوۡمِ الدِّيۡنِ ؕ 11

(83:11) those that give the lie to the Day of Recompense.

وَمَا يُكَذِّبُ بِهٖٓ اِلَّا كُلُّ مُعْتَدٍ اَثِيْمٍ ۙ 12

(83:12) Yet none gives the lie to it except the transgressor immersed in sin;

اِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِ اٰيٰتُنَا قَالَ اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ؕ 13

(83:13) who, when Our verses are recited to him,[6] says: "Mere tales of olden times!"

6. Our verses: Those verses in which news of the Day of Recompense has been given.

كَلَّا بَلْ ۜ رَانَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ 14

(83:14) No indeed! The truth is that their hearts have become rusted on account of their evil deeds.[7]

7. That is, they have no good reason for regarding the meting out of rewards and punishments as unreal. What has made them say is this: Is it that their hearts have become rusty because of their sins; therefore, a thing which is thoroughly reasonable appears unreal and unreasonable to them. The explanation of this rust as given by the Prophet (peace be upon him) is as follows: When a servant commits a sin, it marks a black stain on his heart. If he offers repentance, the stain is washed off, but if he persists in wrongdoing, it spreads over the entire heart. (Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Nasai, Ibn Majah, Ibn Jarir, Hakim, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Hibban and others).

كَلَّآ اِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَّبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّمَحْجُوْبُوْنَ ؕ 15

(83:15) No indeed! On that Day they will be screened off from seeing their Lord,[8]

8. That is, these people will remain deprived of the vision of Allah with which the righteous will be blessed. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 17 of Surah Al -Qiyamah).

ثُمَّ اِنَّهُمْ لَصَالُوا الْجَحِيْمِ ؕ 16

(83:16) and then they shall enter Hell,

ثُمَّ يُقَالُ هٰذَا الَّذِيْ كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تُكَذِّبُوْنَ ؕ 17

(83:17) whereafter they will be told: "This is what you used to give the lie to."

كَلَّآ اِنَّ كِتٰبَ الْاَبْرَارِ لَفِيْ عِلِّيِّيْنَ ؕ 18

(83:18) No indeed![9] Verily, the deeds of the virtuous shall be in the record of the exalted ones.

9. That is, they are wrong in thinking that there is going to be no meting out of rewards and punishments.

وَمَآ أَدۡرَىٰكَ مَا عِلِّيُّونَ ١٩

(83:19) And what do you know what the Record of the exalted ones is?

كِتَٰبٞ مَّرۡقُومٞ ٢٠

(83:20) It is a Book inscribed,

يَشۡهَدُهُ ٱلۡمُقَرَّبُونَ ٢١

(83:21) which the angels placed near Allah to safeguard.

إِنَّ ٱلۡأَبۡرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ ٢٢

(83:22) Verily the virtuous shall be in Bliss;

عَلَى ٱلۡأَرَآئِكِ يَنظُرُونَ ٢٣

(83:23) resting on couches, looking around.

تَعۡرِفُ فِي وُجُوهِهِمۡ نَضۡرَةَ ٱلنَّعِيمِ ٢٤

(83:24) You shall see upon their faces the glow of bliss.

يُسۡقَوۡنَ مِن رَّحِيقٖ مَّخۡتُومٍ ٢٥

(83:25) They will be served a drink of the finest sealed wine,[10]

10. One meaning of the words khtamu-hu-misk is that the vessels containing the wine will carry the seal of musk instead of clay or wax. Accordingly the verse means: This will be the choicest kind of wine, which will be superior to the wine flowing in the canals, and it will be served by the attendants of Paradise in vessels sealed with musk to the dwellers of Paradise. Another meaning can also be: When that wine will pass down the throat, its final effect will be of the flavor of musk. This state is contrary to the wines of the world which give out an offensive smell as soon as the bottle opens and one feels its horrid smell even while drinking and also when it passes down the throat.

خِتٰمُهٗ مِسۡكٌ ؕ وَفِىۡ ذٰلِكَ فَلۡيَتَنَافَسِ الۡمُتَنَافِسُوۡنَ ؕ 26

(83:26) whose seal is musk – so let all aspirants aspire after that –

وَمِزَاجُهٗ مِنۡ تَسۡنِيۡمٍ ۙ 27

(83:27) a wine whose mixture is Tasnim,[11]

11. Tasneem means height. Thus, Tasnim will be a fountain flowing down from a height.

عَيۡنًا يَّشۡرَبُ بِهَا الۡمُقَرَّبُوۡنَ ؕ 28

(83:28) a fountain at which the chosen ones shall drink.

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ اَجۡرَمُوۡا كَانُوۡا مِنَ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا يَضۡحَكُوۡنَ ۘ 29 صلے

(83:29) Behold, the wicked were wont to laugh at the believers:

وَاِذَا مَرُّوۡا بِهِمۡ يَتَغَامَزُوۡنَ ۘ 30 صلے

(83:30) when they passed by them they winked,

وَاِذَا انۡقَلَبُوۡۤا اِلٰٓى اَهۡلِهِمُ انۡقَلَبُوۡا فَكِهِيۡنَ ۘ 31 صلے

(83:31) and when they went back to their families, they went back jesting,[12]

12. That is, they returned home rejoicing, thinking that they had made fun of such and such a Muslim, had passed evil remarks against him and subjected him to ridicule among the people.

وَاِذَا رَاَوۡهُمۡ قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ لَضَآلُّوۡنَ ۙ 32

(83:32) and when they saw the believers, they said: “Lo! These are the erring ones”;[13]

13. That is, they have lost their reason. They have deprived themselves of the gains and enjoyments of the world and have experienced dangers and undergone hardships only for the reason that Muhammad (peace be upon him) has deluded them with the Hereafter, Heaven and Hell. They are giving up whatever is present here on the false hope that the promise of some Paradise has been held out to them after death, and they are enduring the hardships in the present life only for the reason that they have been threatened with some Hell in the next world.

وَمَآ أُرۡسِلُواْ عَلَيۡهِمۡ حَٰفِظِينَ ٣٣

(83:33) (they said so although) they had not been appointed watchers over them.[14]

14. In this brief sentence the mockers and jesters have been given an instructive warning to the effect: Even if what the Muslims have believed in, is false, they are not harming you at all. They regard something as true, and are accordingly adopting a certain moral attitude for themselves, for their own good. Allah has not appointed you to be keepers over them so that you may be free to criticize and persecute those who are not harming you in any way.

فَٱلۡيَوۡمَ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ مِنَ ٱلۡكُفَّارِ يَضۡحَكُونَ ٣٤

(83:34) But today the believers are laughing at the unbelievers;

عَلَى ٱلۡأَرَآئِكِ يَنظُرُونَ ٣٥

(83:35) seated upon their couches, they are looking around.

هَلۡ ثُوِّبَ ٱلۡكُفَّارُ مَا كَانُواْ يَفۡعَلُونَ ٣٦

(83:36) Have the unbelievers been duly rewarded for their deeds?[15]

15. There is a subtle satire in this sentence. In the world, the disbelievers used to persecute the believers, thinking it was an act of virtue. In the Hereafter, the believers will be enjoying life in Paradise, and watching the disbelievers being punished in Hell. They will say to themselves: What a reward they have earned for their acts of virtue.

84. Surah Inshiqaq (The Splitting)

Name

It is derived from the word inshaqqat in the first verse. Inshaqqat is infinitive which means to split asunder, thereby implying that it is the Surah in which mention has been made of the splitting asunder of the heavens.

Period of Revelation

This too is one of the earliest Surahs to be revealed at Makkah. The internal evidence of its subject matter indicates that persecution of the Muslims had not yet started; however, the message of the Qur'an was being openly repudiated at Makkah and the people were refusing to acknowledge that Resurrection would ever take place when they would have to appear before their God to render an account of their deeds.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is the Resurrection and Hereafter.

In the first five verses not only have the state of Resurrection been described vividly but an argument of its being true and certain also have been given. It has been stated that the heavens on that Day will split asunder, the earth will be spread out plain and smooth, and it will throw out whatever lies inside it of the dead bodies of men and evidences of their deeds so as to become completely empty from within. The argument given for it is that such will be the Command of their Lord for the heavens and the earth; since both are His creation. they cannot dare disobey His Command. For them the only right and proper course is that they should obey the Command of their Lord.

Then, in vv 6-19 it has been said that whether man Is conscious of this fact or not, he in any case is moving willy nilly to the destination when he will appear and stand before his Lord. At that time all human beings will divide into two parts: first those whose records will be given in their right hands: they will be forgiven without any severe reckoning; second those whose records will be given them behind their back. They will wish that they should die somehow, but they will not die; instead they will be cast into Hell. They will meet with this fate because in the world they remained lost in the misunderstanding that they would never have to appear before God to render an account of their deeds, whereas their Lord was watching whatever they were doing, and there was no reason why they should escape the accountability for their deeds. Their moving gradual]y from the life of the world to the meting out of rewards and punishments in the Hereafter was as certain as the appearance of twilight after sunset, the coming of the night after the day, the returning of men and animals to their respective abodes at night, and the growing of the crescent into full moon.

In conclusion, the disbelievers who repudiate the Qur'an instead of bowing down to God when they hear it, have been forewarned of a grievous punishment and the good news of limitless rewards has been given to the believers and the righteous.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اِذَا السَّمَآءُ انۡشَقَّتۡ ۙ 1

(84:1) When the sky is rent asunder

وَاَذِنَتۡ لِرَبِّہَا وَحُقَّتۡ ۙ 2

(84:2) and hearkens to the command[1] of its Lord, doing what it should;

1. Literally: And listens its Lord's command. However, according to Arabic usage adhina lahu does not only mean: He heard the command but it means: Hearing the command he carried it out promptly like an obedient servant.

وَاِذَا الۡاَرۡضُ مُدَّتۡ ۙ 3

(84:3) and when the earth is stretched out[2]

2. When the earth is stretched out: when the oceans and rivers are filled up, the mountains are crushed to pieces and scattered away, and the earth is leveled and turned into a smooth plain. In Surah TaHa, the same thing has been expressed, thus: He will turn the earth into an empty level plain, wherein you will neither see any curve nor crease. (verses 106-107). Hakim in Mustadrak has related through authentic channels on the authority of Jabir bin Abdullah a saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to the effect: On the Resurrection Day the earth will be flattened out and spread out like the table-cloth; then there will hardly be room on it for men to place their feet. To understand this saying one should keep in mind the fact that on that Day all men who will have been born from the first day of creation till Resurrection, will be resurrected simultaneously and produced in the divine court. For gathering together such a great multitude of the people it is inevitable that the oceans, rivers, mountains, jungles, ravines and all high and low areas be leveled and the entire globe of the earth be turned into a vast plain so that all individuals of human race may have room on it to stand on their feet.

وَاَلۡقَتۡ مَا فِیۡہَا وَتَخَلَّتۡ ۙ 4

(84:4) and casts out what is within it and is emptied,[3]

3. That is, it will throw out all dead bodies of men and also the traces and evidences of their deeds lying within it, so that nothing remains hidden and buried in it.

وَاَذِنَتۡ لِرَبِّہَا وَحُقَّتۡ ۙ 5

(84:5) and hearkens to the command of its Lord, doing what it should.[4]

4. Here, it has not been expressly told what will happen when such and such an event takes place, for the subsequent theme by itself explains this, as if to say: O man, you are moving towards your Lord and are about to meet Him; you will be given your conduct book; and rewarded or punished according to your deeds."

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلۡإِنسَٰنُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدۡحٗا فَمُلَٰقِيهِ ۚ 6

(84:6) O man, you are striving unto your Lord[5] and you will meet Him.

5. That is, "You may if you so like think that all your efforts and endeavors in the world are confined to worldly life and motivated by worldly desires, yet the truth is that you are moving, consciously or unconsciously, towards your Lord and you have ultimately to appear before Him in any case.

فَأَمَّا مَنۡ أُوتِيَ كِتَٰبَهُۥ بِيَمِينِهِۦ ۙ 7

(84:7) Whoever is given the Record in his right hand

فَسَوۡفَ يُحَاسَبُ حِسَابٗا يَسِيرٗا ۙ 8

(84:8) shall be called to an easy accounting,[6]

6. That is, his reckoning will be less severe. He will not be asked why he had done such and such a thing and what excuses he had to offer for it. Though his evil deeds will also be there along with his good deeds in his records, his errors will be overlooked and pardoned in view of his outweighing good deeds. In the Quran, for the severe reckoning of the wicked people the words su-al-hisab (heavy reckoning) have been used (Surah Ar-Raad, Ayat 181), and concerning the righteous it has been said: From such people, We accept the best of their deeds and overlook their evils. (Surah Al- Ahqaf, Ayat 16). The explanation of it given by the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been related in different words by Imam Ahmad Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Nasai, Abu Daud, Hakim, Ibn Jarir, Abd bin Humaid, and Ibn Marduyah on the authority of Aishah. According to one of these traditions the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Doomed will be he who is called to account for his deeds. Aishah said: O Messenger of Allah, has not Allah said: He whose record is given in his right hand shall have an easy reckoning? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: That is only about the presentation of the deeds, but the one who is questioned would be doomed. In another tradition Aishah has related: I once heard the Prophet (peace be upon him) supplicate during the prayer, thus: O God, call me to a light reckoning. When he brought his Prayer to conclusion, I asked what he meant by that supplication. He replied: Light reckoning means that one's conduct book will be seen and one's errors will be overlooked. O Aishah, the one who is called to account for his deeds on that Day, would be doomed.

وَّيَنۡقَلِبُ اِلٰٓى اَهۡلِهٖ مَسۡرُوۡرًا ؕ 9

(84:9) and shall return to his people joyfully.[7]

7. His kinsfolk: his family and relatives and companions who will have been pardoned even like himself.

وَاَمَّا مَنۡ اُوۡتِىَ كِتٰبَهٗ وَرَآءَ ظَهۡرِهٖ ۙ 10

(84:10) But he who is given the Record behind his back,[8]

8. In(Surah Al-Haaqqah, Ayat 25), it was said that his record will be given to him in his left hand but here behind his back. This will probably be for the reason that he would already have lost all hopes that he would be given his record in his right hand, for he would be well aware of his misdeeds and sure to receive his record in his left hand. However, in order to avoid the humiliation of receiving it in the left hand, in front of all mankind, he will withdraw his hand behind and so would receive it behind his back.

فَسَوۡفَ يَدۡعُوۡا ثُبُوۡرًا ۙ 11

(84:11) shall cry for "perdition,"

وَّيَصۡلٰى سَعِيۡرًا ؕ 12

(84:12) and will enter the Blazing Fire.

اِنَّهٗ كَانَ فِىۡۤ اَهۡلِهٖ مَسۡرُوۡرًا ؕ 13

(84:13) He used to live joyfully among his people,[9]

9. That is, his way of life was different from that of God's righteous men, about whom in(Surah At-Toor, Ayat 26), it has been said that they lived among their kinsfolk in fear and dread of God, i.e. they fear lest they should ruin their own Hereafter on account of their absorption in the love of children and endeavors for the sake of their well-being and prosperity in the world. On the contrary, this man lived a life free from every care and worry and also helped his children and kinsfolk to enjoy life fully, no matter what wicked and immoral methods he had to use to procure the means of enjoyment, how he had to usurp the rights of others and transgress the bounds set by Allah for the sake of the worldly pleasures.

اِنَّهٗ ظَنَّ اَنۡ لَّنۡ يَّحُوۡرَ ۚ 14

(84:14) thinking he would never revert (to Us).

بَلٰٓى ۚ اِنَّ رَبَّهٗ كَانَ بِهٖ بَصِيْرًا ۝15

(84:15) But no; (how would he not revert)? His Lord was ever watching him.[10]

10. That is, it was against God's justice and His wisdom that He should overlook the misdeeds that he was committing and should not summon him before Himself to render his account of the deeds.

فَلَآ اُقْسِمُ بِالشَّفَقِ ۙ ۝16

(84:16) Nay; I swear by the twilight;

وَالَّيْلِ وَمَا وَسَقَ ۙ ۝17

(84:17) and by the night and what it enfolds,

وَالْقَمَرِ اِذَا اتَّسَقَ ۙ ۝18

(84:18) and by the moon, when it reaches its fullness:

لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَنْ طَبَقٍ ۭ ۝19

(84:19) you shall proceed onwards from stage to stage.[11]

11. That is, you will not remain in one and the same state, but will have to pass through countless stages gradually, from youth to old age, from old age to death, from death to barzakh (the intermediary state between death and Resurrection), from barzakh to Resurrection, from Resurrection to the Plain of Assembly, then to the Reckoning, and then to the meting out of rewards and punishments. An oath has been sworn by three things to confine this:

(1) By the twilight.

(2) By the darkness of night and the gathering together in it of all those human beings and animals who remain scattered in the day time.

(3) By the moon's passing through different phases to become full. These are some of those things which testify that rest and stillness is unknown in the universe in which man lives. There is a continuous and gradual change taking place everywhere. Therefore, the disbelievers are wrong in thinking that life comes to an end after man has breathed his last.

فَمَا لَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ۙ 20

(84:20) So, what is the matter with them that they do not believe,

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقُرْآنُ لَا يَسْجُدُونَ ۩ ۝ 21

(84:21) and when the Qur'an is recited to them, they do not prostrate[12] themselves?

12. They do not fall prostrate: they do not bow down to God out of fear of Him. To perform a sajdah (prostration) here is confirmed by the practice of the Prophet (peace be upon him). lmam Malik, Muslim and Nasai have related a tradition concerning Abu Huraira saying that he recited this Surah in the Prayer and performing a sajdah here and said: The Prophet (peace be upon him) performed a sajdah at this point. Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud and Nasai have cited this statement of Abu Rafi: Abu Huraira recited this Surah in the Isha Prayer and performed a sajdah. When I asked why he had done so, he replied: I prayed under the leadership of Abul Qasim (peace be upon him) and he performed a sajdah here. Therefore, I will continue to perform this sajdah likewise as long as I live. Muslim, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Nasai, Ibn Majah and others have related another tradition saying that Abu Huraira said: We performed sajdah behind the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah in this Surah and in Iqra bi-ismi Rabbikalladhi khalaq.

بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُكَذِّبُونَ ۝ 22

(84:22) Instead, the unbelievers reject it, calling it a lie.

وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يُوعُونَ ۝ 23

(84:23) Allah knows best what they are accumulating (in their Record).[13]

13. Another meaning can also be: Allah knows best what disbelief, malice, hostility to the truth and evil intentions and designs they keep in their breasts.

فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ۙ 24

(84:24) So give them the good news of a painful chastisement,

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ ۝ 25

(84:25) except for those who believe and do good deeds. Theirs shall be an unending reward.

85. Surah Al Burooj (The Constellations)

Name

The Surah is so designated after the word al buruj appearing in the first verse.

Period of Revelation

The subject matter itself indicates that this Surah was sent down at Makkah in the period when persecution of the Muslims was at its climax and the disbelievers of Makkah were trying their utmost by tyranny and coercion to turn away the new converts from Islam.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is to warn the disbelievers of the evil consequences of the persecution and tyranny that they were perpetrating on the converts to Islam, and to console the believers, so as to say: "If you remain firm and steadfast against tyranny and coercion, you will be rewarded richly for it, and Allah will certainly avenge Himself on your persecutors on your behalf."

In this connection, first of all the story of the people of the ditch (ashab al-ukhdud) had been related, who had burnt the believers to death by casting them into pits full of fire. By means of this story the believers and the disbelievers have been taught a few lessons. First, that just as the people of the ditch became worthy of Allah's curse and punishment, so are the chiefs of Makkah also becoming worthy of it. Second, that just as the believers at that time had willingly accepted to sacrifice their lives by being burnt to death in the pits of fire instead of turning away from the faith, so also the believers now should endure every persecution but should never give up the faith. Third, that Gods acknowledging Whom displeases the disbelievers and is urged on by the believers, is Dominant and Master of the Kingdom of the earth and heavens; He is self-praiseworthy and is watching what the two groups are striving for. Therefore, it is certain that the disbelievers will not only be punished in Hell for their disbelief but, more than that, they too will suffer punishment by fire as a fit recompense for their tyranny and cruelties. Likewise, this also is certain that those, who believe and follow up their belief with good deeds, should go to Paradise and this indeed is the supreme success. Then the disbelievers have been warned, so as to say: "God's grip is very severe. If you are proud of the strength of your hosts, you should know that the hosts of Pharaoh and Thamud were even stronger and more numerous. Therefore, you should learn a lesson from the fate they met. God's power has so encompassed you that you cannot escape His encirclement, and the Qur'an that you are bent upon belying, is unchangeable: it is inscribed in the Preserved Tablet, which cannot be corrupted in any way."

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

وَالسَّمَآءِ ذَاتِ الْبُرُوْجِ ۙ 1

(85:1) By the heaven with its impregnable castles;[1]

1. Literally: By the heaven having constellations. Some of the commentators have interpreted it to mean the twelve signs of the zodiac in the heavens according to ancient astronomy, However, according to Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, Qatadah, Hasan Basri, Dahhak and Suddi it implies the glorious stars and planets of the sky.

وَالْيَوْمِ الْمَوْعُوْدِ ۙ 2

(85:2) by the Promised Day,[2]

2. That is, the Day of Resurrection.

وَشَاهِدٍ وَّمَشْهُوْدٍ ؕ 3

(85:3) and by the witness and what is witnessed:[3]

3. The commentators have expressed many different views about "the witness" and "that which is witnessed". In our opinion what fits in well with the context is that it is every such person who will witness the Day of Resurrection, and that which is witnessed is the Resurrection itself, the dreadful scenes of which will be seen by all. This is the view of Mujahid. Ikrimah, Dahhak, lbn Nujaih and some other commentators.

قُتِلَ اَصْحٰبُ الْاُخْدُوْدِ ۙ 4

(85:4) the people of the pit were destroyed

النَّارِ ذَاتِ الْوَقُوْدِ ۙ 5

(85:5) with fire abounding in fuel,

اِذْ هُمْ عَلَيْهَا قُعُوْدٌ ۙ 6

(85:6) while they sat around it,

وَّهُمْ عَلٰى مَا يَفْعَلُوْنَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ شُهُوْدٌ ؕ 7

(85:7) and were witnessing what they did to the believers.[4]

4. The people of the ditch were those who had burnt the believers at stake and witnessed their burning themselves. Destroyed were: Cursed were they by God and they became worthy of Hell torment. On this an oath has been sworn by three things:

(1) By the heaven having constellations.

(2) By the Day of Resurrection which has been promised.

(3) By the dreadful scenes of the Day of Resurrection and all those creatures who will witness those scenes.

The first of these testifies to the truth that the Sovereign, Absolute Being Who is ruling over the glorious stars and planets of the universe, cannot allow this contemptible, insignificant creature called man to escape His grip. The second thing has been sworn by on the basis that the wicked people committed whatever tyranny they wanted to commit, but the Day of which men have been fore-warned is sure to come when the grievances of every wronged person will be redressed and every wrongdoer will be brought to book and punished. The third thing has been sworn by for the reason that just as these wicked people enjoyed witnessing the burning of the helpless believers, so will all human beings on the Day of Resurrection witness how they are taken to task and burnt in Hell.

Several events have been mentioned in the traditions of the believers having been thrown into pits of blazing fire, which show that such tyrannies have been inflicted many a time in history.

One of the events has been reported by Suhaib Rumi from the Prophet (peace be upon him), saying that a king had a magician at his court who on becoming old requested the king to appoint a boy who should learn magic from him. Accordingly, the king appointed a boy. But the boy while going to the magician's place and coming back home also started visiting on the way a monk, who was probably a follower of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), and being influenced by his teaching turned to a believer. So much so that by his training he acquired miraculous powers. He would heal the blind and cure the lepers. When the king came to know that the boy had believed in the Unity of God, he first put the monk to the sword; then wanted to kill the boy, but no instrument and no device had any effect on him. At last, the boy said to the king: If you are bent upon killing me, shoot an arrow at me with the word: Bi-ismi Rabbil-ghulam (in the name of this boy's Lord) in front of the assembled people, and I shall die. The king did as he was told and the boy died. There upon the people cried out that they affirmed faith in the Lord of the boy. The courtiers told the king that the same precisely had happened which he wanted to avoid: the people had forsaken his religion and adopted the boy's religion. At this the king was filled with rage. Consequently, he got pits dug out along the roads, got them filled with fire and ordered all those who refused to renounce the new faith to be thrown into the fire. (Ahmad, Muslim. Nasai, Tirmidhi, Ibn Jarir. Abdur Razzaq. Ibn Abi Shaibah, Tabarani. Abd bin Humaid).

The second event has been reported from Ali. He says that a king of lran drank wine and committed adultery with his sister resulting in illicit relations between the two. When the secret became known, the king got the announcement made that God had permitted marriage with the sister. When the people refused to believe in it, he started coercing them into accepting by different kinds of punishment; so much so that he began to cast into the pits of fire every such person who refused to concede it. According to Ali, marriage with the prohibited relations among the fireworshippers has begun since then. (Ibn Jarir).

The third event has been related by lbn Abbas, probably on the basis of the Israelite traditions, saying that the people of Babylon had compelled the children of Israel to give up

the religion of the Prophet Moses (peace he upon him), so much so that they cast into pits of fire all those who refused to obey. (Ibn Jarir, Abd bin Humaid).

The best known event, however, relates to Najran, which has been related by Ibn Hisham, Tabari, Ibn Khaldun, the author of Mujam al-Buldan and other Islamic historians. Its resume is as follows: Tuban Asad Abu Karib, king of Himyar (Yaman), went to Yathrib once, where he embraced Judaism under the influence of the Jews, and brought two of the Jewish scholars of Bani Quraizah with him to Yaman. There he propagated Judaism widely. His son Dhu Nuwas succeeded him and he attacked Najran which was a stronghold of the Christians in southern Arabia so as to eliminate Christianity and make the people accept Judaism. Ibn Hisham says that these people were true followers of the Gospel of the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him). In Najran, he invited the people to accept Judaism but they refused to obey. Thereupon he caused a large number of the people to be burnt in the ditches of fire and slew many others with the sword until he had killed nearly twenty thousand of them. Daus Dhu Thalaban an inhabitant of Najran escaped and went, according to one tradition, to the Byzantine emperor, and according to another to the Negus, king of Abyssinia, and told him what had happened.

According to the first tradition, the emperor wrote to the king of Abyssinia, and according to the second, the Negus requested the emperor to provide him with a naval force. In any case; an Abyssinian army consisting of seventy thousand soldiers under a general called Aryat, attacked Yaman, Dhu Nuwas was killed, the Jewish rule came to an end, and Yaman become a part of the Christian kingdom of Abyssinia.

The statements of the Islamic historians are not only confirmed by other historical means but they also give many more details. Yaman first came under the Christian Abyssinian domination in 340 A.D. and this domination continued till 378 A.D. The Christian missionaries started entering Yaman in that period. About the same time, a man named Faymiyun (Phemion), who was a righteous, earnest, ascetic man and possessed miraculous powers, arrived in Yaman and by his preaching against idol-worship converted the people of Najran to Christianity. These people were ruled by three chiefs: Sayyid, who was the principal chief like the tribal elders and responsible for external affairs, political agreements and command of the forces, Aqib, who looked after the internal affairs and Usquf (Bishop), the religious guide. In southern Arabia Najran commanded great importance, being a major trade and industrial center with tussore, leather and the armament industries. The well-known Yamanite wrapper and cloak (hulla Yamani) was also manufactured here. On this very basis, Dhu Nuwas attacked this important place not only for religious but also for political and economic reasons. Dhu Nuwas put to death Harithah (called Arethas by the Syrian historians), killed Sayyid of Najrain and also killed his two daughters in front of their mother Romah and compelled her to drink their blood and then put even her to death. He took out the bones of Bishop Paul from the grave and burnt them, and ordered women, men, children, aged people, priests and monks, all to be thrown into the pits of fire. The total number of the people thus killed has been estimated between twenty and forty thousand. This happened in October, 523 A.D. At last, in 525 A.D. the Abyssinians attacked Yaman and put an end to Dhu Nuwas and his Himyarite kingdom. This is confirmed by the Hisn Ghurab inscription which the modern archaeologists have unearthed in Yaman.

In several Christian writings of the 6th century A.D. details of the event relating to the "people of the ditch" have been given, some of which are contemporary and reported from eye-witnesses. Authors of three of these books were contemporaries with the event. They were Procopeus, Cosmos Indicopleustis, who was translating Greek book of Ptolemy under command of the Negus Elesboan at that time and resided at Adolis, a city on the sea-coast of Abyssinia, and Johannes Malala from whom several of the later historians have related this event. After this, Johannes of Ephesus (dated 585 A.D) has related the story of the persecution of the Christians of Najran in his history of the Church from a letter of Bishop Mar Simeon who was a contemporary reporter of this event. Mar Simeon wrote this letter to Abbot von Gabula; in it Simeon has reported this event with reference to the statements of the Yamanite eye-witnesses present on the occasion. This letter was published in 1881 A.D. from Rome and in 1890 A.D. in the memoirs of the martyrs of Christianity Jacobian Patriarch. Dionysius and Zacharia of Mitylene have in their Syriac histories also related this event. Yaqub Saruji also in his book about the Christians of Najran has made mention of it. Bishop Pulus of Edessa's elegy on those who perished in Najran, is still extant. An English translation of the Syriac kitab al-Himyarin (Book of the Himyarites) was published in 1924 from London, which confirms the statements of the Muslim historians. In the British Museum there are some Abyssinian manuscripts relating to that period or a period close to it, which support this story. Philby in his travelogue entitled Arabian Highlands, writes: Among the people of Najran the place is still well known where the event of the people of the ditch (ashab al-ukhdud) had taken place. Close by Umm Kharaq there can still be seen some pictures carved in the rocks, and the present day people of Najran also know the place where the cathedral of Najran stood.

The Abyssinian Christians after capturing Najran had built a church here resembling the Kabah, by which they wanted to divert pilgrimage from the Kabah at Makkah to it. Its priests and keepers wore turbans and regarded it as a sacred sanctuary. The Roman empire also sent monetary aid for this "kabah". The priests of this very "kabah" of Najran had visited the Prophet (peace be upon him) under the leadership of their Sayyid, Aqib and Bishop for a discussion with him and the famous event of the mubahala (trial through prayer) took place as referred to in (Surah Al-Imran, Ayat 61). (For details. see (E.Ns 29 and 55 of Surah Al-Imran).

وَمَا نَقَمُوْا مِنْهُمْ اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّؤْمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَمِيْدِ ۙ 8

(85:8) Against these they had no grudge except that they believed in Allah, the Most Mighty, the Most Praiseworthy,

الَّذِيْ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيْدٌ ۭ 9

(85:9) to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. Allah witnesses everything.[5]

5. In these verses those of Allah Almighty's attributes have been mentioned on account of which He alone deserves that one should believe in Him, and the people who feel displeased at one's believing in Him, are wicked and unjust. 1

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَتَنُوا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتُوبُوا فَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ الْحَرِيقِ ۝10

(85:10) Surely those who tormented the believing men and the believing women and then did not repent, theirs shall be the chastisement of Hell, and theirs shall be the chastisement of burning.[6]

6. Punishment of burning has been mentioned separately from the torment of Hell because they had burnt the oppressed people to death by casting them into the pits of fire. Probably this will be a different and severer kind of fire from the fire of Hell in which those people will be burnt.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْكَبِيرُ ۝11

(85:11) As for those who believed and acted righteously, theirs shall be Gardens beneath which rivers flow. That is the great triumph.

إِنَّ بَطْشَ رَبِّكَ لَشَدِيدٌ ۝12

(85:12) Stern indeed is your Lord's punishment.

إِنَّهُ هُوَ يُبْدِئُ وَيُعِيدُ ۝13

(85:13) He it is Who creates for the first time and He it is Who will create again,

وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الْوَدُودُ ۝14

(85:14) and He is the Ever Forgiving, the Most Loving

ذُو الْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيدُ ۝15

(85:15) – the Lord of the Glorious Throne,

فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ ۝16

(85:16) the Executor of what He wills.[7]

7. He is the All-Forgiving: If a person repents and reforms himself, he can hope to be received by Allah in His mercy. All-Loving: He has no enmity with His creatures that He would subject them to torment without any reason, but He loves the creatures He has created and punishes them only when they do not give up the attitude of rebellion against Him. Owner of the Throne, means that He alone is the Ruler of the kingdom of the universe: no one who is a rebel can escape His grip and punishment. The mention of His being Exalted is meant to warn man for his meanness when he adopts an attitude of arrogance against such a Being. Last of all, "He is Doer of whatever He intends: no one in the entire universe has the power to obstruct and resist what Allah wills to do.

هَلۡ اَتٰىكَ حَدِيۡثُ الۡجُنُوۡدِ ۙ 17

(85:17) Has the story of the armies reached you,

فِرۡعَوۡنَ وَثَمُوۡدَ ؕ 18

(85:18) the armies of Pharaoh and Thamud?[8]

8. The address is directed to the people who in their false pride of having powerful hosts, are breaking the law of God on His earth. They are being warned, as if to say: Do you know what evil fate was met before by those who broke the bounds set by Allah on the strength of the power of their hosts.

بَلِ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا فِىۡ تَكۡذِيۡبٍ ۙ 19

(85:19) The unbelievers are indeed engaged in denying it, calling it a lie,

وَّاللّٰهُ مِنۡ وَّرَآئِهِمۡ مُّحِيۡطٌ ۚ 20

(85:20) although Allah surrounds them.

بَلۡ هُوَ قُرۡاٰنٌ مَّجِيۡدٌ ۙ 21

(85:21) Nay; but this is a glorious Qur'an,

فِىۡ لَوۡحٍ مَّحۡفُوۡظٍ ع 22

(85:22) inscribed on a well-guarded Tablet.[9]

9. That is, the writ of the Quran is unchangeable and imperishable. It is inscribed in the guarded tablet of God, which cannot he corrupted in any way. Whatever is written in it has to be fulfilled: even the whole world together cannot avert its fulfillment.

86. Surah Al Tariq (The Morning Star)

Name

The Surah taken its name from the word at-tariq in its first verse.

Period of Revelation

The style of its subject matter resembles that of the earliest Surahs revealed at Makkah, but this surah was sent down at a stage when the disbelievers of Makkah were employing all sorts of devices and plans to defeat and frustrate the message of the Qur'an and Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings).

Theme and Subject Matter

It discuses two themes: first that man has to appear before God after death; second, that the Qur'an is a decisive Word which no plan or device of the disbelievers can defeat or frustrate.

First of all, the stars of the heavens have been cited as an evidence that there is nothing in the universe which may continue to exist and survive without guardian over it. Then man has been asked to consider his own self as to how he has been brought into existence from a mere sperm drop and shaped into a living human being. Then it has been said that the God, Who has so brought him into existence, has certainly the power to create him once again, and this resurrection will be for the purpose to subject to scrutiny all the secrets of man which remained hidden in the world. At that time, man will neither be able to escape the consequences of his deeds by his own power, nor will anyone else come to his rescue.

In conclusion, it has been pointed out that just as the falling of rain from the sky and the sprouting of plants and crops from the earth is no child's play but a serious task, so also the truths expressed in the Qur'an are no jest but a firm and unchangeable reality. The disbelievers are involved in the misunderstanding that their plans and devices will defeat the invitation of the Qur'an, but they do not know that Allah too is devising a plan which will bring to naught all their scheming and planning. Than in one sentence the discourse has been summed up, with a word of consolation to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) and a tacit warning to the disbelievers, saying: "Have patience for a while: let the disbelievers do their worst. Before long they will themselves realize whether they have been able to defeat the Qur'an by their scheming or the Qur'an has dominated them in the very place where they are exerting their utmost to defeat it."

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

وَالسَّمَآءِ وَالطَّارِقِ ۙ 1

(86:1) By the heaven, and the night-visitor,

وَمَآ أَدۡرَىٰكَ مَا ٱلطَّارِقُ ۙ 2

(86:2) what do you know what the night-visitor is?

ٱلنَّجۡمُ ٱلثَّاقِبُ ۙ 3

(86:3) It is the piercing star.

إِن كُلُّ نَفۡسٖ لَّمَّا عَلَيۡهَا حَافِظٞ ۖ 4

(86:4) There is no living being but there is a protector over it.[1]

1. A Guardian: Allah Almighty Himself, who is looking after and watching over every creature, big or small, in the earth and heavens. He it is who has brought everything into existence, who is maintaining and sustaining everything in its place and position, and who has taken the responsibility to provide for every creature and to protect it from calamities till an appointed time. On this, an oath has been sworn by the heaven and by every star and planet which appears in the darkness of the night. (Although lexically, an-najm ath-thaqib is singular, it does not imply any one star but the star in the generic sense). The oath signifies that the existence of each star (among the countless stars and planets that shine in the sky at night) testifies to the fact that there is a Being who has created it, illuminated it, suspended it in space, and thus is watching over it in a manner that neither it falls from its place nor collides with any other of the countless stars in their movements, nor does any other star collide with it.

فَلۡيَنظُرِ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنُ مِمَّ خُلِقَ ۖ 5

(86:5) So let man consider of what he was created.[2]

2. After inviting man to ponder over the heavens, he is now being invited to consider his own self and see how he has been created, who is it who selects one spermatozoon from among billions of spermatozoa emitted by the father and combines it at some time with one ovum out of a large number of the ova produced by the mother, and thus causes a particular human being to be conceived? Then, who is it who after conception develops it gradually in the mother's womb until it is delivered in the form of a living child? Then, who is it who in the mother's womb itself brings about a certain proportion and harmony between its bodily structure and its physical and mental capabilities? Then, who is it who watches over it continuously from birth till death, protects it from disease, accidents and calamities and provides him with countless means of life and opportunities for survival in the world of which he is not even conscious, not to speak of having the power to provide these for himself. Is all this happening without the planning and supervision of One God?

خُلِقَ مِن مَّآءٍ دَافِقٍ ۙ 6

(86:6) He was created of a gushing fluid,

يَّخۡرُجُ مِنۢ بَيۡنِ الصُّلۡبِ وَالتَّرَآئِبِ ؕ 7

(86:7) emanating from between the loins and the ribs.[3]

3. "A fluid gushing forth" means ejaculation of semen (maain) carrying the sperm (nutfa), one of the minute, usually actively motile gametes-a mature male reproductive cell in semen, which serves to fertilize the female ovum. Sperms are produced by testes. Each testes has 800 small tubules and each tube about 2 feet long, semeniferous tubules which produce sperms about 200-300 million every day. There are 2 valves around urethra. Both are tightly closed to hold and store semen before its expulsion. The inner valve stays tightly closed to prevent backward ejaculation into the urinary bladder and the outer valve intermittently contracts and relaxes 3-7 times along with surrounding muscles contraction to generate force for propelling the semen out (dafiqin). (Ref. Spinal Cord Medicine, Demos Medical Publishing Inc. New York USA, Chapter 26, Page 354).

اِنَّهٗ عَلٰى رَجۡعِهٖ لَقَادِرٌ ؕ 8

(86:8) Surely He (the Creator) has the power to bring him back (to life).[4]

4. Sulb is the backbone (vertebral column) and taraib the ribs. There are 12 pairs of ribs. Of them, 7 pairs are called true ribs as each of them is attached between the vertebra (backbone) and the sternum (breast bone), and the remaining 5 are called false ribs as they are also attached to the vertebral column but not to sternum. Ejaculation is a highly complex process which requires smooth coordination of multiple sections of the nervous system. Mechanism of emission and propulsions is caused by 2 spinal cord centers. The spinal cord is 43-45 cm long and is continuation of brain tissue and occupies its place in the center of upper spinal bony vertebral column. It is the proper functioning, integrity and continuity of these 2 spinal cord centers located between vertebrae (sulb) and ribs (taraib) connecting spinal cord and sex organs along with the valves around urethra by the nerves which are responsible for ejaculation. (Ref. Spinal Cord Medicine, Demos Medical Publishing Inc. New York USA, Chapter 2, Page 16).

يَوۡمَ تُبۡلَى السَّرَآئِرُ ۙ 9

(86:9) On the Day when man's deepest secrets shall be put to the test[5]

5. That is, His bringing man into existence and watching over him from the time conception takes place until death, is a clear proof that He can create him once again after death. If He had the power to create him in the first instance and man stays alive in the world by His power alone, what rational arguments can be presented for the conjecture that He does not

have the power to do the same thing a second time? To deny this power man will even have to deny that God has brought him into existence, and the one who denies this may well come out one day with the claim that all books in the world have been printed accidentally, all cities of the world have been built accidentally, and there has occurred on the earth an explosion by chance which made all the factories start functioning automatically. The fact is that the creation of man, the structure of his body, the existence of the powers and capabilities working within him, and his survival as a living being all this is a much more complex process than all those works that have come to be accomplished through man, or are still in the process of being accomplished. If such a complex work with such wisdom, proportion and order could be accomplished just through a chance accident, what else could not be regarded as accidental by a mentally deranged person?

فَمَا لَهٗ مِنۡ قُوَّةٍ وَّلَا نَاصِرٍ ؕ 10

(86:10) he shall have no power, and no helper.

وَالسَّمَآءِ ذَاتِ الرَّجۡعِ ۙ 11

(86:11) By the heaven with its recurring cycle of rain,[6]

6. The hidden secrets: the acts of every person which remained a secret to the world as well as those affairs which came before the world only in their apparent form, but the intentions, aims and secret motives working behind them remained hidden from the people. On the Resurrection Day all this will be laid bare and not only will the acts and deeds of every person be examined but it will also be seen what was his motive and intention and object of so acting. Likewise, it also remained hidden from the world, even from the doer of the act himself, what effects and influences of his act appeared in the world, to what extent they spread and for how long they continued to work. This secret will also be revealed on the Resurrection Day and it will be fully examined as to what were the consequences of the seed that a person sowed in the world, what fruit it bore and for how long it affected the later generations for better or for worse.

وَالۡاَرۡضِ ذَاتِ الصَّدۡعِ ۙ 12

(86:12) and by the earth ever bursting with verdure,

اِنَّهٗ لَقَوۡلٌ فَصۡلٌ ۙ 13

(86:13) this (Qur'an) is surely a decisive Word,

وَّمَا هُوَ بِالۡهَزۡلِ ؕ 14

(86:14) not a flippant jest.[7]

7. The words dhat ar-raje have been used for the sky. Literally raje means to return, but metaphorically this word is used for the rain in Arabic, for rain does not fall just once, but returns over and over again in the season and sometimes out of season as well. Another reason for calling the rain raje is that water rises as vapor from the oceans of the earth and then falls back as rain on the same earth.

اِنَّهُمۡ يَكِيۡدُوۡنَ كَيۡدًا ۙ 15

(86:15) They are devising a guile,[8]

8. That is, just as the falling of rain from the sky and the splitting of the earth to put out shoots is no jest but a serious reality, so also the news which the Quran gives that man has to return to his God is no jest but a definite and decisive reality and an unchangeable truth which has to be fulfilled.

وَّاَكِيۡدُ كَيۡدًا ۚ 16

(86:16) and I too am devising a guile.[9]

9. That is, these disbelievers are devising every kind of plan to defeat the invitation of the Quran; they wish to blow out this candle; they are creating all sorts of doubts In the people's minds; they are inventing false accusations against the Prophet (peace be upon him) who has brought it, so as to frustrate his mission in the world and perpetuate the darkness of ignorance and unbelief which he is struggling so hard to remove.

فَمَهِّلِ الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ اَمۡهِلۡهُمۡ رُوَيۡدًا ع 17

(86:17) So leave the unbelievers to themselves; respite them awhile.[10]

10. That is, I am planning that none of their devices should succeed so that they are utterly defeated in their designs, and the light which they are trying their utmost to put out, spreads far and wide.

87. Surah Al Ala (The Most High)

Name

The Surah takes its name from the word al-A`la in the very first verse.

Period of Revelation

The subject matter shows that this too is one of the earliest Surahs to be revealed, and the words: "We shall enable you to recite, then you shall never forget" of verse 6 also indicate that it was sent down in the period when the Holy Messenger (upon whom he Allah's peace) was not yet fully accustomed to receive Revelation and at the time Revelation came down he feared lest he should forget its words. If this verse is read along with verse 114 of Surah Ta Ha and verses 16-19 of Al-Qiyamah and the three verses are also considered with regard to their styles and contexts, the sequence of events seems to be that first in this Surah the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) was reassured to the effect: "Do not at all worry: We shall enable you to recite this Word, then you shall not forget it." Then after a lapse of time, on another occasion, when the Surah Al-Qiyamah was being revealed, the Holy Prophet involuntarily began to rehearse the words of the Revelation. Thereupon it was said: "O Prophet do not move your tongue to remember this Revelation hastily. It is for Us to have it remembered and read. Therefore when We are reciting it, listen to its recital carefully. Again, it is for Us to explain its meaning." Last of all, on the occasion of the revelation of Surah Ta Ha, the Holy Prophet on account of human weakness, again became afraid lest his memory should fail to preserve some portion of the 113 verses which were continuously revealed at that time, and therefore, he began to memorize them. Thereupon, it was said: "And see that you do not hasten to recite the Quran before its revelation is completed to you." After this, it never so happened that he felt any such danger, for apart form these three places, there is no other place in the Quran where there might be a reference to this matter.

Theme and Subject Matter

This short surah contains three themes: Tauhid, instructions to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) and the Hereafter.

In the first verse, the doctrine of Tauhid has been compressed into a single sentence, saying that Allah's name should be glorified and exalted, i. e. He should not be remembered by any name which mighty reflect a deficiency, fault, weakness, or an aspect of likeness, with created beings, for the root of all false creeds in the world are wrong concepts about Allah, which assumed the form of an erroneous name for His glorious and exalted Being. Therefore, for the correction of the creed, the primary thing is that Allah Almighty should be remembered only by the beautiful names which suit and befit Him.

In the next three verses, it has been said: "Your Lord, glorification of Whose name is being enjoined, is He Who created everything in the Universe, proportioned it, set it a destiny, taught it to perform the function for which it is created, and you witness this manifestation of His power day and night that He creates vegetation on the earth as well as reduces it to mere rubbish. No other being has the power to bring about spring nor the power to prevent autumn."

Then, in the following two verses, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) his been consoled, as if to say: "Do not worry as to how you will remember word for word the Qur'an that is being revealed to you. It is for Us to preserve it in your memory, and its preservation is not in any way the result of any excellence in you but the result of Our bounty and favor, otherwise if We so will, We can cause you to forget it."

Then, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) has been told: "You have not been made responsible to bring everyone on to the right path; your only duty is to convey the truth, and the simplest way of conveying the truth is that admonition be given to him who is inclined to listen to the admonition and accept it, and the one who is not inclined to it, should not be pursued. The one who fears the evil consequences of deviation and falsehood, will listen to the truth and accept it, and the wretched one who avoids listening to and accepting it, will himself see his evil end."'

The discourse has been summed up, saying: "Success is only for those who adopt purity of belief, morals and deed, and remember the name of their Lord and perform the Prayer. But, on the contrary, the people are wholly lost in seeking the ease, benefits and pleasures of the world, whereas they should actually endeavor for their well being in the Hereafter, for the world is transitory and the Hereafter everlasting and the blessings of the Hereafter are far better than the blessings of the world. This truth has not been expressed only in the Qur'an but in the books of the Prophets Abraham and Moses too, it had been brought to the notice of man.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

سَبِّحِ اسۡمَ رَبِّكَ الۡاَعۡلَىۙ 1

(87:1) Glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High,[1]

1. Literally: “Glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High.” This can have several meanings and all are implied:

(1) Allah should be remembered by the names which fit Him, and no such name should be used for His exalted Being which, with regard to its meaning and sense, does not fit Him, or which reflects some aspect of deficiency, lack of reverence, polytheism about Him, or which refers to some wrong belief in respect of His Being, attributes, or works. For this purpose, the safest way is that only such names be used for Allah, which He himself has mentioned in the Quran, or which are a correct translation of these names in other languages.

(2) Allah should not be remembered by the names as are used generally for the created beings, or the created beings should not be called by names as are specifically meant for Allah. And if there are some attributive names which are not specifically meant for Allah, but may also be used for the created beings, such as Rauf (Kind), Rahim (Compassionate), Karim (Generous), Sami (Hearing), Basir (Seeing), etc. one should exercise due care not to use them for man as they are used for Allah.

(3) Allah should not be mentioned in a way or in a state which reflects lack of respect for Him; for example, to mention His name when engaged in mockery or jest, or when in the lavatory, or while committing a sinful act, or before the people who might behave insolently in response, or in assemblies where the people are engaged in absurd things and might laugh off His mention, or on an occasion when it is feared that the hearer will hear it disdainfully. About Imam Malik, it is related that when a beggar begged him for something and he did not have anything to give, he would not turn away the beggar, saying that Allah would help him, as is commonly done by the people, but he would excuse himself in some other way. When asked why he did so, he replied: When the beggar is not given anything and one makes an excuse, it inevitably displeases him. On such an occasion, I do not like to mention Allah's name, for I do not like that somebody should hear His name in a state of annoyance and displeasure.

In the Hadith, it has been reported from Uqbah bin Amir Juhani that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had enjoined recitation of Subhana Rabbi yal-Aala in sajdah on the basis of this very verse, and the recitation of Subhana Rabbi yal- Adheem in ruku on the basis of the last verse of Surah Al- Waqiah, viz. Fa-sabhih bismi-Rabbi-kal-Adeem. (Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud, lbn Majah, Ibn Hibban, Hakim, Ibn al- Mundhir).

الَّذِیۡ خَلَقَ فَسَوّٰی ۪ۙ 2

(87:2) Who created all things and fashioned them in good proportion;[2]

2. That is, He created everything, from the earth to the heavens, in the universe, and gave whatever he created the right proportion and balance and gave every creature the best conceivable form and shape. The same thing has been expressed in Surah As-Sajdah, thus: Who gave everything He created the best form (verse 7) Thus, the creation of everything in the world giving it due order and proportion, is an express sign of the truth that some Wise Designer is its Creator. Had the creation of the countless things in the universe been the result of a chance accident, or the work of many creators, there could be no order and balance, no beauty and inner coherence among the many things existing in the world.

وَالَّذِیۡ قَدَّرَ فَهَدٰی ۪ۙ 3

(87:3) Who determined[3] and guided them,[4]

3. Set a destiny: Determined beforehand what would be the function of a certain thing in the world, and for that purpose what would be its size, its form and shape, its qualities, its place of location, and what opportunities and means should be provided for its survival, existence and functioning, when it should come into being, and when and how it should cease to be after completing its part of the work. Such a scheme for a thing is its destiny (taqdir). And this destiny Allah has set for everything in the universe and for the entire universe as a whole. This means that the creation has not come about without a pre-conceived plan, haphazardly, but for it the Creator had a full plan before Him, and everything is happening according to that plan. (For further explanation, see (E.Ns 13, 14 of Surah Al-Hijr); (E.N. 8 of Surah Al-Furqan); (E.N. 25 of Surah Al-Qamar). (E.N. 12 of Surah Abasa).

4. That is, nothing was just created and left to itself, but whatever was created to perform a certain function, it was also taught the method of performing that function. In other words, He is not merely the Creator but Guide too. He has taken the responsibility to give guidance to whatever He has created in a particular capacity to fit its nature and to guide it in the way suitable for it. One kind of guidance is for the earth, the moon, the sun, and the stars and planets, which they are following in performing their role. Another kind of guidance is for water, air, light and the solid and mineral elements, and they are performing the same services for which they have been created accordingly. Still another kind of guidance is for vegetables, according to which they take root and spread in the earth, sprout up from its layers, obtain food from wherever Allah has created it for them, produce stem, branches, leaves, blossom and fruit, and fulfill the function which has been appointed for each of them. Still another kind of guidance is for the countless species of animals of the land, and water, and for each member of the species, the wonderful manifestations of which are clearly visible in the life of the animals and in their works, so much so that even an atheist is compelled to concede that different kinds of animals possess some sort of inspirational knowledge which man cannot obtain even through his instruments, not to speak of his senses. Then, there are two different kinds of guidance for man, which correspond to his two different capacities. One kind of guidance is for his animal life, by which each child learns to suck milk spontaneously on birth, by which the eyes of man, his nose, ear, heart, brain, lungs, kidney, liver, stomach, intestines, nerves, veins and arteries, all are performing their respective functions, without man's being conscious of it, or his will's having anything to do with the functions of these organs. This is the guidance under which all physical and mental changes pertaining to childhood, maturity, youth and old age go on taking place in man, independent of his will, choice, even his consciousness. The second kind of guidance is for his intellectual and conscious life, the nature of which is absolutely different from the guidance for unconscious life, for in this sphere of life a kind of freedom has been transferred to man, for which the mode of guidance meant for voluntary life is not suitable. For turning away from this last kind of guidance, man may offer whatever arguments and excuses he may like, it is not credible that the Creator Who has arranged guidance for everything in this universe according to its capacity, might have set for man the destiny that he may appropriate numerous things in His world freely, but might not have made any arrangement to show what is the right way of using his choice and what is the wrong way. (For further explanation, see (E.Ns 9, 10,14, 56 of Surah An-Nahl); (E.N. 23 of Surah TaHa), (E.Ns 2, 3 of Surah Ar-Rahman); (E.N. 5 of Surah Ad-Dahr).

وَالَّذِيٓ اَخۡرَجَ الۡمَرۡعٰى ۙ 4

(87:4) Who brought forth the pasture,[5]

5. The word maraa as used in the text means the fodder for animals but the context shows that here it does not imply mere fodder but every kind of vegetation that grows out of the soil.

فَجَعَلَهٗ غُثَآءً اَحۡوٰى ؕ 5

(87:5) and then made it into a blackish straw.[6]

6. That is, He does not only bring about spring but autumn as well. You witness both the manifestations of this power. On the one side, He causes lush green vegetation to grow, the freshness of which pleases the hearts and, on the other, He renders the same vegetation pale, dry and black rubbish, which is blown about by winds and swept away by floods. Therefore, no one here should be involved in the misunderstanding that he will only experience spring and will never see autumn. This same theme has been expressed at several other places in the Quran in other ways. For example see (Surah Younus, Ayat 24); (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayat 45); (Surah Al-Hadid, Ayat 20).

سَنُقْرِئُكَ فَلَا تَنْسٰٓى ۙ 6

(87:6) We shall make you recite and then you will not forget,[7]

7. Hakim has related from Saad bin Abi Waqqas and Ibn Marduyah from Abdullah bin Abbas that the Prophet (peace be upon him) repeated the words of the Quran for fear lest he should forget them. Mujahid and Kalbi say that even before Gabriel finished recitation of the revelation the Prophet (peace be upon him) would start repeating the initial verses lest he should forget them. On this very basis Allah assured him that he should listen quietly when the revelation was coming down, for, We shall enable you to recite it; then you will remember it forever. You should have no fear that you will forget any word of it. This is the third occasion where the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been taught the method of receiving the revelation. The first two occasions have been referred to in(Surah TaHa, Ayat 114)and (Surah Al-Qiyamah, Ayats 16-19). This verse proves that just as the Quran was sent down to the Prophet (peace be upon him) as a miracle, so also its each word was preserved in his memory as a miracle and no possibility was allowed to remain that he should forget anything of it, or that he should utter another synonymous word for any word of it.

اِلَّا مَا شَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ يَعْلَمُ الْجَهْرَ وَمَا يَخْفٰى ؕ 7

(87:7) except what Allah should wish.[8] He knows all that is manifest and all that is hidden.[9]

8. This sentence can have two meanings: First, that the preservation of the entire Quran word for word in your memory is not a manifestation of your own power but the result of Allah Almighty's bounty and grace; otherwise if Allah so willed, He could cause it to be forgotten. This same theme has been expressed at another place in the Quran, thus: O Muhammad! We may, if We so will, take back from you all of what We have revealed to you. (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 86). Another meaning can also be: Your forgetting something temporarily, or your forgetting a verse or a word occasionally is an exception from this promise. What has been promised is: You will not forget any word of the Quran permanently. This meaning is confirmed by the following tradition of Bukhari: Once while leading the Fajr Prayer the Prophet (peace be upon him) happened to omit a verse during the recitation. After the Prayer Ubayy bin Kaab asked if the verse had been abrogated. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied that he had forgotten to recite it.

9. Although the words are general, and they mean that Allah knows everything, whether it is open or hidden, yet in the context in which they occur, they seem to mean: O Prophet, your reciting the Quran along with Gabriel is known to Allah and your fear for which you do so is also in Allah's knowledge. Therefore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) is being assured that he will not forget it.

وَنُيَسِّرُكَ لِلۡيُسۡرٰى ۖ 8

(87:8) We shall ease you to follow the way of Ease.

فَذَكِّرۡ اِنۡ نَّفَعَتِ الذِّكۡرٰى ؕ 9

(87:9) So render good counsel if good counsel will avail.[10]

10. Generally, the commentators take these as two separate sentences. They interpret the first sentence to mean: We are giving you a simple code of law, which is easy to practice and act upon, and the second sentence to mean: Admonish the people if admonishing be useful. but in our opinion, the word fa-dhakkir connects the two sentences in meaning, and the theme of the second sentence bears upon the theme of the first sentence. Therefore, we interpret these sentences to mean: O Prophet, We do not want to put you to any hardship concerning the preaching of Islam by demanding that you should make the deaf to hear and the blind to see the way, but We have appointed an easy way for you, which is this: Give admonition when you feel that the people are inclined to benefit by it. As to who is inclined to benefit by the admonition and who is not, this you can only know through general preaching. Therefore, you should continue your general preaching, but your object should be to search out those from among the people who will benefit by it and adopt the right way. Such people alone are worthy of your attention and you should pay full attention only to their instruction and training. You need not abandon them and pursue those about whom you find by experience that they are not inclined to accept any admonition. Almost this very theme has been expressed in Surah Abasa in another way, thus: As for him who is indifferent, to him you attend, though you would not be responsible if he does not reform. And the one who comes to you running, of his own will and fears, from him you turn away. By no means: This is but an Admonition. Let him who wills, accept it. (verses 5-12).

سَيَذَّكَّرُ مَنۡ يَّخۡشٰى ۙ 10

(87:10) He who fears (Allah) shall heed it,[11]

11. That is, only the one who has fear of God and of evil consequences, will consider whether or not he is following a wrong way, and he only will heed the admonition of the Servant of Allah, who is distinguishing guidance from misguidance for him and guiding him to true successes and piety.

وَيَتَجَنَّبُهَا الْاَشْقَى ۙ 11

(87:11) but the wretched will turn away from it.

الَّذِىْ يَصْلَى النَّارَ الْكُبْرٰى ۚ 12

(87:12) He will be cast into the Great Fire.

ثُمَّ لَا يَمُوْتُ فِيْهَا وَلَا يَحْيٰى ؕ 13

(87:13) Then he will neither die in it, nor live.[12]

12. That is, he will neither die so as to escape the punishment nor live as one truly lives so as to enjoy the pleasures of life. This punishment is for those who do not at all accept the admonition of Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) and persist in disbelief, polytheism and atheism till death. As for those who believe in their hearts but are cast into Hell because of their evil deeds, it has been said in the Hadith that when they will have undergone their punishment, Allah will give them death; then intercession on their behalf will be accepted, and their scorched bodies will be brought to the canals of Paradise, and the dwellers of Paradise will be asked to sprinkle water on them; then by that water they will come to life even as vegetation grows up when water is sprinkled on the earth. This theme has been reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him) in Muslim on the authority of Abu Saeed Khudri and in Bazzar on the authority of Abu Hurairah.

قَدْ اَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكّٰى ۙ 14

(87:14) He who purified himself shall prosper,[13]

13. Who purified himself: Who affirmed the faith giving up disbelief and polytheism, adopted good morals giving up evil morals, and performed good deeds giving up evil deeds. Success does not imply worldly prosperity, but true and real success whether worldly prosperity accompanies it or not. (For explanation, see (E.N. 23 of Surah Younus), (E.Ns 1, 11, 50 of Surah Al-Mominoon); (E.N. 4 of Surah Luqman).

وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهٖ فَصَلّٰى ؕ 15

(87:15) remembering his Lord's name[14] and praying.[15]

14. To remember Allah signifies His remembrance in the heart as well as with the tongue.

15. That is, he did not remain content only with remembering Allah but proved by performing the Prayer that he is also practically prepared to obey God in Whom he has affirmed the faith, and will remember His name as long as he lives. In this verse mention has been made of two things respectively: First, to remember Allah, then to perform the Prayer.

Accordingly, the method enjoined is that the Prayer be begun with Allahu Akbar. This is an evidence to prove that all the elements of the procedure that the Prophet (peace be upon him) has taught of performing the Prayer, are based on the allusions in the Quran. But, no one else, apart from the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah, could by combining these injunctions and allusions give the Prayer the form that it has.

بَلۡ تُؤۡثِرُوۡنَ الۡحَيٰوةَ الدُّنۡيَا ۖ صلے 16

(87:16) No; but you prefer the present life,[16]

16. That is, O man, all your thoughts and endeavors are only for the world, its ease and comforts, its benefits and enjoyments. You regard whatever you gain here as the real gain and whatever you lose here as your real loss.

وَالۡاٰخِرَةُ خَيۡرٌ وَّاَبۡقٰى ؕ 17

(87:17) whereas the Hereafter is better and more enduring.[17]

17. That is, the Hereafter is preferable to the world for two reasons: First, that its comforts and pleasures are far superior to all the blessings of the world; second, that the world is transitory and the Hereafter everlasting.

اِنَّ هٰذَا لَفِى الصُّحُفِ الۡاُوۡلٰى ۙ 18

(87:18) This, indeed, was in the ancient Scrolls,

صُحُفِ اِبۡرٰهِيۡمَ وَمُوۡسٰى ؏ 19

(87:19) the Scrolls of Abraham and Moses.[18]

18. This is the second place in the Quran where reference has been made to the teachings of the Books of the Prophets Abraham and Moses (peace be upon them). The first reference was made in section 3 of Surah An-Najm.

88. Surah Al Ghashiya (The Overwhelming Event)

Name

The Surah takes its name from the word al-ghishiyah in the first verse.

Period of Revelation

The whole subject matter of the Surah indicates that this too is one of the earliest Surahs to be revealed; but this was the period when the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) had started preaching his message publicly, and the people of Makkah were hearing it and ignoring it carelessly and thoughtlessly.

Theme and Subject Matter

To understand the subject matter well one should keep in view the fact that in the initial stage the preaching of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) mostly centered around two points which he wanted to instill in the people's minds: Tauhid and the Hereafter: and the people of Makkah were repudiating both. Let us now consider the subject matter and the style of this Surah.

At the outset, in order to arouse the people from their heedlessness, they have been plainly asked: “Do you have any knowledge of the time when an overwhelming calamity will descend?" Immediately after this details of the impending calamity are given as to how the people will be divided into two separate groups and will meet separate ends. One group of the people will go to Hell and they will suffer punishment; the second group will go to the sublime Paradise and will be provided with, blessings.

After thus arousing the people the theme suddenly changes and the question is asked: Do not these people, who frown and scorn the teaching of Tauhid and the news of the Hereafter being given by the Qur'an, observe the common things which they experience daily in their lives? Do they never consider how the camels, on whom their whole life activity in the Arabian desert depends, came into being, endowed precisely with the same characteristics as were required for the beast needed in their desert life? When they go on their journeys, they see the sky, the mountains, or the earth. Let them ponder over these three phenomena and consider as to how the sky was stretched above them, how the mountains were erected and how the earth was spread beneath them? Has all this come about without the skill and craftsmanship of an All- Powerful, All Wise Designer? If they acknowledge that a Creator has created all this with great wisdom and power and that no one else is an associate with Him in their creation, why then do they refuse to accept Him alone as their Lord and Sustainer? And if they acknowledge that that God had the power to create all this, then on what rational ground do they hesitate to acknowledge that that God also has the power to bring about Resurrection, to recreate man, and to make Hell and Heaven?

After making the truth plain by this concise and rational argument, the address turns from the disbelievers to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) and he is told: "If these people do not acknowledge the truth, they may not; you have not been empowered to act with authority over them, so that you should coerce them into believing: your only task is to

exhort, so exhort them. Ultimately they have to return to Us; then We shall call them to full account and shall inflict a heavy punishment on those who do not believe."

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

هَلۡ اَتٰىكَ حَدِيۡثُ الۡغَاشِيَةِ ۘ 1

(88:1) Has the news of the overwhelming event reached you?[1]

1. The overwhelming: the Resurrection which will overshadow the whole world. One should know that here the Hereafter as a whole is being depicted, which comprehends all the stages from the upsetting of the present system to the resurrection of all human beings and the dispensation of rewards and punishments from the divine court.

وُجُوۡهٌ يَّوۡمَئِذٍ خَاشِعَةٌ ۙ 2

(88:2) Some faces[2] that Day shall be downcast with fear,

2. Some faces: some persons, for the face is the most conspicuous part of the human body by which man's personality is judged and which reflects the good or bad states through which man passes.

عَامِلَةٌ نَّاصِبَةٌ ۙ 3

(88:3) be toiling and worn-out;

تَصۡلٰى نَارًا حَامِيَةً ۙ 4

(88:4) they shall burn in a Scorching Fire;

تُسۡقٰى مِنۡ عَيۡنٍ اٰنِيَةٍ ؕ 5

(88:5) their drink shall be from a boiling spring.

لَيۡسَ لَهُمۡ طَعَامٌ اِلَّا مِنۡ ضَرِيۡعٍ ۙ 6

(88:6) They shall have no food except bitter dry thorns[3]

3. At some places in the Quran, it has been stated that the dwellers of Hell will be given zaqqum to eat; at another place it has been said that they will have no other food but ghislin (washing from wounds), and here that their only food will be thorny dry grass. There is, in fact, no contradiction between these statements. This may as well mean that Hell will have

many different compartments in which different categories of the criminals will be lodged according to their crimes, and subjected to different punishments. This may also mean that if they try to avoid zaqqum they will be given ghislin, and if they try to avoid even that, they will only get thorny grass. In short, they would get nothing to suit their taste.

لَّا يُسْمِنُ وَلَا يُغْنِي مِن جُوعٍ ۝7

(88:7) that will neither nourish nor satisfy their hunger.

وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَّاعِمَةٌ ۝8

(88:8) On that very Day some faces shall be radiant with joy,

لِّسَعْيِهَا رَاضِيَةٌ ۝9

(88:9) well-pleased with their striving.[4]

4. That is: they will be overjoyed to see the best results in the Hereafter of their endeavors and deeds in the world; they will be satisfied to see that they had, in fact, made a profitable bargain in that they had adopted a life of faith, virtue and piety, by sacrificing the desires of the flesh, undergone hardships in carrying out their obligations, endured afflictions in obeying the divine commands, incurred losses and suffered deprivation of benefits and pleasures while trying to avoid sins and acts of disobedience.

فِي جَنَّةٍ عَالِيَةٍ ۝10

(88:10) They will be in a lofty Garden

لَّا تَسْمَعُ فِيهَا لَاغِيَةً ۝11

(88:11) wherein they shall hear no vain talk.[5]

5. This thing has been mentioned at several places in the Quran as a major blessing of Paradise. (For explanation, see(E.N. 38 of Surah Maryam); (E.N. 18 of Surah At-Toor); (E.N. 13 of Surah Al-Waqiah); (E.N. 21 of Surah An-Naba).

فِيهَا عَيْنٌ جَارِيَةٌ ۝12

(88:12) In it there shall be a flowing spring,

فِيهَا سُرُرٌ مَّرْفُوعَةٌ ۝13

(88:13) and couches raised high,

وَّاَكْوَابٌ مَّوْضُوْعَةٌ ۙ 14

(88:14) and goblets laid out,[6]

6. That is, filled goblets already supplied so that they do not have to ask for them.

وَّنَمَارِقُ مَصْفُوْفَةٌ ۙ 15

(88:15) and cushions arrayed in rows,

وَّزَرَابِيُّ مَبْثُوْثَةٌ ؕ 16

(88:16) and rich carpets levelled out.

اَفَلَا يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَى الْاِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ ۫ وقفة 17

(88:17) Do (these unbelievers) not observe the camels: how they were created?

وَاِلَى السَّمَآءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ ۫ وقفة 18

(88:18) And the sky: how it was raised high?

وَاِلَى الْجِبَالِ كَيْفَ نُصِبَتْ ۫ وقفة 19

(88:19) And the mountains: how they were fixed?

وَاِلَى الْاَرْضِ كَيْفَ سُطِحَتْ ۫ وقفة 20

(88:20) And the earth: how it was spread out?[7]

7. That is, if they deny the possibility of the Hereafter, have they never looked around themselves and considered how the camels were created, how the heaven was raised high, how the mountains were firmly set and how the earth was spread out? When all these things could be created, and exist before them in their finished form, why can the Resurrection not take place? Why cannot a new world come about, and why cannot Hell and Heaven be possible? Only a foolish and thoughtless person would think that the coming into existence of only those things which he has found existing, on opening his eyes in the world, is possible, because they already exist. As for the things, which he has not yet observed and experienced, he should thoughtlessly pass the judgment that their coming into being is impossible. If he has any common sense, he should think as to how the things,

which already exist, came into being? How did the camel possessing precisely the same characteristics as needed for the beast required by the desert dwellers of Arabia come into being? How did the sky whose atmosphere is filled with air to breathe in, whose clouds bring rain, whose sun provides light and warmth in the day, whose moon and stars shine at night, come into being? How did the earth spread out on which man lives and passes his life, whose products fulfill all his needs and requirements on whose springs and wells his life depends? How did the mountains rise up from the surface of the earth, which stand fixed with earth and stones of different colors and a variety of minerals in them? Has all this happened without the artistic skill of an All-Powerful, All- Wise Designer. No thinking and intelligent mind can answer this question in the negative. Unless it is stubborn and obstinate, it will have to acknowledge that each one of these things was impossible, had not an Omnipotent, Wise Being made it possible. And when an All-Powerful, Wise Being created these things, there is no reason why the Hereafter should be regarded as remote from reason and impossible.

فَذَكِّرْ ۖ قف إِنَّمَآ أَنتَ مُذَكِّرٌ ۖ ط 21

(88:21) So render good counsel, for you are simply required to counsel,

لَّسْتَ عَلَيْهِم بِمُصَيْطِرٍ ۙ 22

(88:22) and are not invested with the authority to compel them.[8]

8. That is, if a person does not listen to reason, he may not. You have not been appointed to force the will of the deniers: your only task is to distinguish the right from the wrong for the people and warn them of the consequences of following the wrong way; so this is the task you should continue to perform.

إِلَّا مَن تَوَلَّىٰ وَكَفَرَ ۙ 23

(88:23) But whoever will turn away (from the Truth),

فَيُعَذِّبُهُ ٱللَّهُ ٱلْعَذَابَ ٱلْأَكْبَرَ ۖ ط 24

(88:24) Allah will chastise him with the most terrible chastisement.

إِنَّ إِلَيْنَآ إِيَابَهُمْ ۙ 25

(88:25) Surely to Us is their return;

ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا حِسَابَهُم ع 26

(88:26) and then it is for Us to call them to account.

89. Surah Al Fajr (The Dawn)

Name

The Surah is so designated after the word wal-fajr with which it opens.

Period of Revelation

Its contents show that it was revealed at the stage when persecution of the new converts to Islam had begun in Makkah. On that very basis the people of Makkah have been warned of the evil end of the tribes of Ad and Thamud and of Pharaoh.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is to affirm the meting out of rewards and punishments in the Hereafter, which the people of Makkah were not prepared to acknowledge, Let us consider the reasoning in the order in which it has been presented.

First of all, swearing oaths by the dawn, the ten nights, the even and the odd, and the departing night, the listeners have been asked: "Are these things not enough to testify to the truth of that which you are refusing to acknowledge?" From the explanation that we have given of these four things in the corresponding notes, it will become clear that these things are a symbol of the regularity that exists in the night and day, and swearing oaths by these the question has been asked in the sense: Even after witnessing this wise system established by God, do you still need any other evidence to show that it is not beyond the power of that God Who has brought about this system to establish the Hereafter, and that it is the very requirement of his wisdom that He should call man to account for his deeds?

Then, reasoning from man's own history, the evil end of the Ad and the Thamud and Pharaoh has been cited as an example to show that when they transgressed all limits and multiplied corruption in the earth, Allah laid upon them the scourge of His chastisement. This is a proof of the fact that the system of the universe is not being run by deaf and blind forces, nor is the world a lawless kingdom of a corrupt ruler, but a Wise Ruler is ruling over it, the demand of Whose wisdom and justice is continuously visible in the world itself in man's own history that He should call to account, and reward and punish accordingly, the being whom He has blessed with reason and moral sense and given the right of appropriation in the world.

After this, an appraisal has been made of the general moral state of human society of which Arab paganism was a conspicuous example; two aspects of it in particular, have been criticized: first the materialistic attitude of the people on account of which overlooking the moral good and evil, they regarded only the achievement of worldly wealth, rank and position, or the absence of it, as the criterion of honor or disgrace, and had forgotten that neither riches was a reward nor poverty a punishment, but that Allah is trying man in both conditions to see what attitude he adopts when blessed with wealth and how he behaves when afflicted by poverty. Second, the people's attitude under which the orphan child in their society was left destitute on the death of the father. Nobody asked after the poor; whoever could, usurped the whole heritage left by the deceased parent, and drove away the weak heirs fraudulently. The people were so afflicted with an insatiable greed for wealth

that they were never satisfied however much they might hoard and amass. This criticism is meant to make them realize as to why the people with such an attitude and conduct in the life of the world should not be called to account for their misdeeds.

The discourse has been concluded with the assertion that accountability shall certainly be held and it will be held on the Day when the Divine Court will be established. At that time the deniers of the judgment will understand that which they are not understanding now in spite of instruction and admonition, but understanding then will be of no avail. The denier will regret and say, "Would that I had provided for this Day beforehand while I lived in the world." But his regrets will not save him from Allah's punishment. However, as for the people who would have accepted the Truth, which the heavenly books and the Prophets of God were presenting, with full satisfaction of the heart in the world, Allah will be pleased with them and they will be well pleased with the rewards bestowed by Allah. They will be called upon to join the righteous and enter Paradise.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

وَالۡفَجۡرِ ۙ 1

(89:1) By the dawn,

وَلَیَالٍ عَشۡرٍ ۙ 2

(89:2) and the ten nights,

وَّالشَّفۡعِ وَالۡوَتۡرِ ۙ 3

(89:3) and the even and the odd,

وَالَّیۡلِ اِذَا یَسۡرِ ۚ 4

(89:4) and by the night when it departs.

هَلۡ فِیۡ ذٰلِکَ قَسَمٌ لِّذِیۡ حِجۡرٍ ؕ 5

(89:5) Is there in this an oath for one endowed with understanding?[1]

1. Much difference of opinion has been expressed by the commentators in the commentary of these verses, so much so that in respect of “the even and the odd” there are as many as 36 different views. In some traditions the commentary of these verses has also been attributed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), but the fact is that no commentary is confirmed from him, otherwise it was not possible that anyone from among the companions, their

immediate successors, and later commentators would have dared to determine the meaning of these verses by themselves after the commentary by the Prophet (peace be upon him).

After a study of the style one clearly feels that there was an argument already in progress in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) was presenting something and the disbelievers were denying it. At this, affirming what the Prophet (peace be upon him) presented, it was said: By such and such a thing, so as to say: By these things, what Muhammad (peace be upon him) says is wholly based on the truth. Then, the argument is concluded with the question: Is there an oath in it for a man of understanding. That is, is there a need for yet another oath to testify to the truth of this matter. Is this oath not enough to persuade a sensible man to accept that which Muhammad (peace be upon him) is presenting.

Now the question arises: what was the argument for the sake of which an oath was sworn by these four things? For this we shall have to consider the whole theme which, in the following verses, commences with: Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the Aad, and continues till the end of the Surah. It shows that the argument concerned the rewards and punishments of the Hereafter, which the people of Makkah were refusing to acknowledge and the Messenger (peace be upon him) was trying to convince them of this by constant preaching and instruction. At this oaths were sworn by the dawn, the ten nights, the even and the odd, and the departing night to assert: Are these four things not enough to convince a sensible man of the truth of this matter so that he may need yet another evidence for it?

After having determined the significance of these oaths in the context, we would inevitably have to take each of these in the meaning relevant to the subsequent theme. First of all, it is said: By Fajr. Fajr is the breaking of day, i.e. the time when the first rays of the light of day appear in the midst of the darkness of night as a white streak from the east. Then, it is said: By the ten nights. If the context is kept in view, it will become plain that it implies each group of the ten nights among the thirty nights of the month, the first ten nights being those during which the crescent moon starting as a thin nail, goes on waxing every night until its major portion becomes bright. The second group of the ten nights being those during which the greater part of the night remains illumined by the moon. And the last ten nights being those during which the moon goes on waning and the nights becoming more and more dark until by the end of the month the whole night becomes absolutely dark. Then, it is said: By the even and the odd. Even is the number which is divisible into two equal parts, as 2, 4, 6, 8, and the odd the number which is not so divisible, as l, 3, 5, 7. Generally, it may imply everything in the universe, for things in the universe either exist in pairs or as singles. But since the context here concerns the day and the night, the even and the odd mean the alternation of day and night in the sense that the dates of the month go on changing from the first to the second, and from second to the third, and every change brings with it a new state. Last of all, it is said: By the night when it is departing, i.e. when the darkness which had covered the world since sunset may be at the verge of disappearing and the day be dawning. Now let us consider as a whole the four things an oath by which has been sworn to assert that the news which Muhammad (peace be upon him) is giving of the meting out of rewards and punishments is wholly based on the truth. All these things point to the reality that an all-Powerful Sustainer is ruling over this universe and nothing of what He is doing is absurd, purposeless, or lacking wisdom. On the contrary, a wise plan clearly underlies whatever He does. In His world one will never see that while it is night, the midday sun

should suddenly appear overhead, or that the moon should appear one evening in the shape of the crescent and be followed next evening by the full moon, or that the night, when it falls, should never come to an end, but should become perpetual, or that there should be no system in the alternation of the day and night so that one could keep a record of the dates and know what month was passing, what was the date, on what date a particular work is to begin, and when it is to finish, what are the dates of the summer season and what of the rainy or winter season. Apart from countless other things of the universe if man only considers this regularity of the day and night intelligently and seriously, he will find evidence of the truth that this relentless discipline and order has been established by an Omnipotent Sovereign God; with it are connected countless of the advantages of the creatures whom He has created on the earth. Now, if a person living in the world of such a Wise, Omnipotent and All-Mighty Creator denies the rewards and punishments of the Hereafter, he inevitably commits one of the two errors: either he is a denier of His powers and thinks that though He has the power to create the universe with such matchless order and discipline, He is powerless to recreate man and mete out rewards and punishments to him or he denies His wisdom and knowledge and thinks that although He has created man with intellect and powers in the world, yet He will neither ever call him to account as to how he used his intellect and his powers, nor will reward him for his good deeds, nor punish him for his evil deeds. The one who believes in either is foolish in the extreme.

أَلَمۡ تَرَ كَيۡفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِعَادٍ ۝٦

(89:6) Have you[2] not seen how your Lord dealt with Ad

2. After reasoning out the judgment from the system of day and night, now an argument is being given from man's own history for its being a certainty. The mention of the conduct of a few well known tribes of history and their ultimate end is meant to point out that the universe is not working under some deaf and blind law of nature, but a Wise God is ruling over it, and in the Kingdom of that God only one law, which man describes as the law of nature is not working, but a moral law also is operative, which necessarily calls for retribution and rewards and punishments. The results of the working of the law have been appearing over and over again even in this world, which point out to the people of understanding as to what is the nature of the kingdom of the universe. Any nation which carved out a system of life for itself, heedless of the Hereafter and of the rewards and punishments of God, was ultimately corrupted and depraved, and whichever nation followed this way, was eventually visited with the scourge of punishment by the Lord of the universe. This continuous experience of man's own history testifies to two things clearly:

(1) That denial of the Hereafter has been instrumental in corrupting every nation and sending it ultimately to its doom; therefore, the Hereafter indeed is a reality clashing with which leads, as it has always led, to the same inevitable results.

(2) That retribution for deeds will at some time in the future take place in its full and complete form also, for the people who touched the extreme limits of corruption and depravity and were visited with punishment had been preceded by many others who had sown seeds of corruption for centuries and left the world without being visited by any scourge.

The justice of God demands that all those people also should be called to account at some time and they too should suffer for their misdeeds. Argument from history and morals for the Hereafter has been given at many places in the Quran and we have explained it everywhere accordingly. For example, see (E.Ns 5, 6 of Surah Al-Aaraf); (E.N. 12 of Surah Younus); (E.Ns 57, 105, 115 of Surah Houd); (E.N. 9 of Surah Ibrahim); (E.Ns 66, 86 of Surah An-Naml); (E.N. 8 of Surah Ar-Room); (E.N. 25 of Surah Saba); (E.Ns 29, 30 of Surah Suad); (E.N. 80 of Surah Al-Momin); (E.Ns 33, 34 of Surah Ad-Dukhan); (E.Ns 27, 28 of Surah Al-Jathiah); (E.N. 17 of Surah Qaf); (E.N. 21 of Surah Adh-Dhariyat).

إِرَمَ ذَاتِ الْعِمَادِ ۝7

(89:7) of Iram,[3] known for their lofty columns,

3. Aad Iram implies the ancient tribe of Aad, who have been called Aad-ula in the Quran and Arabian history. In Surah An-Najm, it has been said: And that We destroyed the ancient people of Aad (verse 50), i.e. the Aad to whom the Prophet Houd (peace be upon him) had been sent, and who were punished with a scourge. As against them the people of Aad who remained safe and flourished afterwards are remembered as Aad-ukhra in Arabian history. The ancient Aad are called Aad-lram for the reason that they belonged to that branch of the Semetic race which descended from Iram, son of Shem, son of Noah (peace be upon him). Several other sub-branches of this main branch are well known in history. One of which were the Thamud, who have been mentioned in the Quran; another are the Aramaeans, who in the beginning inhabited the northern parts of Syria and whose language Aramaic occupies an important place among the Semetic languages.

The words dhat-ul-imad (of lofty pillars) have been used for the Aad because they built high buildings and the pattern of architecture of erecting edifices on lofty pillars was introduced by them in the world. At another place in the Quran this characteristic has been mentioned in connection with the Prophet Houd (peace be upon him), who said to them: What, you erect for mere pleasure a monument on every high spot, and build huge castles as if you were immortal. (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 128-129).

الَّتِي لَمْ يُخْلَقْ مِثْلُهَا فِي الْبِلَادِ ۝8

(89:8) the like of whom no nation was ever created in the lands of the world?[4]

4. That is, they were a matchless people of their time; no other nation in the world compares with them in strength, glory and grandeur. At other places in the Quran, it has been said about them: Your Lord made you very robust. (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 69). As for the Aad, they became arrogant with pride in the land, without any right, and said: Who is stronger than us in might. (Surah HaMim As- Sajdah, Ayat 15). When you seized somebody, you seized him like a tyrant. (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayat 130).

وَثَمُودَ الَّذِينَ جَابُوا الصَّخْرَ بِالْوَادِ ۝9

(89:9) And how did He deal with Thamud who hewed out rocks in the valley?[5]

5. The valley: Wad-il-Qura, where the Thamud carved out dwellings in the mountains, and probably in history they were the first people who started cutting out such buildings into the rocks. (For details, see (E.Ns 57, 59 of Surah Al- Aaraf); (E.N. 45 of Surah Al-Hijr); (E.Ns 95, 99 of Surah Ash- Shuara).

وَفِرْعَوْنَ ذِى الْأَوْتَادِ ۙ 10

(89:10) And with Pharaoh of the tent pegs[6]

6. The words dhul-autad (of the stakes) for Pharaoh have also been used in (Surah Suad, Ayat 12). This can have several meanings. Possibly his forces have been compared to the stakes, and "of the stakes" means "of great forces", for it was by their power and might that he ruled a firmly established kingdom; it might also imply multiplicity of forces, and the meaning may be that wherever his large armies camped, pegs of the tents were seen driven into the ground on every side; it may also imply the stakes at which he punished the people, and it is also possible that the pyramids of Egypt have been compared to the stakes, for they are the remnants of the grandeur and glory of the Pharaohs, and seem to have been driven into the ground like stakes for centuries.

الَّذِينَ طَغَوْا فِى الْبِلَادِ ۙ 11

(89:11) who transgressed in the countries of the world

فَأَكْثَرُوا فِيهَا الْفَسَادَ ۙ 12

(89:12) spreading in them much corruption?

فَصَبَّ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّكَ سَوْطَ عَذَابٍ ۚ 13

(89:13) Then their Lord unloosed upon them the lash of chastisement.

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَبِالْمِرْصَادِ ۗ 14

(89:14) Truly your Lord is ever watchful.[7]

7. The words "ever watchful in ambush" have been used metaphorically for keeping watch on the movements and activities of the wicked and mischievous people. An ambush is a place where a person lies hiding in wait to attack somebody by surprise. The victim, thoughtless of his fate, comes and falls a prey. The same is the case against Allah of those wicked people who spread mischief in the world and have no sense and fear that there is God above them, Who is watching all their misdeeds. Therefore, they go on committing

everyday more and more evils fearlessly until they reach the limit which Allah does not permit them to transgress. At that very moment His scourge descends upon them suddenly.

فَاَمَّا الۡاِنۡسَانُ اِذَا مَا ابۡتَلٰىهُ رَبُّهٗ فَاَكۡرَمَهٗ وَنَعَّمَهٗ ۙ فَيَقُوۡلُ رَبِّىۡۤ اَكۡرَمَنِ ۖ 15

(89:15) As for man,[8] when his Lord tests him by exalting him and bestowing His bounties upon him, he says: "My Lord has exalted me."

8. Now, criticizing the general moral state of the people, it is being said: After all, why shouldn't the men who have adopted such an attitude in the life of the world, be ever called to account, and how can it be regarded as a demand of reason and justice that when man has left the world, after doing all he could, he should never receive any reward or suffer any punishment for his deeds.

وَاَمَّاۤ اِذَا مَا ابۡتَلٰىهُ فَقَدَرَ عَلَيۡهِ رِزۡقَهٗ ۙ فَيَقُوۡلُ رَبِّىۡۤ اَهَانَنِ ۚ 16

(89:16) But when He tests him by straitening his sustenance, he says: "My Lord has humiliated me."[9]

9. This then is man's materialistic view of life. He regards the wealth and position and power of this world alone as everything. When he has it, he is filled with pride and says God has honored me; and when he fails to obtain it, he says: God has humiliated me. Thus, the criterion of honor and humiliation in his sight is the possession of wealth and position and power, or the absence of it, whereas the truth which he does not understand is that whatever Allah has given anybody in the world has been given for the sake of a trial. If he has given him wealth and power, it has been given for a trial to see whether he becomes grateful for it, or commits ingratitude. If he has made him poor, in this too there is a trial for him to see whether he remains content and patient in the will of God and faces his hardships bravely within permissible bounds, or becomes ready to transgress every limit of morality and honesty and starts cursing his God.

كَلَّا بَلۡ لَّا تُكۡرِمُوۡنَ الۡيَتِيۡمَ ۙ 17

(89:17) But no;[10] you do not treat the orphan honourably,[11]

10. That is, this is not all the criterion of honor and disgrace, for the real criterion is the moral good and evil.

11. That is, as long as his father is alive, your treatment of him is attentive and when his rather dies, even the paternal and maternal uncles and the elder brothers, to say nothing of the neighbors and distant relatives, neglect him.

وَلَا تَحٰٓضُّوۡنَ عَلٰى طَعَامِ الۡمِسۡكِيۡنِ ۙ 18

(89:18) and do not urge one another to feed the poor,[12]

12. That is, nobody in your society feels any urge to feed the poor. Neither a man himself feels inclined to feed a hungry person, nor is there among the people any urge to do something to satisfy the hunger of the hungry, nor do they exhort one another to do so.

وَتَاْكُلُوْنَ التُّرَاثَ اَكْلًا لَّمًّا ۙ 19

(89:19) and greedily devour the entire inheritance,[13]

13. In Arabia, the women and children were as a rule deprived of inheritance and the people's idea in this regard was that the right to inheritance belonged only to those male members who were fit to fight and safeguard the family. Besides, the one who was more powerful and influential among the heirs of the deceased, would annex the whole inheritance without qualms, and usurp the shares of all those who did not have the power to secure their shares. They did not give any importance to the right and duty so that they should honestly render the right to whom it was due as a duty whether he had the power to secure it or not.

وَّتُحِبُّوْنَ الْمَالَ حُبًّا جَمًّا ؕ 20

(89:20) and love the riches, loving them ardently.[14]

14. That is, you have no regard for the permissible or the forbidden, the lawful or the unlawful. You feel no qualms about acquiring wealth in any way or by any means, fair or foul, and your greed is never satisfied however much you may have acquired and amassed.

كَلَّاۤ اِذَا دُكَّتِ الْاَرْضُ دَكًّا دَكًّا ۙ 21

(89:21) But no;[15] when the earth is ground to powder,

15. That is, you are wrong in thinking that you may do whatever you like in your life of the world, but you will never be called to account for it. The meting out of rewards and punishment denying which you have adopted this mode of life, is not anything impossible and fictitious, but it has to come to pass and it will certainly come to pass at the time being mentioned below.

وَّجَآءَ رَبُّكَ وَالْمَلَكُ صَفًّا صَفًّا ۚ 22

(89:22) and when your Lord appears[16] with rows upon rows of angels,

16. Although literally the words jaa Rabbuka mean your Lord will come, obviously there cannot be any question of Allah Almighty's moving from one place to another; therefore, this will inevitably have to be understood as an allegoric expression, which is meant to give an idea that at that time the manifestations of Allah Almighty's power and His majesty and

sovereignty will appear fully, as, for example, in the world the arrival of a king in person in the court is more awe-inspiring than the mere array of his forces and chiefs and nobles.

وَجِایْٓءَ یَوْمَىِٕذٍۭ بِجَهَنَّمَ ۙ۬ یَوْمَىِٕذٍ یَّتَذَكَّرُ الْاِنْسَانُ وَاَنّٰى لَهُ الذِّكْرٰى ؕ 23

(89:23) and when Hell is brought near that Day. On that Day will man understand, but of what avail will that understanding be?[17]

17. The words in the original can have two meanings:

(1) That on that Day man will remember whatever he had done in the world and will regret, but what will remembrance and regretting avail him then.

(2) That on that Day man will take heed and accept admonition: he will realize that whatever he had been told by the Prophets was true and he committed a folly when he did not listen to them; but what will taking heed and accepting the admonition and realizing one's errors avail then.

یَقُوْلُ یٰلَیْتَنِیْ قَدَّمْتُ لِحَیَاتِیْ ۚ 24

(89:24) He will say: "Would that I had sent ahead what would be of avail for this life of mine!"

فَیَوْمَىِٕذٍ لَّا یُعَذِّبُ عَذَابَهٗٓ اَحَدٌ ۙ 25

(89:25) Then on that Day Allah will chastise as none other can chastise;

وَّلَا یُوْثِقُ وَثَاقَهٗٓ اَحَدٌ ؕ 26

(89:26) and Allah will bind as none other can bind.

یٰٓاَیَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَىِٕنَّةُ ۟ قف صلے 27

(89:27) (On the other hand it will be said): "O serene soul![18]

18. Peaceful and fully satisfied soul: The man who believed in Allah, the One, as his Lord and Sustainer, and adopted the way of life brought by the Prophets as his way of life, with full satisfaction of the heart, and without the least doubt about it, who acknowledged as absolute truth whatever creed and command he received from Allah and His Messenger, who withheld himself from whatever he was forbidden by Allah's religion, not unwillingly but with perfect conviction that it was really an evil thing, who offered without sacrifice whatever sacrifice was required to be offered for the sake of the truth, who endured with full peace of mind whatever difficulties, troubles and hardships he met on this way and who felt no remorse on being deprived of the gains and benefits and pleasures in the world

which seemed to accrue to those who followed other ways but remained fully satisfied that adherence to true faith had safeguarded him against those errors. This very state has been described at another place in the Quran as sharh sadr. (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 125).

ارْجِعِيٓ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً ۚ 28

(89:28) Return to your Lord[19] well-pleased (with your blissful destination), well-pleasing (to your Lord).

19. This he will be told at the time of his death as well as on the Day of Resurrection when he will rise from the dead and move towards the Plain of Assembly and also on the occasion when he will be presented in the divine court. At every stage he will be assured that he is moving towards the Mercy of Allah Almighty.

فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَٰدِي ۙ 29

(89:29) So enter among My (righteous) servants

وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي ۩ 30

(89:30) and enter My Paradise."

90. Surah Al Balad (The City)

Name

The Surah has been so named after the word *al balad* in the first verse.

Period of Revelation

Its subject matter and style resemble those of the earliest Surahs revealed at Makkah, but it contains a pointer which indicates that it was sent down in the period when the disbelievers of Makkah had resolved to oppose the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace), and made it lawful for themselves to commit tyranny and excess against him.

Theme and Subject Matter

In this Surah a vast subject has been compressed into a few brief sentences, and it is a miracle of the Quran that a complete ideology of life which could hardly be explained in a thick volume has been abridged most effectively in brief sentences of this short Surah. Its theme is to explain the true position of man in the world and of the world in relation to man and to tell that God has shown to man both the highways of good and evil, has also provided for him the means to judge and see and follow them, and now it rests upon mans own effort and judgment whether he chooses the path of virtue and reaches felicity or adopts the path of vice and meets with doom.

First, the city of Makkah and the hardships being faced therein by the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) and the state of the children of Adam have been cited as a witness to the truth that this world is not a place of rest and ease for man, where he might have been born to enjoy life, but here he has been created into toil and struggle. If this theme is read with verse 39 of Surah An-Najm (*Laisa lil insani illa ma saa*: there is nothing for man but what he has striven for), it becomes plain that in this world the future of man depends on his toil and struggle, effort and striving.

After this, man's misunderstanding that he is all in all in this world and that there is no superior power to watch what he does and to call him to account, has been refuted.

Then, taking one of the many moral concepts of ignorance held by man, as an example, it has been pointed out what wrong criteria of merit and greatness he has proposed for himself in the world. The person who for ostentation and display squanders heaps of wealth, not only himself prides upon his extravagances but the people also admire him for it enthusiastically, whereas the Being Who is watching over his deeds, sees by what methods he obtained the wealth and in what ways and with what motives and intention he spent it.

Then Allah says: We have given man the means of knowledge and the faculties of thinking and understanding and opened up before him both the highways of virtue and vice: one way leads down to moral depravity, and it is an easy way pleasing for the self; the other way leads up to moral heights, which is steep like an uphill road, for scaling which man has to exercise self- restraint. It is man's weakness that he prefers slipping down into the abyss to scaling the cliff.

Then, Allah has explained what the steep road is by following which man can ascend to the heights. It is that he should give up spending for ostentation, display and pride and should spend his wealth to help the orphans and the needy, should believe in Allah and His Religion and joining the company of believers should participate in the construction of a society which should fulfill the demands of virtue and righteousness patiently and should be compassionate to the people. The end of those who follow this way is that they would become worthy of Allah's mercies. On the contrary, the end of those who follow the wrong way, is the fire of Hell from which there is no escape.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

لَاۤ اُقۡسِمُ بِهٰذَا الۡبَلَدِ ۙ 1

(90:1) Nay![1] I swear by this city[2]

1. As we have explained in(E.N.1 of Surah Al-Qiyamah), to begin a discourse with a Nay and resume it with an oath means that the people were asserting a wrong thing to refute which it was said: Nay, the truth is not that which you seem to assert, but I swear by such and such a thing that the truth is this and this. As for the question what it was to refute which this discourse was sent down, it is indicated by the theme that follows. The disbelievers of Makkah said that there was nothing wrong with the way of life that they were following, as if to say: Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die in the natural process of time. Muhammad (peace be upon him), without any reason, is finding fault with this way of life and warning us that we would at some time in the future be called to account for it and rewarded and punished accordingly.

2. This City: the city of Makkah. There was no need here to explain why an oath was being sworn by this City. The people of Makkah were well aware of the background and importance of their city and knew how in the midst of desolate mountains, in an un-cultivated, barren valley, the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) had brought his wife and suckling child and left them there without any support; how he had built a House there and proclaimed to the people to visit it as pilgrims when there was no soul for miles around to hear the proclamation, and then how this city had eventually become the commercial and religious centre of Arabia and was blessed with such sacredness that there was no other place of security beside it in that lawless land for centuries.

وَاَنۡتَ حِلٌّۢ بِهٰذَا الۡبَلَدِ ۙ 2

(90:2) – this city wherein you have been rendered violable–[3]

3. Three meanings of the words in the text have been given by the commentators:

(1) That you are a resident of this city and your residence here has further enhanced the glory of this city.

(2) That although this city is a sanctuary; a time will come when for some time it will become lawful for you to fight and kill the enemies of the true faith here.

(3) That in this city where even killing of animals and cutting of trees is forbidden for the people of Arabia, and where everyone is living in perfect peace, you, O Prophet, have no peace, and persecuting you and devising plans to kill you has been made lawful.

Although the words are comprehensive enough to cover all the three meanings, yet when the theme that follows is considered, one feels that the first two meanings bear no relevance to it, and only the third meaning seems to be correct.

وَوَالِدٍ وَّمَا وَلَدَ ۙ 3

(90:3) and I swear by the parent and his offspring:[4]

4. As the words "father and children he begot" have been used indefinitely, and this is followed by the mention of man, father could only imply Adam (peace be upon him) and children the human beings who existed in the world, exist today and will exist in the future.

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ فِيْ كَبَدٍ ؕ 4

(90:4) Verily We have created man into toil and hardship.[5]

5. This is that for which the oaths as mentioned above have been sworn. Man's being created in toil means that man in this world has not been created to enjoy himself and live a life of ease and comfort, but the world for him is a place of enduring and undergoing toil, labor and hardship, and no man can be immune from this. The city of Makkah is a witness that a servant of Allah toiled and struggled hard, then only did it become a city and the centre of Arabia. In this city of Makkah the condition of Muhammad (peace be upon him) is a witness that he is enduring every kind of hardship for the sake of a mission; so much so that there is full peace here for the wild animals but no peace for him. Then, every man's survival, from the time he is conceived in the mother's womb till the last breath of life, is a witness that he has to pass through trouble, toil, labor, dangers and hardships at every step. The most fortunate of us is also exposed to grave dangers of death before birth or of elimination by abortion while in the mother's womb. At birth he is only a hair-breadth away from death. After birth he is so helpless that had there not been somebody to look after him, he would perish uncared for and unnoticed. When he became able to walk he stumbled at every step. From childhood to youth and old age he had to pass through such physical changes that if any change had taken a wrong turn, his very life would have been at stake. Even if he is a king or a dictator, at no time he enjoys internal peace from the fear that a rebellion might arise against him somewhere. Even if he is a conqueror he is never at peace from the danger that one of his generals might rise in revolt against him. Even if he is a Korah of his time, he is ever anxious to increase his wealth and to safeguard it. Thus, there is no one who may be enjoying perfect peace freely and without hesitation, for man indeed has been created into a life of toil and trouble.

أَيَحْسَبُ أَن لَّن يَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ أَحَدٌ ۘ 5

(90:5) Does he think that no one can overpower him?[6]

6. That is, is man, who is ever exposed to such hazards, involved in the delusion that he can do what he likes, and there is no superior power to seize and suppress him? The fact, however, is that even before the occurrence of the Hereafter in this world itself, he sees that his destiny every moment is being ruled by some other Being against Whose decrees all his plans and designs prove ineffective. A single jolt of the earthquake, a blast of wind, a flood in the river and a sea-storm are enough to show how weak and feeble man is against the divine forces. A sudden accident can reduce a strong and robust person to a cripple; one turn of the fortune deposes a mighty sovereign from the position of authority. When the fortunes of the nations, which have climbed to the very apex of glory and prosperity, change, they are humiliated and disgraced even in the world where no one could dare look at them in the face. How has then this man been deluded into thinking that no one else can have power over him.

يَقُولُ أَهْلَكْتُ مَالًا لُّبَدًا ۖ 6

(90:6) He says: "I have squandered enormous wealth."[7]

7. Literally: I have destroyed heaps of wealth, i.e. squandered and wasted it. These words show how proud the speaker was of his wealth. The heaps of wealth, that he spent was so insignificant as against his total wealth that he did not mind squandering it carelessly. And to what purpose did he squander it? Not for a genuine, good cause as becomes evident from the following verses, but for display of his wealth and expression of his pride and glory. Bestowing rich awards on poetic admirers, inviting and feeding hundreds of thousands of people on marriage and death ceremonies, gambling away heaps of wealth, attending festivals with large entourages, trying to excel others in display of glory and grandeur, having heaps of food cooked on ceremonial occasions and throwing invitations to all and sundry to come and eat, or arranging and supplying running meals at the residence so as to impress the people around with one's generosity and large heartedness; such were the expenditures of ostentation, which in the days of ignorance were regarded as a symbol of man's munificence and magnanimity, and a sign of his greatness. For these they were praised and admired; on these their praises were sung; and on account of these they prided themselves against the less fortunate.

أَيَحْسَبُ أَن لَّمْ يَرَهُۥٓ أَحَدٌ ۖ 7

(90:7) Does he believe that none has seen him?[8]

8. That is, doesn't this boaster understand that there is also a God above him, Who sees by what means he obtained this wealth, in what ways he spent it, and with what intention, motive, and purpose he did all this? Does he think that God will put any value on his

extravagance, his fame-mongering and his boasting. Does he think that like the world, God too will be deluded by it.

اَلَمۡ نَجۡعَلۡ لَّهٗ عَيۡنَيۡنِ ۙ 8

(90:8) Did We not grant him two eyes,

وَلِسَانًا وَّشَفَتَيۡنِ ۙ 9

(90:9) and a tongue and two lips?[9]

9. That is, have We not given him the means of obtaining knowledge and wisdom? Two eyes does not imply the eyes of the cow and buffalo, but human eyes, which if used intelligently can help man see all around himself those signs which lead to the reality and distinguish the right from the wrong. The tongue and lips do not merely imply the instruments of speech but the rational mind behind these instruments which performs the functions of thinking and understanding and then uses them for expressing its ideas, motives and designs.

وَهَدَيۡنٰهُ النَّجۡدَيۡنِ ۚ 10

(90:10) And did We not show him the two highroads (of good and evil)?[10]

10. That is, We have not left him alone after granting him the faculties of thinking and reasoning so that he may have to search out his own way, but We have also guided him and opened up before him both the highways of good and evil, virtue and vice, so that he may consider them seriously and choose and adopt one or the other way on his own responsibility. This same subject has been expressed in (Surah Ad-Dahr, Ayat 2-3), thus: Indeed We created man from a mixed sperm-drop, to try him, and so We made him capable of hearing and seeing. We showed him the way, whether to be grateful or disbelieving. For explanation, see (E.Ns 3 to 5 of Surah Ad-Dahr).

فَلَا اقۡتَحَمَ الۡعَقَبَةَ ۖ 11

(90:11) But he did not venture to scale the difficult steep.[11]

11. The words in the original are: fa-laqtaham-al-aqabah. Iqtiham means to apply oneself to a hard and toilsome task, and aqabah is the steep path that passes through mountains for ascending heights. Thus, the verse means: One of the two paths that We have shown him, leads to heights but is toilsome and steep; man has to tread it against the desires of his self and the temptations of Satan. The other path is easy which descends into chasms, but does not require any toil from man; one only needs to give free reins to himself, then he automatically goes on rolling down the abyss. Now, the man to whom We had shown both the paths, adopted the easy down-hill path and abandoned the toilsome path, which leads to the heights.

وَمَآ أَدۡرَىٰكَ مَا ٱلۡعَقَبَةُ ١٢

(90:12) And what do you know what that difficult steep is?

فَكُّ رَقَبَةٍ ١٣

(90:13) It is freeing someone's neck from slavery;

أَوۡ إِطۡعَٰمٌ فِي يَوۡمٍ ذِي مَسۡغَبَةٍ ١٤

(90:14) or giving food on a day of hunger

يَتِيمًا ذَا مَقۡرَبَةٍ ١٥

(90:15) to an orphan near of kin;

أَوۡ مِسۡكِينًا ذَا مَتۡرَبَةٍ ١٦

(90:16) or to a destitute lying in dust;[12]

12. Since in the foregoing verses the extravagances of man which he indulges in for ostentation and expression of superiority to others, have been mentioned, now here it is being stated as to what expenditure of wealth it is which leads man up to moral heights instead of causing him to sink into moral depravity and perversion. But in this there is no enjoyment for the self; on the contrary, man has to exercise self-restraints and make sacrifices. The expenditure is that one should set a slave free, or should render a slave monetary help so as to enable him to win his freedom by paying the ransom, or free a debtor from his debt, or secure release of a helpless person without means from penalties. Likewise, the expenditure is that one should feed a nearly related orphan (i.e. an orphan who is either a relative or a neighbor) who is hungry, and a needy, helpless person who might have been reduced to extreme poverty and might have none to support and help him. Helping such people does not win a person fame and reputation, nor feeding them brings him the admiration for being wealthy and generous which one usually wins by holding banquets to thousands of well-to-do people. But the path to moral and spiritual heights passes on steep uphill roads only.

Great merits of the acts of virtue mentioned in these verses have been described by the Prophet (peace be upon him). For instance, about fakku raqabah (freeing a neck from bondage) many ahadith have been related in the traditions, one of which is a tradition from Abu Hurairah, to the effect, The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The person who set a believing slave free, Allah will save from fire of Hell every limb of his body in lieu of every limb of the slave's body, the hand in lieu of the hand, the foot in lieu of the foot, the private parts in lieu of the private parts. (Musnad, Ahmad, Bukhari. Muslim, Tirmidhi, Nasai). Ali

bin Husain (Zain al-Abedin) asked Saad bin Marjanah, the reporter of this Hadith: Did you hear it yourself from Abu Hurairah? When he replied in the affirmative, Zain al- Abedin called out his most valuable slave and set him free there and then. According to Muslim, he had an offer of ten thousand dirhams for the slave. On the basis of this verse, Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam Shafi have ruled: Setting a slave free is superior to giving away charity, for Allah has mentioned it before the mention of charity.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) has mentioned the merits of rendering help to the needy in many ahadith, one of which is this Hadith from Abu Hurairah: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The one who strives in the cause of rendering help to the widow and the needy is like the one who endeavors and strives in the cause of jihad for the sake of Allah. And Abu Hurairah says, I think that the Prophet (peace be upon him) also said: He is even like him who keeps standing up in the Prayer constantly, without ever taking rest, and like him who observes the fast continuously without ever breaking it: (Bukhari, Muslim).

As for the orphans, there are numerous sayings reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him). Sahl bin Saad has reported, The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: I and the one who supports a nearly related of un-related orphan, shall stand in Paradise like this, saying this he raised his index finger and the middle finger, keeping them a little apart. (Bukhari). Abu Hurairah has reported this saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him): The best among the Muslim homes is the home wherein an orphan is treated well and the worst the one wherein an orphan is mistreated. (Ibn Majah, Bukhari in Al-Adab al-Mufrad). Abu Umamah says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The one who passed his hand on the head of an orphan, only for the sake of Allah, will have as many acts of virtue recorded in his favor as the number of the hair on which his hand passed, and the one who treated an orphan boy or girl well, will stand in Paradise with me like this, saying this the Prophet (peace be upon him) joined his two fingers together. (Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi). Ibn Abbas says, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The one who made an orphan join him in eating and drinking, Allah will make Paradise obligatory for him unless he commits a sin which cannot be forgiven. (Sharh as-Sunnah). Abu Hurairah says: A man complained before the Prophet (peace be upon him), saying: I am hard-hearted. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to him: Treat the orphan with kindness and love and feed the needy one. (Musnad Ahmad).

ثُمَّ كَانَ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْمَرْحَمَةِ ؕ 17

(90:17) and, then besides this, he be one of those who believed,[13] and enjoined upon one another steadfastness and enjoined upon one another compassion.[14]

13. That is, in addition to these qualities it is essential that one should be a believer, for without faith no act is an act of virtue, nor acceptable in the sight of Allah. At numerous places in the Quran it has been stated that only such an act of virtue is appreciable and becomes a means of salvation as is accompanied by faith. In Surah An-Nisa, for example, it has been said: The one who does good deeds, whether man or woman, provided that the one is a believer, will enter Paradise (verse 124). In Surah An-Nahl: Whosoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, provided that he is a believer, We shall surely grant him to live a pure life in this world, and We will reward such people (in the Hereafter) according to their best deeds (verse 97). In Surah Al-Momin: Whoever does good, whether

man or woman, provided that he is a believer, all such people shall enter Paradise wherein they shall be provided without measure. (verse 4). Whoever studies the Quran, will see that in this Book wherever the good reward of a righteous act has been mentioned, it has always been made conditional upon the faith, a good act without faith has nowhere been regarded as acceptable to God, nor has any hope been given for a reward for it.

Here, the following important point should also not remain hidden from view: In this verse it has not been said: Then he believed, but: Then being among those who have believed. This means that mere believing as an individual and remaining content with it is not what is desired; what is desired is that every new believer should join those who have already believed so as to form a party of the believers, to bring about a believing society, which should work for establishing the virtues and wiping out the vices as demanded by the faith.

14. These are two of the important characteristics of the believing society, which have been expressed in two brief sentences. The first characteristic is that its members should exhort one another to patience, and the second that they should exhort one another to compassion and mercy.

As for patience, we have explained at many places that in view of the extensive meaning in which the Quran has used this word, the entire life of a believer is a life of patience. As soon as a man steps on to the path of the faith, test of his patience starts. Patience is required to be exercised in performing the acts of worship enjoined by Allah; patience is needed in carrying out the commands of Allah; abstention from the things forbidden by Allah is not possible without patience; patience is needed in abandoning the moral evils and in adopting the pure morals. Temptations to sin faced at every step can be resisted only by recourse to patience. On countless occasions in life obedience to God's law entails losses, troubles, hardships and deprivations, and disobedience to the law seems to bring benefits and pleasures. Without patience no believer can fare well on such occasions. Then, as soon as a believer has adopted the way of the faith, he has to meet with resistance not only from his own self and personal desires but also from his children, family, society, country and nation, so much so that he is even required to abandon his country and undertake Jihad in the cause of God. Under all these conditions only the quality of patience can cause a man to remain steadfast to principles. Now, obviously, if every believer individually was put to such a hard test, he would be faced with the danger of defeat at every step and would hardly be able to pass through the test successfully. On the contrary, if there existed a believing society, every member of which was not only himself possessed of patience but all its members also were supporting one another mutually in the test of patience, successes would fall to its lot, a tremendous power would be generated to face the evil, a mighty force of good individuals would be ready to help bring the entire society on to the path of virtue and righteousness.

As for mercy and compassion, it is the distinctive feature of the society of believers that they are not a merciless and unjust people but a society whose members are merciful and compassionate to humanity at large and sympathetic and friendly among themselves. A believer as an individual is an embodiment of Allah's quality of mercy and the group of the believers as a party also is a representative of Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him), who has been described thus: O Muhammad (peace be upon him), We have sent you to be a real blessing for the people of the world. (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 107). The highest moral quality which the Messenger (peace be upon him) tried his utmost to inculcate among his followers

was this very quality of mercy. Consider the following of his sayings, which show what importance he attached to it. Jarir bin Abdullah says that the Messenger (peace be upon him) said: Allah does not show mercy to him who does not show mercy to others. (Bukhari, Muslim).

Abdullah bin Amr bin al-aas says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The Rahman (Merciful) shows mercy to those who show mercy (to others). Show mercy to those who live on the earth, the One who is in heaven will show mercy to you. (Abu Daud, Tirmidhi).

Abu Saeed Khudri has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The one who does not show mercy, is not shown mercy. (Bukhari in Al-Adab al-Mufrad). Ibn Abbas says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The one who does not treat our young ones mercifully and does not treat our elderly ones respectfully, does not belong to us.(Tirmidhi).

Abu Daud has related this same saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him) on the authority of Abdullah bin Amr, thus: The one who did not feel pity on our young and did not respect our elderly does not belong to us.

Abu Hurairah says: I have heard Abul-Qasim, the truthful (peace be upon him), say: The heart of the wretched one is deprived of the quality of mercy altogether. (Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi).

Iyad bin Himad relates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Three kinds of men belong to Paradise, one of whom is the person who is kind and compassionate to every relative and every Muslim. (Muslim).

Numan bin Bashir has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: You will find the believers like a body in the matter of mutual kindness, love and sympathy, so that if one part of the body suffers the whole body suffers and becomes restless because of it. (Bukhari, Muslim).

Abu Musa al-ashari says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The believer is for the other believer like a wall each part of which supports and strengthens the other part. (Bukhari, Muslim).

Abdullah bin Umar has reported that the Prophet said: A Muslim is a brother of the other Muslim: neither treats him unjustly, nor withholds his help from him. The person who works to fulfill a need of his brother, Allah will seek to fulfill his need; and the one who rescues a Muslim from an affliction, Allah will rescue him from an affliction of the afflictions of the Resurrection Day; and the one who conceals the fault of a Muslim, Allah will conceal his fault on the Resurrection Day. (Bukhari, Muslim).

These traditions indicate what kind of a society is envisaged by the Quranic instruction given in this verse, which exhorts the righteous people to join the group of the believers after they have affirmed the faith.

 أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ ط

(90:18) These are the People of the Right Hand.

وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا هُمْ اَصْحٰبُ الْمَشْئَمَةِ ؕ 19

(90:19) As for those who rejected Our Signs, they are the People of the Left Hand.[15]

15. For an explanation of the people of the right hand and of the left hand, see(E.Ns 5, 6 of Surah Al-Waqiah). 2

عَلَيْهِمْ نَارٌ مُّؤْصَدَةٌ ع 20

(90:20) Upon them shall be a Fire that will hem them in.[16]

16. That is, fire will be so covering them from every side that they will find no way of escape from it.

91. Sura As Shams (The Sun)

Name

The Surah has been so designated after the word ash-shams with which it opens.

Period of Revelation

The subject matter and the style show that this Surah too was revealed in the earliest period at Makkah at a stage when opposition to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) had grown very strong and intense.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is to distinguish the good from the evil and to warn the people, who were refusing to understand this distinction and insisting on following the evil way, of the evil end.

In view of the subject matter this Surah consists of two parts. The first part consists of vv. 1-10, and the second of vv. 11-15. The first part deals with three things:

1. That just as the sun and the moon, the day and the night, the earth and the sky, are different from each other and contradictory in their effects and results, so are the good and the evil different front each other and contradictory in their effects and results; they are neither alike in their outward appearance nor can they be alike in their results.
2. That Allah after giving the human self powers of the body, sense and mind has not left it uninformed in the world, but has instilled into his unconscious by means of a natural inspiration the distinction between good and evil, right and wrong, and the sense of the good to be good and of the evil to be evil.
3. That the future of man depends on how by using the powers of discrimination, will and judgment that Allah has endowed him with, he develops the good and suppresses the evil tendencies of the self. If he develops the good inclination and frees his self of the evil inclinations, he will attain to eternal success, and if, on the contrary, he suppresses the good and promotes the evil, he will meet with disappointment and failure.

In the second part citing the historical precedent of the people of Thamud the significance of Prophethood has been brought out. A Messenger is raised in the world, because the inspirational knowledge of good and evil that Allah has placed in human nature, is by itself not enough for the guidance of man, but on account of his failure to understand it fully man has been proposing wrong criteria and theories of good and evil and thus going astray. That is why Allah sent down clear and definite Revelation to the Prophets (peace be upon them) to augment man's natural inspiration so that they may expound to the people as to what is good and what is evil. Likewise, the Prophet Salih (peace be upon him) was sent to the people of Thamud, but the people overwhelmed by the evil of their self, had become so rebellious that they rejected him. And when he presented before them the miracle of the she camel, as demanded by themselves, the most wretched one of them, in spite of his warning, hamstrung it, in accordance with the will and desire of the people. Consequently, the entire tribe was overtaken by a disaster.

While narrating this story of the Thamud nowhere in the Surah has it been said "O people of Quraish, if you rejected your Prophet, Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings), as the Thamud had rejected theirs, you too would meet with the same fate as they met." The conditions at that time in Makkah were similar to those that had been created by the wicked among the people of Thamud against the Prophet Salih (peace be upon him). Therefore, the narration of this story in those conditions was by itself enough to suggest to the people of Makkah how precisely this historical precedent applied to them.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

وَالشَّمۡسِ وَضُحٰىہَا ۙ 1

(91:1) By the sun and its heat and brightness,[1]

1. The word duha as used in the original applies both to the light of the sun and to its heat. Although in Arabic its well known meaning is the time between sunrise and meridian when the sun has risen high, at that height it does not only give light but heat too. Therefore, when the word duha is attributed to the sun, its full meaning can be expressed more appropriately by its radiant brightness than by its light, or by the time of the day that it indicates.

وَالۡقَمَرِ اِذَا تَلٰىہَا ۙ 2

(91:2) and by the moon as it follows it;

وَالنَّہَارِ اِذَا جَلّٰىہَا ۙ 3

(91:3) and by the day as it displays the sun's glory,

وَالَّیۡلِ اِذَا یَغۡشٰىہَا ۙ 4

(91:4) and by the night as it envelopes the sun;[2]

2. That is, when the night comes, the sun hides and its light remains hidden throughout the night. This state has been described, saying that the night covers up the sun, for the night actually signifies the sun’s hiding behind the horizon because of which its light cannot reach that part of the earth where the night has fallen.

وَالسَّمَآءِ وَمَا بَنٰىہَا ۙ 5

(91:5) and by the sky and by Him Who made it;[3]

3. Who established it: Who established it like a vault over the earth. In this verse and in the two succeeding verses, the word ma has been used. A section of the commentators has taken

this ma as an infinitive, and interpreted these verses to mean: By the heaven and its being established, by the earth and its being spread out, and by the human self and its being balanced. But this meaning is not correct for the reason that the following sentence: Then inspired it with its wickedness and its piety, does not fit in with the context. Other commentators have taken ma here in the meaning of mun or alladhi and they interpret the sentence to mean: Who established the heaven, who spread out the earth, and who balanced the human self. This second meaning is correct in our view, and no one can object that ma in Arabic is used of lifeless things and irrational creatures, For in the Quran itself there are numerous instances that ma has been used in the meaning of mun, e.g. wala antum abiduna ma aabud (nor are you the worshippers of Him Whom I worship), fankihu ma taba lakun-mia-an-nisa (so, marry from among the women those whom you like), wala tankihu ma nakaha abaaukum min-nisa (do not marry those women whom your fathers had married).

وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا طَحٰىهَا ۙ 6

(91:6) and by the earth and by Him Who stretched it out;

وَنَفْسٍ وَّمَا سَوّٰىهَا ۙ 7

(91:7) and by the soul and by Him Who perfectly proportioned it,[4]

4. Proportioned it: Gave man such a body which by virtue of its erect stature, its hands and feet, and its brain was most appropriate for him to live as man in the world. He blessed him with the senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell which on account of their combination and their characteristics could become the best means of obtaining knowledge for him. He endowed him with the faculties of thinking, reasoning, imagination, memory, discrimination, judgment, will-power and such other mental powers by virtue of which he is able to perform the functions fit for man in the world. In addition, proportioning also means that man was not created a sinner by birth and a criminal by instinct but on right and sound nature, and was not characterized with any inborn crookedness because of which he may be unable to adopt the right path even if he wanted to do so. This same thing has been expressed in Surah Ar-Room, saying: Be steadfast on the nature whereupon Allah has created mankind, (verse 30), and the same has been explained by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in a Hadith, saying: Every new-born child is born on true human nature; it is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian afterwards. Its example is of an animal giving birth to complete and sound young one. Do you find any one with a torn or slit ear? (Bukhari, Muslim). That is, it is the polytheistic people who on account of their superstitions of ignorance tear and slit the ears of animals afterwards; otherwise God does not cause an animal to be born with torn ears from its mother's belly. In another Hadith the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: My Lord says: I had created all My servants on true faith (i.e. on sound nature); then the satans came and led them astray from their faith (i.e.. the true natural faith) and made unlawful what I had made lawful for them, and commanded them to associate with Me those for whom I had sent down no authority. (Musnad Ahmad; Muslim also has related a saying from the Prophet (peace be upon him) in similar words).

فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا ۝٨

(91:8) and imbued it with (the consciousness of) its evil and its piety:[5]

5. The word ilham is derived from lahm which means to swallow. According to this very basic meaning, the word ilham is used terminologically for Allah's inspiring a man with a concept or idea unconsciously. Inspiring the human self with its wickedness and its piety and virtue has two meanings: (1) That the Creator has placed in it tendencies to both good and evil, and this is the thing that every man feels in himself. (2) That Allah has endowed every man's unconscious mind with the concept that there is a moral good and there is a moral evil, that good morals and acts and evil morals and acts are not equal and alike. Fujur (immorality) is an evil thing and taqva (abstention from evils) a good thing. These concepts are not new to man; he is conscious of these by nature, and the Creator has endowed him with the ability to distinguish between good and evil naturally. This same thing has been said in Surah Al-Balad: And We showed him both the highways of good and evil. (verse 10); and in Surah Ad-Dahr, thus: We showed him the way, whether to be grateful or disbelieving (verse 3); and the same has been expressed in Surah Al-Qiyamah, saying: In man there is the reproaching self (conscience) which reproaches him when he commits evil (verse 2), and man knows his own self best, even though he may offer many excuses. (verses 14-15).

Here, one should also understand well that Allah has blessed every creature with natural inspiration according to its position and nature, as has been pointed out in Surah TaHa: Who has given a distinctive form to everything and then guided it aright. (verse 50). For example, every species of animals has been given inspirational knowledge according to its needs by virtue of which the fish learns to swim, the bird to fly, the bee to make the beehive and the weaver-bird to build the nest instinctively. Man also in view of his different capacities has been granted separate kinds of inspirational knowledge. His one capacity is that he is an animal being; as such the most significant instance of the inspirational knowledge that he has been given is that the human child starts sucking the mother's milk soon on birth, which no one could teach it, had it, not been taught of it instinctively by God. Another position of man is that he is a rational being. As such God has been blessing him with inspirational guidance continuously since the time of his creation, by virtue of which he has been discovering things and making inventions to develop his civilization. Anyone who studies the history of these discoveries and inventions will realize that there was hardly any which might be the result of man'ˈs own effort or thought, but mostly it so happened that suddenly an idea struck a person and he discovered or invented something. Besides these two, another position of man is that he is a moral being. In this position too Allah has blessed him by inspiration with discrimination between good and evil and of the realization of the good to be good and of the evil to be evil. This sense of discrimination and realization is a universal truth on account of which no human society in the world has ever been without the concepts of good and evil; there has never been in history, nor is there now, a society which may not be having some kind of a system of rewarding the good and punishing the evil. This fact being prevalent in every age, at every place, and at every stage of civilization is a clear proof of its being natural and innate. Furthermore, this is also proof that a Wise Creator possessed of knowledge has endued man's nature with it, for in the

elements of which man is made up and the laws which govern the material system of the world, no human origin of morals can be traced out.

قَدۡ اَفۡلَحَ مَنۡ زَكّٰىهَا ۙ 9

(91:9) He who purifies it will prosper,

وَقَدۡ خَابَ مَنۡ دَسّٰىهَا ؕ 10

(91:10) and he who suppresses it will be ruined.[6]

6. This is for which an oath has been sworn by the things mentioned in the above verses. Let us now consider how those things bear upon it. The rule that Allah has followed in the Quran is that to bear testimony to the truth that He wants to impress on the human mind, he cites some of the most conspicuous, common-place things which every man sees in his surroundings, or in his own self. Accordingly here, pairs of contradictory things have been cited, each unlike the other in its effects and results, rather opposite and reverse. The first pair is of the sun and the moon. The light of the sun is intensely bright and also hot. As against it the moon has no light of its own. Even if it is there in the sky when the sun shines, it is without light. It shines when the sun hides, and even then its light is neither so bright that it may change the night into day nor is there any heat in it that it may have the same effect as the sun's light. Nevertheless, it has its own effects which are quite different from the effects of the sun. Likewise, there is the pair of the day and the night. Each is the reverse of the other. The effects and results of each are so different from the other that no one can say they are alike; so much so that even a most foolish person cannot possibly say that the day's being the day or the night's being the night does not make any difference. Likewise, there is the pair of the sky and the earth; the former has been raised high by the Creator and the latter spread like a carpet beneath it. Although both are serving the same universe, its system and expediencies, yet there is a world of difference between their functions and their effects and results. After citing these universal evidences, man's own self has been considered, and it has been said that after balancing it with suitable combination of the limbs, senses and mental powers and faculties the Creator has placed in it tendencies, inclinations and motives to both good and evil, which are contradictory to each other, and made him understand by inspiration the distinction between the two: that one is fujur, which is evil, and the other is taqva, which is good. Now, if the sun and the moon, the day and the night, the earth and the heaven, are not alike but necessarily different from each other in their effects and results, how can fujur and taqva of the self be alike in spite of being reverse of each other? Man himself in this world does not regard and acknowledge the good and the evil as equal, no matter what criteria of good and evil he might have devised for himself according to his self-propounded philosophies. In any case, about whatever he regards as good, he holds the opinion that it is appreciable and worthy of praise, reward and recompense. On the contrary, about whatever he regards as evil, it is his own objective opinion that it is worthy of condemnation and punishment. But the real judgment does not lie with man; it lies with the Creator, Who has inspired man with his fujur and taqva. The fujur is that which is fujur in the sight of the Creator and the taqva is that which is taqva in His sight. And both have separate results in the sight of the Creator. The result of the one is

that he who purifies his self, should attain to eternal success, and the result of the other is that he who suppresses his self, should be a failure.

Tazkiyah means to purify, develop and cultivate. In the context it clearly means: The one who purifies his self of fujur and develops it to the level of taqva and cultivates in it the good, will attain to eternal success. As against this, the word dassaha has been used, the infinitive of which is tadsiyah, which means to suppress, conceal, seduce and lead astray. The meaning of this also becomes clear from the context; i.e. the one who suppresses the tendency in his self towards good instead of developing and cultivating it, who seduces it into doing evil, and makes fujur dominate over taqva so as to cover it up completely, like the dead body which is buried and covered with earth, will be a failure. Some commentators have interpreted this verse to mean: Truly successful was he whom (whose self) Allah purified, and a failure he whom (whose self) Allah suppressed. But this commentary is, firstly, opposed to the style of the Quran in view of the language, for if Allah had meant to say this, He would have said: Truly successful was the self which Allah purified and a failure the self which Allah suppressed; secondly, this commentary clashes with the other statements of the Quran on this subject. In Surah Al- Aala, Allah says: Truly successful was he who adopted purity. (verse 14). In Surah Abasa, Allah has addressed His Messenger (peace be upon him), saying: And you would not be responsible if he did not adopt purity. In both these verses, adoption of purity has been regarded as an act of man. Besides, the truth stated at many places in the Quran is that man in this world is being put to the test. For example, in Surah Ad-Dahr, it is said: We created man from a mixed sperm-drop to try him, and so We made him capable of hearing and seeing. (verse 2). In Surah Al-Mulk it is stated: Who created death and life that he may try you to see which of you is best in deeds. (verse 2). Now, obviously, if the examiner at the outset encourages one candidate and discourages the other, the test would he a farce. Therefore, the correct commentary is that which Qatadah, Ikrimah, Mujahid and Saeed bin Jubair have given, saying that the subject zakkaha and dassaha is man and not God. As for the Hadith which Ibn Abi Hatim has related on the authority of Juwaybir bin Saeed from Dahhak from Ibn Abbas, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself interpreted this verse to mean: Truly successful was the self whom the Almighty Allah purified. This saying is not confirmed to be from the Prophet (peace be upon him), for its one reporter Juwaybir, has been rejected as a narrator of Hadith, and Dahhak did not meet Ibn Abbas. However, the Hadith which Imam Ahmad, Muslim, Nasai and Ibn Abi Shaibah have related on the authority of Zaid bin Arqam, is correct which says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to pray: O Allah, grant my self its taqva and purify it; You alone are the best to purify it; You alone are its Guardian and Master. In almost similar words, this supplication of the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been related by Tabarani, Ibn Marduyah and lbn al-Mundhir from Abdullah bin Abbas and Imam Ahmad from Aishah. It actually means that man can only desire and seek taqva and tazkiyah; as for its attainment, it depends in any case on Allah's grace and favor alone. And the same is also true of tadsiyah: Allah does not suppress a self forcibly, but when a man is resolved on iniquity, Allah deprives him of the grace of taqva and tazkyah, and leaves him alone to suppress and bury his self under any heap of filth he likes.

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِطَغْوَىٰهَآ ﴿١١﴾

(91:11) In their presumptuous insolence the Thamud[7] called the Truth a lie[8]

7. The things stated in principle in the above verses are now being explained by an historical precedent. Of what it is a precedent and how it relates to what has been stated above, one should consider well in the light of the other statements of the Quran the two basic truths which have been expressed in (verses 7-10).

Firstly, in these it has been stated that after creating the human self on balanced and sound nature, Allah inspired it with its fujur and its taqva. The Quran along with stating this truth also makes explicit that this inspirational knowledge of fujur and taqva is not enough for every man that he may by himself obtain detailed guidance from it, but for this purpose Allah gave detailed guidance to the Prophets through revelation in which it was explained what is fujur and what it applies to, which one should avoid, and what is taqva which one should attain and develop. If man does not accept and acknowledge this clear and definite guidance sent down through Revelation, he can neither avoid fujur not find the way to taqva.

Secondly, in these verses it has been stated that, the rewards and punishments are the necessary results which accrue from adoption of either fujur or taqva The result of cleansing the self of fujur and developing it with taqva is eternal success and the result of suppressing its good tendencies and causing it to be overwhelmed with fujur is failure, ruin and destruction.

To make man understand this truth a historical precedent is being cited and for this the tribe of Thamud has been taken as an illustration, for the various tribes destroyed in antiquity the territory of the Thamud was closest to Makkah. In northern Hijaz its historical ruins were extant, which the people of Makkah passed by during their trade journeys to Syria, and the way this tribe has been frequently referred to in the pre-Islamic poetry shows that its destruction was a common subject of talk among the Arabs.

8. Denied the truth: belied the Prophethood of the Prophet Salih (peace be upon him), who was sent for their guidance. On account of their rebellious attitude they were not prepared to give up the fujur in which they were involved, and they were not inclined to accept the taqva to which the Prophet Salih (peace be upon him) was calling them. For details, see(Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayats 73-76); (Surah Houd, Ayats 61-62); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 141-153); (Surah An- Naml,Ayats 45-49); (Surah Al-Qamar, Ayats 23-25).

إِذِ انۢبَعَثَ اَشۡقٰىهَا ۘ 12

(91:12) when their arch-criminal rose up in rage.

فَقَالَ لَهُمۡ رَسُوۡلُ اللّٰهِ نَاقَةَ اللّٰهِ وَسُقۡيٰهَا ؕ 13

(91:13) Then Allah's Messenger warned them: “Hands off the she-camel and her drink!”[9]

9. At other places in the Quran the following details, are given: The people of Thamud challenged the Prophet Salih (peace be upon him) to present a sign (a miracle) if he was truthful. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) presented a she-camel miraculously before them and warned them to the effect: This is Allah's she-camel. She will graze at will in the land. One day will be for her to drink and one day for you and your cattle. If you molest her, you will be punished with a scourge. This proved to be a deterrent for some time. Then they appealed to their most wicked and rebellious chief to put an end to the she-camel, and he took up the responsibility and hamstrung her. (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 73); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 134, 156); (Surah Al-Qamar, Ayat 29).

فَكَذَّبُوْهُ فَعَقَرُوْهَا ۖ فَدَمْدَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِذَنْۢبِهِمْ فَسَوّٰىهَا ۖ 14

(91:14) But they rejected his statement as a lie and hamstrung the she-camel.[10] For that crime their Lord rumbled down upon them, utterly razing them to the ground.

10. According to (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 77), after they had killed the she-camel, the people of Thamud said to the Prophet Salih (peace be upon him): Bring the scourge with which you threatened us. And according to Surah Houd, Ayat 65, the Prophet Salih (peace be upon him) said to them: Well, you have only three more days to enjoy yourselves in your houses. This is a limit that will not prove false.

وَلَا يَخَافُ عُقْبٰهَا ۔ 15

(91:15) He has no fear of its sequel.[11]

11. That is, Allah is not like the kings of the world and the rulers of governments, who, when they want to take some action against a people, are compelled to consider what will be the consequences of their action. Allah's power is supreme. He had no apprehension that some supporting power of the Thamud would come out to avenge itself on Him.

92. Sura Al Lail (The Night)

Name

The Surah takes its name from the word wal-lail with which it opens.

Period of Revelation

Its subject matter so closely resembles that of Surah Ash-Shams that each Surah seems to be an explanation of the other. It is one and the same thing which has been explained in Surah Ash-Shams in one way and in this Surah in another. This indicates that both these Surahs were sent down in about the same period.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is to distinguish between the two different ways of life and to explain the contrast between their ultimate ends and results. In view of the subject matter this Surah consists of two parts, the first part consisting of vv. 1-11 and the second of vv. 12-21.

In the first part, at the outset it has been pointed out that the strivings and doings that the individuals, nations and groups of mankind are engaged in in the world, are, in respect of their moral nature, as divergent as the day is from the night, and the male from the female. After this, according to the general style of the brief Surahs of the Quran, three moral characteristics of one kind and three moral characteristics of the other kind have been presented as an illustration from among a vast collection of the strivings and activities of man, from which every man can judge which style of life is represented by one kind of the characteristics and which style of life by the other kind. Both these styles have been described in such brief, elegant. and pithy sentences that they move the heart and go down into memory as soon as one hears them. Characteristics of the first kind are that one should spend one's wealth, adopt God-consciousness and piety, and acknowledge the good as good. The second kind of the characteristics are that one should be miserly, should least care for God's pleasure and His displeasure, and should repudiate what is good and right. Then it has been stated that these two modes of action which are clearly divergent, cannot be equal and alike in respect of their results. But, just as they are divergent in their nature, so they are divergent in their results. The person (or group of persons) who adopts the first mode of action, Allah will make easy for him the correct way of life, so much so that doing good will become easy for him and doing evil difficult. On the contrary, he who adopts the second mode of life, Allah will make easy for him the difficult and hard way of life, so much so that doing evil will become easy for him and doing good difficult. This passage has been concluded with a most effective and touching sentence, saying: "This worldly wealth for the sake of which man is even prepared to risk his life will not go down with him into the grave; therefore, what will it avail him after death?"

In the second part also three truths have been stated equally briefly. First, that Allah has not left man uninformed in the examination hall of the world, but He has taken on Himself the responsibility to tell him which one is the straight and right way out of the different ways of life. Here, there was no need to point out that by sending His Messenger and His Book He has fulfilled His this responsibility, for both the Messenger and the Book were present to

afford the guidance. Second, that the Master of both the world and the Hereafter is Allah alone. If you seek the world, it is He Who will give it, and if you seek the Hereafter, again it is He Who will give it. Now, it is for you to decide what you should seek from Him. The third truth that has been stated is that the wretched one who rejects the good, which is being presented through the Messenger and the Book, and turns away from it, will have a blazing fire ready for him. As for the God fearing person who spends his wealth in a good cause, without any selfish motive, only for the sake of winning his Lord's good pleasure, his Lord will be pleased with him and will bless him with so much that he will be well pleased with Him.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

وَالَّيۡلِ اِذَا يَغۡشٰىۙ 1

(92:1) By the night when it enshrouds,

وَالنَّهَارِ اِذَا تَجَلّٰىۙ 2

(92:2) and by the day when it breaks in its glory,

وَمَا خَلَقَ الذَّكَرَ وَالۡاُنۡثٰٓىۙ 3

(92:3) and by Him Who created the male and the female:

اِنَّ سَعۡيَكُمۡ لَشَتّٰىؕ 4

(92:4) surely your strivings are divergent.[1]

1. This is that for which an oath has been sworn by the night and the day, and the creation of the male and the female. It means to say: Just as the night and the day, and the male and the female, are different from each other, and their effects and results are mutually contradictory, so are the aims and objects for which men are endeavoring and struggling; different in their nature and contradictory with regard to their results. In the following verses, it has been told that all these divided endeavors are divided into two main kinds.

فَاَمَّا مَنۡ اَعۡطٰى وَاتَّقٰىۙ 5

(92:5) As for him who gave out his wealth (for Allah's sake) and abstained (from disobeying Him),

وَصَدَّقَ بِالۡحُسۡنٰىۙ 6

(92:6) and affirmed the Truth of goodness:[2]

2. This is the first kind of endeavors, which includes three things, and a little consideration shows that they comprehend all virtues:

(1) That man should refrain from wealth-worship, but should spend whatever Allah has given him generously in rendering Allah's and His servants' rights, for good works and for helping others.

(2) That he should fear God and refrain from things which cause His displeasure in his moral, social, economic and other dealings with the people.

(3) That he should believe in goodness. Goodness is a comprehensive word, which includes goodness of belief, morals and acts. Goodness of belief means that one should give up polytheism, atheism, and disbelief, and affirm faith in Tauhid, the Hereafter and Prophethood. Affirming belief in goodness of morals and acts is that one should not be doing good and right merely unconsciously, outside a definite system, but one should acknowledge as right and sound the system of goodness which God has sent, which combines every kind of goodness in all its forms and aspects into a system comprehensively called the divine shariah.

فَسَنُيَسِّرُهٗ لِلۡيُسۡرٰى ؕ 7

(92:7) We shall facilitate for him the Way to Bliss.[3]

3. This is the result of the first kind of endeavoring and struggling. The easy way implies the way which is in accordance with human nature, which is in accordance with the will of the Creator, Who has created man and the whole universe. It is a way in which man has not to fight his conscience, in which he does not have to force his faculties of mind and energies of body into doing works for which they are not given but to do things for which they have actually been given him. It is a way in which man has not to experience war, resistance and conflict on every side, which he has to experience in a life full of sin, but a human society in which at every step he experiences peace and concord, appreciation and honor. Obviously, the person who spends his wealth for public welfare, treats every other person kindly and well, whose life is free from crime, sin and immorality, who is righteous and fair in his dealings, who neither cheats others nor proves false in his promises, from whom no one apprehends dishonesty, injustice and excess, and with whose character no one finds any fault, will in any case be honored and respected in any society, however, corrupt and depraved it may be. Hearts will be attracted towards him in esteem and regard; his own heart and conscience will be satisfied, and he will attain to dignity in society which no immoral person can ever attain. This same thing has been expressed in Surah An-Nahl, thus: Whoever does righteous deeds whether male or female, provided that he is a believer, We will surely grant him to live a pure life in this world (verse 97), and in Surah Maryam, thus: The Merciful will fill with love the hearts of those who believe and do righteous deeds (verse 96). This then is the way in which there is nothing but joy and tranquility for man, for the world till the Hereafter. Its results are not transient and temporary but eternal and everlasting.

Concerning this Allah says: We shall facilitate for him the easy way. It means to say: When after affirming goodness he decides that this way alone suits him, and the evil way does not suit him, and when by making sacrifices and adopting the life of taqva practically he proves that he is true in his affirmation, Allah will make easy for him to walk this way. Then, to commit evil will become difficult for him, and to do good easy. When unlawful wealth comes before him, he will not regard it as a good bargain, but consider it a hot piece of burning coal, which he cannot hold in his hand. When opportunities for sin appear before him, he will not rush to seize them as opportunities for pleasure and enjoyment, but will look upon them as gates to Hell and will flee from them. The Prayer will not be hard for him, but he will have no internal peace until he has performed it at its appointed time. He will not feel hurt when paying the Zakat, but will regard his wealth as impure until he has paid out the Zakat from it. In short, at every step, Allah will favor him with His grace and help him to follow this way; conditions will be made favorable for him and he will be helped out of every difficulty.

Now, the question arises that in Surah Al-Balad, this very way has been called an uphill road, and here it has been described as an easy way. How can the two things be reconciled? The answer is that before a man has adopted this way, it appears to be a steep, uphill road, for ascending which he has to fight his desires, his materialistic members of the family, his relatives, his friends and those with whom he has social and other dealings, and above all Satan, for each one of them obstructs his way, and makes it seem dreadful. But after man has affirmed goodness and resolved to follow this way, and giving away his wealth in the cause of God and adopting the way of taqva, has practically strengthened his resolve, ascending the steep road becomes easy and slipping into the abyss of moral depravities becomes difficult for him. 8

وَاَمَّا مَنۡۢ بَخِلَ وَاسۡتَغۡنٰىۙ 8

(92:8) As for him who was a miser and behaved with aversion (to Allah),

وَكَذَّبَ بِالۡحُسۡنٰىۙ 9

(92:9) and denied the Truth of goodness:[4]

4. This is the second kind of human endeavoring, which in every part of it is different from the corresponding part of the first kind. Niggardliness (bukhl) is not merely the niggardliness because of which people generally regard a person as niggardly if he hoards money: neither spends it on himself nor on his children, but bukhl here implies to refrain from spending in the cause of Allah and public welfare. According to this, niggardly is every person who spends generously, rather squanders money, on his self, for his own ease and comfort, interests and enjoyments, but, as for a good cause, spends nothing, or, if at all, he spends anything, it is for display, or to win a reputation and name, or to have access to officers, or to obtain some benefit and gain. Independence of God implies that one should make worldly, material benefits only the object of all his endeavoring and strivings and being independent of God should least care to see what pleases Him and what displeases

Him. As for belying goodness, it is in sharp contrast to believing in goodness in every detail, therefore, it need not be explained here as it has already been explained above.

فَسَنُيَسِّرُهٗ لِلۡعُسۡرٰى ؕ 10

(92:10) We shall facilitate for him the way to Hardship,[5]

5. This way has been called the hard way, for although the one who follows it, does so for the sake of material benefits, worldly enjoyments and superficial successes, yet while following it he is always at war with his nature, his conscience, the laws made by the Creator of the universe and the society in which he lives. When he transgresses all moral limits of truth, honesty, nobility, purity and chastity, and endeavors to satisfy his interests and desires in every way, when the people feel harmed by him rather than benefiting from him, and when he encroaches upon the rights of others and violates people's honor, he feels disgraced in his own eyes and has to clash at every step with the society in which he lives. If he is weak, he has to suffer every kind of punishment on account of his conduct, and if he is wealthy, strong and influential, the world may lie low before him, but no one cherishes any good wishes, any feeling of honor and love for him; so much so that even his associates and companions regard him as a wicked man. And this thing is not only restricted to individuals, even when a strong and powerful nation transgresses the bounds of morality and adopts an immoral conduct, in arrogance of pride and wealth, it earns on the one hand, the enmity of the outside world: on the other, its own society falls a victim to all sorts of crime, prevalence of suicide, intoxication, venereal diseases, destruction of family life, waywardness of the new generation, class conflict and ever-increasing injustice and tyranny. So much so that when it falls from its position of prestige, it leaves nothing behind except curses and condemnation for itself in the history of the world.

As for saying that: So We shall make smooth for him the path of difficulty, it means: We shall facilitate for him the hard ways. He will be deprived of the grace to follow the way of good, gates of evil will be opened up for him, means and resources for the same will be provided for him, doing evil will become easy, and doing good will become toilsome and risky for him. This same theme has been expressed at another place in the Quran, thus: So whomever Allah wills to guide aright, He makes his breast wide open to Islam, and whomever He wills to let go astray, he makes his breast narrow and squeezes it so tightly that (at the very idea of Islam) he begins to feel as though his soul were climbing up towards the sky. (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat125). At another place it has been said: No doubt, Salat is a hard task but not for the obedient servants. (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 46). And about the hypocrites it has been said: When they come to offer the Salat, they come reluctantly and they spend in the way of Allah with unwilling hearts. (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 54), and that: There are such among them who regard what they spend in the way of Allah as a penalty. (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 98).

وَمَا يُغۡنِىۡ عَنۡهُ مَالُهٗۤ اِذَا تَرَدّٰى ؕ 11

(92:11) and his wealth shall be of no avail to him when he perishes.[6]

6. In other words it means that he has to die one day and leave behind in the world whatever he had amassed for his ease and enjoyment. If he did not earn and send forward something for the Hereafter, what would this wealth avail him? He will not take his palatial residence, his majestic conveyance, his property and wealth into the grave.

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا لَلْهُدٰى ۖ 12

(92:12) Surely it is for Us to show the Right Way,7

7. That is, Allah as the Creator of man has on the basis of His wisdom, His justice and His mercy, taken on Himself the responsibility not to leave him uninformed in the world, but to tell him what is the right way and what are the wrong ways, what is good and what is evil, what is lawful and what is unlawful, what attitude and conduct will make him an obedient servant and what attitude and conduct will make him a disobedient servant. This same thing has been expressed in Surah An-Nahl, thus: Allah has taken upon Himself to show the right way, when there are also crooked ways. (verse 9 Also see E.N. 9 of Surah An-Nahl).

وَإِنَّ لَنَا لَلْاٰخِرَةَ وَالْأُولٰى 13

(92:13) and to Us belong the Next Life and the present.8

8. This statement has several meanings and all are correct:

(1) That from the world till the Hereafter, you are nowhere beyond Our grasp, for Ours are both this and the next world.

(2) That both this world and the Hereafter are in any case under Our sovereignty, whether you follow the way shown by Us or not. If you adopt error, you will not harm Us but only yourselves; and if you adopt the right way, you will not do any good to Us, but will do good only to yourselves. Your disobedience cannot cause any decrease in Our sovereignty and your obedience cannot cause any increase in it.

(3) That We alone are Master of both the worlds. If you seek the world, We alone can grant it; and if you seek the well being of the Hereafter, We alone have the power to bestow it too.

This very theme has been expressed in Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 145: Whoso makes effort with the intention of the reward of this world, We will reward him in this world, and whoso makes effort with the intention of the reward of the Hereafter, We shall grant him thereof. And the same has been expressed in Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayat 20, thus: Whoever seeks the harvest of the Hereafter, We do increase his harvest; and whoever seeks the harvest of this world, We do give him of it here, but in the Hereafter he will have no share at all. (For explanation, see (E.N. 105 of Surah Al-Imran); (E.N. 37 of Surah Ash-Shura).

فَأَنْذَرْتُكُمْ نَارًا تَلَظّٰى ۚ 14

(92:14) I have now warned you of a Blazing Fire,

لَا يَصْلٰىهَآ اِلَّا الْاَشْقَى ۙ 15

(92:15) where none shall burn except the most wicked,

الَّذِىْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلّٰى ؕ 16

(92:16) who rejected the Truth, calling it falsehood and turned his back on it.

وَسَيُجَنَّبُهَا الْاَتْقَى ۙ 17

(92:17) But the God-fearing shall be kept away from it,

الَّذِىْ يُؤْتِىْ مَالَهٗ يَتَزَكّٰى ۚ 18

(92:18) the Godfearing who spends his wealth to purify himself;[9]

9. This does not mean that no one will enter the fire except the most wretched one, and no one will be saved from it except the most pious one but the object is to describe the extremely contradictory fate of the two extremely contradictory characters. One of them is the person who belies the teachings of Allah and His Messenger and turns away from obedience; the other one is the person, who not only believes but also spends his wealth in the cause of Allah sincerely, without any desire for display and reputation, only in order to be regarded as a pure man in His eyes. Both these types of character were present in the Makkah society of that day. Therefore, without mentioning any name, the people have been told that the man of the first type of character only will burn in the fire of Hell and not the man of the second type of character. The man of the second type of character only will be kept away from it and not the man of the first type of character.

وَمَا لِاَحَدٍ عِنْدَهٗ مِنْ نِّعْمَةٍ تُجْزٰٓى ۙ 19

(92:19) not as payment for any favours that he received,

اِلَّا ابْتِغَآءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ الْاَعْلٰى ۚ 20

(92:20) but only to seek the good pleasure of his Lord Most High.[10]

10. This is further explanation of the sincerity of the pious man. He was not indebted in any way to the people on whom he spends his wealth so that he may be doing so in order to repay for favors received, or may be giving gifts and holding banquets to them in order to further benefit from them, but he is helping such people only in order to seek the goodwill of his Lord, the Supreme. He was neither indebted to them before, nor he expects any favors

from them in the future. Its best illustration is the act of Abu Bakr Siddiq, he would purchase and set free the poor slaves and slaves-girls who accepted Islam in Makkah and were cruelly treated by their masters on that account. Ibn Jarir and Ibn Asakir have related, on the authority of Amir bin Abdullah bin Zubair, that when Abu Bakr's father saw him spending money to purchase the freedom of the poor slaves and slave-girls, he said to him: Son, I see that you are getting the weak people free; had you spent this money on the freedom of strong, young men, they would have become your helpers and supporters. Abu Bakr replied: Dear father, I only seek the reward that is with Allah.

وَلَسَوْفَ يَرْضٰى ۝21

(92:21) He will surely be well-pleased (with him).[11]

11. This verse can have two meanings and both are correct:

(1) That Allah certainly will be well pleased with him.

(2) That Allah soon will bless this man with so much that he will be happy.

93. Sura Ad Dhuha (The Morning Light)

Name

The Surah takes its name Ad-Duha from the very first word.

Period of Revelation

Its subject matter clearly indicates that it belongs to the earliest period at Makkah. Traditions also show that the revelations were suspended for a time, which caused the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace) to be deeply distressed and grieved. On this account he felt very anxious that perhaps he had committed some error because of which his Lord had become angry with him and had forsaken him. Thereupon he was given the consolation that revelation had not been stopped because of some displeasure but this was necessitated by the same expediency as underlies the peace and stillness of the night after the bright day, as if to say: "If you had continuously been exposed to the intensely bright light of Revelation (Wahi) your nerves could not have endured it. Therefore, an interval was given in order to afford you peace and tranquility." This state was experienced by the Holy Prophet in the initial stage of the Prophethood when he was not yet accustomed to hear the intensity of Revelation. On this basis, observance of a pause in between was necessary. This we have already explained in the introduction to Surah Al Muddaththir; and in E. N. 5 of Surah Al-Muzzammil also we have explained what great burden of the coming down of Revelation he had to bear. Later, when the Holy Prophet developed the power to bear this burden, there was no longer any need for long gaps.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is to console the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) and its object to remove his anxiety and distress, which he had been caused by the suspension of Revelation. First of all, swearing an oath by the bright morning and the stillness of night, he has been reassured, so as to say: "Your Lord has not at all forsaken you, nor is he displeased with you." Then, he has been given the good news that the hardships that he was experiencing in the initial stage of his mission, would not last long, for every later period of life for him would be better than the former period, and before long Allah would bless him so abundantly that he would be well pleased. This is one of the express prophecies of the Quran, which proved literally true, afterwards, whereas when this prophecy was made there seemed not to be the remotest chance that the helpless and powerless man who had come out to wage a war against the ignorance and paganism of the entire nation, would ever achieve such wonderful success.

Then, addressing His Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) Allah says: "O My dear Prophet, what has caused you the anxiety and distress that your Lord has forsaken you, and that We are displeased with you? Whereas the fact is that We have been good to you with kindness after kindness ever since the day of your birth. You were born an orphan, We made the best arrangement for your upbringing and care: you were unaware of the Way, We showed you the Way; you were indigent, We made you rich. All this shows that you have been favored by Us from the very beginning and Our grace and bounty has been constantly focused on you." Here, one should also keep in view vv. 37-42 of Surah Ta Ha, where Allah, while sending the Prophet Moses to confront a tyrant like Pharaoh, encouraged and consoled him,

saying: "We have been looking after you with kindness ever since your birth; therefore, you should be satisfied that you will not be left alone in this dreadful mission. Our bounty will constantly be with you."

In conclusion, Allah has instructed His Prophet (upon whom be peace) telling him how he should treat the creatures of God to repay for the favors He has done him and how he should render thanks for the blessings He has bestowed on him.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

وَالضُّحٰى ۙ 1

(93:1) By the bright forenoon,[1]

1. Here, the word duha has been used in contrast to the night; therefore, it implies the bright hours of the day. A precedent of it are(verses 97-98 of Surah Al-Aaraf), which say: Do the people of the settlements now feel secure that Our punishment will not come to them all of a sudden at night, while they might be fast asleep? Or, do they feel secure that Our punishment will not smite them all of a sudden during the day while they might be engaged in pastimes?" In these verses also since the word duha has been used in contrast to the night, it implies the day and not just forenoon.

وَالَّيۡلِ اِذَا سَجٰى ۙ 2

(93:2) and by the night when it covers the world with peace:[2]

2. The word saja in the original does not only signify the spreading of darkness but it also contains the meaning of stillness and peace that prevails at night. This quality of night deeply relates to the theme that follows.

مَا وَدَّعَكَ رَبُّكَ وَمَا قَلٰى ؕ 3

(93:3) (O Prophet), your Lord has neither forsaken you, nor is He displeased.[3]

3. Traditions show that revelations to the Prophet (peace be upon him) had remained suspended for some period of time. Different traditions have mentioned different durations of this period. Ibn Juraij has mentioned it to be 12 days, Kalbi 15 days, Ibn Abbas 25 days, and Suddi and Muqatil have stated that it extended to 40 days. In any case the period was so long that it made the Prophet (peace be upon him) sorrowful, and the opponents also had the opportunity to taunt him. For whenever a new Surah came down, the Prophet (peace be upon him) would recite it before the people. Therefore, when he did not recite any new revelation to them for quite some days, the opponents thought that the fountainhead from where the revelation came, had dried up. Jundub bin Abdullah al-Bajali has related that when Angel Gabriel stopped coming, the pagans started saying that Muhammad (peace be upon him) had been forsaken by his Lord. (Ibn Jarir, Tabarani, Abd bin Humaid, Saeed bin

Mansur, Ibn Marduyah). Other traditions show that Umm Jamil, wife of Abu Lahab, who was an aunt of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and whose house adjoined his, said to him: It appears your satan has forsaken you. Aufi and Ibn Jarir have related, on the authority of Ibn Abbas, that when Gabriel did not visit him for several days, the Prophet (peace be upon him) became anxious and distressed, and the pagans began to say that his Lord had become angry with him and had forsaken him. In the mursal traditions of Qatadah and Dahhak almost the same theme has been expressed. The Prophet's (peace be upon him) extreme grief and anguish in this condition has also been referred to in several traditions. And this was natural. The apparent indifference on the part of the beloved, the apparent deprivation of the contact with the source of power, which was his chief support, in the soul-destroying conflict between belief and unbelief, and above all, the taunts and jeers of the enemy, when all these things combined they must have caused great anguish to the Prophet (peace be upon him), and he must be thinking that because of some error that he might have committed, his Lord had become displeased with him and had forsaken and left him to fight the battle between truth and falsehood alone.

This was the state when this Surah was sent down to console the Prophet (peace be upon him). In it, swearing an oath by the light of the day and the peacefulness of the night, he has been told: Your Lord has neither forsaken you, nor is He displeased with you. The relevance of the oath by these two things to the theme is: Just as brightening up of the day and spreading of the night with darkness and stillness is not for the reason that Allah is pleased with the people during the day and displeased with them during the night but both states are based on supreme wisdom and expedience, so sending down of revelation to you at onetime and suspending it at another time is also based on wisdom and expedience; it has nothing to do with Allah's being pleased with you when He sends down revelation and his being displeased with you when He suspends it. Besides, another relevance of the oath to the subject is that if man is constantly exposed to the light of days it wearies him; so, it is necessary that night should fall after the day has remained bright for a certain period so that man may have rest and peace in it. Likewise, if you are constantly exposed to the light of revelation, your nerves would not stand it. Therefore, fatrah (break or gap in the revelation) has also been provided by Allah on account of expedience so that the effects of the strain of revelation that you have to bear passes away and complete peace is restored to you. In other words, rising of the sun of revelation is analogous to the bright day and the period of the fatrah to the stillness and peace of the night.

وَلَلْاٰخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لَّكَ مِنَ الْاُوْلٰى ؕ 4

(93:4) Indeed what is to come will be better for you than what has gone by.[4]

4. This good news was given by Allah to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in a state when he had only a handful of Muslims with him, the entire nation was hostile and there was not even a remote chance of success. The candle of Islam was flickering only in Makkah and storms were brewing all around to blow it out. At that juncture Allah said to His Prophet (peace be upon him): Do not at all grieve at the hardships of the initial stage, every later period of life will be better for you than the former period. Your power and glory, your honor and prestige will go on enhancing and your influence will go on spreading. This promise is not only confined to the world, but it also includes the promise that the rank and

position you will be granted in the Hereafter will be far higher and nobler than the rank and position you attain in the world. Tabarani in Awsat and Baihaqi in Ad-Dalail have related on the authority of Ibn Abbas that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: All the victories which would be attained by my Ummah after me, were presented before me. This pleased me much. Then, Allah sent down this Word, saying: The Hereafter is far better for you than the world.

وَلَسَوْفَ يُعْطِيكَ رَبُّكَ فَتَرْضٰى ؕ 5

(93:5) Verily your Lord will soon give you so amply that you will be well-pleased.[5]

5. That is, although it will take some time, yet the time is not far when your Lord will bless you with so much that you will be well pleased. This promise was fulfilled during the lifetime of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and all Arabia, from the southern coasts to the Syrian frontiers of the Byzantine empire and the Iraqi frontiers of the Persian empire in the north, and from the Persian Gulf in the east to the Red Sea in the west, came under his control. For the first time in the history of Arabia this land became subject to one law and rule. Whichever power clashed with it was doomed to destruction. The slogan La-ilaha-illallah-u Muhammad-ur-Rasul-Allah reverberated throughout the land where the polytheists and the followers of the earlier scriptures had tried their utmost to keep their false creeds and slogans aloft till the last. The people not only bowed their heads in obedience, their hearts were also conquered and their beliefs, morals and acts were revolutionized. There is no precedent in human history that nation sunk in paganism might have completely changed in only 23 years. Then the movement started by the Prophet (peace be upon him) gathered such power that it spread over a larger part of Asia, Africa and Europe and its influence reached every nook and corner of the world. This much Allah gave His Messenger (peace be upon him) in the world, the glory and extent of what He will give him in the Hereafter cannot be imagined. Also see (E.N. 112 of Surah TaHa).

اَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيمًا فَاٰوٰى ۪ 6

(93:6) Did He not find you an orphan and then gave you shelter?[6]

6. That is, there can be no question of forsaking you and being displeased with you. We have, in fact, been good to you ever since the time you were born as an orphan. The Prophet's (peace be upon him) father passed away three months before his birth; thus he was an orphan at birth. But Allah did not leave him without support even for a day. Up to six years of age his mother nourished and looked after him. After her death, his grandfather took him and brought him up with great love. He would proudly tell the people: My this son has a great future. When he died, his uncle, Abu Talib, became his guardian and treated him with such rare love that no father could treat his son better. So much so that when after his proclamation to be a Prophet the entire nation turned hostile, Abu Talib alone stood firm as his chief supporter for as long as ten years.

وَوَجَدَكَ ضَآلًّا فَهَدٰى ۝ 7

(93:7) Did He not find you unaware of the Right Way, and then directed you to it?[7]

7. The word daallan as used in the original is derived from dalalat, which has several meanings in Arabic. Its one meaning is to be lost in error and deviation; another, to be unaware of the way and to be bewildered at the crossroads as to which way one should choose; still another meaning is of being lost and astray. The tree also is daallah which stands alone and lonely in the desert; the word dalal is also used for a thing which is wasting in unfavorable and uncongenial condition and climate, and also for heedlessness, of which there is an example in the Quran itself: La yadillu Rabbi wa la yansa, My Lord is neither heedless nor He forgets. (Surah TaHa, Ayat 52). Out of these different meanings. The first meaning does not apply here, for in the historical accounts of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) life, from childhood till just before Prophethood, there is no trace that he ever might have been involved in idolatry, polytheism or atheism, or in any of the acts, customs and practices of paganism prevalent among his people. Therefore, inevitably wa-wa-jadaka-daallan cannot mean that Allah had found him erring and astray in respect of creed or deed. The other meanings, however, can be applicable here in one or other aspect, and possibly all are applicable in their own particular aspect. Before Prophethood the Prophet (peace be upon him) was certainly a believer in the existence of Allah and His Unity, and his life was free from sin and reflected excellent morals, yet he was unaware of true faith, its principles and injunctions, as it has been pointed out in the Quran: You did not know at all what was the Book and what was the faith. (Surah Ash-Shura, Ayat 52). This verse may also mean that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was lost in a society, engrossed in ignorance, and his personality as a guide and leader was not in anyway prominent before Prophethood. It may as well mean that in the desert of ignorance, he was standing like a lonely tree, which had the capability to bear fruit and turn the whole desert into a garden, but this capability was not being put to any use before Prophethood. It may also imply that the extraordinary powers, that Allah had blessed him with, were going waste in the unfavorable environment of ignorance. Dalal can also be taken in the meaning of heedlessness, so as to say: You were heedless of the truth and signs of which Allah made you aware after Prophethood. This thing also has been referred to in the Quran itself: Though before this you were utterly unaware of this truth. (Surah Yusuf, Ayat 3). Also see(Surah AlBaqarah,Ayat 282); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayat 20).

وَوَجَدَكَ عَآئِلًا فَأَغۡنٰى ۝ 8

(93:8) And did He not find you in want, and then enriched you?[8]

8. The Prophet's (peace be upon him) father had left only a she-camel and a slave-girl in heritage for him; so he started his life in a state of poverty. Then a time came when the wealthiest lady among the Quraish, Khadijah, first made him her partner in trade, then married him, and he took charge of all her trade and business. Thus, he not only became wealthy but his riches in no way were dependent on the resources of his wife; his own hard work and ability had gone a long way towards promoting her trade and commerce.

فَأَمَّا الْيَتِيمَ فَلَا تَقْهَرْ ۖ 9

(93:9) Therefore, be not harsh with the orphan;[9]

9. That is, as you yourself have been an orphan and Allah graced you with the bounty that he made the best possible arrangements to help you in that state, therefore, in gratitude you should see that no orphan is treated unjustly and harshly.

وَأَمَّا السَّائِلَ فَلَا تَنْهَرْ ۖ 10

(93:10) and chide not him who asks,[10]

10. It has two meanings.

If saail is taken in the sense of a needy person, who asks for help, it would mean that if you can, you should help him. If you cannot, you should excuse yourself politely, but should never scold him. In this sense the instruction corresponds to Allah's this favor: You were poor, then Allah enriched you.

And if saail is taken in the sense of the one who inquires, i.e. asks for enlightenment on a religious matter or injunction, it would mean that even if such a person be extremely ignorant and ill-mannered and might put the question, or present his problem, impolitely, you should in any case answer him politely and kindly, and should not turn him away like the rude people proud of their knowledge.

In this meaning, the instruction corresponds to Allah's this favor: You were unaware of the way, then He guided you. Abu Darda, Hasan Basri, Sufyan Thauri and some other scholars have preferred this second meaning, for in view of the order and sequence this instruction corresponds to: wa-wa-jadaka daalllan fa hada.

وَأَمَّا بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثْ ۝ 11

(93:11) and proclaim the bounty of your Lord.[11]

11. The word nimat (bounty) is general, which also implies those bounties, which Allah had bestowed on His Messenger (peace be upon him) until the revelation of this Surah as well as those which He bestowed on him afterwards according to the promise made in this Surah, which He fulfilled completely. Then, it is enjoined: O Prophet, mention and proclaim every bounty that Allah has favored you with. Now, obviously, there can be different forms and ways of mentioning and proclaiming the bounties and every bounty, in view of its nature, requires a special form of its mention and proclamation. As a whole, the way of proclaiming the bounties is that Allah be thanked with the tongue and the truth be acknowledged that all the bounties received are only due to His grace and favor and none is the result of any personal excellence and merit on his part. The blessing of Prophethood can be proclaimed by preaching and conveying its message in the best way possible. The blessing of the Quran can be proclaimed by publicizing it widely and impressing its teachings on the people's

minds as far as one can. The blessing of Allah's guidance can be proclaimed by showing the right way to the people who are gone astray and by enduring patiently all the bitterness and hardship of the way. The favor that Allah has done of helping during orphan-hood, demands that the orphans be treated well. The favor that Allah did of enriching after poverty requires that Allah's needy servants be helped and supported. In short, this is a very comprehensive instruction which Allah gave to His Messenger (peace be upon him) in this brief sentence after having described His bounties and blessings.

94. Surah Al Inshirah (The Opening Up)

Name

The Surah is so designated after the first sentence.

Period of Revelation

Its subject matter so closely resembles that of Surah Ad-Duha that both these Surah seem to have been revealed in about the same period under similar conditions. According to Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas, it was sent down in Makkah just after wad-Duha.

Theme and Subject Matter

The aim and object of this Surah too is to console and encourage the Holy Messenger (upon whom be Allah's peace). Before his call he never had to encounter the conditions which he suddenly had to encounter after it when he embarked on his mission of inviting the people to Islam. This was by itself a great revolution in his own life of which he had no idea in his life before Prophethood. No sooner had he started preaching the message of Islam than the same society which had esteemed him with unique honor, turned hostile to him. The same relatives and friends, the same clansmen and neighbors, who used to treat him with the highest respect, began to shower him with abuse and invective. No one in Makkah was prepared to listen to him; he began to be ridiculed and mocked in the street and on the road; and at every step he had to face new difficulties. Although gradually he became accustomed to the hardships, even much severer ones, yet the initial stage was very discouraging for him. That is why first Surah Ad-Duha was sent down to console him, and then this Surah.

In it, at the outset, Allah says: "We have favored you, O Prophet, with three great blessings; therefore you have no cause to be disheartened. The first is the blessing of Sharh Sadr(opening up of the breast), the second of removing from you the heavy burden that was weighing down your back before the call, and the third of exalting your renown the like of which has never been granted to any man before. Further below in the notes we have explained what is implied by each of these blessings and how great and unique these blessings indeed are!

After this, the Lord and Sustainer of the universe has reassured His Servant and Messenger (upon whom be peace) that the period of hardships which he is passing through, is not very long, but following close behind it there is also a period of ease. This same thing has been described in Surah Ad-Duha, saying: "Every later period is better for you than the former period, and soon your Lord will give you so much that you will be well pleased."

In conclusion, the Holy Prophet has been instructed, so as to say, "You can develop the power to bear and resist the hardships of the initial stage only by one means, and it is this: `When you are free from your occupations, you should devote yourself to the labor and toil of worship, and turn all your attention exclusively to your Lord'." This same instruction has been given him in much greater detail in Surah Al-Muzzammil 1-9.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اَلَمۡ نَشۡرَحۡ لَکَ صَدۡرَکَ ۙ 1

(94:1) (O Prophet), Did We not lay open your breast[1]

1. To begin the discourse with this question, and then the subsequent theme, shows that the Messenger (peace be upon him) at that time was very disturbed and distressed at the great hardships that he was passing through in the initial stage of his mission of calling the people to Islam. Under those conditions Allah addressed him and consoling him, said: O Prophet, have We not blessed you with such and such favor. Then, why do you feel so disturbed and distressed at these initial difficulties.

A little consideration of the context wherever the word sharh-sadr (opening up of the breast) has occurred in the Quran, shows that it has two meanings:

(1) In (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 125), it was said: So whomever Allah wills to guide aright, He makes his breast wide open to Islam (yashrah sadrahu lil-lslam); and in (Surah Az- Zumar, Ayat 22): Can the person whose breast Allah has opened for Islam (sharahullahu sadrahu lil-Islam) and he is walking in the light shown by his Lord. At both these places sharh-sadr implies to free oneself from every kind of distraction and vacillation and to be satisfied with Islam as the only right way of life, and to regard the beliefs, principles of morality and civilization, religious instructions and injunctions, which Islam has given to man, as right and true.

(2) In (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 12-13), it has been mentioned that when Allah appointed the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) to the great office of Prophethood and commanded him to go and confront the Pharaoh and his mighty empire, he submitted: My Lord, I fear that they will treat me as a liar, and my breast straitens. And in (Surah Ta Ha, Ayats 25-26), it has been stated that on this very occasion the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) implored Allah, saying: Lord, open up my breast for me (Rabbishrahli sadri) and make my task easy for me. Here, straitening of the breast implies a person's finding it too hard for himself to shoulder the onerous responsibilities of Prophethood and going out to clash with a mighty and tyrannical power of disbelief all by himself, and sharh-sadr implies that his morale be boosted so that he is ready to undertake any campaign and any task however difficult and hard, without any hesitation, and he develops the nerve and courage to shoulder the great responsibilities of Prophethood.

A little consideration will show that in this verse, "opening up of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) breast", contains both these meanings. According to the first meaning, it implied that before the Prophethood the Prophet (peace be upon him) looked upon the religion of the polytheistic Arabs, Christians, Jews and fire worshippers as false, and was not even satisfied with the hanifiyyat prevalent among some of the Arab monotheists, for it was an ambiguous creed which contained no detail of the right way. (This we have explained in E.Ns of Surah As-Sajdah). But since he himself did not know what the right way was, he was mentally confused and distracted. With the blessing of Prophethood, Allah removed his

mental agitation and opened up before him the way of right guidance, which brought him full peace of mind. According to the second meaning, it implies that along with the blessing of Prophethood Allah also blessed him with the courage, spirit of resolution and broad mindedness which were needed for shouldering the onerous responsibilities of the great office. He became bearer of the vast knowledge, which no other human mind could encompass and contain. He was blessed with the wisdom which could rectify any evil however grave and wide spread. He developed the capability to stand up without any equipment and the apparent help and support of a worldly power as the standard-bearer of Islam in a society sunk in ignorance and barbarism, to brave any storm of hostility without the least hesitation, to endure patiently all the difficulties and hardships of the way so that no power might cause him to abandon his position and standpoint. Thus, The verse means to impress the point: When Allah has blessed you, O Prophet, with this invaluable wealth of sharh-sadr, why do you feel distressed and depressed at the hardships you are experiencing in the initial stage of your mission.

Some commentators have taken sharh-sadr to mean shaqq- Sadr (splitting up of the breast) and have declared this verse to be a proof of the miracle of sharh-sadr as related in the traditions of the Hadith. But the fact is that the proof of that miracle is dependent only on the traditions of the Hadith, it is not correct to prove it from the Quran. According to the Arabic language, sharh-sadr can in no way be taken to mean shaqq-sadr. Allama Alusi in the Ruh al- Maani says: In the sight of the research scholars it is a weak thing to regard sharh-sadr as shaqq-sadr.

وَوَضَعۡنَا عَنكَ وِزۡرَكَ ٢

(94:2) and relieve you of the burden

ٱلَّذِيٓ أَنقَضَ ظَهۡرَكَ ٣

(94:3) that had well-nigh broken your back?[2]

2. Some of the commentators have interpreted this to mean that before Prophethood, in the days of ignorance, the Prophet (peace be upon him) had happened to commit certain errors because of which he was feeling disturbed, and Allah by sending down this verse consoled and satisfied him, saying that He had forgiven him those errors. But in our opinion it is a grave mistake to interpret this verse thus. In the first place, the word vizr does not necessarily mean a sin, but it is also used for a heavy burden. Therefore, there is no reason why it should in every case be taken in the bad sense. Secondly, the Prophet's (peace be upon him) life before Prophethood was also so clean and pure that it had been presented in the Quran as a challenge before the opponents. So much so that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was made to point out to the disbelievers: I have already lived a lifetime among you before the revelation of this Quran. (Surah Younus, Ayat 16). And he was also not the type of a person who would commit a sin secretly. God forbid, had he been such a man, Allah would not have been unaware of it, and would not have made him proclaim the thing before the people openly, which He made him proclaim in the above-mentioned verse of Surah Younus, if his person carried the blot of a sin committed secretly. Thus, in fact, in this

verse vizr means a heavy burden and it implies the burden of distress, anguish and anxiety that was difficult on his sensitive nature when he saw his nation deeply sunk in ignorance and barbarism. Idols were being worshipped, the community was engrossed in idolatry and polytheistic customs and practices, filth of immorality and indecency prevailed all around, wickedness and corrupt practices were rampant in society, the powerful were suppressing the powerless, girls were being buried alive, tribes were subjecting one another to surprise attacks, and sometimes the wars of vengeance continued for a hundred years at a stretch. No one's life, property and honor was safe unless he had a strong band at his back. This grieved the Prophet (peace be upon him) but he could find no way to cure the malady. This same anxiety was weighing down his back. Allah by showing him the way to guidance removed its burden from him. Then as soon as he was appointed to the office of Prophethood, he came to know that belief in the doctrine of Tauhid, the Hereafter and Prophethood was the master-key by which each corruption in human life could be eradicated and the way to reform opened in every aspect of life. This guidance from Allah relieved him of his burden and he felt re-assured that by means of it he would not only be able to cure the maladies of Arabia but also of all mankind outside Arabia as well.

وَرَفَعۡنَا لَكَ ذِكۡرَكَ ؕ 4

(94:4) And did We not exalt your fame?[3]

3. This was said at a time when no one could even conceive how the renown of the one unique individual, who had only a few followers confined only to the city of Makkah, would be exalted throughout the world and what high fame he would achieve. But Allah Almighty gave His Messenger (peace be upon him) this good news under those very conditions and then fulfilled it in a strange way. In the first place, he took from his enemies themselves the task of exalting his renown. One of the methods that the disbelievers of Makkah adopted to defeat his mission was that in the Hajj season when the pilgrims from every corner of Arabia were attracted to their city, they would visit them at their halting places and would warn them to beware of a dangerous man called Muhammad (peace be upon him), who they alleged, worked such magic on the people that father was separated from son, brother from brother, and husband from wife; therefore, they should keep away from him. The same thing they said to all other people, who visited Makkah on other than Hajj days in connection with pilgrimage or on other business. In this way although they were trying to defame the Prophet (peace be upon him), yet the result was that his name reached every nook and corner of Arabia and the enemies themselves took him out of his seclusion in Makkah and introduced him among all the tribes of the country. After this, it was but natural that the people should become curious to know as to who this man was, what he preached, what was his character like and who were the people influenced by his magic and what sort of effect his magic had on them. As the propaganda of the Makkan disbelievers spread, the people's curiosity also grew. Then, when as a result of this curiosity the people came to know of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) morals, his character and conduct, when they heard the Quran and found what teachings it presented and when the people saw how different the lives of those who had been influenced by what was being described as magic had become from the lives of the common Arabs, the bad name started being changed into good name. So much so that by the time the Hijrah took place, there was perhaps no tribe left anywhere in Arabia from which one or another person, one or another

clan had not accepted Islam and in which at least some people had not developed sympathy and interest in the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his message. This was the first stage of the exaltation of his renown. Then from the Hijrah started the second stage in which, on the one hand, the hypocrites, the Jews and the prominent polytheists of Arabia were actively engaged in defaming him, and, on the other, the Islamic State of Al-Madinah was presenting such a practical model of God-worship, God consciousness, piety and devotion, purity of morals and community life, justice and equity, equality of man and man, generosity of the rich, care of the poor, fulfillment of pledges and promises and righteousness in dealings, which was conquering the hearts. The enemies tried by resort to war to impede the growing influence of the Prophet (peace be upon him), but the party of the believers, trained and developed under his own leadership, proved its superiority by their discipline, their bravery, their fearlessness of death, and their adherence to restrictions of morality even in the state of war, so convincingly that entire Arabia had to recognize it as a power to be reckoned with. Within ten years the Prophet's (peace be upon him) renown become so exalted that the same land in which the opponents had exerted their utmost to defame him, reverberated with the slogan of Ash hadu anna Muhammad ar-Rasul Allah from one end to the other. Then the third stage commenced with the establishment of the righteous Caliphate when his holy name started being mentioned and praised everywhere in the world. This process continues till today, and will continue till Resurrection if Allah so wills. Wherever in the world there exists a settlement of the Muslims, the apostleship of Muhammad (peace be upon him) is being proclaimed aloud in the call to the Prayer five times a day, blessings of Allah are being invoked on him in the Prayers, and his sacred remembrance is being made in the Friday Sermons. There is no moment in the 12 months of the year and in the 24 hours of the day when at one or another place in the world, the Prophet's (peace be upon him) name is not being mentioned. This is a clear proof of the truth of the Quran that when in the initial stage of the Prophethood Allah proclaimed wa rafana laka dhikrak, no one could estimate and imagine with what esteem and to what great extent the Prophet's (peace be upon him) renown would be exalted. In a Hadith, Abu Saeed Khudri has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Gabriel came to me and said: My Lord and your Lord asks, in what ways have I exalted your renown. I submitted: Allah alone has the best knowledge. He said, Allah says: Whenever mention is made of Me, you too will be mentioned along with Me. (Ibn Jarir, lbn Abi Hatim, Musnad Abu Yala, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Hibban, Ibn Marduyah, Abu Nuaim). The whole later history stands witness that this prediction has proved literally true.

فَاِنَّ مَعَ الۡعُسۡرِ يُسۡرًا ۙ 5

(94:5) Indeed, there is ease with hardship.

اِنَّ مَعَ الۡعُسۡرِ يُسۡرًا ؕ 6

(94:6) Most certainly, there is ease with hardship.[4]

4. This has been repeated twice so as to reassure the Prophet (peace be upon him) that the bad times he was passing through at that time would not last for ever, but were going to be replaced by good times in the near future. On the surface this appears to be a contradiction

that hardship should be accompanied by ease, for these two things do not co-exist. But the words hardship with ease instead of ease after hardship have been used in the sense that the period of ease is so close to it as if it were a concomitant of it.

فَإِذَا فَرَغْتَ فَانْصَبْ ۙ 7

(94:7) So, whenever you are free, strive in devotion,

وَإِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَارْغَبْ ۚ 8

(94:8) and turn to your Lord with longing.[5]

5. So when you have finished (your duties): When you are free from other occupations, whether occupations in connection with the preaching of divine message, or teaching and training of the new converts, or domestic occupations of mundane nature. The commandment means: When you are no more occupied, you should spend your time in the labor and toil of Allah's worship and turn all your attention exclusively to your Lord.

95. Surah At Tin (The Fig)

Name

The Surah has been so named after the very first word at-tin.

Period of Revelation

According to Qatadah, this Surah is Madani. Two different views have been reported from Ibn Abbas: first that it is a Makki Surah, and second that it is Madani. But the majority of scholars regard it as a Makki revelation, a manifest symbol of which is the use of the words hadh-al-balad-il-amin (this city of peace) for Makkah. Obviously, if it had been revealed at Madinah, it would not be correct to use the words "this city" for Makkah Besides, a study of the contents of the Surah shows that it belongs to the earliest period of Makkah, for in it there is no sign whatever to indicate that during the period of its revelation any conflict had started between Islam and unbelief. Moreover, it reflects the same style of the earliest revelations of Makkah period in which briefly and succinctly the people have been made to realize that the judgment of the Hereafter is necessary and absolutely rational.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is the rewards and punishments of the Hereafter. For this purpose first swearing an oath by the habitats of some illustrious Prophets, it has been stated that Allah has created man in the most excellent of molds. Although at other places in the Quran, this truth has been expressed in different ways, for example, at some places it has been said: "Allah appointed man His vicegerent on the earth and commanded the angels to bow down to him (Al-Baqarah: 30,34, Al-Anam: 165, Al-Araf: 11, Al-Hijr 28,29, An-Naml: 62, Suad 71- 73);" at others that: "Man has become bearer of the Divine trust, which the earth and the heavens and the mountains did not have the power to bear (Al-Ahzab 72);" and at still others that: "We honored the children of Adam and exalted them above many of Our other creatures (Bani Israil 70)," yet here the statement made on oath in particular by the habitats of the Prophets that man has been created in the finest of molds, signifies that mankind has been blessed with such an excellent mold and nature that it gave birth to men capable of attaining to the highest position of Prophethood, a higher position than which has not been attained by any other creature of God.

Then, it has been stated that there are two kinds of men. those who in spite of having been created in the finest of molds, become inclined to evil and their moral degeneration causes them to be reduced to the lowest of the low, and those who by adopting the way of faith and righteousness remain secure from the degeneration and consistent with the noble position, which is the necessary demand of their having been created in the best of molds. The existence among mankind of both these kinds of men is such a factual thing which no one can deny, for it is being observed and experienced in society everywhere at all times.

In conclusion, this factual reality has been used as an argument to prove that when among the people there are these two separate and quite distinct kinds, how can one deny the judgment and retribution for deeds If the morally degraded are not punished and the morally pure and exalted are not rewarded and both end in the dust alike, it would mean

that there is no justice in the Kingdom of God; whereas human nature and common sense demand that a judge should do justice. How then can one conceive that Allah, Who is the most just of all judges, would not do justice?

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

لَآ
وَالتِّیۡنِ وَالزَّیۡتُوۡنِ 1

(95:1) By the fig and the olive;[1]

1. There has been much difference of opinion among the commentators about the explanation of this verse. Hasan Basri, Ikrimah, Ata bin Abi Rabah, Jabir bin Zaid, Mujahid and Ibrahim Nakhal say that the fig implies the same fig which the people eat, and the olive the same which produces oil. Ibn Abi Hatim and Hakim have also cited a statement from Abdullah bin Abbas in support of this. And the commentators who have accepted this explanation have, in view of the uses and virtues of the fig and the olive, expressed the opinion that Allah has sworn by these two fruits because of these very qualities. There is no doubt that the Arabic reader would understand the words teen and zaytun in the same meaning as are their well known meanings in Arabic, yet there are two reasons for which these meanings cannot be accepted. First, that in the subsequent verses, oaths have been sworn by the Mount Sinai and the City of Makkah, and there seems to be no relevance between the oaths sworn by the two fruits and the oaths by the two places. Second, the theme that follows the oaths is borne out by the Mt. Sinai and the City of Makkah but not by the two fruits. Wherever in the Quran AIlah has sworn by something, He has not sworn by it because of its glory or its uses and benefits but every oath has relevance to the theme that follows it. Therefore, the virtues and qualities of these two fruits cannot be regarded as the reason for swearing the oath by them.

Some other commentators have taken teen and zaytun to imply some places. Kaab Ahbar, Qatadah and Ibn Zaid say that teen implies Damascus and zaytun Bait al-Maqdis (Jerusalem). A view of Ibn Abbas has been cited by Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim and Ibn Marduyah to the effect that teen implies the mosque of the Prophet Noah, which he built on Mt. Judi, and zaytun implies Bait al-Maqdis, but hearing the words wat-tin waz-zaytun, no ordinary Arab could think of these meanings, nor was it well known among the Arabs, who were the first addressees of the Quran that teen and zaytun were names of the places.

However, there was a practice among the people of Arabia that they generally named a land where a certain fruit was produced in plenty after the name of the fruit itself. Accordingly, the meaning of teen and zaytun can be the land where these fruits are grown, and it is the land of Syria and Palestine, for among the Arabs of that period this very land was well known for the production of fig and olive. lbn Taimiyah, Ibn al-Qayyim, Zamakhshari and Alusi have adopted this very explanation; and although Ibn Jarir has also preferred the first view, yet he has conceded that teen and zaytun may also imply the land where these fruits are grown. Hafiz Ibn Kathir has also regarded this explanation as worthy of consideration.

وَطُوْرِ سِيْنِيْنَ ۙ 2

(95:2) and by the Mount Sinai,[2]

2. The words in the original are Tur-i-Sinin. Sinin is another name for the Sinai Peninsula. It is called Saina or Sina as well as Sinin. In the Quran itself at one place the words Tur-i-Sinin have been used. Since the land in which Mt. Sinai is located is well known as Sina, we have adopted this well known name in the translation.

وَهٰذَا الْبَلَدِ الْاَمِيْنِ ۙ 3

(95:3) and by this city (of Makkah), a haven of peace:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ فِيْٓ اَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيْمٍ ۫ 4

(95:4) surely We created man in the best mould;[3]

3. This is the truth for which the oath has been sworn by the lands of the fig and the olive (i.e. Syria and Palestine) and Mt. Sinai and Makkah, the city of peace. Man's having been created in the most excellent of molds means that he has been given the finest body which no other living being has been given, and he has been blessed with the noblest faculties of thought, knowledge and intellect which no other creature has been blessed with. Then, since the most sublime model these excellencies and unique merits of mankind's are the Prophets and no creation can have a higher rank than them, so that Allah may choose it for appointment to the office of Prophethood, an oath has been sworn by the places associated with the Prophets of God to bear testimony to man's having been created in the finest of molds. The land of Syria and Palestine is the land where a large number of Prophets, from the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) to the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him), were raised. Mt. Toor is the place where the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was blessed with Prophethood. As for Makkah, it was founded by the Prophets Abraham and Ishmael (peace be upon them) themselves. It was on account of their association with it that it became the holiest central place of Arabia. It was the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) who had prayed: O my Lord, make this city a city of peace and security. (Surah Al- Baqarah, Ayat 126); and it was because of this prayer that in the midst of chaos and confusion prevailing everywhere in Arabia only this city continued to remain an island of peace for some 2500 years or more. Thus, the verse means to say: We created mankind in such an excellent mold that it produced men who attained to the most sublime rank of Prophethood.

ثُمَّ رَدَدْنٰهُ اَسْفَلَ سَافِلِيْنَ ۙ 5

(95:5) then We reverted him to the lowest of the low,[4]

4. The commentators in general have given two meanings of this:

(1) That We reversed him to the miserable state of old age in which he was no longer able to think and understand and work.

(2) That We reversed him to the lowest stage of Hell.

But these two meanings cannot be an argument for the object for the confirmation of which this Surah was revealed. The Surah is meant to reason out the truth of the judgment in the Hereafter. On this, neither has this fact any bearing that some human beings are caused to reach the most miserable state of old age, nor that a section of human beings will be cast into Hell. The first thing cannot be an argument for the judgment because old age comes upon both the good and the bad people, and a person's reaching this age is no punishment which he might suffer in consequence of his deeds. As for the second thing, it will occur in the Hereafter. It cannot be presented as an argument before the people who are being convinced of the meting out of rewards and punishments in the Hereafter itself. Therefore in our opinion the correct meaning of the verse is: After having been created in the finest of molds when man uses the powers of his body and mind in evil ways, Allah grants him the power to do only evil and causes him to reach the lowest ebb of degradation. This is a truth which one commonly observes in human society. People become so overwhelmed by greed, selfishness, lustfulness, addiction to intoxicants, meanness, rage and fury and such other traits that morally they are actually reduced to the lowest of the low. Consider only one example: When a nation is blinded by its hostility to another country it surpasses all savage beasts in barbarity. A wild beast preys upon its victim only for the sake of food, it does not resort to a general massacre; but man resorts to massacre of his own kind. The beast only uses its claws and teeth but man who has been created in the best of molds invents the gun, rifle, tank, aircraft, atom and hydrogen bombs and countless other weapons by his intellect so that he can instantly destroy whole populations. The beast only kills or inflicts a wound but man invents such painful methods of torturing men like himself as cannot even be imagined by a beast. Then to wreak his vengeance and fury on his enemies he forces the women to march out in naked processions: they are subjected to rape by tens and twenties of men; they are dishonored before the eyes of their fathers, brothers and husbands; children are massacred in front of their parents; mothers are forced to drink their children's blood; human beings are burnt and buried alive. There is no wild species of animals in the world which may equal this human barbarity in any degree. The same is also the case with other evil traits, man proves himself to be the lowest of the low in whichever evil he indulges. So much so that he degrades even religion which is the most sacred thing for man: he worships the trees, animals and mountains, even the sex organs of man and woman; he keeps religious prostitutes in the places of worship to win the goodwill of the gods and commits adultery with them as an act of virtue. In his mythology he attributes such filthy tales to his gods and goddesses which would make the most wretched beast to hang his head in shame.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ ۝6

(95:6) except those who have faith and do righteous deeds. Theirs is a never ending reward.[5]

5. The commentators who have taken asfala-safilin to imply the state of extreme old age when man loses his sense and reason, interpret this verse to mean: But the people who in

the prime and strength of their age believed and did righteous deeds would have in this old age too the same righteous deeds credited for them and will be rewarded accordingly. No reduction will be made in their rewards on the ground that they could not perform those righteous deeds in that period of life. And the commentators who construe reversal to safilin to imply being cast into the lowest stage of Hell interpret this verse to mean: The people also believed and did righteous deeds are an exception: they will not be reversed to this stage but they will have a reward unending and unfailing. But, neither of these meanings is relevant to the reasoning made in this Surah to justify the judgment of the Hereafter. In our opinion the verse means: Just as it is a common observation in human society that the morally degraded are made the lowest of the low, so this is also an observation of every age that those who believed in God, the Hereafter and the Prophethood and who molded their lives after righteousness and piety, remained secure from this degeneration and remained consistent with the best mold and nature that Allah had created them on. Therefore, they are worthy of the unending reward, i.e. the reward which will neither be less than what they deserve, nor will it ever be cut off.

فَمَا يُكَذِّبُكَ بَعْدُ بِالدِّيْنِ 7

(95:7) Who, then, can give the lie to you, (O Prophet), about the Reward and the Punishment?[6]

6. Another translation of this verse can be: What can after this (O man) make you deny the judgment? In both cases the intention and purpose remains the same. That is when it is a common observation in human society that a section of mankind which has been created in the best of molds and nature, is rendered lowest of the low because of moral degradation, and the other section remains secure by adopting the path of constant faith and righteousness in view of its being created in the best of molds and nature how can judgment be denied after this? Does common sense require that the end of both these men be the same? Does justice demand that neither those who are reduced to the lowest of the low be punished nor those who strive to adopt a righteous life be rewarded? The same theme has been expressed at other places in the Quran thus: Shall We then treat the obedient as We treat the culprits? What has happened to you: how ill you judge? (Surah Al-Qalam, Ayat 35, 36). Do those who have committed evil think that We shall hold them and those who have believed and done righteous deeds as equal so that their life and their death should be alike? Ill are the judgments they pass. (Surah Al- Jathiyah, Ayat 21).

اَلَيْسَ اللّٰهُ بِاَحْكَمِ الْحٰكِمِيْنَ 8

(95:8) Is not Allah the Greatest of all sovereigns?[7]

7. That is, when you want and expect even the petty judges of the world to do justice, punish the culprits and reward the doers of good, what is your opinion about God? Is He not the greatest of all judges? If you think He is the greatest of all judges, do you think that He will not do any justice? Do you expect that He will treat the good and the evil alike? Will those who commit the vilest of deeds in the world and those who perform righteous deeds,

both end in the dust: neither will any be punished for his evil deeds, nor any be rewarded for his good works.

Imam Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Abu Daud, Ibn al-Mundhir, Baihaqi, Hakim and Ibn Marduyah have related, on the authority of Abu Hurairah, that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: When one of you recites Surah Wat-teen waz-zaytun and reaches Alais-Allah-u bi-ahkam-il-Hakimin he should respond to it, saying: Bala wa ana ala dhalika min-ash-shahidin (Yes, and I am of those who bear witness to it). According to some other traditions, the Prophet (peace be upon him) responded with Subhanaka fa-bala when he recited this verse.

96. Sura Al Alaq (The Clot)

Name

The Surah is so entitled after the word `alaq in the second verse.

Period of Revelation

This Surah has two parts: the first part consists of vv. 1-5, and the second of vv. 6-19. About the first part a great majority of the Islamic scholars are agreed that it forms the very first Revelation to be sent down to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings). In this regard, the Hadith from Hadrat Aishah, which Imam Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, and other traditionists have related with several chains of authorities, is one of the most authentic Ahadith on the subject. In it Hadrat Aishah has narrated the full story of the beginning of revelation as she herself heard it from the Holy Messenger of Allah. Besides, Ibn Abbas, Abu Musa al-Ashari and a group of the Companions also are reported to have stated that these were the very first verses of the Quran to be revealed to the Holy Prophet. The second part was sent down afterwards when the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) began to perform the prescribed Prayer in the precincts of the Kabah and Abu Jahl tried to prevent him from this with threats.

Beginning of Revelation

The traditionists have related on the strength of their respective authorities the story of the beginning of revelation from Imam Az-Zuhri, who had it from Hadrat Urwah bin Zubair, who had it from Hadrat Aishah, his aunt. She states that revelations to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) began in the form of true (according to other traditions, good) visions. Whichever vision he saw it seemed as though he saw it in broad daylight. Afterwards solitude became dear to him and he would go to the Cave of Hira to engage in worship there for several days and nights (Hadrat Aishah has used the word tahannuth, which Imam Zuhri has explained as ta'abbud: devotional exercises. This was some kind of worship which he performed, for until then he had not been taught the method of performing the Prayer by Allah). He would take provisions with him and stay there for several days, then would return to Hadrat Khadijah who would again provide for him for a few more days. One day when he was in the Cave of Hira, Revelation came down to him unexpectedly and the Angel said, to him: "Read".

After this Hadrat Aishah reports the words of the Holy Prophet himself, to the effect, "I said: I cannot read! There upon the Angel took me and pressed me until I could bear it no more. Then he left me and said: Read. I said: I cannot read! He pressed me a second time until I could bear it no more. Then he left me and said: Read. I again said: I cannot read! He pressed me for the third time until I could bear it no more. Then he left me and said: Iqra bismi Rabbi kal- ladhi khalaqa: (Read in the name of your Lord Who created) till he reached ma lam ya lam (what he did not know).

Then the Holy Messenger (upon whom be peace) returned home to Hadrat Khadijah trembling with fear, and said to her: `Cover me, cover me', and he was covered. When terror left him, he said: `O Khadijah, what has happened to me?' Then he narrated to her whatever

had happened, and said: `I fear for my life'. She said; `No never! Be of good cheer. By God, never will God debase you: you treat the kindred well, you speak the truth, (one tradition adds: you restore what is entrusted to you), you bear the burden of the helpless, you help the poor, you entertain the guests, and you cooperate in good works.'

Then she took him to Waraqah bin Naufal, who was her cousin. He had become a Christian in pre-Islamic days, wrote the Gospel in Arabic and Hebrew, and had become very old and blind. Hadrat Khadijah said: `Brother, listen to the son of your brother.' Waraqah said to the Holy Prophet: `What have you seen, nephew?' The Holy Prophet described what he had seen. Waraqah said; `This is the same Gabriel (the Angel of Revelation) which Allah had sent down to Moses. Would that I were a young man during your Prophethood! Would that I were alive when your tribe would expel you!' The Holy Prophet said: `Will they expel me?' Waraqah said; `Yes, never has it so happened that a person brought what you have brought and was not treated as an enemy. If I live till then I would help you with all the power at my command.' But not very long after this Waraqah died.

This narrative is explicit that even until a moment before the coming Angel the Holy Messenger of Allah (upon whom be His peace) was without any expectation that he was going to be appointed a Prophet. Nothing to say of any such wish or expectation, he did not even have any idea that he would meet with such an experience. Coming down of the Revelation and appearing of the Angel face to face was an unexpected accident for him the first effect of which on him was precisely the same as could naturally be on a person meeting with such a tremendous experience, in the absence of any preparation. That is why when he proclaimed the message of Islam, the people of Makkah raised all sorts of objections, but no one said that they were already apprehending that he would make a claim, for he had been making preparations since long to become a Prophet.

From this narrative another thing which also becomes obvious is how pure was the Holy Prophet's life and how sublime was his character before Prophethood, Hadrat Khadijah was no young lady: she was 55 years old at the time this event took place and had been the Holy Prophet's life companion for 15 years. No weakness of the husband can remain hidden from the wife. She had during this long period of married life found him to be such a generous and noble man that when he told her of his experience in the Cave of Hira', she admitted without the least hesitation that it was indeed Allah's own Angel who had come to him with Revelation. Likewise, Waraqah bin Naufal also was an old inhabitant of Makkah, who had seen the Holy Prophet grow up from childhood. Particularly, for the past 15 years because of the close relationship he was even more intimately aware of his life, his Affairs and dealings. When he also heard of his experience, he did not regard it as an evil suggestion, but immediately said that it was the same Gabriel who had descended on Moses (peace be upon him). This meant that even according to him the Holy Prophet was such a sublime person that there was nothing surprising in his being elevated to the office of Prophethood.

Occasion of Revelation of verses 6-19

This second part of thee Surah was revealed when the Holy Messenger of Allah began to perform the Prayer in the Islamic way in the Ka'bahand Abu Jahl threatened and tried to prevent him from this. It so happened that after his appointment to Prophethood even before he could start preaching Islam openly, he began to perform the Prayer in the

precincts of the Ka'bahin the way Allah taught him; and from this the Quraish felt for the first time that he had adopted a new religion. The other people were watching it with curiosity, but Abu Jahl in his arrogance and pride threatened the Holy Prophet and forbade him to worship in that way in the Ka'bah. In this connection, quite a number of the Ahadith have been related from Hadarat Abdullah ibn Abbas and Hadrat Abu Huraira, which mention the foolish behaviour of Abu Jahl.

Hadrat Abu Huraira says that Abu Jahl asked the people of Quraish: "Does Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) set his face on the ground before you?" When they replied in the affirmative, he said: "By Lat and Uzza, if I ever catch him in that act of worship, I would set my foot on his neck and rub his face in the dust." Then it so happened that he saw the Holy Messenger in that posture and came forward to set his foot on his neck, but suddenly turned back as if in a fright and being asked what was the matter, he said there was a ditch of fire and a terrible apparition between himself and Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) and some wings. On hearing this the Holy Prophet remarked: "Had he come near me, the angels would have smitten and torn him to pieces." (Ahmad, Muslim, Nasai, Ibn Jarir, Ibn AbI Hatim, Ibn al-Mundhir, lbn Marduyah, Abu Nu'aim Isfahani, Baihaqi).

According to lbn Abbas, Abu Jahl said: "If I caught Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) performing his Prayer by the Ka'bah, I would trample his neck down." When the Holy Prophet heard of it, he said: "If he acted so, the angels would seize him there and then?" (Bukhari, Tirmidhi, Nasai, Ibn Jarir, Abdur Razzaq, Abd bin Humaid, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Marduyah).

According to another tradition from Ibn Abbas, the Holy Prophet was performing his Prayer at the Maqam Ibrahim. Abu Jahl passed that way and said: "O Muhammad, did I not forbid you this, and then he started to threaten him." In reply the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) rebuked him severely. There upon he said: "O Muhammad, on what strength do you rebuke me? By God, my followers in this valley far exceed yours in number." (Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Nasai, Ibn Jarir, lbn Abi Shaibah, Ibn al-Mundhir, Tabarani, Ibn Marduyah).

Because of these very incidents the portion of this Surah beginning with Kalla inn al-insana la yat gha was sent down. Naturally the place of this part should be the same as assigned to it in this Surah of the Quran, for after the coming down of the first Revelation the Holy Prophet had given expression to Islam first of all by the act of Prayer, and his conflict with the pagans.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

اِقۡرَاۡ بِاسۡمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِىۡ خَلَقَ ۚ 1

(96:1) Recite[1] in the name of your Lord[2] Who created,[3]

1. As we have explained in the Introduction, when the Angel said to the Prophet (peace be upon him): Read, the latter replied: I cannot read! This indicates that the Angel had

presented these words of the revelation before him in the written form and had asked him to read them. For if the Angel had meant that he should repeat what he recited, he should not have replied, saying: I cannot read!

2. Read in the name of your Lord: Say Bismillah and read. This shows that the Prophet (peace be upon him) even before the coming down of this revelation regarded and acknowledged Allah alone as his Lord. That is why there was no need to ask who his Lord was, but it was said: Read in the name of your Lord.

3. Only the word khalaqa (created) has been used absolutely, and the object of creation has not been mentioned. This automatically gives the meaning: Read in the name of the Lord, Who is the Creator, Who created the whole universe and everything in it.

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ۚ 2

(96:2) created man from a clot of congealed blood.4

4. After making mention generally of the creation of the universe, mention has been made of man in particular, saying how Allah made him a perfect man starting his creation from an insignificant and humble state. Alaq is plural of alaqah, which means congealed blood. This is the primary state of the embryo which appears a few days after conception. Then it assumes the form of a lump of flesh, then afterwards it gradually takes human shape. (For details, see (Surah Al-Hajj, Ayat 5 and the corresponding E.Ns 5 to 7).

اِقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ ۙ 3

(96:3) Recite: and your Lord is Most Generous,

الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ۙ 4

(96:4) Who taught by the pen,5

5. That is, it is a great favor of Allah that starting man's creation from a most insignificant state, He made him possessor of knowledge which is the noblest attribute of creation, and He made him not only possessor of knowledge but also taught him the art of writing by the use of pen, which became the means of propagation, progress, dissemination and preservation of knowledge on a large scale. Had He not given man the knowledge of the art of pen and writing (by inspiration) his intellectual faculty would have stagnated, and it would have had no opportunity to develop, expand and become a means of transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next and make future progress.

عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ ۚ 5

(96:5) taught man what he did not know.6

6. That is, man originally was absolutely illiterate. Whatever of knowledge he obtained, he obtained it as a gift from Allah. Whatever doors of knowledge at any stage did Allah will to open for man, they went on opening up before him. This same thing has been expressed in the verse of the Throne (Ayat-ul-Kursi), thus: And the people cannot comprehend anything of His knowledge save what He Himself may please to reveal. (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 255). Whatever man looks upon as his own scientific discovery was, in fact, unknown to him before. Allah gave him its knowledge whenever He willed without his realizing that Allah by His grace had blessed him with the knowledge of it.

These verses were the very first to be revealed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), as is stated in the Hadith reported by Aishah. This first experience was so intense and tremendous that the Prophet (peace be upon him) could not bear it any more. Therefore, at that time he was only made aware that the Being Whom he already knew and acknowledged as his Lord and Sustainer was in direct communion with him, had started sending down revelations to him, and had appointed him as His Prophet (peace be upon him). Then after an intermission the opening verses of Surah al-Muddaththir were revealed in which he was told what mission he had to perform after his appointment to Prophethood. (For explanation, see Introduction to Al- Muddaththir).

كَلَّآ اِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ لَيَطْغٰٓى ۙ 6

(96:6) Nay,[7] surely man transgresses;

7. That is, man should never adopt an attitude of ignorance and rebellion against the Bountiful God Who has been so generous to him

اَنْ رَّاٰهُ اسْتَغْنٰى ؕ 7

(96:7) for he believes himself to be self-sufficient.[8]

8. That is, when the man has attained wealth, honor and rank and whatever else he desired to attain in the world, he becomes rebellious instead of being grateful and transgresses the boundaries of servitude to Allah.

اِنَّ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ الرُّجْعٰى ؕ 8

(96:8) Surely to your Lord is your return.[9]

9. That is, whatever he might have attained in the world, which makes him behave arrogantly and rebelliously, in the end he has to return to your Lord. Then he will realize what fate awaits him in consequence of his such attitude and behavior.

اَرَءَيْتَ الَّذِىْ يَنْهٰى ؕ 9

(96:9) Did you see him who forbids

عَبْدًا اِذَا صَلّٰىؕ 10

(96:10) a servant (of Allah) when he prays?[10]

10. A servant: the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah himself. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has been mentioned by this epithet at several places in the Quran. For example, Glory be to Him Who transported His servant one night from the Masjid al-Haram to the distant Temple. (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 1); All praise is for Allah Who has sent down this Book to His servant. (Surah Al- Kahf, Ayat 1); And that when the servant of Allah stood up to pray, the people got ready to assault him. (Surah Al- Jinn, Ayat 19). This shows that it is a special style of love by which Allah makes mention of His Messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him) in His Book. Besides, it also shows that Allah after appointing His Messenger to Prophethood had taught him the method of performing the Prayer. There is no mention of this method anywhere in the Quran, saying: O Prophet, perform the Prayer in this and this way. Hence, this is another proof that the Revelation sent down to the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not only consist of what has been recorded in the Quran, but besides this, other things were also taught to him by revelation, which are not recorded in the Quran.

اَرَءَيْتَ اِنْ كَانَ عَلَى الْهُدٰٓىۙ 11

(96:11) Did you consider: what if he is on the Right Way,

اَوْ اَمَرَ بِالتَّقْوٰىؕ 12

(96:12) and enjoins piety?

اَرَءَيْتَ اِنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلّٰىؕ 13

(96:13) Did you consider: what if he gives the lie (to the Truth) and turns away (from it)?

اَلَمْ يَعْلَمْ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَرٰىؕ 14

(96:14) Does he not know that Allah sees everything?[11]

11. The audience here apparently is every just man, who is being asked: Have you watched the act of the person who prevents a servant from God's worship? What do you think: if the servant be rightly guided, or warning the people to fear God and refrain from evil, and this forbidden be denying the truth and turning away from it, what will his act be like? Could this man adopt such an attitude had he known that Allah is watching the man who is exhorting others to piety as well as him who is denying the truth and turning away from it? Allah's watching the oppressor and his wrongdoing and the oppressed and his misery by

itself implies that He will punish the oppressor and redress the grievances of the wronged and downtrodden person.

كَلَّا لَئِن لَّمْ يَنتَهِ ۙ لَنَسْفَعًۢا بِالنَّاصِيَةِ ۙ 15

(96:15) No indeed;[12] if he does not desist, We shall drag him by the forelock;

12. That is, the person who threatens that he would trample the neck of Muhammad (peace be upon him) down when he performed the Prayer, would never be able to do so.

نَاصِيَةٍ كَاذِبَةٍ خَاطِئَةٍ ۚ 16

(96:16) by the lying forelock steeped in sin.[13]

13. The forelock here implies the person with the forelock.

فَلْيَدْعُ نَادِيَهُۥ ۙ 17

(96:17) So let him summon his helpmates;[14]

14. As we have explained in the Introduction, when the Prophet (peace be upon him) rebuked Abu Jahl on his foolish behavior, he had retorted: O Muhammad, on what strength do you threaten me? By God, my supporters in this valley far exceed yours in number. At this it is being said: Let him call his band of supporters.

سَنَدْعُ الزَّبَانِيَةَ ۙ 18

(96:18) We too shall summon the guards of Hell.[15]

15. According to the explanation given by Qatadah, the word zabaniyah in the original is used for the police in Arabic idiom, and zaban actually means to push away. The kings too kept armed attendants who would push out the one with whom the king was annoyed and angry. Therefore, what Allah means is: Let him call his supporters; We too shall summon Our Police, i.e. the angels of torment, to deal with him and his supporters.

كَلَّا ۖ لَا تُطِعْهُ وَاسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِب ۩ ۝ 19

(96:19) No, not at all. Never obey him. But prostrate yourself and become nigh (to your Lord).[16]

16. Sajdah (prostration) here implies the Prayer, so as to say: O Prophet, continue to perform your Prayer fearlessly as you have been in the past, and seek your Lord's presence through it. In the Sahih of Muslim and other books of Hadith there is a tradition from Abu Huraira to the effect: The servant is nearest to his Lord when he is in the state of prostration, and in

Muslim there is also a tradition from Abu Hurairah that when the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited this verse, he performed a sajdah of recital.

97. Surah Al Qadr (Power)

Name

The Surah has been so designated after the word al-qadr in the very first verse.

Period of Revelation

Whether it is a Makki or a Madani revelation is disputed. Abu Hayyan in Al-Bahr al-Muhti has made the claim that the majority of scholars regard it as a Madani Surah. Ali bin Ahmad al-Wahidi in his commentary says that this is the first Surah to be sent down in Madinah. Contrary to this, Al Mawardi says that according to the majority of scholars it is a Makki revelation, and the same view has Imam Suyuti expressed in Al-Itqan. Ibn Mardayah has cited Ibn Abbas, lbn Az Zubair and Hadrat Aishah as saying that this Surah was revealed at Makkah. A study of the contents also shows that it should have been revealed at Makkah as we shall explain below.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is to acquaint man with the value, worth and importance of the Quran. Its being placed just after Surah Al-Alaq in the arrangement of the Quran by itself explains that the Holy Book, the revelation of which began with the first five verses of Surah Al-Alaq. was sent down in a destiny making night. It is a glorious Book and its revelation for mankind is full of blessings.

At the outset, Allah says: "We have sent it down." That is, it is not a composition of Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessing) himself, but We Ourself have revealed it.

Then, it is said that "We sent it down in the Night of Destiny." Night of Destiny lies two meanings and both are implied here. First, that it is the night during which destinies are decided; or, in other words, it is not an ordinary night like the other nights, but a night in which destinies are made or marred. The revelation of this Book in this night is not merely the revelation of a book but an event which will change the destiny of not only the Quraish, or of Arabia, but of, the entire world. The same thing has been said in Surah Ad-Dukhan for which please see Introduction to that Surah and E. N. 3 thereof. The other meaning is that this is, a night of unique honor, dignity and glory; so much so that it is better than a thousand months. Thus, the disbelievers of Makkah have been warned, as if to say: "You on account of your ignorance regard this Book, which Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) has presented, as a calamity for yourselves and complain that a disaster has befallen you, whereas the night in which it was decreed to be sent down was such a blessed night that a task was accomplished in it for the well being of mankind, which had never been accomplished even during a thousand months of history. This also has been said in verse 3 of Ad-Dukhan in another way, which we have explained in the introduction to that Surah.

In conclusion, it has been stated that in this night the angels and Gabriel descend with every decree (which in verse 4 of Surah Ad- Dukhan has been described as arm-hakim: wise decree) by the leave of their Lord, and it is all peace from evening till morning; that is, there

is no interference of evil in it, for all decrees of Allah are intended to promote good and not evil. So much so that even if a decision to destroy a nation is taken, it is taken for the sake of ultimate good, not evil.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اِنَّاۤ اَنۡزَلۡنٰہُ فِیۡ لَیۡلَۃِ الۡقَدۡرِ ۚ صلے ج 1

(97:1) Behold, We revealed this (Qur'an) on the Night of Power.[1]

1. The words in the original are anzalana hu: We sent it down. But although there is no mention of the Quran before it, the Quran is implied, for sending down by itself points out that the Quran is meant. And there are numerous instances of this in the Quran that if from the context, or the style, the antecedent of a pronoun is apparent, the pronoun is used even if the antecedent has not been mentioned anywhere before or after it. (For explanation, see(E.N. 9 of Surah An-Najm).

Here, it has been said: We sent it down (the Quran) in the Night of Destiny, and in (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 185), Ramadan is the month in which the Quran was sent down. This shows that the night in which the Angel of God had brought down revelation for the first time to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the Cave of Hira, was a night of the month of Ramadan. This night has been described as Lailat-ul-qadr here and as Lailat-im-mubarakah in (Surah Ad-Dukhan,Ayat 3).

There can be two meanings of sending down the Quran in this night: First, that in this night the entire Quran was entrusted to the bearers (angels) of revelation, and then Gabriel continued to reveal its verses and Surahs, from time to time, to the Prophet (peace be upon him) during 23 years as the occasion and conditions demanded. This meaning has been given by Ibn Abbas. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn al- Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Hakim, lbn Marduyah, Baihaqi). Second, that the revelation of the Quran began in this night. This is Imam Shabi's view, although from him too the other view is also related, which is the view of Ibn Abbas as cited above (Ibn Jarir). Anyhow, in both cases, the meaning is the same that the revelation of the Quran to the Prophet (Peace be upon him) began in this very night, and this was the night in which the five opening verses of (Surah Al-Alaq) were revealed. The fact, however, is that Allah did not compose the verses and the Surahs of the Quran right at the time guidance was needed by the Prophet (Peace be upon him) for his message of Islam in respect of an occasion or affair, but even before the creation of the universe, in the very beginning, Allah had a full plan of the creation of mankind on the earth, of raising the Prophets in it, of sending down the Books to the Prophets, of raising the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) at the end of the line of the Prophets and of sending down the Quran to him. In the Night of Destiny only the execution of the final phase of the plan began. No wonder if at that very time the entire Quran was entrusted to the bearers of revelation.

Some commentators have interpreted qadr to mean destiny (taqdir), i.e. it is the night in which Allah entrusts the decrees of destiny to the angels to be enforced. This is supported

by (verse 3 of Surah Ad-Dukhan): This is a night in which every matter is decided wisely by Our command. On the contrary, Imam Zuhri says that qadr means glory and honor, there by implying that it is a Night of Destiny. This meaning is supported by the words Lailat-ul-qadr is better than a thousand months of this Surah itself.

As for the question as to which night it was, it is disputed and there are as many as 40 different views on this subject. However, a great majority of scholars hold the opinion that one of the odd nights of the last ten nights of the month of Ramadan is Lailat-ul-qadr, and among these also most scholars think that it is the 27th night. Below we give the authentic Ahadith which have been reported in this connection:

According to Abu Hurairah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, in connection with Lailat-ul qadr, that it is the 27th night. (Abu Daud Tayalisi). According to another tradition from Abu Hurairah, it is the last night of Ramadan. (Musnad Ahmad).

When Zirr bin Hubaish asked Ubayy bin Kaab about Lailat-ul-qadr, he stated on oath, and did not make any exception, that it is the 27th night. (Ahmad, Muslim, Abu Da'ud, Tirmidhi, Nasai, Ibn Hibban). When Abu Zarr was asked about it, he said: Umar, Hudhaifah and many other companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) had no doubt that it is the 27th night. (Ibn Abi Shaibah). Ubadah bin as-Samit says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Lailat-al-qadr is one of the odd nights of the last ten nights of Ramadan: 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, 29th, or the last night. (Musnad Ahmad).

Abdullah bin Abbas says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Search for it among the last ten nights of Ramadan when there are still nine days in the month, or seven days, or five days. (Bukhari). Most of the scholars have understood it to mean that by this the Prophet (peace be upon him) meant the odd nights. Abu Bakr said: When nine days remain in the month, or seven days, or five days, or three days, or the last night. What he meant was that Lailat-ul-qadr should be sought among these days. (Tirmidhi, Nasai).

According to Aishah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Search for Lailat-ul-qadr among the odd nights of the last ten nights of Ramadan. (Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, Tirmidhi). Aishah and Abdullah bin Umar have also reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) observed itikaf (seclusion in the Mosque) during the last ten nights of Ramadan every year during his lifetime.

On the basis of the traditions related in this regard on the authority of a great companions like Muawiyah, lbn Umar, Ibn Abbas and others, a large number of the earlier scholars regard the 27th of Ramadan as Lailat-ul-qadr. Probably Allah and His Messenger have not specified any one night for the reason so that the people, in their zeal to benefit from the virtues of Lailat-ul-qadr, should spend more and more nights in worship and devotion and should not remain content with only one night. Here the question arises that when it is night at Makkah, it is daytime in a large part of the world; therefore, the people of those parts can never take advantage of Lailat-ul-qadr. The answer is that the word night in Arabic is mostly used for the combination of the day and night. Therefore, the night preceding the day on any one of these dates of Ramadan can be Lailat ul-qadr for that part of the world.

وَمَآ أَدۡرَىٰكَ مَا لَيۡلَةُ ٱلۡقَدۡرِ ۖ 2

(97:2) And what do you know what the Night of Power is?

لَيۡلَةُ ٱلۡقَدۡرِ ۙ خَيۡرٌ مِّنۡ أَلۡفِ شَهۡرٍ ۖ 3

(97:3) The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.[2]

2. The commentators in general have understood this to mean that the good acts performed in this night are superior in value to the good acts of a thousand months in which Lailat-ul-qadr is not included. There is no doubt that this is in itself correct and the Prophet (peace be upon him) has described great excellences and virtues of the good acts and devotions of this night. According to a tradition related in Bukhari and Muslim, on the authority of Abu Hurairah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The one who remained standing in worship in the state of belief and for the sake of rewards from Allah during Lailat-ul-qadr, would have all his previous sins forgiven. And in Musnad Ahmad, there is a tradition from Ubadah bin as-Samit, saying that the Prophet said: Lailat-ut-qadr is among the last ten nights of Ramadan. The one who stood up in worship in order to take advantage of their rewards, Allah will forgive all his former and latter sins. But, the verse does not say: To act righteously in Lailat-ul-qadr is better than acting righteously in a thousand months, but it says: Lailat-ul-qadr is better than a thousand months. And a thousand months also does not imply 83 years and 4 months exactly, but a very long period of time as a thousand denoted among the Arabs. Therefore, the verse means that in this one night a task was accomplished for the welfare of mankind the like of which had not been accomplished even during an indefinitely long period of history.

تَنَزَّلُ ٱلۡمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ وَٱلرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذۡنِ رَبِّهِم مِّن كُلِّ أَمۡرٍ ۛ 4

(97:4) The angels along with the Spirit[3] descend in it by the permission of their Lord[4] with all kinds of decrees.

3. The Spirit: Gabriel, who has been mentioned separately from the angels in view of his unique eminence, honor and merit.

4. That is, they do not descend of their own accord but by leave of their Lord, and every decree implies amr hakim (a wise decree) as described in (Surah Ad-Dukhan, Ayat 5).

سَلَٰمٌ هِيَ حَتَّىٰ مَطۡلَعِ ٱلۡفَجۡرِ ۝ 5

(97:5) All peace is that night until the rise of dawn.[5]

5. That is, the entire night, from evening till morning, is peace, free from every evil and mischief.

98. Surah Al Bayyina (The Clear Evidence)

Name

The Surah is so designated after the word al-bayyinah occurring at the end of the first verse.

Period of Revelation

Where it was revealed, at Makkah or Madinah, is also disputed. Some commentators say it is a Makki revelation according to most scholars; others say it is a Madani revelation according to most scholars. Ibn Az Zubair and Ata bin Yasar hold the view that it is Madani. Ibn Abbas and Qatadah are reported to have held two views, first that it is Makki, second that it is Madani. Hadrat Aishah regards it as a Makki Surah. Abu Hayyan, author of Bahr al-Muhit, and Abdul Munim ibn al- Faras, author of Ahkam al-Quran, also have preferred to regard it as Makki. As for its contents, there is nothing in it to indicate whether it was revealed at Makkah or at Madinah.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its having been placed after Surahs Al-Alaq and Al-Qadr in the arrangement of the Quran is very meaningful. Surah Al-Alaq contains the very first revelation, while Surah Al-Qadr shows as to when it was revealed, and in this Surah it has been explained why it was necessary to send a Messenger along with this Holy Book.

First of all the need of sending a Messenger has been explained, saying: The people of the world, be they from among the followers of the earlier scriptures or from among the idolaters, could not possibly be freed from their state of unbelief, until a Messenger was sent whose appearance by itself should be a clear proof of his apostleship, and he should present the Book of God before the people in its original, pristine form, which should be free from every mixture of falsehood corrupting the earlier Divine Books; and which should comprise sound teachings.

Then, about the errors of the followers of the earlier Books it has been said that the cause of their straying into different creeds was not that Allah had not provided any guidance to them, but they strayed only after a clear statement of the Right Creed had come to them. From this it automatically follows that they themselves were responsible for their error and deviation. Now, if even after the coming of the clear statement through this Messenger, they continued to stray, their responsibility would further increase.

In this very connection, it has been stated that the Prophets who came from Allah and the, Books sent down by Him, did not enjoin anything but that the way of sincere and true service to Allah be adopted, apart from all other ways, no one else's worship, service or obedience be mixed with His, the salat be established and the zakat be paid. This same has been the true religion since ever. From this also it automatically follows that the followers of the earlier scriptures, straying from this true religion, have added extraneous things to it, which are false, and Allah's this Messenger has come to invite them back to, the same original faith.

In conclusion, it has been pointed out clearly that the followers of the earlier Books and the idolaters who would refuse to acknowledge this Messenger are the worst of creatures: their punishment is an everlasting Hell; and the people who would believe and act righteously, and would spend life in the world in awe of God, are the best of creatures: their reward is eternal Paradise wherein they will live for ever. Allah became well pleased with them and they became well pleased with Allah.

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

لَمْ يَكُنِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ وَالْمُشْرِكِيْنَ مُنْفَكِّيْنَ حَتّٰى تَاْتِيَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَةُ ۙ 1

(98:1) Those who disbelieved[1] – be they from the People of the Book or from those who associated[2] others with Allah in His Divinity – will not desist from unbelief until the Clear Proof should come to them;[3]

1. Here the word kufr (unbelief) has been used in its widest sense, which includes different forms of the unbelieving attitude. For example, some were unbelievers in the sense that they did not acknowledge Allah at all; some did acknowledge Allah but did not regard Him as the One and only God, but worshipped others as well, thinking they were associates in divine Being or divine attributes and powers in one way or the other; some acknowledged oneness of God but committed some kind of shirk as well; some acknowledged God but did not acknowledge His Prophets and the guidance brought by them; some acknowledged one particular Prophet and did not acknowledge another; others rejected the Hereafter. In short, there were different kinds of kufr in which the people were involved. And the statement: The disbelievers from among the people of the Book and those who associate, does not mean that some of them were not involved in kufr, but that those who were involved in kufr were of two kinds: the followers of the Book and the mushriks. Here, min (among) has not been used for division but for explanation, as for example, in (Surah Al-Hajj, Ayat 30), where it has been said Fajtanib-ur rijsa min al-authan, which means: Therefore, guard yourselves against the filth of idols, and not, guard yourselves against the filth which is in the idols. Likewise, alladhina kafaru min ahl-il-Kitabi wal-mushrikin means: the disbelievers from among the followers of the Book and the mushriks, and not, those who have disbelieved from these two groups.

2. Despite the common factor of kufr between them the two groups have been mentioned by separate names. The followers of the Book imply the people who possessed any of the revealed Books, even if in corrupted form, sent to the former Prophets, and they believed in it. And the mushriks (idolaters) imply the people who did not follow any Prophet nor believed in any Book. Although in the Quran the shirk, (polytheism, idolatry) of the people of the Book has been mentioned at many places, e.g. about the Christians it has been said: They say: God is one of the three (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 73); The Messiah is son of God (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 30); The Messiah, son of Mary, is God (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 17). And about the Jews it has been said: They say: Ezra is son of God (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 30), yet nowhere in the Quran has the term mushrik been used for them, but they have been mentioned as alladhina ul-ul-Kitaba (those who were given the Book), or by the words Jews and Christians. For they believed in the principle of Tauhid (Oneness of God) as the true

religion, and then committed shirk. Contrary to this, for others than the followers of the Book, the word mushrik has been used as a term, for they acknowledged shirk (idolatry) as true religion and dis-acknowledged Tauhid. This distinction between the two groups holds good not only in the use of the term but also in the Shariah injunctions. Animal flesh duly slaughtered by the followers of the Book has been declared lawful for the Muslims if they slaughter a lawful animal in the name of Allah in the prescribed way, and permission to marry their women has also been given. On the contrary, neither the animal slaughtered by the mushriks is lawful for the Muslims nor is marriage with their women.

3. That is, there was no means of their being freed from this state of unbelief except that a clear evidence (of the truth) should come and make them understand the falsity of every form of kufr and its being untrue, and should present the right way before them in a clear and rational way. This does not mean that after the coming of the clear evidence they would give up kufr but that in the absence of the clear evidence it was not at all possible that they would be delivered from that state. However, if even after its coming, some of them still persisted in their kufr, then they themselves would be responsible for it; they could not complain that Allah had made no arrangement for their guidance. This same thing bas been expressed in the Quran at different places in different ways, e.g. in (Surah An-Nahl, Ayat 9), it is said: Allah has taken upon Himself to show the right way; in (Surah Al-Lail, Ayat 12), it is said: It is for Us to show the way; in (Surah An-Nisa, Ayats 163-165): O! Prophet, We have sent revelation to you just as We had sent it to Noah and other Prophets after him (peace be upon them all)... All these Messengers were sent as bearers of good news and warners so that, after their coming, the people should have no excuse left to plead before Allah; and in (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 19): O people of the Book, this Messenger of Ours has come to you and is making clear to you the teachings of the right way after a long interval during which there had come no Messengers, lest you should say: No bearer of good news nor warner came to us. Lo, now the bearer of good news and warner has come.

رَسُوْلٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ يَتْلُوْا صُحُفًا مُّطَهَّرَةً ۙ 2

(98:2) a Messenger[4] from Allah, reciting from Purified Scrolls;[5]

4. Here, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been called the clear evidence, for his life before and after Prophethood, his presenting a Book like the Quran in spite of being un-lettered, his bringing about an extraordinary revolution in the lives of the converts to Islam through education and training, his educating the people in rational beliefs, clean and pure forms of worship, excellent morals and the best principles and injunctions for human life, perfect harmony and agreement between his word and deed, and his constancy of purpose in respect of his message in spite of every kind of resistance and opposition, all these were clear signs of the truth that he was Allah's Messenger.

5. Lexically, suhuf means written pages, but in the Quran this word has been used as a term for the Books revealed to the Prophets of Allah (peace be upon them); and by the scriptures are meant the scriptures which are free from every mixture of falsehood, every kind of error and moral filth. The full import of these words becomes evident when one studies the Bible (and the books of other religions as well) vis-a-vis the Quran, and finds written in them along with sound teachings such things as are not only opposed to truth and reason but are

also morally contemptible. After reading them when one turns to the Quran, one realizes how pure and hallowed this Book is.

فِيهَا كُتُبٌ قَيِّمَةٌ ۚ 3

(98:3) in writings wherein are scriptures, absolutely true and unerring.

وَمَا تَفَرَّقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَٰبَ إِلَّا مِنۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنَةُ ۚ 4

(98:4) Nor did those to whom the Book had been given split up until after the Proof (of the Right Way) had come to them.[6]

6. That is, the reason why the people of the Book before this were divided into countless sects because of different kinds of errors and deviation, was not that Allah had failed to send a clear evidence from Himself for their guidance, but the fact that they adopted the wrong way after guidance had come from Allah. Therefore, they themselves were responsible for their deviation, for Allah had fulfilled His obligation towards them. Likewise, since their scriptures are no longer pure and their books no longer consist of original and correct teachings, Allah by sending a Messenger of His, as a clear evidence, with a hallowed Book, containing sound and pure teachings, has again fulfilled His obligation towards them, so that even if after that they remained divided, they themselves should be responsible for it and should have no excuse left to plead before Allah. This has been stated at many places in the Quran, e.g. see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 213, 253); (Surah Al-Imran, Ayat 19); (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayats 44-50); (Surah Younus, Ayat 93); (Surah Ash-Shura, Ayats 13-15); (Surah Al-Jathiyah, Ayats 16-18), along with the corresponding notes for full understanding.

وَمَآ أُمِرُوٓا۟ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا۟ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ ٱلدِّينَ ۥ حُنَفَآءَ وَيُقِيمُوا۟ الصَّلَوٰةَ وَيُؤْتُوا۟ الزَّكَوٰةَ ۚ وَذَٰلِكَ دِينُ الْقَيِّمَةِ ۚ 5

(98:5) Yet all that they had been commanded was that they serve Allah, with utter sincerity, devoting themselves exclusively to Him, and that they establish Prayer and pay Zakah. That is the Right Faith.[7]

7. That is, the message of the same religion, which now the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is preaching, had been given to the people of the Book by the Prophets who came to them and by the Books which were sent among them; they had not been enjoined any of the false belief and wicked deeds which they adopted afterwards and created different sects. Right and correct religion has always been the same: that Allah alone should be served and worshipped exclusively, none else be joined with Him in worship, man should become worshipper of One Allah alone and obedient to His command only, should establish the salat and pay the zakat. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 19 of Surah Al-Aaraf); (E.Ns 108, 109 of Surah Younus), (E.Ns 43 to 47 of Surah Ar-Room); (E.Ns 3, 4 of Surah Az-Zumar). Some commentators have taken the words din alqayyimah in this verse in the meaning of

din al-millat alqayyimah: Religion of the righteous community. Some others have taken qayyimah in the superlative sense and understood it in the same meaning as we have adopted in our translation.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ شَرُّ الْبَرِيَّةِ ۚ 6

(98:6) Those who disbelieved[8] – be they from among the People of the Book or among those who associated others with Allah in His Divinity– shall be in the Fire, and will abide in it. They are the worst of creatures.[9]

8. Disbelieved: Refused to acknowledge the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as Allah's Messenger. The meaning is that the end of those from among the mushriks and the followers of the Book, who have not acknowledged the Messenger whose emergence by itself is a clear evidence, and who is reciting to them hallowed pages containing sound and correct teachings, will be as is being described below.

9. That is, they are worse than all creatures of God, even animals, for the animals do not possess reason and power, but these people reject the truth in spite of having reason and authority.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ۙ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ خَيْرُ الْبَرِيَّةِ ۚ 7

(98:7) But those that believe and work righteous deeds, they are the best of creatures.[10]

10. That is, they are superior to all creatures of God, even to the angels, for the angels do not have the power to disobey, and these people adopt Allah's obedience in spite of having the power to disobey Him.

جَزَاؤُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۖ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ رَبَّهُ ۚ ع 8

(98:8) Their recompense lies with their Lord: Gardens of eternity beneath which rivers flow; therein they shall dwell, forever and ever. Allah is well-pleased with them, and they are well-pleased with Him. All this is for him who fears his Lord.[11]

11. In other words, the person who did not live in the world fearlessly and independent of God, but feared Him at every step lest he should do something which might entail His wrath and punishment, will have this reward reserved for him with Allah.

99. Surah Az Zalzala (The Earthquake)

Name

It is derived from the word zilzal in the first verse.

Period of Revelation

Whether or not it was revealed, at Makkah or Madinah, is disputed. Ibn Masud, Ata, Jabir, and Mjahid say that it is a Makki Surah and a statement of Ibn Abbas also supports this view. On the contrary, Qatadah and Muqatil say that it is Madani and another statement of Ibn Abbas also has been cited in support of this view. That it is a Madani Surah is reasoned from a tradition from Hadrat Abu Said Khudri, which Ibn Abi Hatim has related from him. He says: "When the verse Fa-man ya mal mithqala dharratin khairan yarah, wa man ya mal mithqala dharratin sharran yarah, was revealed, I said: "O Messenger of Allah, shall I really see my deeds? The Holy Messenger replied in the affirmative. I submitted: And every major sin? He replied yes. I said: And the minor sins too? He replied yes. Thereupon I exclaimed that I would then be ruined. The Holy Prophet said: Rejoice, O Abu Sa'id, for each good act will be equal to ten good acts like it." The basis of the argument for this Surah's being Madani is that Hadrat Abu Sa'ld Khudri was an inhabitant of Madinah and reached maturity after the Battle of Uhud. Therefore, if this Surah was revealed in his presence, as is apparent from his statement, it must be a Madani Surah. However, the practice that the Companions and their immediate successors followed in respect of the occasion of the revelation of the verses and Surahs, has already been explained in the Introduction to Surah Ad-Dahr above. Therefore, a Companion's saying that a verse was sent down on this or that particular occasion is no proof that it was sent down on that very occasion. It may well be that after coming of age when Hadrat Abu Sa'id heard this Surah for the first time from the Holy Prophet, terrified by its last portion he might have asked the Holy Prophet the questions which we have cited above, and he might have narrated the incident saying that when this verse was revealed he put this and this question to the Holy Prophet. In the absence of this tradition every reader who reads the Qur'an with understandings will feel that it is a Makki Surah. More than that: from its theme and style he would feel that it must have been sent down in the earliest stage at Makkah when the fundamental principles and beliefs of Islam were being presented before the people in a concise but highly effective way.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is the second life after death and presentation in it before man of the full record of the deeds done by him in the world. In the first three sentences it has been told briefly how the second life after death will take place and how confounding it will be for man. In the next two sentences it has been said that this very earth on which man has lived and performed all kinds of deeds thoughtlessly, and about which he never could fancy that this lifeless thing would at some time in the future bear witness to his deeds, will speak out on that Day by Allah's command and will state in respect of each individual person what act he had committed at a particular time and place. Then, it has been said that men on that Day, rising from their graves, will come out in their varied groups from all corners of the earth, to be shown their deeds and works, and their presentation of the deeds will be so complete

and detailed that not an atom's weight of any good or evil act will be left unnoticed or hidden from his eyes.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اِذَا زُلۡزِلَتِ الۡاَرۡضُ زِلۡزَالَہَا ۙ 1

(99:1) When the earth will be shaken with a mighty shaking,[1]

1. Zalzalah means to shake violently over and over again. Thus, zulzilat-il ardu means that the earth will be shaken violently by convulsion after convulsion, and since shaking of the earth has been mentioned, it automatically gives the meaning that the entire earth will be shaken and not a limited territory of it. Then, in order to express the great intensity of the earthquake the word zilzalaha has been added, which literally means: its being shaken. It means: It will be so shaken as a huge sphere like it ought to be shaken, or shaken to its utmost intensity. Some commentators have taken it to imply the first earthquake with which the first stage of Resurrection will begin, i.e. when all living beings will perish and the present order of the world will be upset. But, according to a large section of them, it implies the earthquake with which the second stage of Resurrection will begin, i.e. when all the former and the latter generations of mankind will rise back to life. This second commentary seems to be more correct, for the whole subsequent theme supports it.

وَ اَخۡرَجَتِ الۡاَرۡضُ اَثۡقَالَہَا ۙ 2

(99:2) and the earth will throw up all her burdens,[2]

2. This same has been expressed in Surah Al-Inshiqaq, Ayat 4, thus: And throws out whatever is within it, and becomes empty. It has several meanings:

(1) It will cast out bodies of the dead in whatever form and state and wherever they may be lying in the earth; and the following sentence indicates that at that time all the scattered parts of the bodies will reassemble and be resurrected once again in the same form and shape as they had been in their first life, for if it were not so, how will they say: What has happened to the earth? It will not only cast out the dead bodies of men but also all traces and evidences of the words, deeds and activities of their former life lying buried in it; the following sentence points out that the earth will narrate all that had happened on its back.

(2) A third meaning has also been given by some commentators, saying that it will cast out the treasures of gold, silver, jewels and every kind of wealth lying hidden in the earth's belly and man will see it and realize how he thirsted for these things in the world, how he committed murders, thefts, robberies and piracies in the land and sea, usurped the rights of others, waged wars and devastated vast populations. On that Day all that will lie heaped up before him, yet of no avail, but will rather become a means of punishment for him.

وَقَالَ الْإِنسَانُ مَا لَهَا ۚ 3

(99:3) and man will cry out: "What is the matter with her?"[3]

3. Man here may as well imply every man, for after resurrection and coming to senses the first impression of every man will be as to what was happening around him; afterwards he will realize that it was the Resurrection Day. Man may also imply the man who denies the Hereafter, for what he regarded as impossible would be happening in front of him and causing him confusion and bewilderment. As for the believers, they will not be bewildered and confused, for everything would be taking place according to their belief and conviction. To an extent, this second meaning is supported by verse 52 of Surah YaSeen, in which it has been said that the deniers of the Hereafter at that time will exclaim: Ah, who has roused us from our sleeping place? And the reply given would be: This is the same which the Merciful God had promised and the Messengers sent by God had spoken the truth. This verse does not expressly say that this answer to the disbelievers would actually be given by the believers, for there is no indication of it in the verse. The probability, however, is that the believers will give them this answer.

يَوْمَئِذٍ تُحَدِّثُ أَخْبَارَهَا ۙ 4

(99:4) On that Day it will relate all her news,[4]

4. According to Abu Hurairah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) recited this verse and asked: Do you know what annals it will relate? The people said: Allah and His Messenger have the best knowledge. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The annals are that the earth will testify to the deeds which every man and woman has done on its back. It will say: He or she had done such and such a thing on such and such a day. These will be the annals the earth will narrate. (Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Nasai, Ibn Jarir, Abd bin Humaid, Ibn al-Mundhir, Hakim, Ibn Marduyah, Baihaqi in Ash-Shuab). According to Rabiah Kharashi, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Beware of the earth, for it is your root and basis, and there is nothing which a person does on it, and it will not report, whether it is good or bad. (Mujam at-Tabarani). Anas reports that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The earth on the Day of Resurrection will bring out every act that would have been done on its back. Then he recited these verses. (Ibn Marduyah, Baihaqi). About Ali it is related that when he distributed the money of the Bait al- Mal (public treasury) among the needy ones and thus emptied it, he would perform two rakahs of the Prayer in it and say: You will have to bear witness that I filled you with justice and emptied you with justice.

It might have been difficult for a man of ancient times to understand how the earth will speak and narrate the annals and events happening on it on the Resurrection Day, but in the present age of scientific discoveries and the inventions of cinema, loudspeaker, radio, television, tape-recorder, electronic equipment, etc., it is no longer difficult to understand how the earth will narrate its annals. The impression of whatever man speaks is preserved in the air, in the radio waves, on the particles of the walls and floors and ceilings of the houses, and on the environments of the road, plain or field if he spoke outside the house. If Allah so wills He can make these things repeat all these voices precisely in the way these

were uttered in the first instance by man. Man at that time will hear with his ears and know that it was his own voice, and all his acquaintances will also testify that whatever they were hearing was the person's own voice and his own accent. Then whatever man has done anywhere on the earth, and in whatever state, has had its impression on everything of the environment and its image inscribed on it. Even if he did something in pitch dark, there are such rays in the Kingdom of God for which darkness and light make no difference; they can preserve his image in any case. All these images will pass before man on the Resurrection Day like a motion picture, and will show him when and where he had done something during his life on the earth.

The fact is that although Allah directly knows whatever a man does, yet in the Hereafter when He will establish His court, He will punish every culprit only after fulfilling all the demands of justice. Any case which is brought before His court against a criminal will be proved with such perfect evidence that no room will be left to doubt his being a criminal. The first and foremost evidence against him is the record in which the two recording angels are recording his each word and deed. (Surah Qaaf, Ayats 17-18; Surah Al-Infitar, Ayats 10-12). This record will be handed over to him and he will be asked to read it, for "you yourself suffice as reckoner against yourself." (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 14). Reading it man will be bewildered, for "it has left nothing un-recorded of our deeds, small or great." (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayat 49). Then there is man's own body which he had used in the world. In Allah's court his own tongue will bear witness as to what he had been speaking through it in the world, his own hands and feet will bear witness as to what deeds he had committed through them (Surah An-Noor, Ayat 24). His eyes and his ears will bear witness as to what he saw and heard by their means. Even the skin of his body will bear witness to his deeds. Bewildered, he will ask his limbs: Why have you borne witness against me? They will reply: The same God Who has given speech to everything has given us speech. (Surah HaMim As-Sajdah, Ayats 20- 22). On top of these, there will be the witnesses which will be presented from the earth and all its environments, in which man will hear his own voice by his own ears and see the exact pictures of his own deeds by his eyes. Furthermore, the ideas, motives and aims hidden in the heart of man and the intentions with which he had performed every deed will be brought out and placed before him as is stated in Surah Al-Adiyat. That is why with the production of such absolute, clear and undeniable proofs, man will be confounded and he will be left with no chance to say anything in self-defense to excuse himself. (Surah Al-Mursalat, Ayats 35-36).

بِاَنَّ رَبَّكَ اَوۡحٰى لَهَا ؕ 5

(99:5) for your Lord will have commanded her (to do so).

يَوۡمَئِذٍ يَّصۡدُرُ النَّاسُ اَشۡتَاتًا ۙ لِّيُرَوۡا اَعۡمَالَهُمۡ ؕ 6

(99:6) On that Day people will go forth in varying states[5] so that they be shown their deeds.[6]

5. This can have two meanings:

(1) That each man will present himself in his own individual capacity. Families, groups, parties, nations, all will scatter away. This thing has also been said at other places in the Quran, for e.g. according to Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 94, Allah on that Day will say to the people: So, you have come before Us all alone, as We created you the first time, and in Surah Maryam: He will appear before Us all alone (verse 80); and Everyone of them will be presented before Him individually on the Resurrection Day. (verse 95).

(2) That the people who during thousands and thousands of years had died at different places; will be rising from different corners of the earth and proceeding in groups, as has been said in Surah An-Naba: The day the Trumpet is blown, you will come out in crowds. (verse 18).

Apart from these, there is no room in the word ashtatan for the meanings, which different commentators have given, and are, therefore, outside the literal bounds of this word, although they are correct by themselves and in accordance with the conditions depicted of the Resurrection Day in Quran and the Hadith.

6. This can have two meanings:

(1) That they are shown their deeds, i.e. each one will be told what he did in the world.

(2) That they are shown the rewards of their deeds.

Although this second meaning can also be taken of the words li yurau jazaa a malahum (so as to be shown the rewards of their deeds) but li yurau a malahum (so as to be shown their deeds). Therefore, the first meaning is preferable, especially when at several places in the Quran it has been stated clearly that the disbeliever and the believer, the righteous and the wicked, the obedient and the disobedient, all will be given their records. (see Surah Al-Haqqah, Ayats 19, 25; Surah Al-Inshiqaq, Ayats 7, 10). Evidently, there is no difference between showing somebody his deeds and handing over to him his record. Furthermore, when the earth will narrate whatever had happened on it, the whole picture of the conflict between the truth and the falsehood that has been raging since the beginning of time and will continue to rage till the end, will also appear before the people and they will see what part the truth loving people played in it and what vile deeds did the supporters of falsehood commit against them. It may well be that the people will hear with their own ears all the speeches and dialogues of the callers to right guidance and of the publicists of error and evil; the whole record of the writings and literature produced by the two sides will be placed intact before them, and the people gathered together in the Plain of Assembly will see with their own eyes the persecution of the lovers of truth by the worshippers of falsehood and all the scenes of the bitter conflict that raged between the two parties.

فَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَّرَهٗ ۙ 7

(99:7) So, whoever does an atom's weight of good shall see it;

وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَّرَهٗ ۧ 8

(99:8) and whoever does an atom's weight of evil shall see it.[7]

7. A simple and straightforward meaning of this statement, and it is right and correct, is that not an atom's weight of good or evil done by a person, will have been left unrecorded in his conduct book, and he will see it in any case. But if seeing is taken to imply seeing its reward and punishment, it will be wrong to take it in the meaning that in the Hereafter every person will be rewarded for his most minor offence, and no one will be left un-rewarded for a good and unpunished for an evil done by him. For in the first place, it would mean that each evil act will be punished and each good act rewarded separately; secondly, it also means that no believer, however righteous and virtuous, will remain safe from being punished for a most ordinary error, and no disbeliever, however wicked and iniquitous, will be left unrewarded for a most ordinary good act. Both these meanings are opposed not only to the explanations given in the Quran and the Hadith, but also to reason. From the point of view of reason, it is not understandable that a master would refuse to pardon a most loyal and dutiful servant for a minor error, and along with rewarding for each act of service and obedience, would also punish him for each and every error. Likewise, this also is not understandable from the viewpoint of reason that a person brought up and favored by you should prove disloyal and treacherous and ungrateful in spite of your favors, and you, over-looking his collective attitude, should punish him for each act of treachery separately and reward him for each, even if most insignificant, act of service separately. As for the Quran and the Hadith, they have laid down a detailed law of rewards and punishments for the different categories of the people, be they believers, hypocrites, disbelievers, righteous believers, erring believers, wicked and sinful believers, common disbelievers, or wicked and mischievous disbelievers, and these rewards and punishments pervade the entire life of man, from here to the Hereafter.

In this connection, the Quran has stated, in principle, certain things explicitly:

First, that the deeds of the disbelievers, idolaters and hypocrites (i.e. the deeds regarded as virtuous) have been rendered vain; they will receive no reward for them in the Hereafter. If at all they deserve a reward for them, they will receive it here in the world. For this, see Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 147; Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 17, 67-69; Surah Houd, Ayats 15-16; Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 18; Surah Al-Kahf, Ayat 104, 105; Surah An-Noor, Ayat 39; Surah Al-Furqan, Ayat 23; Surah Al-Ahzab, Ayat 19; Surah Az-Zumar, Ayat 65; Surah Al-Ahqaf, Ayat 20.

Second, that evil will be punished to the extent that evil has been committed, but the good deeds will be rewarded much more generously than what they will actually deserve. At some places it has been explicitly stated that a good act will have a ten-fold reward for it, and at others that Allah will increase the reward of the good act as much as He will please. For this, see Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 261; Surah Al- Anaam, Ayat 160; Surah Younus, Ayats 26-27; Surah An- Noor, Ayat 38, Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 84; Surah Saba, Ayat 37, Surah Al-Mumin, Ayat 40.

Third, that if the believers abstained from major sins, their ordinary offences will be forgiven. (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 31; Surah Ash-Shura, Ayat 37; Surah An-Najm, Ayat 32).

Fourth, that the righteous believer shall have an easy reckoning, his evils will be overlooked and he will be rewarded according to his best deeds. (Surah Al-Ankabut, Ayat 7; Surah Az-Zumar, Ayat 35; Surah Al-Ahqaf, Ayat 16; Surah Al-Inshiqaq, Ayat 8).

The Hadith is also very explicit in this regard. In the commentary of Surah Al-Inshiqaq above, we have cited the Ahadith which have been reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him) in connection with the explanation of easy reckoning and severe accountability. (See E.N. 6 of Surah Al-lnshiqaq). Anas says that once Abu Bakr Siddiq was having his meals with the Prophet (peace be upon him). In the meantime this verse was revealed. Abu Bakr withdrew his hand from food and said: O Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah, shall I see the result of every little evil that I have happened to commit? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: O Abu Bakr, whatever unpleasant and troublesome things you experience in the world, will compensate for the little evils that you happened to commit, and Allah is reserving every little good that you do for your Hereafter, (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Tabarani in Al-Ausat, Baihaqi in Ash-Shuab. Ibn al-Mundhir, Hakim, Ibn Marduyah, Abd bin Humaid). The Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah had also explained this verse to Abu Ayyub Ansari, saying: Whoever from among you does good will have his reward in the Hereafter, and whoever commits an evil will suffer punishment for it in this very world in the form of misery and disease. (Ibn Marduyah). Qatadah has related this saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him) on the authority of Anas: Allah does not wrong a believer in the world. He provides him sustenance in lieu of his good deeds, in the Hereafter He will reward him for these. As for the disbeliever, he is recompensed for his good deeds in the world itself; then when Resurrection takes place, he, will have no good work left to his credit. (lbn Jarir). Masruq has related from Aishah that she asked the Prophet (peace be upon him): In the pre-Islamic days of ignorance Abdullah bin Judan treated his kindred kindly, fed the poor, received his guests well, earned freedom for the captives. Will this be of any use to him in the Hereafter? The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: No, he never said until death: Rabbighfir-li khatiati yaum ad-din. My Lord, forgive me my errors on the Judgement Day. (lbn Jarir). The Prophet (peace be upon him) also gave similar replies in respect of the other people, who did good deeds in the pre-Islamic days, but died as pagans. But there are certain other sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him), which show that although the good done by a disbeliever cannot save him from the fire of Hell, yet in Hell he will not be subjected to the severe punishment which will be the lot of the wicked, sinful and villainous disbelievers, e.g. according to a Hadith, Hatim Tai in view of his generosity will be subjected to a light punishment in Hell (Ruh al-Maani).

However, this verse warns man of a truth of vital importance which is this: Even a most ordinary good has its own weight and its own value, and the same is also true of evil: even a most ordinary evil will also be considered and taken into account; it will not just be overlooked. Therefore, no good act, however small and insignificant, should be left, undone, for many such good acts can collect and be regarded as a major good act in the reckoning with Allah. Likewise, even a most ordinary evil also should not be committed, for a large number of such ordinary errors can become serious sins. The same thing has been described by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in several Ahadith. According to a tradition related in Bukhari and Muslim, on the authority of Adi bin Hatim, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Save yourselves from the fire of Hell even if it be by giving away a pit of a date, or by uttering a good word. Again from Adi, in an authentic tradition, the Prophet's (peace be

upon him) saying has been reported: Do not look upon any good work as insignificant, even if it be emptying a bucket into the vessel of one asking for water, or receiving a brother of yours with a pleasant face. According to a tradition reported in Bukhari from Abu Hurairah, the Prophet (peace be upon him), addressing the women, said: O Muslim women, no woman should look upon sending a gift to her neighbor as mean, even if it be the hoof of a goat. A tradition has been related in Musnad Ahmad, Nasai and Ibn Majah from Hadrat Aishah, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: O Aishah, abstain from the sins which are looked upon as trivial, for they too will be enquired about by Allah. Musnad Ahmad contains a tradition from Abdullah bin Masud, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Beware of minor sins, for they will gather together on man so much so that they will kill him. (For the distinction between the grave and the trivial offences, see E.N. 53 of Surah An-Nisa and E.N. 32 of Surah An-Najm).

100. Surah Al Adiyat (Those That Run)

Name

The Surah has been so entitled after the word al `adiyat with which it opens.

Period of Revelation

Whether it is a Makki or a Madani Surah is disputed. Hadrat Abdullah bin Masud, Jabir, Hasan Basri, Ikrimah, and Ata say that it is Makki. Hadrat Anas bin Malik, and Qatadah say that it is Madani; and from Hadrat Ibn Abbas two views have been reported, first that it is a Makki Surah, and second that it is Madani. But the subject matter of the Surah and its style clearly indicate that it is no only Makki but was revealed in the earliest stage of Makkah.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its object is to make the people realize how evil man becomes when he denies the Hereafter, or becomes heedless of it, and also to warn them that in the Hereafter not only their visible and apparent deeds but even the secrets hidden in their hearts too will be subjected to scrutiny.

For this purpose the general chaos and confusion prevailing in Arabia, with which the whole country was in turmoil, has been presented as an argument. Bloodshed, loot and plunder raged on every side. Tribes were subjecting tribes to raids, and no one could have peaceful sleep at night from fear that some enemy tribe might raid his settlement early in the morning. Every Arab was fully conscious of this state of affairs and realized that it was wrong. Although the plundered bemoaned his miserable, helpless state and the plunderer rejoiced, yet when the plunderer himself was plundered, he too realized how abject was the condition in which the whole nation was involved. Referring to this very state of affairs, it has been said, Unaware of the second life after death and his accountability before God in it, man has become ungrateful to his Lord and Sustainer. He is using the powers and abilities given by God for perpetrating tyranny and pillage; blinded by the love of worldly wealth he tries to obtain it by every means, however impure and filthy, and his own state itself testifies that by abusing the powers bestowed by his Lord he is being ungrateful to Him. He would never have behaved so, had he known the time when the dead will be raised from the graves, and when the intentions and motives with which he had done all sorts of deeds in the world, will be exposed and brought out before everyone to see. At that time the Lord and Sustainer of men shall be well informed of what one had done and what punishment or reward one deserved.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

وَالۡعٰدِیٰتِ ضَبۡحًا ۙ 1

(100:1) By (the horses) that charge snorting,[1]

1. There is no indication in the words of the verse to show whether those who run imply the horses; only the word wal-adiyat (by, those who run) has been used. That is why the commentators have disputed as to what is implied by those who run. One section of the companions and their immediate successors has been to think that it implies the horses; another section says that it implies the camels. But since the peculiar sound called dabh is produced only by the panting, snorting horses, and the following verses also in which mention has been made of striking sparks and raiding a settlement early at dawn and raising clouds of dust, apply only to the horses, most scholars are of the opinion that horses are meant. Ibn Jarir says: Of the two views this view is preferable that by "those who run" horses are implied, for the camel does not breathe hard in running, it is the horse which does so, and Allah has said: By those runners which pant and breathe hard in running. Imam Razi says: The words of these verses proclaim that horses are meant, for the sound of dabh (panting breath) is only produced by the horses, and the act of striking sparks of fire with the hoofs too is associated with the horses, and, likewise, mounting of a raid early at dawn is easier by means of the horses than by other animals.

فَالْمُوْرِيٰتِ قَدْحًا ۙ 2

(100:2) then raise sparks of fire (by their hoofs),[2]

2. Strike sparks: indicates that the horses run in the dead of night, for the sparks struck by their hoofs become conspicuous only at night.

فَالْمُغِيْرٰتِ صُبْحًا ۙ 3

(100:3) then raid by the dawn,[3]

3. The practice among the Arabs was that when they had to mount a raid on a settlement, they marched out in the night so as to take the enemy by surprise; then they would launch a sudden attack early in the morning so that everything became visible in the light of day, and at the same time it did not become so bright that the victim could notice their movement from a distance and be ready to meet the offensive.

فَاَثَرْنَ بِهٖ نَقْعًا ۙ 4

(100:4) and blaze a trail of dust,

فَوَسَطْنَ بِهٖ جَمْعًا ۙ 5

(100:5) and penetrate deep into a host.

اِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهٖ لَكَنُوْدٌ ۚ 6

(100:6) Verily man is most ungrateful to his Lord;[4]

4. This is for which an oath has been sworn by the horses, which run with panting breath and dash off sparks at night, then raising dust rush to assault a settlement at dawn and penetrate into the enemy host. It is astonishing to note that a large number of the commentators have taken these horses to imply the horses of the Muslim fighters and the enemy host to imply the host of disbelievers, whereas the oath has been sworn to impress the point that man is highly ungrateful to his Lord. Now, obviously, in the course of Jihad for the sake of Allah, the rushing forth of the fighters' horses and their assaulting a host of disbelievers all of a sudden, does not at all support the point that man is ungrateful to his Lord, nor the following sentences, viz. man himself is a witness to it, and he loves the worldly wealth with all his heart, apply to the people who go out to fight in the cause of Allah. Therefore, one will have to admit that the oaths sworn in the first five verses of this Surah, refer, in fact, to the general bloodshed, looting and plunder prevalent in Arabia at that time. In the pre-Islamic days of ignorance the night was a very dreadful thing: in it the people of every tribe and settlement apprehended the danger of a sudden attack by some unknown enemy, and when the light of day appeared they would heave a sigh of relief that the night had passed in peace. The tribes did not fight only retaliatory wars but different tribes also raided others in order to deprive them of their worldly goods and herds and to capture their women and children to be made slaves. This kind of tyranny and plunder was carried out mostly by means of the horses, which Allah is presenting here as an argument for the fact that man is ungrateful to his Lord. That is the powers which man is employing for fighting, shedding blood and plundering had not been given him by God for this purpose. Therefore this indeed is sheer ingratitude that the resources granted by Allah and the power given by Him should be used for causing chaos and corruption to spread in the earth, which Allah abhors.

وَإِنَّهُۥ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ لَشَهِيدٌ ۚ 7

(100:7) and he himself is a witness to that,[5]

5. That is his own conscience and his own deeds are a witness to it; then there are many disbelievers also who by their own tongue express their ingratitude openly, for they do not even believe that God exists to say nothing of acknowledging His blessings for which they may have to render gratitude to Him.

وَإِنَّهُۥ لِحُبِّ ٱلْخَيْرِ لَشَدِيدٌ ۖ 8

(100:8) and surely he loves riches with a passionate loving.[6]

6. Literally He is most ardent in the love of khair. But the word khair is not only used for goodness and virtue in Arabic but also for worldly wealth. In (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 180), khair has been used in the meaning of worldly wealth. The context itself shows where khair has been used in the sense of goodness and where in that of worldly goods. The context of this verse clearly shows that here khair means worldly wealth and not virtue and goodness. For about the man who is ungrateful to his Lord and who by his conduct is himself

testifying to his ingratitude it cannot be said that he is very ardent in the love of goodness and virtue.

أَفَلَا يَعْلَمُ إِذَا بُعْثِرَ مَا فِي الْقُبُورِ ۙ 9

(100:9) Is he not aware that when whatever lies (buried) in the graves is overthrown;[7]

7. That is, the dead men will be raised back as living men from whatever state and wherever they would be lying buried in the earth.

وَحُصِّلَ مَا فِي الصُّدُورِ ۙ 10

(100:10) and the secrets of the hearts are laid bare (and examined)?[8]

8. That is all the intentions, aims and objects, ideas and thoughts and the motives behind acts and deeds that lie hidden in the hearts will be exposed and examined in order to sort out the good from the evil. In other words judgment will not be passed only on the apparent and superficial as to what a man practically did but the secrets hidden in the hearts will also be brought out to see what were the intentions and motives under which a man did what he did. If man only considers this, he cannot help admitting that real and complete justice cannot be done anywhere except in the court of God. Secular laws of the world also admit in principle that a person should not be punished merely on the basis of his apparent act but his motive for so acting also should be seen and examined. But no court of the world has the means by which it may accurately ascertain the motive and intention. This can be done only by God: He alone can examine the underlying motives behind every apparent act of man as well as take the decision as to what reward or punishment he deserves. Then, as is evident from the words of the verse, this judgment will not be passed merely on the basis of the knowledge which Allah already has about the intentions and motives of the hearts, but on Resurrection Day these secrets will be exposed and brought out openly before the people and after a thorough scrutiny in the court it will be shown what was the good in it and what was the evil. That is why the words hussila ma fissudur have been used. Tahsil means to bring out something in the open, and to sort out different things from one another. Thus, the use of tahsil concerning hidden secrets of the hearts contains both the meanings: to expose them and to sort out the good from the evil. This same theme has been expressed in Surah At-Tariq, thus: The Day the hidden secrets are held to scrutiny. (verse 9).

إِنَّ رَبَّهُمْ بِهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّخَبِيرٌ ۜ 11

(100:11) Surely on that Day will their Lord be fully informed about them.[9]

9. That is, He will be knowing well who is who, and what punishment or reward he deserves.

101. Surah Al Qaria (The Disaster)

Name

The Surah takes its name from its first word *al- qari`ah*. This is not only a name but also the title of its subject matter, for the Surah is devoted to Resurrection.

Period of Revelation

There is no dispute about its being a Makki Surah. Its contents show that this too is one of the earliest Surahs to be revealed at Makkah.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is Resurrection and the Hereafter. At the outset, the people have been aroused and alarmed, saying: "The Great Disaster! What is the Great Disaster? And what do you know what the Great Disaster is? "Thus, after preparing the listeners for the news of the dreadful calamity, Resurrection has been depicted before them in two sentences, saying that on that Day people will be running about in confusion and bewilderment just like so many scattered moths around a light, and the mountains uprooted, will their cohesion and will fly about like carded wool. Then, it has been said that when Allah's Court is established in the Hereafter and the people are called upon to account for their deeds. The people whose good deeds are found to be heavier than their evil deeds, will be blessed with bliss and happiness, and the people whose good deeds are found to be lighter than their evil deeds, will be cast into the deep pit full of burning fire.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

اَلۡقَارِعَةُ ۙ 1

(101:1) The Calamity![1]

1. Qariah literally means the striking one. Qar is to strike one thing upon another so severely as to produce a noise. In view of this literal meaning, the word qariah is used for a dreadful disaster and a great calamity. At another place in the Quran this word has been used for a great affliction befalling a nation. In (Surah Ar-Raad, Ayat 31), it has been said: As for the disbelievers, because of their misdeeds, one affliction or the other does not cease to visit them every now and then.

But, here the word al-Qariah has been for the Resurrection and in Surah Al-Haaqqah too the Resurrection has been described by this very epithet (verse 4). One should remember that here the whole Hereafter, from the first stage of Resurrection to the last stage of judgment and meting out of rewards and punishments is being depicted together.

مَا الۡقَارِعَةُ ۚ 2

(101:2) What is the Calamity?

وَمَآ أَدۡرٰىكَ مَا الۡقَارِعَةُ ۙ 3

(101:3) And what do you know what the Calamity is?

يَوۡمَ يَكُوۡنُ النَّاسُ كَالۡفَرَاشِ الۡمَبۡثُوۡثِ ۙ 4

(101:4) On that Day human beings shall be like scattered moths,

وَتَكُوۡنُ الۡجِبَالُ كَالۡعِهۡنِ الۡمَنۡفُوۡشِ ۙ 5

(101:5) and the mountains shall be like fluffs of carded wool in varying colours.[2]

2. This will be the first stage of Resurrection, when in consequence of the great disaster the whole of the present order of the world will be overthrown; the people will then be running about in confusion and bewilderment like so many scattered moths around a light; and the mountains will be flying about like carded wool of different colors. The mountains have been compared to wool of different colors because of the existence of a variety of colors in them

فَاَمَّا مَنۡ ثَقُلَتۡ مَوَازِيۡنُهٗ ۙ 6

(101:6) Then[3] he whose scales weigh heavier

3. From here begins description of the second stage of Resurrection when after having been resurrected men will appear in the court of God.

فَهُوَ فِىۡ عِيۡشَةٍ رَّاضِيَةٍ ؕ 7

(101:7) shall have a blissful life;

وَاَمَّا مَنۡ خَفَّتۡ مَوَازِيۡنُهٗ ۙ 8

(101:8) but he whose scales weigh lighter,[4]

4. The word mawazin in the original can be plural of mauzun as well as, of mizan. In the first case, mawazin would imply the deeds which might have some weight in the sight of Allah and be, thus, worthy of appreciation. In the second case, mawazin would imply scales of a balance. In the first case, the meaning of the mawazin's being heavier or lighter is that the good deeds will be heavy or light as against the evil deeds, for in the sight of Allah only good deeds have any weight and worth. In the second case. the meaning of the mawazin's being heavy is that the scale of the good deeds will be heavier than the scale of evil deeds, in

Allah Almighty's Balance of Justice, and their being light means that the scale of good deeds will be lighter than the scale of evil deeds. Besides, in Arabic idiom the word mizan is also used for weight (wazan); accordingly, the weight's being heavy or light implies the good deeds being heavy or light. In any case, whether mawazin is taken in the meaning of mauzun or of mizan, or of wazan, the intention remains the same, which is that the basis of judgment in the divine court will be whether the provision of the deeds that a man has brought is weighty or weightless, or whether his good deeds are heavier than his evil deeds or lighter. This theme has occurred at several places in the Quran which explains the full meaning.

In Surah Al-Aaraf it has been said: On that Day the weight will be identical with the truth: accordingly, those whose scales, will be heavy will alone come out successful; and those whose scales are light will be the ones who will have incurred loss upon themselves. (verses 8-9).

In Surah Al-Kahf, it was said: O Prophet, say to them: Should we tell you who are the most un-successful people and miserable failures in regard to their deeds? They are those whose all endeavors in the worldly life had gone astray from the right way, but they were under the delusion that everything they were doing, was rightly directed. These are the people who rejected the revelations of their Lord and did not believe that they would ever go before Him. Therefore, all their deeds were lost, for We will assign no weight to them on the Day of Resurrection. (verses 103-105).

In Surah Al-Anbiya: On the Day of Resurrection, We will set up just and accurate balances so that no one will be wronged in the least in any way; even if it be an act equal in weight to a grain of mustard seed, We will bring it forth (to be weighed) and We suffice for reckoning. (verse 47). These verses show that kufr and denial of the truth is in itself such a stupendous evil that it will certainly lower the scale of evils, and there will be no good act of the disbelievers, which may have any weight in the scale of good deeds so that its scale of goodness may become heavy. However, in the scales of the believer there will be the weight of faith as well as the weight of the good deeds which he performed in the world. On the other hand, every evil done by him will be placed in the scale of evil deeds and then it will be seen whether his scale of the good deeds is heavier or his scale of the evil deeds.

فَأُمُّهُۥ هَاوِيَةٌ ۟ 9

(101:9) his shall be the deep pit for a dwelling.[5]

5. The words in the original are: ummu hu hawiyah: his mother will be hawiyah. Hawiyah is from hawa, which means to fall from a height to a depth, and hawiyah is the deep pit into which something falls. Hell has been called Hawiyah because it will be very deep and the culprits will be thrown into it from the height. As for the words, his mother will be Hawiyah, they mean: Just as the mother's lap is the child's abode, so Hell will be the culprits' only abode in the Hereafter.

وَمَآ أَدۡرَىٰكَ مَا هِيَهۡ ١٠

(101:10) And what do you know what that is?

نَارٌ حَامِيَةُۢ ١١

(101:11) A Blazing Fire![6]

6. That is, it will not merely be a deep pit but will also be full of raging fire.

102. Surah At Takathur (The Mutual Rivalry)

Name

The Surah taken its name from the word at takathur in the first verse.

Period of Revelation

Abu Hayyan and Shaukani say that this Surah, according to all commentators, is Makki, and this same is the well known view according to Iman Suyuti. However, there are some traditions, on the basis of which it is considered a Madani Surah, and they are as follows:

Ibn Abi Hatim has cited Abu Buraidah as saying that this Surah was sent down concerning the two tribes, Bani Harithah and Bani al-Harth, of the Ansar. The two tribes had first recounted the glories and illustrious deeds of their living men; then they had gone to the grave yard and bragged of the glorious deeds of their dead. Thereupon the Divine Revelation Alhakum at takathur came down. But, if the practice of the Companions and their successors concerning the occasions of revelation, is kept in view, this tradition is no argument to prove that Surah At Takathur was sent down on that very occasion, but it shows that this Surah fully applied to the act of the two tribes.

Imam Bukhari and Ibn Jarir have cited this view of Hadrat Ubayy bin Ka'ab: "We took the Holy Prophet saying: “If the son of Adam had two valleys full of wealth, he would long for a third valley; the son of Adam's belly cannot be filled but by earth, to be from the Quran until Alhakum at takathur was sent down.”

This Hadith has been regarded as an argument for Surah At-Takathur to be a Madani Surah on the ground that Hadrat Ubayy had become a Muslim in Madinah. But Hadrat Ubayy's this statement does not indicate in what sense the Companions regarded this saying of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) as belonging to the Quran. If it means that they regarded it as a verse of the Quran, it cannot be acceptable, for a great majority of the Companions consisted of the men who were well aware of each and every word of the Quran; they could not have the misunderstanding that the Hadith was a verse of the Quran. And if its belonging to the Quran is taken to mean its being derived from the Quran, the tradition can also mean that when the Companions who entered Islam in Madinah, heard this Surah for the first time from the Holy Prophet, they thought that it had been revealed just then, and then about the Holy Prophet's above saying they formed the idea that it was derived from this very Surah.

Ibn Jarir Tirmidhi, Ibn al Mundhir and other traditionists have related this view of Hadrat Ali: "We were in doubt about the torment of the grave until Alhakum at takathur was sent down." This view has been regarded as an argument for Surah At-Takathur to be Madani on the ground that the torment of the grave was first mentioned at Madinah; no mention of it was ever made at Makkah. But this is wrong. In the Makki Surahs of the Quran, the torment of the grave has been mentioned at many places so clearly that there can he no room for any such doubt; for example, see Al- An'am: 93, An-Nahl: 28, Al-Muminun: 99-100, Al-Mu'min: 45-46, which are all Makki Surahs. Therefore, if anything is proved by Hadrat Ali's saying, it is that Surah At-Takathur had been revealed before the revelation of the above mentioned

Makki Surahs and its revelation had removed the Companions doubt about the torment of the grave.

That is why, in spite of these traditions, a great majority of the commentators are agreed that this Surah is Makki. In our opinion this is not only a Makki Surah but in view of its contents and style it is one of the earliest Surahs to be revealed at Makkah.

Theme and Subject Matter

In it the people have been warned of the evil consequences of world worship because of which they spend their lives in acquiring more and more of worldly wealth, material benefits and pleasures, and position and power, till death, and in vying with one another and bragging and boasting about their acquisitions. This one pursuit has so occupied them that they are left with no time or opportunity for pursuing the higher things in life. After warning the people of its evil end they have been told us if to say: "These blessings which you are amassing and enjoying thoughtlessly, are not mere blessings but are also a means of your trial. For each one of these blessings and comforts you will surely be called to account in the Hereafter."

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

اَلۡهٰٮكُمُ التَّكَاثُرُ ۙ 1

(102:1) The craving for ever-greater worldly gains and to excel others in that regard keeps you occupied[1]

1. The words alhakum at-takathur of the original are too vast in meaning to be fully explained in a passage. Alhakum is from lahv which originally means heedlessness, but in Arabic this word is used for every occupation which engrosses man so completely that he becomes heedless of the more important things in life.

When the word alhakum is made from this root, it will mean that man has become so obsessed with some occupation that he has lost sight of everything more important than it. He is preoccupied with it, is wholly lost in pursuit of it and this obsession has rendered him heedless of everything else in life. Takathur is from kathrat, which has three meanings:

(1) That man should strive to gain more and more of everything.

(2) That the people should vie with one another for gaining more and more.

(3) That they should brag and boast of possessing greater abundance of things than others.

Therefore, alhakum at-takathur would mean: Takathur (greed for more and more) has so occupied you that its pursuit has made you heedless of every higher thing in life. In this sentence it has not been indicated as to abundance of what is meant in takathur, heedlessness of what is implied in alhakum, and who are the addressees of alhakum. In the absence of such an explanation, the words become applicable in their most general and

extensive meaning. Thus, takathur does not remain restricted in meaning and application but applies to all the gains and benefits, pleasures and comforts, the passion for acquiring more and more means of power and authority, vying with others in pursuit of these and bragging and boasting of their abundance. Likewise, the addressees of alhakum also do not remain limited but the people of all ages, in their individual as well as collective capacity, become its addressees. It gives the meaning that the passion for acquiring more and more of the worldly wealth, vying with others in pursuit of it and bragging and boasting of its possession has affected individuals as well as societies. Likewise, since in alhakum at-takathur it has not been pointed out as to which people are engrossed in acquisitiveness and of what they are rendered heedless, it has also become very extensive in meaning. It means that the passion for piling up more and more has made the people heedless of everything more important than it. They have become heedless of God, of the Hereafter, of the moral bounds and moral responsibilities, of the rights of others and of their own obligations to render those rights. They are only after raising the standard of living and do not bother even if the standard of humanity be falling. They want to acquire more and more of wealth no matter how and by what means it is acquired. They desire to have more and more means of comfort and physical enjoyment and, overwhelmed by this greed, they have become wholly insensitive as to the ultimate end of this way of living. They are engaged in a race with others to acquire more and more of power, more and more of forces, more and more of weapons, and they have no idea that all this is a means of filling God's earth with tyranny and wickedness and of destroying humanity itself. In short, takathur has many forms, which have engrossed individuals as well as societies so completely that they have become heedless of everything beyond the world, its benefits and pleasures.

حَتّٰى زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ ؕ 2

(102:2) until you reach your graves.[2]

2. That is, you spend your whole life in the same craze and endeavor, until the time comes when you must die and leave the world.

كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ 3

(102:3) Nay, you will soon come to know;[3]

3. That is, you are under the delusion that the abundance of the worldly goods and surpassing others in it is real progress and success, whereas the opposite is the case. Soon you will know its evil end and you will realize that it was a stupendous error in which you remained involved throughout your life. Soon may mean the Hereafter. That is, for the Being Whose sight comprehends all ages, from eternity to eternity, a few thousand years or a few hundred thousand years can only be a short span of the eternal time. Soon it can also mean death, for death is not very far away from any man, and soon after death man will come to know whether the occupations which engaged him throughout life were a means of good fortune and success for him, or of misfortune and failure.

ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝4

(102:4) nay, again, you shall soon come to know.

كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِيْنِ ۝5

(102:5) Nay, would that you knew with certainty of knowledge (what your attitude will lead to, you would never have acted the way you do).

لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيْمَ ۝6

(102:6) You will surely end up seeing Hell;

ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِيْنِ ۝7

(102:7) again, you shall most certainly end up seeing it with absolute certainty.

ثُمَّ لَتُسْئَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيْمِ ۝8

(102:8) Then, on that Day, you will be called to account for all the bounties you enjoyed.[4]

4. "Then" in this sentence does not mean that accountability will be held after the culprits have been cast into Hell, but it means: Then We give you the news that you will be questioned about these comforts of life, and obviously this questioning will be held at the time of accountability in the divine court. Its main argument is that in several Ahadith it has been reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him) that the believers and the disbelievers, both will have to account for the blessings granted by Allah. However, the people who did not show ingratitude but spent their lives as grateful servants of Allah, will come out successful from the accountability, and those who proved thankless to Allah for His blessings and committed ingratitude by word or by deed, or by both; will emerge as failures.

Jabir bin Abdullah says: The Prophet (peace be upon him) once visited us and we served him with fresh dates and gave him cool water to drink. Thereupon he said: These are of the blessings about which you will be questioned. (Musnad Ahmad, Nasai, Ibn Jarir, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Marduyah, Abd bin Humaid, Baihaqi in Ash-Shuab).

Abu Hurairah has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) once asked Abu Bakr and Umar to accompany him to the place of Abul-Haitham bin at-Taihan Ansari. Thus, he took them to the oasis of Ibn at-Taihan. The latter brought a bunch of dates and placed it before them. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Why didn't you pluck the dates yourself? He said: I thought you would yourselves select and eat dates of your choice. So, they ate the dates and drank cool water. At the end, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: By Him in

Whose hand is my life: this is of the blessings about which you will be questioned on the Resurrection Day, the cool shade, the cool dates, the cool water. (This tradition has been narrated in different ways by Muslim, Ibn Majah, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Nasai, Ibn Jarir, Abu Yala and others, on the authority of Abu Hurairah. In some of which the name of the Ansari companion has been mentioned and in some he has been referred to as a person from among the Ansar. This incident has been related with several details by Ibn Abi Hatim from Umar and by Imam Ahmad from Abu Asib, the Prophet's (peace be upon him) freed slave. Ibn Hibban and Ibn Marduyah have related a tradition from Abdullah bin Abbas, which shows that an almost similar thing had happened in the house of Abu Ayyub Ansari.

These Ahadith make it explicit that not only the disbelievers but the righteous believers too will be questioned. As for the blessings which Allah has bestowed on man, they are unlimited and countless. There are many blessings of which man is not even conscious. The Quran says: If you try to count the blessings of Allah, you will not be able to calculate them. (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 34). Countless of them are the blessings which Allah has granted directly to man, and a large number of these are the blessings which man is granted through his own skill and endeavor. About the blessings that accrue to man in consequence of his own labor and skill, he will have to render an account as to how he acquired them and in what ways he spent them. In respect of the blessings directly bestowed by Allah, he will have to give an account as to how he used them. And in respect of all the blessings, on the whole, he will have to tell whether he had acknowledged that those blessings had been granted by Allah and whether he had expressed gratitude for them to Allah with his heart, and by word and deed, or whether he thought he had received all that accidentally, or as a gift from many gods, or whether he held the belief that although those were the blessings of One God, in their bestowal many other beings also had a part, and for that very reason he had taken them as his gods and worshipped and thanked them as such.

103. Surah Al Asr (The Declining Day, The Time)

Name

The Surah takes its name from the word al-`asr occurring in the first verse.

Period of Revelation

Although Mujahid, Qatadah and Muqatil regard it as a Madani Surah, yet a great majority of the commentators opine that it is Makki; its subject matter also testifies that it must have been sent down in the earliest stage at Makkah, when the message of Islam was being presented in brief but highly impressive sentences so that the listeners who heard them once could not forget them even if they wanted to, for they were automatically committed to memory.

Theme and Subject Matter

This Surah is a matchless specimen of comprehensiveness and brevity. A whole world of meaning has been compressed into its few brief words, which is too vast in content to be fully expressed even in a book. In it, in a clear and plain way it has been stated what is the way to true success for man and what is the way to ruin and destruction for him. Imam Shafi has very rightly said that if the people only considered this Surah well, it alone would suffice them for their guidance. How important this Surah was in the sight of the Companions can be judged from the tradition cited from Hadrat Abdullah bin Hisn ad-Darimi Abu Madinah, according to which whenever any two of them met they would not part company until they had recited Surah Al-Asr to each other. (Tabarani)

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

وَالۡعَصۡرِ ۙ 1

(103:1) By the time!

اِنَّ الۡاِنۡسَانَ لَفِىۡ خُسۡرٍ ۙ 2

(103:2) Lo! Man is in a state of loss;

اِلَّا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَتَوَاصَوۡا بِالۡحَـقِّ ۙ وَتَوَاصَوۡا بِالصَّبۡرِ ع 3

(103:3) save those who have faith and do righteous deeds, and counsel each other to hold on to truth and counsel each other to be steadfast.[1]

1. In this Surah an oath has been sworn by the Time to impress the point that man is in sheer loss and only those people are an exception from the loss who are characterized by four qualities:

(1) Faith.

(2) Righteous deeds.

(3) Exhorting one another to truth.

(4) Exhorting one another to patience.

Let us consider each of these parts separately in order to fully understand the meanings.

As for the oath, we have explained several times above that Allah has not sworn an oath by any of the created objects on account of its glory or its excellence and wonderful qualities but for the reason that it testifies to the truth which is meant to be established. Therefore, the oath by Time signifies that Time is witness to the truth that man is in sheer loss except for the people who possess the four qualities.

The word time is used for the past as well as for the passing time in which the present, in fact, does not signify any long stretch of time. Every moment, when it has passed, becomes past, and every moment of the future, when it is passing, becomes present, and when it has passed, becomes past. Here, since the oath has been sworn by time absolute, both kinds of time are included in its meaning. The oath by the past time means that human history testifies that the people who were without these qualities, eventually incurred loss, and in order to understand the significance of the oath by the passing time, one should understand that the time which is now passing is, in fact, the time which has been given to every single individual and every single nation to work in the world. Its example is of the time which is allotted to a candidate for answering his question-paper in the examination hall. The speed with which this time is passing can be estimated from the movement of the secondhand in the watch. Even a second is a considerable amount of time, for during this very second light travels 186,000 miles, and in the Kingdom of God there may as well be many things which move even faster than light, but are not yet known to man. However, if the speed of the passing time be regarded the same as of the movement of the second-hand, and we consider that whatever act, good or bad, we perform and whatever occupation we pursue, takes place in the limited span of age that we have been given for work in the world, we feel that our real wealth is this very time, which is passing so quickly. Imam Razi has cited a scholar as saying: I understood the meaning of Surah Al- Asr from an ice-seller, who was calling aloud for the attention of the people repeatedly in the bazar: Have mercy on the one whose wealth is melting away! Hearing what he was crying I said to myself: this then is the meaning of Walasri innal-insana lafi khusrin. The age-limit that man has been allotted is passing quickly like the melting away of ice. If it is wasted, or spent in wrong pursuits, it will be sheer loss to man. Thus, swearing an oath by the Time what has been said in this Surah, means that the fast passing Time is witness that devoid of these four qualities in whatever occupation and work man is spending his limited span of life, he is engaged in bad bargains. Only such people are engaged in good bargains, who work in the world, characterized by the four qualities. It would be just like calling attention of the candidate, who was spending the time allotted for solving the question-paper in some other pursuit, to the wall clock in the examination hall, to tell him that the passing time bore witness that he was causing loss to himself; the candidate benefiting by the Time was he who was using every moment of the allotted time in solving the paper.

Though the word man has been used in the singular, in the following sentences those people have been made an exception from it, who are characterized by the four qualities. Therefore, one will have to admit that here the word man has been used as a collective noun, denoting a class, and it applies equally to individuals, groups, nations, and entire mankind. Thus, the general statement that whoever is devoid of the above four qualities is in loss, would be proved in any case whether it is a person who is devoid of these, or a nation, or all men of the world. It will be just like giving the verdict that poison is fatal for man; it will mean that poison is fatal in any case whether it is taken by an individual, or a nation, or all the people of the world. Poison's being fatal is an unchangeable truth; it does not make any difference whether one man has taken it, or a nation has decided to take it, or all the people of the world collectively have agreed to take poison. Precisely in the same way this truth by itself is unchangeable that man's being devoid of the above four qualities brings him loss. The general rule is not at all affected even if one man is devoid of these, or a nation, or all the people of the world agree that they would exhort one another to disbelief, immorality, falsehood and servitude to the self.

Now, let us see in what sense has the Quran used the word khusr (loss). Lexically, khusr is an antonym of nafa (profit); in trade this word is used in the case when loss results from one bargain as well as in the case when the whole business is running in loss, and also in the case when man loses all his capital and becomes bankrupt. The Quran has made this word a special term of its own and uses it as an antonym of falah (true success). And just as its concept of falah is not merely synonymous with worldly prosperity but comprehends man's true success from the world till the Hereafter, so its concept of khusr (loss) is also not merely synonymous with worldly failure or distress but comprehends man's real failure and disappointment from the world till the Hereafter. We have explained the Quranic concept of both falah and khusran at several places before which need not be repeated here. (For this please see (E.N. 9 of Surah Al-Aaraf); (E.N. 30 of Surah Al-Anfal); (E.N. 23 of Surah Younus); (E.N. 102 of Surah Bani Israil); (E.N. 17 of Surah Al-Hajj); (E Ns 1, 2, (11, (50 of Surah Al-Muminoon); (E.N. 4 of Surah Luqman); (E.N. 34 of Surah Az-Zumar). Besides, one should also understand that although according to the Quran true success is man's success in the Hereafter and real loss his failure there, yet in this world too what the people describe as success is not, in fact, real success but its end in this world itself is failure, and what they regard as loss is not, in fact, loss but a means of true success even in this world. This truth has been stated by the Quran at several places and we have explained it everywhere accordingly. (Please see (E.N. 99 of Surah An- Nahl); (E.N. 53 of Surah Maryam); (E.N. 105 of Surah TaHa); (E.Ns 3-5 of Surah Al-Lail). Thus, when the Quran states conclusively and absolutely that man is certainly in loss, it implies loss both in this world and in the Hereafter. And when it says that only such people are secure from this loss, who are characterized by the four qualities, it implies their being secure from loss and attaining true success both here and in the Hereafter.

Now, let us consider the four qualities on the existence of which depends man's being secure from loss and failure.

Of these the first quality is Iman (Faith). Although this word at some places in the Quran has been used in the meaning of only verbal affirmation of Faith (e.g. in (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 137); (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 54); (Surah Al- Anfal, Ayats 20, 27); (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 38); (Surah As- Saff, Ayat 2), it has primarily been used in the meaning of believing

sincerely and faithfully, and in the Arabic language this word has this very meaning. Lexically, amanu lahu means saddaqa-hu wa tamada alai-hi: affirmed him and put faith in him, and amana bi-hi means aiqana bi-hi: had full faith in him. The Faith which the Quran regards as true Faith has been explained in the following verses:

In fact, true believers are those who believed in Allah and His Messenger, then entertained no doubt. (Surah Al- Hujurat, Ayat 15).

Those who said: Allah is our Lord, and then stood steadfast by it. (Surah HaMim As-Sajdah, Ayat 30).

True believers are those whose hearts tremble with awe, whenever Allah is mentioned to them. (Surah Al-Anfaal, Ayat 2).

Those who have believed adore Allah most ardently. (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 165).

Nay, (O Prophet), by your Lord, they can never become believers until they accept you as judge for the decision of the disputes between them, and then surrender to your decision with entire submission without the least resentment in their hearts. (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 65).

The following verse is even more explicit as regards the distinction between verbal affirmation of Faith and true Faith; it says that what is actually desirable is true Faith and not mere verbal affirmation of the Faith:

O you who profess to have believed, believe sincerely in Allah and His Messenger. (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 136).

As for the question, what has one to believe in, in order to have true faith? This has also been answered and explained in the Quran most explicitly. First, it implies that one has to believe in Allah, not merely in His Being but in the sense that He alone is God; no one else is an associate in His Godhead. He alone is worthy that man should worship, serve and obey Him. He alone can make or mar destinies; man should invoke Him alone and have trust in Him alone. He alone can enjoin things and forbid things; man is under obligation to obey Him and refrain from what he forbids. He sees everything and hears everything; not to speak of any act of man, even his motives and intentions with which he has done an act, are not hidden from Him. Secondly, one has to believe in the Messenger, in the sense that he is a guide and leader appointed by Allah: whatever he has taught, is from Allah, is based upon the truth and has to be acknowledged and accepted. This belief in Apostleship also includes faith in the angels, the Prophets, the divine Books and in the Quran itself, for this forms part of the teachings which the Messenger of Allah has given. Thirdly, one has to believe in the Hereafter, in the sense that man's present life is not his first and last life, but after death man has to be resurrected, to render an account to God of the deeds done in the present life, and has to be rewarded for the good deeds and punished for the evil deeds accordingly. This Faith provides a firm basis for morality and character, upon which can be built the edifice of a pure life, whereas the truth is that without such Faith, the life of man, however beautiful and pleasing outwardly, is like a ship without an anchor, which is at the mercy of the waves wherever they may take it.

After Faith the second quality required to save man from loss is to perform righteous deeds (salihalt). Salihat comprehends all kinds of virtuous and good deeds. However, according to the Quran, no act can be a good act unless it is based on Faith and it is performed in obedience to the guidance given by Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him). That is why in the Quran exhortation to perform good deeds is preceded everywhere by Faith, and in this Surah too it has been mentioned after the Faith. Nowhere in the Quran has a deed without Faith been called a good deed, nor any reward promised for a deed performed without Faith. On the contrary, this also is a fact that only that Faith is reliable and beneficial, the sincerity of which is proved by man's own act and deed, otherwise Faith without righteous deeds would be a false claim refuted by the man himself when in spite of this claim he follows a way opposed to the way taught by Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him). The relationship between Faith and righteous deed is of the seed and the tree. Unless the seed is sown in the soil no tree can grow out of it. But if the seed is in the soil and no tree is growing out of it, it would mean that the seed is lost in the soil. On this very basis whatever good news has been given in the Quran, has been given to the people who believe and do good deeds, and the same has been reiterated in this Surah. What man requires to do after the Faith in order to remain secure from loss is to perform righteous deeds. In other words, mere Faith without righteous deeds cannot save man from loss.

The above two qualities are such as must be possessed by every single individual. Then, the Surah mentions two further qualities, which a man must have in order to be saved from loss. They are that the people who believe and do good deeds must exhort one another to truth and to patience. This means that in the first place, a believing and righteous people should not live as individuals but should create a believing and righteous society by their combination. Second, that every individual of this society must feel his responsibility not to let the society become degenerate. Thus, all its members are duty bound to exhort one another to truth and to patience.

Truth is the antonym of falsehood, and generally it is used in , two meanings:

(1) A correct and right thing which is in accordance with justice and truth, whether it relates to belief and faith or to mundane affairs.

(2) The right which is obligatory on man to render, whether it is the right of God, the right of man, or the right of one's own self. Thus, to exhort one another to truth means that the society of the believers should not be so insensitive that falsehood may thrive and things against justice and truth be done in it, and the people be watching everything indifferently. On the contrary, it should be a living, sensitive society so that whenever and wherever falsehood appears, the upholders of the Truth should rise up against it, and no member of the society rest content with only himself adhering to truth, righteousness, justice and rendering the rights of others, but should exhort others also to adopt the same way of life. This is the spirit that can ensure security of a society against moral degeneration and decay. If a society becomes devoid of this spirit, it cannot remain secure from loss, and eventually even those people are also affected by the loss who might in their own way be adhering to the truth, but were insensitive to violation of the truth in their society.

The same has been stated in Surah Al-Maidah, thus: Those who adopted the way of disbelief among the children of Israel were cursed by the tongue of David and of Jesus, son of Mary,

because they had grown rebellious and become transgressors: they would not forbid one another to do the wrong deeds they committed. (verses 78-79). Then the same idea has been expressed in Surah Al-Aaraf, thus: When the children of Israel totally forgot the teachings (of observing the Sabbath), We seized with a severe scourge all those who were transgressors, and We saved those who used to forbid evil (verse 165); and in Surah Al-Anfal, thus: And guard against that mischief which will not bring punishment in particular to the mischief-makers alone from among you. (verse 25). That is why to enjoin what is good and to forbid what is evil, has been enjoined on the Muslim community as a duty (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 104) and the community which performs this duty has been declared to be the best community (Surah Aal-Imran, Ayat 110).

Besides exhorting to the truth, the other thing which has been declared as a necessary condition for keeping the believers and their society secure from loss is that the members of the society should enjoin patience upon one another. That is, they should enjoin upon one another to bear with fortitude and steadfastness the difficulties, hardships, trials, losses and deprivations which befall the one who adheres to the truth and supports it. Each one of them should encourage the other to bear up against adversity steadfastly. (For further explanation, see (E.N. 16 of Surah Ad-Dahr); (E.N. 14 of Surah Al-Balad).

104. Surah Al Humaza (The One Who Slanders)

Name

The Surah takes its name from the word humazah occurring in the first verse.

Period of Revelation

All commentators are agreed that it is a Makki Surah; a study of its subject matter and style shows that this too is one of the earliest Surahs to be revealed at Makkah.

Theme and Subject Matter

In it some of the evils prevalent among the materialistic hoarders of wealth in the pre-Islamic days have been condemned. Every Arab knew that they actually existed in their society; they regarded them as evils and nobody thought they were good. After calling attention to this kind of ugly character, the ultimate end in the Hereafter of the people having this kind of character has been stated. Both these things (i.e. the character and his fate in the Hereafter) have been depicted in a way which makes the listener automatically reach the conclusion that such a man fitly deserves to meet such an end. And since in the world, people of such character do not suffer any punishment, but seem to be thriving instead, the occurrence of the Hereafter becomes absolutely inevitable.

If this Surah is read in the sequence of the Surahs beginning with Az-Zilzal, one can fully well understand how the fundamental beliefs of Islam and its teachings were impressed on the peoples minds in the earliest stage in Makkah. In Surah Az-Zilzal, it was said that in the Hereafter man's full record will be placed before him and not an atom's weight of good or evil done by him in the world will have been left unrecorded. In Surah Al-Adiyat, attention was drawn to the plunder and loot, bloodshed and vandalism, prevailing in Arabia before Islam; then making the people realize, that the way the powers given by God were being abused, was indeed an expression of sheer ingratitude to Him, they were told that the matter would not end up in the world, but in the second life after death not only their deeds but their intentions and motives too would be examined, and their Lord fully well knows which of them deserves what reward or punishment. In Surah Al-Qariah after depicting Resurrection the people were warned that in the Hereafter a man's good or evil end will be dependent on whether the scale of his good deeds was heavier, or the scale of his evil deeds was heavier: In Surah At-Takathur the people were taken to task for the materialistic mentality because of which they remained occupied in seeking increase in worldly benefits, pleasures, comforts and position, and in vying with one another for abundance of everything until death overtook them. Then, warning them of the evil consequences of their heedlessness, they were told that the world was not an open table of food for then to pick and choose whatever they pleased, but for every single blessing that they were enjoying in the world, they would have to render an account to their Lord and Sustainer as to how they obtained it and how they used it. In Surah Al-Asr it was declared that each member, each group and each community of mankind, even the entire world of humanity, was in manifest loss, if its members were devoid of Faith and righteous deeds and of the practice of exhorting others to truth and patience. Immediately after this comes Surah Al-Humazah in which after presenting a specimen of leadership of the pre-Islamic age of ignorance, the

people have been asked the question: "What should such a character deserve if not loss and perdition?"

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

وَیۡلٌ لِّکُلِّ ہُمَزَۃٍ لُّمَزَۃِۣ ۙ 1

(104:1) Woe to every fault-finding backbiter;[1]

1. The words used in the original are humazat il-lumazah. In Arabic hamz and lamz are so close in meaning that they are sometimes used as synonyms and sometimes with a little difference in the shade of meaning. But this difference is not definite and clear, for the meaning given to hamz by some Arabic speaking people themselves is given to lamz by other Arabic speaking peoples. On the contrary, the meaning given to lamz by some people is given to hamz by others. Here, since both the words appear together and the words humazat il-lumazat have been used, they give the meaning that it has become a practice with the slanderer that he insults and holds others in contempt habitually. He raises his finger and winks at one man, finds fault with the lineage and person of another, taunts one in the face and backbites another; creates differences between friends and stirs up divisions between brothers; calls the people names and satirizes and defames them.

الَّذِیۡ جَمَعَ مَالًا وَّعَدَّدَہٗ ۙ 2

(104:2) who amasses wealth and counts it over and again.[2]

2. This second sentence after the first sentence by itself gives the meaning that he slanders others because of his pride of wealth. The words jama a malan for collecting money suggest the abundance of wealth; then the words counting it over and over again depict the person's miserliness and his selfish hoarding of wealth.

یَحۡسَبُ اَنَّ مَالَہٗۤ اَخۡلَدَہٗ ۚ 3

(104:3) He thinks that his wealth will immortalise him forever.[3]

3. Another meaning also can be: He thinks that his wealth will make him immortal. That is, he is so engrossed in amassing wealth and counting it over and over again that he has forgotten death and he never bothers to consider that a time will come when he will have to depart from the world empty-handed, leaving everything behind.

کَلَّا لَیُنۡۢبَذَنَّ فِی الۡحُطَمَۃِ ۖ 4

(104:4) Nay, he shall be thrown[4] into the Crusher.[5]

4. The word in the original is la yunbadhanna. Nabdh in Arabic is used for throwing away a thing regarding it as worthless and mean. This by itself indicates that because of his wealth he thinks that he is a great man but on the Day Of Resurrection he will be hurled into Hell as a mean and contemptible object.

5. The word hutamah in the original is from hatm, which means to smash, crush and break into pieces. Hell has been described by this epithet because it will crush and break to pieces whatever is thrown into it because of its depth and its fire.

وَمَآ أَدۡرَىٰكَ مَا ٱلۡحُطَمَةُ ٥

(104:5) And what do you know what the Crusher is?

نَارُ ٱللَّهِ ٱلۡمُوقَدَةُ ٦

(104:6) It is the Fire[6] kindled by Allah,

6. Nowhere else in the Quran has the fire of Hell been called the fire of Allah. Here, its ascription to Allah not only expresses its dreadfulness but it also shows how the wrath and contempt of Allah envelops those who become proud and arrogant with the worldly wealth. That is why Allah has described that fire as His own Fire into which they will be hurled.

ٱلَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى ٱلۡأَفۡـِٔدَةِ ٧

(104:7) the Fire that shall rise to the hearts (of criminals).[7]

7. Tattaliu is from ittalaa, which means to climb and mount to the top, and also to be aware and informed. Afidah is plural of fuwad, which means the heart. But this word is not used for the organ which throbs in the breast, but for the seat of man's understanding and consciousness, his feelings and desires, beliefs and thoughts, motives and intentions, Thus, one meaning of the rising of the fire to the hearts is that this fire will reach the place which is the centre of man's evil thoughts, false beliefs, impure desires and feelings, and wicked motives and intentions. The second meaning is that the Fire of Allah will not be blind like the fire of the world, which burns up the deserving and the non-deserving alike, but it will reach the heart of every culprit and discover the nature of his crime and then punish him according to his guilt.

إِنَّهَا عَلَيۡهِم مُّؤۡصَدَةٌ ٨

(104:8) Verily it will close in upon them,[8]

8. That is, after the culprits have been thrown into it, Hell will be closed in upon them without leaving any slit or opening anywhere, in order to choke and suffocate them.

فِي عَمَدٍ مُّمَدَّدَةٍ ۝٩

(104:9) in outstretched columns.[9]

9. Fi amad-im-mumaddahah can have several meanings:

(1) That the gates of Hell will be closed and tall columns will be erected on them.

(2) That the culprits will be tied to the tall columns.

(3) According to Ibn Abbas, the flames of the fire shall be rising high like tall columns.

105. Surah Al Fil (The Elephant)

Name

The Surah derives its name from the word ashab al fil in the very first verse.

Period of Revelation

This is unanimously a Makki Surah; and if it is studied against its historical background it appears that it must have been sent down in the very earliest stage at Makkah.

Historical Background

As we have explained in E. N. 4 of Surah Al-Buruj above, in retaliation for the persecution of the followers of the Prophet Jesus Christ (peace be on him) in Najran by the Jewish ruler Dhu-Nuwas of Yemen, the Christian kingdom of Abyssinia invaded Yemen and put an end to the Himyarite rule there, and in 52S A. D. this whole land passed under Abyssinian control. This happened, in fact, through collaboration between the Byzantine empire of Constantinople and the Abyssinian kingdom, for the Abyssinians at that time had no naval fleet. The fleet was provided by Byzantium and Abyssinia sent 70,000 of its troops by it across the Red Sea to Yemen. At the outset one should understand that all this did not happen under the religious zeal but there were economic and political factors also working behind it, and probably these were the real motive, and retaliation for the Christian blood was just an excuse. Since the time the Byzantine empire had occupied Egypt and Syria, it had been trying to gain control over the trade going on between East Africa, India, Indonesia, etc., and the Byzantine dominions: from the Arabs, who had been controlling it for centuries, so as to earn maximum profits by eliminating the intermediary Arab merchants. For this purpose, in 24 or 25 B. C., Caesar Augustus sent a large army under the Roman general, Aelius Gallus, which landed on the western coast of Arabia, in order to intercept and occupy the sea route between southern Arabia and Syria. (See map of this trade route on p. 111 of The Meaning of the Qur'an, vol. iv). But the campaign failed to achieve its objective on account of the extreme geographical conditions of Arabia. After this, the Byzantines brought their fleet into the Red Sea and put an end to the Arab trade which they carried out by sea, with the result that they were left only with the land route. To capture this very land route they conspired with the Abyssinian Christians and aiding them with their fleet helped them to occupy Yemen.

The Arab historians statements about the Abyssinian army that invaded Yemen are different. Hafiz Ibn Kathir says that it was led by two commanders, Aryat and Abrahah, and according to Muhammad bin Ishaq, its commander was Aryat, and Abrahah was included in it. Then both are agreed that Aryat and Abrahah fell out, Aryat was killed in the encounter, and Abrahah took possession of the country; then somehow he persuaded the Abyssinian king to appoint him his viceroy over Yemen. On the contrary, the Greek and Syrian historians state that when after the conquest of Yemen, the Abyssinians started putting to death the Yamanite chiefs, who had put up resistance, one of the chiefs, named As-Sumayfi Ashwa (whom the Greek historians call Esymphaeus) yielded to the Abyssinians and promising to pay tribute obtained the Abyssinian king's warrant to be governor over Yemen. But the Abyssinian army revolted against him and made Abrahah

governor in his place. This man was the slave of a Greek merchant of the Abyssinian seaport of Adolis, who by clever diplomacy had come to wield great influence in the Abyssinian army occupying Yemen. The troops sent by the Negus to punish him either warned him or were defeated by him. Subsequently, after the death of the king, his successor was reconciled to accept him as his vice regent of Yemen.(The Greek historians write him as Abrames and the Syrian historians as Abraham. Abrahah perhaps is an Abyssinian variant of Abraham, for its Arabic version is Ibrahim).

This man through passage of time became an independent ruler of Yemen. He acknowledged the sovereignty of the Negus only in name and described himself as his deputy. The influence he wielded can be judged from the fact that after the restoration of the dam of Marib in 543 A. D. he celebrated the event by holding a grand feast, which was attended by the ambassadors of the Byzantine emperor, king of Iran, king of Hirah, and king of Ghassan. Its full details are given in the inscription that Abrahah installed on the dam. This inscription is extant and Glaser has published it.(For further details, see E. N. 37 of the commentary of Surah Saba).

After stabilizing his rule in Yemen Abrahah turned his attention to the objective which from the very beginning of this campaign had been before the Byzantine empire and its allies, the Abyssinian Christians, i. e. to spread Christianity in Arabia, on the one hand, and to capture the trade that was carried out through the Arabs between the eastern lands and the Byzantine dominions, on the other. The need, for this increased because the Byzantine struggle for power against the Sasanian empire of Iran had blocked all the routes of the Byzantine trade with the East.

To achieve this objective, Abrahah built in Sana, the capital of Yemen, a magnificent cathedral, called by the Arabian historians al-Qalis, al-Qullais, or al-Qulais, this word being an Arabic version of the Greek word Ekklesia, church. According, to Muhammad bin Ishaq, after having completed the building, he wrote to the Negus, saying: "I shall not rest until I have diverted the Arabs pilgrimage to it." Ibn Kathir writes that he openly declared his intention in Yemen and got it publicly announced. He, in fact, wanted to provoke the Arabs into doing something which should provide him with an excuse to attack Makkah and destroy the Ka'bah. Muhammad bin Ishaq says that an Arab, enraged at this public proclamation somehow went into the cathedral and defiled it. Ibn Kathir says this was done by a Quraishite and according to Muqatil bin Suleman, some young men of the Quraish had set fire to the cathedral. Either might have happened, for Abrahah's proclamation was certainly provocative and in the ancient pre-Islamic age it cannot be impossible that an Arab, or a Quraishite youth, might have been enraged and might have defiled the cathedral, or set fire to it. But it may well also be that Abrahah himself got this done secretly by his own agent so as to have an excuse for invading Makkah and thus achieving both his objectives by destroying the Quraish and intimidating the Arabs. In any case, whatever happened, when the report reached Abrahah that the devotees of the Ka'bah had thus defiled his cathedral, he swore that he would not rest until he had destroyed the Ka'bah.

So, in 570 or 571 A. D., he took 60,000 troops and 13 elephants (according to another tradition, 9 elephants) and set off for Makkah. On the way, first a Yamanite chief, Dhu Nafr by name, mustering an army of the Arabs, resisted him but was defeated and taken prisoner. Then in the country of Khath'am he was opposed by Nufail bin Habib al-Khath'am, with his

tribe, but he too was defeated and taken prisoner, and in order to save his life he accepted to serve him as guide in the Arab country. When he reached near Ta'if, Bani Thaqif felt that they would not be able to resist such a big force and feeling the danger lest he should destroy the temple of their deity Lat, too; their chief, Mas'ud. came out to Abrahah with his men, and he told him that their temple was not the temple he had come to destroy. The temple He sought was in Makkah, and they would send with him a man to guide him there. Abrahah accepted the offer, and Bani Thaqif sent Abu Righal as guide with him. When they reached al-Mughammas (or al- Mughammis), a place about 3 miles short of Makkah, Abu Righal died, and the Arabs stoned his grave and the practice survives to this day. They cursed the Bani Thaqif too, for in order to save the temple of Lat they had cooperated with the invaders of the House of Allah.

According to Muhammad bin Ishaq, from al- Mughammas Abrahah sent forward his vanguard and they brought him the plunder of the people of Tihamah and Quraish, which included two hundred camels of Abdul Muttalib, the grandfather of the Holy Messenger of Allah (upon whom be His peace). Then, he sent an envoy of his to Makkah with the message that he had not come to fight the people of Makkah but only to destroy the House (i. e. the Ka'bah). If they offered no resistance, there would be no cause for bloodshed. Abrahah also instructed his envoy that if the people of Makkah wanted to negotiate, he should return with their leading chief to him. The leading chief of Makkah at that time was Abdul Muttalib. The envoy went to him and delivered Abrahah's message. Abdul Muttalib replied: "We have no power to fight Abrahah. This is Allah's House. If He wills He will save His House." The envoy asked him to go with him to Abrahah. He agreed and accompanied him to the king. Now Abdul Muttalib was such a dignified and handsome man that when, Abrahah saw him he was much impressed; he got off his throne and sat beside him on the carpet. Then he asked him what he wanted. Abdul Muttalib replied that he wanted the king to return his camels which he had taken. Abrahah said: "I was much impressed when I saw you but your reply has brought you down in my eyes: you only demand your camels but you say nothing about this House which is your sanctuary and the sanctuary of your forefathers." He replied: "I am the owner of my camels and am requesting you to return them. As for the House, it has its own Owner: He will defend it." When Abrahah said that He would not be able to defend it against him, Abdul Muttalib said that that rested between Him and him. With this Abdul Muttalib left Abrahah and he restored to him his camels.

Ibn Abbas tradition is different. It does not mention the demand for the camels at all. According to the traditions related from him by Abd bin Humaid, Ibn al-Mundhir, lbn Marduyah, Hakim, Abu Nuaim and Baihaqi, he states that when Abrahah reached As-Sifah (a place situated between Arafat and Taif in the mountains near the sacred bounds of Makkah), Abdul Muttalib went to him and said: "There was no need for you to come so far. You should have ordered us and we would have brought before you whatever you needed." He said: "I hear that this House is the House of peace: I have come to destroy its peace." Thereupon, Abdul Muttalib said: "This is Allah's House. He has not allowed anyone so far to dominate it." Abrahah replied: "We will not return until we have destroyed it." Abdul Muttalib said: "You may take whatever you like from us and return." Abrahah refused to budge and ordered his troops to advance, leaving Abdul Muttalib behind.

Leaving the two traditions as they are, one thing which becomes evident is that the tribes living in and around Makkah did not have the power to fight such a big force and save the

Ka'bah. Therefore, obviously, the Quraish did not try to put up any resistance. The Quraish on the occasion of the Battle of the Trench (Ahzab) had hardly been able to muster & strength numbering ten to twelve thousand men in spite of the alliance with the pagan and Jewish tribes; they could not have resisted an army 60,000 strong.

Muhammad bin Ishaq says that after returning from the camp of Abrahah Abdul Muttalib ordered the Quraish to withdraw from the city and go to the mountains along with their families for fear of a general massacre. Then he went to the Ka'bah along with some chiefs of the Quraish and taking hold of the iron ring of the door, prayed to Allah Almighty to protect His House and its keepers. There were at that time 360 idols in and around the Ka'bah, but on that critical moment they forgot them and implored only Allah for help. Their supplications which have been reported in the books of history do not contain any name but of Allah, the One. Ibn Hisham in his Life of the Prophet has cited some verses of Abdul Muttalib, which are to the following effect:

"O God, a man protects his house, so protect Your House; Let not their cross and their craft tomorrow overcome Your craft. If You will to leave them and our qiblah to themselves, You may do as You please."

Suhail in Raud al-Unuf has cited this verse also in this connection: "Help today Your devotees against the devotees of the cross and its worshipers."

Ibn Jarir has cited Abdul Muttalib's these verses also, which he had recited in his supplication; "O my Lord, I do not cherish any hope from anyone against them except You. O my Lord, protect Your House from them. The enemy of this House is Your enemy. Stop them from destroying Your settlement."

After making these supplications Abdul Muttalib and his companions also went off to the mountains. Next morning Abrahah prepared to enter Makkah, but his special elephant, Mahmud, which was in the forefront, knelt down. It was beaten with iron bars, goaded, even scarified, but it would not get up. When they made it face south, north, or east, it would immediately start off, but as soon as they directed it towards Makkah, it knelt down. In the meantime swarms of birds appeared carrying stones in their beaks and claws and showered these on the troops. Whoever was hit would start disintegrating. According to Muhammad bin Ishaq and Ikrimah, this was smallpox, which was seen in Arabia for the first time in that year. Ibn Abbas says that whoever was struck by a pebble, would start scratching his body resulting in breaking of the skin and falling off of the flesh. In another tradition Ibn Abbas says that the flesh and blood flowed like water and bones in the body became visible. The same thing happened with Abrahah too. His flesh fell in pieces and there arose bores on his body emitting pus and blood. In confusion they withdrew and fled towards Yemen. Nufail bin Habib, whom they had brought as guide from the country of Khatham, was searched out and asked to guide them back to Yemen, but he refused and said: "Now where can one flee when God pursues? The split nose (Abrahah) is the conquered; not the conqueror."

As they withdrew they were continually falling by the bay and dying. Ata bin Yasar says that all the troops did not perish at the spot; some perished there and others perished by the wayside as they withdrew. Abrahah died in the country of Khath'am.

This event took place at Muhassir by the Muhassab valley, between Muzdalifah and Mina. According to the Sahih of Muslim and Abu Da'ud, in the description of the Holy Prophet's farewell pilgrimage that Imam Jafar as-Sadiq has related from his father, Imam Muhammad Baqir, and he from Hadrat Jabir bin Abdullah, he says that when the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) proceeded from Muzdalifah to Mina, he increased his speed in the valley of Muhassir. Imam Nawawi has explained it saying that the incident of the people of the elephant had occurred there; therefore, the pilgrims have been enjoined to pass by quickly, for Muhassir is a tormented place. Imam Malik in Mu'atta has related that the Holy Prophet said that the whole of Muzdalifah is a fit place for staying but one should not stay in the valley of Muhassir.

In the verses of Nufail bin Habib, which Ibn Ishaq has cited, he describes this event as an eye witness: "Would that you had seen, O Rudaina, but you would not see, What we saw by the valley of Muhassab. I praised God when I saw the birds, and I feared lest the stones should fall upon us. Everyone was asking for Nufail As though I owned the Abyssinians a debt."

This was such a momentous event that it soon spread throughout Arabia and many poets made it the subject of their laudatory poems. In these poems one thing is quite evident that everyone regarded it as a manifestation of Allah Almighty's miraculous power, and no one, even by allusion, said that the idols which were worshiped in the Ka'bah, had anything to do with it. For example, Abdullah ibn Az-Zibara says: "The sixty thousand returned not home, Nor did their sick man (Abrahah) survive on return. Ad and Jurham were there before them, And there is Allah, above the servants, Who sustains it."

Abu Qais bin Aslat says: "Rise and worship your Lord and anoint The Corners of the House of Allah between the Mountains of Makkah and Mina. When the help of the Owner of the Throne reached you, His armies repulsed them so that they were lying in dust, pelted with stones."

Not only this, but according to Hadrat Umm Hani and Hadrat Zubair bin al-Awwam, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) said: "The Quraish did not worship anyone but Allah, the Only and One, for ten years (and according to others, for seven years. Umm Hani's tradition has been related by Imam Bukhari in his History and by Tabarani, Hakim, Ibn Marduyah and Baihaqi in their collections of Ahadith. Hadrat Zubair's statement has been related by Tabarani, Ibn Marduyah and Ibn Asakir, and this is further confirmed by the mursal tradition of Hadrat Sa'id bin al Musayyab, which Khatib Baghdadi has recorded in his History.

The Arabs describe the year in which this event took place as Am al-Fil (the year of the elephants), and in the same year the Holy Messenger of Allah (upon whom be His peace) was born. The traditionists and historians almost unanimously state that the event of the people of the elephant had occurred in Muharram and the Holy Prophet was born in Rabi al-Awwal. A majority of them states that he took birth 50 days after the event of the elephant.

Theme and Substance

If Surah al-Fil is studied in the light of the historical details as given above, one can fully well understand why in this Surah only Allah's inflicting His punishment on the people of the elephant has been referred and described so briefly. It was an event of recent occurrence, and everyone in Makkah and Arabia was fully aware of it. The Arabs believed that the Ka'bah had been protected in this invasion not by any god or goddess but by Allah Almighty Himself. Then Allah alone had been invoked by the Quraish chiefs for help, and for quite a few years the people of Quraish having been impressed by this event, had worshiped none but Allah. Therefore, there was no need to mention the details in Surah al-Fil, but only a reference to it was enough so that the people of Quraish, in particular, and the people of Arabia, in general, should consider well in their hearts the message that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) was giving. For the only message that he gave was that they should worship and serve none but Allah, the Only and One. Then, they should also consider that if they used force to suppress this invitation to the truth, they would only be inviting the wrath of God, Who had so completely routed and destroyed the people of the elephants.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اَلَمۡ تَرَ کَیۡفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّکَ بِاَصۡحٰبِ الۡفِیۡلِ ؕ 1

(105:1) Have you not seen[1] how your Lord dealt with the people of the elephants?[2]

1. Though the address apparently is directed to the Prophet (peace be on him), its real addressees are not only the Quraish but all the people of Arabia, who were well aware of the event. At many places in the Quran the words alam tara (have you not seen) have been used, and they are meant not to address the Prophet (peace be on him) but the people in general. (For example, see (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 19); (Surah Al-Hajj, Ayats 18, 65); (Surah An-Noor, Ayat 43); (Surah Luqman, Ayats 29,31); (Surah Fatir, Ayat 27); (Surah Az-Zumar, Ayat 21). Then, the word seeing has been used here to signify that in and around Makkah and in the vast country of Arabia, from Makkah to Yaman, there were many such people still living, who had witnessed with their own eyes the event of the destruction of the people of the elephant, for it had occurred only about forty to forty-five years earlier, and the people of Arabia had continually heard it described by the eye-witnesses themselves so that they had become so certain of it as though they had seen it with their own eyes.

2. Here, Allah has not given any detail as to who were the people of the elephant, wherefrom they had come and what was the object of their march, for all these things were well known among the people.

اَلَمۡ یَجۡعَلۡ کَیۡدَہُمۡ فِیۡ تَضۡلِیۡلٍ ۙ 2

(105:2) Did He not bring their plan[3] to naught?[4]

3. The word kayd is used for a secret plan meant to harm somebody. The question is what was secret in this case? Sixty thousand troops together with several elephants had openly come from Yaman to Makkah, and they had kept no secret that they had come to destroy the Kabah. Therefore, there was nothing secret about this plan. However, what was secret was the motive of the Abyssinians. They by destroying the Kabah, crushing down the Quraish and intimidating the Arabians, wanted to take control of the trade route that led from south Arabia to Syria and Egypt. This motive they kept hidden, and instead proclaimed their intent that they wanted to destroy the Kaabah, the principal House of Arab worship, in retaliation for the pollution of their cathedral by the Arabs.

4. Literally, fi-tadlil means: led their plan astray, but idiomatically leading a plan astray means bringing it to nought and rendering it fruitless. At one place in the Quran, it has been said: But the disbelievers' plot (kayd) ended in vain. (Surah Al-Momin, Ayat 25), At another: And that Allah does not lead to success the plan (kayd) of deceivers. (Surah Yousuf, Ayat 52). The Arabians described Imra ul-Qais by the epithet of al-malik ad-dalil (the king who lost and wasted), for he had lost the kingdom left by his father.

وَّاَرۡسَلَ عَلَيۡهِمۡ طَيۡرًا اَبَابِيۡلَ ۙ 3

(105:3) And He sent against them swarms of birds[5]

5. Ababil means many separate and scattered groups whether of men or other creatures, which come from different sides successively. Ikrimah and Qatadah say that these swarms of birds had come from the Red Sea side. Saeed bin Jubair and Ikrimah say that such birds had neither been seen before nor ever after; these were neither birds of Najd, nor of Hijaz, nor of Timamah (the land between Hijaz and the Red Sea). lbn Abbas says that their beaks were like those of birds and claws like the dog's paw. Ikrimah has stated that their heads were like the heads of the birds of prey, and almost all the reporters agree that each bird carried a stone in its beak and two stones in its claws. Some people of Makkah had these stones preserved with them for a long time. Thus, Abu Nuaim has related a statement of Naufal bin Abi Muawiyah, saying that he had seen the stones which had been thrown on the people of the elephant; they equaled a small pea seed in size and were dark red in color. According to Ibn Abbas's tradition that Abu Nuaim has related, they were equal to a pine kernel, and according to Ibn Marduyah, equal to a goat's dropping. Obviously, all the stones might not be equal but differing in size to some extent.

تَرۡمِيۡهِمۡ بِحِجَارَةٍ مِّنۡ سِجِّيۡلٍ ۙ 4

(105:4) which smote them with stones of baked clay,[6]

6. Literally, bi hijarat-im-min sijjil means stones of sijjil type. Ibn Abbas says that sijjil is the Arabic version of the Persian sang and gil, and it implies the stones made from clay and become hard when baked. The Quran also confirms the same. In (Surah Houd, Ayat 82) and (Surah Al- Hijr, Ayat 74), it has been said that stones of baked clay (sijjin were rained on the people of Lot, and about the same stones in (Surah Adh-Dhariyat, Ayat 33), it has been said that they were the stones made from clay (hijarat-im min tin).

Hamid-ad-Din Farahi, who in the present age has done valuable work on the research and determination of the meaning and content of the Quran regards the people of Makkah and other Arabians as the subject of tarmihim in this verse, who are the addressees of alam tara. About the birds he says that they were not casting stones but had come to eat the dead bodies of the people of the elephant. A resume of the arguments he has given for this interpretation is that it is not credible that Abdul Muttalib should have gone before Abrahah and demanded his camels instead of pleading for the Kabah, and this also is not credible that the people of Quraish and the other Arabs who had come for Hajj, did not resist the invaders and leaving the Kaabah at their mercy had gone off to the mountains. Therefore, what actually happened was that the Arabs pelted the army of Abrahah with stones, and Allah by sending a stormy wind charged with stones, destroyed it completely; then the birds were sent to eat the dead bodies of the soldiers. But, as we have already explained in the Introduction, the tradition does not only say that Abdul Muttalib had gone to demand his camels but it says that he did not demand the camels at all but tried to dissuade Abrahah from attacking the Kabah. We have already explained that according to all reliable traditions, Abrahah's army had come in Muharram when the pilgrims had gone back and also it was beyond the power of Quraish and other Arab tribes living in the surrounding areas to resist and fight an army 60,000 strong. They had hardly been able to muster a force ten to twelve thousand strong on the occasion of the Battle of the Trench (Ahzab) with the help of the Arab pagans and Jewish tribes then how could they have mustered courage to encounter an army, 60,000 strong? However, even if all these arguments are rejected and the sequence of the verses of Surah Al-Feel only is kept in view, this interpretation is seen to go against it. If it were so that the stones were cast by the Arabs and the people of the elephant were rendered as chaff, and then the birds came to eat their dead bodies, the order would be this: You were pelting them with stones of baked clay, then Allah rendered them as chaff eaten up, and then Allah sent upon them swarms of birds. But here we see that first Allah has made mention of sending swarms of birds; this is immediately followed by tarmihim bi-hijarat-im min-sijjil (which were pelting them with stones of baked clay); and then at the end it is said that Allah made them as straw eaten up.

فَجَعَلَهُمْ كَعَصْفٍ مَّأْكُولٍ ۧ 5

(105:5) and made them like straw eaten up (by cattle).[7]

7. The word asf as used in the original has already occurred in verse 12 of Surah Ar-Rahman: dhul-asf warraihan: and corn with husk as well as grain. This shows that asf means the outer covering of seeds, which the farmer throws away after the grain has been separated from it. Then the animals eat it, and some of it falls down in the chewing and some is trampled under the hoofs.

106. Surah Quraish

Name

The Surah has been so entitled after the word Quraish in the very first verse.

Period of Revelation

Although Dahhak and Kalbi regard it as a Madani Surah, yet a great majority of the commentators are agreed that it is Makki, and a manifest evidence of this are the words Rabba hadh-al-Bait (Lord of this House) of this Surah itself. Had it been revealed at Madinah, the words "this House" for the Ka'bah could not be relevant. Moreover, its subject matter so closely relates to that of Surah Al-Fil that probably it was revealed immediately after it, without any other Surah intervening between them. On the basis of this very relevance, some of the earliest scholars regard the two Surahs as one entity. This view is strengthened by the traditions which say that in the Quran copy belonging to Hadrat Ubayy bin Ka'b these two were written as one Surah, i.e. without the insertion of the Bismillah between them. Furthermore, Hadrat Umar had once recited the two Surahs as one in the Prayer. But this view is not acceptable because in the Quran copy which Hadrat Uthman (may Allah bless him) had got written down officially by the cooperation of a large number of the Companions and sent to the centers of Islamic lands, the Bismillah was written between these two Surahs, and since then these two have been written as separate Surahs in all the copies of the Quran everywhere in the world. Moreover, the style of the two Surahs is so different that they manifestly appear as two separate Surahs.

Historical Background

To understand the Surah well it is essential that one should keep the historical background relevant to the contents of this Surah and of Surah Al-Fil in view.

The tribe of Quraish was scattered throughout Hijaz until the time of Qusayy bin Kilab, the ancestor of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's peace). First of all, Qusayy gathered it in Makkah and this tribe was able to gain authority over the Ka'bah. On that very basis Qusayy was called mujammi (uniter, assembler) by his people. This man by his sagacity and wisdom founded a city state in Makkah and made excellent arrangements for the welfare of the pilgrims coming from all over Arabia, with the result that the Quraish were able to gain great influence among the Arabian tribes and lands. After Qusayy the offices of the state of Makkah were divided between his sons, Abdi Manaf and Abd ad-Dar, but of the two Abdi Manaf gained greater fame even during his father's lifetime and was held in high esteem throughout Arabia. Abdi Manaf had four sons: Hashim, Abdi Shams, Al-Muttalib, and Naufal. Of these Hashim, father of Abdul Muttalib and grandfather of the Holy Prophet, first conceived the idea to take part in the trade that passed between the eastern countries and Syria and Egypt through Arabia, and also to purchase the necessities of life for the Arabians so that the tribes living by the trade route bought these from them and the merchants living in the interior of the country were attracted to the, market of Makkah. This was the time when the Sasanian kingdom of Iran had captured the international trade that was carried out between the northern lands and the eastern countries and Byzantine empire through the Persian Gulf. This had boosted up the trade activity on the trade route leading

from southern Arabia to Syria and Egypt along the Red Sea coast. As against the other Arabian caravans, the Quraish had the advantage that the tribes on the route held them in high esteem on account off their being keepers of the Ka'bah. They stood indebted to them for the great generosity with which the Quraish treated them in the Hajj season. That is why the Quraish felt no fear that their caravans would be robbed or harmed any where on the way. The tribes on the way did not even charge them the heavy transit taxes that they demanded from the other caravans. Hashim taking advantage of this prepared the trade scheme and made his three brothers partners in it. Thus, Hashim obtained trade privileges from the Ghassanide king of Syria, Abdi Shams from the Negus, Al-Muttalib from the Yamanite nobles and Naufal from the governments of Iraq and Iran, and their trade began to flourish. That is how the four brothers became famous as traders and began to be called ashab al-ilaf (generators of love and affection) on account of their friendly relations with the tribes and states of the surrounding lands.

Because of their business relations with Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Yaman and Abyssinia, the Quraish came across such opportunities and their direct contact with the culture and civilization of different countries so enhanced the level of their knowledge and wisdom that no tribe in Arabia could match and equal them. As regards wealth and worldly goods they became the most affluent tribe, and Makkah became the most important commercial center of the Arabian peninsula. Another great advantage that accrued from these international relations was that they brought from Iraq tile script which later was used for writing down the Quran. No other Arabian tribe could boast of so many literate people as Quraish. For these very reasons the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) said: "Quraish are the leaders of men." (Musnad Ahmad: Marwiyat Amr bin al As). And according to a tradition from Hadrat Ali in Baihaqi, the Holy Prophet said: "First the leadership of the Arabians was in the hands of the people of Himyar, then Allah withdrew it from them and gave it to Quraish".

The Quraish were thus prospering and flourishing when the event of Abrahah's invasion of Makkah took place. Had Abrahah at that time succeeded in taking this holy City and destroying the Ka'bah, the glory and renown of not only the Quraish but of the Ka'bah itself, would have faded away, the belief of the pre-Islamic Arabia that the House indeed was Allah's House would have been shattered, and the high esteem in which Quraish were held for being keepers of the House throughout the country would have been tarnished. Then, after the Abyssinian advance to Makkah, the Byzantium also would have taken the initiative to gain control over the trade route between Syria and Makkah: and the Quraish would have been reduced to a plight worse than that in which they were involved before Qusayy bin Kilab. But when Allah showed this manifestation of His power that the swarms of birds destroyed 60,000 Abyssinian troops brought by Abrahah by pelting then, with stones, and from Makkah to Yaman they went on falling and dying by the wayside, the faith of the Arabs that the Ka'bah indeed was Allah's House increased manifold, and the glory and renown of Quraish too was enhanced considerably throughout the country. Now the Arabs were convinced that they were under Allah's special favor; therefore, they visited every part of Arabia fearlessly and passed through every land with their trade caravans unharmed. No one could dare touch them with an evil intention. Not to speak of touching them, even if they had a non-Quraishite under their protection, he too was allowed to pass unharmed.

Theme and Substance

As all this was well known in the time of the Holy Prophet's appointment to Prophethood, there was no need to mention them. That is why in the four brief sentences of this Surah, Quraish were simply asked to consider: "When you yourselves acknowledge this House (i. e. the Ka'bah) to be Allah's House, and not of the idols, and when you fully well know that it is Allah alone Who has granted you peace by virtue of this House, made your trade and commerce flourish and saving you from destitution favored you with prosperity you should then worship and serve Him alone."

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

لِاِيْلٰفِ قُرَيْشٍ ۙ 1

(106:1) Since the Quraysh became accustomed,[1]

1. The word ilaf, as used in the original is from alf which means to be habituated and accustomed to be reunited after breaking up, and to adopt something as a habit. About the lam that is prefixed to ilaf, some Arabists have expressed the opinion that it is to express surprise and wonder. Thus, Li-ilaf-i Quraish-in means: How surprising is the conduct of Quraish! It is only by virtue of Allah's bounty that they are reunited after their dispersion and have become accustomed to the trade journeys which have brought them their prosperity, and yet from Allah's worship and service they are turning away. This is the opinion of Akhfash, Kisai and Farra, and holding this opinion as preferable Ibn Jarir writes: When the Arabs mention something after this lam, the same thing itself is regarded as sufficient to show that the attitude and conduct a person has adopted in spite of it, is surprising and amazing. On the contrary, Khalil bin Ahmad, Sibawaih and Zamakhshari say that this is the lam of talil and it relates to the following sentence: Fa-ya budu Rabba hadh al-Bait, which means: Allah's blessings on the Quraish are countless. But if for no other blessing, they should worship Allah at least for this blessing that by His bounty they became accustomed to the trade journeys, for this by itself is indeed a great favor of Allah to them.

اٖلٰفِهِمْ رِحْلَةَ الشِّتَآءِ وَالصَّيْفِ ۚ 2

(106:2) accustomed to the journey of winter and summer,[2]

2. That is, the trade journeys. In summer the Quraish travelled northward to Syria and Palestine, for they are cool lands, and in winter southward to Yaman, etc. for they are warm.

فَلْيَعْبُدُوْا رَبَّ هٰذَا الْبَيْتِ ۙ 3

(106:3) therefore, let them worship the Lord of this House;[3]

3. This House: the Holy Kabah. The sentence means that the Quraish have attained to this blessing only by virtue of the House of Allah. They themselves acknowledge that the 360

idols, which they worship, are not its lord, but Allah alone is its Lord. He alone saved them from the invasion of the army of elephants. Him alone they had invoked for help against Abrahah's army. It was His House the keeping of which enhanced their rank and position in Arabia, for before that they were dispersed and commanded no position whatever. Like the common Arab tribes, they too were scattered factions of a race. But when they rallied round this House in Makkah and began to serve it, they became, honorable throughout Arabia, and their trade caravans began to visit every part of the country fearlessly. Therefore, whatever they have achieved, it has been possible only by the help of the Lord of this House; therefore, they should worship Him alone.

الَّذِيٓ اَطۡعَمَهُمۡ مِّنۡ جُوۡعٍ ۙ وَّاٰمَنَهُمۡ مِّنۡ خَوۡفٍ ۧ 4

(106:4) Who fed them against hunger,[4] and secured them against fear.[5]

4. The allusion implies that before the Quraish came to Makkah, they were a scattered people in Arabia and living miserable lives. After their gathering together in Makkah they began to prosper, and the Prophet Abraham's (peace be upon him) prayer for them was literally fulfilled when he had prayed: Lord, I have settled some of my descendents in a barren valley near Thy sacred House. Lord, I have done this in the hope that they will establish salat there. So turn the hearts of the people towards them, and provide fruits for their food. (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 37).

5. Secure against fear: Secure from the fear from which no one anywhere in Arabia was safe. There was no settlement anywhere in the country the people of which could sleep peacefully at night, for they feared an attack any time from any quarter by some unknown enemy. No one could step out of the bounds of his tribe for fear of life or of being taken prisoner and made a slave. No caravan could travel safely from fear of attack, or without bribing influential chiefs of the tribes on the way for safe conduct. But the Quraish were immune from every danger; they had no fear of an attack from an enemy. Their caravans, small or big, freely passed on the trade routes everywhere in the country. As soon as it became known about a certain caravan that it belonged to the keepers of the Kabah, no one could dare touch it with an evil intention, so much so that even if a single Quraishite was passing on the way, he was allowed to pass unharmed and untouched as soon as the word hara-mi or ana min hara-millah" was heard from him.

107. Surah Al Ma'un (The Small Kindnesses)

Name

The Surah has been so designated after the word *al-ma`un* occurring at the end of the last verse.

Period of Revelation

Ibn Marduyah has cited Ibn Abbas (may Allah bless them both) as saying that this Surah is Makki, and the same also is the view of Ata and Jabir. But Abu Hayyan in *Al-Bahr al-Muhit* has cited Ibn Abbas, Qatadah and Dahhak as saying that this Surah was revealed at Madinah. In our opinion there is an internal piece of evidence in the Surah itself which points to its being a Madani Revelation. It holds out a threat of destruction to those praying ones who are unmindful of their Prayers and who pray only to be seen. This kind of hypocrites were found only at Madinah, for it was there that Islam and the Muslims gained such strength that many people were compelled to believe from expedience, had to visit the Mosque, join the congregational Prayer and prayed only to be seen of others, so as to be counted among Muslims.

Contrary to this is, at Makkah conditions were altogether different. No one had to pray to be seen. There it was difficult even for the believers to pray in congregation; they prayed secretly and if a person prayed openly he did so only at the risk of his life. This kind of hypocrites found in Makkah did not comprise those who believed and Prayed to be seen but those who in their hearts had know, and acknowledged the Holy Messenger of Allah (upon whom be peace) to be on the true path, but were avoiding to accept Islam in order to maintain their Position of leadership and authority, or were not prepared to take the risk of being afflicted with the kind of hardships with which they found the believers afflicted in the society around them. This condition of the hypocrites at Makkah has been described in vv. 10-11 of Surah Al- Ankabut. (For explanation, see E.N.'s 13 to 16 of Surah Al-'Ankabut).

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is to point out what kind of morals a man develops when he refuses to believe in the Hereafter. In vv. 2-3 the condition of the disbelievers who openly belie the Hereafter has been described, and in the last four verses the state of those hypocrites who apparently are Muslims but have no idea of the Hereafter, its judgment, and the meting out of rewards and punishments accordingly has been described. On the whole, the object of depicting the attitude and conduct of two kinds of people is to impress the point that man cannot develop a strong, stable and pure character in himself unless he believes in the Hereafter.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

اَرَءَيۡتَ الَّذِىۡ يُكَذِّبُ بِالدِّيۡنِ ؕ 1

(107:1) Did you see him[1] who gives the lie to the Reward and Punishment[2] of the Hereafter?[3]

1. The words "have you seen", apparently, are directed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), but the Quranic style is that on such occasions it generally addresses every intelligent and thinking person. And seeing means seeing with the eyes, for what has been described in the succeeding verses can be seen by every seer with his eyes, as well as knowing, understanding and considering something deeply. If the word araaita is taken in the second meaning, the verse would mean: Do you know the kind of man who belies the rewards and punishments. Or: Have you considered the state of the person who belies the Judgment?

2. The word ad-din as Quranic term is used for the rewards and punishments of the Hereafter as well as for the religion of Islam. But the theme that follows is more relevant to the first meaning, although the second meaning is also not out of the context. Ibn Abbas has preferred the second meaning, while a majority of the commentators have preferred the first. In case the first meaning is taken, the theme of the Surah would mean that denial of the Hereafter produces such and such a character in man. In case the second meaning is taken, the object of the Surah would be to highlight the moral importance of Islam, to stress that Islam aims at producing an altogether different character in its adherents from that found in its deniers.

3. The style shows that the object of asking this question at the outset is not to ask whether he has seen the person or not, but to invite the listener to consider as to what kind of character is produced in man when he denies the judgment of the Hereafter, and to urge him to know the kind of the people who belie this creed so that he tries to understand the moral significance of belief in the Hereafter.

فَذٰلِكَ الَّذِىْ يَدُعُّ الْيَتِيْمَ ۙ 2

(107:2) Such is[4] the one who repulses the orphans away,[5]

4. The letter fa in the sentence fa-dhalika-alladhi expresses the meaning of a whole sentence, which is to this effect: If you do not know, then know that it is indeed he who drives away the orphan. Or, it gives the meaning: Because of his this very denial of the Hereafter he is the kind of man who drives away the orphan.

5. The sentence yadu ul yatim as used in the original, has several meanings:

(1) That he deprives the orphan of his rights and evicting him from his father's heritage thrusts him away.

(2) That if an orphan comes to ask him for help, he repulses him instead of showing him any compassion, and if he still persists in his entreaties in the hope for mercy, he drives him away and out of sight.

(3) That he ill-treats the orphan.

For example, if in his own house there is a closely related orphan, it is the orphans lot to serve the whole house, to receive rebuffs and suffer humiliation for trivial things. Besides, this sentence also contains the meaning that the person does not behave unjustly and tyrannically only occasionally but this is his habit and settled practice. He does not have the feeling that it is an evil which he must give up, but he persists in it with full satisfaction, thinking that the orphan is a helpless, powerless creature; therefore, there is no harm if his rights are taken away wrongfully, or he is made the target of tyranny and injustice, or he is repulsed and driven away whenever he asks for help.

In this connection, Qadi Abul Hasan al-Mawardi has related a strange incident in his Aalam an-Nubuwwat. Abu Jahl was the testator of an orphan. The child one day came to him in the condition that he had no shred of a garment on his body and he implored him to be given something out of his father's heritage. But the cruel man paid no attention to him and the poor child had to go back disappointed. The Quraish chiefs said to him out of fun: Go to Muhammad (peace be upon him) and put your complaint before him. He will recommend your case before Abu Jahl and get you your property. The child not knowing any background of the nature of relationship between Abu Jahl and the Prophet (peace be upon him) and not understanding the motive of the mischief-mongers, went straight to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and apprised him of his misfortune. The Prophet (peace be upon him) immediately arose and accompanied the child to the house of Abu Jahl, his bitterest enemy. Abu Jahl received him well and when the latter told him to restore to the child his right, he yielded and brought out whatever he owed to him. The Quraish chiefs were watching all this earnestly in the hope that an interesting altercation would take place between them. But when they saw what actually happened they were astounded and went to Abu Jahl and taunted him saying that he too perhaps had abandoned his religion. He said: By God, I have not abandoned my religion, but I so felt that on the right and left of Muhammad (peace be upon him) there was a spear which would enter my body if I acted against what he desired. This incident not only shows what was the attitude and conduct of the principal chiefs of the most civilized and noble tribe of Arabia towards the orphans and other helpless people in those days but it also shows what sublime character the Prophet (peace be upon him) possessed and what impact it had even on his bitterest enemies. A similar incident we have already related in(E.N. 5 of Surah Al-Anbiya), which points to the great moral superiority of the Prophet (peace be upon him) because of which the disbelieving Quraish branded him as a sorcerer.

وَلَا يَحُضُّ عَلٰى طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِيْنِ ۟ 3

(107:3) and urges[6] not the feeding of the needy.[7]

6. La yahuddu means that the person neither persuades his own self, nor tells the people of his household, to provide the poor man with his food, nor does he urge others to recognize the rights of the poor and needy people of society who are starving and do something to satisfy their hunger.

Here, by giving only two conspicuous examples, Allah has pointed out what kind of evils are produced in the people who deny the Hereafter. The real object is not to point out only these two evils that the people drive away the orphans and do not urge giving away the

food of the poor as a result of the denial of the Hereafter. But of the countless evils which are thus produced, two evils have been presented as an example, which every noble and sound-natured person will regard as hateful. Besides, another thing meant to be impressed is that if this very man had believed that he would have to go before God to render an account of his deeds, he would not have committed such evils as to deprive the orphan of his rights, tyrannize him, repulse him, neither feed the poor man himself nor urge others to give him his food. The characteristics of the believers in the Hereafter which have been described in Surah Al-Asr and Surah Al-Balad are that they exhort one another to mercy, and they exhort one another to the truth and to render the rights of others.

7. The words used are to taam-il-miskin and not itam-ilmiskin. If itam-il-miskin were the words, the meaning would be that he does not urge (others) to feed the poor. But taam -il-miskin means that he does not urge (others) to give away the food of the poor. In other words, the food that is given to the poor man is not the food of the giver but of the poor man himself; it is his right which is enjoined on the giver, and the giver is not doing him any favor but rendering him his right. This same thing had been said in Surah Adh-Dhariyat: And in their possessions is a due share of him who asks and of him who is needy. (verse 19).

فَوَيۡلٌ لِّلۡمُصَلِّيۡنَ ۙ 4

(107:4) Woe, then, to those who pray,[8]

8. The fa in fa-wail-ul -lil-musallin signifies that such was the condition of the open deniers of the Hereafter. One may then consider the condition of the hypocrites who are included among the praying ones (i.e. Muslims). Since, despite being Muslims they regard the Hereafter as a falsehood, one may note what path of ruin they are following.

Though musallin means the praying ones, in view of the context in which this word has been used and the characteristics of these people that follow, this word, in fact, does not have the meaning of the praying ones but of the people of salat, i.e. of those included among Muslims.

الَّذِيۡنَ هُمۡ عَنۡ صَلَاتِهِمۡ سَاهُوۡنَ ۙ 5

(107:5) but are heedless in their Prayers,[9]

9. The words used are an-salat-i him sahun and not fi salati- him ahun. In case the words fi salat-i him had been used, the meaning would be that they forget in the course of their Prayer. But forgetting in the course of the Prayer is no sin in the eyes of the Shariah, nothing to say of its being hypocrisy, nor is it a fault or anything blameworthy. The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself sometimes forgot in the Prayer and to compensate for it he prescribed the method of sajdah sahv. On the contrary, an salat-i-him sahun means that they are neglectful of their Prayer. Whether they perform the Prayer, or do not perform it, it is of little importance to them. They are not regular at the Prayers. When they perform it, they do not observe the prescribed times, but offer it carelessly at the eleventh hour. Or, when they rise up for the Prayer, they rise up and perform it with an unwilling heart, as if it were a

calamity imposed on them. They play with their garments, yawn and betray absence of every trace of Allah's remembrance in their hearts. Throughout the Prayer they show no feeling at all that they are performing the Prayer, nor of what they are reciting; their minds wander and they perform articles of the Prayer without due attention; they somehow perform a semblance of the Prayer and try to be rid of it as soon as possible. And there are many people who would perform the Prayer only when they must, otherwise the Prayer has no place in their lives. The Prayer time comes but they show no concern that it is the Prayer time; they hear the call to the Prayer but do not understand what the caller is calling to, whom he is calling and for what purpose. These in fact are the signs of absence of faith in the Hereafter. The claimants to Islam believe thus only because they do not believe that they would be rewarded for performing the Prayer, nor have the faith that they would be punished for not performing it. On this very basis, Anas bin Malik and Ata bin Dinar say: Thanks to God that he said an salat-ihim and not fi salat-i-him. That is, we do forget in the course of the Prayer but we are not forgetful and neglectful of it; therefore, we shall not be counted among the hypocrites.

The Quran at another place has described this state of the hypocrites, thus: They come to offer their Prayer but reluctantly, and they spend in the way of Allah with unwilling hearts. (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 54). The Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah has said: This is the Prayer of the hypocrite; this is the Prayer of the hypocrite; this is the Prayer of the hypocrite! He watches the sun at the Asr time until when it reaches between the two horns of Satan (i.e. when the time of sunset approaches), he gets up and performs the Prayer carelessly, in which he remembers Allah but little. (Bukhari, Muslim, Musnad Ahmad). Musab bin Saad has related from his father, Saad bin Abi Waqqas: When I asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) about the people who are neglectful of their Prayer, he said: These are the people who perform their Prayers when the prescribed time for it has passed. (Ibn Jarir, Abu Yala, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn abi Hatim, Tabarani in Ausat; Ibn Marduyah, Baihaqi in As-Sunan). This tradition has been related as a statement of Saad himself also as a mauquf hadith and its sanad is stronger. Its being a marfu narration of the saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been regarded as weak by Baihaqi and Hakim). Another tradition from Musab is that he asked his father: Have you considered this verse? Does it mean giving up the Prayer, or wandering of one's attention in the course of the Prayer, who among us has not his attention divided. He replied: No, it implies wasting the prescribed time of the Prayer and performing it when its time has elapsed. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Shaibah, Abu Yala, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Marduyah, Baihaqi in As-Sunan).

Here, one should understand that coming of other thoughts in the mind in the course of the Prayer is one thing and being unmindful of the Prayer and thinking other things during it quite another. The first state is a natural human weakness. Thoughts do interfere without intention, and as soon as a believer feels that his attention is wandering from the Prayer, he gathers it and brings it back to the Prayer. The other state is of being neglectful of the Prayer, for in it man only goes through an exercise of the Prayer mechanically, he has no intention of the remembrance of God in his heart. From the commencement of the Prayer till its completion his heart is not turned towards God even for a moment, and he remains engrossed in the thoughts with which he entered the Prayer.

الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَآءُونَ ۙ 6

(107:6) those who do good (in order) to be seen,[10]

10. This can be an independent sentence as well as one relating to the preceding sentence. In the first case, it would mean that they do not perform any act of goodness with a pure intention for the sake of God, but whatever they do, they do to be seen of others so that they are praised, are considered righteous, their good act is publicized and its advantage and benefit accrues to them here in the world. In the second case, the meaning would be that they pray to be seen. The commentators generally have preferred the second meaning, for at first sight it appears that it relates to the preceding sentence. Ibn Abbas says: It implies the hypocrites who prayed to be seen. They performed the Prayer if there was somebody to see them, but did not perform it if there was nobody to see them. In another tradition his words are to the effect: If they were alone they did not pray; but if there were others, they prayed. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim , Ibn Marduyah, Baihaqi , in Ash-Shuab). In the Quran the hypocrites have been described thus: When they rise up for the salat, they go reluctantly to it, merely to be seen of people and they remember Allah but little. (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 142).

وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ ۝ 7

(107:7) and deny people the articles of common necessity.[11]

11. The word used is maun. The view held by Ali, Ibn Umar, Saeed bin Jubair, Qatadah, Hasan Basri, Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah, Dahhak, Ibn Zaid, Ikrimah, Mujahid, Ata and Zuhri is that it implies the zakat while Ibn Abbas, Ibn Masud, Ibrahim Nakhai, Abu Malik and many other scholars have expressed the opinion that it implies items of common use; for example, cooking-pot, bucket, hatchet, balance, salt, water, fire, flint (now its successor, the match-stick), etc. which the people generally borrow from each other. A statement of Saeed bin Jubair and Mujahid also supports it. Another view of Ali also is that it implies the zakat as well as the little courtesies and kindnesses of daily life. Ibn Abi Hatim has related from Ikrimah that maun of the highest form is zakat and of the lowest lending of a sieve, bucket, or needle to a borrower. Abdullah bin Masud says: We, the companions of Muhammad (peace be upon him), used to say, and according to other traditions, in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), used to say that maun implies lending of the cooking pot, hatchet, bucket, balance, and such other things. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Shaibah, Abu Daud, Nasai, Bazzar, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Tabarani in Al- Ausat, Ibn Marduyah, Baihaqi in As-Sunan). Saad bin Iyad without specifying any names has related almost the same view from the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), which shows that he had heard this from several companions. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Shaibah). Dailami, Ibn Asakir, and Abu Nuaim have related a tradition from Abu Hurairah in which he says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) explained this verse saying that it implies the hatchet, bucket and other such things. If this tradition is genuine, it probably did not come to the notice of other scholars; otherwise it was not possible that other people should have given any other commentary of this verse.

Maun in fact is a small, little thing useful to the people. Accordingly, zakat also is maun, for it is a little amount out of much wealth, which one has to give away in order to help the poor, and the other small items of common use are also maun as mentioned by Abdullah Ibn Masud and the scholars who share his viewpoint. The majority of the commentators say that maun applies to all those small things which the neighbors usually ask each other for, and asking for these is not in any way blameworthy, for the rich and the poor, all stand in need of these at one time or another. However, to show stinginess in lending these is regarded as mean behavior morally. Generally these things by themselves last and the neighbor returns them in the original form after he has used them. It would also be maun if a neighbor asks the other for a bed or bedding items on the arrival of guests, or asks the neighbor's permission to have loaves baked in his oven, or wants to leave some valuables in the neighbor's custody when going out of his house for some days. Thus, the verse means to impress that denial of the Hereafter renders a man so narrow-minded and niggardly that he is not even prepared to make a most minor sacrifice for the sake of others.

108. Surah Al Kauthar (The Abundance)

Name

The Surah has been so designated after the word al-kauthar occurring in the first verse.

Period of Revelation

Ibn Marduyah has cited Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas, Hadrat Abdullah bin az-Zubair and Hadrat Aishah as saying that this Surah is Makki. Kalbi and Muqatil also regard it as Makki, and the same is the view held by the majority of commentators. But Hadrat Hasan Basri, Ikrimah, Mujahid and Qatadah regard it as Madani. Imam Suyuti in Al-Itqan has confirmed this same view, and Imam Nawawi in his commentary of the Sahih of Muslim has also preferred the same. The reason for this assumption is the tradition which traditionists of the rank of Imam Ahmad, Muslim, Abu Daud, Nasai, Ibn Abi Shaibah, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Marduyah, Baihaqi and others have related from Hadrat Anas bin Malik, saying: "The Holy Prophet was among us. In the meantime he dozed; then he raised his head, smiling, according to some traditions, the people asked what for he was smiling, according to others, he himself told them that a Surah had just been revealed to him. Then, with Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim, he recited Surah Al-Kauthar; then he asked the people whether they knew what Kauthar was. When they said that Allah and his Messenger had the best knowledge, he said; It is a river which my Lord has granted me in Paradise." (The details follow under "Kauthar"). The basis of the reasoning from this tradition for this Surah's being Madani is that Hadrat Anas belonged to Madinah, and his saying that this Surah was revealed in his presence is a proof that it was Madani.

But, in the first place, from this same Hadrat Anas, Imam Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Da'ud, Tirmidhi and Ibn Jarir have related the traditions which say that this river of Paradise (Al-Kauthar) had been shown to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) on the occasion of the mi`raj (ascension) and everyone knows that mi`raj had taken place at Makkah before the hijrah. Secondly, when during the mi`raj the Holy Prophet had not only been informed of this gift of Allah Almighty but also shown it, there was no reason why Surah Al-Kauthar should have be revealed at Madinah to give him the good news of it. Thirdly, if in an assembly of the Companions the Holy Prophet himself had given the news of the revelation of Surah Al-Kauthar which Hadrat Anas has mentioned in his tradition, and it meant that that Surah had been revealed for the first time then, it was not possible that well-informed Companions like Hadrat Aishah, Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas and Hadrat Abdullah bin Zubair should have declared this Surah to be a Makki revelation and most of the commentators also should have regarded it as Makki. If the matter is considered carefully, there appears to be a flaw in the tradition from Hadrat Anas in that it does not say what was the subject under discussion in the assembly in which the Holy Prophet gave the news about Surah Al-Kauthar. It is possible that at that time the Holy Prophet was explaining something. In the meantime he was informed by revelation that that point was further explained by Surah Al-Kauthar, and he mentioned the same thing, saying that that Surah was revealed to him just then. Such incidents did take place on several occasions, on the basis of which the commentators have opined about certain verses that they were revealed twice. This second revelation, in fact, meant that the verse had been revealed earlier, but on some later occasion the Holy Prophet's attention was invited to it by

revelation for the second time. In such traditions, the mention of the revelation of a certain verse is not enough to decide whether it was revealed at Makkah or Madinah, and when precisely it was revealed.

Had this tradition of Hadrat Anas not been there to cause doubt, the whole content of the Surah Al-Kauthar by itself bears evidence that it was revealed at Makkah, and in the period when the Holy Prophet was passing through extremely discouraging conditions.

Historical Background

Before this in Surahs Ad-Duha and Alam Nashrah we have seen that when in the earliest phase of Prophethood the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) was passing through the most trying conditions when the whole nation had turned hostile, there was resistance and opposition on every side, and the Holy Prophet and a handful of his Companions did not see any remote chance of success. Allah in order to console and encourage him at that time had sent down several verses. In Surah Ad- Duha it was said: "And surely the later period (i.e. every later period) is better for you than the former period, and soon your Lord shall give you so much that you shall be well pleased". In Surah Alam Nashrah: "And We exalted your renown for you." That is, "Though the enemies are trying to defame you throughout the country, We, on the contrary, have arranged to exalt your name and fame." And: "The fact is that along with every hardship there is also ease." That is, "You should not be disheartened by the severity of conditions at this time; this period of hardships will soon pass, and the period of success and victory will follow."

Such were the conditions in which Allah by sending down Surah Al-Kauthar consoled the Holy Prophet as well as foretold the destruction of his opponents. The disbelieving Quraish said: "Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) is cut off from his community and reduced to a powerless and helpless individual. According to Ikrimah when the Holy Prophet was appointed a Prophet, and he began to call the people to Islam, the Quraish said: "Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) is cut off from his people as a tree is cut off from its root, which might fall to the ground any moment." (Ibn Jarir). Muhammad bin Ishaq says: "Whenever the Prophet (upon whom be peace) was mentioned before As bin Wa'il as-Sehmi, the chief of Makkah, he used to say: Let him alone for he is only a childless man (abtar) with no male offspring. When he dies, there will be no one to remember him." Shamir bin Atiyyah says that Uqbah bin Abi Mu'ait, also used to say similar things about the Holy Prophet, (Ibn Jarir). According to Ibn Abbas, once Ka'b bin Ashraf (the Jewish chief of Madinah) came to Makkah and the Quraish chiefs said to him: "Just see this boy, who is cut off from his people; he thinks he is superior to us, whereas we manage the Hajj, look after the Ka'bah and water the pilgrims." (Bazzar). Concerning this very incident Ikrimah reports that the Quraish had used the words as-sunbur al-munbatir min qaumi-hi (a weak, helpless and childless man who is cut off from his people) for the Holy Prophet. (Ibn Jarir) Ibn Sa'd and lbn Asakir have related that Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas said; "The eldest son of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) was Qasim; next to him was Zainab, next to her Hadrat Abdullah and next to him three daughters, viz. Umm Kulthum, Fatimah and Ruqayyah. Of them first Hadrat Qasim died and then Hadrat Abdullah. Thereupon As bin Wail said: "His line has come to an end: now he is abtar (i. e. cut of from root)."Some traditions add that As said "Muhammad is abtar: he has no son to succeed him. When he dies, his memory will perish and you will be rid of him." The tradition from Ibn Abbas,

which Abd bin Humaid has related, shows that Abu Jahl also had said similar words on the death of the Holy Prophet's son, Abdullah. Ibn Abi Hatim has related on the authority of Shmir bin Atiyyah that the same kind of meanness was shown by Uqbah bin Abi Mu'ait by rejoicing at this bereavement of the Holy Prophet. Ata says that when the second son of the Holy Prophet died, his own uncle, Abu Lahab (whose house was next to his) hastened to the pagans and gave them the "good news": Batira Muhammadun al-lail: "Muhammad has become childless this night, or he is cut off from root."

Such were the disturbing conditions under which Surah Al-Kauthar was sent down. The Quraish were angry with him because he worshiped and served only Allah and repudiated their idolatry publicly. For this very reason he was deprived of the rank, esteem and honor that he enjoyed among his people before Prophethood and was now as cut off from his community. The handful of his Companions also were helpless, poor people who were being persecuted and tyrannized. Furthermore, he was bereaved by the death of two sons, one after the other, whereat the near relatives and the people of his clan, brotherhood and neighborhood were rejoicing and uttering such words as were disheartening and disturbing for a noble person who had treated even his enemies most kindly. At this Allah just in one sentence of this brief Surah gave him the good news, better news than which has never been given to any man in the world, besides the decision that it will be his opponents who will be cut off from their root and not he.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

اِنَّاۤ اَعۡطَيۡنٰكَ الۡكَوۡثَرَ ؕ 1

(108:1) (O Prophet), We have surely bestowed upon you good in abundance.[1]

1. The full meaning of the word kauthar, as used here, cannot perhaps be expressed in one word in any language of the world. This is an intensive form of the noun kathrat which literally means abundance, but the context in which it has been used does not give the meaning of mere abundance but abundance of good, of spiritual benefits and blessings, and of such abundance which is unbounded and limitless, and it does not imply any one good or benefit or blessing but abundance of countless benefits and blessings.

Have a look again at the background of this Surah given in the Introduction. The enemies thought that Muhammad (peace be upon him) had been completely ruined: he was cut off from the community and had become utterly helpless and powerless; his trade was ruined; his male children who could perpetuate his name were dead; the message that he presented was such that except for a handful of the people no one in entire Arabia, not to speak of Makkah, was prepared to listen to it. Therefore, failure and disappointment would be his lot as long as he lived and there would be no one in posterity to remember him when he died. Under such conditions when Allah said: We have granted you the Kauthar, this by itself gave the meaning: Your foolish opponents think that you are ruined and deprived of the good things that you enjoyed before Prophethood, but the fact is that We have favored you with unbounded good and countless blessings. This included the matchless moral qualities which the Prophet (peace be upon him) was blessed with; this included the great blessings

of Prophethood and the Quran, the knowledge and wisdom that were granted to him; this included the blessing of Tauhid and also of such a system of life whose simple and intelligible, rational and natural, and comprehensive principles had the potential to spread throughout the world and of continuing to spread for ever afterwards. This also included the blessing of the exaltation of renown because of which the Prophet's (peace be upon him) blessed name continues to be exalted throughout the world since 1400 years and will continue to be so exalted till Resurrection.

This also included the blessing that by his preaching eventually such a world-wide community came into being, which became the standard-bearer of truth in the world forever, which can claim to have produced the greatest number of the pious, virtuous and noble character people in any one nation, and which even when corrupted and deprived has the highest good in it as against every other nation of the world. This also included the blessing that the Prophet (peace be upon him) during his very lifetime witnessed his invitation and message attaining to the highest success and the preparation of a community which had the power to dominate the world. This also included the blessing that although on his being deprived of the male offspring the enemies thought he would be lost to posterity, yet Allah not only blessed him with the spiritual offspring in the form of Muslims, who will continue to exalt his name in the world till Resurrection but also granted him from his one daughter, Fatimah, the natural progeny, who have spread throughout world and whose only mark of distinction and pride is that they trace their descent from him.

These are the blessings which the people have seen and witnessed as to how abundantly Allah has blessed His Prophet (peace be upon him) within the world. In addition, Kauthar also implies two other great blessings which Allah will bestow on him in the Hereafter. We had no means of knowing these; therefore the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself gave us news of them, and told us that Kauthar also implied them. First, the Fountain of Kauthar, which he will be granted on the Resurrection Day in the Plain of Assembly; second, the River Kauthar, which he will be granted in Paradise. About both such a large number of the Ahadith have been reported from him through such a large number of the reporters that there remains no doubt about their authenticity.

What the Prophet (peace be upon him) said about the Fountain of Kauthar is as follows:

(1) This Fountain will be granted to him on the Resurrection Day when there will be the cry of al-atash, alatash (thirst, thirst!) on every side. The Prophet's (peace be upon him) community will gather together before him at it and will be watered thereby. He himself will be the first to arrive at it and will be occupying the central position.

He has said: This is a Fountain at which my Ummah will assemble on the Resurrection Day. (Muslim: Kitab as-Salat Abu Daud: Kitab as-Sunnah). I shall have arrived at the Fountain before you. (Bukhari: Kitab ar-Riqaq and Kitab al- Fitan; Muslim: Kitab al-Fidail and Kitab at-Taharah; lbn Majah: Kitab al Manasik and Kitab az-Zuhd. Musnad Ahmad: Marwiyyat Abdullah bin Masud, Abdullah bin Abbas, Abu Hurairah).

I shall be there before you and shall bear witness on you, and by God, I am seeing my Fountain even at this time. (Bukhari: Kitab al-jana-iz Kitab al- Maghazi, Kitab ar-Riqaq).

Addressing an assembly of the Ansar, the Prophet (peace be upon him) once said: After me you will meet with selfishness and nepotism, endure it patiently until you meet me at the Fountain. (Bukhari: Kitab Manaqib al-Ansar and Kitab al-Maghazi; Muslim: Kitab al-Iman; Tirmidhi: Kitab al-Fitan).

I shall be near the middle of the Fountain on the Resurrection Day. (Muslim: Kitab al-Fadail).

Abu Barzah Aslami was asked: Have you heard something about the Fountain from the Prophet (peace be upon him). He replied: Not once, or twice, or thrice, or four or five times, but over and over again. May Allah deprive of its water the one who belies it. (Abu Daud: Kitab as-Sunnah).

Ubaidullah bin Ziyad thought that the traditions about the Fountain were false; so much so that he belied all the traditions reported by Abu Barzah Aslami, Bara bin Aazib and Aaidh bin Amr. At last, Abu Sabrah brought out a writing which he had written down after hearing it from Abdullah bin Amr bin alAas, and it contained this saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him): Beware! Your place of meeting me will be my Fountain. (Musnad Ahmad: Marwiyyat Abdullah bin Amr bin alAas).

(2) Different dimensions of the Fountain have been given in different traditions, but according to a large number of the traditions it will extend from Aylah (the present Israeli seaport of Ilat) to Sana'a of Yaman, or from Aylah to Adan, or from Amman to Adan in length, and from Aylah to Juhfah (a place between Jeddah and Rabigh) in breadth. (Bukhari: Kitab ar-Riqaq; Abu Daud at Tayalisi: Hadith No. 995; Musnad Ahmad: Marwiyyat Abu Bakr Siddiq and Abdullah bin Umar; Muslim: Kitab at-Taharah and Kitab al-Fadail; Tirmidhi Abwab Sifat al-Qiyamah; Ibn Majah: Kitab az-Zuhd). From this it appears that on the Resurrection Day the present Red Sea itself will be turned into the Fountain of Kauthar. And the correct knowledge is only with Allah.

(3) About this Fountain the Prophet (peace be upon him) has told us that water will be supplied to it from the River Kauthar of Paradise (which is being mentioned below). Two channels from Paradise will flow into it and supply water to it. (Muslim: Kitab al-Fadail). According to another tradition: A canal from the River Kauthar of Paradise will be opened towards this Fountain. (Musnad Ahmad; Marwiyyat Abdullah bin Masud).

(4) According to the description of it given by the Prophet (peace be upon him) its water will be whiter than milk (according to other traditions whiter than silver, and according to still others, whiter than snow), cooler than snow, sweeter than honey; the earth of its bed will be more fragrant than musk; the water jugs set at it will be as numerous as the stars in the sky; the one who drinks from it would never thirst; and the one who is deprived of it will never have his thirst satisfied. These things with a little variation in wording have been reported in numerous Ahadith (Bukhari: Kitab ar-Riqaq; Muslim: Kitab at- Taharah and Kitab al-Fadail; Musnad Ahmad: Marwiyyat Ibn Masud, Ibn Umar, Abdullah bin Amr bin alAas; Tirmidhi: Abwab Sifat al-Qiyanmah: Ibn Majah: Kitab az- Zuhd; Abu Daud: Tayalisi, Ahadith No. 995, 2135).

(5) Concerning it the Prophet (peace be upon him) warned the people of his time again and again, saying: After me those from among you who would effect changes in my way, will be

removed from the Fountain and will be disallowed to approach it. I shall say: they are my companions, but it will be said: Don't you know what they did after you? Then I too shall discard them and tell them to keep away. This subject has been expressed in many traditions. (Bukhari: Kitab ar-Rigaq, Kitab al-Fitan; Muslim: Kitab at-Tahara and Kitab al-Fadail Musnad Ahmad: Marwiyyat Ibn Masud, Abu Hurairah; Ibn Majah: Kitab al-Manasik. The Hadith which Ibn Majah has related in this connection contains very pathetic words. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Beware! I shall have arrived at the Fountain before you and shall pride myself by your means upon the greater numbers of my Ummah as against other ummahas. Do not at that time cause my face to be blackened. Beware! I shall have some people released, and some people shall be separated from me. I shall say: O my Lord, they are my companions. He will reply: Don't you know what innovations they introduced after you? According to Ibn Majah, these words were said by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in his Sermon at Arafat.

(6) Likewise, the Prophet (peace be upon him) has also warned the Muslims coming after him till Resurrection, saying: Whoever from among you will swerve from my way and effect changes in it, will be removed from the Fountain. I shall say: O Lord, they belong to me, they are the people of my Ummah. In response it will be said: Don't you know what changes they effected after you and then turned back on their heels? Then I shall also turn them away and shall not allow them to approach the Fountain. Many traditions on this subject are found in the Hadith. (Bukhari: Kitab al- Musaqat, Kitab ar-Riqaq, Kitab al-Fitan; Muslim: Kitab at- Taharah. Katab as-Salat, Kitab al-Fadail; Ibn Majah: Kitab az-Zuhd; Musnad Ahmad: Marwiyyat Ibn Abbas).

Traditions about this Fountain have been related by more than 50 companions, and the earlier scholars generally have taken it to mean the Fountain of Kauthar. Imam Bukhari has named the last chapter of his Kitab ar-Riqaq as Babun fil hawd wa qual-Allahu inna a tainak al-Kauthar, and in a tradition from Anas there is the explanation that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said about Kauthar: It is a Fountain at which my Ummah shall alight.

The River Kauthar which the Prophet (peace be upon him) shall be granted in Paradise, also has been mentioned in a large number of the traditions of Hadith. Many traditions have been related on the authority of Anas in which he says, and in some he explains that he is reporting the exact words of the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself, that on the occasion of miraj; the Prophet (peace be upon him) was taken round Paradise and shown a river on the banks of which there were vaults of pearls or precious stones carved from within; the earth of its bed was of the strong-scented musk. He asked Gabriel, or the angel who took him round, what it was? He replied that it was the River Kauthar, which Allah had granted him. (Musnad Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Abu Daud Tayalisi, Ibn Jarir) Again, according to Anas, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked (or a person asked him): What is the Kauthar? He replied; It is a River which Allah has granted me in Paradise. Its earth is musk: its water is whiter than milk and sweeter than honey. (Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi, lbn Jarir; according to another tradition of Musnad Ahmad, describing the merits of the River Kauthar the Prophet said that at its bottom there are pearls instead of pebbles. Ibn Umar says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The Kauthar is a river in Paradise the banks of which are golden; it flows on pearls and diamonds (i.e. its bed has diamonds instead of pebbles); its earth smells sweeter than musk; its water is whiter than milk (or snow), cooler than snow and sweeter than honey." (Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah,

Ibn Abi Hatim, Darimi, Abu Daud Tayalisi, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Marduyah, Ibn Abi Shaibah). Usamah bin Zaid says that the Prophet (peace be upon him) once went to visit Usamah; he was not at home; his wife entertained him and during the conversation said My husband has told me that you have been granted a river in Paradise, which is called the Kauthar. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: Yes, and its bed is of rubies and corals and emeralds and pearls. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Marduyah. Though the sanad of this tradition is weak, the presence of a large number of traditions dealing with this subject strengthens it). Besides these marfu traditions, a great many sayings of the companions and their successors have been related in the Hadith to the effect that the Kauthar implies a river in Paradise. These traditions describe its qualities as have been mentioned above. For instance, the sayings of Abdullah bin Umar, Abdullah bin Abbas, Anas bin Malik, Aishah, Mujahid and Abul Aliyah are found in Musnad Ahmad, Bukhari, Tirmidhi, Nasai; and the books of Ibn Marduyah, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Shaibah and other traditionists.

فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَانْحَرْ ۝2

(108:2) So offer Prayer and sacrifice[2] to your Lord alone.

2. Different commentaries of it have been reported from different scholars. Some of them take the Prayer to mean the five times obligatory Prayer (salat); some take it to imply the Prayer of Id al-Adha, and some say that it implies the Prayer itself. Likewise, the meaning of wanhar and sacrifice according to some illustrious scholars, is to place the right hand over the left hand and to fold them on the chest in the Prayer; some say that it implies raising both hands with Allahu Akbar at the commencement of the Prayer; some say that it implies raising both hands at the commencement of the Prayer, at bowing for Ruku and after rising from Ruku; and some say that it means performing the Id al-Adha Prayer and then offering the animal sacrifice. But if the context in which this command has been enjoined, is considered, its meaning clearly seems to be: O Prophet, when your Lord has granted you so many and so splendid blessings, then you should perform the Prayer only for His sake and offer sacrifice only for His sake. This command was given in the environment when not only the pagans of Quraish but the pagans of entire Arabia and the world worshipped their self-made gods and offered sacrifices at their shrines. Therefore, the intention of the command is: Contrary to the polytheistic practice, you should remain steadfast to your creed: your Prayer is only for Allah and your sacrifice is also for Him alone, as it has been said at another place: Declare, O Prophet, my salat and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for Allah, Lord of the universe, Who has no partner with Him. This is what I have been enjoined, and I am the first to surrender to Him. (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayats 162-163). This same meaning has been explained of it by Ibn Abbas. Ata, Mujahid, Ikrimah, Hasan Basri, Qatadah, Muhammad bin Kaab al-Qurzi, Dahhak, Rabi bin Anas, Ata al-Khurasani and many other major commentators. (Ibn Jarir). However, this by itself is correct that when the Prophet (peace be upon him) enforced by Allah's command the practice of the Id al-Adha Prayer and the offering of animal sacrifice at Al-Madinah, he himself gave the first place to the Prayer (salat and the second to the sacrifice, as commanded in the verses: Inna salati wa nusuki and fa-salli li-Rabbika wanhar, and also enjoined on the Muslims to do the same, i.e. they should first perform the Prayer and then offer the sacrifice. This is neither the explanation of this verse nor the occasion of its revelation but a deduction made by the Prophet (peace be upon him) from these verses and his deduction of injunctions is also a kind of divine inspiration.

إِنَّ شَانِئَكَ هُوَ الْأَبْتَرُ ۚ 3

(108:3) Verily your enemy[3] alone has been cut off from the roots.[4]

3. The word shani as used, in the original is derived from shaan, which means the hatred and spite because of which a person may start ill-treating another. At another place in the Quran it has been said: (And O Muslims,) the enmity of any people should not so provoke you as to turn you away from justice. (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 8). Thus, shani aka implies every such person who blinded by his enmity of the Prophet (peace be upon him) should bring false accusations against him, slander and defame him and vent his personal spite against him by taunting and scoffing at him in every possible way.

4. Huwal abtar: He himself is abtar, i.e. though he calls you abtar, he in fact himself is abtar. Some explanations of abtar have already been given in the Introduction to the Surah. It is derived from batar which means to cut off, but idiomatically it is used in a comprehensive meaning. In the Hadith, the rakah of the Prayer which is not coupled with another rakah is called butaira, i.e. the lonely rakah. According to another Hadith, every piece of work, which is in any way important, is abtar if it is started without the glorification and praise of Allah implying that it is cut off from the root; it has no stability; and it is doomed to failure. A man who fails to achieve his object is abtar as also the one who is deprived of all means and resources. A person who is left with no hope of any good and success in life is also abtar. A person who has been cut off from his family, brotherhood, associates and helpers is also abtar. The word abtar is also used for the man who has no male child, or whose male child or children have died, for after him there remains no one to remember him and he is lost to posterity after death. In almost all these meanings the disbelieving Quraish called the Prophet (peace be upon him) abtar. At this, Allah said: O Prophet, not you but your enemies are abtar. This was not merely a reprisal, but a prophecy out of the most important prophecies of the Quran, which literally proved true. When it was made, the people regarded the Prophet (peace be upon him) as abtar, and no one could imagine how the big chiefs of the Quraish would become abtar, who were famous not only in Makkah but throughout Arabia, who were successful in life, rich in worldly wealth and children, who had their associates and helpers everywhere in the country, who enjoyed intimate relations with all the Arabian tribes, being monopolists in trade and managers of Hajj. But not long afterwards the conditions altogether changed. There was a time when on the occasion of the Battle of the Trench (A.H. 5) the Quraish had invaded Al-Madinah with the help of many Arabian and Jewish tribes, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) being besieged had to resist the enemy by digging a trench around the city. After only three years, in A.H. 8, when he attacked Makkah, the Quraish had no helper and they had to surrender helplessly. After this within a year or so the whole Arabia came under his control, deputations of tribes from all over the country began to visit him to take the oaths of allegiance and his enemies were left utterly helpless and resource-less. Then they were so lost to posterity that even if their children survived, none of them today knows that he is a descendent of Abu Jahl, Abu Lahab, Aas bin Wail, or Uqbah bin Abi Muait, the enemies of Islam, and even if he knows it, he is not prepared to claim that his ancestors were those people. On the contrary, blessings are being invoked on the children of the Prophet (peace be upon him) throughout the world; millions and millions of Muslims take pride in bearing relationship to him; hundreds of thousands of people regard it as a mark of honor and prestige to have descended not only

from him but from his family and even the families of his companions. Thus, some one is a Sayyid, another an Alavi, and Abbasi, a Hashmi, a Siddiqi, a Faruqi, an Uthmani, a Zubairi, or an Ansari, but no one is an Abu Jahli or Abu Lahabi. History has proved that not the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) but his enemies were, and are, abtar.

109. Surah Al Kafirun (The Disbelievers)

Name

The Surah takes its name from the word al-kafirun occurring in the first verse.

Period of Revelation

Hadrat Abdullah bin Mas'ud, Hadrat Hasan Basri and Ikrimah, say that this Surah, is Makki, while Hadrat Abdullah bin Zubair says that it is Madani. Two different views have been reported from Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas and Qatadah, first that it is Makki, and second that it is Madani. However, according to the majority of commentators, it is a Makki Surah, and the subject matter itself points to its being a Makki revelation.

Historical Background

There was a time in Makkah when although a storm of opposition had arisen in the pagan society of Quraish against the message of Islam preached by the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace), yet the Quraish chiefs hall not yet lost hope that they would reach some sort of a compromise with him. Therefore, from time to time they would visit him with different proposals of compromise so that he accepted one of them and the dispute between them was brought to an end. In this connection, different traditions have been related in the Hadith.

According to Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas, the Quraish proposed to the Holy Prophet; "We shall give you so much of wealth that you will become the richest man of Makkah. We shall give you whichever woman you like in marriage. We are prepared to follow and obey you as our leader, only on the condition that you will not speak ill of our gods. If you do not agree to this, we present another proposal which is to your as well as to our advantage."

When the Holy Prophet asked what it was, they said that if he would worship their gods, Lat and Uzza, for a year, they would worship his God for the same space of time. The Holy Prophet said: "Wait awhile; let me see what my Lord commands in this regard."

Thereupon the revelation came down: Qul ya-ayyuhal- kafirun... and: Qul afa-ghair Allahi... (Az-Zumar: 64): "Say to them: ignorant people, do you bid me to worship others than Allah?" (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Tabarani). According to another tradition from Ibn Abbas, the Quraish said to the Holy Prophet: "O Muhammad, if you kiss our gods, the idols, we shall worship your God. Thereupon, this Surah was sent down. (Abd bin Humaid).

Said bin Mina (the freed slave of Abul Bakhtari) has related that Walid bin Mughirah, As bin Wail, Aswad bin al-Muttalib and Umayyah bin Khalaf met the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) and said to him: "O Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings), let us agree that we would worship your God and you would worship our gods, and we would make you a partner in all our works. If what you have brought was better than what we possess, we would be partners in it with you, and have our share in it, and if what we possess is better than what you have brought, you would be partner in it with us and have your share of it." At this Allah sent down: Qul ya-ayyuhal-kafirun (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Hisham also has related this incident in the Sirah).

Wahb bin Munabbih has related that the people of Quraish said to Allah's' Messenger: "If you like we would enter your faith for a year and you would enter our faith for a year."(Abd bin Humaid, Ibn Abi Hatim).

These traditions show that the Quraish had proposed such things to the Holy Prophet not once, in one sitting, but at different times and on different occasions; and there was need that they should be given a definite, decisive reply so that their hope that he would come to terms with them on the principle of "give and take" was frustrated for ever.

Theme and Subject Matter

If the Surah is read with this background in mind, one finds that it was not revealed to preach religious tolerance as some people of today seem to think, but it was revealed in order to exonerate the Muslims from the disbelievers religion, their rites of worship, and their gods, and to express their total disgust and unconcern with them and to tell them that Islam and kufr (unbelief) had nothing in common and there was no possibility of their being combined and mixed into one entity. Although it was addressed in the beginning to the disbelieving Quraish in response to their proposals of compromise, yet it is not confined to them only, but having made it a part of the Quran, Allah gave the Muslims the eternal teaching that they should exonerate themselves by word and deed from the creed of kufr wherever and in whatever form it be, and should declare without any reservation that they cannot make any compromise with the disbelievers in the matter of Faith. That is why this Surah continued to be recited when the people to whom it was addressed as a rejoinder, had died and been forgotten, and those Muslims also continued to recite it who were disbelievers at the time it was revealed, and the Muslims still recite it centuries after they have passed away, for expression of disgust with and dissociation from kufr and its rites is a perpetual demand of Faith.

As for the esteem in which the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) held this Surah, it can be judged from the following few ahadith:

Hadrat Abdullah bin Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) has related that on many an occasion he heard the Holy Prophet recite Surahs Qul Ya- ayyuhal- kafirun and Qul Huwu-Allahu ahad in the two rakahs before the Fajr obligatory Prayer and in the two rakahs after the Maghrib obligatory Prayer. Several traditions on this subject with a little variation in wording have been related by Imam Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Nasai, Ibn Majah, Ibn Hibban, Ibn Marduyah from Ibn Umar.

Hadrat Khabbab says: "The Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) said to me: when you lie down in bed to sleep, recite Qul ya-ayyuhal kafirun, and this was the Holy Prophet's own practice also; when he lay down to sleep, he recited this Surah." (Bazzar, Tabarani, Ibn Marduyah).

According to Ibn Abbas, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) said to the people: "Should I tell you the word which will protect you from polytheism? It is that you should recite Qul ya-ayyuhal kafirun when you go to bed."(Abu Ya'la, Tabarani).

Hadrat Anas says that the Holy Prophet said to Hadrat Mu'adh bin Jabal; "Recite Qul ya-ayyuhal-kafirun at the time you go to bed, for this is immunity from polytheism." (Baihaqi in Ash-Shu'ab).

Both Fardah bin Naufal and Abdur Rahman bin Naufal have stated that their father, Naufal bin Muawiyah al-Ashjai, said to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace): "Teach me something which I may recite at the time I go to bed." The Holy Prophet replied: "Recite Qul ya-ayyuhal kafirun to the end and then sleep, for this is immunity from polytheism." (Musnad Ahmad, Aba Da'ud, Tirmidhi, Nasai, Ibn Abi Shaibah, Hakim, Ibn Marduyah, Baihaqi in Ash-Shuab). A similar request was made by Hadrat Jabalah bin Harithah, brother of Hadrat Said bin Harithah, to the Holy Prophet and to him also he gave the same reply. (Musnad Ahmad, Tabarani).

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

قُلۡ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الۡكٰفِرُوۡنَ ۙ 1

(109:1) Say: "O unbelievers!"[1]

1. A few points in this verse are particularly noteworthy:

(1) Although the Prophet (peace be upon him) has been commanded to tell this to the disbelievers plainly, the theme that follows makes it explicit that every believer should tell the disbelievers plainly what has been said in the following verses; so much so that the person who has just believed and repented of kufr is also bound to express similarly his disgust with and disapproval of the creed and rites of worship and gods of kufr. Thus, though the first addressee of the word qul (say) is the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself, the command is not restricted to him alone but it reaches every believer through him.

(2) The word kafir is no abuse, which might have been used for the addressees of this verse, but it implies the one who refuses to believe or is an unbeliever. As against it the word mumin is used for the believer. Therefore, the Prophet's (peace be upon him) saying, by Allah's command, O disbelievers... in fact, means: O you, who have refused to believe in my apostleship and in the teachings brought by me. Likewise, when a believer uses this word, it will imply those who do not believe in the Prophet Muhmmad (peace be upon him).

(3) The word used is O kafirs and not O mushriks; therefore, the addressees are not only the mushriks but all those people who do not acknowledge Muhammad (peace be upon him) as Allah's Messenger and the teachings and guidance brought by him as the teaching and guidance given by Allah Himself, whether they be Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians or the disbelievers, polytheists and pagans of the entire world. There is no reason why this address be restricted to the pagans of Quraish or of Arabia only.

(4) To address the deniers with the word O kafirs is just like addressing certain people as O enemies, or O opponents. Such an address is not, in fact, directed to the person of the addressee but it is made on the basis of their characteristic of enmity and opposition, and lasts only until they are so characterized. If one of them gives up enmity and opposition, or

turns a friend and supporter, he no longer remains the addressee of this word. Likewise, the address of O kafirs to the people also is in view of their characteristic of kufr and not their person. This address would be perpetual for him who continues to be a kafir till death, but the one who believes will no longer be its addressee.

(5) Many scholars from among the commentators have expressed the opinion that in this Surah the address of O disbelievers applied only to a few persons of Quraish, who were visiting the Prophet (peace be upon him) with proposals of compromise regarding religion and about whom Allah had informed His Messenger (peace be upon him) that they would not believe. They have formed this opinion for two reasons. First, that it is followed by La a budu ma ta budun: I do not worship him or those whom you worship. They say that this does not apply to the Jews and Christians, for they worship Allah. Second, that this is also followed by: wala antum abiduna ma aabud: Nor are you worshippers of Him Whom I worship. Their reasoning is that this statement does not apply to the people who at the revelation of this Surah were disbelievers but later believed. Both these arguments are incorrect. As for these verses, their explanation that follows will show that they do not bear the meaning which has been understood from them. Here, to point out the error of the reasoning it would be enough to say that if the addressees of this Surah were only these people, why then does this Surah still continue to be recited when they are dead and gone from the world long long ago? And what was the need of making this Surah a part of the Quran permanently so that the Muslims should continue to read it for ever afterwards?

لَآ أَعۡبُدُ مَا تَعۡبُدُونَ ٢

(109:2) I do not worship those that you worship[2]

2. This includes all those deities whom the disbelievers and the polytheists have been, and are still, worshipping everywhere in the world, whether they are the angels, the jinn, prophets, saints, spirits of the living or dead men, or the sun, the moon, stars, animals, trees, rivers, idols and imaginary gods and goddesses. One may say that the pagans of Arabia also acknowledged Allah as a deity and the other pagans of the world also have never disacknowledged Allah as a deity till today. As for the followers of the earlier scriptures, they also acknowledge Allah alone as the real deity. How then can it be correct to exonerate oneself from the worship of all the deities of all those people, without exception, when Allah too is included among them?

The answer is that if Allah is worshipped along with others regarding Him as a deity among other deities, the believer in Tauhid will inevitably express his immunity from this worship, for in his sight Allah is not a deity out of a collection of deities, but He alone is the real deity, and the worship of the collection of deities is no worship of Allah, although worship of Allah is also included in it. The Quran has clearly stated that Allah's worship is only that which does not have any tinge of the worship of another and in which man makes his worship exclusively Allah's. And the only command they were given, was to worship Allah, making their religion sincerely His, turning all their attention towards Him. (Surah Al-Bayyinah, Ayat 5).

This subject has been explained at many places in the Quran forcefully; for example, see (Surah An-Nisa, Ayats 145-146); (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 29); (Surah Az-Zumar, Ayats 2, 3, 11, 14, 15); (Surah Al-Mumin, Ayat 14, 64-66). It has been further explained in a Hadith Qudsi (i.e. divine word revealed through the mouth of the Prophet) in which the messenger of Allah says: Allah says, I am Self-Sufficient of the association of every associate most of all. Whoever performed an act in which he also associated another with Me, I am free of it, and the entire act is for him who was associated. (Muslim, Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Majah). Thus, acknowledging Allah as one of the two, three or many gods and serving and worshipping others along with Him is, in fact, the real kufr, declaration of immunity from which is the object of this Surah.

وَلَآ أَنتُمۡ عَٰبِدُونَ مَآ أَعۡبُدُ ۚ 3

(109:3) neither do you worship Him Whom I worship;[3]

3. The words used are: ma abudu. The word ma in Arabic, is generally used for lifeless or unintelligent things, and the word mun for intelligent and rational beings. The question arises why has ma abudu been used here instead of man abudu? The commentators generally give four answers to it:

(1) That ma here is in the meaning of mun.

(2) That ma here is in the meaning of alladhi (i.e. which or who).

(3) That in both the sentences ma is in the meaning of a noun of action (masdar) and it means: I do not perform the kind of worship that you perform, i.e. polytheistic worship, and you do not perform the kind of worship that I perform, i.e. worship of One God.

(4) That since in the first sentence ma tabuduna has been used, in the second ma abudu has been used to keep the style; in both places there is only the uniformity of the word, there is no uniformity of meaning; instances of this are found elsewhere also in the Quran. For example, in (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 194), it has been said: Therefore, if anyone transgresses a prohibition by attacking you, you may do likewise. Obviously, to transgress likewise in retaliation is no transgression, but the word transgression (in retaliation) has been used only for the sake of uniformity in style. In (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 67), it has been said: They forgot Allah, so Allah forgot them. Whereas Allah does not forget. What is meant to be said is that Allah ignored them. The word nisyan in respect of Allah has been used corresponding to their nisyan (forgetfulness) only to keep the uniformity of the study.

Although all these four interpretations are correct in their own way, and there is room in Arabic to take all these meanings, yet none of these explains the real object for which ma abudu has been used instead of mun abudu. As a matter of fact, when mun is used for a person in Arabic, it is meant to say or ask something about his person, and when ma is used, it is meant to ask or express something about his characteristics and traits. This can be explained in English by the questions: who is he, and what is he, about a person. When it is asked, who is he, the object is to know something about his person. But when it is asked, what is he, the object is to know whether, for example, he belongs to the army, and if so,

what is his rank, or whether he belongs to some teaching organization, and if so, whether he is a lecturer in it, or a reader, or a professor, what science or art subject he teaches, what are his qualifications, etc.

Thus, if in this verse, it was said: La antum abiduna mun abud, it would mean: You are not worshippers of the being whom I worship, and in response, the disbelievers and the polytheists could have said that they too believed in the Being of Allah and also worshipped Him. But when it was said: La antum abiduna ma abud, it meant: You are not worshippers of the deity who has the attributes of the deity whom I worship.

And this is the real point on the basis of which the religion of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is absolutely distinguished from the religions of all kinds of disbelievers, besides the deniers of God, for his God is utterly different from the God of all of them. The God of some of them is such that He stood in need of rest on the seventh day after having created the world in six days, Who is not God of the universe but God of Israel, Who stands in a special relationship to the people of one particular race, which is not shared by other men, Who wrestles with the Prophet Jacob and cannot throw him, Who has also a son, named Ezra. The God of some others is father of an only son, called Jesus Christ, and He causes His son to be crucified in order to make him an atonement for the sins of others. The God of some has wife and children, but begets only daughters. The God of some assumes human form and shape and living in a human body on the earth works like men. The God of some is merely an Essence, or Cause of causes, or the First Cause, Who after giving the system of the universe the initial push is sitting aside unconcerned, the universe is working by itself according to some relentless laws, and now He and man have nothing to do with each other. In short, even the unbelievers who acknowledge God do not, in fact, acknowledge the God, Who is the Creator, Master, Disposer, Administrator and Ruler of the entire universe, Who has not only set the system of the universe but is running and controlling it by Himself every moment, Who is above every defect, fault, weakness and error, Who is free from every similitude, every physical limitation, every likeness, Who is Self- Sufficient of every companion and associate, Who has no partner in His Being, attributes, powers and entitlement to worship, Who is far too Holy that He should have children, or should take some one for a son, or should have an exclusive relationship with a community or race, Who is directly related to each individual creature of His as its Providence, Sustainer and Guardian, Who hears the prayers and answers them, Who alone possesses all the powers to give life and death, to cause profit and loss, and to make and mar destinies, Who not only sustains His creatures but also guides each according to its nature and need, Who is not only our God Whom we worship but also enjoins commands and prohibitions through His Prophets and His Books, which we have to obey, before Whom we are accountable for our deeds, Who will resurrect us after death, call us to account and reward and punish us accordingly. No one in the world except for Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his followers are worshipping the God with these attributes. If at all some others also are worshipping God, they are not worshipping the real and true God but the God who is their self-invented, imaginary God.

وَلَآ أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدتُّمْ ۙ 4

(109:4) nor will I worship those whom you have worshipped;

وَلَآ أَنتُمْ عَٰبِدُونَ مَآ أَعْبُدُ ۝5

(109:5) nor are you going to worship Him Whom I worship.[4]

4. A section of the commentators is of the view that both these sentences are a repetition of the theme of the first two sentences and the repetition is meant to strengthen the statement in the first two sentences. But many commentators do not regard it as a repetition. They say that a new theme has been expressed in these which is different from the theme of the first two sentences. In our opinion they are correct in so far as there is no repetition in these sentences, for in these only "nor are you worshippers of Him Whom I worship" has been repeated, and this repetition also is not in the sense in which this sentence was used first. But after negating the repetition the meanings that this section of the commentators has given of these two sentences are very different from each other. There is no occasion here to take up and discuss each of the meanings given by the commentators. Avoiding details we shall only discuss the meaning which is correct in our opinion.

In the first sentence, it has been said: "Nor am I a worshipper of those whom you have worshipped." Its theme is absolutely different from the theme of verse 2, in which it was said: "I do not worship those whom you warship," These two things widely differ in two aspects. First, that although there is denial, and a forceful denial, in saying that "I do not, or shall not, do such and such a thing," yet there is much greater force in saying that "I am not a doer of such and such a thing," for it means: "It is such an evil thing that nothing to say of committing it; it is not possible that I would even think of it, or have intention of doing it." Second, that the sentence "whom you worship" applies to only those gods whom the disbelievers are worshipping now. On the contrary, the sentence "whom you have worshipped" applies to all those gods whom the disbelievers and their forefathers have been worshipping in the past. Now, it is a well known fact that the gods of the polytheists and disbelievers have always been changing and their number increasing and decreasing. In different ages different groups of them have been worshipping different gods, and the gods of all the disbelievers have never always been the same everywhere. Therefore, the verse means: I exonerate myself not only from your gods of today but also from the gods of your forefathers, and I am not a person who would even think of worshipping such gods.

As for the second sentence, although its words in verse 5 are the same as in verse 3, yet its meaning at the two places is different. In verse 3, it follows this sentence: "I do not worship those whom you worship." Therefore, it means: "Nor are you worshippers of the God having the attributes of the One God Whom I worship." And in verse 5, it follows this sentence: "Nor am I a worshipper of those whom you have worshipped." Therefore, it means: "Nor does it seem you would become worshippers of the One God Whom I worship." Or, in other words, "It is not possible that 1 should become a worshipper of each of those gods whom you and your forefathers have worshipped, and on account of your aversion to adopting worship of One God, instead of many gods, it cannot be expected that you would desist from this wrong worship and will become worshipper of Him Whom I worship.

لَكُمْ دِيْنُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِيْنِ ۧ 6

(109:6) To you is your religion, and to me, my religion.[5]

5. That is, my religion is entirely distinct and separate from your religion. I am not a worshipper of your gods and you are not worshippers of my God. I cannot worship your gods and you are not prepared to worship my God, Therefore, you and I can never follow and walk one and the same path together. This is not a message of tolerance to the disbelievers, but a declaration of immunity, disgust with and dissociation from them as long as they are disbelievers. Its object is to disappoint them absolutely and finally that in the matter of religion the party of Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) and his followers would ever come to terms with them. This same declaration of immunity and expression of disgust has been made in the Makki Surahs revealed after this Surah successively.

Thus, in Surah Younus, it was said: If these people deny you, say to them: 1 am responsible for my deeds and you are responsible for yours: you are not accountable for what I do, and I am not accountable for what you do. (verse 41). Then further on in the same Surah it was said: O Prophet, say: O mankind, if you are still in doubt concerning my faith, know that I do not worship those whom you worship beside Allah, but I worship that Allah alone, Who has the power to cause your death. (verse 104).

In Surah Ash-Shuara it was said: If they disobey you, tell them: I am not responsible for what you do. (verse 216).

In Surah Saba it was said: Say to them: you will not be questioned for the errors we have committed, nor shall we be answerable for what you are doing. Say, our Lord will gather us together, then He will judge between us rightly. (verses 25-26).

In Surah az-Zumar: Tell them plainly: O my people, do whatever you will, so shall I. Soon you shall come to know as to whom comes the disgraceful torment and who gets the enduring punishment. (verses 39- 40).

Then the same lesson was taught in Al-Madinah to all the Muslims: There is indeed an excellent example for you in Abraham and his companions when they said to their people plainly: We have nothing to do with you and your gods, whom you worship beside God; we have renounced you and there has arisen between us and you enmity and hatred for ever, until you believe in Allah, the One. (Surah Al-Mumtahinah, Ayat 4).

These continuous explanations of the Quran do not leave any room whatever for the doubt that the verse Lakum dinu kum wa liya din does not mean: You may go on following your religion and allow me to follow mine, but it is the kind of declaration made in Surah Az-Zumar, Ayat 14: O Prophet, say to them: I shall serve Allah alone, making my religion sincerely His. As for you, you may serve whomever you please beside Him. (verse 14).

From this verse lmam Abu Hanifah and Imam Shafei have deduced that kufr (unbelief), as a whole, is one community, however discordant and different from each other be the religions of the unbelievers; therefore, a Jew can inherit a Christian, and a Christian a Jew, and likewise the unbeliever of one religion can inherit the unbeliever of another religion, if there

exists between them a relationship by descent or marriage, or some other connection, which necessitates the passage of inheritance of one to another. On the contrary, Imam Malik, Imam Auzai and Imam Ahmad hold the view that the followers of one religion cannot inherit the followers of another religion. They deduce this from the Hadith which has been related on the authority of Hadrat Abdullah bin Amr bin alAas, saying that Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said: The people of two different communities cannot inherit each other. (Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud, Ibn Majah, Daraqutni).

A Hadith with almost the same content has been related by Tirmidhi from Jabir, by Ibn Hibban from Abdullah bin Umar, and by Bazzar from Abu Hurairah. Dealing with this legal problem comprehensively, the well known Hanafi Imam; Shamsul-Aimmah Sarakhsi, writes: The unbelievers can inherit each other mutually for all those reasons for which the Muslims inherit each other mutually, and they can also inherit each other in certain other cases in which the Muslims do not inherit each other. The fact is that Allah recognizes only two ways of life, the religion of truth and the religion of falsehood; that is why He has declared: Lakum dinu-kum wa liya din. And He has classified the people also into two groups, one group will go to Paradise and this consists of the believers, and the second group will go to Hell and this consists of the disbelievers collectively. And He has declared the two groups only as the potential opponents of each other: These are the two parties who have disputed about their Lord. (Surah Al-Hajj, Ayat 19).

That is, one group comprises all the disbelievers collectively and they are opposed to the believers. We do not admit that they are separate and distinct communities according to their beliefs, but as against the Muslims they all form one community. For the Muslims affirm faith in the apostleship of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and in the Quran and they (disbelievers) refuse to affirm faith. For this very reason they have been declared to be unbelievers and are one community as opposed to the Muslims. The Hadith, La yata-warith ahl millatain, points to the same thing as explained above. For the Prophet (peace be upon him) has explained the word millatain (two communities) by his saying: La yarithul Muslim al-kafir wa lal-kafir al-Muslim: The Muslim cannot inherit the disbeliever, nor the disbeliever can inherit the Muslim. (AlMabsut vol. 30, pp. 30-32). The Hadith cited here by Imam Sarakhsi has been related by Bukhari, Muslim, Nasai, Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and Abu Daud on the authority of Usamah bin Zaid.

110. Surah An Nasr (The Help)

Name

The Surah takes its name from the word nasr occurring in the first verse.

Period of Revelation

Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas states that this is the last Surah of the Quran to be revealed, i. e. no complete Surah was sent down to the Holy Prophet after it. (Muslim Nasai, Tabarani, Ibn Abi Shaibah, Ibn Marduyah).

According to Hadrat Abdullah bin Umar, this Surah was sent down on the occasion of the Farewell Pilgrimage in the middle of the Tashriq Days at Mina, and after it the Holy Prophet rode his she camel and gave his well known Sermon. (Tirmidhi, Bazzar, Baihaqi, Ibn Abi Shaibah, Abd bin Humaid, Abn Yala, Ibn Marduyah). Baihaqi in Kitab al- Hajj has related from the tradition of Hadrat Sarra bint-Nabhan the Sermon which the Holy Prophet gave on this occasion. She says:

"At the Farewell Pilgrimage I heard the Holy Prophet say: O people, do you know what day it is? They said: Allah and His Messenger have the best knowledge. He said: This is the middle day of the Tashriq Days. Then he said: Do you know what place it is? They said: Allah and His Messenger have the best knowledge. He said: This is Masharil-Haram. Then he said: I do not know, I might not meet you here again. Beware, your bloods and your honors are forbidden, until you appear before your Lord, and He questions you about your deeds. Listen: let the one who is near convey it to him who is far away. Listen: have I conveyed the message to you? Then, when we returned to Madinah, the Holy Prophet passed away not many days after that."

If both these traditions are read together, it appears that there was an interval of three months and some days between the revelation of Surah An-Nasr and the Holy Prophet's death, for historically the same was the interval between the Farewell Pilgrimage and the passing away of the Holy Prophet.

Ibn Abbas says that when this Surah was revealed, the Holy Prophet said that he had been informed of his death and his time had approached. (Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Jarir, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Marduyah). In the other traditions related from Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas, it has been stated that at the revelation of this Surah the Holy Prophet understood that he had been informed of his departure from the world.(Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Jarir, Tabarani, Nasai, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Marduyah).

Mother of the Believers, Hadrat Umm Habibah, says that when this Surah was revealed the Holy Prophet said that he would leave the world that year. Hearing this Hadrat Fatimah wept. Thereat he said: "From among my family you will be the first to join me." Hearing this she laughed.(Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Marduyah). A tradition containing almost the same theme has been related by Baihaqi from Ibn Abbas.

Ibn Abbas says: "Hadrat Umar used to invite me to sit in his assembly along with some of the important elderly Companions who had fought at Badr. This was not liked by some of

them. They complained that they also had sons who were like the boy. Why then was he in particular invited to sit in the assembly? (Imam Bukhari and Ibn Jarir have pointed out that such a thing was said by Hadrat Abdur Rahman bin Auf).

Hadrat Umar said that the boy enjoyed the position and distinction because of his knowledge. Then one day he invited the Companions of Badr and called me also to sit with them. I understood that he had invited me to the assembly to prove his contention. During the conversation Hadrat Umar asked the Companions of Badr: "What do you say about Idha jaa nasrullahi wal- fath?" Some said: "In it we have been enjoined to praise Allah and ask for His forgiveness when His succor comes and we attain victory." Some others said that it implied the conquest of cities and forts. Some kept quiet. Then Hadrat Umar said: "Ibn Abbas, do you also say the same?"I said no. He asked: "What then is your view?"I submitted that it implied the last hour of Allah's Messenger (upon whom be peace); in it he was informed that when Allah's succor came and victory was attained, it would be a sign that his hour had come; therefore, he should praise Allah and ask for His forgiveness. Thereat Hadrat Umar said "I know naught but what you have said."

In another tradition there is the addition that, Hadrat Umar said to the Companions: "How can you blame me when you yourselves have seen why I invite this boy to join the assembly?" (Bukhari, Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Marduyah, Baghawi, Baihaqi, Ibn al-Mundhir).

Theme and Subject Matter

As is shown by the above traditions, Allah in this Surah had informed His Messenger (upon whom be peace) that when Islam attained complete victory in Arabia and the people started entering Allah's religion in great numbers, it would mean that the mission for which he had been sent to the world, had been fulfilled. Then, he was enjoined to busy himself in praising and glorifying Allah by Whose bounty he had been able to accomplish such a great task, and should implore Him to forgive whatever failings and frailties he might have shown in the performance of the service. Here, by a little consideration one can easily see the great difference that there is between a Prophet and a common worldly leader. If a worldly leader in his own lifetime is able to bring about a revolution, which has the aim and objective of his struggle, this would be an occasion for exultation for him. But here we witness quite another phenomenon. The Messenger of Allah in a brief space of 23 years revolutionized an entire nation as regards its beliefs, thoughts, customs, morals, civilization, ways of living, economy, politics and fighting ability, and raising it from ignorance and barbarism enabled it to conquer the world and become leader of nations; yet when he had accomplished this unique task, he was not enjoined to celebrate it but to glorify and praise Allah and to pray for His forgiveness, and he busied himself humbly the implementation of that command.

Hadrat Aishah says: "The Holy Messenger (upon whom be peace) often used to recite Subhanak-Allahumma wa bi-hamdika astaghfiruka wa atubu ilaika (according to some other traditions, Subhan Allahi wa bi hamdi-hi as- taghfirullaha wa atubu ilaihi) before his death. I asked: O Messenger of Allah, what are these words that you have started reciting now? He replied: A sign has been appointed for me so that when I see it, I should recite these words, and it is: Idha jaa nasrullahi wal-fathu." (Musnad Ahmad, Muslim, Ibn Jarir, lbn al-Mundhir, Ibn Marduyah).

In some other traditions on the same subject Hadrat Aishah has reported that the Holy Prophet often recited the following words in his ruku and sajdah: Subhanak-Allahumma wa-bi hamdika, Allahumma- aghfirli. This was the interpretation of the Quran (i. e. of Surah An-Nasr) that he had made.(Bukhari, Muslim Abu Daud, Nasai, Ibn Majah, Ibn Jarir).

Hadrat Umm Salamah says that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) during his last days very often recited the following words sitting and standing, going out of the house and coming back to it: Subhan Allahi wa-bi hamdi-hi. I one day asked: "Why do you recite these words so often? O Messenger of Allah". He replied: I have been enjoined to do so. Then he recited this Surah." (Ibn Jarir).

According to Hadrat Abdullah bin Masud, when this Surah was revealed, the Messenger of Allah (upon whom be peace) frequently began to recite the words Subhanak-Allahumma wa bi-hamdika, Allahumm-aghfirli, subhanaka Rabbana wa bi-hamdika, Allahumm-aghfirli, innaka anta at- Tawwab al-Ghafur.(Ibn Jarir, Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Abi Hatim).

Ibn Abbas has stated that after the revelation of this Surah the Holy Messenger (upon whom be peace) began to labor so intensively and devotedly hard for the Hereafter as he had never done before.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

اِذَا جَآءَ نَصۡرُ اللّٰهِ وَالۡفَتۡحُ ۙ 1

(110:1) When the help comes from Allah, and victory (is granted),[1]

1. Victory here does not imply victory in any one particular campaign but the decisive victory after which there remained no power in the land to resist and oppose Islam, and it became evident that Islam alone would hold sway in Arabia. Some commentators have taken this to imply the conquest of Makkah. But the conquest of Makkah took place in A.H. 8, and this Surah was revealed towards the end of A.H. 10, as is shown by the traditions related on the authority of Abdullah bin Umar and Sarra bint Nabhan, which we have cited in the Introduction. Besides, the statement of Abdullah bin Abbas that this is the last Surah of the Quran to be revealed also goes against this commentary. For if the victory implied the conquest of Makkah, the whole of Surah at-Taubah was revealed after it then it could not be the last Surah. There is no doubt that the conquest of Makkah was decisive in that it broke the power of the Arabian pagans, yet even after this, they showed clear signs of resistance. The battles of Taaif and Hunain were fought after it, and it took Islam about two years to attain complete control over Arabia.

وَرَاَيۡتَ النَّاسَ يَدۡخُلُوۡنَ فِىۡ دِيۡنِ اللّٰهِ اَفۡوَاجًا ۙ 2

(110:2) and you see people entering Allah's religion in multitudes,[2]

2. "And you see... in multitudes": When the time for the people to enter Islam in ones and twos comes to an end, and when whole tribes and people belonging to large tracts start

entering it in crowds of their own free will and without offering battle or resistance. This happened from the beginning of A.H. 9, because of which that year has been described as the year of deputations. Deputations from every part of Arabia started coming before the Messenger (peace be upon him), entering Islam and taking the oath of allegiance to him, until when he went for the farewell pilgrimage to Makkah, in A.H. 10, the whole of Arabia had become Muslim, and not a single polytheist remained anywhere in the country.

فَسَبِّحۡ بِحَمۡدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسۡتَغۡفِرۡهُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ تَوَّابًا ۧ 3

(110:3) then extol the praise[3] of your Lord and pray to Him for forgiveness.[4] For He indeed is ever disposed to accept repentance.

3. Hamd implies praising and hallowing Allah Almighty as well as thanking and paying obeisance to Him; tasbih means to regard Allah as pure and free from every blemish and weakness. The Holy Prophet was enjoined to do hamd and tasbih of Allah when he witnessed this manifestation of His power. Here, hamd means that in respect of his great success he should never entertain even a tinge of the idea that it was the result of any excellence of his own, but he should attribute it to Allah's favor and mercy, thank Him alone for it, and acknowledge with the heart and tongue that praise and gratitude for the victory and success belonged to Him alone. And tasbih means that he should regard Allah as pure and free from the limitation that exaltation of His word stood in need of his effort and endeavor, or was dependent on it. On the contrary, his heart should be filled with the faith that the success of his effort and struggle was dependent upon Allah's support and succor. He could take this service from any of His servants He pleased. And this was His favor that He had taken this service from him, and made His religion meet success through him. Besides, there is an aspect of wonder also in pronouncing the tasbih, i.e. Subhan Allah. When a wonderful incident takes place, one exclaims subhan Allah, thereby implying that only by Allah's power such a wonderful thing had happened; otherwise no power of the world could have caused it to happen.

4. "Pray for His forgiveness": Pray to your Lord to overlook; and pardon whatever error or weakness you might have shown inadvertently in the performance of the service that He had entrusted to you. This is the etiquette that Islam has taught to man. A man might have performed the highest possible service to Allah's religion, might have offered countless sacrifices in its cause, and might have exerted himself extremely hard in carrying out the rites of His worship, yet he should never entertain the thought that he has fulfilled the right his Lord had on him wholly. Rather he should always think that he has not been able to fulfill what was required of him, and he should implore Allah, saying: Lord, overlook and forgive whatever weakness I might have shown in rendering Your right, and accept the little service that I have been able to perform. When such an etiquette was taught to the Messenger (peace be upon him), none in the world conceivably has toiled and struggled so hard in the cause of Allah as he did, how can another person regard his work as superb and be involved in the misunderstanding that he has fulfilled the right Allah had imposed on him. Allah's right, in fact, is so supreme that no creature can ever fulfill and render it truly and fully.

Allah in this command has taught Muslims an eternal lesson: Do not regard any of your worship, devotion or religious service as something superb; even if you have spent your entire life in the cause of Allah, you should always think that you could not do all that was required of you by your Lord. Likewise, when you attain some victory, you should not regard it as a result of some excellence in yourselves but as a result of only Allah's bounty and favor. Then bowing humbly before your Lord, you should praise and glorify Him, and should repent and beg for His forgiveness instead of boasting and bragging of your success and victory.

111. Surah Al-Masad (The Flame)

Period of Revelation

Although the commentators have not disputed its being a Makki Surah, yet it is difficult to determine in which phase of the life at Makkah precisely it was revealed. However, in view of Abu Lahab's role and conduct against the Holy Prophet's message of Truth, it can be assumed that it must have been revealed in the period when he had transgressed all limits in his mad hostility to him, and his attitude was becoming a serious obstruction in the progress of Islam. It may well have been revealed in the period when the Quraish had boycotted the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) together with the people of his clan and besieged them in Shi'b Abi Talib, and Abu Lahab was the only person to join with the enemies against his own relatives. The basis of this assumption is that Abu Lahab was the Holy Prophet's uncle, and public condemnation of the uncle by the tongue of the nephew could not be proper until the extreme excesses committed by the uncle had become visible to everyone. If the Surah had been revealed before this, in the very beginning, the people would have regarded it as morally discourteous that the nephew should so condemn the uncle.

Background

This is the only place in the Quran where a person from among the enemies of Islam has been condemned by name, whereas in Makkah as well as in Madinah, after the migration, there were many people who were in no way less inimical to Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) than Abu Lahab. The question is, what was the special trait of the character of this person, which became the basis of this condemnation by name? To understand that it is necessary that one should understand the Arabian society of that time and the role that Abu Lahab played in it.

In ancient days since there prevailed chaos and confusion, bloodshed and plunder throughout Arabia, and the condition for centuries was that a person could have no guarantee of the protection of life, honor and property except with the help and support of his clansmen and blood relations, therefore silah rehmi (good treatment of the kindred) was esteemed most highly among the moral values of the Arabian society and breaking off of connections with the kindred was regarded as a great sin. Under, the influence of the same Arabian tradition when the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) began to preach the message of Islam, the other clans of Quraish and their chiefs resisted and opposed him tooth and nail, but the Bani Hashim and the Bani al-Muttalib (children of al-Muttalib, brother of Hashim) not only did not oppose him but continued to support him openly, although most of them had not yet believed in his Prophethood. The other clans of Quraish themselves regarded this support by the blood relations of the Holy Prophet as perfectly in accordance with the moral traditions of Arabia. That is why they never taunted the Bani Hashim and the Bani al-Muttalib in that they had abandoned their ancestral faith by supporting a person who was preaching a new faith. They knew and believed that they could in no case hand over an individual of their clan to his enemies, and their support and aid of a clansman was perfectly natural in the sight of the Quraish and the people of Arabia.

This moral principle, which the Arabs even in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance, regarded as worthy of respect and inviolable was broken only by one man in his enmity of Islam, and that was Abu Lahab, son of Abdul Muttalib. He was an uncle of the Holy Prophet, whose father and he were sons of the same father. In Arabia, an uncle represented the father especially when the nephew was fatherless. The uncle was expected to look after the nephew as one of his own children. But this man in his hostility to Islam and love of kufr trampled all the Arab traditions under foot.

The traditionists have related from Ibn Abbas with several chains of transmitters the tradition that when the Holy Prophet was commanded to present the message of Islam openly, and he was instructed in the Quran to warn first of all his nearest kinsfolk of the punishment of God, he ascended the Mount, Safa one morning and called out aloud: Ya sabahah (O, the calamity of the morning!). This alarm in Arabia was raised by the person who noticed early at dawn an enemy tribe advancing against his tribe. When the Holy Messenger made this call, the people inquired as to who had made the call. They were told that it was Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace). There the people of all the clans of Quraish rushed out. Everyone who could, came. He who could not, sent another one for himself. When the People had assembled, the Holy Messenger calling out each clan by name, viz. O Bani Hashim, O Bani Abdul Muttalib, O Bani Fihr, O Bani so and so, said: "If I were to tell you that behind the hill there was an enemy host ready to fall upon you, would you believe me?" The people responded with one voice, saying that they never had so far experienced a lie from him. The Holy Prophet said: "Then I warn you that you are heading for a torment." Thereupon, before anyone else could speak, Abu Lahab, the Holy Prophet's uncle, said: "May you perish! Did you summon us for this?" Another tradition adds that he picked up a stone to throw at the Holy Prophet. (Musnad Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ibn Jarir, and others).

According to Ibn Zaid, one day Abu Lahab asked the Holy Prophet: "If I were to accept your religion, what would I get?" The Holy Prophet replied: "You would get what the other believers would get." He said: "Is there no preference or distinction for me?" The Holy Prophet replied: "What else do you want?" Thereupon he said: "May this religion perish in which I and all other people should be equal and alike!" (Ibn Jarir).

In Makkah Abu Lahab was the next door neighbor of the Holy Prophet. Their houses were separated by a wall. Besides him, Hakam bin As (Father of Marwan), Uqbah bin Abi Muait, Adi bin Hamra and Ibn al-Asda il-Hudhali also were his neighbors. These people did not allow him to have peace even in his own house. Sometimes when he was performing the Prayer, they would place the goat's stomach on him; sometimes when food was being cooked in the courtyard, they would throw filth at the cooking pot. The Holy Prophet would come out and say: "O Bani Abdi Manaf, what kind of neighborliness is it?" Abu Lahab's wife, Umm Jamil (Abu Sufyan's sister), had made it a practice to cast thorns at his door in the night so that when he or his children came out of the house at dawn, they should run thorns in the foot. (Baihaqi, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Asakir, Ibn Hisham).

Before the proclamation of Prophethood, two of the Holy Prophet's daughters were married to two of Abu Lahab's sons, Utbah and Utaibah. After his call when the Holy Prophet began to invite the people to Islam, Abu Lahab said to both his sons: "I would forbid myself seeing and meeting you until you divorced the daughters of Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's

peace and blessings)."So, both of them divorced their, wives. Utaibah in particular became so nasty in his spitefulness that one day he came before the Holy Prophet and said: "I repudiate An-najmi idha hawa and Alladhi dana fatadalla" and then he spat at him, but his spit did not fall on him. The Holy Prophet prayed: "O God, subject him to the power of a dog from among Your dogs." Afterwards, Utaibah accompanied his father in his journey to Syria. During the journey the caravan halted at a place which, according to local people, was visited by wild beasts at night. Abu Lahab told his companions, the Quraish: "Make full arrangements for the protection of my son, for I fear the curse invoked by Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) on him." Accordingly, the people made their camels sit all around Utaibah and went to sleep. At night a tiger came which crossed the circle of the camels and devoured Utaibah tearing him to pieces. (Ibn Abdul Barr: Al-Istiab; Ibn Hajar: Al- Isabah; Abu Nuaim al-Isfahani: Dalail an-Nubuwwat; As-Suhaili: Raud al-Unuf. Here there is a difference of opinion. Some reporters say that the divorce took place after the Holy Prophet's proclamation of Prophethood and some say that it took place after the revelation of Tabbat yada Abi Lahab. There is also a difference of opinion about whether Abu Lahab's this son was Utbah or Utaibah. But this much is confirmed that after the conquest of Makkah, Utbah embraced Islam and took the oath of allegiance at the Holy Prophet's hand. Therefore, the correct view is that it was Utaibah).

Abu Lahab's wickedness can be judged from the fact that when after the death of the Holy Prophet's son Hadrat Qasim, his second son, Hadrat Abdullah, also died, this man instead of joining with his nephew in his bereavement, hastened to the Quraish chiefs joyfully to give them the news that Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) had become childless that night. This we have already related in the commentary of Surah Al-Kauthar.

Wherever the Holy Prophet went to preach his message of Islam, this man followed him and forbade the people to listen to him. Rabiah bin Abbad ad- Dill has related: "I was a young boy when I accompanied my father to the face of Dhul-Majaz. There I saw the Holy Messenger (may peace be upon him) who was exhorting the people, saying: 'O people, say: there is no deity but Allah, you will attain success.' Following behind him I saw a man, who was telling the people, `This fellow is a liar: he has gone astray from his ancestral faith.' I asked; who is he? The people replied: He is his uncle, Abu Lahab." (Musnad Ahmad, Baihaqi).

Another tradition from Hadrat Rabiah is to the effect; "I saw that the Holy Prophet went to the halting place of each tribe and said: `O children of so and so, I have been appointed Allah's Messenger to you. I exhort you to worship only Allah and to associate none with Him. So, affirm faith in me and join me so that I may fulfill the mission for which I have been sent.' Following close behind him there was a man who was saying: `O children of so and so, he is leading you astray from Lat and Uzza and inviting you to the religion of error and innovation which he has brought. Do not at all listen to what he says and do not follow him.' I asked my father: who is he? He replied: he is his uncle, Abu Lahab." (Musnad Ahmad, Tabarani).

Tariq bin Abdullah al-Muharibi's tradition is similar. He says: "I saw in the fare of Dhul-Majaz that the Holy Messenger (upon whom be peace) was exhorting the people, saying: `O people, say La ilaha ill-Allah, you will attain success', and behind him there was a man who

was casting stones at him, until his heels bled, and he was telling the people: 'Do not listen to him, he is a liar.' I asked the people who he was. They said he was his uncle, Abu Lahab." (Tirmidhi).

In the 7th year of Prophethood, when all the clans of Quraish boycotted the Bani Hashim and the Bani al-Muttalib socially and economically, and both these clans remaining steadfast to the Holy Prophet's support, were besieged in Shib Abi Talib, Abu Lahab was the only person, who sided with the disbelieving Quraish against his own clan. This boycott continued for three years, so much so that the Bani Hashim and the Bani al-Muttalib began to starve. This, however, did not move Abu Lahab. When a trade caravan came to Makkah and a besieged person from Shib Abi Talib approached it to buy some article of food, Abu Lahab would shout out to the merchants to demand a forbidding price, telling them that he would make up for any loss that they incurred. Thus, they would demand exorbitant rates and the poor customer had to return empty handed to his starving children. Then Abu Lahab would purchase the same articles from them at the market rates. (Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Hisham).

On account of these very misdeeds this man was condemned in this Surah by name, and there was a special need for it. When the Holy Prophet's own uncle followed and opposed him before the Arabs who came for hajj from outside Makkah, or gathered together in the fares held at different places, they regarded it as against the established traditions of Arabia that an uncle should run down his nephew without a reason, should pelt stones at him and bring false accusations against him publicly. They were, therefore, influenced by what Abu Lahab said and were involved in doubt about the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace). But when this, Surah was revealed, and Abu Lahab, filled with rage, started uttering nonsense, the people realized that what he said in opposition to the Holy Prophet was not at all reliable, for he said all that in his mad hostility to his nephew.

Besides, when his uncle was condemned by name, the people's expectation that the Holy Messenger (upon whom be peace) could treat some relative leniently in the matter of religion was frustrated for ever. When the Holy Messenger's own uncle was taken to task publicly the people understood that there was no room for preference or partiality in their faith. A non-relative could become a near and dear one if he believed, and a near relation a non-relative if he disbelieved. Thus, there is no place for the ties of blood in religion.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

تَبَّتۡ يَدَاۤ اَبِىۡ لَهَبٍ وَّتَبَّ ؕ 1

(111:1) Destroyed were the hands of Abu Lahab, and he lay utterly doomed.[1]

1. His real name was Abd al-Uzza, and he was called Abu Lahab on account of his glowing, ruddy complexion. Lahab means the flame of fire, and Abu Lahab the one with a flaming, fiery face. His being mentioned here by his nickname (Kunyat), instead of his real name, has several reasons. First, that he was better known by his nickname than by his real name; second, that the Quran did not approve that he should be mentioned by his polytheistic

name Abd al Uzza (slave of Uzza); third, that his kunyat goes well with the fate that has been described of him in this Surah.

Some commentators have translated tabbat yada Abi Lahab to mean: May the hands of Abu Lahab be broken, and tabba to mean: may he perish or he perished. But this, in fact, was not a curse which was invoked on him, but a prophecy in which an event taking place in the future, has been described in the past tense, to suggest that its occurrence in the future is certain and inevitable.

In fact, at last the same thing happened as had been foretold in this Surah a few years earlier. Breaking of the hands obviously does not imply breaking of the physical hands, but a person's utterly failing in his aim and object for which he has exerted his utmost. And Abu Lahab indeed had exerted his utmost to defeat and frustrate the message of Islam presented by the Prophet (peace be upon him). But hardly seven or eight years after the revelation of this Surah most of the big chiefs of Quraish, who were a party with Abu Lahab in his hostility to Islam, were killed in the Battle of Badr. When the news of the defeat reached Makkah, he was so shocked that he could not survive for more than seven days. His death occurred in a pitiable state. He became afflicted with malignant pustule and the people of his house left him to himself, fearing contagion. No one came near his body for three days after his death, until the body decomposed and began to stink. At last, when the people began to taunt his sons, according to one tradition, they hired some black people, who lifted his body and buried it.

According to another tradition, they got a pit dug out and threw his body into it by pushing it with wood, and covered it up with earth and stones. His utter failure became manifest when the religion which he had tried his utmost to impede and thwart, was accepted by his own children. First of all, his daughter, Darrah, migrated from Makkah to Madinah and embraced lslam; then on the conquest of Makkah, both his sons, Utbah and Muattab, came before the Prophet (peace be upon him) through the mediation of Abbas, believed and took oath of allegiance to him.

مَآ أَغۡنَىٰ عَنۡهُ مَالُهُۥ وَمَا كَسَبَ ؕ 2

(111:2) His wealth did not avail him, nor his acquisitions.[2]

2. Abu Lahab was a stingy, materialistic man. Ibn Jarir has stated that once in the pre-Islamic days he was accused of having stolen two golden deer from the treasury of the Kabah. Though later the deer were recovered from another person, the fact that he was accused of stealing indicates the opinion the people of Makkah held of him. About his riches Qadi Rashid bin Zubair writes in his Adh-Dhakhair wat- Tuhaf: He was one of the four richest men of the Quraish, who owned one qintar (about 260 oz) of gold each. His love of wealth can be judged from the fact that when on the occasion of the battle of Badr the fate of his religion was going to be decided forever, and all the Quraish chiefs had personally gone to fight, he sent Aas bin Hisham to fight on his own behalf, telling him: This is in lieu of the debt of four thousand dirhams that you owe to me. Thus, he contrived a plan to realize his debt, for Aas had become bankrupt and there was no hope of the recovery of the debt from him.

Some commentators have taken maa kasaba in the meaning of the earning, i.e. the benefits that accrued to him from his wealth were his kasab (earning), and some other commentators have taken it to imply children, for the Prophet (peace be upon him) has said that a man's son also is his kasab (earning). (Abu Daud, Ibn Abi Hatim). Both these meanings fully correspond to the fate met by Abu Lahab. For when he was afflicted with the malignant pustule, his wealth availed him nothing, and his children also left him alone to die a miserable, wretched death. They did not even bury him honorably. Thus, within a few years the people witnessed how the prophecy which had been made in this Surah about Abu Lahab was literally fulfilled.

سَيَصْلٰى نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ ۚ 3

(111:3) Surely, he will be cast into a Flaming Fire

وَّامْرَاَتُهٗ ؕ حَمَّالَةَ الْحَطَبِ ۚ 4

(111:4) along with his wife,[3] that carrier of slanderous tales;[4]

3. Her name was Arwa and her nickname (kunyat) Umm Jamil. She was sister of Abu Sufyan and was no less bitter than her husband, Abu Lahab, in her enmity to the Messenger (peace be upon him). Abu Bakr's daughter Asma has related that when this Surah was revealed, and Umm Jamil heard it, she was filled with rage and went out in search of the Prophet (peace be upon him). She carried a handful of stones and she was crying some verses of her own, satirizing the Prophet (peace be upon him). She came to the Kabah, where the Prophet (peace be upon him) was sitting with Abu Bakr. The latter said: O Messenger of Allah, there she comes and I fear lest she should utter something derogatory to you. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: She will not see me. The same thing happened. She could not see the Prophet (peace be upon him) although he was there. She said to Abu Bakr: I hear that your companion has satirized me. Abu Bakr replied: No, by the Lord of this house, he has not satirized you. Hearing this she went off. (lbn Abi Hatim, Ibn Hisham; Bazzar has related an incident on the authority of Abdullah bin Abbas also, which closely resembles this). What Abu Bakr meant was that she had not been satirized by the Prophet (peace be upon him), but by Allah Himself.

4. The words in the original are hammalat al-hatab, which literally mean: carrier of the wood. The commentators have given several meanings of it. Abdullah bin Abbas, Ibn Zaid, Dahhak and Rabi bin Anas say: She used to strew thorns at the Prophet's (peace be upon him) door in the night; therefore, she has been described as carrier of the wood. Qatadah, Ikrimah, Hasan Basri, Mujahid and Sufyan Thauri say: She used to carry evil tales and slander from one person to another in order to create hatred between them; therefore, she has been called the bearer of wood idiomatically. Saaid bin Jubair says: The one who is loading himself with the burden of sin is described idiomatically in Arabic as: Fulan-un Yahtatibu ala zahri bi (so and so is loading wood on his back); therefore, hummalat al-hatab means: The one who carries the burden of sin. Another meaning which the commentators have also given is: she will do this in the Hereafter, i.e. she will bring and supply wood to the fire in which Abu Lahab would be burning.

فِيْ جِيْدِهَا حَبْلٌ مِّنْ مَّسَدٍ ۚ 5

(111:5) upon her neck shall be a rope of palm-fibre.[5]

5. The word used for her neck is jeed, which in Arabic means a neck decorated with an ornament. Saeed bin al- Musayyab, Hasan Basri and Qatadah say that she wore a valuable necklace and used to say: By Lat and Uzza, I will sell away this necklace and spend the price to satisfy my enmity against Muhammad (peace be upon him). That is why the word jeed has been used here ironically, thereby implying that in Hell she would have a rope of palm-fiber round her neck instead of that necklace upon which she prides herself so arrogantly. Another example of this ironical style is found at several places in the Quran in the sentence: Bashshir-hum bi-adhab-in alima "Give them the good news of a painful torment.

The words habl-um min-masad have been used for the rope which will be put round her neck, i.e. it will be a rope of the masad kind. Different meanings of this have been given by the lexicographers and commentators. According to some, masad means a tightly twisted rope; others say that masad is the rope made from palm-fiber; still others say that it means the rope made from rush, or camel-skin, or camelhair. Still another view is that it implies a cable made by twisted iron strands together.

112. Surah Al Ikhlas (The Purity)

Name

Al-Ikhlas is not merely the name of this Surah but also the title of its contents, for it deals exclusively with Tauhid. The other Surahs of the Quran generally have been designated after a word occurring in them, but in this Surah the word Ikhlas has occurred nowhere. It has been given this name in view of its meaning and subject matter. Whoever understands it and believes in its teaching, will get rid of shirk (polytheism) completely.

Period of Revelation

Whether it is a Makki or a Madani Surah is disputed, and the difference of opinion has been caused by the traditions which have been related concerning the occasion of its revelation. We give them below ad seriatim:

1. Hadrat Abdullah bin Masud has reported that the Quraish said to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace): "Tell us of the ancestry of your Lord." Thereupon this Surah was sent down. (Tabarani).
2. Abul Aliyah has related on the authority of Hadrat Ubayy bin Kab that the polytheists said to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace): “Tell us of your Lord's ancestry." Thereupon Allah sent down this Surah. (Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Abi Harim, Ibn Jarir, Tirmidhi, Bukhari in At-Tarikh, Ibn al-Mundhir, Hakim, Baihaqi). Tirmidhi has related a tradition on the same theme from Abul Aliyah, which does not contain any reference to Hadrat Ubayy bin Kab, and has declared it to be more authentic.
3. Hadrat Jabir bin Abdullah has stated that a bedouin (according to other traditions, some people) said to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace): "Tell us of your Lord's ancestry." Thereupon Allah sent down this Surah.(Abu Yala, Ibn Jarir, Ibn al-Mundhir, Tabarani in Al-Ausat, Baihaqi, Abu Nuaim in Al-Hilyah).
4. Ikrimah has related a tradition form Ibn Abbas, saying that a group of the Jews, including Kab bin Ashraf, Huyayy bin Akhtab and other, came before the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) and said: "O Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings), tell us of the attributes of your Lord, who has sent you as a Prophet." Thereupon Allah sent down this Surah. (Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Adi, Baihaqi in Al-Asma was-Sifat).

   In addition to these, some other traditions also have been cited by Ibn Taimiyyali in his commentary of Surah Al-Ikhlas, which are as follows;

5. Hadrat Anas has stated that some Jews of Khaiber came before the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) and they said: "O Abul Qasim, Allah created the angels from light, Adam from rotten clay, Iblis from the flame of fire, the sky from smoke, and the earth from the foam of water. Now tell us about your Lord (of what He is made)." The Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) did not give any reply to this question. Then Gabriel came and he said: "O Muhammad, say to them: Huwa Allahu ahad."
6. Amir bin at-Tufail said to the Holy Prophet: "O Muhammad, what do you call us to?" The Holy Prophet replied: "To Allah." Amir said, "Then, tell us of what He is made, whether of gold, silver, or iron?" Thereupon this surah was sent down.

7. Dahhak, Qatadah and Muqatil have stated that some Jewish rabbis came before the Holy Prophet, and they said: "O Muhammad, tell us what is your Lord like, so that we may believe in you. Allah in the Torah has sent down His description. Kindly tell us of what He is made, what is His sex, whether He is made of gold, copper, brass, iron, or silver, and whether He eats and drinks. Also tell us from whom He has inherited the world, and who will inherit it after Him." Thereupon Allah sent down this Surah.
8. Ibn Abbas has reported that a deputation of the Christians of Najran along with seven priests visited the Holy Prophet upon whom be peace), and they said: "O Muhammad, tell us what is your Lord like and of what substance He is made." The Holy Prophet replied, "My Lord is not made from any substance. He is unique and exalted above everything." Thereupon Allah sent down this Surah.

These traditions show that different people on different occasions had questioned the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) about the essence and nature of the God to Whose service and worship he invited the people, and on every occasion he recited by Allah's command this very Surah in response. First of all, the pagans. of Quraish asked him this question in Makkah, and in reply this Surah was sent down. Then, at Madinah, sometimes the Christians, and sometimes the other people of Arabia, asked him questions of this nature, and every time Allah inspired him to recite this very Surah in answer to them. In each of these traditions, it has been said that this Surah was revealed on this or that occasion. From this one should not form the impression that all these traditions are mutually contradictory. The fact is that whenever there existed with the Holy Prophet a verse or a Surah previously revealed in respect of a particular question or matter, and later the same question was presented before him, Allah inspired him to recite the same verse or Surah to the people as it contained the answer to their question. The reporters of Hadith describe the same thing, saying: When such and such a question or matter was presented before the Holy Prophet, such and such a verse or Surah was revealed. This has also been described as repetition of revelation, i. e. the revelation of a verse or Surah several times.

Thus, the fact is that this Surah is Makki, rather in view of its subject matter a Surah revealed in the earliest period at Makkah, when detailed verses of the Quran dealing with the essence and attributes of Allah Almighty had not yet been revealed, and the people hearing, the Holy Prophet's invitation to Allah, wanted to know what was his Lord like to whose worship and service he was calling them. Another proof of this Surah's being one of the earliest Surahs to be revealed is that when in Makkah Umayyah bin Khalaf, the master of Hadrat Bilal, made him lie down on burning sand and placed a heavy stone on his chest, Bilal used to cry "Ahad, Ahad!" This word was derived from this very Surah.

Theme and Subject Matter

A little consideration of the traditions regarding the occasion of the revelation of this Surah, shows what were the religious concepts of the world at the time the Holy Prophet began to preach the message of Tauhid. The idolatrous polytheists were worshiping gods made of wood, stone, gold, silver and other substances. These gods had a form, shape and body. The gods and goddesses were descended from each other. No goddess was without a husband and no god without a wife. They stood in need of food and drink and their devotees arranged these for them. A large number of the polytheists believed that God assumed human form and there were some people who descended from Him. Although the

Christians claimed to believe in One God, yet their God also had at least a son, and besides the Father and Son, the Holy Ghost also had the honor of being an associate in Godhead: so much so that God had a mother and a mother-in-law too. The Jews also claimed to believe in One God, but their God too was not without physical, material and other human qualities and characteristics. He went for a stroll, appeared in human form, wrestled with a servant of His, and was father of a son, Ezra. Besides these religious communities, the Zoroastrians were fire worshipers, and the Sabeans star worshipers. Under such conditions when the people were invited to believe in Allah, the One Who has no associate, it was inevitable that questions arose in the minds as to what kind of a God it was, Who was one and Only Lord and invitation to believe in Whom was being given at the expense of all other gods and deities. It is a miracle of the Quran that in a few words briefly it answered all the questions and presented such a clear concept of the Being of Allah as destroyed all polytheistic concepts, without leaving any room for the ascription of any of the human qualities to His Being.

Merit and Importance

That is why the Holy Messenger of Allah (upon whom be peace) held this Surah in great esteem, and he made the Muslims realize its importance in different ways so that they recited it frequently and disseminated it among the people. For it states the foremost and fundamental doctrine of Islam (viz. Tauhid) in four such brief sentences as are immediately impressed on human memory and can be read and recited easily. There are a great number of the traditions of Hadith, which show that the Holy Prophet on different occasions and in different ways told the people that this Surah is equivalent to one third the Quran. Several ahadith on this subject have been related in Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud; Nasai, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, Musnad Ahmad, Tabarani and other books, on the authority of Abu Said Khudri, Abu Hurairah, Abu Ayyub Ansari, Abu ad-Darda, Muadh bin Jabal, Jabir bin Abdullah, Ubayy bin Kab, Umm Kulthum bint Uqbah bin Abi Muait, Ibn Umar, Ibn Masud, Qatadah bin an-Numan, Anas bin Malik, and Abu Masud (may Allah be pleased with all of them).

The commentators have given many explanations of the Holy Prophet's saying. But in our opinion it simply means that the religion presented by the Quran is based on three doctrines: Tauhid, Prophethood and the Hereafter. This Surah teaches Tauhid, pure and undefiled. Therefore, the Holy Prophet (upon whom he Peace) regarded it as, equal to one-third of the Quran.

A tradition on the authority of Hadrat Aishah has been related in Bukhari, Muslim and other collections of the Ahadith, saying that the Holy Prophet sent a man as leader of an expedition. During the journey he concluded his recitation of the Quran in every Prayer with Qul Huwa-Allahu ahad. On their return him companions mentioned this before the Holy Prophet. He said: "Ask him why he did so." When the man was asked, he replied: "In this Surah the attributes of the Merciful God have been stated; therefore, I love to recite it again and again." When the Holy Prophet heard this reply, he said to the people: "Inform him that Allah holds him in great love and esteem."

A similar incident has been related in Bukhari, on the authority of Hadrat Anas. He says: "A man from among the Ansar led the Prayers in the Quba Mosque. His practice was that in

every rak`ah he first recited this Surah and then would join another Surah to it. The people objected to it and said to him: "Don't you think that Surah Ikhlas is by itself enough? Why do you join another Surah to it? You should either recite only this surah, or should leave it and recite some other Surah. He said: "I cannot leave it, I would rather give up leadership in the Prayer, if you so desired." The people did not approve that another man be appointed leader instead of him. At last, the matter was brought before the Holy Prophet. He asked the man, "What prevents you from conceding what your companions desire? What makes you recite this particular Surah in every rak`ah?" The man replied: "I have great love for it." The Holy Prophet remarked: "Your this love for this Surah has earned you entry into Paradise."

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

قُلۡ ہُوَ اللّٰہُ اَحَدٌ ۚ 1

(112:1) Say:[1] "He is Allah,[2] the One and Unique;[3]

1. The first addressee of this command is the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself for it was he who was asked: Who is your Lord and what is He like. Again it was he who was commanded to answer the question in the following words. But after him every believer is its addressee. He too should say what the Prophet (peace be upon him) had been commanded to say.

2. That is, my Lord to Whom you want to be introduced is none but Allah. This is the first answer to the questions, and it means: I have not introduced a new lord who I want you to worship beside all other gods, but it is the same Being you know by the name of Allah. Allah was not an unfamiliar word for the Arabs. They had been using this very word for the Creator of the universe since the earliest times, and they did not apply this word to any of their other gods. For the other gods they used the word ilah. Then their beliefs about Allah had become fully manifest at the time Abraha invaded Makkah. At that time there existed 360 idols of gods (ilahs) in and around the Kabah, but the polytheists forsaking all of them had invoked only Allah for protection. In other words, they knew in their hearts that no ilah could help them on that critical occasion except Allah. The Kabah was also called Bait-Allah by them and not Baitilahs after their self-made gods. At many places in the Quran the polytheistic Arabian belief about Allah has been expressed, thus:

In Surah Az-Zukhruf it has been said: If you ask them who created them, they will surely say, Allah. (verse 87).

In Surah Al-Ankabuut: If you ask them, who has created the earth and the heavens and who has subjected the moon and the sun. They will surely say: Allah. And if you ask them, who sent down rainwater from the sky and thereby raised the dead earth back to life. They will surely say: Allah. (verses 61-63).

In Surah Al-Muminun: Say to them, tell me, if you know, whose is the earth and all who dwell in it. They will say, Allah's. Say to them: To whom do the seven heavens and the Glorious Throne belong. They will say: To Allah. Say to them: Tell me, if you know, whose

is the sovereignty over everything. And who is that Being who gives protection while none else can give protection against Him. They will surely reply: This power belongs to Allah. (verses 84-89).

In Surah Younus: Ask them: Who provides for you from the heavens and the earth. Who has power over the faculties of hearing and sight. Who brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living. Who directs the system of the universe. They will surely reply: Allah. (verse 31).

Again in Surah Younus at another place: When you set sails in ships, rejoicing over a fair breeze, then all of a sudden a strong wind begins to rage against the passengers and waves begin to surge upon them from every side and they realize that they have been encircled by the tempest. At that time they pray to Allah with sincere faith, saying: If you deliver us from this peril, we will become Your grateful servants. But when He delivers them, the same people begin to rebel on the earth against the truth. (verses 22-23).

The same thing has been reiterated in Surah Bani Israil, thus: When a misfortune befalls you on the sea, all of those whom you invoke for help fail you but He (is there to help you), yet when He brings you safe to land, you turn away from Him. (verse 67).

Keeping these verses in view, let us consider that when the people asked: Who is your Lord and what is He like to Whom service and worship you call us. The answer given was Huwa Allah: He is Allah. This answer by itself gives the meaning: My Lord is He whom you yourself acknowledge as your own as well as the whole world's Creator, its Master, Sustainer and Administrator, and He whom you invoke for help at critical times beside all other deities, and I invite you to His service alone. This answer comprehends all the perfect and excellent attributes of Allah. Therefore, it is not at all conceivable that the Creator of the universe, its Administrator and Disposer of its affairs, Sustainer of all the creatures living in it, and the Helper of the servants in times of hardship, would not be living, hearing and seeing, that He would not be an All-Powerful, All-Knowing, All- Wise, All-Merciful and All-Kind Sovereign.

3. The scholars have explained the sentence Huwa-Allahu Ahad syntactically, but in our opinion its explanation which perfectly corresponds to the context is that Huwa is the subject and Allahu its predicate, and Ahad-un its second predicate. According to this parsing the sentence means: He (about Whom you are questioning me) is Allah, is One and only one. Another meaning can also be, and according to language rules it is not wrong either: He is Allah, the One.

Here, the first thing to be understood is the unusual use of ahad in this sentence. Usually this word is either used in the possessive case as yaum ul-ahad (first day of the week), or to indicate total negative as Ma jaa a-ni ahad-un (No one has come to me), or in common questions like Hal indaka ahadun (Is there anyone with you), or in conditional clauses like Injaa-ka ahad-un (If someone comes to you), or in counting as ahad, ithnan, ahad ashar (one, two, eleven). Apart from these uses, there is no precedent in the pre-Quranic Arabic that the mere word ahad might have been used as an adjective for a person or thing. After the revelation of the Quran this word has been used only for the Being of Allah, and for no one else. This extraordinary use by itself shows that being single, unique and matchless is a

fundamental attribute of Allah; no one else in the world is qualified with this quality: He is One, He has no equal.

Then, keeping in view the questions that the polytheists and the followers of earlier scriptures asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) about his Lord, let us see how they were answered with ahad-un after Huwa-Allah.

First, it means: He alone is the Sustainer: no one else has any share or part in providence and since He alone can be the Ilah (Deity) Who is Master and Sustainer, therefore, no one else is His associate in Divinity either.

Secondly, it also means He alone is the Creator of the universe: no one else is His associate in this work of creation. He alone is the Master of the universe, the Disposer and Administrator of its system, the Sustainer of His creatures, Helper and Rescuer in times of hardship; no one else has any share or part whatever in the works of Godhead, which as you yourselves acknowledge, are works of Allah.

Thirdly, since they had also asked the questions: Of what is your Lord made? What is His ancestry? What is his sex? From whom has He inherited the world and who will inherit it after Him? All these questions have been answered with one word ahad for Allah. It means:

(1) He alone has been, and will be, God forever; neither was there a God before Him, nor will there be any after Him.

(2) There is no race of gods to which He may belong as a member: He is God, One and Single, and none is homogeneous with Him.

(3) His being is not merely One (wahid but ahad, in which there is no tinge of plurality in any way:

He is not a compound being, which may be analyzable or divisible, which may have a form and shape, which may be residing somewhere, or may contain or include something, which may have a color, which may have some limbs, which may have a direction, and which may be variable or changeable in any way. Free from every kind of plurality He alone is a Being who is Ahad in every aspect. (Here, one should fully understand that the word wahid is used in Arabic just like the word one in English. A collection consisting of great pluralities is collectively called wahid or one, as one man, one nation, one country, one world, even one universe, and every separate part of a collection is also called one. But the word Ahad is not used for anyone except Allah. That is why wherever in the Quran the word wahid has been used for Allah, He has been called Ilah wahid (one Deity), or AllahulWahid- al-Qahhar (One Allah Who is Omnipotent), and nowhere just wahid, for this word is also used for the things which contain pluralities of different kinds in their being. On the contrary, for Allah and only for Allah the word Ahad has been used absolutely, for He alone is the Being Who exists without any plurality in any way, Whose Oneness is perfect in every way.

ٱللَّهُ ٱلصَّمَدُ ۚ 2

(112:2) Allah, Who is in need of none and of Whom all are in need;[4]

4. The word used in the original is samad of which the root is smd. A look at the derivatives in Arabic from this root will show how comprehensive and vast this word is in meaning. (Lexical discussion of the meanings of the derivatives is omitted).

On the basis of these lexical meanings the explanations of the word as-Samad in the verse Allah-us-Samad, which have been reported from the companions, their immediate successors and the later scholars are given below:

Ali, Ikrimah and Kab Ahbar: Samad is he who has no superior.

Abdullah bin Masud, Abdullah bin Abbas and Abu Wail Shaqiq bin Salamah: The chieftain whose chieftaincy is perfect and of the most extraordinary kind.

Another view of Ibn Abbas: Samad is he to whom the people turn when afflicted with a calamity. Still another view of his: The chieftain who in his chieftaincy, in his nobility and glory, in his clemency and forbearance, in his knowledge and wisdom is perfect.

Abu Hurairah: He who is independent of all and all others are dependent upon him.

Other views of Ikrimah: He from whom nothing ever has come out, nor normally comes out, who neither eats nor drinks. Views containing the same meaning have been related from Shabi and Muhammad bin Kab al-Kurazi also.

Suddi: The one to whom the people turn for obtaining the things they need and for help in hardships.

Saeed bin Jubair: He who is perfect in all his attributes and works.

Rabi bin Jubair: He who is immune from every calamity.

Muqatil bin Hayyan: He who is faultless.

Ibn Kaysan: He who is exclusive in his attributes.

Hasan Basri and Qatadah: He who is ever-living and immortal. Similar views have been related from Mujahid, Mamar and Murrat alHamadani also.

Murrat al-Hamadani's another view is: He who decides whatever he wills and does whatever he wills, without there being anyone to revise his judgment and decision.

Ibrahim Nakhai: He to whom the people turn for fulfillment of their desires.

Abu Bakr al-Anbari: There is no difference of opinion among the lexicographers that samad is the chief who has no superior and to whom the people turn for fulfillment of their desires and needs and in connection with other affairs. Similar to this is the view of Az-Zajjaj, who says Samad is he in whom leadership has been perfected, and to whom one turns for fulfillment of his needs and desires.

Now, let us consider why Allahu-Ahad has been said in the first sentence and why Allah-us-Samad in this sentence. About the word ahad we have explained above that it is exclusively used for Allah, and for none else. That is why it has been used as ahad, in the indefinite sense. But since the word samad is used for creatures also, Allall-us-Samad has been said instead of Allah Samad, which signifies that real and true Samad is Allah alone. If a creature is samad in one sense, it may not be samad in some other sense, for it is mortal, not immortal; it is analyzable and divisible, is compound, its parts can scatter away any time; some creatures are dependent upon it, and upon others it is dependent; its chieftaincy is relative and not absolute; it is superior to certain things and certain other things are superior to it; it can fulfill some desires of some creatures but it is not in the power of any creature to fulfill all the desires of all the creatures, On the contrary, Allah is perfect in His attributes of Samad in every respect; the whole world is dependent upon Him in its needs, but He is not dependent upon anyone; everything in the world turns to Him, consciously or unconsciously, for its survival and for fulfillment of the needs of everyone; He is Immortal and Ever-living; He sustains others and is not sustained by anyone; He is Single and Unique, not compound so as to be analyzable and divisible; His sovereignty prevails over entire universe and He is Supreme in every sense. Therefore, He is not only Samad but As-Samad, i.e. the Only and One Being Who is wholly and perfectly qualified with the attribute of samad in the true sense.

Then, since He is As-Samad, it is necessary that He should be Unique, One and Only, for such a being can only be One, which is not dependent upon anyone and upon whom everyone else may be dependent; two or more beings cannot be self-sufficient and fulfillers of the needs of all. Furthermore, His being As-samad also requires that He alone should be the Deity, none else, for no sensible person would worship and serve the one who had no power and authority to fulfill the needs of others.

لَمۡ يَلِدۡ ۙ وَلَمۡ يُوۡلَدۡ ۙ 3

(112:3) He neither begot any nor was He begotten,[5]

5. The polytheists in every age have adopted the concept that like men, gods also belong to a species, which has many members and they also get married, beget and are begotten. They did not even regard Allah, Lord of the universe, as supreme and above this concept of ignorance, and even proposed children for Him. Thus, the Arabian belief as stated in the Quran was that they regarded the angels as daughters of Allah. The Prophetic communities too could not remain immune from this creed of paganism. They too adopted the creed of holding one saintly person or another as son of God. Two kinds of concepts have always been mixed up in these debasing superstitions. Some people thought that those whom they regarded as Allah's children, were descended from him in the natural way and some others claimed that the one whom they called son of God, had been adopted by Allah Himself as a son. Although they could not dare call anyone as, God forbid, father of God, obviously human mind cannot remain immune against such a concept that God too should be regarded as a son of somebody when it is conceived that He is not free from sex and procreation and that He too, like man, is the kind of being which begets children and needs to adopt a son in case it is childless, That is why one of the questions asked of the Prophet

(peace be upon him) was: What is the ancestry of Allah, and another was: From whom has He inherited the world and who will inherit it after Him.

If these assumptions of ignorance are analyzed, it becomes obvious that they logically necessitate the assumption of some other things as well.

First, that God should not be One, but there should be a species of Gods, and its members should be associates in the attributes, acts and powers of Divinity. This not only follows from assuming God begetting children but also from assuming that He has adopted someone as a son, for the adopted son of somebody can inevitably be of his own kind. And when, God forbid, he is of the same kind as God, it cannot be denied that he too possesses attributes of Godhead.

Second, that the children cannot be conceived unless the male and the female combine and some substance from the father and the mother unites to take the shape of child. Therefore, the assumption that God begets children necessitates that He should, God forbid, be a material and physical entity, should have a wife of His own species, and some substance also should issue from His body.

Third, that wherever there is sex and procreation, it is there because individuals are mortal and for the survival of their species it is inevitable that they should beget children to perpetuate the race. Thus, the assumption that God begets children also necessitates that He should, God forbid, Himself be mortal, and immortality should belong to the species of Gods, not to God Himself. Furthermore, it also necessitates that like all mortal individuals, God also, God forbid, should have a beginning and an end. For the individuals of the species whose survival depends upon sex and procreation neither exist since eternity nor will exist till eternity.

Fourth, that the object of adopting some one as a son is that a childless person needs a helper in his lifetime and an heir after his death. Therefore, the supposition that Allah has adopted a son inevitably amounts to ascribing all those weaknesses to His sublime Being which characterize mortal man.

Although all these assumptions are destroyed as soon as Allah is called and described as Ahad and As-Samad, yet when it is said: Neither has He an offspring nor is He the offspring of another, there remains no room for any ambiguity in this regard. Then, since these concepts are the most potent factors of polytheism with regard to Divine Being, Allah has refuted them clearly and absolutely not only in Surah Al-Ikhlas but has also reiterated this theme at different places in different ways so that the people may understand the truth fully. For example let us consider the following verses:

Allah is only One Deity: He is far too exalted that He should have a son: whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth belongs to Him. (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 171).

Note it well: they, in fact, invent a falsehood when they say, Allah has children. They are utter liars. (Surah As-Saaffat, Ayats 151-152).

They have invented a blood-relationship between Allah and the angels, whereas the angels know well that these people will be brought up (as culprits). (Surah As-Saaffat, Ayat 158).

These people have made some of His servants to be part of Him. The fact is that man is manifestly ungrateful. (Surah Az-Zukhruf, Ayat l5).

Yet the people have set up the Jinn as partners with Allah, whereas He is their Creator; they have also invented for Him sons and daughters without having any knowledge, whereas He is absolutely free from and exalted far above the things they say. He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth: how should He have a son, when He has no consort? He has created each and every thing. (Surah AlAnaam, Ayats 100-101).

They say: the Merciful has offspring. Glory be to Allah! They (whom they describe as His offspring) are His mere servants who have been honored. (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 26).

They remarked: Allah has taken a son to himself. Allah is All-pure: He is Self Sufficient. He is the Owner of everything that is in the heavens and the earth. Have you any authority for what you say? What, do you ascribe to Allah that of which you have no knowledge. (Surah Younus, Ayat 68).

And (O Prophet) say: Praise is for Allah who has begotten no son nor has any partner in His Kingdom nor is helpless to need any supporter. (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 111).

Allah has no offspring, and there is no other deity as a partner with Him. (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayat 91).

In these verses the belief of the people who ascribe real as adopted children to Allah, has been refuted from every aspect, and its being a false belief has also been proved by argument. These and many other Quranic verses of the same theme further explain Surah Al-Ikhlas.

وَلَمۡ يَكُن لَّهُۥ كُفُوًا أَحَدُۢ ٤

(112:4) and none is comparable to Him."[6]

6. The word kufu as used in the original means an example, a similar thing, the one equal in rank and position. In the matter of marriage, kufu means that the boy and the girl should match each other socially. Thus, the verse means that there is no one in the entire universe, nor ever was, nor ever can be, who is similar to Allah, or equal in rank with Him, or resembling Him in His attributes, works and powers in any degree whatever.

113. Surah Al Falaq (The Daybreak)

Please note that the following introduction is for both Surah Al Falaq (113) and Surah An Nas (114).

Name

Although these two Surahs of the Qur'an are separate entities and are written in the *Mushaf* also under separate names, yet they are so deeply related mutually and their contents so closely resemble each other's that they have been designated by a common name *Mu'awwidhatayn* (the two Surahs in which refuge with Allah has been sought). Imam Baihaqi in *Dala'il an-Nubuwwat* has written that these Surahs were revealed together, that is why the combined name of both is *Mu'awwidhatayn*. We are writing the same one Introduction to both, for they discuss and deal with just the same matters and topics. However, they will be explained and commented on separately below.

Period of Revelation

Hadrat Hasan Basri, 'Ikrimah, 'Ata' and Jabir bin Zaid say that these Surahs are Makki. A tradition from Hadrat 'Abdullah bin 'Abbas also supports the same view. However, according to another tradition from him, it is Madani and the same view is held also by Hadrat 'Abdullah bin Zubair and Qatadah. One of the traditions which strengthens this second view is the *Hadith* which Muslim, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i and Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal have related on the authority of Hadrat 'Uqbah bin 'Amir. He says that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) one day said to him: "Do you know what kind of verses have been revealed to me tonight? These matchless verses are *A'udhu bi-Rabbil-falaq* and *A'udhu bi-Rabbin-nas*. This *Hadith* is used as an argument for these Surahs to be Madani because Hadrat 'Uqbah bin 'Amir had become a Muslim in Madinah after the *hijrah*, as related by Abu Da'ud and Nasa'i on the basis of his own statement. Other traditions which have lent strength to this view are those related by Ibn Sa'd, Muhiyy-us-Sunnah Baghawi, Imam Nasafi, Imam Baihaqi, Hafiz Ibn Hajar, Hafiz Badr-uddin 'Ayni, 'Abd bin Humaid and others to the effect that these Surahs were revealed when the Jews had worked magic on the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) in Madinah and he had fallen ill under its effect. Ibn Sa'd has related on the authority of Waqidi that this happened in A.H. 7. On this very basis Sufyan bin Uyainah also has described these Surah as Madani.

But as we have explained in the Introduction to Surah Al-Ikhlas, when it is said about a certain Surah or verse that it was revealed on this or that particular occasion, it does not necessarily mean that it was revealed for the first time on that very occasion. Rather it sometimes so happened that a Surah or a verse had previously been revealed, then on the occurrence or appearance of a particular incident or situation, the Holy Prophet's attention was drawn to it by Allah for the second time, or even again and again. In our opinion the same also was the case with the *Mu'awwidhatayn*. The subject matter of these Surahs is explicit that these were sent down at Makkah in the first instance when opposition to the Holy Prophet there had grown very intense. Later, when at Madinah storms of opposition were raised by the hypocrites, Jews and polytheists, the Holy Prophet was instructed to recite these very Surahs, as has been mentioned in the above cited tradition from Hadrat Uqbah bin Amir. After this, when magic was worked on him, and his illness grew intense,

Gabriel came and instructed him by Allah's command to recite these very Surahs. Therefore, in our opinion, the view held by the commentators who describe both these Surahs as Makki is more reliable. Regarding them as connected exclusively with the incident of magic is difficult, for to this incident related only one verse (v.4), the remaining verses of Surah al Falaq and the whole of Surah An-Nas have nothing to do with it directly.

Theme and Subject-Matter

The conditions under which these two Surahs were sent down in Makkah were as follows. As soon as the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) began to preach the message of Islam, it seemed as though he had provoked all classes of the people around him. As his message spread the opposition of the disbelieving Quraish also became more and more intense. As long as they had any hope that they would be able to prevent him from preaching his message by throwing some temptation in his way, or striking some bargain with him, their hostility did not become very active. But when the Holy Prophet disappointed them completely that he would not effect any kind of compromise with them in the matter of faith, and in Surah Al-Kafirun they were plainly told: "I do not worship those who you worship nor are you worshipers of Him Whom I worship. For you is your religion and for me is mine", the hostility touched its extreme limits. More particularly, the families whose members (men or women, boys or girls) had accepted Islam, were burning with rage from within against the Holy Prophet. They were cursing him, holding secret consultations to kill him quietly in the dark of the night so that the Bani Hashim could not discover the murderer and take revenge; magic and charms were being worked on him so as to cause his death, or make him fall ill, or become mad; satans from among the men and the jinn spread on every side so as to whisper one or another evil into the hearts of the people against him and the Qur'an brought by him so that they became suspicious of him and fled him. There were many people who were burning with jealousy against him, for they could not tolerate that a man from another family or clan than their own should flourish and become prominent. For instance, the reason why Abu Jahl was crossing every limit in his hostility to him has been explained by himself: "We and the Bani Abdi Manaf (to which the Holy Prophet belonged) were rivals of each other: they fed others, we too fed others; they provided conveyances to the people, we too did the same; they gave donations, we too gave donations, so much so that when they and we have become equal in honor and nobility, they now proclaim that they have a Prophet who is inspired from the heaven; how can we compete with them in this field? By God, we will never acknowledge him, nor affirm faith in him". (*Ibn Hisham*, vol. I, pp. 337-338).

Such were the conditions when the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) was commanded to tell the people: "I seek refuge with the Lord of the dawn, from the evil of everything that He has created, and from the evil of the darkness of night and from the evil of magicians, men and women, and from the evil of the envious", and to tell them: "I seek refuge with the Lord of mankind, the King of mankind, and the Deity of mankind, from the evil of the whisperer, who returns over and over again, who whispers (evil) into the hearts of men, whether he be from among the jinn or men." This is similar to what the Prophet Moses had been told to say when Pharaoh had expressed his design before his full court to kill him: "I have taken refuge with my Lord and your Lord against every arrogant person who does not believe in the Day of Reckoning." (Al-Mu'min: 27). And: "I have taken refuge with my Lord and your Lord lest you should assail me." (Ad-Dukhan;20).

On both occasions these illustrious Prophets of Allah were confronted with well-equipped, resourceful and powerful enemies. On both occasions they stood firm on their message of Truth against their strong opponents, whereas they had no material power on the strength of which they could fight them, and on both occasions they utterly disregarded the threats and dangerous plans and hostile devices of the enemy, saying: "We have taken refuge with the Lord of the universe against you." Obviously, such firmness and steadfastness can be shown only by the person who has the conviction that the power of His Lord is the supreme power, that all powers of the world are insignificant against Him, and that no one can harm the one who has taken His refuge. Only such a one can say: "I will not give up preaching the Word of Truth. I care the least for what you may say or do, for I have taken refuge with my Lord and your Lord and Lord of all universe."

Question whether Mu'awwidhatayn are, or are not, Quranic

The above discussion is enough to help one understand fully the theme and content of the two Surahs, but since three points in the books of *Hadith* and commentary concerning these Surahs have been discussed, which are likely to create doubts in the minds, it is necessary to clear them also here.

First, whether it is absolutely established that these two Surahs are the Qur'anic Surahs, or whether there is some doubt in this regard. This question arose because in the traditions related from an illustrious Companion like Hadrat Abdullah bin Mas'ud, it has been said that he did not regard these two Surahs as the Surahs of the Qur'an and had eliminated these from his copy of the *Mushaf*. Imam Ahmad, Bazzar, Tabarani, Ibn Marduyah, Abu Ya'la, Abdullah bin Ahmad bin Hanbal, Humaydi, Abu Nu'aim, Ibn Hibban and other traditionists have related this from Hadrat Abdullah bin Mas'ud with different chains of transmitters and mostly on sound authority. According to these traditions, he not only eliminated these Surahs from the *Mushaf* but it has also been reported that he used to say: "Do not mix up with the Qur'an that which is not of the Qur'an. These two Surahs are not included in the Quran. This was only a command enjoined on the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) for seeking God's refuge." In some traditions there is also the addition that he did not recite these Surahs in the Prayer.

On the basis of these traditions the opponents of Islam had an opportunity to raise doubts about the Qur'an, saying that this Book, God forbid, is not free from corruption. For when, according to a Companion of the rank of Hadrat Abdullah bin Mas'ud, these two Surahs are an annexation to the Qur'an, many other additions and subtractions also might have been made in it. To rid the Qur'an of this blame Qadi Abu Bakr Al-Baqillani, Qadi Iyad and others took the stand that Ibn Mas'ud was not in fact a denier of the *Mu'awwidhatayn* being Qur'anic but only refused to write them in the *Mushaf*. For, according to him, only that which the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) had allowed, should be written in the *Mushaf*, and Ibn Mas'ud did not receive the information that the Holy Prophet had allowed this. But this stand is not correct, for according to sound evidence, it is confirmed that Ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) had denied that these were Surahs of the Qur'an. Some other scholars, for instance, Imam Nawawi, Imam Ibn Hazm and Imam Fakhr-ud-din Razi, regard this as a pure lie and falsehood that Ibn Mas'ud had asserted any such thing. But to reject genuine historical facts without sound evidence is unscientific.

Now, the question is: How can the blame that attaches to the Qur'an because of these traditions of Ibn Mas'ud correctly refuted? This question has several answers which we shall give below in sequence:

1. Hafiz Bazzar after relating these traditions of Ibn Mas'ud in his *Musnad*, has written that he is solitary and isolated in his this opinion; no one from among the Companions has supported this view.
2. The copies of the Qur'an which the third Caliph, Hadrat Uthman (may Allah be pleased with him), had got compiled by the consensus of the Companions and which he had sent from the Islamic Caliphate officially to the centers of the world of Islam contained both these Surahs.
3. The *Mushaf* which, since the sacred time of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) till today, has the seal of consensus of the entire world of Islam, contains both these Surahs. The solitary opinion of only Abdullah bin Mas'ud, in spite of his high rank, has no weight against this great consensus.
4. It is confirmed by sound and reliable *ahadith* from the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) that he not only recited these Surahs in the Prayer himself but instructed others also to recite them, and taught them to the people as the Surahs of the Qur'an. Consider, for instance, the following *ahadith*:

We have cited on the authority of Muslim, Ahmad, Tirmidhi and Nasai the tradition of Hadrat Uqbah bin Amir that the Holy Prophet told him about Surah Al-Falaq and Surah An- Nas, saying that those verses had been revealed to him that night. A tradition in Nasai from Uqbah bin Amir is to the effect that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) recited both these Surahs in the Morning Prayer. Imam Ahmad on sound authority has related in his *Musnad* the tradition from a Companion that the Holy Prophet said to him, "When you perform the Prayer, recite both these Surahs in it."

In Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud and Nasai this tradition of Uqbah bin Amir has been related: "The Holy Prophet said to him: Should I not teach you two such Surahs as are among the best Surahs that the people recite? He said: Do teach me, O Messenger of Allah. Thereupon the Holy Prophet taught him the *Mu'awwidhatayn*. Then the Prayer began and the Holy Prophet recited the same two Surahs in it also, and when after the Prayer the Holy Prophet passed by him, he said to him, 'O Uqbah, how did you like it?' Then he instructed him to the effect: When you go to bed, and when you get up from bed, recite these Surahs."

In Musnad Ahmad, Abu Da'ud, Tirmidhi and Nasa'i there is a tradition from Uqbah bin Amir, saying that the Holy Prophet exhorted him to recite the *Mu'awwidhat* (i.e. *Qul Huwa Allahu ahad* and the *Mu'awwidhatayn*) after every Prayer.

Nasai, Ibn Marduyah and Hakim have related this tradition also from Uqbah bin Amir: "Once the Holy Prophet was riding on a conveyance and I was walking along with him with my hand placed on his sacred foot. I said: Kindly teach me Surah Hud or Surah Yusuf. He replied: In the sight of Allah there is nothing more beneficial for the servant than *Qul a'udhu bi-Rabbil-falaq*."

A tradition from Abdullah bin Abid al-Juhani has been related by Nasai, Baihaqi and Ibn Sad, saying that the Holy Prophet said to him: "Ibn Abid, should I not tell you what are the

best things out of the means by which the seekers of refuge have sought refuge with Allah? I submitted: Do teach me, O Messenger of Allah. He replied: *Qul a'udhu bi-Rabbil-falaq* and *Qul a-udhu bi Rabbin-nas* - both these Surahs."

Ibn Marduyah had related from Hadrat Umm Salamah: "The Surahs best liked by Allah are: *Qul a'udhu bi-Rabbil-falaq* and *Qul a'udhu bi-Rabbin-nas*."

Here, the question arises: what caused Hadrat Abdullah bin Mas'ud the misunderstanding that these two are not Surahs of the Qur'an? We get the answer to it when we combine two traditions: first, that Hadrat Abdullah bin Mas'ud asserted that this was only a command which the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) was given to teach him the method of seeking refuge with Allah; second, the tradition which Imam Bukhari has related in his *Sahih*, Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad*, Hafiz Abu Bakr al- Humaidi in his *Musnad*, Abu Nu'aim in his *Al-Mustakhraj* and Nasai in his *Sunan*, with different chains of transmitters, on the authority of Zirr bin Hubaish, with a slight variation in wording from Hadrat Ubayy bin Kab, who held a distinguished place among the Companions on the basis of his knowledge of the Qur'an. Zirr bin Hubaish states: "I said to Hadrat Ubayy: Your brother, Abdullah bin Mas'ud, says these things. What do you say about this view? He replied: I had questioned the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) about this. He said to me: I was told to say '*qul*', so I said '*qul*'. Therefore, we too say the same as the Holy Prophet said."

In the tradition related by Imam Ahmad, Hadrat Ubayy's words are to the effect: "I bear witness that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) told me that Gabriel (peace be on him) had told him to say: *Qul a'udhu bi-Rabbil-falaq*; therefore, he recited likewise, and Gabriel asked him to say: *Qul a'udhu bi- Rabbin-nas*; therefore he too said likewise. Hence, we too say as the Holy Prophet said." A little consideration of these two traditions will show that the word *qul* (say) in the two Surahs caused Hadrat Abdullah bin Mas'ud the misunderstanding that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) had been commanded to say: *A'udhu bi-Rabbil-falaq* and *A'udhu bi-Rabbin-nas*. But he did not feel any need to question the Holy Prophet about it. In the mind of Hadrat Ubbay bin Kab also a question arose about his and he put it before the Holy Prophet. The Holy Prophet replied: "Since Gabriel (peace be on him) had said *qul*, so I too say *qul*." Let us put it like this. If somebody is commanded and asked: "Say, I seek refuge", he will not carry out the command, saying: "Say, I seek refuge", but he will drop the work "say" and say: "I seek refuge." On the contrary, if the messenger of a superior officer conveys to somebody the message in these words: "Say, I seek refuge", and this command is given to him not only for his own person but to be conveyed to others, he will convey the words of the message verbatim to the people, and will not have the permission to drop anything from the text of the message. Thus, the fact that these two Surahs begin with the word *qul* is a clear proof that it is Divine Word, which the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) was bound to convey verbatim. It was not merely a command given to him for his person. Besides these two Surahs, there are 330 other verses in the Qur'an which begin with the word *qul* (say). The presence of *qul* in all these is a proof that it is Divine Word. which was obligatory for the Holy Prophet to convey verbatim; otherwise if *qul* everywhere had meant a command, the Holy Prophet would have dropped it and said only that which he was commanded to say, and it would not have been recorded in the Qur'an, but, on the contrary, he would have remained content with saying only what he was commanded to say.

Here, if one considers this, one can understand fully well how unreasonable it is to regard the Companions as infallible and to make the clamor that a Companion has been defamed as soon as one hears a saying or doing of his being described as wrong. Here, one can clearly see what a blunder happened to be committed by an illustrious Companion like Hadrat Abdullah bin Mas'ud about two Surahs of the Qur'an. If such an error could be committed by an eminent Companion like him, others also might commit an error. We can examine it in the scientific way, and describe it as wrong if a thing said or done by a Companion is proved to be wrong. But wicked indeed would be the person who went beyond describing a wrong act as wrong and started reproving and finding fault with the Companions of the Holy Prophet of Allah. Concerning the *Mu'awwidhatayn* the commentators and traditionists have described the opinion of Ibn Mas'ud as wrong, but no one has dared to say that by denying these two Surahs of the Qur'an, he had, God forbid, become a disbeliever.

Question of Holy Prophet's being affected by Magic

The second thing that has arisen in respect of these two Surahs is that, according to traditions, magic had been worked on the Holy Prophet, and he had fallen ill under its effect, and Gabriel (peace be on him) had instructed him to repeat these Surahs to remove the charm. This has been objected to by many rationalists of both ancient and modern times. They say that if these traditions are accepted, the whole *Shari'ah* becomes doubtful. For if the Prophet could be charmed, and according to these traditions he was charmed, one cannot say what the Prophet might have been made to say and do under the influence of magic by his opponents, and what in his teaching may be Divine and what the result of magic. Not only this: they also allege that if this is accepted as true, it might well be that the Prophet might have been prompted to make the claim to Prophethood through magic and the Prophet by misunderstanding might have thought that an angel had come to him. They also argue that these traditions clash with the Qur'an. The Qur'an mentions the accusation of the disbelievers who said that the Prophet was bewitched (Bani Isra'il: 47), but these traditions confirm the accusation of the disbelievers that the Prophet had actually been charmed and bewitched.

For a proper investigation of this question it is necessary that one should first see whether it is established by authentic historical evidence that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) had actually been affected by magic, and if so, what it was and to what extent. Then it should be seen whether the objections raised against what is established historically do actually apply to it or not.

The Muslim scholars of the earliest period were truly honest and upright in that they did not try to corrupt history or conceal facts according to their own ideas, concepts and assumptions. They conveyed intact to the later generations whatever was confirmed historically, and did not at all care how the material supplied by them could be used by the one who was bent upon drawing perverse conclusions from the facts. Now, if something stands confirmed by authentic and historical means, it is neither right for an honest and right-minded person that he should deny history on the ground that in case he accepted it, it would lead to these evil results according to his thinking, nor it is right that he should add to and stretch beyond its genuine limits by conjecture and speculation whatever is established historically. Instead, he should accept history as history and then see what is actually proved by it and what is not.

As far as the historical aspect is concerned, the incident of the Holy Prophet's being affected by magic is absolutely confirmed, and if it can be refuted by scientific criticism, then no historical event of the world can be proved right and genuine. It has been related by Bukhari, Muslim, Nasai, Ibn Majah, Imam Ahmad, Abdur Razzaq, Humaidi, Baihaqi, Tabarani, Ibn Sad, Ibn Mardayah, Ibn Abi Shaibah, Hakim, Abd bin Humaid and other traditionists on the authority of Hadrat Aishah, Hadrat Zaid bin Arqam and Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas, through so many different and numerous channels that forgery is out of the question. Although each tradition by itself is an isolated report (*khabar wahid*), we give it below as a connected event from the details provided by the traditions.

After the peace treaty of Hudaibiyah when the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) returned to Madinah, a deputation of the Jews of Khaibar visited Madinah in Muharram, A.H. 7 and met a famous magician, Labid bin Asam, who belonged to the Ansar tribe of Bani Zurayq. They said to him: "You know how Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) has treated us. We have tried our best to bewitch him but have not succeeded. Now we have come to you because you are a more skilled magician. Here are three gold coins, accept these and cast a powerful magic spell on Muhammad." In those days the Holy Prophet had a Jewish boy as his attendant. Through him they obtained a piece of the Holy Prophet's comb with some hair stuck to it. Magic was worked on the same hair and the teeth of the comb. According to some traditions, magic was worked by Labid bin Asam himself, according to others, his sisters were more skilled than him and he got the spell cast through them. Whatever be the case, Labid placed this spell in the spathe of a male date-tree and his it under a stone at the bottom of Dharwan or Dhi Arwan, the well of Bani Zurayq. The spell took one whole year to have effect upon the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace). In the latter half of the year the Holy Prophet started feeling as if was unwell. The last forty days became hard on him, of which the last three days were even harder. But its maximum effect on him was that he way melting away from within. He thought he had done a thing whereas, in fact, he had not done it: he thought he had visited his wives whereas he had not visited them; and sometimes he would doubt having seen something whereas, in fact, he had not seen it. All these effects were confined to his own person; so much so that the other people could not notice what state he was passing through. As for his being a Prophet, no change occurred in the performance of his duties.

There is no tradition to say that he might have forgotten some verses of the Qur'an in those days, or might have recited a verse wrongly, or a change might have occurred in the assemblies and in his counsels and sermons, or he might have presented a discourse as Revelation which may not have been revealed to him, or he might have missed a Prayer and thought that he had performed it. God forbid, if any such thing had happened, it would have caused a clamor and the whole of Arabia would have known that a magician had overpowered the one whom no power had been able to overpower. But the Holy Prophet's position as a Prophet remained wholly unaffected by it. Only in his personal life he remained worried on account of it. At last, one day when he was in the house of Hadrat Aishah, he prayed to Allah to be restored to full health. In the meantime he fell asleep or drowsed and on waking he said to Hadrat Aishah: "My Lord has told me what I had asked of Him." Hadrat Aishah asked what it was. He replied: "Two men (i.e. two angels in human guise) came to me. One sat near my head and the other near my feet. The first asked: what has happened to him? The other replied: Magic has been worked on him. The first asked:

who has worked it? He replied: Labid bin Asam. He asked: In what is it contained? He replied: In the comb and hair covered in the spathe of a male date-tree. He asked: where is it? He replied: under a stone at the bottom of Dhi Arwan (or Dharwan), the well of Bani Zurayq. He asked: what should be done about it? He replied: the well should be emptied and it should be taken out from under the stone. The Holy Prophet then sent Hadrat Ali, Hadrat Ammar bin Yasir and Hadrat Zubair: They were also joined by Jubair bin Iyas az-Zurqi (two men from Bani Zurayq). Later the Holy Prophet also arrived at the well along with some Companions. The water was taken out and the spathe recovered. There they found that beside the comb and hair there was a cord with eleven knots on it and a wax image with needles pricked into it. Gabriel (peace be on him) came and told him to repeat the *Mu'awwidhatayn*. As he repeated verse after verse, a knot was loosened and a needle taken out every time, till on finishing the last words all the knots were loosened and all the needles removed, and he was entirely freed from the charm. After this he called Labid and questioned him. He confessed his guilt and the Holy Prophet let him go, for he never avenged himself on anyone for any harm done to his person. He even declined to talk about it to others, saying that Allah had restored him to health; therefore he did not like that he should incite the people against anyone.

This is the story of the magic worked on the Holy Prophet. There if nothing in it which might run counter to his office of Prophethood. In his personal capacity if any injury could be inflicted on him as it happened in the Battle of Uhud, if he could fall from his horse and be hurt as is confirmed by the *Hadith*, if he could be stung by a scorpion as has been mentioned in some Traditions and none of these negates the protection promised him by Allah in his capacity as a Prophet, he could also fall ill under the influence of magic in his personal capacity. That a Prophet can be affected by magic is also confirmed by the Qur'an. In Surah Al- A'raf it has been said about the magicians of Pharaoh that when they confronted the Prophet Moses, they bewitched the eyes of thousands of people who had assembled to witness the encounter (v. 116). In Surah Ta Ha it has been said that not only the common people but the Prophet Moses too felt that the cords and staffs that they cast were running towards them like so many snakes, and this filled Moses' heart with fear. Thereupon Allah revealed to him: "Don't fear for you will come out victorious. Cast down you staff." (vv. 66-69). As for the objection that this then confirms the accusation of the disbelievers of Makkah that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) was a bewitched man, its answer is that the disbelievers did not call him a bewitched man in the sense that he had fallen ill under that effect of magic cast by somebody, but in the sense that some magician has, God forbid, made him mad, and he had made claim to Prophethood and was telling the people tales of Hell and Heaven in his same madness. Now, obviously this objection does not at all apply to a matter about which history confirms that the magic spell had affected only the person of Muhammad (upon whom be peace) and not the Prophethood of Muhammad (upon whom be peace), which remained wholly unaffected by it.

In this connection, another thing worthy of mention is that the people who regard magic as a kind of superstition hold this view only because the effect of magic cannot be explained scientifically. But there are many things in the world which one experiences and observes but one cannot explain scientifically how they happen. If we cannot give any such explanation it does not become necessary that we should deny the thing itself which we cannot explain. Magic, in fact, is a psychological phenomenon which can affect the body

through the mind just as physical things affect the mind through the body. Fear, for instance, is a psychological phenomenon, but it affects the body: the hair stand on end and the body shudders. Magic does not; in fact, change the reality, but under its influence man's mind and senses start feeling as if reality had changed. The staffs and the cords that the magicians had thrown towards the Prophet Moses, had not actually become snakes, but the eyes of the multitude of people were so bewitched that everybody felt they were snakes; even the senses of the Prophet Moses could not remain unaffected by the magic spell. Likewise, in Al-Baqarah: 102, it has been said that in Babylon people learned such magic from Harut and Marut as could cause division between husband and wife. This too was a psychological phenomenon. Obviously, if the people did not find it efficacious by experience they could not become its customers. No doubt, it is correct that just like the bullet of the rifle and the bomb from the aircraft, magic too cannot have effect without Allah's permission, but it would be mere stubbornness to deny a thing which has been experienced and observed by man for thousands for years.

Question of Reciting Charms and Amulets in Islam

The third thing that arises in connection with these Surahs is whether recitation of charms and amulets has any place in Islam, and whether such recitation is by itself efficacious or not. This question arises for in many *ahadith* it has been reported that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) at the time of going to bed every night, especially during illness, used to recite the Mu'awwidhatayn (or according to other reports, the *Mu'awwidhat*, i.e. *Qul Huwa-Allahu Ahad* and the *Mu'awwidhatayn*) thrice, blow in his hands and then rub the hands on his body from head to foot as far as his hands could reach. During his last illness when it was not longer possible for him to so do, Hadrat Aishah recited these Surahs herself or by his command blew on his hands in view of their being blessed and rubbed them on his body. Traditions on this subject have been related in Bukhari, Muslim, Nasai, Ibn Majah, Abu Da'ud and Mu'atta of Imam Malik through authentic channels on the authority of Hadrat Aishah herself beside whom no one could be better acquainted with the domestic life of the Holy Prophet.

In this regard, one should first understand its religious aspect. In the *Hadith* a lengthy tradition has been related on the authority of Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas, at the end of which the Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "The people of my *Ummah* to enter Paradise without reckoning will be those who neither turn to treatment by branding, nor to enchanting, nor take omens, but have trust in their Lord." (Muslim). According to a tradition reported on the authority of Hadrat Mughirah bin Shubah, the Holy Prophet said: "He who got himself treated by branding, or enchanting, became independent of trust in Allah." (Tirmidhi). Hadrat Abdullah bin Mas'ud has reported that the Holy Prophet disapproved of ten things one of which was recitation of charms and amulets except by means of the *Mu'awwidhatayn* or *Mu'awwidhat*. (Abu Daud, Ahmad, Nasai, Ibn Hibban, Hakim). Some *ahadith* also show that in the beginning the Holy Prophet had altogether forbidden recitation of charms and amulets, but later he allowed it on the condition that is should not smack of polytheism, but one should recite and blow by means of the holy names of Allah, or the words of the Qur'an. The words used should be understandable and one should know that there is nothing sinful in it, and one should not wholly rely on the recitation of charms but on Allah's will to make it beneficial." After the explanation of the religious aspect, let us now see what the *Hadith* says in this regard.

Tabarani in As-Saghir has related a tradition on the authority of Hadrat Ali, saying: "One the Holy Prophet was stung by a scorpion during the Prayer. When the Prayer was over, he remarked: God's curse be on the scorpion: it neither spares a praying one, nor any other. Then he called for water and salt, and started rubbing the place where the scorpion had stung with salt water and reciting *Qul ya ayyuhal-kafirun*, *Qul Huwa Allahu ahad*, *Qul a'udhu bi-Rabbil-falaq* and *Qul a'udhu bi-Rabbin-nas*, along with it."

Ibn Abbas also has related a tradition to the effect: "The Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) used to recite this invocation over Hadrat Hasan and Husain: *U'idhu kuma bi-kalimat Allahit-tamati min kulli shaitan-in wa hammati-wa min kulli ayt-in-lam nati*: "I give you in the refuge of Allah's blameless words, from every devil and troublesome thing, and from every evil look." (Bukhari, Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah).

A tradition has been related in Muslim, Muwatta, Tabarani and Hakim about Uthman bin al-As ath-Thaqafi, with a little variation in wording, to the effect that he complained to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace), saying: "Since I have become a Muslim, I feel a pain in my body, which is killing me." The Holy Prophet said: "Place your right hand on the place where you feel the pain, then recite *Bismillah* thrice, and *A'udhu billahi wa qudratihi min sharri ma ajidu wa uhadhiru* ("I seek refuge with Allah and with His power from the evil that I find and that I fear") seven times, and rub your hand." In *Muwatta* there is the addition: "Uthman bin Abi al-As said: After that my pain disappeared and now I teach the same formula to the people of my house."

Musnad Ahmad and Tahavi contain this tradition from Talq bin Ali: "I was stung by a scorpion in the presence of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace). The Holy Prophet recited something and blew over me and rubbed his hand on the affected place."

Muslim contains a tradition from Abu Said Khudri, which says: "Once when the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) fell ill, Gabriel came and asked: O Muhammad, are you ill? The Holy Prophet answered in the affirmative. Gabriel said: I blow on you in the name of Allah from everything which troubles you and from the evil of every soul and the evil look of every envier. May Allah restore you to health. I blow on you in His name." A similar tradition has been related in Musnad Ahmad on the authority of Hadrat Ubadah bin as-Samit, which says: "The Holy Prophet was unwell. I went to visit him and found him in great trouble. When I re-visited him in the evening I found him quite well. When I asked how he had become well so soon, he said: Gabriel came and blew over me with some words. Then he recited words similar to those reported in the above *Hadith.* A tradition similar to this has been related on the authority of Hadrat Aishah also in Muslim and Musnad Ahmad.

Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad* has related this tradition from Hafsah, mother of the Faithful: "One day the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) visited me in the house and a woman, named Shifa, was sitting with me. She used to blow on the people to cure them of blisters. The Holy Prophet said to her: Teach Hafsah also the formula." Imam Ahmad, Abu Daud and Nasai have related this tradition from Shifa bint Abdullah herself, saying: "The Holy Prophet said to me: Just as you have taught Hafsah reading and writing, so teach her blowing to cure blisters as well."

In Muslim there is a tradition from Auf bin Malik al-Ashjal to the effect: "We used to practice blowing to cure diseases. We asked the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) for his opinion in this regard. He said: Let me know the words with which you blow over the people. There is no harm in blowing unless it smacks of polytheism."

Muslim, Musnad Ahmad and Ibn Majah contain a tradition from Hadrat Jabir bin Abdullah, saying: "The Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) had forbidden us blowing to cure disease. Then the people of the clan of Hadrat Amr bin Hazm came and they said: We had a formula with which we used to blow on the people to cure them of scorpion's sting (or snake-bite). But you have forbidden us the practice. Then they recited before him the words which they made use of. Thereupon the Holy Prophet said: I do not see any harm in it, so let the one who can do good to his brother, do him good." Another tradition from Jabir bin Abdullah in Muslim is: "The family of Hazm had a formula to cure snake-bite and the Holy Prophet permitted them to practise it." This is also supported by the tradition from Hadrat Aishah, which is contained in Muslim, Musnad Ahmad, and Ibn Majah: "The Holy Prophet granted permission to a family of the Ansar for blowing to cure the evils effects of biting by every poisonous creature." Traditions resembling these have been related from Hadrat Anas also in Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Muslim and Ibn Majah, saying that the Holy Prophet gave permission for blowing to cure the bite by poisonous creatures, the disease of blisters and the effects of the evil look."

Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and Hakim have related this tradition on the authority of Hadrat Umair, freed slave of Abi al-Laham: "In the pre-Islamic days I had a formula with which I used to blow over the people. I recited it before the Holy Prophet, whereupon he told me to drop out such and such words from it, and permitted me to blow with the rest of it."

According to *Muwatta*, Hadrat Abu Bakr went to the house of his daughter, Hadrat Aishah, and found that she was unwell and a Jewish woman was blowing over her. Thereupon he said to her: "Blow over her by means of the Book of Allah." This shows that if the people of the Book practice blowing by means of the verses of the Torah and the Gospel, it is also permitted.

As for the question whether blowing for curing disease is efficacious also, or not, its answer is that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) not only did not forbid anybody to have recourse to cure and medical treatment but himself stated that Allah has created a cure for every disease and exhorted his followers to use cures. He himself told the people the remedies for certain diseases, as can be seen in the *Hadith in the Kitab at-Tib* (Book of Cures). But the cure can be beneficial and useful only by Allah's command and permission, otherwise if the cure and medical treatment were beneficial in every case, no one would have died in hospitals. Now, if beside the cure and medical treatment, Allah's Word and His beautiful names also are made use of, or Word and His beautiful names also are made use of, or Allah is turned to and invoked for help by means of His Word, Names and Attributes in a place where no medical aid is available, it would not be against reason except for the materialists. However, it is not right to disregard intentionally a cure or treatment where it is available, and recourse had only to enchanting and reciting of charms, and the people should start a regular practice of granting amulets as a means of earning their livelihood.

Many people in this regard argue from Hadrat Abu Said Khudri's tradition which has been related in Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud and Ibn Majah, and it is supported also by a tradition related in Bukhari on the authority of Ibn Abbas. According to it the Holy Prophet sent some of his Companions including Hadrat Abu Said Khudri on an expedition. They halted on the way at the settlement of an Arabian tribe and demanded hospitality from the people, but they refused to extend any hospitality. In the meantime the chief of the tribe was stung by a scorpion and the people came to the travelers to ask if they had any medicine or formula by which their chief could be cured. Hadrat Abu Said said: "Yes, we do have, but since you have refused us hospitality, we would not treat him unless you promised us to give us something." They promised to give them a flock of goats (according to some traditions, 30 goats), and Hadrat Abu Said went and started reciting Surah Al-Fatihah and rubbing his saliva on the affected place. Consequently, the chief felt relieved of the effect of the poison and the people of the tribe gave them the goats as promised. But the Companions said to one another; "Let us not make any use of the goats until we have asked the Holy Prophet about it", for they were not sure whether it was permissible to accept any reward for what they had done. So they came before the Holy Prophet and related what had happened. The Holy Prophet smiled and said: "How did you know that Surah Al-Fatihah could also be used for curing such troubles? Take the goats and allocate my share also in it."

But before one used this *Hadith* for permission to adopt a regular profession of granting amulets and reciting charms, one should keep in view the conditions under which Hadrat Abu Said Khudri had recourse to it, and the Holy Prophet not only held it as permissible but also said that a share for him also should be allocated so that there remained no doubt in the minds of the Companions that such a thing was permissible. The conditions in Arabia in those days were, as they still are, that settlements were situated hundreds of miles apart, there were not hotels and restaurants where a traveler could buy food when he reached one of these after several days journey. Under such conditions it was considered a moral duty that when a traveler reached a settlement the people of the place should extend hospitality to him. Refusal on their part in many cases meant death for the travelers, and this was looked upon as highly blameworthy among the Arabs. That is why the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) allowed as permissible the act of his Companions. Since the people of the tribe had refused them hospitality, they too refused to treat their chief, and became ready to treat him only on the condition that they should promise to give them something in return. Then, when one of them with trust in God recited Surah Al-Fatihah over the chief and he became well, the people gave the promised wages and the Holy Prophet allowed that the wages be accepted as lawful and pure. In Bukhari the tradition related on the authority of Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas about this incident contains the Holy Prophet's words to the effect: "Instead that you should have acted otherwise, it was better that you recited the Book of Allah and accepted the wages for it." He said this in order to impress the truth that Allah's Word is superior to every other kind of enchanting and practice of secret arts. Furthermore, the Message also was incidentally conveyed to the Arabian tribe and its people made aware of the blessings of the Word that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) had brought from Allah. This incident cannot be cited as a precedent for the people who run clinic in the cities and towns for the practice of secret arts and have adopted it as a regular profession for earning livelihood. No precedent of it is found in the life and practice of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) or his Companions, their followers and the earliest Imams.

Relation between Surah Al-Fatihah and the Mu'awwidhatayn

The last thing which is note worthy with regard to the *Mu'awwidhatayn* is the relation between the beginning and the end of the Qur'an. Although the Qur'an has not been arranged chronologically, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) arranged in the present order the verses and Surahs revealed during 23 years on different occasions to meet different needs and situations not by himself but by the command of Allah Who revealed them. According to this order, the Qur'an opens with the Surah Al-Fatihah and ends with the *Mu'awwidhatayn*. Now, let us have a look at the two. In the beginning, after praising and glorifying Allah, Who is Lord of the worlds, Kind, Merciful and Master of the Judgment Day, the servants submits: "Lord, You alone I worship and to You along I turn for help, and the most urgent help that I need from You is to be guided to the Straight Way." In answer, he is given by Allah the whole Qur'an to show him the Straight Way, which is concluded thus: Man prays to Allah, Who is Lord of dawn, Lord of men, King of men, Deity of men, saying: "I seek refuge only with You for protection from every evil and mischief of every creature, and in particular, from the evil whisperings of devils, be they from among men or jinn, for they are the greatest obstacle in following the Straight Way." The relation that the beginning bears with the end, cannot remain hidden from anyone who has understanding and insight.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

قُلۡ اَعُوۡذُ بِرَبِّ الۡفَلَقِ ۙ 1

(113:1) Say:[1] "I seek refuge[2] with the Lord of the rising day;[3]

1. As qul (say) is a part of the message which was conveyed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) by revelation for preaching his prophetic message, its first addressee is the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself but after him every believer is also its addressee.

2. The act of seeking refuge necessarily consists of three parts:

(1) The act of seeking refuge itself.

(2) The seeker of refuge.

(3) He whose refuge is sought.

Seeking refuge implies feeling fear of something and seeking protection of another, or taking cover of it, or clinging to it, or going under its shelter for safety. The seeker after refuge in any case is the person, who feels that he cannot by himself resist and fight the thing that he fears, but stands in need of refuge with another for protection. Then the one whose refuge is sought must necessarily be a person or being about whom the seeker after refuge believes that he or it alone can protect him from the calamity. Now, one kind of refuge is that which is obtained according to natural laws in the physical world from a perceptible material object or person or power, for example, taking shelter in a fort for protection against the enemy's attack, or taking cover in a trench or behind a heap of earth, or wall, for protection against a shower of bullets, or taking refuge with a man or

government, for protection from a powerful tyrant or taking refuge in the shade of a tree or building for protection from the sun. Contrary to this, the other kind of refuge is that which is sought in a supernatural Being from every kind of danger and every kind of material, moral or spiritual harm and injury on the basis of the belief that that Being is ruler over the physical world and can protect in supersensory ways the one who seeks His refuge. This second kind of refuge is the one that is implied not only in Surah Al-Falaq and Surah An-Nass but wherever in the Quran and the Hadith mention has been made of seeking refuge with Allah, it implies this particular kind of refuge, and it is a necessary corollary of the doctrine of Tauhid that this kind of refuge should be sought from no one but Allah. The polytheists sought this kind of protection, and seek even today, from other beings than Allah, e.g. the jinn, or gods and goddesses. The materialists also turn for this to material means and resources, for they do not believe in any supernatural power. But the believer only turns to Allah and seeks refuge only with Him, against all such calamities and misfortunes to ward off which he feels he has no power.

For example, about the polytheists it has been said in the Quran: And that from among men some people used to seek refuge with some people from among the jinn (Surah Al-Jinn, Ayat 16).

And explaining it in (E.N. 7 of Surah Al-Jinn)we have cited Abdullah bin Abbas's tradition that when the polytheistic Arabs had to pass a night in an uninhabited valley, they would call out, saying: We seek refuge of the lord of this valley (i.e. of the jinn who is ruler and master of this valley). Contrary to this, about Pharaoh it has been said: When he witnessed the great signs presented by the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), he showed arrogance on account of his might. (Surah Adh- Dhariyat, Ayat 39).

As for the attitude and conduct of the God-worshippers the Quran says that they seek Allah's refuge for protection against the evil of everything that they fear, whether it is material or moral or spiritual. Thus, about Mary it has been said that when God's angel appeared before her suddenly in human guise (when she did not know that he was an angel), she cried out: I seek the merciful God's refuge from you, if you are a pious man. (Surah Maryam, Ayat 18).

When the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) made an improper petition to Allah, and was rebuked by Allah in response, he immediately submitted: My Lord, I seek Your protection lest I should ask of You anything of which I have no knowledge. (Surah Hud, Ayat 47) When the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) commanded the children of Israel to sacrifice a cow, and they said that perhaps he was having a jest with them, he replied: I crave Allah's protection from behaving like ignorant people. (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 67).

The same is the case with all the acts of seeking refuge which have been reported in respect of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the books of Hadith. For instance, consider the following prayers that the Prophet (peace be upon him) made:

Aishah has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to pray, saying: O God, I seek Your refuge from the evil of the works which I did and from the evil of the works which I did not do. (i.e. if I have done a wrong, I seek refuge from its evil results, and if I

have not done a work which I should have done, I seek refuge from the loss that I have incurred, or from that I should do what I should not do). (Muslim).

Ibn Umar has reported that one of the supplications of the Prophet (peace be upon him) was to the effect: O God, I seek Your refuge from being deprived of a blessing that You have bestowed on me and from being deprived of the well-being that You have granted me and I seek refuge lest Your wrath should descend on me suddenly, and I seek refuge from every kind of Your displeasure. (Muslim).

Zaid bin Arqam has reported that the Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah used to pray: O God, I seek Your refuge from the knowledge which is not beneficial, from the heart which does not fear You, from the soul which is never satisfied, and from the prayer which is not answered. (Muslim).

Abu Hurairah has reported that the Messenger (peace be upon him) used to pray: O God, I seek Your refuge from hunger, for it is a most evil thing with which one may have to pass a night, and I seek Your refuge from dishonesty, for it is sheer evil-mindedness. (Abu Daud).

Anas has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to pray: O God, I seek Your refuge from leprosy and madness and all evil diseases. (Abu Daud).

Aishah has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to pray in these words: O God, I seek Your refuge from the mischief of the fire and from the evil of affluence and poverty. (Tirmidhi, Abu Daud).

Shakal bin Humaid requested the Prophet (peace be upon him) to teach him some prayer. He told him to say: O God, I seek Your refuge from the evil of my hearing, from the evil of my sight, from the evil of my tongue, from the evil of my heart, and from the evil of my lust, (Tirmidhi, Abu Daud).

Atlas bin Malik has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to say: O God, I seek Your refuge from helplessness, indolence, cowardice, old age and stinginess, and I seek Your refuge from the torment of the grave and from the mischief of life and death, (and according to a tradition in Muslim also) from the burden of debt and that the people should overpower me. (Bukhari, Muslim).

Khawla bint Hukaym Sulamiyyah says that she heard the Prophet (peace be upon him) as saying that the one who halts at a new stage (during the journey) and says: I seek refuge in the blameless words of Allah from the evil of the creatures, will not be caused any harm until he departs from that stage. (Muslim).

We have related these few prayers of the Prophet (peace be upon him) from the Hadith, which show that the believer should seek Allah's refuge from every danger and evil and not the refuge of anyone else, nor he should become self sufficient of Allah and place reliance only on himself.

3. The word used in the original is Rabbil-Falaq. Falaq actually means to split and to pierce through. A great majority of the commentators have taken it to mean bringing out the light of dawn by splitting the darkness of night, for in Arabic falaq-as-subh is often used for the

breaking of dawn, and also in the Quran the words Faliqul- isbah (He Who causes the dawn to appear by splitting the darkness of night) have been used for Allah. (Surah AlAnaam, Ayat 96).

Another meaning of falaq is also to create ot to bring into being, for everything created in the world appears by splitting something. All vegetation sprouts by splitting open the seed and the soil; all animals come out either from the womb of mother or by breaking open the egg, or some other obstruction. All springs gush out by splitting open the rock or soil. The day appears by piercing through the curtain of the night. The drops of rain pierce through the clouds and fall on the earth. In short, everything in the world comes into being as a result of breaking and splitting another thing; so much so that the earth and the heavens also in the beginning were one mass, then they were broken and parted. (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayat 30).

Thus, according to this meaning the word falaq is common to all creations. Now, if the first meaning is adopted, the verse would mean: I seek refuge with the Lord of rising dawn, and according to the second meaning, it would mean: I seek refuge with the Lord of all creation. Here the attribute of Rabb has been used for Allah instead of His proper Name, for Allah's attribute of being Rabb, i.e. Master, Sustainer and Provider, is more relevant to seeking and taking of His refuge. Then, if Rabb-ul-falaq implies Lord of the rising dawn, seeking His refuge would mean: I seek refuge with the Lord Who brings out the bright daylight from the darkness of night so that He may likewise bring well-being for me from all kinds of physical and psychical dangers. If it is taken to mean Rabb al-khalaq the meaning would be: I seek refuge with the Lord of all creation, so that He may protect me from the evil of His creation.

مِنۡ شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ ۙ 2

(113:2) from the evil of all that He created;[4]

4. In other words: I seek His refuge from the evil of all creatures. A few things in this sentence deserve consideration.

First, that the creation of evil has not been attributed to Allah, but the creation of creatures has been attributed to Allah and of evil to the creatures. That is, it has not been said: I seek refuge from the evils that Allah has created, but that: I seek refuge from the evil of the things He has created. This shows that Allah has not created any creature for the sake of evil, but all His work is for the sake of good and a special purpose. However, from the qualities that He has created in the creatures to fulfill the purpose of their creation, sometimes evil appears from some kinds of creatures in most cases.

Second, that even if this one sentence was given and no mention made of seeking Allah's refuge separately from the evils of some particular kinds of creatures in the following sentences, this one sentence alone would have sufficed to express the intent, for in it Allah's refuge has been sought from the evil of all creatures. After this general prayer for refuge making mention of seeking refuge from some particular evils by itself gives this meaning: Though I seek Allah's refuge from the evil of everything created by Allah, I stand in great

need of Allah's refuge from the particular evils that have been mentioned in the remaining verses of Surah Al-Falaq and Surah An-Nass.

Third, that the most suitable and effective prayer for seeking refuge from the evil of the creatures is that refuge should be sought with their Creator, for He is in any case dominant over His creatures and is aware of their evils, which we know, as well as of those which we do not know. Hence, His refuge is the refuge of the supreme Ruler Whom no power can fight and oppose, and with His refuge we can protect ourselves from every evil of every creature, whether we are aware of it or not. Moreover, this contains the prayer for refuge not only from the evils of the world but also from every evil of the Hereafter.

Fourth, that the word sharr (evil) is used for loss, injury, trouble and affliction as well as for the means which cause losses and injuries and afflictions; for example, hunger, disease, injury in accident or war, being burnt by fire, being stung or bitten by a scorpion or snake, being involved in the grief of children's death and similar other evils which are evils in the first sense, for they are by themselves troubles and afflictions. Contrary to this, unbelief, polytheism and every kind of sin and wickedness, for instance, are evils in the second sense, for they cause loss and affliction, although apparently they do not cause any trouble at the moment, rather some sins give pleasure and bring profit. Thus, seeking refuge from evil comprehends both these meanings.

Fifth, that seeking refuge from evil also contains two other meanings. First, that man is praying to his God to protect him from the evil that has already taken place; second, that man is praying to his God to protect him from the evil that has not yet taken place.

وَمِنۡ شَرِّ غَاسِقٍ اِذَا وَقَبَ ۙ 3

(113:3) from the evil of night's darkness when it spreads around;[5]

5. After seeking Allah's refuge generally from the evil of the creatures, now prayer is being taught for seeking refuge from the evil of some special creatures in particular. The word ghasiq in the verse literally means dark. Thus, at another place in the Quran it has been said: Establish the salat from the declining of the sun to the darkness of the night, ila-ghasaq-il-lail. (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 78), and waqab means to enter or to overspread. Prayer has been taught to seek refuge in particular from the evil of the darkness of night, for most of the crimes and acts of wickedness are committed at night, harmful animals also come out at night, and the night was a very dreadful thing in the time chaos prevailed in Arabia when these verses were revealed. Raiders came out in the dark of night and plundered and destroyed settlements. The people who were thinking of putting the Prophet (peace be upon him) to death, also made their secret plans at night, so that the murder could not be detected. Therefore, command was given to seek Allah's refuge from the evils and calamities which descend at night. Here, the subtle relation that exists between seeking refuge from the evil of the dark night with the Lord of breaking dawn cannot remain hidden from anybody having insight and understanding.

A difficulty is confronted in the explanation of this verse in view of several authentic traditions. Aishah has reported: Once during a moon-lit night, the Prophet (peace be upon

him) took hold of my hand and pointing to the moon said: Seek Allah's refuge, for this is al ghasiq idha waqab. (Tirmidhi, Ahmad, Nasai, lbn Jarir, Ibn al-Mundhir, Hakim, Ibn Marduyah). To explain this some scholars said that idha waqab here means idha khasaf, i.e. when the moon is eclipsed. But in no tradition has it been mentioned that when the Prophet (peace be upon him) pointed to the moon, it was in eclipse. In the Arabic lexicon also idha waqab cannot mean idha khasaf. In our opinion the correct explanation of this Hadith is that since the moon rises in the night (in the daytime it does not shine even if it is there in the sky), what the Prophet (peace be upon him) meant was this: Seek God's refuge from the night, the time when it (the moon) appears, for the light of the moon is not as helpful for the one who resists as for the one who attacks, and not as helpful for the victim of the crime as for the culprit. On this very basis the Prophet (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: When the sun has set, devils spread on every side. Therefore, gather your children together in the house and keep your animals tied down until the darkness of night disappears.

وَمِنْ شَرِّ النَّفّٰثٰتِ فِي الْعُقَدِ ۙ 4

(113:4) from the evil of the women who blow on knots;[6]

6. The word uqad in naffathat fil-uqad is plural of uqdah, which means a knot that is tied on a string or piece of thread. Nafath means to blow. Naffathat is plural of naffathah, which may mean the men who blow much, and if taken as a feminine gender, women who blow much; it may as well relate to nufus (human beings) or to jamaats (groups of men), for both nafas and jamaat are grammatically feminine. Blowing upon knots, according to most, rather all, commentators imply magic, for the magicians usually tie knots on a string or thread and blow upon them as they do so. Thus, the verse means: I seek refuge with the Lord of rising dawn from the evil of magicians, male and female. This meaning is also supported by the traditions which show that when magic was worked on the Prophet (peace be upon him), Gabriel had come and taught him to recite the Muawwidhatayn, and in the Muawwidhatayn this is the only sentence which relates directly to magic. Abu Muslim Isfahani and Zamakhshari have also given another meaning of naffathat fil-uqad, which is that it implies the deceitfulness of women and their influencing men's resolutions, views and ideas and this has been compared to a magic spell, for in the love of women man starts behaving as if he was under a spell. Though this explanation is interesting, it runs counter to the commentary given by the earlier scholars; and it also does not correspond to the conditions in which the Muawwidhatayn were sent down as we have shown in the Introduction.

About magic one should know that in it since help is sought of the satans and evil spirits or stars to influence the other person evilly, it has been called kufr (unbelief) in the Quran: Solomon was not involved in kufr but the satans who taught magic to the people. (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 102).

But even if it does not contain any word of kufr, or any polytheistic element, it is forbidden and unlawful and the Prophet (peace be upon him) has counted it among the seven heinous sins which ruin the Hereafter of man. In Bukhari and Muslim a tradition has been related from Abu Hurairah, saying that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Avoid seven deadly sins: associating another with Allah, magic, killing a soul unjustly which Allah has

forbidden, devouring interest, eating the orphan's property, fleeing from the enemy in the battlefield, and slandering simple and chaste Muslim women with un-chastity.

وَمِنْ شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ ۝5

(113:5) and from the evil of the envier when he envies."[7]

7. Hasad means that a person should feel unhappy at the better fortune, superiority or good quality that Allah has granted to another, and should wish that it should be taken away from the other person and given to him, or at least the other one should be deprived of it. However, hasad does not mean that a person should wish that he too should be blessed with the bounty that the other one has been blessed with. Here, Allah's refuge has been sought from the evil of the jealous one when he feels jealous, and takes a practical step with word or deed to satisfy his heart. For until he takes a practical step, his being unhappy may by itself be bad but it is not an evil for the other person so that he may seek refuge from it. When such an evil appears from a jealous person the best thing would be to seek Allah's refuge from it. Besides this, there are a few other things which are also helpful for obtaining immunity from the evil of the jealous person. First, that one should have trust in Allah and the faith that unless Allah so wills no one can harm him in any way. Second, that one should have patience over what the jealous person says and does and should not start behaving impatiently so as to be degraded morally to the level of the jealous person. Third, that one should in any case maintain dignity and practice piety even if the jealous person behaves frivolously, being fearless of God and shameless of the people. Fourth, that one should free his mind of every thought about the jealous person and should disregard him altogether, for making him a subject of one's thought is a prelude to being influenced by him. Fifth, that one should do the jealous person a good turn as and when one can, not to speak of treating him evilly, no matter whether this good behavior mitigates his jealousy or not. Sixth, that one should understand rightly and remain steadfast to the doctrine of Tauhid for the heart which enshrines Tauhid, cannot be affected by anyone else's fear except the fear of Allah.

114. Surah An Nas (Mankind)

Please note that the following introduction is for both Surah Al Falaq (113) and Surah An Nas (114).

Name

Although these two Surahs of the Qur'an are separate entities and are written in the Mushaf also under separate names, yet they are so deeply related mutually and their contents so closely resemble each other's that they have been designated by a common name Mu'awwidhatayn (the two Surahs in which refuge with Allah has been sought). Imam Baihaqi in Dala'il an-Nubuwwat has written that these Surahs were revealed together, that is why the combined name of both is Mu'awwidhatayn. We are writing the same one Introduction to both, for they discuss and deal with just the same matters and topics. However, they will be explained and commented on separately below.

Period of Revelation

Hadrat Hasan Basri, 'Ikrimah, 'Ata' and Jabir bin Zaid say that these Surahs are Makki. A tradition from Hadrat 'Abdullah bin 'Abbas also supports the same view. However, according to another tradition from him, it is Madani and the same view is held also by Hadrat 'Abdullah bin Zubair and Qatadah. One of the traditions which strengthens this second view is the Hadith which Muslim, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i and Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal have related on the authority of Hadrat 'Uqbah bin 'Amir. He says that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) one day said to him: "Do you know what kind of verses have been revealed to me tonight? These matchless verses are A'udhu bi-Rabbil-falaq and A'udhu bi-Rabbin-nas. This Hadith is used as an argument for these Surahs to be Madani because Hadrat 'Uqbah bin 'Amir had become a Muslim in Madinah after the hijrah, as related by Abu Da'ud and Nasa'i on the basis of his own statement. Other traditions which have lent strength to this view are those related by Ibn Sa'd, Muhiyy-us-Sunnah Baghawi, Imam Nasafi, Imam Baihaqi, Hafiz Ibn Hajar, Hafiz Badr-uddin 'Ayni, 'Abd bin Humaid and others to the effect that these Surahs were revealed when the Jews had worked magic on the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) in Madinah and he had fallen ill under its effect. Ibn Sa'd has related on the authority of Waqidi that this happened in A.H. 7. On this very basis Sufyan bin Uyainah also has described these Surah as Madani.

But as we have explained in the Introduction to Surah Al-Ikhlas, when it is said about a certain Surah or verse that it was revealed on this or that particular occasion, it does not necessarily mean that it was revealed for the first time on that very occasion. Rather it sometimes so happened that a Surah or a verse had previously been revealed, then on the occurrence or appearance of a particular incident or situation, the Holy Prophet's attention was drawn to it by Allah for the second time, or even again and again. In our opinion the same also was the case with the Mu'awwidhatayn. The subject matter of these Surahs is explicit that these were sent down at Makkah in the first instance when opposition to the Holy Prophet there had grown very intense. Later, when at Madinah storms of opposition were raised by the hypocrites, Jews and polytheists, the Holy Prophet was instructed to recite these very Surahs, as has been mentioned in the above cited tradition from Hadrat Uqbah bin Amir. After this, when magic was worked on him, and his illness grew intense,

Gabriel came and instructed him by Allah's command to recite these very Surahs. Therefore, in our opinion, the view held by the commentators who describe both these Surahs as Makki is more reliable. Regarding them as connected exclusively with the incident of magic is difficult, for to this incident related only one verse (v.4), the remaining verses of Surah al Falaq and the whole of Surah An-Nas have nothing to do with it directly.

Theme and Subject-Matter

The conditions under which these two Surahs were sent down in Makkah were as follows. As soon as the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) began to preach the message of Islam, it seemed as though he had provoked all classes of the people around him. As his message spread the opposition of the disbelieving Quraish also became more and more intense. As long as they had any hope that they would be able to prevent him from preaching his message by throwing some temptation in his way, or striking some bargain with him, their hostility did not become very active. But when the Holy Prophet disappointed them completely that he would not effect any kind of compromise with them in the matter of faith, and in Surah Al-Kafirun they were plainly told: "I do not worship those who you worship nor are you worshipers of Him Whom I worship. For you is your religion and for me is mine", the hostility touched its extreme limits. More particularly, the families whose members (men or women, boys or girls) had accepted Islam, were burning with rage from within against the Holy Prophet. They were cursing him, holding secret consultations to kill him quietly in the dark of the night so that the Bani Hashim could not discover the murderer and take revenge; magic and charms were being worked on him so as to cause his death, or make him fall ill, or become mad; satans from among the men and the jinn spread on every side so as to whisper one or another evil into the hearts of the people against him and the Qur'an brought by him so that they became suspicious of him and fled him. There were many people who were burning with jealousy against him, for they could not tolerate that a man from another family or clan than their own should flourish and become prominent. For instance, the reason why Abu Jahl was crossing every limit in his hostility to him has been explained by himself: "We and the Bani Abdi Manaf (to which the Holy Prophet belonged) were rivals of each other: they fed others, we too fed others; they provided conveyances to the people, we too did the same; they gave donations, we too gave donations, so much so that when they and we have become equal in honor and nobility, they now proclaim that they have a Prophet who is inspired from the heaven; how can we compete with them in this field? By God, we will never acknowledge him, nor affirm faith in him". (Ibn Hisham, vol. I, pp. 337-338).

Such were the conditions when the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) was commanded to tell the people: "I seek refuge with the Lord of the dawn, from the evil of everything that He has created, and from the evil of the darkness of night and from the evil of magicians, men and women, and from the evil of the envious", and to tell them: "I seek refuge with the Lord of mankind, the King of mankind, and the Deity of mankind, from the evil of the whisperer, who returns over and over again, who whispers (evil) into the hearts of men, whether he be from among the jinn or men." This is similar to what the Prophet Moses had been told to say when Pharaoh had expressed his design before his full court to kill him: "I have taken refuge with my Lord and your Lord against every arrogant person who does not believe in the Day of Reckoning." (Al-Mu'min: 27). And: "I have taken refuge with my Lord and your Lord lest you should assail me." (Ad-Dukhan;20).

On both occasions these illustrious Prophets of Allah were confronted with well-equipped, resourceful and powerful enemies. On both occasions they stood firm on their message of Truth against their strong opponents, whereas they had no material power on the strength of which they could fight them, and on both occasions they utterly disregarded the threats and dangerous plans and hostile devices of the enemy, saying: "We have taken refuge with the Lord of the universe against you." Obviously, such firmness and steadfastness can be shown only by the person who has the conviction that the power of His Lord is the supreme power, that all powers of the world are insignificant against Him, and that no one can harm the one who has taken His refuge. Only such a one can say: "I will not give up preaching the Word of Truth. I care the least for what you may say or do, for I have taken refuge with my Lord and your Lord and Lord of all universe."

Question whether Mu'awwidhatayn are, or are not, Quranic

The above discussion is enough to help one understand fully the theme and content of the two Surahs, but since three points in the books of Hadith and commentary concerning these Surahs have been discussed, which are likely to create doubts in the minds, it is necessary to clear them also here.

First, whether it is absolutely established that these two Surahs are the Qur'anic Surahs, or whether there is some doubt in this regard. This question arose because in the traditions related from an illustrious Companion like Hadrat Abdullah bin Mas'ud, it has been said that he did not regard these two Surahs as the Surahs of the Qur'an and had eliminated these from his copy of the Mushaf. Imam Ahmad, Bazzar, Tabarani, Ibn Marduyah, Abu Ya'la, Abdullah bin Ahmad bin Hanbal, Humaydi, Abu Nu'aim, Ibn Hibban and other traditionists have related this from Hadrat Abdullah bin Mas'ud with different chains of transmitters and mostly on sound authority. According to these traditions, he not only eliminated these Surahs from the Mushaf but it has also been reported that he used to say: "Do not mix up with the Qur'an that which is not of the Qur'an. These two Surahs are not included in the Quran. This was only a command enjoined on the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) for seeking God's refuge." In some traditions there is also the addition that he did not recite these Surahs in the Prayer.

On the basis of these traditions the opponents of Islam had an opportunity to raise doubts about the Qur'an, saying that this Book, God forbid, is not free from corruption. For when, according to a Companion of the rank of Hadrat Abdullah bin Mas'ud, these two Surahs are an annexation to the Qur'an, many other additions and subtractions also might have been made in it. To rid the Qur'an of this blame Qadi Abu Bakr Al-Baqillani, Qadi Iyad and others took the stand that Ibn Mas'ud was not in fact a denier of the Mu'awwidhatayn being Qur'anic but only refused to write them in the Mushaf. For, according to him, only that which the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) had allowed, should be written in the Mushaf, and Ibn Mas'ud did not receive the information that the Holy Prophet had allowed this. But this stand is not correct, for according to sound evidence, it is confirmed that Ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) had denied that these were Surahs of the Qur'an. Some other scholars, for instance, Imam Nawawi, Imam Ibn Hazm and Imam Fakhr-ud-din Razi, regard this as a pure lie and falsehood that Ibn Mas'ud had asserted any such thing. But to reject genuine historical facts without sound evidence is unscientific.

Now, the question is: How can the blame that attaches to the Qur'an because of these traditions of Ibn Mas'ud correctly refuted? This question has several answers which we shall give below in sequence:

1. Hafiz Bazzar after relating these traditions of Ibn Mas'ud in his Musnad, has written that he is solitary and isolated in his this opinion; no one from among the Companions has supported this view.
2. The copies of the Qur'an which the third Caliph, Hadrat Uthman (may Allah be pleased with him), had got compiled by the consensus of the Companions and which he had sent from the Islamic Caliphate officially to the centers of the world of Islam contained both these Surahs.
3. The Mushaf which, since the sacred time of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) till today, has the seal of consensus of the entire world of Islam, contains both these Surahs. The solitary opinion of only Abdullah bin Mas'ud, in spite of his high rank, has no weight against this great consensus.
4. It is confirmed by sound and reliable ahadith from the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) that he not only recited these Surahs in the Prayer himself but instructed others also to recite them, and taught them to the people as the Surahs of the Qur'an. Consider, for instance, the following ahadith:

We have cited on the authority of Muslim, Ahmad, Tirmidhi and Nasai the tradition of Hadrat Uqbah bin Amir that the Holy Prophet told him about Surah Al-Falaq and Surah An- Nas, saying that those verses had been revealed to him that night. A tradition in Nasai from Uqbah bin Amir is to the effect that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) recited both these Surahs in the Morning Prayer. Imam Ahmad on sound authority has related in his Musnad the tradition from a Companion that the Holy Prophet said to him, "When you perform the Prayer, recite both these Surahs in it."

In Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud and Nasai this tradition of Uqbah bin Amir has been related: "The Holy Prophet said to him: Should I not teach you two such Surahs as are among the best Surahs that the people recite? He said: Do teach me, O Messenger of Allah. Thereupon the Holy Prophet taught him the Mu'awwidhatayn. Then the Prayer began and the Holy Prophet recited the same two Surahs in it also, and when after the Prayer the Holy Prophet passed by him, he said to him, 'O Uqbah, how did you like it?' Then he instructed him to the effect: When you go to bed, and when you get up from bed, recite these Surahs."

In Musnad Ahmad, Abu Da'ud, Tirmidhi and Nasa'i there is a tradition from Uqbah bin Amir, saying that the Holy Prophet exhorted him to recite the Mu'awwidhat (i.e. Qul Huwa Allahu ahad and the Mu'awwidhatayn) after every Prayer.

Nasai, Ibn Marduyah and Hakim have related this tradition also from Uqbah bin Amir: "Once the Holy Prophet was riding on a conveyance and I was walking along with him with my hand placed on his sacred foot. I said: Kindly teach me Surah Hud or Surah Yusuf. He replied: In the sight of Allah there is nothing more beneficial for the servant than Qul a'udhu bi-Rabbil-falaq."

A tradition from Abdullah bin Abid al-Juhani has been related by Nasai, Baihaqi and Ibn Sad, saying that the Holy Prophet said to him: "Ibn Abid, should I not tell you what are the

best things out of the means by which the seekers of refuge have sought refuge with Allah? I submitted: Do teach me, O Messenger of Allah. He replied: Qul a'udhu bi-Rabbil-falaq and Qul a-udhu bi Rabbin-nas - both these Surahs."

Ibn Marduyah had related from Hadrat Umm Salamah: "The Surahs best liked by Allah are: Qul a'udhu bi-Rabbil-falaq and Qul a'udhu bi-Rabbin-nas."

Here, the question arises: what caused Hadrat Abdullah bin Mas'ud the misunderstanding that these two are not Surahs of the Qur'an? We get the answer to it when we combine two traditions: first, that Hadrat Abdullah bin Mas'ud asserted that this was only a command which the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) was given to teach him the method of seeking refuge with Allah; second, the tradition which Imam Bukhari has related in his Sahih, Imam Ahmad in his Musnad, Hafiz Abu Bakr al- Humaidi in his Musnad, Abu Nu'aim in his Al-Mustakhraj and Nasai in his Sunan, with different chains of transmitters, on the authority of Zirr bin Hubaish, with a slight variation in wording from Hadrat Ubayy bin Kab, who held a distinguished place among the Companions on the basis of his knowledge of the Qur'an. Zirr bin Hubaish states: "I said to Hadrat Ubayy: Your brother, Abdullah bin Mas'ud, says these things. What do you say about this view? He replied: I had questioned the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) about this. He said to me: I was told to say 'qul', so I said 'qul'. Therefore, we too say the same as the Holy Prophet said."

In the tradition related by Imam Ahmad, Hadrat Ubayy's words are to the effect: "I bear witness that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) told me that Gabriel (peace be on him) had told him to say: Qul a'udhu bi-Rabbil-falaq; therefore, he recited likewise, and Gabriel asked him to say: Qul a'udhu bi- Rabbin-nas; therefore he too said likewise. Hence, we too say as the Holy Prophet said." A little consideration of these two traditions will show that the word qul (say) in the two Surahs caused Hadrat Abdullah bin Mas'ud the misunderstanding that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) had been commanded to say: A'udhu bi-Rabbil-falaq and A'udhu bi-Rabbin-nas. But he did not feel any need to question the Holy Prophet about it. In the mind of Hadrat Ubbay bin Kab also a question arose about his and he put it before the Holy Prophet. The Holy Prophet replied: "Since Gabriel (peace be on him) had said qul, so I too say qul." Let us put it like this. If somebody is commanded and asked: "Say, I seek refuge", he will not carry out the command, saying: "Say, I seek refuge", but he will drop the work "say" and say: "I seek refuge." On the contrary, if the messenger of a superior officer conveys to somebody the message in these words: "Say, I seek refuge", and this command is given to him not only for his own person but to be conveyed to others, he will convey the words of the message verbatim to the people, and will not have the permission to drop anything from the text of the message. Thus, the fact that these two Surahs begin with the word qul is a clear proof that it is Divine Word, which the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) was bound to convey verbatim. It was not merely a command given to him for his person. Besides these two Surahs, there are 330 other verses in the Qur'an which begin with the word qul (say). The presence of qul in all these is a proof that it is Divine Word. which was obligatory for the Holy Prophet to convey verbatim; otherwise if qul everywhere had meant a command, the Holy Prophet would have dropped it and said only that which he was commanded to say, and it would not have been recorded in the Qur'an, but, on the contrary, he would have remained content with saying only what he was commanded to say.

Here, if one considers this, one can understand fully well how unreasonable it is to regard the Companions as infallible and to make the clamor that a Companion has been defamed as soon as one hears a saying or doing of his being described as wrong. Here, one can clearly see what a blunder happened to be committed by an illustrious Companion like Hadrat Abdullah bin Mas'ud about two Surahs of the Qur'an. If such an error could be committed by an eminent Companion like him, others also might commit an error. We can examine it in the scientific way, and describe it as wrong if a thing said or done by a Companion is proved to be wrong. But wicked indeed would be the person who went beyond describing a wrong act as wrong and started reproving and finding fault with the Companions of the Holy Prophet of Allah. Concerning the Mu'awwidhatayn the commentators and traditionists have described the opinion of Ibn Mas'ud as wrong, but no one has dared to say that by denying these two Surahs of the Qur'an, he had, God forbid, become a disbeliever.

Question of Holy Prophet's being affected by Magic

The second thing that has arisen in respect of these two Surahs is that, according to traditions, magic had been worked on the Holy Prophet, and he had fallen ill under its effect, and Gabriel (peace be on him) had instructed him to repeat these Surahs to remove the charm. This has been objected to by many rationalists of both ancient and modern times. They say that if these traditions are accepted, the whole Shari'ah becomes doubtful. For if the Prophet could be charmed, and according to these traditions he was charmed, one cannot say what the Prophet might have been made to say and do under the influence of magic by his opponents, and what in his teaching may be Divine and what the result of magic. Not only this: they also allege that if this is accepted as true, it might well be that the Prophet might have been prompted to make the claim to Prophethood through magic and the Prophet by misunderstanding might have thought that an angel had come to him. They also argue that these traditions clash with the Qur'an. The Qur'an mentions the accusation of the disbelievers who said that the Prophet was bewitched (Bani Isra'il: 47), but these traditions confirm the accusation of the disbelievers that the Prophet had actually been charmed and bewitched.

For a proper investigation of this question it is necessary that one should first see whether it is established by authentic historical evidence that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) had actually been affected by magic, and if so, what it was and to what extent. Then it should be seen whether the objections raised against what is established historically do actually apply to it or not.

The Muslim scholars of the earliest period were truly honest and upright in that they did not try to corrupt history or conceal facts according to their own ideas, concepts and assumptions. They conveyed intact to the later generations whatever was confirmed historically, and did not at all care how the material supplied by them could be used by the one who was bent upon drawing perverse conclusions from the facts. Now, if something stands confirmed by authentic and historical means, it is neither right for an honest and right-minded person that he should deny history on the ground that in case he accepted it, it would lead to these evil results according to his thinking, nor it is right that he should add to and stretch beyond its genuine limits by conjecture and speculation whatever is

established historically. Instead, he should accept history as history and then see what is actually proved by it and what is not.

As far as the historical aspect is concerned, the incident of the Holy Prophet's being affected by magic is absolutely confirmed, and if it can be refuted by scientific criticism, then no historical event of the world can be proved right and genuine. It has been related by Bukhari, Muslim, Nasai, Ibn Majah, Imam Ahmad, Abdur Razzaq, Humaidi, Baihaqi, Tabarani, Ibn Sad, Ibn Mardayah, Ibn Abi Shaibah, Hakim, Abd bin Humaid and other traditionists on the authority of Hadrat Aishah, Hadrat Zaid bin Arqam and Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas, through so many different and numerous channels that forgery is out of the question. Although each tradition by itself is an isolated report (khabar wahid), we give it below as a connected event from the details provided by the traditions.

After the peace treaty of Hudaibiyah when the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) returned to Madinah, a deputation of the Jews of Khaibar visited Madinah in Muharram, A.H. 7 and met a famous magician, Labid bin Asam, who belonged to the Ansar tribe of Bani Zurayq. They said to him: "You know how Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) has treated us. We have tried our best to bewitch him but have not succeeded. Now we have come to you because you are a more skilled magician. Here are three gold coins, accept these and cast a powerful magic spell on Muhammad." In those days the Holy Prophet had a Jewish boy as his attendant. Through him they obtained a piece of the Holy Prophet's comb with some hair stuck to it. Magic was worked on the same hair and the teeth of the comb. According to some traditions, magic was worked by Labid bin Asam himself, according to others, his sisters were more skilled than him and he got the spell cast through them. Whatever be the case, Labid placed this spell in the spathe of a male date-tree and his it under a stone at the bottom of Dharwan or Dhi Arwan, the well of Bani Zurayq. The spell took one whole year to have effect upon the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace). In the latter half of the year the Holy Prophet started feeling as if was unwell. The last forty days became hard on him, of which the last three days were even harder. But its maximum effect on him was that he way melting away from within. He thought he had done a thing whereas, in fact, he had not done it: he thought he had visited his wives whereas he had not visited them; and sometimes he would doubt having seen something whereas, in fact, he had not seen it. All these effects were confined to his own person; so much so that the other people could not notice what state he was passing through. As for his being a Prophet, no change occurred in the performance of his duties.

There is no tradition to say that he might have forgotten some verses of the Qur'an in those days, or might have recited a verse wrongly, or a change might have occurred in the assemblies and in his counsels and sermons, or he might have presented a discourse as Revelation which may not have been revealed to him, or he might have missed a Prayer and thought that he had performed it. God forbid, if any such thing had happened, it would have caused a clamor and the whole of Arabia would have known that a magician had overpowered the one whom no power had been able to overpower. But the Holy Prophet's position as a Prophet remained wholly unaffected by it. Only in his personal life he remained worried on account of it. At last, one day when he was in the house of Hadrat Aishah, he prayed to Allah to be restored to full health. In the meantime he fell asleep or drowsed and on waking he said to Hadrat Aishah: "My Lord has told me what I had asked of Him." Hadrat Aishah asked what it was. He replied: "Two men (i.e. two angels in human

guise) came to me. One sat near my head and the other near my feet. The first asked: what has happened to him? The other replied: Magic has been worked on him. The first asked: who has worked it? He replied: Labid bin Asam. He asked: In what is it contained? He replied: In the comb and hair covered in the spathe of a male date-tree. He asked: where is it? He replied: under a stone at the bottom of Dhi Arwan (or Dharwan), the well of Bani Zurayq. He asked: what should be done about it? He replied: the well should be emptied and it should be taken out from under the stone. The Holy Prophet then sent Hadrat Ali, Hadrat Ammar bin Yasir and Hadrat Zubair: They were also joined by Jubair bin Iyas az-Zurqi (two men from Bani Zurayq). Later the Holy Prophet also arrived at the well along with some Companions. The water was taken out and the spathe recovered. There they found that beside the comb and hair there was a cord with eleven knots on it and a wax image with needles pricked into it. Gabriel (peace be on him) came and told him to repeat the Mu'awwidhatayn. As he repeated verse after verse, a knot was loosened and a needle taken out every time, till on finishing the last words all the knots were loosened and all the needles removed, and he was entirely freed from the charm. After this he called Labid and questioned him. He confessed his guilt and the Holy Prophet let him go, for he never avenged himself on anyone for any harm done to his person. He even declined to talk about it to others, saying that Allah had restored him to health; therefore he did not like that he should incite the people against anyone.

This is the story of the magic worked on the Holy Prophet. There if nothing in it which might run counter to his office of Prophethood. In his personal capacity if any injury could be inflicted on him as it happened in the Battle of Uhud, if he could fall from his horse and be hurt as is confirmed by the Hadith, if he could be stung by a scorpion as has been mentioned in some Traditions and none of these negates the protection promised him by Allah in his capacity as a Prophet, he could also fall ill under the influence of magic in his personal capacity. That a Prophet can be affected by magic is also confirmed by the Qur'an. In Surah Al- A'raf it has been said about the magicians of Pharaoh that when they confronted the Prophet Moses, they bewitched the eyes of thousands of people who had assembled to witness the encounter (v. 116). In Surah Ta Ha it has been said that not only the common people but the Prophet Moses too felt that the cords and staffs that they cast were running towards them like so many snakes, and this filled Moses' heart with fear. Thereupon Allah revealed to him: "Don't fear for you will come out victorious. Cast down you staff." (vv. 66-69). As for the objection that this then confirms the accusation of the disbelievers of Makkah that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) was a bewitched man, its answer is that the disbelievers did not call him a bewitched man in the sense that he had fallen ill under that effect of magic cast by somebody, but in the sense that some magician has, God forbid, made him mad, and he had made claim to Prophethood and was telling the people tales of Hell and Heaven in his same madness. Now, obviously this objection does not at all apply to a matter about which history confirms that the magic spell had affected only the person of Muhammad (upon whom be peace) and not the Prophethood of Muhammad (upon whom be peace), which remained wholly unaffected by it.

In this connection, another thing worthy of mention is that the people who regard magic as a kind of superstition hold this view only because the effect of magic cannot be explained scientifically. But there are many things in the world which one experiences and observes but one cannot explain scientifically how they happen. If we cannot give any such

explanation it does not become necessary that we should deny the thing itself which we cannot explain. Magic, in fact, is a psychological phenomenon which can affect the body through the mind just as physical things affect the mind through the body. Fear, for instance, is a psychological phenomenon, but it affects the body: the hair stand on end and the body shudders. Magic does not; in fact, change the reality, but under its influence man's mind and senses start feeling as if reality had changed. The staffs and the cords that the magicians had thrown towards the Prophet Moses, had not actually become snakes, but the eyes of the multitude of people were so bewitched that everybody felt they were snakes; even the senses of the Prophet Moses could not remain unaffected by the magic spell. Likewise, in Al-Baqarah: 102, it has been said that in Babylon people learned such magic from Harut and Marut as could cause division between husband and wife. This too was a psychological phenomenon. Obviously, if the people did not find it efficacious by experience they could not become its customers. No doubt, it is correct that just like the bullet of the rifle and the bomb from the aircraft, magic too cannot have effect without Allah's permission, but it would be mere stubbornness to deny a thing which has been experienced and observed by man for thousands for years.

Question of Reciting Charms and Amulets in Islam

The third thing that arises in connection with these Surahs is whether recitation of charms and amulets has any place in Islam, and whether such recitation is by itself efficacious or not. This question arises for in many ahadith it has been reported that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) at the time of going to bed every night, especially during illness, used to recite the Mu'awwidhatayn (or according to other reports, the Mu'awwidhat, i.e. Qul Huwa-Allahu Ahad and the Mu'awwidhatayn) thrice, blow in his hands and then rub the hands on his body from head to foot as far as his hands could reach. During his last illness when it was not longer possible for him to so do, Hadrat Aishah recited these Surahs herself or by his command blew on his hands in view of their being blessed and rubbed them on his body. Traditions on this subject have been related in Bukhari, Muslim, Nasai, Ibn Majah, Abu Da'ud and Mu'atta of Imam Malik through authentic channels on the authority of Hadrat Aishah herself beside whom no one could be better acquainted with the domestic life of the Holy Prophet.

In this regard, one should first understand its religious aspect. In the Hadith a lengthy tradition has been related on the authority of Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas, at the end of which the Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "The people of my Ummah to enter Paradise without reckoning will be those who neither turn to treatment by branding, nor to enchanting, nor take omens, but have trust in their Lord." (Muslim). According to a tradition reported on the authority of Hadrat Mughirah bin Shubah, the Holy Prophet said: "He who got himself treated by branding, or enchanting, became independent of trust in Allah." (Tirmidhi). Hadrat Abdullah bin Mas'ud has reported that the Holy Prophet disapproved of ten things one of which was recitation of charms and amulets except by means of the Mu'awwidhatayn or Mu'awwidhat. (Abu Daud, Ahmad, Nasai, Ibn Hibban, Hakim). Some ahadith also show that in the beginning the Holy Prophet had altogether forbidden recitation of charms and amulets, but later he allowed it on the condition that is should not smack of polytheism, but one should recite and blow by means of the holy names of Allah, or the words of the Qur'an. The words used should be understandable and one should know that there is nothing sinful in it, and one should not wholly rely on the recitation of

charms but on Allah's will to make it beneficial." After the explanation of the religious aspect, let us now see what the Hadith says in this regard.

Tabarani in As-Saghir has related a tradition on the authority of Hadrat Ali, saying: "One the Holy Prophet was stung by a scorpion during the Prayer. When the Prayer was over, he remarked: God's curse be on the scorpion: it neither spares a praying one, nor any other. Then he called for water and salt, and started rubbing the place where the scorpion had stung with salt water and reciting Qul ya ayyuhal-kafirun, Qul Huwa Allahu ahad, Qul a'udhu bi-Rabbil-falaq and Qul a'udhu bi-Rabbin-nas, along with it."

Ibn Abbas also has related a tradition to the effect: "The Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) used to recite this invocation over Hadrat Hasan and Husain: U'idhu kuma bi-kalimat Allahit-tamati min kulli shaitan-in wa hammati-wa min kulli ayt-in-lam nati: "I give you in the refuge of Allah's blameless words, from every devil and troublesome thing, and from every evil look." (Bukhari, Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah).

A tradition has been related in Muslim, Muwatta, Tabarani and Hakim about Uthman bin al-As ath-Thaqafi, with a little variation in wording, to the effect that he complained to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace), saying: "Since I have become a Muslim, I feel a pain in my body, which is killing me." The Holy Prophet said: "Place your right hand on the place where you feel the pain, then recite Bismillah thrice, and A'udhu billahi wa qudratihi min sharri ma ajidu wa uhadhiru ("I seek refuge with Allah and with His power from the evil that I find and that I fear") seven times, and rub your hand." In Muwatta there is the addition: "Uthman bin Abi al-As said: After that my pain disappeared and now I teach the same formula to the people of my house."

Musnad Ahmad and Tahavi contain this tradition from Talq bin Ali: "I was stung by a scorpion in the presence of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace). The Holy Prophet recited something and blew over me and rubbed his hand on the affected place."

Muslim contains a tradition from Abu Said Khudri, which says: "Once when the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) fell ill, Gabriel came and asked: O Muhammad, are you ill? The Holy Prophet answered in the affirmative. Gabriel said: I blow on you in the name of Allah from everything which troubles you and from the evil of every soul and the evil look of every envier. May Allah restore you to health. I blow on you in His name." A similar tradition has been related in Musnad Ahmad on the authority of Hadrat Ubadah bin as-Samit, which says: "The Holy Prophet was unwell. I went to visit him and found him in great trouble. When I re-visited him in the evening I found him quite well. When I asked how he had become well so soon, he said: Gabriel came and blew over me with some words. Then he recited words similar to those reported in the above Hadith. A tradition similar to this has been related on the authority of Hadrat Aishah also in Muslim and Musnad Ahmad.

Imam Ahmad in his Musnad has related this tradition from Hafsah, mother of the Faithful: "One day the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) visited me in the house and a woman, named Shifa, was sitting with me. She used to blow on the people to cure them of blisters. The Holy Prophet said to her: Teach Hafsah also the formula." Imam Ahmad, Abu Daud and Nasai have related this tradition from Shifa bint Abdullah herself, saying: "The Holy

Prophet said to me: Just as you have taught Hafsah reading and writing, so teach her blowing to cure blisters as well."

In Muslim there is a tradition from Auf bin Malik al-Ashjal to the effect: "We used to practice blowing to cure diseases. We asked the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) for his opinion in this regard. He said: Let me know the words with which you blow over the people. There is no harm in blowing unless it smacks of polytheism."

Muslim, Musnad Ahmad and Ibn Majah contain a tradition from Hadrat Jabir bin Abdullah, saying: "The Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) had forbidden us blowing to cure disease. Then the people of the clan of Hadrat Amr bin Hazm came and they said: We had a formula with which we used to blow on the people to cure them of scorpion's sting (or snake-bite). But you have forbidden us the practice. Then they recited before him the words which they made use of. Thereupon the Holy Prophet said: I do not see any harm in it, so let the one who can do good to his brother, do him good." Another tradition from Jabir bin Abdullah in Muslim is: "The family of Hazm had a formula to cure snake-bite and the Holy Prophet permitted them to practise it." This is also supported by the tradition from Hadrat Aishah, which is contained in Muslim, Musnad Ahmad, and Ibn Majah: "The Holy Prophet granted permission to a family of the Ansar for blowing to cure the evils effects of biting by every poisonous creature." Traditions resembling these have been related from Hadrat Anas also in Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Muslim and Ibn Majah, saying that the Holy Prophet gave permission for blowing to cure the bite by poisonous creatures, the disease of blisters and the effects of the evil look."

Musnad Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and Hakim have related this tradition on the authority of Hadrat Umair, freed slave of Abi al-Laham: "In the pre-Islamic days I had a formula with which I used to blow over the people. I recited it before the Holy Prophet, whereupon he told me to drop out such and such words from it, and permitted me to blow with the rest of it."

According to Muwatta, Hadrat Abu Bakr went to the house of his daughter, Hadrat Aishah, and found that she was unwell and a Jewish woman was blowing over her. Thereupon he said to her: "Blow over her by means of the Book of Allah." This shows that if the people of the Book practice blowing by means of the verses of the Torah and the Gospel, it is also permitted.

As for the question whether blowing for curing disease is efficacious also, or not, its answer is that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) not only did not forbid anybody to have recourse to cure and medical treatment but himself stated that Allah has created a cure for every disease and exhorted his followers to use cures. He himself told the people the remedies for certain diseases, as can be seen in the Hadith in the Kitab at-Tib (Book of Cures). But the cure can be beneficial and useful only by Allah's command and permission, otherwise if the cure and medical treatment were beneficial in every case, no one would have died in hospitals. Now, if beside the cure and medical treatment, Allah's Word and His beautiful names also are made use of, or Word and His beautiful names also are made use of, or Allah is turned to and invoked for help by means of His Word, Names and Attributes in a place where no medical aid is available, it would not be against reason except for the materialists. However, it is not right to disregard intentionally a cure or treatment where it

is available, and recourse had only to enchanting and reciting of charms, and the people should start a regular practice of granting amulets as a means of earning their livelihood.

Many people in this regard argue from Hadrat Abu Said Khudri's tradition which has been related in Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Musnad Ahmad, Abu Daud and Ibn Majah, and it is supported also by a tradition related in Bukhari on the authority of Ibn Abbas. According to it the Holy Prophet sent some of his Companions including Hadrat Abu Said Khudri on an expedition. They halted on the way at the settlement of an Arabian tribe and demanded hospitality from the people, but they refused to extend any hospitality. In the meantime the chief of the tribe was stung by a scorpion and the people came to the travelers to ask if they had any medicine or formula by which their chief could be cured. Hadrat Abu Said said: "Yes, we do have, but since you have refused us hospitality, we would not treat him unless you promised us to give us something." They promised to give them a flock of goats (according to some traditions, 30 goats), and Hadrat Abu Said went and started reciting Surah Al-Fatihah and rubbing his saliva on the affected place. Consequently, the chief felt relieved of the effect of the poison and the people of the tribe gave them the goats as promised. But the Companions said to one another; "Let us not make any use of the goats until we have asked the Holy Prophet about it", for they were not sure whether it was permissible to accept any reward for what they had done. So they came before the Holy Prophet and related what had happened. The Holy Prophet smiled and said: "How did you know that Surah Al-Fatihah could also be used for curing such troubles? Take the goats and allocate my share also in it."

But before one used this Hadith for permission to adopt a regular profession of granting amulets and reciting charms, one should keep in view the conditions under which Hadrat Abu Said Khudri had recourse to it, and the Holy Prophet not only held it as permissible but also said that a share for him also should be allocated so that there remained no doubt in the minds of the Companions that such a thing was permissible. The conditions in Arabia in those days were, as they still are, that settlements were situated hundreds of miles apart, there were not hotels and restaurants where a traveler could buy food when he reached one of these after several days journey. Under such conditions it was considered a moral duty that when a traveler reached a settlement the people of the place should extend hospitality to him. Refusal on their part in many cases meant death for the travelers, and this was looked upon as highly blameworthy among the Arabs. That is why the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) allowed as permissible the act of his Companions. Since the people of the tribe had refused them hospitality, they too refused to treat their chief, and became ready to treat him only on the condition that they should promise to give them something in return. Then, when one of them with trust in God recited Surah Al-Fatihah over the chief and he became well, the people gave the promised wages and the Holy Prophet allowed that the wages be accepted as lawful and pure. In Bukhari the tradition related on the authority of Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas about this incident contains the Holy Prophet's words to the effect: "Instead that you should have acted otherwise, it was better that you recited the Book of Allah and accepted the wages for it." He said this in order to impress the truth that Allah's Word is superior to every other kind of enchanting and practice of secret arts. Furthermore, the Message also was incidentally conveyed to the Arabian tribe and its people made aware of the blessings of the Word that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) had brought from Allah. This incident cannot be cited as a precedent for the people who run clinic in the cities

and towns for the practice of secret arts and have adopted it as a regular profession for earning livelihood. No precedent of it is found in the life and practice of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) or his Companions, their followers and the earliest Imams.

Relation between Surah Al-Fatihah and the Mu'awwidhatayn

The last thing which is note worthy with regard to the Mu'awwidhatayn is the relation between the beginning and the end of the Qur'an. Although the Qur'an has not been arranged chronologically, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) arranged in the present order the verses and Surahs revealed during 23 years on different occasions to meet different needs and situations not by himself but by the command of Allah Who revealed them. According to this order, the Qur'an opens with the Surah Al-Fatihah and ends with the Mu'awwidhatayn. Now, let us have a look at the two. In the beginning, after praising and glorifying Allah, Who is Lord of the worlds, Kind, Merciful and Master of the Judgment Day, the servants submits: "Lord, You alone I worship and to You along I turn for help, and the most urgent help that I need from You is to be guided to the Straight Way." In answer, he is given by Allah the whole Qur'an to show him the Straight Way, which is concluded thus: Man prays to Allah, Who is Lord of dawn, Lord of men, King of men, Deity of men, saying: "I seek refuge only with You for protection from every evil and mischief of every creature, and in particular, from the evil whisperings of devils, be they from among men or jinn, for they are the greatest obstacle in following the Straight Way." The relation that the beginning bears with the end, cannot remain hidden from anyone who has understanding and insight.

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

قُلۡ اَعُوۡذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ ۙ 1

(114:1) Say: “I seek refuge with the Lord of mankind;

مَلِکِ النَّاسِ ۙ 2

(114:2) the King of mankind,

اِلٰہِ النَّاسِ ۙ 3

(114:3) the True God of mankind,[1]

1.Here also, as in Surah Al-Falaq, instead of saying Audhu-billahi (I seek Allah’s refuge), a prayer has been taught to seek Allah’s refuge by reference to His three attributes: First, that He is Rabb-in-naas, i.e. Sustainer, Provider; second, that He is Malik-in-naas, i.e. Master of all mankind; third, that He is Ilah-in-naas, i.e. real Deity of all mankind. Here, one should clearly understand that the word ilah has been used in two meanings in the Quran: first for the thing or person who is practically being worshipped although it or he is not entitled to worship; second, for Him Who is entitled to worship, Who is in fact the Deity whether the

people worship Him or not, wherever this word is used for Allah; it has been used in the second meaning. Seeking refuge by means of these three attributes means: I seek refuge with that God, Who being the Sustainer, King and Deity of men, has full power over them, can fully protect them and can really save them from the evil, to save myself and others from which I am seeking His refuge. Not only this; since He alone is Sustainer, King and Deity, therefore, there is no one beside Him with Whom I may seek refuge and he may give real refuge.

مِنۡ شَرِّ الۡوَسۡوَاسِ ۙ الۡخَنَّاسِ ۙ 4

(114:4) from the mischief of the whispering, elusive prompter who returns again and again,[2]

2. The word waswas in waswas-il-khannas means the one who whispers over and over again, and waswasa means to whisper into someone's heart an evil suggestion over and over again in such a way or ways that the one who is being inspired may not feel that the whisperer is whispering an evil suggestion into his heart. Waswasah by itself suggests repetition just as zalzalah contains the meaning of repetitive movement. Since man is not tempted by just one attempt but effort has to be made over and over again to seduce and tempt him, such an attempt is called waswasah and the tempter waswas. As for the word khannas, it is derived from khunus, which means to hide after appearing and to retreat after coming into view. Since khannas is the intensive form, it would imply the one who behaves thus very frequently. Now, obviously the whisperer has to approach man for whispering again and again, and besides, when he is also described as khannas, the combination of the two words by itself gives the meaning that after whispering once he retreats and then again returns over and over again to repeat the act of whispering. In other words, when once he fails in his attempt to whisper evil, he withdraws, then he again returns to make the second and the third and the next attempt over and over again.

After understanding the meaning of waswas-il-khannas, let us consider what is meant by seeking refuge from its evil. Its one meaning is that the seeker after refuge himself seeks God's refuge from its evil, i.e. from the evil lest it should whisper some evil suggestion into his own heart. The second meaning is that the caller to Truth seeks God's refuge from the evil of the one who whispers evil suggestions into the hearts of the people against himself. It is not in his own power to approach all the people in whose hearts evil suggestions are being whispered against himself individually and remove the misunderstandings of every person. It is also not right and proper for him that he should give up his mission of inviting others to Allah and should devote all his time and energy to removing the misunderstanding created by the whisperer and to answering their accusations. It is also below his dignity that he should stoop to the level of his opponents. Therefore, Allah has instructed the caller to truth to seek only His refuge from the evil of the wicked people, and then to attend single-mindedly to his work of invitation and mission. For it is not for him to deal with them but for Allah, who is Sustainer of men, King of men, God of men.

Here, one should also understand that an evil suggestion is the starting point of evil act. When it affects a careless or heedless person, it creates in him a desire for evil. Then, further

whisperings change the evil desire into an evil intention and evil purpose. When the evil suggestion grows in intensity, the intention becomes a resolution, which then culminates in the evil act. Therefore, the meaning of seeking God's refuge from the evil of the whisperer is that Allah should nip the evil in the bud.

If seen from another aspect, the order of the evil of the whisperers seems to be this: first they incite one to open unbelief, polytheism, or rebellion against Allah and His Messenger, and enmity of the righteous (godly) people. If they fail in this and a person does enter Allah's religion, they misguide him to some innovation. If they fail in this too, they tempt him to sin. If they do not succeed even in this, they inspire the man with the suggestion that there is no haram in indulging in minor sins, so that if he starts committing these freely, he is over burdened with sin. If one escapes from this too, in the last resort they try that one should keep the true religion confined to oneself, and should do nothing to make it prevail, but if a person defeats all these plans, the whole party of the devils from among men and jinn makes a common front against him and incites and stirs up the people and makes them shower him with invective and accusation and slander, and defames him as widely as it can. Then, Satan comes to the believer and excites him to anger, saying: It is cowardly of you to have borne all this insult: arise and clash with your opponents. This is the last and final device with Satan by which he tries to thwart the struggle of the caller to truth and entangle him in difficulties and obstructions. If he succeeds in escaping from this too, Satan becomes powerless before him. About this same thing it has been said in the Quran: If Satan ever excites you to anger, seek refuge with Allah. (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 200); (Surah HaMim As-Sajdah, Ayat 36).

Say: Lord, I seek refuge with You from the promptings of satans. (Surah Al-Mominun, Ayat 97).

The fact is that if ever an evil suggestion from Satan so much as touches those who are God-fearing people, they immediately get alerted and clearly see the right course they should adopt. (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 201).

And on this very basis about the people who escape from this last attack of Satan Allah says: None can attain to this rank except those who are men of great good fortune. ((Surah HaMim As-Sajdah, Ayat 35).

In this connection, another thing should also be kept in mind, and it is this: Evil suggestion is not whispered into the heart of man only from outside by the satans from among men and jinn, but also by the self of man from within. His own wrong theories misguide his intellect, his own unlawful motives and desires lead his power of discrimination, will and power of judgment astray, and it is not only the satans from outside but within man his satan of the self also beguiles him. This same thing has been expressed in the Quran, thus: And We know the evil suggestions arising from his self. (Surah Qaaf, Ayat 16). On this very basis, the Prophet (peace be upon him) in his well-known Sermon said: We seek Allah's refuge from the evils of our self.

الَّذِيْ يُوَسْوِسُ فِيْ صُدُوْرِ النَّاسِ ۙ 5

(114:5) who whispers in the hearts of people;

مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ ع 6

(114:6) whether he be from the jinn or humans."[3]

3. According to some scholars, these words mean that the whisperer whispers evil into the hearts of two kinds of people: the jinn and the men. If this meaning is admitted, the word naas would apply to both jinn and men. They say that this can be so, for when the word rijal (men) in the Quran has been used for the jinn, as in(Surah Al-Jinn, Ayat 6), and when nafar can be used for the group of jinn, as in (Surah A1-Ahqaf, Ayat 29), men and jinn both can be included metaphorically in the word naas also. But this view is wrong because the words naas, ins and insan are even lexically contrary in meaning to the word jinn. The actual meaning of jinn is hidden creation and jinn is called jinn because he is hidden from man's eye. On the contrary, the words naas and ins are spoken for insan (man) only on the basis that he is manifest and visible and perceptible. In (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 29), the word anasa has been used in the meaning of raa, i.e. the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) saw a fire in the direction of Toor. In (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 6), the word anastum has been used in the meaning of ahsastum or raaytum (i.e. if you perceive or see that the orphans have become capable). Therefore, naas cannot apply to jinn lexically, and the correct meaning of the verse is: From the evil of the whisperer who whispers evil into the hearts of men, whether he be from among the jinn or from the men themselves. In other words, whispering of evil is done by devils from among jinn as well as by devils from among men and the prayer in this Surah has been taught to seek refuge from the evil of both. This meaning is supported by the Quran as well as by the Hadith. The Quran says: And so it has always been that We set against every Prophet enemies from among devils of men and devils of jinn, who have been inspiring one another with charming things to delude the minds. (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 112).

And in the Hadith, lmam Ahmad, Nasai, and Ibn Hibban have related on the authority of Abu Dharr a tradition, saying: I sat before the Prophet (peace be upon him, who was in the Mosque. He said: Abu Dharr, have you performed the Prayer? I replied in the negative. He said: Arise and perform the Prayer. So, I performed the Prayer. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: O Abu Dharr, seek Allah's refuge from the devils of men and the devils of jinn. I asked, are there devils among men also? O Messenger of Allah! He replied: Yes.